The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries
East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450

General Editor
Florin Curta

VOLUME 20

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/ecee
The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

By
Virgil Ciocîltan

Translated by
Samuel Willcocks
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. vii
List of Maps ............................................................................................................................... ix

1 Preliminary Remarks ............................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 The Mongols and Trade ................................................................................................. 2
    1.1.1 Sources and Historiographical Concepts ............................................................ 3
    1.1.2 The Khan and the Merchants: A Symbiotic Relationship .................................... 8
    1.1.3 The Silk Road as the Spine of Eurasian Commerce ........................................... 20
    1.1.4 The Nomads and the Silk Road .......................................................................... 23
  1.2 The Mongols and the Black Sea .................................................................................... 30
    1.2.1 Continental Possessions, Maritime Horizons .................................................. 30
    1.2.2 Expansion and Blockade .................................................................................. 32
    1.2.3 The Black Sea—A Crossroads of Eurasian Trade ........................................... 34

2 The Mongol Expansion and the Eurasian Commercial Axes ............................................. 37
  2.1 The Silk Road as a Channel for Expansion .................................................................. 37
    2.1.1 Chinggis Khan and the Silk Road ................................................................. 37
    2.1.2 The Silk Road Under the Protectorate of the Golden Horde .......................... 42
  2.2 The Spice Road: Assault on the Fertile Crescent ....................................................... 55
    2.2.1 The Last Pan-Mongol Campaign to the West: Half a Victory ....................... 55
    2.2.2 The Ilkhanate—Chief Beneficiary of Western Asian Expansion .................... 58

3 The Disintegration of the Empire: Intra- and Extra-Mongol Commercial Rivalries .......... 61
  3.1 The Jochid-Ilkhanid Struggle for Tabriz ..................................................................... 61
  3.2 Cilician Armenia in the Ilkhanid-Mamluk Struggle for the Fertile Crescent ............ 68
  3.3 Political Consequences: The Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz Triangle ......................................... 88
    3.3.1 The Sarai-Cairo Axis and its Allies ................................................................. 89
    3.3.2 The Ilkhanid-Genoese Alliance ....................................................................... 95
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was originally a doctoral thesis, and I owe its composition, along with my whole training as a historian, to Professor Şerban Papacostea, member of the Romanian Academy, who has supervised my work as a researcher at the Nicolae Iorga Institute of History in Bucharest since 1971.

Professor Gottfried Schramm, Professor Ulrich Haarmann, Professor Dieter Mertens and Doctor Ursula Ott of the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg gave me unstinting support, in word and in deed, while I was gathering source material in German libraries with the help of a stipend from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. My great good fortune in having such help and support became clear to me ten years later back home in Romania, when I set about updating the bibliography for the English edition of this work. Although much can be achieved with research on the internet and inter-library loans, I sorely felt my lack of access to libraries such as that of the Freiburg Orientalisches Seminar, which undoubtedly contain a wealth of recent literature on the topic which I could not, alas, include.

Samuel Willcocks and his wife, Dr Maria Pakucs, have ensured that the English translation follows my arguments and style in the Romanian version of the book as closely as possible, while Dr Iuliana Barnea’s professional and painstaking work on the maps has illustrated the sweep and scope of these arguments.

To all these people, and to the institutions named, I owe my most heartfelt gratitude.
LIST OF MAPS

These maps can be found at the back of the book

1. Black Sea (XIII–XIV centuries)
2. Mongol states (after 1261)
3. Trade Routes before 1241
4. Trade Routes, 1241–1261
5. Trade Routes, 1261–1291
6. Trade Routes, 1291–1335
7. Trade Routes, 1335–1395
It is a well-established fact that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Black Sea benefited from an economic boom without parallel in the Middle Ages, since during this period more than any other this crossroads region fulfilled the function that Gheorghe Brătianu so aptly described as a "plaque tournante" ("turntable") of the Eurasian trade.¹

The Romanian historian made extensive studies of the commercial activity of Western seafarers in the Black Sea, and especially of the interests and actions of the Venetians and, predominantly, the Genoese.² He must also be credited with the insight that the famous Pax Mongolica was fundamental to the development of trade in the Black Sea as in all the other areas across which it extended.³ Nevertheless, along with all those who shared this historical view, he missed two factors: shifts within the great web of long-distance trade routes controlled by the Chinggisids, and the khans’ own concrete initiatives in the realm of Black Sea trade. Both were of supreme importance for the truly exceptional economic development of the Black Sea region.

It is impossible to correctly appreciate the importance of these factors, their profound implications and the specific forms which they took, without first clarifying the attitudes of the Mongol rulers to trade in general. The first step in such an assessment is to research the sources, and the historiographical concepts and approaches, touching on relations between the khans and the merchants.

¹ See the title: “La mer Noire, plaque tournante du trafic international à la fin du Moyen Âge” (Brătianu, “La mer Noire”).
² This perspective runs throughout his work, from the doctoral thesis that became Brătianu, Recherches, to the posthumously published monograph, Brătianu, Mer Noire; the most important works are listed in the Bibliography.
³ Cf. ibid.
1.1 *The Mongols and Trade*

There is no escaping the fact that the massacres and devastation which the Mongols left in their wake in the course of their conquests will forever—and rightly—cast a shadow over Chinggisid history.

Nevertheless, even from the very start there were discordant notes in this dismal image: even those who suffered from the Mongol scourge could not restrain themselves from admiring comment on the conquerors’ military prowess. Similarly, the sheer size of the empire, which in the mid-thirteenth century extended from the Pacific to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, was impressive.

Those who had direct experience of internal conditions in the state were among the most admiring voices. They did not hesitate to praise the law and order which the rulers could guarantee throughout the whole extent of the vast empire. Positive opinion only increased once foreign travellers, merchants or missionaries, came forward to say that not only did the ‘barbarians’ not forbid access to the territories that they ruled, but they even encouraged travellers to their enormous Eurasian domain. This welcoming attitude was all the more surprising since it so visibly went against the well-known practice in Islamic and Byzantine lands of completely forbidding foreigners to travel in the interior of the country.

Indeed, the most positive accomplishment in all of Chinggisid history is precisely the extraordinary ease of access and transit which they created in an enormous geographical space. People from the most diverse cultural regions, heretofore isolated from one another, came into contact for the first time, came to know one another, and exchanged material goods and religious or intellectual ideas.

Among the first to take advantage of the abolition of traditional barriers and the opening of new horizons were, of course, merchants. It is self-evident that in such unusual conditions, transcontinental trade developed at a dizzying rate, on a scale unprecedented in the Middle Ages.

Historians agree in emphasising that this measure was the Mongol khans’ decisive contribution to the development of the global economy. No significant voices deny the achievement, just as no arguments would be sufficient to refute this major fact in world history.

Sadly, the historical consensus is not demonstrably based on concrete proofs. It is here, precisely in the domain of academic rigour and demonstration, above and beyond any general impressions, that the difficulties begin. As might easily be supposed, the main fault underlying this state of
affairs—as in so many other instances in medieval history—is the scarcity of source material.

1.1.1 Sources and Historiographical Concepts

One of those who deplored the paucity of information on trade during the time of Mongol rule was Bertold Spuler, unsurpassed as a scholar of Chinggisid history. His remark on the situation in the Tartar state in Iran is indeed discouraging.5

Surviving written sources from the Ilkhanate—where, as is well known, the long-established Persian bureaucracy continued to function with a high degree of efficiency under the Mongols—give some idea, however exiguous, of merchant activity and of the policies which this or that ruler may have adopted regarding the merchant class. It is no surprise then that a genuine steppe empire, as the Golden Horde was, left incomparably fewer documents as evidence. Indeed the output of documents issued by the khans of Desht-i Qipchâq seems, by all appearances, to have been already very modest, and the number that has survived the ravages of time is so low that they can be counted on one's fingers. Nor is there any hope of supplementing this scanty internal source with information from private documents, since these too are notably absent. Equally discouraging to researchers is the situation regarding narrative sources, since none of the rulers of the ulus of Jochi in the Cuman steppe departed sufficiently far from nomad habits to feel any need to immortalise his deeds through the efforts of court chroniclers.

By contrast, in the neighbouring Ilkhanate—as in China—the genius loci displaced at least a part of these established customs. In the fertile cultural soil of Persia, works of history and literature flourished under Mongol rule which were no lesser in quality than those composed in other epochs under the patronage of local rulers.9 For instance, the works of

---

4 On the relation of the ethnonyms Mongol and Tartar, which were often synonymous in the Middle Ages, cf. Ciocîltan, “Evoluția.”
6 On the meaning of the term, see below, chapter 3.1.
7 This Persian expression for the ‘Cuman steppe’ is widely used in the Oriental sources.
8 This is the common Eastern term for the Golden Horde; ulus “appanages, state, people” (CH Inner Asia, p. 487), and Jochi, the first-born son of Chinggis Khan.
9 Browne, History, III.
the great Persian scholars ʿAlā al-Dīn ʿAṭā Malik Juwaynī and Faḍl Allāh Rashid al-Dīn are fundamental not just for understanding the history of the Ilkhanate, but also that of all other branches of the Chinggisid dynasty down to the beginning of the fifteenth century; these works recorded and duly celebrated the deeds of the rulers at some length, but do not mention merchants except briefly and in passing, since this socio-professional class was valued no more highly in Muslim circles than it was in Christian settings.10

Although there are more internal Ilkhanid sources on trade than these Persian chronicles alone, these cannot offer anywhere near as much information as external sources. These latter are more numerous and more comprehensive, offering the main body of evidence for the history of trade both during the time of the unitary empire and, after 1260, in the age of the Mongol successor states.11

Of the multitude of documents, uncommonly heterogeneous both in genre and in place of origin, which happen to contain information about trade, it is worth paying closer attention to the ‘high-profile’ sources preserved in the archives of Genoa and Venice, the great maritime and commercial powers of the Middle Ages. Documents touching upon commercial activity by the subjects of these two republics in the lands governed by the Tartars are unevenly distributed, both chronologically and geographically, and by their very nature they give only a partial and partisan picture of the complex of problems in trade under Mongol patronage, yet despite all these reservations they far surpass any other sources in the precision of the information they offer.12

The absence of internal sources mentioned above is indeed to a great extent compensated by the Italians, who either found themselves physically and geographically in the thick of the action, or else were at least much concerned with the problems connected to the trade, and who built the structures whereby we generally understand Eurasian trade in Chinggisid times. Among many illustrious names, it suffices here to mention Marco Polo, a tireless and well-informed observer of the trade conditions he came across on his famous voyage to China; Francesco Balducci

---

10 On the situation concerning editions and translations of these two authors and of other scholars, their contemporaries, cf. also Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 399–408.
12 Cf. for example, Balard, Romanie, Iorga, Veneția, Thiriet, Régestes, Thiriet, Romanie.
Pegolotti, who wrote a detailed and voluminous guidebook for those of his contemporaries who wished to travel the transcontinental routes; and Marino Sanudo, one of the most clear-sighted thinkers on the problem of long-distance trade in the context of the Crusades.13

Such contributions led to the creation of a framework and integrative vision of Eurasian trade in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This strongly-founded structure has lost none of its relevance down to this day. It has remained, whether acknowledged or tacitly, the basis for all modern attempts to reconstruct organically this important historical phenomenon.14

One of the cardinal virtues of the conceptual framework which Western veterans of the long-distance trade drew up is that it aligns the content of various reports and sources, and organises them in a coherent, intelligible system. This imposition of ‘structure’ on the sources has a further use, which should by no means be overlooked: it also reveals where there are gaps in the information about merchants and their trade. Historians’ attempts to garner useful information about trade from the huge and polyglot mass of both Eastern and Western sources15 has cleared up remarkably many aspects of this complex of questions, but far too many still languish in obscurity. Examination of the sources and the secondary literature leads to an inescapable conclusion: the volume of trade-related information is far too small to allow any scholar to write a ‘compact’ history of trade in the Mongol period. Although it is not uniform, the sparseness of source material which Spuler noted in the case of the Ilkhanate is also encountered throughout the period of Tartar rule, and across the whole area in which they governed.

Despite his largely justified misgivings, Spuler’s pessimism is contradicted by countless works proving that historians did not resign themselves to merely gleaning a few notes and queries, but made decisive strides toward our understanding of various aspects of Eurasian trade in the Chinggisid era, and indeed toward understanding its very nature.16

How was such progress possible?

13 Cf. Polo/Benedetto, Pegolotti/Evans, Sanudo/Bongars.
14 The importance of Western sources in general, and of Italian sources in particular, for the history of trade in the Mongol age becomes clear in the synthesis by Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 3–253.
15 Cf. the impressive bibliographies on the Chinggisids at the end of the volumes by Spuler, Horde, and Mongolen.
16 The chapters which Spuler devoted to commerce in the Golden Horde and in the Ilkhanate (cited above, note 5) are themselves little more than dry inventories.
To answer this question, it is enough to compare the contrasting findings of studies in trade and commerce by scholars with differing ideas on what commerce is.

Here I refer on the one hand to Spuler’s chapter, already frequently mentioned, where he collected those few scattered reports on merchant activity in Persia under the Mongols, and on the other hand to the substantial chapter on the Ilkhanate in Wilhelm Heyd’s monograph on the history of Levantine trade. The formal constraints imposed by the different themes of these two works—one concerned to present an overall view of the Ilkhanate, in which trade was necessarily given only a limited space, the other primarily examining the historiographical problems of commerce, and presenting these as a unitary whole—does not explain the fundamental difference in their approach to the matter under discussion. The two historians were at odds in their essential concept of trade, more precisely in the way they understood the concept and its extent. Thus in Spuler’s view, trade primarily means the sum of all activities undertaken by professional merchants, as reflected in a specific set of documents (account books, registers etc.). For Heyd, the same word has a much larger and more complex meaning, and it cannot be understood in its true scale outside of the geopolitical context created by the Mongol conquests, the determining framework for the concrete conditions under which goods were produced and traded. The state of the roads, security and ease of transport, customs duties and many other ‘peripheral’ matters all entered into this extended definition of trade.

Basing his concept on such considerations, Heyd included the Mongol khan, alongside the merchants, as an essential player and participant in the process of trade and exchange. The khan was the main actor in assuring those conditions which the professional merchants needed to practice their trade. The sources consistently attest that the Chinggisid rulers made sustained efforts to create and to maintain an infrastructure for long-distance trade, and sought, through a series of liberal measures, to make the territories which they controlled as attractive as possible for foreign merchants.

Such are the broad outlines of the portrait of the Mongol ruler as protector and promoter of trade, as this can be found in contemporary accounts and specialist literature; furthermore, they also indicate the extent of his powers and ability to affect the sphere of trade. Despite inevitable

variations over time and in different lands, the trade policy of the Mongol khans was relatively stable in its characteristics, a circumstance which makes it much easier to define and to classify this policy.

As it is, most historians have understood matters in the same way as Heyd, considering that trade is a part of the ruler’s power when this power is exercised in economic affairs, especially touching trade. According to the established view in the historiography of the topic, the extent of Chinggisid powers and interests covered approximately the same field of problems as a Minister for Trade’s portfolio ordinarily includes today.

There are strong indications that even such an understanding is too restricted to do justice to the overwhelming importance that the Mongol khans gave to trade, or to fully convey the stranglehold which trade policy had on other spheres of activity. It is not merely that such a presentation arbitrarily cuts off the side-branches which run out from trade and commerce into various other areas of the economy and social life; there is another aspect which is much more prejudicial to a full understanding of the importance of trade from the perspective of the Mongol rulers.

Taken in isolation, trade policy appears to be a self-contained matter which is subordinate to other decisions taken at a higher level. Admittedly, such a subordinate status cannot be disproven, and it accordingly features, either tacitly or overtly emphasised, in works on the topic. The opposite argument, namely that trade and commercial considerations determined wider Chinggisid state policy, has not been advanced to anything like the same extent. Even if a few historians have suspected that, for example, strong commercial impulses may have underlain some of the great trends in foreign policy (while the sources passed over these motives in silence) there has so far been no systematic research into the way such considerations may have impacted the great business of state.

From this perspective, the khans’ “interventionist” approach favouring the merchants not only attests to a sphere of activity well beyond the traditional limits of trade policy stricto sensu, but it also confirms the suspicion that merchants fulfilled a central function in the Chinggisid state.

Any study hoping to establish the exact degree of mutual dependence between the khan and the merchants can only reach provisional

---

18 Cf. for example the chapters on trade in Martinez, “Development,” pp. 100–108.
19 The prolonged conflict between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate over territories of Transcaucasia offers an example case. Following a suggestion by Pelliot, Brătianu observes that the problem of Far Eastern trade was the actual cause of the enmity (Brătianu, “Les Vénitiens,” p. 154); he did not however follow up all the implications here.
conclusions, but it is inevitable that we set out the nature of the bond as a premise for further argument if we are to discern those instances where trade considerations weighed in a political decision, especially in those cases where the sources keep silent.

1.1.2 The Khan and the Merchants: A Symbiotic Relationship

The cohesion of a band of armed men is based on a contract: the members of the group offer their captain their “services,” while he in turn is obliged to ensure the success of their raids. The booty is divided up among the participants according to no fixed set of rules, and serves to reward effort and encourage loyalty—it is a guarantee that these joint actions will continue. The prestige and the power of the leader depend on the amount of treasure that each of his men can heap up. This law of *do ut des* is an objective, widespread law in history, and also runs through the history of the Chinggisids from start to finish.

In this respect as in many others, the assembly of princes and high officials (*qurultai*) of 1206 was a memorable occasion: our most significant internal source, referring to this gathering of the members of Chinggis Khan’s family and the Mongol nobility, mentions the lordly manner in which Chinggis Khan rewarded each companion who had stood beside him in battle, whether famous engagements or obscure skirmishes, up until that moment.²⁰ This was an exemplary action by the founder of the empire, who thereby elevated such behaviour to a principle of government which all his successors would be obliged to respect.²¹ It was an unnecessary precaution: his successors knew that their rule was endangered as soon as their retinue’s thirst for profit went unsatisfied, and this argument was far more persuasive than any demonstrative legacy.

Fulfilling this need was always a pressing problem. The ongoing answer was of course “the war that feeds on war.” Indeed, from China all the way to Central Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean, plundered booty fed the Mongol armies’ taste for combat. Moreover, since the resources available grew as the conquests went on, the business of conquest, planned and carried out on a transcontinental scale, swept along with it enormous quantities of material resources and immense numbers of men. The Chinggisids proved to be unrivalled in the art of mobilising such vast resources for war.

---

²¹ *Geheime Geschichte*, p. 145.
Armed raids for plunder, however, also brought with them a consequence that was seriously inconvenient for the invaders as well as for the victims: the massacres and looting which the Mongols indulged in wherever they went destroyed livelihoods and production, so that captains were forced to lead their men onwards, in search of plunder, to ever new horizons. Since there were objective limits, the Mongol khans found that they could not satisfy the need for more and more loot, neither in day-to-day conquest nor, evidently, in the (infinitely) long run. One of Chinggis’ councillors had advised him that “the empire was created from horseback, but it cannot be ruled from horseback”22—an undeniable truth.

The Mongol rulers’ leadership qualities were also much in evidence, though in less spectacular fashion, in peacetime. Their achievements as peacetime rulers are all the more remarkable because the chronic problem of finding sources of income to support their military and civilian retinues became acute once the wars of conquest had ceased. Until this point, the stability of their power had been assured by the very dynamic of its expansion—a process comparable to a man riding a bicycle, who can only keep his balance while he is in motion—but now it had to be guaranteed by other means.

The task of converting a war economy into a system for making the best use of human potential and material resources began early; it was a long process, with many twists and turns, and never succeeded in supplanting the empire’s fundamentally military structure, nor that of the Mongol successor states. The administrative apparatus had already taken shape during the period of expansion, and it was progressively built upon and perfected. Run by predominantly Muslim or Chinese personnel, the system was primarily aimed at collecting revenue for the khan’s treasury. The great census of the population all across the empire, carried out at the great khan Möngke’s orders in the mid-thirteenth century in order to improve tax-gathering, is the most developed expression of this underlying concern.23

However efficiently the apparatus worked—and this was only rarely the case24—the endemic poverty of the rural and urban tax base, exacerbated

---

22 Grousset, Empire, p. 321.
24 Corruption and abuses by local authorities were an endemic problem, against which centrist attempts at reform usually remained ineffectual (cf. ibid.).
dramatically by the devastations of the invasion era and the savage extraction of wealth which followed, was a harsh reality with severe repercussions for the balance between income and expenses. In this regard, it was an additional disadvantage that by the nature of things, most taxes were raised in kind and in produce. The khans, however, needed precisely movable wealth and precious goods—and they never had enough of exactly these.

A convincing number of sources show that in the most authentic ‘barbarian’ tradition, the Chinggisid rulers preferred these forms of concentrated wealth as payment. Alongside lesser expenses that devoured their budget, their army was top-heavy when compared to the available economic base and was the principal, and always insatiable, consumer of this wealth. Whether we are discussing the unitary empire at the height of its strength or the fragments that were left when the empire was carved up, an inherent weakness was always gnawing inexorably away at the state’s strength: the khans’ revenues did not keep pace with the expenses which their position as rulers obliged them to meet. This discrepancy was at the root of several crises which led the state to the brink of collapse.

---


27 The tradition also survived in the Ilkhanate, although here Persian civilisation had an enormous impact. Thus the Ilkhan Ghazan appointed two chancellors to his exchequer, “1. für seine Juwelen und seine Kleider und 2. für die Staatsgewänder, d. h. für Bestandteile des Staatschatzes” (Spuler, Mongolen, p. 248).

28 According to one contemporary report, even in the pastoral Golden Horde, the khan paid his ‘countless’ troops only in specie (‘Umari/Lech, pp. 144, 147).

29 Batu, finding himself in a liquidity crisis, asked the great khan at Qara Qorum for 10,000 silver ingots so that he could buy pearls. Even though Möngke owed him his throne and the two had excellent relations, he sent Baku only 1,000 ingots and advised him to practise moderation (Allsen, Imperialism, p. 58).

30 For instance in the Golden Horde, which reached the peak of its development under khan Özbeg, about whom al-‘Umari wrote: “He is friendly to his subjects and to all travelers, but he does not give very generous gifts, for even if he wished to do so, the revenues of his realm are insufficient” (‘Umari/Lech, p. 137).

31 The introduction of paper banknotes in an attempt to redress the disastrous state of the Ilkhanate’s finances is significant here; “Nach der Einführung der Scheine September/
This being the case, it should be no surprise that merchants were seen as the saviours of state finances thanks to both the volume and the nature of their payments toward a budget which was never sufficient to needs. In this context, the Ilkhan Ahmad Tegüder expressed an opinion which was surely widely shared by the other Chinggisids when he called the merchant the “foundation of the state.”

Timur Lenk (Tamberlane) was even better placed to judge the importance of merchants in Eurasian long-distance trade, ruling as he did over such vast territories: the ‘world-conqueror’ applied all his energies to rebuilding the Mongol empire, and shortly after his victory in the battle of Ankara (1402) he wrote to Charles IV of France that merchants were the basis of all prosperity, and invited the king to join him in protecting them.

Timur Lenk’s conduct toward the merchant class was by no means innovative: his Mongol predecessors took the same benevolent attitude, offering patronage which made their mercantile policy one of the brightest pages in their history—in stark contrast to the barbarity of the conquests. Various different sources agree that this was characteristic for all the khans, from the all-powerful rulers of the unitary empire down to the epigonal princelings of the ages of decline. No effort was spared to encourage all
kinds of commercial activity: they allowed unhindered access for foreigners in the lands which they governed,\textsuperscript{35} guaranteed safety for travellers and ensured the proper conditions for transport of goods, which of course also included setting customs duties at an attractive level. Any measure which would increase trade was considered good.\textsuperscript{36}

The unprecedented amount of transcontinental trade in the Chinggisid era is clear proof that the khans’ efforts were successful. In turn, the scale of their achievements is an indication of the economic constraints which forced the Mongol rulers, at all times and in all their realms, to work to the advantage of the merchants. If we are to judge exactly how far any given Chinggisid ruler depended on income drawn from trade, we need to establish its relative importance in the balance of income and expenditure. Sadly, any such calculations are ruled out, since the quantitative information available does not allow any such estimation even in exceptional cases.\textsuperscript{37}

In my view, the problematic effects of this paucity of sources can be reduced to some extent if we include the Mongol case in a whole series of others such, a larger Fallreihe where the vital relationship between rulers and merchants is the common denominator. Therefore, before going on to analyse the economic basis of power in the Chinggisid Empire and its successor states in concrete terms, I will compare the convergent findings of other scholars of the medieval era who have examined the matter from the same perspective using cases from outside the Mongol realm.

The effects of this “unwritten law” become especially evident at moments when long-distance trade stops contributing to the treasury for one reason or another. Below are a few instructive examples of the

\textsuperscript{35} This was in absolute contrast to the usual practice in Byzantium, for instance, or in the Islamic lands, where foreigners were limited in where they could travel or were completely forbidden from doing so. Among the many motives which may have caused Chinggisid rulers to adopt this approach, we should probably include the need to call on foreign merchants because the Mongols themselves never developed even the rudiments of a “commercial bourgeoisie” which the state would have wished to protect against foreign competitors (as in the countries mentioned).

\textsuperscript{36} The set of measures which might stimulate trade is not of course limited to those few mentioned here. The concern for commerce also had its effects in other areas which at first glance have little to do with trade, such as for instance the religious policies of the various khans.

\textsuperscript{37} This is true even in the Ilkhanat, where although the Persian bureaucracy produced great numbers of trade-related documents, losses over time make any such reconstruction impossible today (Spuler, Mongolen, p. 250). In the ulus of Jochi, such documentation was completely unknown, since the absence of written sources is almost total here (see above, p. 4).
symbiotic relationship between state power and trade beyond the lands under Mongol rule.

The scholar who has written most memorably on the subject, in work which has long counted as a classic of historiography, was Henri Pirenne. Whether or not we agree with the thesis that Islamic expansion caused the cessation of commerce in the Merovingian state, his conclusion that the end of long-distance trade caused the decline of the first Frankish dynasty has become a model of historical reasoning.

In his view, after the death of Dagobert I in 639 the reduced flow of material goods to the central power shifted the balance of forces between the monarch and the aristocracy, as so often happens. While trade flourished and kept the royal exchequer well-supplied, the king had enough resources to maintain a personal guard (trustis) which could keep the lay and ecclesiastical grandees in check. Once customs receipts began to drop in the latter half of the eighth century, the nobility wrung ever more extensive privileges from the king, and anarchy became widespread.38 Pirenne considered that by the nature of things, trade held a crucial position in the Merovingian state economy, above other sources of income, including the land tax.39

The same dependence between central authority and trade which Pirenne demonstrated in the case of the Frankish Merovingian kingdom can also be found, not just in those states which we are accustomed to call merchant republics, above all Venice and Genoa, but in many other states which in the Middle Ages profited so much from trade revenues that they tied their fortunes irrevocably to the ups and downs of trade fluctuations.

The ability to profit from such an advantage depended, above all, on a given state’s position on the trade routes, which were more or less intensively used from one epoch to the next in response to geographic, economic and political changes in the region and world-wide. The role of intermediary proved to be unusually profitable, and was reserved to a lucky few. I will mention only two cases to give an idea of their characteristic features, though a long series of further examples might be cited.

---

39 Ibid., pp. 172–173: “Que ces ressources dépendissent surtout des péages sur la circulation commerciale, c’est ce dont on ne peut douter. La perception en était infiniment plus facile que celle de l’impôt foncier et ne provoquait guère de résistance. […] Pourtant l’impôt foncier s’est certainement conservé à côté du tonlieu, mais en rapportant de moins en moins.”
While the Merovingian kingdom was in decline in the West, the Khazar Empire began its ascent in Eastern Europe. This steppeland state, ruled by a Jewish aristocracy, was situated on the middle and lower courses on the Volga and the Don, and drew immense revenues from the transit trade along the two rivers between its Southern neighbours, the Umayyad caliphate (after 750 the Abbasid) and Byzantium, and the Volga Bulgars, Russians and Scandinavians to the North.40 One of the most consistent features of the Khazar khagans’ trade policy was the complete freedom of movement granted to foreign merchants, and it seems that the Khazars did not have their own commercial class. The principle products from the North, furs and slaves, were much in demand in the Muslim world and were mostly paid for in dirhems, the silver coinage of the caliphs.41

The revenues drawn from the 10% customs duty, imposed *ad valorem* on the transit trade, formed the basis for the Khazar rulers’ power, although of course they were not the sole component.42

According to the analysis by Th. S. Noonan, the most thorough scholar of Khazar economics, “the lucrative international trade provided immense income for the state [i.e. Khazar Khaganate]. These revenues were used, among other things, to reinforce the army through the employment of large numbers of Muslim auxiliaries from Khwarezm. This enlarged army, in turn, ensured the collection of tribute from the 25 or more dependent peoples and provided the security that made Khazaria a safe place for merchants to do business.”43 As in the Merovingian case as well, the khagans depended entirely on the Volga-Don trade, as Noonan notes. “The prosperity and political viability of the Khazar khaganate were based on the existence of both lucrative international trade and a well developed domestic commerce. […] The shift of the main trade route from the Islamic world to European Russia via Bulghar ca. 900 caused a sharp drop in Khazaria’s income which threatened its political power. […] The highly diversified internal economy could not compensate for the loss of so much revenue derived from foreign commerce.”44 As a result, when Svyatoslav, ruler of

---

41 Ibid., p. 231.
42 Ibid., p. 243: “The prosperity and political viability of the Khazar khaganate were based [ca. 750–ca. 900] on the existence of both lucrative international trade and well developed domestic commerce.”
44 Ibid., pp. 243–244.
the Kievan Rus’, destroyed the Khazar commercial centres in his campaign of 962, among them the famous capital of Itil on the Volga, this was a blow from which the empire never recovered. It should be remarked here that the attack was launched against a weakened state that was unable to defend itself as it had in the past against attack by the caliphate.45

As is well-known, the conquerors who took over in the Khazar territories had been both warriors and traders ever since the foundation of their state. Kievan Rus’ was a political expression of the power gained by successfully controlling the famous Dnieper route from the Varangian lands of the Baltic all the way to Byzantium. The conflict between the Rurikids and the Khazars was generated (even dictated) by competition between parallel trade routes, the Dnieper on the one hand and the Don and the Volga on the other.

The second much-studied case which I have chosen here to exemplify the symbiotic relationship between central power and transit trade is that of the Mamluk sultanate.

The Mongol invasion, which culminated in 1258 with the fall of Baghdad and the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate, changed only the ruler-ship over one part of the Eurasian trade network, rather than changing the routes themselves. The true end of this Eurasian system came with the great geographical discoveries at the close of the fifteenth century, when long-distance trade shifted to other horizons, with other participants and others who drew the profit. When Vasco da Gama made the first recorded voyage to India by way of the Cape of Good Hope, at almost exactly the same time as Christopher Columbus discovered America, these voyages had fatal and irreversible consequences across the whole Islamic world, which definitively lost its economic and political pre-eminence.46

This large-scale process is neatly illustrated on the smaller stage by the long-drawn-out death throes of the Mamluk sultanate, which casts much light on the symbiotic relationship between the ruler and the merchants.

Even the very name of the state bears witness to its unusual economic strength: the Arabic word Mamlük means slave, and the slave warriors who made up the army and the political elite from 1250 to 1516 were in the final analysis themselves a commercial ware, imported to Egypt and Syria. It is self-evident that the sultans had to spend enormous sums of money

45 Nazmi, Relations, pp. 65–74 (chapter: ‘The Khazar-Arab conflict’).
46 Cahen, “Mots,” p. 32, found that there was a veritable consensus doctorum here: “On dit souvent que l’événement principal qui a entrainé la décadence de l’économie musulmane consiste dans les Grandes Découvertes.”
to acquire the slaves which they imported from the regions North of the Black Sea in numbers sufficient to turn back the Mongols in 1261 and to keep them from crossing the Euphrates in subsequent decades. It was no secret that the sultans' fabulous wealth came from levies imposed on transit trade especially in spices from India; the Venetian Marino Sanudo says that the customs levy was one-third of the value of goods, while other sources put it at 10% or 20%.\footnote{Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23; cf. Ciocîltan, Mongolii, p. 72 note 60, Labib, “Policy,” p. 74.} Such high levies were possible because of the reduced costs of transport, almost entirely by water, across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, then after a short overland portage, along the Nile as far as the port of Alexandria,\footnote{Labib, “Policy,” pp. 64–65: in the tenth century the centre of the spice trade shifted from Baghdad to Cairo.} which William of Tyre justifiably called forum publicum utrique orb\emph{i}.\footnote{Heyd, Histoire, I, p. 378: until the circumnavigation of Africa, this route was the most convenient connection between East and West, since it minimised the costs and the risks of transport. Egypt took advantage of the opportunities thus obtained in Antiquity as in modern times (ibid.).} The city held the staple right and offered Italian merchants, mostly Venetian, spices and other botanicals in much greater quantities and at much lower prices than anywhere else on the Mediterranean.\footnote{Labib, “Policy,” p. 71: “Being forbidden to carry on trade in Cairo itself, the Franks confined themselves to the commercial ports of the Mediterranean, above all Alexandria”; p. 73: “Like Venice, Egypt was a commercial middleman,” and their own merchants (karîmî) acquired and reexported products arriving from the Indian Ocean and from the Mediterranean, with pepper being the most important ware (ibid., pp. 70–73).} Alexandria enjoyed uncontested pre-eminence at least from the tenth century, but was pushed aside by Portuguese entrepreneurs in the space of only a few years. The Portuguese had rounded Africa under Vasco da Gama and landed on the Western coast of the Indian subcontinent for the first time on 20th May 1498. His compatriots then launched expedition after expedition at a feverish rate, buying spices directly at source, and in a short time succeeded in making Lisbon the principle marketplace in Western Europe for Oriental wares. The diversion of the flow of trade around the Cape of Good Hope was already causing a collapse on the Egyptian market in 1502, along with a substantial increase in prices,\footnote{Heyd, Histoire, I, p. 519.} which led to concern in Venice, whose merchants had traditionally been the most important Western and Central European importers and redistributors of these goods. The Senate was aware that the fate of the Republic was at stake, and in the same year they sent Benedetto Sanudo to the
sultan al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ġawrī to warn him of the seriousness of the danger they were facing together, and to recommend counter-measures. The sultan’s reaction could hardly have been slower or more lethargic. He did not send ships to combat those who were destroying the “foundation of his power and wealth” until 1509. These ships were promptly sunk by the fleet under Francesco Almeida at Diu, which put a stop to the sultan’s naval campaign against the Portuguese and allowed them to consolidate their position in the region: in 1510 Goa became the capital of their colonial empire.

Thus the stages of Portuguese triumph marched closely in step with Mamluk decline. When the Ottoman Selim I attacked and conquered Egypt in 1516, he had a relatively easy task, since he encountered an enfeebled state whose great trade route, which had once fed its strength, had ceased to function.

The Golden Horde belongs in the same category as the Mamluk sultanate and the Khazar Empire, sharing with the latter not just the same heartland but a similarly structured economy, which was just as fatally dependent on trade. It is thus obvious that, mutatis mutandis, these two steppeland states flourished and then declined in similar ways.

Reliable sources record that the majority of the horde’s population lived a pastoral life, which gives the misleading impression that even after the Mongol armies dismounted and settled down, the nomads continued their ancestral way of life in the Cuman steppe in every particular, with its loose forms of association. In fact, from 1242 onwards the vast steppe was occupied by a state in the full sense of the word, which showed exceptional order and rigorous centralism for a remarkably long time. Like any other state, the Golden Horde was an expensive business. However, the besetting problem which overshadowed the fates of all the Mongol states was more severe in the case of the ulus of Jochi than elsewhere, since on the steppe, the material resources needed to maintain great-power status were rarer than in the settled lands which fell under Mongol rule.

---

52 Ibid., I, p. 520.
53 Ibid., I, p. 517.
54 Ibid., I, p. 536.
55 Ibid., I, p. 547; from 1507, Portugal exercised suzerainty over the principality of Hormuz, which controlled transit between the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf (ibid., p. 549).
56 Ibid., I, p. 545.
elsewhere. However hard the Jochid khans tried to squeeze their vassals and their own subjects, the Horde’s resource-hungry economy was far too fragile a base to support the crushing burden of their rule.

The reputation which the khans of the Golden Horde enjoyed as protectors of long-distance trade necessarily resulted from the same fatal flaw. The results obtained by efforts to redress this structural infirmity in the Golden Horde’s economy were nevertheless remarkable; the scarcity of resources was a problem from the very beginning of the state’s existence. The *Pax Mongolica* not only led to a greater volume of trade in the established goods on the North-South axis; the Jochid rulers also succeeded in connecting the Golden Horde to the trunk roads of trade linking China and Central Asia to the Mediterranean-Black Sea economic area via their own route, developed under their rule.

Such trade links, developed by mutually advantageous cooperation between the khan and the merchants, prove that despite appearances the Golden Horde was never an autarchy. Like the Khazar Empire, it had a more diversified economy than is commonly believed, but for all that it drew its lifeblood from the arteries of Eurasian trade. Here, far more than in other Chinghizid territories, the merchant truly deserved to be called the foundation of the state.

The Jochid state’s extreme dependence on trade harboured the same dangers as in the Mamluk sultanate and the Khazar empire. The success of Timur Lenk’s campaign in 1395–1396, which destroyed the Golden Horde’s commercial centres (Sarai, Astrakhan and Tana), paralysed commercial activity in the Cuman steppe and brought on the Horde’s true death throes (c. 1430) but his victories were certainly made easier by the material losses incurred once Janibek had launched the war against

---

57 The heavy taxes in the Golden Horde furnish conclusive proof here. A Syrian merchant visiting the Horde at the peak of its development during the reign of Özbek remarked on unusual and excessive taxation: the whole population was obliged to pay taxes to the khan, and these were collected even in bad years when there was pestilence among the flocks, heavy snow had fallen, or when there had been a hard frost, so that some were forced to sell their children into slavery to pay what they owed (‘Umarī/Lech, p. 140). Evidently, the khan demanded payment in coin even from the nomads—another sign of the financial difficulties which he faced. We should also remark here the way the state exchequer tapped, albeit indirectly, into the stream of profit from one of the most important export wares, slaves.


60 See chapter 3.4.1.

61 See chapter 4.2.7.
the Genoese and Venetians in Crimea in 1343:62 the war led to a drastic drop in trade, which in turn caused two decades of internal strife in the Horde and softened it up for the blow. Here Timur’s actions can properly be compared with those of Svyatoslav and Selim I, not just taken in isolation but also in terms of background and consequences: all three conquerors encountered states weakened by a severe economic crash, which loosened state structures and made them ready for unravelling.

The khanates which emerged from the collapse of the Golden Horde offer even more convincing proof of the symbiotic relationship between the khan and the merchants. These Jochid successor states survived not in the open steppe, as might be expected, but in and around the great commercial centres. Even the names of these khanates are instructive: Crimea, Astrakhan, Kazan. These were the true commercial strongholds, islands of trade in a surrounding nomadic landscape.

It is hard for us, accustomed as we are to the realities of today, to imagine the truly exceptional importance of the transit trade in the Middle Ages as a source of revenue. Its role only began to decline with the start of industrialisation, which increased productivity many times over and stimulated activity enormously in many different sectors of the economy which then became major contributors to the budget. As a result, the transit trade’s remarkable significance in the Middle Ages as a resource supplier to the state can only be explained on the basis of a general feebleness in the rest of the economy. Setting aside regional variations here and there, and notable exceptions, this was the predominant state of affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Under these conditions, it should be no surprise that in every state that took shape in this vast area, where trade was a mainstay of power, a relationship of interdependence grew up: the rulers were principally responsible for safety and security, and the great merchants were the principal contributors to the budget. This being the case, it is clear why every ruler had to make his mark as a protector of commerce, and furthermore why the governing power so often needed help and support from trade. The numerous wars for control of the routes also attest to this truth, in the Mongol world as elsewhere.

62 See below, chapters 4.2.5 and 4.2.6.
1.1.3 The Silk Road as the Spine of Eurasian Commerce

The vast network of Eurasian trade routes made up a system stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic and from the taiga to the Indian Ocean. Certainly, not all routes were equally important within the network, nor were the towns and regions that they connected. From this perspective, the Silk Road linking China to the Eastern Mediterranean was far and away the most important, forming the veritable backbone of Eurasian trade. A few preliminary observations are in order if we are to understand its anatomy and physiology.

In premodern times, goods were transported either by water or overland. Although there are no exact quantitative data to help us grasp the comparative advantages or disadvantages of one or the other mode of transport, it may be instructive to draw an analogy from precise figures available in our own day. Thus for instance, where it costs €45.21 to transport a ton of goods 1,000 kilometres by road freight and €48.42 by rail freight (Deutsche Bahn), the same payload and distance costs only €12.60 by river and canal.\(^6^3\) Thus prices are at a ratio of 4:1 in favour of water transport, and this disproportion can only have been greater in the Middle Ages when road transport relied on animal power, either yoked or harnessed to carts, or loaded directly as pack animals; the inconvenience of such freight compared to modern mechanised transport can easily be imagined, especially given the deplorable state of the roads.\(^6^4\)

Under such conditions, it is understandable that the sea or river routes were always preferred wherever possible. Merchants in particular always paid close attention to the costs of transport, since they were always seeking to maximise profits and these costs contributed to the final price of goods. However, during the Chinggisid era, when most of Asia and Western Europe enjoyed open borders thanks to the Pax Mongolica, a “single global market” developed, from the latter thirteenth century onwards. A Genoese merchant travelling on the Silk Road, for example, needed to know how much he could buy a bale of silk for in China, how much his transport costs would be, the rate of the customs levy and so forth, if his

---

\(^6^3\) PLANCO, Vergleich, p. 62.

wares were to compete on the European market against similar goods which had come via the sea route through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. One tactic which the merchant handbooks recommended was to trade in the wares known as *merces subtiles*, light, low-volume goods with high unit value (silk, precious stones and metals, pearls etc.).\(^{65}\) It was not only the merchants who were forced to keep an eye on transport costs; their partners, the Mongol khans, also had their own economic interest in keeping the wares moving. One excellent indicator of the Golden Horde's commercial policy clearly shows how well they understood the unchanging laws of market forces: the Tartar customs at Tana at the mouth of the Don, where the so-called Tartar route linking the Black Sea to Central Asia and China ended, never exceeded 3–5\% by value of goods,\(^ {66}\) while the Mamluk sultans could afford to impose rates several times higher in Alexandria,\(^ {67}\) on the wares brought via the Red Sea and the Nile.

Many more such observations could be made, and these all tend to yield another “law”; that water transport makes goods cheaper whilst overland transport makes them more expensive. It is self-evident, then, that states with access to sea and river routes for trade could build up much greater concentrations of capital, much more quickly, than states which were land-locked, and this had immense effects not just in the economic sphere but also politically, socially and culturally. Along with the well-known merchant maritime republics, especially Venice and Genoa, we might also include Athens in the same category, unimaginable without Piraeus just as Rome is unimaginable without Ostia.\(^ {68}\)

It was not just the sea that brought these benefits: so too did the great waterways, when used to transport wares. This category includes the Khazar state, Kievan Rus’ and the Tartar Horde of the Eurasian steppe, along with the succession of unifying powers that arose in the great cultures of China, Mesopotamia and Egypt.\(^ {69}\)

\(^{65}\) It was these goods that set the “great wheels of history” turning (H. İnalcık), as I shall examine on another occasion.\(^ {66}\) See below, chapters 4.2.5 and 4.2.6.\(^ {67}\) See above, note 47.\(^ {68}\) Pirenne, *Mahomet*, pp. 1, 3: “De tous les caractères de cette admirable construction humaine que fut l’Empire romain, le plus frappant et aussi le plus essentiel est son caractère méditerranéen. […] La mer, dans toute la force du terme la *Mare nostrum*, véhicule des idées, des religions, des religions, des marchandises. […] Sans Ostie, Rome est incompréhensible.”\(^ {69}\) In this last case, the obvious question is whether the Pharaohs financed the construction of the pyramids through the same means—duties on transit trade—as the Mamluk sultans used to fund their slave purchases.
In the light of what has been said above, it seems that the Silk Road was a paradox in need of explanation, since it was a land-locked trade route *par excellence*, immensely long and yet of singular importance in the Eurasian trade network. This trans-Asiatic trade route was named in 1877 by the German Sinologist Ferdinand von Richthofen, whose coinage *Seidenstraße* was taken up and adopted into various languages thanks both to the historical precision of the term and the aura of legend it conjured up: it was used not just by specialist writers, but by the public at large.\(^{70}\) The name was justified not just because silk was indeed probably the principal product traded on the route but also because, as well as being a manufacture in its own right, it also served as a hard currency: none of the various coinages issued could compete in widespread acceptance.

Most historians follow von Richthofen’s concept of the Silk Road as a *via magna* which for thousands of years linked the Far East, via Central Asia, Iran, Iraq, Syria or Asia Minor, to the Mediterranean, with greater or lesser detours over time.\(^{71}\) Other historians however consider that this classic definition needs to be abandoned, albeit that it contains a kernel of truth, since the luxury products under discussion here were also transported via other routes, so that instead of talking of one Silk Road, they write of several silk roads.\(^{72}\) The present work uses the term in its original meaning.

The Silk Road, in Ferdinand von Richthofen’s sense, suggests one long route stretching across Eurasia, with towns upon it like beads on a string. This image is somewhat over-simplified, and does not truly reflect either the actual anatomy or the physiology of the Silk Road. The principle settlements were not just simple stopovers, rather they were cross-roads where the main East-West highway intersected with North-South routes. Thus Samarkand drew goods in from the north via its entrepôt at Urgench in Khwarezm, which collected products from the steppe and the taiga,

---


\(^{72}\) On this topic see Boulnois, *Route*. 
while it also commanded the Southern corridor via Kabul and Kandahar in Afghanistan and along the valley of the Indus into India; Tabriz had two Northern channels, either through Derbent in the Caucasus or through Erzurum, Trebizond and the Black Sea, and also a Southern route through to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean; Baghdad had the river route down to Basra and thence, again, to the Gulf, while it could also reach the Eastern Mediterranean via Mosul, Damascus and Aleppo. Constantinople was similarly well-placed.

The value of a market-place depends, of course, on the quantity of goods exchanged but also on their variety and how well the goods on offer complement other wares. Thus every one of the major metropolitan centres mentioned—Samarkand, Tabriz, Baghdad and Constantinople—collected and redistributed wares from four major Eurasian areas, each offering a specific range of goods: the Far East, Europe in the Western reaches, the steppe and taiga in the North, and in the South the Indian Ocean.

Another “unwritten law” dictated the position of these major markets, which were always optimally placed to serve as meeting-points for merchants from all four of the major zones. From this perspective, Samarkand, Tabriz and Baghdad satisfied the requirement, and their geographical position made them true commercial centres. Thus the East-West trade route which has gained wider fame as the Silk road also served, through its lateral branches and supply chains, as the backbone of a whole network of Eurasian commerce.

As a result, although it was entirely land-locked, this principal axis of long-distance trade was able to compete with the parallel sea route via the Indian Ocean both in classical times and in the Middle Ages, even though sea transport was at least ten times cheaper: the Silk Road owed this competitive advantage to its central position par excellence. All the determining factors, geographical and economic, worked to assure its continuing good health: whenever the political circumstances were also favourable, the Silk Road was reborn from its own ashes, with only the minimum of diversions and new routes.

1.1.4 The Nomads and the Silk Road

The Mongol expansion was essentially nothing more than another nomad incursion into settled lands. The most characteristic feature of Chinggis Khan’s deeds, and those of his followers, was the sheer scale. Here the Mongol achievements can be compared to those of the Arab nomads who set out, in the early years of Islam, to conquer the world. The similarities
do not end with scale alone. A comparison of the two episodes of expansion reveals fundamental problems and solutions, including in the reign of long-distance trade.

The warriors around the Prophet Muḥammad, like those around Chinggis Khan, came from peripheral areas of the world economy, and their most striking common feature is the shared form of motivation. Living conditions in the Arabian Peninsula, like those in the Mongol steppe, were precarious at best, and when the call to arms came, those who lived in the areas responded en masse to the prospect of material wealth. There is no doubt that the principal enticement for Bedouins called to jihad was the chance of prizes taken in war (ǧanāʾīm in Arabic), just as it was for the Mongol warriors, who were not impelled by any particular religious motives.

The wealth available in settled lands has surely represented a temptation from time immemorial, but it was not in itself enough to draw the nomads out from their native lands. They were members of kinship societies governed by the lex talionis, and their energies were largely used up in unending internal feuds and squabbles in pre-Islamic Arabia as in Mongolia up until the time of Chinggis Khan’s youth. A new individual and group identity had to be forged, superseding tribal sentiment, in order to put an end to such chronic instability and open the way for political unification. Just as the Muslim faith overcame tribal divisions and permitted the formation of a larger Islamic community (the umma) whose members were at least in theory all equal and bound together by submission to Allah, similarly Chinggis Khan’s reforms, decreed at the

---

73 Planhol, “Setting,” p. 444: “An expressive couple of lines from Abū Tammām (A.D. 806–847) says: ‘No, not for Paradise didst thou the nomad life forsake; Rather, I believe, it was thy yearning after bread and dates’ and the Persian general, Rustam, said the same thing to a Muslim envoy in 637: ‘I have observed that it is simply poverty and the miserable life you have led which have induced you to undertake so much’.”

74 For a long time the Muslims, like the Mongols, preferred to be warriors rather than traders (cf. Nazmi, Relations, p. 69, Histoire secrète, passim).

75 Planhol, Setting, p. 444: “These bedouin were a basically aggressive people, their life founded on raiding and consequently on tribal solidarity combined with protective structures. Their political structure was highly unstable and subject to continual regroupings with the rise and fall of those outstanding personalities who are at the root of all tribal organization. Such a situation was not unusual. It was repeated to some extent throughout the arid zone and on its edges, in all the areas of contact between nomadic and sedentary peoples.”

76 Histoire secrète, pp. 39 ff.

77 Cf. Denny, “Umma.”
qurultai of 1206, marked the triumph of a new identity with similarly all-encompassing values.

When the same assembly of nobles saw the proclamation of empire, this was a marked break with the tribal past. The military was reorganised on the lines of units of ten men, then of a hundred, a thousand and so on upwards in a unitary principle, and this too marked a decisive point in the long process of breaking up the kinship society. Blood ties had been a source of strength but also of wider disunity, and now they gave way to a new, feudal or vassal loyalty. This supplanted tribal or clan solidarity or enmity, and opened the way to a new, imperial identity for the nomads as the Mongol ulus, formed and proclaimed at the qurultai. At the same time, the imperial army took shape. This was to be a formidable instrument in future conquests, and was born of the mass movement ushered in by these radical changes in the world of the steppe-dwellers. Chinggis Khan was the son of this revolution.

In both cases rigorous monotheism contributed decisively to cementing nomad power, whether this was focused on Allah, or on the cult of the Eternal Blue Heaven (Kök Tengri).

Chinggis Khan has the distinction not only of having brought the nomad fighting forces together under one banner with exemplary organisational skills, but also, equally important, of having enthused them with a mobilising ideal above and beyond their expectations: his imperial vision was ideologically present, albeit only in nuce, as early as 1206. The underlying idea of world conquest soon became state doctrine and thereby the ultimate goal of expansion. By the mandate of Heaven, Chinggis Khan and his family were designated as the executors and beneficiaries of the mission. From the Chinese emperor to the pope in Rome, those who did not submit to the ultimatum of unconditional surrender were considered “rebels” and treated as such. The talk was no longer of raiding expeditions but rather of world domination. This sets the Mongol expansion clearly apart from the usual run
of nomad raids beyond the limits of their steppeland. Only when gathered in greater than usual numbers, and tightly bound together, did the Bedouin, and the pastoralist Mongols, have the necessary strength to pour forth from the deserts of Arabia, or from the Mongol steppe, in an irresistible tide that swept across the areas of the older civilisations.

Furthermore, these new forms of organisation, with their universalist tendencies, allowed the conquerors to incorporate the conquered into their ranks, meaning that there was in theory no limit to the growth of Mongol and Arab military growth, gathering strength like an avalanche.

The invaders from the Arabian Peninsula and from Mongolia chose the same targets in Asia once they had put some distance between themselves and the poor living conditions of their home regions, aiming for the same great centres on the Silk Road. In a short time the Muslims, like the Mongols after them, had conquered the greater part of the long-distance trade networks. Once expansion had ground to a halt and there was no more booty to reward warriors for their exertions or other servants for their deeds, the caliphs, just like the Chinggisid khans, were forced to find new resources to maintain the apparatus of state.

Given this necessity, it became an absolute priority to revive long-distance trade. This pressing need led both the Arab and the Mongol rulers to do everything in their power to serve the interests of the merchants, given that these were fundamentally their own interests as well. As a result, commerce developed in step with the internal organisation of these two empires, both able to ensure appropriate law and order and the necessary infrastructure for trade over vast areas. Early in their histories, both states took shape as large realms where trade routes linked islands of urban exchange.

Of cardinal importance for the whole economic, political and cultural history of the Islamic states and of the Mongol Khanates was their geographical position, whereby they controlled trade on an intercontinental

84 Cf. chapter 2.1.
85 Nazmi, Relations, p. 57: "World trade came under Arab control."
86 Ibid., p. 212: trade was "in the primal position of the economic life in the Muslim societies."
87 Ibid., p. 48: "Generally, we can say that Islam established rules in the interest of the merchants."
88 Ibid., p. 61.
scale and played the very lucrative role of principal intermediaries in interstate trade. The central sections of the great routes, the Silk Road with its side-branches and the spice route via the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, crossed their territories, bringing in wealth and assuring long-term stability. In taking Baghdad and toppling the Abbasid caliphate in 1258, the Mongols changed the ownership of the routes but not the routes themselves, which only changed radically two and a half centuries later in the era of the great discoveries.

The ambition to rule over all inhabited lands called for a global strategy from the start. The logical progression of the great campaigns up to 1260 suggests that there was indeed a coherent plan with a set of long-term goals.

However universal the khans’ ambitions to rule—symbolically affirmed by the adjective ‘oceanic’ which was always part of their titles—Mongol power did not spread out evenly, in a perfect circle. The stages of expansion reveal well-defined directions and objectives to this growth.

Medieval sources give a consistent account of the invasions as an overwhelming force which the settled populations had no hope of opposing. Chroniclers—and indeed the majority of later historians—paid far less attention to the enormous difficulties which the horse-nomads encountered once they had left their familiar grasslands. However, if these are lost sight of, one of the most important aspects of the Mongol expansion cannot be understood.

When we measure the conquerors’ achievements against their constantly-proclaimed goal of world domination, the final analysis shows that the strength of the Mongol armies was not inexhaustible. The Chinggisids themselves had a precise definition for the limits of their constantly expanding empire, which was to reach “wherever the Mongol horses place their hooves.” Without the extraordinary endurance of their mounts, which contemporary sources always praised, the breathtaking achievements of Chinggis Khan’s dynasty would be unimaginable. Nevertheless the horse, in the final analysis, set the final limits to empire, just as it was responsible for the initial astonishing expansion.

As in so many other similar cases, the Mongols achieved superiority of force over their enemies where it counted through a successful combination

89 Ibid.
90 See above, note 46.
of speed and numbers. Such advantages were of course only possible thanks to the horse, the quintessential military transport at the time.\textsuperscript{91} Once they emerged from their accustomed territory and crossed large stretches of arid or cultivated land, neither with sufficient grazing, in search of plunder, the nomad cavalry had to rise to the unceasing, unsparing task of finding fodder for their steeds in the settled lands. The difficulty of meeting this need increased daily, proportionately with the number of horses in a campaign. Though the Chinggisid military superpower kept the pastoral economy of the Eurasian steppe well supplied, the solution to this logistical problem nevertheless largely depended on the Mongol armies’ ability to strike hard and move fast in a hostile environment.\textsuperscript{92}

From this perspective, Chinggis Khan and his descendants were unique in the scale and ambition of their attempt to bridge the gulf that had divided the nomadic and settled populations of the vast Eurasian habitat for millennia. The weakness of forces dependent on grazing land was a permanent problem that followed the invaders wherever they went outside of the steppe, with some local variation. We already encounter it in the Mongol case during Chinggis Khan’s own day.

When the Mongol generals around Ögödei suggested turning all of Northern China into pastureland, by killing or deporting the inhabitants, razing their settlements to the ground and letting the arable ground go to seed, this was not an expression of mindless barbarism but rather a response to the strategic need to secure a green corridor to carry the imperial cavalry onward to the Southern lands ruled by the Song dynasty.\textsuperscript{93}

The invaders found the huge stretches of land without sufficient grazing in Central Asia, Iran and the Near East equally unwelcoming. The Western drive of their conquests ran into delays from the very start, in a foretaste

\textsuperscript{91} Napoleon used to say that his great victories had been won by the boots of his soldiers. Evidently, the hooves of the Mongol horse were equally important in empire-building.

\textsuperscript{92} Sinor, “Horse,” opened important lines of enquiry on the subject and its general effects on Mongol power, without following through the implications in a systematic fashion.

\textsuperscript{93} Yeh'lu Ch’u-ts’ai, one of the khan’s advisers, brought convincing economic arguments against such a radical project, using quantitative data to persuade his lord and master of the material advantages which the Mongols could continue to draw from their Chinese subjects by means of a more moderate, well-organised system of exploitation (Grousset, Empire, p. 315, Allsen, Imperialism, p. 159). It seems that such considerations saved Northern China from becoming a mere extension of the Mongolian biotope. The Mongol military point of view would however be vindicated dramatically by future events: when the great khan Möngke crossed the territories, he lost so many horses to lack of fodder that he ordered a further 80,000 mounts to be brought from the Northern parts of his domain to make up the numbers (Jūzjānī/Raverty, II, pp. 1215–1223).
of the problems to come in the following decades: in 1218 Chinggis Khan was impatient to send his horsemen into Transoxiana to take Muḥammad II Khwarezmshah by surprise, but was forced to postpone the campaign by a year for lack of forage. A lesser number of cavalry was then sent out under the command of the generals Jebe and Sübödei to pursue the enemy, indicating that the terrain in Persia could not support the great numbers of horses in the main army without considerable logistical groundwork. Chinggis Khan responded to the situation by ordering wholesale destruction in Eastern Persia to turn the region into continuous pastureland.

This shortcoming considerably delayed the advance of Mongol power in Western Asia, but was partially redressed by one natural advantage, the importance of which in Chinggisid history is impossible to overemphasise: this was the pastureland of Azerbaijan and Arran, fed by many rivers and covered in grass all year round, forming a veritable oasis for all Turanic populations. It is no wonder that the Turanic peoples with their rich herds and flocks were always drawn to the Transcaucasia. This nomad enclave is geographically situated between the settled lands of the Caucasus and Persia, and was predestined to exercise power throughout the region: the Chinggisid strategists appreciated its qualities early on.

Occupying this bridgehead was already a priority in 1229, the first year of the great khan Ögödei’s reign. It was probably due to the difficulties set out above that the emir Chormaghun was unable to fulfil his mission and take Transcaucasia until 1232. From that point onward however it would serve as the base of Mongol power in the Near and Middle East until the collapse of the Ilkhanate in 1335.

The Hungarian puszta (Pannonia) historically played the same role in the heart of Europe, as the frontier of the great Eurasian steppe. Unlike in Azerbaijan and Arran, the Mongols were not able to take full advantage of these qualities on the Danubian plain as their Hun and Magyar precursors had done, turning the region into a permanent settlement. There were various reasons why the puszta was abandoned once and for all in the spring of 1242, among them the general loss of interest in the Western front among

94 In the same year, 1219, Chinese chronicles recorded: “Envoys from the Great Khan were killed in Khwarezm. A great expedition was decided, and a plan was worked out, but the enterprise had to be delayed for lack of fodder” (Krause, Čingis Han, p. 304; see also chapter 2.1.1).
95 Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 23–25.
96 Grousset, Empire, pp. 304–305; the project failed, probably because of unfavourable climatic conditions.
97 Ibid., pp. 324–328.
all the Mongol powers—including the *ulus* of Jochi, newly settled in the Cuman steppe—in favour of a far more rewarding region, economically speaking, than Europe at the time: this was the Levant, and at its heart, the Fertile Crescent.98

We can thus trace Mongol expansion on the map of Eurasian physical geography and reveal how tightly bound up the limits of Chinggisid power were to the existence of pasture for their horses.99 Another factor was equally significant but worked to counter the limits of grassland, drawing the nomads from their habitual environment: this was the attraction that the settled lands held. The deeds of Chinggis Khan and his descendants were carried out between these two poles: the grasslands of home and the great cities of the Silk Road. These two worlds formed the horns of the essential dilemma of Mongol expansion.

1.2 The Mongols and the Black Sea

Medieval chronicles and miniatures show the Mongol warrior on horseback, armed with the typical nomad weapon of all epochs, the bow and arrow. Although a simplification, this classic image reveals the fundamental nature of the armies which Chinggis Khan and his successors used in their projected world conquest: excellently well suited to land-based campaigns, the Mongol cavalry was however entirely ineffective as a fighting force on water. All attempts to overcome this weakness were doomed to failure.

1.2.1 Continental Possessions, Maritime Horizons

In this respect, the failure of the great khan Qubilai’s expeditions to conquer Japan, launched from China in 1274 and 1281, are highly significant, with far-reaching consequences.100 The greater part of the 150,000 soldiers who took ship in 1281 died; compared to these enormous losses, the defeat of Janibek’s attempts at naval domination in the Black Sea was a

---

98 The Western half of the Crescent covers the Eastern Mediterranean shore in its broad sense, while the Eastern half includes Iraq; see below, chapters 2.1.2 and 2.2.1.

99 Sinor, “Horse,” passim, surveys a number of technical innovations whereby the Mongols sought to overcome the effects of the limitation; where these succeeded, the results were spectacular but of limited application.

side-show. In the mid-fourteenth century the khan of the Golden Horde tried to create naval supremacy at a critical moment in Tartar relations with the Genoese, by launching ships under the Horde's own flag to break the Italian power. The Genoese got wind of the plan and in 1345 their squadrons destroyed the vessels hastily being built in the port of Cembalo (Balaklava) in Crimea; at the same time they destroyed any hopes that the khan harboured that a continental great power could also become a great naval power.\textsuperscript{101}

The Tartars were lords over many lands, but were also land-locked: even though almost all European and Asian coasts of the Black Sea were under direct or indirect Mongol rule by the mid-thirteenth century, fate would have it that they played a passive role in events on the water.\textsuperscript{102}

When the nomads poured forth from the depths of Asia, the land-locked nature of their rule became so evident that some observers had the impression that the Mongols as a nation suffered from hydrophobia. Later scholars of the medieval history of the Black Sea, perhaps taking over this error, have also paid remarkably little attention to steppeland influence over the course of events, generally considering that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the sea was the almost exclusive domain of the Italian naval republics, with Genoa exercising unquestioned supremacy. The bibliography on the Black Sea issue in the period is most instructive in this regard.\textsuperscript{103}

One source in particular casts new light on the overly narrow and excessively Mediterranean perspective which most modern scholars take on the matter. In a treaty of December 1347 concluded between the Golden Horde and the Venetians, the khan mentioned above, Janibek, succeeded in including a warning clause: “On the sea, our word shall prevail and we shall have the command.”\textsuperscript{104}


\textsuperscript{102} Cf. the political map of the Black Sea coasts in 1254–1255 set out accurately by the Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck (Rubruck/Jackson, pp. 61–67, and below, chapter 4.1.2).

\textsuperscript{103} Cf. for example, Balard, Romanie, Karpov, Impero, I, Strässle, Schwarzmeerhandel. It is remarkable that historians of the Chinggisid empire have not paid due attention to this chapter, and have been content to take over the conclusions of Black Sea scholars tale quale. The two monographs by Spuler, Horde, and idem, Mongolen, are typical here.

\textsuperscript{104} DVL, II, p. 312: Sullo uiso del mar la parola nostra ual et hauemo forza.
Although hardly two years had passed since the Genoese had moved to forestall the khan’s attempts at building his own warships, this was no empty claim. Despite having no fleet with which to control the Black Sea, the khan was able to make good the lack by other means, so that his word was indeed respected by all those who sailed there. In the first place, he held the Northern shore of the sea and all its ports, flourishing centres of commerce which drew merchants from many lands. Foreign merchants wishing to take part in the lively trade here depended on the Volga khan’s goodwill. For instance, in the treaty in question, Janibek grants the Venetians the right to trade, on condition that they do not attack ships carrying Muslim passengers.\footnote{Ibid.} This is one of many indications that even without a naval force as such, the Golden Horde had its own interests on the Black Sea, and the wherewithal to enforce them.

Although, unlike the Golden Horde, it had no control over any Black Sea coasts, the Ilkhanate in Persia also influenced the medieval history of the sea, albeit more discretely and more intermittently. For instance, a warship under Ilkhanate colours was hunting pirates in the Eastern waters of the sea at the end of the thirteenth century.\footnote{See below, chapter 3.4.2.}

\subsection*{1.2.2 Expansion and Blockade}

Various important enterprises and expeditions reached their peak in the first half of the fourteenth century, and the Western merchants and missionaries travelling in Asia deserve especial mention here. Although the famous names in transcontinental exchange visited Mongolia and China in the previous century, these being the Franciscan friars John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck, and the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, the busiest period in such long-distance travel was certainly the four decades 1300–1340, even if they do not yield such well-known names.

Although Europeans travelled in Asia, there are no recorded Asian travellers visiting Europe during this period. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that Europeans would never have been able to cover the vast distances to the East had it not been for the \textit{Pax Mongolica}, indispensible to the safety of foreign travellers. Chinggis Khan’s successors kept this peace across an enormous stretch of territory, from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Borders in Asia were open as a result of Chinggisid conquests in the previous century. On the Eastern shores of the
Mediterranean and in the Black Sea, this Westward expansion from the Far East encountered a similar but opposite movement.107

The Crusades were an expression of a reinvigorated European drive for expansion after several centuries of relative passivity since Late Antiquity. Though it began with largely (but by no means unmixed) religious impulses among those who “took the Cross,” in the early thirteenth century, other motives accreted onto the Crusading movement, unmistakably secular: when in 1204 the Fourth Crusade veered away from its proclaimed target, the Holy Sepulchre, toward Constantinople, where the Western knights deposed the Byzantine emperor and founded their own Latin Empire, this was at the instigation of Venice, which thus furthered the interests of its merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The other great Italian commercial republic, Genoa, also sought to exploit the Crusading wars for its own purposes, but won its preeminence in the Levantine trade mostly by its own efforts.

There were thus two distinct waves of expansion, from the East and from the West, and in between was a major barrier made up of two distinct parts: the Muslim blockade in the Near and Middle East, and the Byzantine obstacle between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

These two sides of the barrier already came under pressure in the eleventh century, and held up to varying extents. Early in the century the Byzantine emperors had already been forced to grant commercial privileges to the Italian merchants, creating a breach which was never closed until the end of the empire in 1453. In the best case, rulers of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles who wished to remain on the throne in Constantinople had to allow the Venetians and Genoese the freedom of the Black Sea, along with complete exemption from customs duties. The imbalance of power became even more obvious in 1204, when the Crusaders obeyed the doge of Venice’s instructions and installed a Latin power at Constantinople, in the heart of the Byzantine world, which lasted until 1261. In that year the usurpers were expelled and the Byzantine Empire restored under Michael VIII Palaiologos, but this fragile restoration could only be kept on its feet with the protection furnished by Genoese galleys. Their services were rewarded on the same terms: freedom to sail in the Black Sea, and customs exemption.108

---

107 Ciocîltan, “Kreuzzüge.”
By securing passage through the Straits in this manner, Western merchants were one step closer to an important approach to the grand trunk routes of Eurasian trade, and after 1261 the region would play a central role in transcontinental commerce. The Black Sea took on this additional function because the Islamic blockade in the Fertile Crescent withstood all attempts to break it, from both East and West.

The Crusader footholds on the Eastern Mediterranean coast and hinterland, of which the Kingdom of Jerusalem was the most important, were mere dents in this Muslim barrier, and never created a corridor to allow Western merchants access to the routes through Persia to Central Asia, or through Iraq or Egypt to the Indian Ocean. Genoa’s involvement in the Crusades in 1218/9 and 1249/50, and in the Ilkhanate’s campaigns against the Mamluk sultan in Egypt and Syria in 1288–1290, certainly aimed to remove this Muslim barrier to trade.109

Attempts from the East fared no better. A Mongol army was defeated in 1260 by Mamluk troops at the battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt in Palestine, and they never recovered from this loss: the battle definitively fixed the border between the two powers at the Euphrates, despite countless later attempts by the Ilkhans to change it, either on their own or in combined operations with Western powers.

The decisive moments in the confrontation came in 1285 when the kingdom of Cilician Armenia passed from Ilkhanid suzerainty into Cairo’s sphere of influence, and in 1291 when the Mamluks took Acre, the last important position held by the Western European Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean. These gains sealed Mamluk supremacy in the Near East, and since the Christian outposts had also been outposts for long-distance trade, the change in ownership brought about a large shift in the structure of Eurasian commerce. Many of those who now found it impossible to trade in Mediterranean turned to the Black Sea to seek compensation.110

1.2.3 The Black Sea—A Crossroads of Eurasian Trade

As mentioned above, the Romanian historian Gheorghe Brătianu coined a phrase to explain the commercial boom of the Black Sea in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: the sea, he said, was a “plaque tournante” of

110 Ibid., pp. 135 ff., and below, chapter 3.2.
long-distance trade. His characterisation has long been adopted into the historiography hereabouts, and is particularly appropriate for the situation after the wholesale transfer of Western merchants into the Black Sea region, caused by catastrophes suffered in the Eastern Mediterranean. At this point the Black Sea picked up the slack created with the loss of these positions, and became Western Europe’s outpost in Eastern Europe, as a gateway to Asian trade.\footnote{Ibid.}

The gateway opened wide to allow merchants and missionaries unhindered access to limitless horizons because the Black Sea basin was part of the Chinggisid hegemony. Unlike the Byzantine empire or the Muslim rulers of the East, who worked to protect their own merchants’ interests against outside competition, the Mongol khans had no commercial class of their own and did everything they could to encourage foreign merchants to traverse the territories they controlled: the Chinggisids offered merchants from other lands safety in which to travel, and various transit facilities, in order to draw the greatest possible profit via customs levies and the exchange of goods. This income provided an important remedy for the chronic budgetary short-comings, though it could not save a situation in which expenditures always exceeded revenue.

Around 1261 the Mongol empire fractured into several successor states: in the West of the empire’s territory, these were the Golden Horde on the Eurasian steppe, and the Ilkhanate in Persia. This grand reorganisation of power relations generated a series of rivalries within the Mongol world and at its edges, largely commercial in nature. Clashes over the control of the trade routes led to major changes in the Eurasian network, which came out very favourably for the Black Sea region.

When the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde clashed over control of the Silk Road, part of the traffic which travelled that route was diverted from the region of the Aral Sea, through the steppe, to the ports on the Northern Black Sea coast, Tana, Caffa or Soldaia.

The Ilkhanate’s conflict with the Mamluk sultanate, and consolidation of the Muslim barrier in the Eastern Mediterranean, led to blockade on both the Silk Road itself and the Iraqi end of the spice route from the Indian Ocean via the Tigris and Euphrates to Syria and Cilician Armenia. The Ilkhan Arghun worked closely with the Genoese merchants to shift trade from the Iraqi river routes to the overland route through
Persia, connecting the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea via Ormuz, Tabriz and Trebizond.

As a result, the Black Sea region was connected to the flow of trade on the Silk Road and on the spice route, a situation which is probably unique in all of history and certainly during the Middle Ages. Significantly, all great merchant expeditions or missionary journeys after 1300 went via the Black Sea. Numerous sources attest to Western merchants travelling these two routes in the first half of the fourteenth century, raising them to the rank of major commercial arteries.
CHAPTER TWO
THE MONGOL EXPANSION AND THE EURASIAN COMMERCIAL AXES

2.1 The Silk Road as a Channel for Expansion

Chinggis Khan himself (d. 1227) began the conquest of the commercial axis linking Northern China and Central Asia. Not only did he impose Mongol rule on the Easternmost segments of the Silk Road, but his political and military initiatives also set clear paths of expansion along the route for his successors to follow.

2.1.1 Chinggis Khan and the Silk Road

The surprising shrewdness with which this probably illiterate nomad ruler approached questions of long-distance trade, and the great importance which he placed on it, are neatly caught in what has become known as the Otrar incident.\(^1\)

The conquest of Northern China, culminating in the capture of Beijing in 1215, was incomparably more useful to Chinggis Khan’s foreign reputation than the proclamation of the empire in 1206. This success also roused the envy of the Shah of Khwarezm, Muḥammad II, who ruled Transoxiana and Eastern Iran, especially since it was well known that he planned to annex those same territories which the Mongols had recently taken.\(^2\)

He sent an embassy to Chinggis Khan to learn more concrete details of developments in the Far East. The envoys probably arrived at their destination in 1216.\(^3\) They were initially warmly received, but this changed for the worse once the envoys, most of them merchants, asked exorbitant prices for the goods which they had brought with them. Their overpricing was based on the assumption that Chinggis Khan, being a barbarian, did

---

\(^{1}\) The whole episode can be found, in an outline drawn from Eastern sources, in Boyle, “History,” pp. 303 ff., a work which focuses on the political history of the Mongols in Persia; cf. also Petrushevsky, “Condition,” which looks at the socio-economic situation in the Ilkhanate.

\(^{2}\) Barthold, Turkestan, p. 395.

\(^{3}\) Jūzjānī/Raverty, pp. 270–272.
not understand trade and commerce. This infuriated him, and to show that he was familiar with such concepts, he ordered that the merchants submit their goods to his treasury for evaluation, thereby proving that he understood the ideas of price and value. The chronicle account goes on to say that the merchants were ashamed and had to admit that they had been wrong about the khan, and subsequently lowered their prices.\(^4\)

The Great Khan’s behaviour once the guests were due to leave is also relevant in understanding how he viewed long-distance commerce. He ordered his sons and other Mongolian magnates to detail two or three trustworthy men to join each merchant, equipped with bars of gold and silver bullion so that they could travel in the Khwarezmshah’s lands and buy valuable goods with which they were then to return home.\(^5\)

The breadth of the Great Khan’s horizons, and the extent of his knowledge of Asian commerce, may be guessed from the names of his visitors, which reveal their places of origin: ‘Umar Khoja from Otrar on the Syr Darya river, Fakhr al-Din of Bukhara, Amīn al-Din of Herat, and Hāmmāl from Meragha in distant Azerbaijan would all have been able to tell the khan of the glories of their cities.\(^6\) Such stories would certainly have allowed Chinggis Khan to form a clear picture of the Silk Road.

Merchants also provided the Mongol state with other information, going beyond such a general overview. Because of their detailed knowledge of Asia’s physical and economic geography, they proved to be indispensable advisers at the planning stages of military campaigns, and afterwards when they accompanied the armies into hostile territory.\(^7\)

The truly decisive significance which Chinggis Khan accorded to long-distance trade as a guiding factor in the political expansion of his empire is very clearly shown in the further course of events.

In response to Muhammad II’s embassy, messengers were sent to Transoxiana in the spring of 1217 to present the Shah with the following proposal from the Khan: “I know very well how exalted is your rank, and the extent of your power; I know the size of your empire, nor am I unaware

\(^4\) Juwayni/Boyle, p. 78; Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 396.


\(^6\) Nasawi/Houdas, p. 59, Nasawi/Bunyatov, p. 79.

\(^7\) Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 407: “Chinggis-Khan himself, as well as his sons, were accompanied by Muslim merchants, who acted as intermediaries between the Mongols and the population and undoubtedly acquainted the Mongols with the local conditions. […] The strategic plans of Chinggis-Khan and their brilliant execution prove that the geographical conditions were well known to him.”
that your authority is recognised in most countries in the world; thus I consider it my duty to form friendly ties with Your Highness, whom I love as well as I love my favourite child. You must certainly know that I have conquered China and the neighbouring Turkish lands; likewise you know, better than anybody else, that my domains furnish me with soldiers, and with inexhaustible amounts of silver from my mines, and that here we enjoy an abundance of all kinds of goods, and thus have no need to seek them elsewhere. If you consider it just that we each assure unhindered access to the other’s merchants, we would both gain from this, and both would prosper by it.”

The chronicler says nothing of how the Shah reacted during the actual audience, but describes credibly and in detail his disquiet over the following nights. He called one of the leaders of his embassy, Maḥmūd Yalavach, to himself, and asked him in some agitation about the Mongol ruler’s true strength. It seems from the discussion that the Khwarezmshah wanted to hear some encouraging words from his subject, rather than the actual truth. The latter responded with appropriate blandishments, which not only swept away the Shah’s uncertainties but made him boast of his own power to Maḥmūd. “You know the extent of my realm and you know how numerous are my armies! How can it be then that this wretch calls me his son?”

Far from being an over-reaction, Muḥammad II’s anger was a response to the threat implied in Chinggis Khan’s message: the word “son” in the diplomatic language of the time means a vassal. The Mongol ruler thus left no doubt as to his intention to impose his rule on the Shah’s dominions, as Chinggisid imperial doctrine dictated. Willing or not, the Shah set in motion the events that would lead to the Khan’s victory.

Hesitant, as his deeds showed him to be, Muḥammad II bowed to the Great Khan’s will and accepted the proposal. This amicable arrangement

---

8 Nasawi/Houdas, pp. 57–58; Nasawi/Bunyatov, pp. 78–79.
9 It is still unresolved whether Maḥmūd Yalavach of Khwarezm, who a few years later was to be the governor of China, had yet entered Mongol service at this point; on his career see Allsen, Imperialism, pp. 101–102, 104–107.
10 Nasawi/Houdas p. 58; Nasawi/Bunyatov, p. 79.
11 Cf. Spuler, Mongolen, p. 19; Barthold, Turkestan, p. 397: “The effort made by Chinggis-Khan to enter into relations with the empire of the Khwarazm-Shah is fully explained by the commercial interests of his influential Muslim advisers: if his envoys, on their sovereign’s order, called the Khwarazm-Shah ‘the son of Chinggis-Khan,’ this could hardly have been done with the intention of provoking Muḥammad, and even the latter did not put this forward as a casus belli.”
did not last beyond the spring of 1218, however, when a caravan of four hundred and fifty men from the Mongol domains arrived in the border town of Otrar. Inalchik, the Shah's local governor, sent a message to his lord that he believed that they were spies and agents provocateurs sent by Chinggis Khan, and were whipping up the populace with the threat of an imminent invasion. Muḥammad ordered their arrest, but his governor exceeded his orders, confiscating their goods and executing the owners.

It is not clear how far exactly the Shah's court was responsible for the massacre of Otrar. However, when Chinggis Khan's envoys arrived to demand compensation and the extradition of those directly responsible for the murders, the Shah ordered the emissaries killed. This decision was the declaration of war that Chinggis Khan had been waiting for. His troops entered Transoxiana to avenge the merchants' deaths and, according to a contemporary account, to shed rivers of innocent blood.

The deployment of great numbers of nomad cavalry to support the merchant caste is the first striking proof of how important commerce was to imperial policy promoted at the highest echelons of the Mongol state. The Otrar incident also demonstrates the contribution of long-distance commerce to the expansion of Chinggis Khan's power. The support which the great merchants lent to the khan is expressed in a very telling manner, namely in their readiness to renounce their legitimate ruler: the Shah's subjects, Muslims like himself, did not hesitate to abandon him and to enter the service of his 'infidel' enemy. From the professional point of view, this decision to betray their lord can be explained in terms of the turncoats' commercial habits of mind: they showed remarkable foresight in recognising the victorious rival ahead of time, a conqueror willing and able to let the merchant class thrive in step with the breakneck expansion of his empire.

It is also easy to see what concrete benefits they expected from the victory of their candidate, whose military successes to date seemed to back up his claims to world domination: unhindered freedom of movement over the greatest possible territory had always been the great merchants'

---

13 Nasawi/Houdas, p. 59; Nasawi/Bunyatov p. 79; bearing in mind the terms of the agreement, it is clear that it was doomed from the start to be "provisional at best" ("jeden-falls vorläufig," Spuler, Mongolen, p. 18).
14 Ibid.
15 Nasawi/Houdas, pp. 60–61, laments the tragic fate of his Muslim coreligionists in these terms; on Mongol military operations at this time, see especially Petrushevskij, "Pohod."
16 Their confessional identity is clear from their names (see above, p. 38).
dream. Their global aspirations coincided with those of the Chinggisids, explaining the convergence of their interests and why and how they acted in concert with the dynasty.

The earliest indication in this respect is to be found in Muḥammad II’s first embassy to Chinggis Khan’s court. The make-up of the embassy shows that, just like other travellers to Mongol-occupied China at the time, the envoys dispatched as diplomats also sounded out the state of trade, which must have interested them greatly:17 the huge marketplace of China was always a lode-stone for the great merchants of Iran and Central Asia.18 Regrettably, this inexhaustible source of manufactured goods was only sporadically accessible to foreign merchants over the course of history.19 Now Chinggis Khan was promising not just an open door policy in the Far East but also—through the provocative and insulting proposal sent to the Shah—the union of Transoxiana and Persia one rule. Leading representatives of Asia’s urban cultures were willing to serve barbarians from the steppe to bring about this grand goal, a highly desirable new dispensation which proved more powerful than ties of faith. Under these circumstances, a symbiosis arose between the khan and the merchants—a fundamental part of the Mongol state in all its forms and developments.20

Seen chronologically and geographically, the Otrar incident of 1218 likewise proves to be a crucial episode in the Westward expansion: it forms the prelude to the Chinggisids’ enormous project of conquering the Silk Road.

Purportedly a punitive campaign to revenge the merchants who had been killed, Chinggis Khan’s campaign of 1219 against Shah Muḥammad pursued two distinct goals: while the main body of troops laid waste the length and breadth of Transoxiana and Khwarezm, which they then annexed to the empire, the generals Jebe and Sübödei led an expedition to pursue the Shah, a raiding party that became a scouting mission.21 From 1219 to 1223, this expedition took the Mongol horsemen from Central Asia

---

17 Barthold, Turkestan, p. 393.
18 See Herrmann, Seidenstraßen, Haussig, Vorislamische Zeit, idem, Islamische Zeit, Franke, Geld, idem, Geschichte, and the studies collected in Bauer, Studia and Rossabi, China.
19 Ibid.
20 See chapter 1.2.2.
21 Defeated, and with his armies scattered, Muḥammad II took refuge on an island in the Caspian, where he died in obscurity.
through Iran to the Caucasus and the Cuman steppe, then back to their point of departure beyond the Syr Darya.22

The conquest of the Silk Road from China to Khwarezm is inarguably one of Chinggis Khan’s greatest achievements. It is only to be expected that his successors should continue his work, following the same natural channel for expansion. Batu Khan, who led the second great wave of Westward expansion, never lost sight of the Mediterranean shores as an ultimate goal, yet circumstances prevented him from ever reaching this end.

2.1.2 The Silk Road Under the Protectorate of the Golden Horde

Under the terms of Chinggis Khan’s final testament, the whole of the Eurasian steppe, stretching from Mongolia to the Danube delta and the Carpathians, was to be divided among his four sons—regardless of whether it was already part of the empire or yet remained to be conquered. They settled with their families and with the armies assigned to them, and together with the local nomad populations whom they found where they pitched their yurts, constituted the four great ulus or hordes of the Mongol empire.23 The income from the sedentary peoples who paid tribute was also divided—according to criteria which are not easy to reconstruct—among the four chieftains, with the lion’s share going to the head of state in the capital at Qara Qorum in Mongolia. The Great Khan was elected by a qurultai, the legitimising assembly of representatives from all branches of the ruling family, and was owed unconditional allegiance: he was thus a guarantee of mutual support and solidarity, and embodied the unity of the empire. It was certainly a major failing of Chinggis Khan’s constitution, such as it was, to have given overarching authority to such a figure: his successors’ power proved insufficient either to oppose autonomous tendencies in the four original ulus or to prevent the proliferation of further hordes beyond the steppe. As founder of the state, his ideology was shaped by deep respect for the nomad way of life,24 and the settlement

23 For the territories granted to Jochi, eldest son of Chinggis Khan, see the next paragraph; the second of the heirs, Chaghatai, occupied the former Qara-Khitai territories South of Lake Balkhash, while the third, Ögödei, who became Great Khan, would hold the area between the Irtysh and Selenga rivers. The youngest, Tului, kept their father’s lands, which also served as the imperial court (for an overview, cf. Grousset, *Empire*, pp. 316–319).
24 Cf. his melancholy reflections on the conduct of his heirs, who had been ruined by the pleasures of city life (d’Ohsson, *Histoire*, 1, p. 416, Grousset, *Empire*, pp. 310–311).
of Mongol rulers among agricultural or even urban populations—as happened in the course of the next few decades in China and Iran—was certainly not part of his vision.

Following the usual nomad custom whereby the eldest son was given the pasturelands furthest out, Jochi’s share included the Westernmost grasslands of the Chinggisid domains. The initial core of these lands, by the headwaters of the Irtysh, included only the territory of modern Kazakhstan and the lower basin of the Syr Darya. While his brothers and their nomads held lands that could no longer be enlarged upon, Jochi had the considerable advantage of having an open horizon at the borders of his inheritance: the Mongol horsemen saw the conquest of this great expanse of grassland, from the borders of Turkestan to the foothills of the Carpathians, as their destiny. The realisation of this vision would fall not to Jochi (d. 1227) but to his son Batu, the true founder of the Golden Horde.

The Great Khan Ögödei, the first of Chinggis Khan’s successors, tackled the matter of securing the Jochid lands as one of his most urgent and most pressing tasks: the qurultai of 1229 agreed upon a great campaign, in which every ulus would contribute troops. This was a pan-Mongol undertaking, where the whole flower of Chinggisid chivalry would play their part, while Batu was named the overall commander. The leadership of the military operations as such was entrusted to Sübödei, an experienced general.

The groundwork for the great expedition was laid when the emir Chormaghun occupied the important strategic bridgehead of Azerbaijan and Arran in 1232, and by other painstaking logistical preparations; the expedition itself only got underway in 1236, when the Mongol army entered the Cuman steppe. The first victim of the Mongol assault was Volga Bulgaria, the ancient commercial centre on the middle of the Volga river, and thereafter Cuman armies themselves were annihilated. A string of victories against the Russian knyazates culminated in the occupation of Kiev in 1240. Crimea received similarly harsh treatment around the same time, probably in 1238. The Tartars continued to ride Westward in 1241, when they reached the Romanian lands and the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland, then the Bulgarian Empire South of the Danube in 1242. The Great

---

25 Cf. chapter 3.1.
26 Ibid. and Vladimirtsov, Régime, p. 129.
Khan Ögödei’s death in 1241 was the signal for the end of hostilities, as all Mongol combatants withdrew back to their own ulus.\textsuperscript{29}

Despite this hasty retreat, the principal goal of these two Mongol Westward campaigns had been reached: the whole of the Cuman steppe had been conquered and now merely awaited Jochid occupation. When the Tartars settled permanently into the vast territory conquered in the campaign of 1236–1242, this marked the effective birth of the Golden Horde, known in the East as the “ulus of Jochi.”

The founder of the horde, Batu, hastened to organise it in the established pattern of nomad society, probably unchanged for thousands of years. The first step that he took in applying these customs to the new geographic conditions was to install the horde itself in the midst of his ulus,\textsuperscript{30} on the lower reaches of the Volga at Sarai, which would serve as the capital for a time and where Batu’s memory would endure for longer yet.\textsuperscript{31} The khan used the same time-honoured methods when he assigned the endless steppe as pastureland to his subjects in orderly fashion: the Tartars “have divided among themselves all Scythia, which extends from the Danube to where the sun rises, and every commander, according to whether he has a greater or smaller number of men under him, is familiar with the limits of his pasturelands and where he ought to graze in summer and winter, in spring and autumn. For in the winter they move down Southwards to the warmer regions, and in summer they move up Northwards to the colder ones.”\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{30} William of Rubruck, a close observer of Mongol customs, remarks here that \textit{dicitur curia orda lingua eorum, quod sonat medium, quia semper est in medio hominum suorum} (Wyngaert, \textit{Sinica Franciscana}, I, p. 213). The Franciscan’s etymology is correct, and he offers a description of the “horde” or court of Batu as an example. This restricted sense obtained throughout the period of the \textit{ulus} of Jochi, but was also extended early on to mean the entirety of a Tartar state, as in the expression Golden Horde (cf. Doerfer, \textit{Elemente}, I, pp. 32–39, on the Turkish \textit{ordu}, Mongol \textit{ordo} or \textit{orda}, “palace, military camp, empire”); for a description of the Ilkhanid Horde, encamped on the meadows of Ujan by Tabriz in Azerbaijan, cf. ‘Umari/Lech, p. 149 (commentary, p. 326 note 37).

\textsuperscript{31} Sarai-Batu, or Old Sarai (now the village of Selitrenoe near Astrakhan), in contrast to Sarai-Berke, also known as New Sarai (now Tsarev) at the confluence of the Volga with the Akhtuba (Grekov, Yakubovskiy, \textit{Orda}, pp. 68–69). Allsen, “Saray,” pp. 41–44, considers that Sarai-Batu and Sarai-Berke are one and the same place (Old Sarai/Akhtuba), and that “Saray al-Jadid (= New Saray = Tsarev) became the new capital in the early 1340s when Janibek came to power” (p. 42).

\textsuperscript{32} Rubruck/Jackson, p. 72. Contradicting the long-held belief that Golden Horde nomadism was an anarchic and haphazard affair, this eyewitness report attests to a
At the same time as he resolved the problem of Jochid “colonisation” of the Scythian steppe, Batu Khan regularised the relations of his ulus with the neighbouring powers. Once the Tartars withdrew from Europe back into the steppe, the Russian knyazï hastily recognised the hegemony of the Golden Horde, which from its very foundation was the largest power in Eastern Europe. Batu’s achievement, realised gradually over the course of his life, was mainly organisational: he perfected the system of government that controlled and drew revenue from this vassal group, the largest and most important subject population that the Golden Horde was ever to have, and his system was so well conceived that it functioned without reform or innovation for almost a century and a half. For the same period, a good part of the Carpathian and Balkan region was also subject to the Volga khanate.

The settlement of the ulus of Jochi in the Cuman steppe was an excellent fit for the needs and abilities of an essentially nomad state. However, one fundamental flaw marked this great power’s fate from beginning to end: that it did not lie directly across the Silk Road.

The first khan of the Golden Horde to face this problem was Batu himself, known in his day as a great patron and protector of merchants. Here is the description penned by his contemporary, the Persian Jūzjānī: “He [= Batu] was uncommonly just and more than usually fond of the Muslims; the Muslims had freedom to live and trade in his dominions. There were mosques for the believers in his camp and in the camps of his tribe, with imam and muezzin. After his reign, and even during his lifetime, the Muslim countries never suffered attack by his order, neither from those who obeyed him nor from his armies.”

Another Persian source of the same period, Juwayni, emphasised Batu’s role as a promoter of trade:

33 For more detail, cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 218 ff.

34 Rubruck (Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, pp. 167–168); the Franciscan’s claims are confirmed by a letter of 11th November 1250 from Béla IV of Hungary to Pope Innocent IV: “We have resisted becoming their [= the Tartars’] subjects, while all the other peoples against whom they have bent their strength have become their subjects, and the realms to the East of our kingdom, such as Russia [Russia], Cumania, the Brodniks, Bulgaria, most of which were subject to our reign before this” (DIR, C, I, p. 345); cf. Sacerdotianu, Invazie, pp. 70–73. Sacerdotianu, Guillaume de Roubruck, pp. 147–152, Papacostea, România, pp. 136–144.

35 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II p. 15; Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 62, note that “in the current instance, ‘Muslims’ must be understood as Muslim merchants.” Batu’s attitude is
“Merchants brought him wares from all corners of the world; he bought everything, whatever it might be, and paid each one a price many times higher than it was worth. He also gave exemptions and *yarlıks* to the sultans of Rûm, Syria and other countries, and whoever came to serve him did not leave empty-handed.”

His generosity was equalled only by the scope of his ambition: there is no doubt that the final goal toward which he tirelessly bent all his energies was to extend Jochid hegemony across the whole “civilised belt” stretching onward from the Cuman steppe, so as to secure for the Golden Horde the privileged position of bringing all trade between Turkestan and the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean under one rule. Although his great ambitions even reached as far as dominating the continental routes across the Fertile Crescent, bridging the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, there is no doubt that the Silk Road was the backbone of his whole commercial policy.

This policy was determined by necessity and by concrete circumstances, and took shape around two partially connected goals: to secure the Jochid share of Silk Road traffic, and to bring the whole of the Fertile Crescent under Mongol rule, meaning also the Western terminus of the Silk Road where it met the Mediterranean at Ayas in Cilician Armenia. In order to realise the first ambition, Batu had to confront the Great Khan at Qara Qorum, but to fulfil the second he had to work with him.

Several Oriental sources offer more or less convergent accounts of how and where the first Jochid khan drew his strength from the Silk Road. Jūzjānī writes: “In the shade of his protection, the Muslims of Turkestan enjoyed great peace and perfect security. In all those parts of Iran which fell under Mongol rule, one part belonged to him [= Batu] and in the parts which were dependent, he also appointed the high dignitaries.”

His compatriot Juwaynī is more explicit on how Tartar power spread from the Cuman steppe into Central Asia: he confirms that Transoxiana

---

36 Ibid.; the ‘exemptions’ are commercial privileges, and the *yarlıks* are the documents recording these; the phrase “sultans of Rûm” refers to the Seljukids of Asia Minor.

37 These are the routes that link the Red Sea to Egypt on the one hand and the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Syria on the other (cf. Cicci, “Geneza,” pp. 83–84 and chapters 2.2.1, 3.4.2); one indication that Batu appreciated the commercial significance of the Near East is the privilege which he granted to Syrian merchants (see previous note).

was also under Batu’s rule, not just the Northern half of Khwarezm with its capital at Urgench, which had been part of the Golden Horde’s territories from the very start.

The claims about Jochid “vassals” in Iran are supported by al-ʿUmarī, the Syrian encyclopaedist of the Mamluk period, who reports that Chinggis Khan gave his eldest son “the Cuman steppe and its dependencies, which also include Arran, Tabriz, Hamadan and Meragha.” Another scholar in Mamluk service, Ahmad al-Qalqashandi, writes that Batu did not conquer Tabriz and parts of Iran, but received them in the original partition. A more convincing piece of evidence than these foreign sources is the argument advanced at Sarai itself, during the dispute about the reconquest of the Transcaucasian lands occupied in 1261 by the Mongols of Persia: the initial division was cited as an argument for Jochid reconquest, which suggests that Azerbaijan and Arran effectively belonged to the Golden Horde during Batu’s reign and under his successors, right down to that year.

The Transcaucasian regions were probably very much more important to the Golden Horde than their Central Asian holdings, because they were so much closer to the capital on the Volga. The “green island” of the South Caucasus was exceptionally important for Batu and his heirs, and had always been extremely valuable for all Turanic nomads, including the Mongols. On the one hand it extended Golden Horde territories and allowed the Jochids direct access to the Silk Road, and on the other hand it formed a vital strategic base from which to maintain the ulus’ commercial and territorial interests from the Cuman steppe into Western Asia.

The source of this persistent attraction was Tabriz, the great Silk Road commercial emporium South-West of the Caspian, which impressed all visitors with its grandeur. The Arab Ibn al-Athīr noted that the Tartar invaders found “Tabriz, which is the very heart (aṣl) of the country, and every one is dependent on it and on those who live there.” The city reached the peak of its growth under Mongol rule, when its perimeter

39 Barthold, Boyle, “Batu;” Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 63 note 2, ignore this statement and interpret Jüzjānī’s term ‘Turkestan’ in an unnecessarily restrictive manner, taking it to mean Khwarezm alone.
40 Cf. p. 42.
41 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 222; it was certainly Batu rather than Jochi who conquered these territories.
42 Spuler, Mongolen, p. 53 note 8, p. 100.
43 Cf. Spuler, Mongolen, p. 53; Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 18–19 and chapter 3.1.
44 Cf. chapters 1.1.4 and 3.1.
expanded four-fold.\textsuperscript{46} Tabriz was the real centre of the empire which stretched from the Oxus to Egypt.\textsuperscript{47} The gold and silver coins and measures were standardized according to the standards of Tabriz.\textsuperscript{48} The Franciscan missionary Odoric of Pordenone, who knew many cities in Europe, the Near East and the Far East, visited Tabriz under Tartar rule and went so far as to describe it as the greatest city in the world for trade, because of the quantity and variety of goods offered for sale from all corners. The friar cites certain ‘Christian’ informants, who told him that the khan drew more income from that one city than the king of France from his entire kingdom.\textsuperscript{49} Marco Polo, an expert in commodities, was similarly laudatory, and like Odoric explained Tabriz’s wealth by its geographical location at the crossroads of the continental routes: “The people of Tabriz live by trade and industry: for cloth of gold and silk is woven here in great quantity and of great value. The city is so favourably situated that it is a market for merchandise from India and Baghdad; from Mosul and Hormuz; and from many other places; and many Latin merchants [especially Genoese] come here to buy the merchandise imported from foreign lands. It is also a market for precious stones, which are found here in great abundance. It is a city where good profits are made by travelling merchants. The inhabitants are a mixed lot and good for very little. There are Armenians and Nestorians, Jacobites and Georgians, and Persians; and there are also worshippers of Mahomet, who are the natives of the city, and are called Tabrizis.”\textsuperscript{50} The Venetian contradicts himself in this passage as to whether the locals were canny merchants or mere innocents, and al-‘Umarī similarly wrote that the Tabrizis were not gifted in commerce but that they nevertheless lived in great luxury, and he called their city the metropolis of Iran.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{48} ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Wyngaert, \textit{Sinica Franciscana}, I, p. 417: \textit{Hec civitas melior est pro mercimonis quam alia civitas de mundo. Nam non reperitur hodie alicuius mercimonii quiis magna copia non habeatur. Hec enim multum bene est posita atque sita: In tantam est enim nobilis civitas illa, quod est quasi incrediile de hiis que ibi habentur. Nam quasi totus mundus pro mercimonis illi correspondet civitatis. De hac enim volunt dicere christiani, quod de ista civitate plura recept Imperator ille quam Rex Francie habeat de toto suo regno.}

\textsuperscript{50} Polo/Benedetto, pp. 22–23; transl. Polo/Latham, pp. 26–27.

\textsuperscript{51} ‘Umarī/Lech, p. 150: “The inhabitants are an unusually proud people, who display their wealth like no others do. They have great wealth and possessions, have a horror of drab clothing and display the greatest imaginable luxury in their dining, their clothing and at state occasions. It is beneath their dignity to talk in dirhems when they talk of
It is quite true that, just as the medieval sources state, this great commercial capital of Transcaucasia owed its preeminence over all the other cities along the Silk Road to its geographical location. At Tabriz, this East-West highway of long-distance trade also absorbed goods transported on two other major arteries: products from the Caucasus and the Eurasian steppes and forests arrived from the North via Derbent, while from the South goods came from the Indian Ocean via the Persian Gulf and Ormuz.52

Given that the city was a veritable goose that laid the golden eggs, it is understandable that it provoked strong feelings—and rivalries—in Chinggisid times. The unending Mongol disputes about Tabriz began with Batu and the Great Khan Güyük.

When we compare other sources, it seems that Muslim authors were mistaken in believing Transcaucasia to have been legally part of the Jochid share from the very beginning, confusing a de facto with a de jure situation.53 The misapprehension was widespread though, and became more firmly rooted over time, and for some decades the Jochids themselves used the argument to support their claims to the territories South-East of the Caspian.54

---

business, and they only use the dinar in their dealings, that is to say the dinār rā‘iǧ worth six dirhems. This coin in used throughout the whole country except for the districts of Baghdad and Khorasan. […] Tabriz is thus the metropolis [umm] for all Iran, which everybody visits. Here the merchants and the travellers break their journey, and here almost all the great emirs of the sultan’s court have their palaces.” The ilkhân Ŭljeität’s attempt to move the capital to Soltaniyeh, a city founded by his father Arghun, was not successful in the long run and the political and economic centre of Mongol Persia reverted to Tabriz shortly after his successor Abū Sa’īd took the throne (cf. ibid. pp. 149, 323 note 30, 328 note 44).

52 Cf. the section on ‘Les routes par Tabriz’ in Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 280–285, where however the French historian overlooks the city’s connection with the Cuman steppe via the pass which William of Rubruck mentions, ubi est iter Sarracenorum omnium venientium de Perside. Ashtor, History, p. 264, argues that the Mamluk-Ikhanid war on the Euphrates during the period of Mongol rule necessarily diverted the commerce of Baghdad toward Tabriz, where it played a great role in the trade in Indian Ocean goods. Brățianu, Vicina, p. 9, emphasises the importance of other branches of trade, such as the Tabriz-Black Sea route via Trebizond. For more detail on the two routes mentioned above, cf. chapter 3.4.2 below. For early fourteenth-century sources on the commercial capital of Mongol Persia and its connections to Central Asia, where the trade routes split to India and to China, see an anonymous Spanish Minorite in Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, p. 569, and the Arab traveller Ibn Bāṭūṭa/Defremery, Sanguinetti, III, pp. 16 ff; cf. Schwarz, Iran, p. 1285, Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 357–359, Ashtor, History, p. 264; Balard, Romanie, I, p. 140, considers that this grand convergence of Asian routes is also an outpost for Western merchants.

53 See above p. 47 notes 41–43.

54 Cf. chapter 3.1.
However, this version of the story is undermined by the most reliable source in the controversy, 'Atā Malik Juwaynī, who knew the Mongol tax system of Iran well. This Persian historian, together with his father, worked in the administration of Arghun Aga, appointed by Töreghene as chief of finances in the lands beyond the Amu Darya as far as "Fars, Georgia, Anatolia and Mosul." By his own account, once charged with the important task of collecting taxes for the Qara Qorum treasury, he met most opposition not from the tax-payers themselves, but from local Mongol chieftains, who squeezed money from the lands which they had been assigned as though these were their own property. In 1243/4 Arghun restored order in favour of the central power, not just in the areas under direct Mongol rule but also in Anatolia and Syria, which were part of the Chinggisid sphere of influence. Among all those greater or lesser usurpers who had seized the chance presented by Ögödei’s death to carve themselves fiefdoms and rule more or less as they chose, the “bandit chief" was, of course, Batu. His interests, powerfully present both in neighbouring Transcaucasia and in other, more distant parts of the Near East, inevitably clashed head-on with the interests of the dowager empress of Mongolia, once Arghun appeared in Azerbaijan to collect taxes on her behalf. Juwaynī describes this earliest tussle between the two centres of power over Tabriz, although his account is understandably tinged by political partisanship: “When Sharaf al-Dīn arrived in Tabriz from the ordu of Batu he made great exactions on the people there and elsewhere because of arrears in taxes. the emir Arghun opposed this although Sharaf al-Dīn persisted; and love and affection for him became ever more firmly implanted in men’s hearts. […] He left my father the ṣāḥib diwān [director of finance] as his deputy
in the lands of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Rûm, etc.\textsuperscript{60} The way the story ends here seems to suggest that Batu resigned himself to seeing the rival Qara Qorum court claim Transcaucasia—which was certainly not the case.

Rather, the conflict became ever more merciless once Güyük came to the throne in 1246, ending the interregnum in the Empire. Al-‘Umârî offers the most coherent account of relations between Batu and the Great Khan, since although other authors record the same events, only Juwaynî offers a causal explanation of how they affected intra-Mongol relations. The Syrian scholar recounts how Güyük, seeking to wrest Transcaucasia away from the Sarai khanate, sent the emir Eljigidei to arrest Batu’s governors on the spot. The imperial agent carried out his orders but the prisoners, who had their own orders from Sarai to capture Eljigidei, broke their chains, seized the emir and led him off to their khan’s horde across the mountains, where he was boiled to death. On learning of this insult, Güyük mobilised 600,000 cavalry and sent them to bring the rebel Jochid chieftains to heel. Only the unexpected death of the Great Khan after ten days on the march averted the first intra-Mongol war.\textsuperscript{61}

Güyük Khan’s sudden death in April 1248 not only removed an extremely dangerous rival for Batu, but also put him into an excellent position to influence the election of the successor to the imperial throne, since he was the senior member of the dynasty as well as being chief of the largest and most powerful ulus. Taking advantage of this situation, the Volga khan successfully pushed through the election of Tolui’s son Möngke, despite stubborn resistance, and blocked the aspirations of Ögödei’s descendants and their Chaghataid supporters, who refused to acknowledge the new ruler until 1251.\textsuperscript{62} When at last they fell into line, this did not spare them the fierce reprisals launched by the duumvirate, Möngke and Batu. Despite

\begin{enumerate}
\item Spuler, \textit{History}, p. 127.
\end{enumerate}
some isolated uprisings by those who escaped the massacre, in the mid-
thirteenth century the heirs of Ögödei and Chaghatai were more or less eliminated as players in the great game of internal Chinggisid politics, in favour of the victorious Jochid and Toluid branches.63

This was the first step in the policy of centralisation which Möngke whole-heartedly adopted. “Ironically, in his dealings with the princes of the blood, his relations with Batu, the earliest and strongest of his supporters, posed the greatest problem for Möngke.”64 The recognition that he literally owed the throne to Batu,65 and the existing balance of power, forced the Great Khan to admit that he was not the only ruler of the empire. “Just as the sun spreads its rays in all directions, so my power and that of Baatu are spread to every quarter.”66 Although this contradicted the policy of centralisation which he otherwise promoted quite consistently,67 Möngke defined the modus vivendi in the following formula: “There are two eyes in one head, and yet in spite of being two they have only one sight, and where one turns its glance so does the other.”68

This political agreement also of course resolved the explosive issue of spheres of influence, which had caused such serious problems between Sarai and Qara Qorum in previous years.

The sources do not permit a totally accurate reconstruction of this division. One important indication, however, is the scale of Batu’s claims in the agreement of condominium with Möngke: he reckoned that between one-fifth and one-third of the total revenue from Iran was due to him, with the rest to be shared between the Qara Qorum treasury and the troops.69

The Transcaucasian territories of Azerbaijan and Arran could not but form part of these negotiations, and the outcome saw them jointly administered and taxed, so that in 1254 we find imperial agents working side by

---

63 Cf. Grousset, Empire, p. 339; Spuler, Horde, pp. 28–29; and in particular Allsen, Imperialism, pp. 30–34 (chapter ‘The Purge of the Opposition’) which concludes that “there is no doubt that the ranks of Ögödeids and Chaghadaids were thinned substantially” (p. 34); see also pp. 52–53 for discussion of the place of these two ulus under Möngke’s rule.

64 Allsen, Imperialism, p. 54.

65 Rubruck (Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, i, p. 241): Mortuo ergo Keu [= Güyük], Mangu est electus de voluntate Baatu; the Armenian chronicler Kirakos of Gandzak (Dulaurier, “Mongols,” ii, 1858, p. 464) takes the same view of the khan of the Golden Horde, saying that he “was called the king’s father.”


68 Rubruck/Jackson, p. 238.

side with Batu's tax-gatherers under the direction of the seasoned administrator Arghun Aga. A Chinese source says that Möngke gave Georgia as a reward to Batu's brother Berke, who had supported his election as Great Khan at the qurultai of 1251. The agreement also confirmed the ulus of Jochi's long-established rights in the far East of Iran, in Khorasan and in Central Asia, where it seems that the original appanages were even increased, for there are some indications that a share of the Transoxiana resources originally held by the Chagadaids was reassigned to the Cuman steppes horde.

However impressive these gains, they did not justify Batu's boast to the magnates of his entourage that although he had put Möngke on the throne, he himself was “the true ruler.” The actual situation was clearly one of power-sharing, so that the Sarai khan's words are baseless: judged by his ambitions, they nevertheless ring true and reveal his grand political project to become uncontested master of Western Asia—with Möngke's help!

The privileges which Batu granted to the Seljuks, the Cilician Armenians and the Syrians shortly after he occupied the Cuman steppes show just how far-reaching was the commercial policy of the Golden Horde under his leadership. From the beginning, this policy was entirely congruent with an energetic Machtpolitik. His hegemonic aspirations are unequivocally shown in the obligation imposed on all vassals to stop at Sarai on their way to Qara Qorum. Even more conclusive is his policy in Asia Minor, where the obvious goal was to make the Seljuks strictly subordinate to the ulus of Jochi. Although the sultan had already submitted to the Mongols

---

70 He was restored to office after a period of disgrace which nearly cost him his head at the beginning of Möngke's reign (Juwayni in Spuler, History, p. 160); Rubruck shows that he was in office in 1256, alongside the military commander of the Transcaucasia general Baachu [= Baiju] and Arghun: Allus est apud Taurinum [= Tabriz] in Perside, qui est super tributa, nomine Argon (Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, p. 320); cf. Kirakos in Dulaurier, “Mongols,” 11, 1858, pp. 460–461. Jackson, “Dissolution,” p. 220.
71 Allsen, Imperialism, p. 59.
73 Jūzjānī/Raverty, II, p. 118.
74 Even if, as Rubruck (Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, p. 253) observes, Batu's subjects were treated with more deference in Möngke's territories than the Great Khan's men met with in the Jochid horde.
75 See above, pp. 45–46 notes 34–36.
76 Spuler, Horde, p. 28, comments on this abuse: "Dass Batu die meisten Ergebensheitsbesuche selbst entgegennahm, entsprach eigentlich nicht dem Aufbau des mongolischen Reiches, der solche Akte dem obersten Herr, dem Groß-Khan, vorbehielt."
in 1236/7,\textsuperscript{77} in 1242 Batu, hardly returned from the Central European campaign, ordered general Bayju and the Transcaucasian troops to shatter the Seljuk power:\textsuperscript{78} it was definitively destroyed at the battle of Kösa Dagh in 1243.\textsuperscript{79} The defeated Seljuks immediately sent an embassy of capitulation to the khan on the Volga.\textsuperscript{80}

Batu's excursions beyond his assigned limits on the steppeland produced understandable frustration at Qara Qorum: the scale of Güyük's reaction is a measure of the central power's efforts to dam the flood of Jochid hegemony in the Muslim East. Eljigidei enjoyed some successes in this regard when the Great Khan ordered him to thwart the Golden Horde's ambitions South of the Caucasus, but once he was mercilessly executed after Möngke took the throne,\textsuperscript{81} Batu's influence in this region grew stronger again.\textsuperscript{82} The Seljuk sultan was not the only one to recognise the Mongol imperial duumvirate of 1251: the king of Cilician Armenia also visited the Sarai khan first, before continuing his journey to the Mongol capital.\textsuperscript{83}

When Batu settled the new and favourable relationship between himself and his monarch, he clearly secured a number of advantages that more than repaid the effort that he had put in to have Möngke elected Great Khan. He also expected this political investment to pay out even more profitably in future, by supplementing Jochid Eastern holdings with Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

A project on this scale needed the imperial army to carry it out, and only the emperor could mobilise it. It was decided at the \textit{qurultai} of 1251, where the delegates from the Golden Horde had the final say, that the conquest of the Islamic East, from which Batu would emerge the clear


\textsuperscript{78} An-Nuwayrī (Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, i, p. 133) calls him the political force behind the operation, saying that it took place \textit{min qibal Batu}, 'on behalf of Batu,' while al-‘Aynī/ibid., p. 476, mentions him as actually leading the operation; cf. Jackson, "Dissolution," p. 218.

\textsuperscript{79} Cf. Matuz, "Niedergang."

\textsuperscript{80} Cf. Jackson, "Dissolution," p. 218.

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. pp. 50–51.

\textsuperscript{82} On Eljigidei's fate, Kirakos (Dulaurier, "Mongols," 11, 1858, pp. 458–459) notes: "From this time onwards kings, princes, captains and merchants began to come to Batu, meaning all those who had been molested or robbed of their possessions."

\textsuperscript{83} Note that in 1246, King Hethum I found that the correct course of action was to send his brother Sempad straight to Güyük; in the next decade, when he himself made the journey, he took the detour to Sarai (ibid., pp. 463 ff; cf. Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, pp. 40–41).
winner, should continue at the same time as renewed campaigning in China.\textsuperscript{84} The Great Khan’s brothers were entrusted with carrying out the plan, which foresaw the empire’s borders stretching from the Pacific to the Western seas.\textsuperscript{85} Qubilai was charged with conquering all China for the Chinggisid empire, and Hülegü with taking the Near and Middle East.\textsuperscript{86}

His death in 1256 spared Batu from seeing the catastrophic results for his ulus of the campaign that he had so strongly pursued: this last pan-Mongol drive to the West not only failed to extend the Golden Horde’s Asiatic holdings, but lost it those lands which it had gained in the first two decades in the Cuman Steppe.

2.2 The Spice Road: Assault on the Fertile Crescent

2.2.1 The Last Pan-Mongol Campaign to the West: Half a Victory

The mandate which the Great Khan Möngke gave his brother Hülegü was to ensure “that the laws and customs of Chinggis Khan should be observed, in every detail, from the shores of the Amu Darya to the furthest parts of Egypt.”\textsuperscript{87}

Thus the final goal of the campaign envisaged the conquest of the whole Fertile Crescent, with the two great routes of the spice trade linking

\textsuperscript{84} Grousset, \textit{Empire}, p. 349, and Vernadsky, \textit{Mongols}, p. 153, date this meeting to 1253 but are amended by Boyle, “History,” p. 340, who places it in 1251. Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, p. 44, agrees with this dating, saying that Möngke took this major decision “schon bald nach seinem Herrschaftsantritt.”

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ab ortu solis usque ad mare Mediterraneum et usque ad ponticum}, as the Catholic missionary Ascelinus records the proud boast of a leading Mongol noble in 1248 (Saint Quentin/Richard, p. 105).


\textsuperscript{87} Rashid al-Din/Quatremère, pp. 140–142; Quatremère’s translation, “jusqu’à l’extremité du royaume d’Egypte” is an ambiguous version of the Persian phrase \textit{ta be agasi belad Mesr}, where \textit{agasi} is a plural noun more exactly translatable as “the furthest parts” of Egypt, meaning that Möngke also intended the conquest of that country, and that Hülegü was not expected simply to stop at the Eastern border.
the Indian Ocean to the Eastern Mediterranean, one running through the
Persian Gulf and Iraq, the other through the Red Sea and Egypt.

Because an army composed mainly of cavalry encountered continual
problems in advancing through areas with insufficient pasture, progress
was slow, as in the campaign of 1236–1242; the military phase of this last
Westward push by the united Chinggisid strength took about ten years.

The advance party under Ket Bugha left Mongolia in the summer of
1252, but the principal body of the army under the commander-in-chief
only set out in autumn the following year. Hülegü reached the Syr Darya in
autumn 1255, and then the following spring he entered Iran via Khorasan.
Military operations as such only began in 1257, with the destruction of the
Ismaili fortifications in Persia; this sect was known throughout the East
as the Assassins, and spread terror with their policy of targeted murder.

In November the imperial army entered Iraq, and on 10th February 1258
it conquered Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid caliphate. This was the
moment when the city which had for centuries been the renowned spiri-
tual centre of Islam was razed by barbarians from furthest Asia.

The fall of Baghdad paralysed the Muslim world with shock. Resistance
against the invincible Mongol armies seemed futile. In this context, the
conquest of the whole Fertile Crescent could only be considered a mere
formality. After capturing the great city on the Tigris, Hülegü sent a mes-
sage to his brother Möngke, voicing the prevailing mood of cheerful tri-
umphalism and the intention to march onward to victory in Syria and
Egypt. The news led to understandable euphoria in Qara Qorum.

Before resuming the campaign, Hülegü made sure that he had the sup-
port of his vassal King Hethum I of Cilician Armenia, and of the crusad-
ers led by Bohemond IV. This laid the foundation for Mongol-Christian
military alliance against the Muslims.

88 Cf. chapter 1.2.3; Allsen, *Imperialism*, p. 2, comments on the measures that Hülegü’s
commanders took to have pasture for their horses.
89 Cf. above, pp. 43–44.
90 The Muslim population, freed from this scourge, saw the Mongol commander as
the saviour of their faith, but were cruelly disillusioned some months later when Hülegü
destroyed Baghdad, the heart of the Sunni faith.
91 The Caliph al-Mu’stasim was killed together with 24,000 residents, after which the
city was sacked for seventeen days.
93 Rashid al-Din/Jahn, p. 41.
94 That Oriental Christians served in the Chinggisid campaigns was considered an inte-
gral part of the Crusade; see for instance Vartan’s eulogy on an Armenian compatriot who
The great army invaded Syria in September 1259. The principal cities were quickly occupied in spring. While general Ket Bugha completed the conquest of the country, a Mongol governor was installed in Damascus. The gates to the final goal, Egypt, were open wide.

However, the Mongol onslaught was turned from its expected path by an event whose consequences could not at the time have been predicted: in August 1259, the Great Khan Möngke had died in China. The analogy with the fateful year of 1241, when Ögödei died, is self-evident. The prospect of an intra-Mongol war, such as had already broken out once before the succession to the imperial throne, was especially grim for Hülegü, since his political support collapsed with Möngke’s death. In the absence of this support, the status—and the future—of the commander-in-chief of the Western campaign became entirely uncertain.

In order to be as close as possible to where the empire’s fate, and his own, would be decided, Hülegü left Syria with the majority of his troops, heading East. At most 20,000 troops remained behind in the garrisons, under Ket Bugha’s command, which persuaded the Mamluk Sultan in Cairo that the time had come to seek a battle with the Mongols. The decisive battle took place in Palestine at ‘Ayn Jālūt (the “Spring of Goliath”) on 3rd September 1260. Despite fighting fiercely, the Mongol contingent was destroyed: their commander perished bravely and a few survivors managed to flee Northward. The Sultan made a triumphant entry into Damascus, while his troops annexed Muslim Syria as far as the Euphrates.
Although the Mamluks fought only one detachment, rather than the great Mongol army, the historical significance of the battle greatly outweighs its military significance at the time: in the autumn of 1260, the balance between the two powers was definitively struck. The Chinggisids had poured out irresistibly for thousands of miles on their road from the Far East to the shores of the Mediterranean, but a few paces from their final destination, on the very threshold of Syria and Egypt, they reached the limits of their expansion.

The result of this last wave of pan-Mongol expansion was thus only half a victory, or half a defeat: Iraq had been conquered, but Egypt defended its freedom. The same held true at the commercial level: the Iraqi spice route fell into Mongol hands, while the Egyptian route remained a Mamluk possession.

2.2.2 The Ilkhanate—Chief Beneficiary of Western Asian Expansion

Despite this final defeat, Hülegü’s campaign marked a real gain on the previous state of affairs: Mongol rule was consolidated in Persia, which acquired territory through the incorporation of Iraq and at the same time their hegemony was consolidated in the Caucasus in Seljuk Anatolia and in Cilician Armenia.

Möngke’s death exacerbated the pre-existing and pressing question of who would benefit most from this expansion, which had been carried out jointly. The potential for conflict was fed at this point by, on the one hand, the demise of the chief figure who embodied law and order in the empire, and on the other hand by the recent immense increase in value of the domain which had already been bitterly fought over in the past.

---

102 Which became, administratively speaking, a mere Persian province (ibid., pp. 290–293).
103 The two principal duties of a vassal under Chinggisid rule were, as usual, to pay tribute and to take part in the suzerain’s military expeditions; the vassals were ordinarily ‘assisted’ by a Mongol governor, with a variable number of troops at his disposal (ibid., pp. 270–273).
104 That is to say in Greater Armenia and in Georgia (ibid., pp. 272, 293–294).
105 Considered an unreliable vassal—and not without cause—the sultan was kept strictly in check by Mongol troops stationed on his territory (ibid., pp. 272, 294–296); cf. also İşiltan, *Seltschukengeschichte*, p. 44, Chapman, *Michel Paléologue*, p. 147.
106 Unlike their Seljuk neighbours, the Armenians made a voluntary act of submission and showed themselves, in due course, to be the Mongols’ most faithful vassals (Spuler, *Mongolen*, pp. 40–41, 46, 58, 298).
Hülegü, as the best placed of the various claimants, cut the Gordian knot briskly and brutally. The circumstances, and his own ambition, persuaded him to proclaim himself ruler of Persia and of the neighbouring territories mentioned above, and he improvised a qurultai (probably late in the year 1260) to confirm his decision. Whether or not it held strictly to the laws and customs which traditionally consecrated Mongol rulers, this gathering created a new first-order reality in the Chinggisid world, known to history as the Ilkhanate.

Unlike the steppe chieftains who kept their characteristic customs in an environment very like their ancestral home, from the very beginning geopolitical circumstances forced the Ilkhanids to adopt ambivalent behaviours: they were Mongol khans and shahs of Persia at one and the same time. In order to preserve some nomad ways, Hülegü and his successors spent the greater part of the year in the green pastures of the Transcaucasia with their hordes. As heirs to the rulers of Persia, the Ilkhans inherited industrious subjects and rich territories, but they also inherited problems which needed continual attention.

Chief among these were the numerous rich cities, which brought in revenue incomparably greater than the poorer khans of the Golden Horde could draw upon, with their relatively few urban holdings. For the most part, these cities were commercial centres on the Silk Road. It was moreover of central importance that Hülegü ruled not just the whole expanse of Persia from Khorasan to the gates of Asia Minor, but also, as suzerain of the Seljuk sultan and the king of Cilician Armenia, controlled the end points of the great commercial arteries.

The Ilkhanids conquered Mesopotamia, the fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates and a source of riches ever since Babylonian times, from the Abbasids, and thus gained another great corridor of intercontinental long-distance trade, the Iraqi spice route which linked the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean ports of Syria and Cilician Armenia, via the Persian Gulf. The Egyptian spice route, however, remained outside the Ilkhanid

---

108 It lasted from 1261 to 1335; for the meaning of the name, see below, p. 61.
109 Cf. Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 278–280 (chapter ‘Die Hauptstädte und Aufenthaltsorte der Ilchane’).
110 The contrast was striking at the time, and also impressed ‘Umari/Lech, p. 136.
111 Cf. above, chapters 2.1.2, 2.2.1.
112 Cf. below, chapters 3.2, 3.4.2.
sphere of influence, a state of affairs which greatly intensified their rivalry with the Mamluk sultanate.

Hülegü’s successors each made it a point to tighten control over these two great commercial routes, and this dominance provoked strong and persistent reactions both within and beyond the Mongol world. The sudden and irreversible fragmentation of the Chinggisid empire took place against the background of these upheavals.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EMPIRE:
INTRA- AND EXTRA-MONGOL COMMERCIAL RIVALRIES

3.1 The Jochid-Ilkhanid Struggle for Tabriz

The problem of its legitimation was a besetting flaw for the Ilkhanate from beginning to end.¹

This fundamental flaw was particularly painful because until 1295, the Ilkhanids stubbornly emphasised their relation with the empire and its sources of power in the very title that they bore: *il-khan* simply means ‘subordinate khan,’ dependent on the head of state.² Ghazan, Hülegü’s great-grandson, cut the remaining ideological links with the Great Khan in China in 1295³ and adapted his national doctrine to the new situation, saying that his ancestors had won the country with the sword and he would defend it with the sword.⁴ Neither his own bravura nor his ancestors’ bravery could provide a legal foundation that would make his claims acceptable to the other Chinggisid dynasties, and Ghazan acknowledged that the Ilkhanate was a usurper state.⁵

The legal questions surrounding the foundation of the Ilkhanate are far less important, however, than the practical consequences of the new state of affairs both within and beyond the nominal Chinggisid empire.

¹ As a constant source of violent conflict at the time and the subject of much propagandist misrepresentation, the matter is still not entirely clear today, shrouded by obscurities which prevent historians from reaching any consensus. It is especially difficult to unravel since, as well as the general lack of documentary evidence, there is the added inconvenience that the principle sources are strongly biased; these are the Persian court historians Juwayni and Rashid al-Din, who had access to the Iranian Mongol archives of state. On behalf of their patron power, they subtly omitted and falsified material in ways which still confuse the reader today.

² Jackson, “Dissolution,” pp. 231–232, for the most rigorous analysis of this question.

³ Spuler, *Mongolen*, p. 79.

⁴ In a message sent to the khan of the Golden Horde, Toqta, in 1303, in reply to his demand that the Transcaucasian provinces be ceded back to the *ulus* of Jochi; cf. al-Mufaddal (Tiesenhäusen, *Sbornik*, I, pp. 176–178), Spuler, *Horde*, pp. 80–81, Zakirov, *Otnosjeniya*, pp. 18–19.

⁵ Without considering this argument specifically, Jackson, “Dissolution,” p. 222, categorically and convincingly concludes that “the position of the Ilkhans of Iran was based upon an act of usurpation.”
From this perspective, the Ilkhanid usurpation was merely one expression of a deep-seated tendency which eroded the cohesion of the empire over the course of time. Each ulus inherently needed to take shape as an entity with its own goals and interests, which would only occasionally fit with those of ‘the empire.’ After 1241 the appearance of solidarity was preserved at considerable cost but beneath the surface, the chieftains of the various ulus were making and breaking alliances which did not bode well for the unity of the empire. The unexpected appearance of a new power centre, the Ilkhanate, irreparably destroyed the already fragile interior balance of the immense Chinggisid polity. The shock not only broke the empire apart into separate fragments, but also harshly lit up the antagonisms and bonds between them. Henceforward, these ties were to dictate how the new Mongol states would act and interact.

The forces shaping the Ilkhanate’s development were in place before it even came into being. The most important of these predetermining factors was the geopolitical setting, which was as compelling for the Ilkhan as for any other ruler of Persia. This was the enduring foundation on which the Mongol state in Persia built its position among the neighbouring powers. Two fundamentally hostile forces, the Golden Horde and the Mamluk sultanate, set the limits to the Ilkhanate’s destiny even before Hülegü could proclaim its existence.

By contrast, the entente cordiale of 1251 between Batu and Möngke, which had laid the political foundations for the great Westward expansion, was in the process of dissolving, and the first signs of this process were the disputes between Sarai and Qara Qorum over who would succeed Batu to the throne of the Golden Horde after his death in 1255.

His son Sartak supported the Jochid-Toluid alliance and received the yarlik of investiture from the Great Khan, but died of poison on his return from Mongolia in 1257. His uncle Berke was suspected of the murder, which according to an Armenian chronicler was felt as a grave blow by the Christians, whom he had protected, as much as by the brothers Hülegü and Möngke.7

After bloody internal struggles, a new political lineage emerged as the victor in the Golden Horde.8 The Christians mentioned by the Armenian

---

6 Cf. inter alia the conflict between Sarai and Qara Qorum in chapter 2.1.2.
7 Kirakos in Daulnier, “Mongols,” ii, 1858, p. 482.
8 Jüüzjäni/Raverty, ii, p. 1292.
source had most reason to lament the new orientation. The new khan, Berke, was a militant Muslim and as such virtually a defector, all the more dangerous because the Mongol army, including massive contingents of Jochid troops and numerous Christian units, was preparing to strike at Baghdad, the religious centre of Islam.

The Toluid leaders of the campaign to conquer the Muslim East, Möngke and Hülegü, were apprehensive, and Berke justified their fears with a typical episode, a notorious plot hatched with Muslim merchants who had easy access to the camps of his horde, on the road linking the Cuman steppe to Iran via the Derbent pass. This behaviour offended his brother Batu so much that he felt he had to send Berke far from the Volga as a punishment, where such contacts were no longer possible. Another event revealed the real risk: on Möngke’s death in 1259, the Eastern Muslims hurried to recognise their coreligionist, by then himself khan of the Golden Horde, as rightful lord. They clearly expected that he would rescue them from Hülegü, an enemy of their religion. In such a tense atmosphere, a mass anti-Toluid uprising in favour of Berke was entirely possible, since the overwhelming majority of the population saw him as their patron.

These tensions probably dated back to 1256, when Möngke recalled general Baiju, the Jochids’ man in the Transcaucasus, and gave the region to Hülegü to administer. The future Ilkhan then made Azerbaijan and Arran his main base of operations, a choice which was to have disastrous consequences for relations with his kinsmen in the Northern steppes.

---

9 Rubruck (Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana*, I, p. 209) asserts that Batu was displeased not only with the excessive tolls which Berke imposed on merchants heading for Sarai but also for his contacts with the *nuncii sarracenorum*; thus the punishment imposed not only had an economic cause and economic consequences, but also a political cause and effect (cf. on this topic Jackson, “Dissolution,” p. 225 note 166).

10 Jūzjānī/Raverty, II, p. 1292, says that once Möngke “had gone to Hell, the *khutba* [prayer on Friday] was read for Berke-khan in all the cities of East and West, in Iran, Transoxiana and Khorasan”—an honour awarded only to the sovereign.


These actions clearly cut across the Golden Horde's ambitions for hegemony in the Muslim East, and upset the balance of power between Sarai and Qara Qorum in favour of the Toluids.\textsuperscript{13} They may be understood as purely military in character, and valid only for the duration of hostilities.

Hülegü overturned the balance and unleashed a storm when he convoked the \textit{qurultai} and required his high-ranking supporters, from various \textit{ulus}, to recognise him as the ruler of Iran and of all the territories recently conquered in the joint campaign.\textsuperscript{14} The Jochid princes who formed part of the imperial army at the time resisted all pressure he brought on them and did not vote to legitimate this usurpation, an action which was revenged in the typical Mongol manner.\textsuperscript{15}

Not even the \textit{yarlik} granted by Qubilai as emperor could legitimate his brother's actions in claiming the shahs' throne:\textsuperscript{16} beginning with Berke, the khans of the Golden Horde stubbornly refused to recognise the ilkhans as legitimate rulers, and also refused to acknowledge the emperors as a source of authority, after the move from Mongolia to China.\textsuperscript{17} Chinggis Khan's empire was divided in the East as well, along the same line that had always divided the nomads from the settled peoples, and had ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{18}

There is no doubt that the ultimate goal for Berke and his heirs in the dispute with their Persian kinsmen was to destroy the Persian state and annex its territory.\textsuperscript{19} Even before the dispute took on the “classic” form

\textsuperscript{13} They also fed the suspicions of the Jochid chieftains, and it cannot be ruled out that the triumph of Berke's faction over those who wished for a Toluid alliance was a reaction to these losses.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. pp. 53–54.

\textsuperscript{15} Those who were able to flee to Egypt thus escaped summary execution, and where well treated there; a few were able to return to the Golden Horde via the Caucasian passes before they could be captured (Jackson, “Dissolution,” p. 232).

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 234–252.

\textsuperscript{17} Rashid al-Din wished to legitimise the state that he served by any means available, and argues that Möngke gave his prior consent to the proclamation of the Ilkhanate but that the Great Khan's decision was 'private' and thus secret. To support this claim (not in itself very helpful to his thesis), he felt the need to bring in an even weaker proof by arguing that the emperor never publicly ordered Hülegü to return to the ancestral homelands after he had completed his mission. Be all that as it may, it is clear that when Möngke died in 1259, his brother had not yet fully carried out whatever orders he had been given in 1251 (cf. ibid., p. 234).

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp. 227–230, compares the two processes and their mutual development.

\textsuperscript{19} The khan explained in a letter to the sultan of Cairo during one of several attempts to coordinate actions against the Ilkhanate that he planned to annex land as far as the Euphrates (cf. p. 91 note 137).
of an unshakeable rivalry between the Jochids and the Ilkhanids,\textsuperscript{20} Tabriz was at the centre of the conflict.\textsuperscript{21}

Despite all his omissions and oversights, al-'Umarī’s version of events, setting out a short history of the dispute, has the merit of locating the heart of the matter and identifying it as an economic conflict: once “nationalised” by Hülegū, the commercial and artisanal centre of Transcaucasia became the chief object of Jochid demands, from Berke’s time onward.\textsuperscript{22} Since Tabriz was the fixed focus of the conflict, there can be no doubt that “the problem of Eastern trade was the real cause of the enmity” between the two Western hordes.\textsuperscript{23}

The \textit{casus belli} was the subject of propagandist efforts at the time, and has been deliberately (and accidentally) misrepresented in both medieval chronicles and modern historiography. There can be no denying that other factors also contributed to the start of the war and its development, but when taken together with the principle cause, these were simply accessory elements, whether lasting or ephemeral. Such ideas included the legal situation,\textsuperscript{24} the quality of the pastureland in the Transcaucasus,\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. pp. 88–89.
\textsuperscript{21} On its value as a source of revenue for the Chinggisid monarchs, cf. pp. 47–49.
\textsuperscript{22} An account of the conflict can be found at al’Umarī (Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, pp. 217–218; ’Umarī/Lech, p. 144).
\textsuperscript{23} The remark is originally by P. Pelliot, quoted by Brătianu, "Vénitiens," p. 154.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. p. 47. According to the Mamluk chronicler Ibn Kathīr (Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, p. 273), Berke exclaimed when he saw those who had fallen in the fight against the Ilkhanids: "I am saddened that Mongols are killing one another, but what else is there to say about the one who betrayed even Chinggis Khan?"—meaning Hülegū, who ignored the instructions in the founding father’s will about the Transcaucasus.
\textsuperscript{25} 35 years after the outbreak of the war between Berke and Hūlegū, Marco Polo (Polo/Benedetto, p. 360) reported merely that it was fought over a province which both rulers wished to have. In turn, the Persian chronicler Waṣṣāf wrote that the interest of the Golden Horde Mongols in the lands between Derbent and Arran was due to revenues they would bring but also to the abundance of pastureland, ideal forwintering- over their flocks and herds, and that this was the cause of their war against the Ilkhanids (Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, II, pp. 80–81; cf. d’Ohsson, \textit{Histoire}, III, p. 379). The same reasoning is found in Grekov, Yakubovskiy, \textit{Orda}, p. 76; Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, p. 5, underlines the economic aspects and particularly “the geographic situation and favourable climate, the natural riches” without mentioning the commercial significance of Tabriz; we should remark here that the value of the pastureland was not the determining factor that made the Jochid khans fight so long and so fiercely for the Transcaucasus, as is proven by the circumstance that even when they held the pastures they did not spend their time there.
the unequal division of the spoils of war, confessional differences and intrigue.

The actual confrontation between Berke and Hulegu was preceded by the tensions surrounding the election of a successor to the imperial throne after the Great Khan Mongke’s death. This was an unusually heated contest, for when the Golden Horde was pushed out of Azerbaijan and Arran this clearly showed that the ulus of Jochi had become marginalised in the Chinggisid world. Berke’s horde lost influence drastically by contrast with its importance in Batu’s time, due to the redistribution of forces and the shift in the centres of power within the vast Mongol territories. The duumvirate of Batu and Mongke had fixed the Cuman ulus as a power in the Chinggisid Empire, but was replaced by the entirely Toluid axis of the brothers Qubilai and Hulegu.

The signs of this dangerous development could already be seen soon after Batu’s death, and became clearer after Mongke’s death four years later: to block such a tendency, Berke threw all his strength into the

26 Al-Mufaddal (Tisenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 177) and Jūzjānī (ibid., II, p. 19) mention the unjust division of spoils to the detriment of the Jochids as the only cause of the conflict between Berke and Hulegu; the ilkhan had sent only gifts to Sarai, rather than the one-fifth of spoils agreed in advance. Whatever the importance of this factor in the Volga khan’s original decision to go to war, over the following decades it obviously lost its edge. This however did not make the struggle between the two Mongol states any less fierce at the end than it had been at the start.

27 The original cause for the break with Hulegu was not Berke’s conversion to Islam, although Muslim sources attempted to argue this after the event. Al-‘Umarī for instance argues that the khan of the Golden Horde had been against the project of conquering the Muslim East, which cannot be ruled out, but we should bear in mind that his close relations with co-religionists were not to his brother Batu’s tastes either (cf. above, p. 63 note 9). The Syrian source is even less credible when he reports a conversation where Berke refuses Mongke’s order to attack the Caliph (Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 223–224). Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir, the official who edited the correspondence between Berke and the Mamluk sultan Baybars, also stressed the religious nature of the war (ibid., p. 101). There is certainly no doubt that once it had started, the war acquired virulently religious dimensions, and that in attacking his cousin Hulegu, Berke presented himself as a champion of jihād, an approach that the Cairo powers appreciated and encouraged (Baybars/ibid., p. 96, al-Mufaddal/ibid., p. 178, al-Dahhabi/ibid., p. 201). These sources wave away the objection that the Muslim khan allowed Jochid troops in Hulegu’s army to storm Baghdad. As it happens, the conflict continued unabated even after the two ulus involved switched religious allegiance; in 1302, the shamanist Toqa made exactly the same demands of the Muslim ilkhan Ghazan as his predecessor Berke had made of Hulegu (Rashid al-Din/Spuler, Horde, pp. 80–81).

28 Some sources mention behind-the-scenes manoeuvring by the Chinggisids or by Batu’s widow, who supposedly urged the first ilkhan to aim at the throne of Sarai as well; such plots would not have been the principal cause of the war but rather, as in so many comparable cases, a secondary manifestation of the deep crisis between the two ulus.

election of the new emperor—a tactic which his brother had successfully used in 1251. His ties to the nomad factions meant that he supported Arigh Böke, the preferred steppe candidate, who set himself up as a defender of Mongolian tradition against the “traitor” Qubilai in China. The latter however won the election with the help of Hülegü, the other great sedentary ruler. Berke and the equally conservative Chaghataids refused to recognise Qubilai, at his court in Beijing, as the supreme authority, but this was a poor consolation for the Jochids which did nothing to restore their lost Transcaucasian territories or to lessen their isolation in the Cuman steppe.

After this defeat in the proxy conflict of the election, Berke’s final move at the bilateral level was to send an embassy to his rival’s court in Persia. Hülegü’s response was decisive: the two envoys sent to convey the Volga khan’s demands were executed. The ilkhans then underlined his policy with further bloody deeds, when three commanders of the Jochid contingent which had served in the campaign in Iraq and Syria were accused of treason, and met the same fate as the envoys. After these insults, Berke had no other path open to him in pressing his Transcaucasian claims than to take up arms.

The earliest Jochid expedition against the Ilkhanate probably took place in the winter of 1262/3. On hearing that his envoys had been killed, Berke ordered a general mobilisation and set out for enemy territory. Although it seems that the Cuman troops enjoyed a victory, they

33 Understandably, the khans of the Golden Horde were always seen either as petitioners or as aggressors; for some general remarks on the topic, see Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 54–55.
34 The wider impact of these first battles between Mongols in the Western parts of the former empire must have been uncommonly strongly felt, judging by the unusually frequent reports in contemporary sources: Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 70–72 (Ibn Wāsīf) and 273 (Ibn Kathīr), II, pp. 74–75 (Rashid al-Dīn), 81 (Waṣṣāf), 219 (Hamd Allāh Qazwīnī) and 228 (the History of Sheikh Uwais); Polo/Benedetto, p. 360. They mistakenly stretch the duration of the war, which in fact only lasted a few weeks, from 1255 to 1265 and their reports conflict in several aspects. Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 11, confines events to the period 1261–1263 with more justification than the assertion of Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 77, that “the first major encounter took place in 1263–1264 near the left bank of the Kura, and ended in total defeat for Hülegū.”
were not able to hold the Caucasian lands beyond the Kura.\textsuperscript{35} Also in vain was the campaign against Hülegü’s successor Abaqa in 1265–1267, during which Noghai lost an eye but covered himself in glory, whilst Berke, identified with the cause, died.\textsuperscript{36}

The profound significance in these first military clashes between the two Mongol successor states lies in the patterns of behaviour that they created: Berke’s heirs would always appear as the aggressors, while Hülegü’s heirs were always the defenders of the Transcaucasus, and of Tabriz at its centre, the priceless Silk Road city.\textsuperscript{37}

The smouldering conflict over Transcaucasia had repercussions as vast as they were long-lasting, both political\textsuperscript{38} and commercial,\textsuperscript{39} both within and beyond the vast Chinggisid realm.

Seen in these terms, the only comparable source of conflict was the confluence of the Silk Road and the Iraqi spice route, in Cilician Armenia.

### 3.2 Cilician Armenia in the Ilkhanid-Mamluk Struggle for the Fertile Crescent

The economic value of the Eastern Mediterranean coast and its Iraqi hinterland, along with the geographical shape, are well reflected in the name given to this productive region, the Fertile Crescent. It was certainly not the predominantly arid landscape which made this region a promised land. Its particular attraction was rather due to its position on the confluence of all the great transcontinental trade routes. The Fertile Crescent was a true centre of trade, collecting and dispersing the products of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} The most convincing reconstruction of events is that of Spuler, “Außenpolitik,” pp. 27–28; Hülegü set out to meet the invaders in August 1262. The Ilkhanid vanguard was destroyed in October or November, but a short while later Berke’s general Noghai also suffered a defeat, allowing an Ilkhanid counterstrike at the Derbent pass in December. After the Mongols of Persia crossed the Terek, luck favoured the Jochids once more and they bore down on their enemies in January 1263; despite heavy defeat and massive losses, the Ilkhanid army dug in on the fortified right bank of the Kura and resisted the assaults that followed, so that the border between the two states remained unchanged (cf. also Spuler, \textit{Horde}, pp. 42–44, 50).
\item \textsuperscript{36} “So blieb Berke der Erfolg versagt, den er als Hauptaufgabe seines Lebens betrachtet hatte: die Widereroberung des Kaukasus und der angrenzenden Länder” (Spuler, \textit{Horde}, p. 51).
\item \textsuperscript{37} “Damit war der endgültige Zustand erreicht, der sich in der Folgezeit als unabänderlich erwies” (ibid.).
\item \textsuperscript{38} Cf. chapter 3.3.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Cf. chapter 3.4.
\end{itemize}
three continents of the known world. Outside of this region, only Constantinople enjoyed such a privileged position.

The rulers of the Middle East and of Byzantium also played a predestined role as mediators. Their tenacity in defending the region was matched only by the attackers’ zeal to take it, whether such attacks came from East or West. Such determination is explained by the region’s huge revenue-generating capacity. The Crusades, especially those of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, are an example, and scholars are ever more convinced that these too were primarily an economic phenomenon.

The Fertile Crescent also worked its charms in the other direction, where the Chinggisids were equally beguiled. Spuler revealed this irresistible attraction in his unsurpassed geopolitical sketch of the Ilkhanate, the basic lines of which are set out below.

The Ilkhanids took over all attributes of the Persian shahs. They ruled approximately the same territory that the Persian state’s borders had always enclosed, in ancient and more recent times. Given that the geopolitical situation remained unchanged, their fundamental obligations remained those of any national ruler: to defend the territories against invaders, who exercised constant pressure on Iran from the North, from Central Asia as from the Cuman steppe. This latter concern was always imperative for the Ilkhanids, since the Transcaucasian lands were the buffer for the core of their state.

In contrast to their primarily defensive policy in the North, the Ilkhanids followed a policy of active conquest to the South-West of their territory,

40 In all likelihood, both the pyramids of Egypt and Babylon’s architectural wonders were built with money drawn from the Indian Ocean-Mediterranean trade!
41 See Ehrenkreutz, “Implications,” pp. 337–338, for a particularly explicit statement of this view: “Various other goals or manifestations of a political, ideological or religious nature were usually subordinate to the overriding pursuit of economic gains. […] The establishment of the County of Edessa and of the Principality of Antioch opened possibilities of penetration into Upper Mesopotamia, permitting economic participation of interdictory intervention in the flow of traffic between the Mediterranean and Persia and the Persian Gulf. It is in this perspective that one can appreciate the full significance of crusader pressure against Aleppo, of the abortive siege of Damascus by the Second Crusade, and, above all, of the century-long efforts to conquer Egypt. Even before the campaigns against Egypt began, the Crusaders had established a chain of strategic fortresses, stretching from the Mediterranean to Aylah on the Gulf of Aqaba, which allowed them to control the movement of the caravans between Syria and Sinai, as well as to derive monopolistic benefits from the flow of trade along the Syro-Palestinian littoral.”
42 Ciocîltan, “Kreuzzüge,” sets out the elements common to the Crusades and the Mongol expansion, which attacked the Fertile Crescent with equal fervour, from opposite directions and equipped with complete different ideologies.
toward the Fertile Crescent. In this they resembled their kinsmen to the North, whose ambitions took them in the same direction. Here, to the South-West, Mamluk Syria and Palestine guarded the approach to the Mediterranean. Access via Anatolia and Armenia was clearly not enough. Their goal was always to conquer Egypt as well as Syria, for the Mongol rulers of Persia knew that these two countries were geopolitically linked. The ilkhans faced the choice of either ruling Egypt or giving up their access to the sea.

Just as the geopolitical forces which shaped Chinggisid policy in Persia were constant, so the results of their exertions were always the same. All attacks on Transoxiana and all invasions by the Golden Horde were beaten back, but similarly, every Ilkhanid offensive beyond Persia’s traditional borders in the South-West was thwarted. These were the three constants of foreign policy for the Mongol state in Persia.43

In setting out the situation of the Fertile Crescent, and underlining the strategic connection between Egypt and Syria, Spuler seems to have overlooked Syria’s prime strategic function for Cilician Armenia: Syria became the main theatre of war, and here the ilkhans tried to defeat Mamluk Egypt. It was also here that they lost Cilician Armenia to the same enemy.

The Cilician Christian kingdom functioned as the “entryway to the Silk Road,” which raised the stakes of the conflict enormously.44 It was in the ilkhans’ interest that the great commercial artery continue to flow to their advantage, which in turn meant that they had to maintain control over its end point as well. At the same time the Mamluks were determined to capture and exploit this terminus: if they could not do this, the laws of competition demanded that they destroy it.

The first link in the chain of events that made up the Chinggisid struggle with the Mamluks for control of the Fertile Crescent was the battle of ‘Ayn Jalūt in September 1260.45 Although the sultan of Egypt had defeated a detachment of the Mongol imperial army at a time when the Ilkhanate as such did not yet exist, once Hülegü had founded the new state he

43 Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 54–55. The German scholar further concludes that the Mongols’ powerful drive toward the Mediterranean was a matter of Machtpolitik, which is not in itself false, to the extent that every state is a power structure. In this instance though the definition is too broad, and completely overlooks the emphatic commercial dimension of their goal.

44 The phrase is from Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 73 (chapter ‘La Petite-Arménie, considérée comme vestibule de l’Asie centrale’).

45 Cf. pp. 57–58.
took the defeat to heart and set out to prove that it was a mere bump in the road: he was quick to return to Syria, where he reoccupied Aleppo, but his forces were once again defeated in the battle at Homs in December, and withdrew Eastward across the Euphrates. Hülegü’s forces were exhausted by the war with the Jochids that followed, and until the end of his life he was never again able to confront the powerful sultan al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars on the battlefield.

The first years of the reign of Hülegü’s son Aqa were similarly overstretched, since Berke invaded the Ilkhanate in 1265 in an attempt to take advantage of the difficulties that always attend the beginning of a reign. Hardly had this incursion been checked than Aqa was obliged to send his forces East, where the Chaghataids invaded in 1267. It took all of Aqa’s attention to drive off the invaders from Khorasan, and occupied him until 1270.

The Mamluk sultan made good use of the decade’s delay that his Persian enemy granted him. First of all, Baybars’ troops besieged the Crusader fortress at Antioch and laid waste to its environs in 1262, and in the following year the Muslim army arrived at the walls of Acre. The attacks intensified once the Mamluk sultan learned of the Crusader alliance with the Mongols. Caesarea was conquered in 1265 and razed to the ground, while Arsuf was occupied and fortified. Acre’s outpost fortress at Safad followed in 1266, and became a watch post barring the way to the Crusaders’ foothold on the Mediterranean shore.

Knowing that the overlords of Cilician Armenia were busy fighting Jochid invaders, in 1266 the Mamluks launched an expedition against

---

47 Cf. above, pp. 67–68.
48 The only successful campaign on this front led to the occupation of the great commercial centre of Upper Mesopotamia, Mosul (Rashid al-Din/Quatremère, pp. 380–388, Maqrīzī/Quatremère, I/1, pp. 180–181, Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 56–57, Khowaiter, Baybars, p. 53); the siege of al-Bīra [= Birecik] on Syria’s Eastern frontier at Crusader instigation in winter 1264/5 was a failure, since the sultan relieved this vitally important strategic point and then refortified it to such an extent that it became even more of a thorn in the side of Ilkhanid efforts in Syria (Khowaiter, Baybars, pp. 54–55).
49 Cf. above, pp. 67–68.
50 Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 61–63.
51 Khowaiter, Baybars, pp. 80–82.
52 Ibid., pp. 83, 87–92; this drastic measure was systematically applied to deprive the Crusaders of any ports which could supply them with reinforcements from the West; a different fate was reserved for the fortresses of the interior, which were transformed into Mamluk bases (p. 86).
the Armenian kingdom that met little resistance.\footnote{Ibid., 89.} The destruction was so great that the kingdom of Cilicia never completely recovered.\footnote{The resistance led by the Constable of the kingdom, Sempad, was rapidly crushed, but his losses were unusually grave; Thoros, son of king Hethum I, fell in battle, while the king’s brother Leon was taken prisoner. The Mamluks set up their camp in the royal capital at Sis, where they raided the whole country for twenty days running (ibid., pp. 92–93).} The victors imposed conditions that were similarly harsh: as well as paying a ruinous tribute, the Armenians were obliged not to rebuild the fortresses that fell in the war, and not to build new ones. The only consolation for Abaqa, who had looked on powerless while disaster struck his vassal state, came from two Armenian embassies of 1266 and 1267, when Het-hum’s envoys assured the ilkhan that despite the catastrophe, their king remained unshaken in his loyalty.\footnote{Smpat/Dédéyan, p. 120.}

The favorable conditions offered by the fighting in Eastern Iran from 1267 to 1270 also brought other victories for the Mamluks.\footnote{Jaffa was taken and razed to the ground in 1267, and Tyre was neutralised by a ten-year armistice imposed in the same year; the year 1268 was even more rewarding, when Baghras and Antioch fell, leaving Bohemond with only Tripoli, which forced the prince to seek a negotiated peace with Baybars (Khowaiter, \textit{Baybars}, pp. 94–100).} At the end of the decade, though, it seemed that anti-Mamluk campaigns were gaining strength, and that at last the Mongols of Persia would be able to coordinate their actions with the Eastern Mediterranean crusaders. Abaqa heard good news from all sides.

The Great Khan in China had finally succeeded in taming Jochid hostility to their kinsmen in Persia—a diplomatic coup that was as unlikely as it was unprecedented: Berke’s successor on the throne at Sarai, Möngke Temür, was more flexible not least because he was not a Muslim, and in 1269/70 accepted the armistice that Qubilai brokered with Abaqa.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 56, 61; Baybars was wary of the peace and from this moment on began to encourage the rise to power of Noghai, a convert to Islam, as an instrument against the ilkhans.}

At the same time the ilkhan’s embassies to the papal court began to bear fruit. To an extent, his message had revived crusading zeal at the courts of Aragon, France and England, although joint operations with the ilkhans were never more than sporadic and inefficient.\footnote{Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, p. 189.} The potential threat that they posed far outweighed any actual accomplishments—
an imagined threat that provoked a commensurate response from the Mamluks.\textsuperscript{59}

For the sultan, neutralizing one of the most important Crusader positions was a long-fought victory: after these latest setbacks, Western Christendom’s enormous efforts to sustain footholds in Outremer lost their purpose.

Although King Hethum had unsuccessfully tried to mediate between Abaqa and Baybars in 1267, and the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos did the same in 1268/9, the struggle for the Fertile Crescent resumed, and the Ilkhan found that circumstances were much less favorable now that his enemy had taken firm hold of Syria. Having thus won the initiative, Sultan Baybars (d. 1277) devoted most of the last years of his life to extending Mamluk power Northward.

Unlike the Christian kingdom of Cilician Armenia, Muslim Seljuk Anatolia resented the Ilkhanid yoke, and saw the sultan of Cairo as their natural protector. The first signs of a rapprochement here date from 1271/2, but Baybars only took action in 1275 when he suddenly invaded Cilician Armenia in order to make it a bridgehead toward the neighbouring Turkish sultanate. Although their coreligionists indeed greeted the Mamluks as liberators, the 1277 campaign in Asia Minor did not fulfill Cairo’s hopes: the Seljukid state could not be dislodged from Persian “infidel” hegemony.\textsuperscript{60}

Despite this success, the final outcome of the Ilkhanid-Mamluk struggle for the Fertile Crescent in 1260–1277 did not favor the Mongols. Not only did they fail to conquer Egypt and Syria, but they were even in danger of losing the greatest asset with which they had entered the fray: although the Mamluk campaign into Anatolia of 1277 was more of a warning shot than anything else, Baybars’ invasions of Cilician Armenia in 1266 and

\textsuperscript{59} The first to respond was James I, who in 1269 took ship from Barcelona for Acre, though only part of his troops ever reached Syria; several units of Ilkhanid cavalry sent to meet the expeditionary force were easily crushed by the Mamluks, while the disembarked Aragonese troops, together with the garrison at Acre, were intercepted trying to join forces with the Mongols and met the same fate. The French crusade led by Louis IX went astray quite early on and came to grief in Tunisia in 1270. Crown prince Edward of England at least managed to distract the Mamluks enough that they interrupted the siege of Tripoli, though the Mongols who came to his aid were driven away. After this debacle, in 1271 Bohemond concluded a ten-year truce with Baybars, as did the defenders of Acre (Khowaiter, \textit{Baybars}, pp. 61–62, 105–14).

\textsuperscript{60} After the Mongol troops broke the siege of Ablastin, Baybars took the Seljukid throne at Caesarea; this was a mostly symbolic gesture, like the occupation of the country, since the Sultan ordered a speedy withdrawal, fearing that the Mongol troops Abaqa had dispatched may be able to cut him off in Syria (ibid., pp. 62–63, 72–76; Thorau, \textit{Sultan}, pp. 281–290).
1275 showed that the ilkhans were in no position to protect their loyal but distant vassals. Seen in the starkest terms, it is easy to understand that the Silk Road was greatly threatened by the constantly shifting balance of power between these great competitors.\(^{61}\)

The prospects for the future were even more worrying than the state of affairs in 1277. The renewed Mamluk offensive in Cilician Armenia in 1279 was the earliest major initiative by the Egyptian state\(^{62}\)—proof that even after the energetic Sultan Baybars’ death two years earlier, capturing the Mediterranean terminus of the Silk Road was still Cairo’s first priority.

The Ilkhan Abaqa took advantage of the temporary truce in the North-East, and responded swiftly to his enemies’ actions: Mongol troops entered Syria in 1280, together with contingents from the Armenian kingdom, and took Damascus by fire and the sword.\(^{63}\) This raid was merely the prelude to the larger campaign of 1281, when the entire Mongol army returned to Syria, reinforced by Georgian, Armenian and Crusader forces, intending to crush the Mamluk army of Sultan al-Malik al-Mansur Qalâwûn in open battle. A decisive battle was indeed fought near Homs, which after initial successes for the Mongols and their auxiliaries, ended with a new and decisive Mamluk victory.\(^{64}\)

The Ilkhan Abaqa, steadfast protector of the Christians and fervent advocate of an alliance with Western powers against Egypt, died on 1st April 1282, still in shock from this disastrous turn of events.\(^{65}\) With his

\(^{61}\) Canard, “Royaume,” pp. 242–243, gives “la maîtrise d’une route vers l’Anatolie centrale” as one of the primary objectives of Baybars’ invasion of 1275, and this route is none other than the Silk Road (cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 112); the Egyptians’ ultimate goal in the region is well illustrated by the campaign of 1277 that followed, which Spuler, Mongolen, p. 66, considers “ein Versuch, die Mongolen gänzlich vom Westen und vom Meere abzuschließen.” Well before these scholars, Sanudo/Bongars, p. 7, explained: Item si petetur, quare soldanus Babiloniae toties percurrit provinciam Armeniae [. . .], respondeo, propter tria. Primum est ut auferendo magnum cursum mercationum de Armenia in terra sua trahat. The accuracy of Marino Sanudo’s judgement is also confirmed from the opposing camp: “Al-Dawădārī berichtet von den Plänen des Nāẓir al-Khāṣṣ Karīm al-Dīn, die als Reaktion auf das abendländische Bemühen, den Handel mit Ägypten zu boikotieren und die Handelsbeziehungen mit dem Orient über die Straßen durch Mittelasien abzuwickeilen, zu verstehen sind. Er wollte den Hafen in Latakia in Syrien so aufbauen, dass er genauso wichtig wie Alexandrien würde. Latakia sollte den armenischen Umschlagplatz lähmen. Das Projekt scheiterte [. . .]” (Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 67 note 67).

\(^{62}\) Qal‘at al-Rūm, seat of the Armenian Catholicos, was laid waste (Canard, “Royaume,” p. 243).

\(^{63}\) Ibid., pp. 244–245.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., and Spuler, Mongolen, p. 67, Soranzo, Papato, pp. 241–244.

\(^{65}\) According to Spuler, Mongolen, p. 69, the ilkhan died “unter dem Eindruck der Niederlage [. . .] im Säufervorhahn”; cf. ibid., pp. 185–92 (chapter ‘Die Verbindungen der Mongolen zum Abendlande’), and Soranzo, Papato, pp. 241–244.
death, the policy which Hülegü had initiated two decades earlier ended in utter ruin: the defeat at Homs had merely proven, once more, that the Mongols could not win Syria even with Christian aid, and the hope of some future victory—still undimmed even in 1281—was now shown to be entirely illusory.

The realist argument seems to have contributed decisively to a radical shift in Ilkhanid policy. As ruler, Aḥmad Tegüder made a decisive break with tradition and came to represent the alternative.66

The first to feel the effects of the change were the Christian protégés of the previous regime, systematically persecuted by the new ilkhan, a Muslim and declared “friend of all the faithful.”67 Aḥmad Tegüder did not seek merely to strengthen his position internally by taking such a stance: although it is unclear whether he intended to become caliph of Baghdad as well as Mongol ruler of Persia, which would have made him the figurehead of the whole Muslim world,68 it is quite certain that he had chosen to rethink ties with the Mamluks on a new religious footing.

To this end, he sent an embassy to Cairo in September 1282 to tell the Sultan, Qalāwūn, that he had embraced Islam and that his intentions were entirely peaceful. The news was coolly received in Egypt, where his proposal to form an alliance met with no response.69 This refusal represented the failure of Ilkhan Aḥmad’s political and confessional experiment.70 It would have unexpected repercussions, internally and externally.

The only positive and mutually advantageous result was the opening of border crossings for merchants from the two hostile states.71 This

---

67 Among other sources, the account of the tribulations of the Nestorian patriarch Mar Yahballaha III is especially revealing (Yahballaha/Chabot, pp. 45 ff.).
68 This at least is the opinion of the Nestorian monk Rabban Bar Sauma, one of the best-informed although not necessarily most objective sources on the persecution of Christians in the Ilkhanate from 1282 (ibid., p. 50); in any case, Aḥmad Tegüder took the title of Sultan, an eminently Muslim usage, in order to underline his Islamic identity and allegiances (Maqrīzī/Quatremère, II/1, p. 57; Soranzo, Papato, p. 250).
69 See the contents of the message, and the Sultan’s response, in Maqrīzī/Quatremère, II/1, pp. 160–162.
70 Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 69–70.
71 This was one proposal from the ilkhan which the sultan did accept (Bar Hebraeus/Budge, I, p. 467; Mufaḍḍal/Blochet, II, p. 506); Ilisch, Geschichte, pp. 58–59: “Dann wurde den mongolischen Grenztruppen befohlen, die Grenzen zu öffnen und den Handelsverkehr in das und aus dem Mamluksultanat frei passieren zu lassen. […] Das wichtigste, unmittelbar wirksame Ergebnis war der Befehl des Mamluksultans an die Statthalter von ar-Raḥba, al-Bira und ‘Ayn Tāb und an die Grenztruppen, auch ihrerseits die Straßen an den Grenzen dem Verkehr zu öffnen.”
gain, such as it was, could not even begin to outweigh the outright losses incurred by the Persian Mongols in their policy of reconciliation with Egypt, a policy which they pursued at almost any price: the Muslim Ilkhan did not hesitate to sacrifice the Christian kingdom of Cilicia’s fundamental interests, nor in doing so to offer the ancestral enemy a vital artery which fed his own state.

Cilician Armenia was thus abandoned and without hope of support from its nominal suzerain, even if this fond and oft-disappointed hope had previously been the constant basis of its foreign policy: between 1282 and 1284, it found itself under enormous pressure from the South. The Mam-luk army invaded in full strength in 1283 and devastated the length and breadth of the kingdom after brief resistance, as far as Ayas, the famous Silk Road port city on the Mediterranean\(^\text{72}\) which it despoiled mercilessly. Further raids continued in the following year.\(^\text{73}\)

Finding himself at the mercy of the Mamluks, King Leon III bowed to necessity and in 1285 made an act of submission to Sultan Qalāwūn. The conditions imposed on the Armenians were unusually harsh, and were to be valid for ten years: they contained a clause which explicitly recognized the change of suzerain and acknowledged that the principle purpose of the “protection” offered by the sultan was to defend the kingdom against “the long arms and superior might of the Tartars.” The material profits of the kingdom were also accordingly redirected: the annual tribute was fixed at the exorbitant sum of one million dirhems, destined no longer for Tabriz but for Cairo.\(^\text{74}\) The chief secretary of the Mamluk chancery was the chronicler Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, who set out Egypt’s gains in having the Cilician kingdom as a vassal: the tribute which could be extracted was much greater than any profit from conquering and annexing Armenia,

\(^\text{72}\) Cf. the chapter ‘Spese che si fanno ordinatamente a conducere mercantantia da Laiazo [= Ayas] d’Erminia infino a Torissi per terra’ in Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 28–29; Polo/Benedetto, p. 13, was also palpably impressed by the high volume of trade in the city, which he visited in 1271. Large quantities of Chinese silk (seta catuya) were already being shipped through Ayas to Genoa by 1257–1258, whence they were then re-exported across the West (Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 550–551, Bautier, “Rélations,” pp. 290–291, Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 215, Otten-Froux, “Àias,” passim). The commentary of Heyd, History, II, pp. 72–92, contains a thorough overview of Cilicia’s great commercial emporium, and after the publication of his monumental monograph further documents came to light which were comprehensively assessed by Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 280–282.


\(^\text{74}\) The treaty is published in Makrīzī/Quatremère, II/1, pp. 166–171, 201–202, and Canard, “Royaume,” pp. 248–258 (a new translation with commentary); the tribute paid to the Ilkhanate in any one year had amounted to 30,000 dinars (Spuler, Mongolen, p. 272; cf. also pp. 251 ff., the chapter ‘Geldverhältnisse’).
which the conquerors would have had to rebuild at their own expense.\textsuperscript{75} This calculation is one more proof of the importance of economic stakes in the dispute between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ilkhanate for control of Cilician Armenia and its revenues.

The Egyptian secretary’s calculations undoubtedly had their parallels in the Ilkhanate, where Ahmad Tegüder’s Islamophile policies were judged and found wanting. As well as the loss of Cilician contributions to the Ilkhanid state treasury, his reckless attitude had a potentially much more worrying effect: he had given the sultans the power to choke off the final stretch of the Silk Road any time they chose.\textsuperscript{76} It was in the nature of things that if war were to resume, his enemy would use this economic weapon, whose importance need not be emphasized. Ahmad Tegüder’s adventures stirred up tempestuous reactions in the Ilkhanate, which finally crystallized into a new and diametrically opposed policy.

Prince Arghun emerged as the victor from his confrontation with the discredited Islamic party.\textsuperscript{77} In 1284 he began a reign which would remain true to its founding principles until it ended in 1291: it began as a reaction to the enormous losses of the last two years, and unwaveringly followed the old course of traditional Persian Mongol policy.

The touchstone of his reign was alliance with the West. His envoy to the kingdoms of Western Christendom was the monk Rabban Bar Sauma, who revealed a fully-formed programme of policy when he wrote down the Ilkhan’s thoughts: “This prince loved the Christians with all his heart, and planned to enter Palestine and Syria to conquer them and rule there; but he said: ‘If the Christian kings of the West do not come to my aid, I will never fulfil my desire.’”\textsuperscript{78} Although it was not new, the ilkhan’s strategic consideration was very trenchantly expressed: to destroy the Mamluk sultan through simultaneous attacks from the Mediterranean and from across the Euphrates.\textsuperscript{79}

When Arghun sent out his envoys to mobilize the Western powers in a common cause,\textsuperscript{80} their attempts did not have the result that he hoped for:

\textsuperscript{75} Canard, “Royaume,” p. 249.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p. 259, on the commercial regulations of the Armenian-Mamluk treaty.
\textsuperscript{77} Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, pp. 70–72.
\textsuperscript{78} Yahballaha/Chabot, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{79} The idea is found in Arghun’s letter to the princes of the West: \textit{Terra Scami [\textit{= Syria]} videlicet \textit{Egipti inter nos et vos estrengebimus}. […] \textit{Saracenis de medio nostri levabimus} (ibid., p. 90).
\textsuperscript{80} The first embassy (after that of Hülęgü in 1262, cf. p. 243 note 400) left Iran in 1285, and included the Genoese banker Tommaso degli Anfusi; the abundant bibliography on this
the crusading impulse was still suffering from the setbacks of preceding
years, and was fading fast at the courts of England and France, while the
pope confined himself to spiritual matters in his reply to the ilkhan.81

Yet when Arghun sent out his ambassador Rabban Bar Sauma to call
for aid in the winter of 1287/1288, the Genoese answered with great and
unexpected enthusiasm.82 The great majority of the population supported
the Ligurian republic’s decision, which so starkly contrasted not only with
the paralyzing skepticism of Catholic Europe but with their own habitual
cautions, which since 1261 had kept them from any involvement with cru-
sading actions against the Mamluk sultan.83 The Nestorian monk’s mes-
sage by no means unleashed a late wave of crusading fervor in Genoa.
Rather, the citizens of the commune warmly welcomed Arghun’s call to
arms because it offered them the chance to safeguard their own consider-
able interests in the Silk Road.

The Genoese probably represented the single largest group of merchants
active on the Ayas-Tabriz route,84 and keenly felt the indignities to which

sustained contact can for the most part be found in Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 190–191, and
has been supplemented by Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 216–217; cf. also a brief survey of these
envoys in Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 561–565. Among other propaganda efforts, the ilkhan
struck coins with an image of the Holy Tomb and exempted Christians from the poll tax
(Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 149).

81 Cf. Spuler, Mongolen, pp. 190–191; Soranzo, pp. 265–266; Lupprician, Beziehungen,
pp. 245–246; Brâtianu, Recherches, pp. 185–186; Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 216–217. The mood
in the West is summed up by Caro, Genua, II, p. 120: “Der alte Eifer für die Kreuzzugsidéee
hatte seine Stärke eingebüßt.”

82 Yahballaha/Chabot, p. 76: “When the Genoese learnt that an envoy had come from
King Arghun, their ruler and all the people went out to meet him and lead him into the
Ciocîltan, “Genoa,” pp. 283 ff.).

83 For the reasons behind this attitude, see chapter 3.3.1.

84 Desimoni, “Actes,” passim, who gives (pp. 434–437) a short history of the presence of
Ligurian merchants in Cilician Armenia; cf. also Otten-Froux, “Aias,” pp. 148 ff. The earli-
est indication of Genoese involvement in Ilkhanate trade is from 1280, when the Genoese
Luchetto de Recco demands that his compatriot Lamba Doria settle a debt with him,
either at Sivas or at Tabriz (Brâtianu, Recherches, pp. 314–315); it should be noted how-
ever that this first document does not prove that they actually went to Persia, merely that
they made a contract in Genua in which they declared their intention to go to the places
mentioned. After a silence of more than five years, the sources then note a veritable explo-
sion in the number of Genoese in Persia (Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 561–570; on p. 561 the
author asserts, with no documentary support: “Les nouvelles deviennent beaucoup plus
fréquentes après 1282”). The silence in the sources is otherwise unsurprising: only after the
persecution of Christians under Ahmad Tegüder in 1282–1284 had come to an end (Spuler,
Mongolen, p. 69) could the Genoese have founded a colony under Arghun, who not only
protected their commercial interests but also recruited his principal agents for the alli-
ance with the West from their ranks (Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 563–564, Sinor, “Mongols,”
pp. 532–533, and below, chapter 3.3.2).
the Mamluks had subjected Cilician Armenia when the kingdom surrendered to Cairo in 1285. This action completely changed the conditions of trade in the 'entryway' to the Silk Road and caused considerable harm to the Genoese, when we consider that after the Venetians and Pisans had expelled them from Acre in 1258, Ayas remained the only Eastern Mediterranean port open to them.85

The situation was all the more worrying given that in 1285 the second prop for Genoese power in the Levant, Constantinople, was seriously threatened. The Venetians had obtained freedom of navigation in the Black Sea by a treaty with the Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II.86 This essentially annulled the privilege of Nymphaion whereby Michael VIII Palaiologos had reserved the right of navigation to his Genoese allies in 1261. Without this legal support, the Genoese found that they had to defend their position in the Black Sea against their rivals by main force.87

These convergent factors threatened future Genoese participation in trade along the great routes controlled by the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde, and only the scale of these threats can explain why the Republic's leading merchants took on the enormous risk of heeding Arghun's call and attacking Egypt. They must have been aware that if they could not utterly cripple the enemy who blocked their way to Asia and the Indian Ocean, his revenge would be terrible, a catastrophe for the whole of their Levantine trade. If they failed, the embargo on Cilician Armenia and their inevitable difficulties in the Black Sea would be compounded by a ban on trading in Alexandria and other Mamluk ports in Egypt and Syria, which could easily have been the coup de grâce for the Ligurian republic.88

The Armenian-Mamluk and Venetian-Byzantine treaties of 1285 thus each strengthened the effect of the other, forcing the Genoese into a position where they saw Arghun's appeal early in 1287 as the salvation they needed. We may judge the desperate mood in the Ligurian city from the

85 Cf. Brătianu, Recherches, p. 58, Lopez, Genova, pp. 131–135. Their possessions on the coast of Syria where they occasionally traded (Tyre, Gibelet, Beirut) could not compensate the loss, to which they had not reconciled themselves even three decades later; an unsuccessful attack on Acre by five Genoese galleys is recorded in 1287 (Pistarino, “Genova,” p. 113).
88 On the unique importance of Alexandria in the Indian spice trade, see Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23; the Genoese depended on this trading centre not just for spices, but also to preserve their lucrative status as commercial and diplomatic go-betweens for the Golden Horde and Mamluk Egypt (cf. Ehrenkreutz, “Implications,” p. 342, Ciocîltan, “Genoa,” p. 281 note 7, p. 293 note 53, and chapters 3.3.1, 4.2 below).
fact that the decision to join the war, risky in any circumstances, was taken by eminently experienced statesmen who nevertheless overlooked the most basic part of any alliance, namely whether their partner was actually able to fulfil his obligations. As it was, the Ilkhan Argun was beset by numerous internal problems and by renewed war with the Jochids, and would never have been able to honor his military promises.89

Since time was against the Genoese, the Senate did not wait for a more favorable conjunction of circumstances, and invested the famous admiral Benedetto Zaccaria with full powers to act for the Republic in the East. He left the city on 10th June 1288.90

His primary objective in the mission was to free the final stretch of the Silk Road from Mamluk rule. The means chosen to force the sultan to relinquish Cilician Armenia was a naval blockade of Egypt.

For the Mamluk state, the prospect of having their commercial routes cut off was indeed a mortal threat.91 This had been a fundamental idea in Crusader strategy, but had thus far had no perceptible effect, because the great maritime powers of Italy had never been sufficiently engaged.92 Now it became a reality, in outline at least, when the admiral disembarked at Tripoli and occupied the city.93

---

89 Spuler, *Mongolen*, pp. 70–75.
91 Cf., inter alii, Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23: *Per magnam vero commoditatem nauigii siue dextrum, quam vel quod habent Saracenii, maior pars speciariae & aliorum mercimoniorum, quae ab India conducuntur ad Occidentem, ad ista parte in Alexandria conducuntur: de quibus percepit Soldanus in diversis locis, tantum de Thelloneo quod tertium valoris omnium specierum aerarium suum intrat, propter quod thesaurizat, praeter immensam utilitatem quam mercatores & populi sui exinde consequantur*; Adam/Kohler, p. 523: *In Alexandria Egipti [. . .] tanta habundancia habeatur, ut, pro parvo precio et quasi pro nichilo, habeantur.*
92 Heidelberger, *Kreuzzugsversuche*, passim.
However valuable, a single strategic base seems not to have been enough for Benedetto Zaccaria’s bold plan. He thus set about creating an impermeable strategic triangle, which would also include the kingdom of Cyprus and Cilician Armenia.

In September 1288 an offensive and defensive alliance was concluded with the Cypriot King Henry II, and in December Leon III granted the Genoese a privilege to trade while paying steeply reduced customs duties, having welcomed the admiral as liberating the Armenians from “Babylonian slavery.” His successor Hethum II was even more generous when he renewed the privilege in 1289.

Thus the expedition’s main purpose had been accomplished: Genoese merchants could again travel between Ayas and Tabriz, and even on more advantageous terms than before. Liberated by admiral Zaccaria, Cilician Armenia once more entered the Ilkhanid orbit and resumed its function as the Westernmost entrance to the Silk Road.

---


96 The text of this privilege is not preserved; Doria/Imperiale di Sant’Angelo, pp. 294–295, suggests how it built upon the previous terms: *Antonius [= Hethum II] impetravit etiam quod homines Janae possent ascensere in Turchiam cum ballis et mercibus pro satis minori pretio quam solevere soliti erant*.

97 Qalāwūn’s successor, Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalil, sent Hethum II a threatening letter in 1291, upbraiding him severely for his disloyalty: *Et post desolutionem civitatis Achor [= Acre] et civitatis Tyri, nulla remansit terra cuijus montes non humilia venit in potentia mea; sed cum civitas Assisii [= Sis] capita fuit, vinculis ferreis te constrinxit. Et nihil ab hujusmodi malo te potuit liberare, nisi personaliter venias cum tributo duo annorum, quod Tartaris mittebas qui te graverunt et errare fecerunt* (Cotton/Luard, p. 219); the Genoese are not mentioned as the real driving force behind Armenia’s change of allegiance, since they had resumed amicable relations with the Mamluks the preceding year.
This restoration of the status ante quo in 1288–1289 seemed unassailable, since it was backed up by the overwhelming superiority of the Genoese fleet against Mamluk naval power. However, Cairo did not accept the suggested compromise solution that the freedom of the port of Ayas in Cilician Armenia should be exchanged for the freedom of Alexandria: Tripoli, the pivot of the whole operation, was stormed at the beginning of March 1289, and surrendered at the end of the following month. Genoese merchants found in Syrian or Egyptian ports were arrested.

Even though the admiral persisted in his campaign and captured a Muslim ship even after the surrender, to show the Sultan that even without Tripoli he could still block the sea routes to Alexandria, the Genoese leadership considered that the loss of this last bridgehead in the Eastern Mediterranean was the final act in the confrontation with Egypt.

Relations with the Mamluk sultan were then normalized under unusually severe terms, which the Genoese accepted for a variety of reasons, foremost of which was the prospect of losing to the Venetians their position as intermediaries to the Golden Horde. The head of the Mamluk chancery plausibly records that his sovereign was not easily persuaded by the Genoese diplomats, led by Alberto Spinola. The sultan hesitated over concluding the peace not from chagrin at what had happened, but because he was unsettled by the appearance of a new threat.

After Benedetto Zaccaria had finished his mission, the official attitude in Genoa was shaped by those who favored a peace with the Mamluks. Nevertheless, advocates of a continued war not only existed but even took action. Going by analogy with other episodes, it is highly likely that this was a private initiative which formally went against government policy but which nevertheless had its tacit approval.

98 For the miserable condition of the Mamluk fleet, see Ayalon, “Mamluks,” and idem, “Wafidiya.”
104 Cf. the case of Segurano Salvaigo in chapter 4.2.4 below. There is no doubt that in the ultra-liberal Genoese state, individuals could act on their own accord in ways which could endanger the interests of all; among the aims of the Office of the Gazaria, founded in 1313, was the regulation of such anarchic developments which might harm the commune at large (cf. the comparison with Venetian centralisation in Lopez, “Venise”).
In the winter of 1289/90 the inhabitants of Baghdad were surprised to see an unprecedented number of Franks busy building galleys in the city’s shipyards. At least some Baghdadis learnt that the guests were Genoese, in the service of the Ilkhan Arghun, who intended to use the ships to blockade the straits of Aden and cut off the flow of Indian goods to Egypt. The shipbuilding then stopped as suddenly as it had started.105

The news of this joint Genoese-Ilkhanid enterprise spread far and wide, and endured in a way which suggests that it was much discussed in its day. There are some intriguing hints as to how it affected the sultan’s court at Aden in the account offered by Marco Polo, who travelled in the Indian Ocean and in Persia in 1294–195, although he places events in the wrong context.106 There is no doubt that the intended target, the Sultan of Cairo, also knew of the preparations underway in Baghdad.107

105 A Jacobite called Joseph has left an account of these events in his continuation of the chronicle of Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286): “Certain Franks, about two hundred men, came down the Tigris by water to Mawsil [= Mosul] by the command of the King of Kings [= Arghun], as if they were going to Babil [= Baghdad] to construct ships there and to go down to Bosra [= Basra], and from there by the Sea of Pantos (Sea of Suf?) to attack the Egyptians. And others of the Franks, about seven hundred men, went by land; and they remained in Babil the whole winter—until their plan (or, object) was fulfilled. Now there exist stories about the Franks in Babil which are worthy of remembrance […]” (Bar Hebraeus/Budge, p. 486). There is another account in the memoir sent by Guillaume Adam, Archbishop of Sultaniye, to the pope in 1332: Tempore Argoni imperatoris Tartarorum, Januenses, favente eodem imperatore, ino pocius faciente, inceperint hoc negocium attemptare, facientes tantummodo duas galeas in Baldaco, ut per Eufratem [actually the Tigris] in mare Indicum cum dictis galeis descenderent, et sic, applicantes ad passum de quo loquor [Eden], ipsum clauderent, ne de cetero merces alique portari possent de India in Egiptum; quod, procul dubio, perfecissent, nisi eos illi divisionis et parcialitatis spiritus invasisset qui consuevit Ytalicos perturbare. Dicentes enim isti se esse Gebellinos et illi Guelfos, mutuo se occidentes, subito ad nichilum sunt redacti” (Adam/Kohler, p. 551; the Arabic name of the strait Eden ‘Aden’ is Bāb al-Mandabi).

106 Et sachez que le soudan d’Aden a des très grands droits et grand péages de nefs qui vont et viennent d’Inde en sa terre, avec toutes sortes de marchandises. […] on dit qu’il est un des plus riches seigneurs du monde. Et je vous dis que le soudan de Babylone [= Mamluk] alla contre la cité d’Acre et la prit, le soudan d’Aden lui envoya en aide trente milles hommes a cheval et bien quarante mille chameaux, ce qui fut un grand profit pour les Sarrasins et une tres grand dommage pour les Chrétiens. Et il fit cela pur la haine qu’il avait contre les Chrétiens que par amour pour le soudan de Babylone, car ils s’entre-haïssent fort (Polo/ Benedetto, pp. 212–213). The Christians whom he hated so much can only have been the Genoese, who had the source of his colossal wealth in their sights, and only the fear of their military preparations in Baghdad in the winter of 1289/90 can explain his generosity in helping the Mamluk sultan, much against his will; it should also be mentioned that hereafter no Christian ship was to sail in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean or the Red Sea for some time.

107 The former capital of the caliphs was strategically well-placed but was entirely unsuitable for keeping secrets; the Muslim inhabitants were violently opposed to the presence of Arghun’s Christian mercenaries (Richard, “Navigations,” pp. 359–360) and formed
Consequently, by the end of winter 1289/90 at the latest, the Baghdad-Aden project had become a crucial matter in Genoese-Mamluk relations. Cairo could only view the action as an attempt to revive the Tripoli operation. All that had changed was the theatre of action, rather than the aim: having failed to cut the Sultan’s sea routes in the Mediterranean, a new attempt was now made in the Indian Ocean. Indeed the Mamluk state was perhaps more seriously threatened in the spring of 1290 than it had been the previous year, since unlike Tripoli, the Iraqi bases from which the Genoese had chosen to assert their naval superiority were beyond the Mamluk army’s exclusively land-based reach.\footnote{108}

What the Sultan could probably not have won by armed force, he achieved by diplomatic means.

Ibn Abd al-Ẓāhir is certainly not exaggerating when he claims that the Genoese ambassadors “implored” the Mamluk Sultan to make peace: quite apart from the sombre outlook, the merchants of the republic must have suffered catastrophic losses during the few months when they were unable to weigh anchor in Egypt or Syria. The high-placed chronicler also records that the Mamluk exchequer had suffered in turn when trade with the Genoese broke off, and that the Sultan was finally persuaded to lend an ear to the grievances of the republic’s emissaries in order not to affect the prosperity of his ports, and the large sums of money which his customs officers collected there.\footnote{109} Under these considerations, the treaty was signed on 13th May 1290.\footnote{110}

The negotiations were no doubt long and exhaustive, but our author (who noted the circumstances under which the treaty was drawn up) was ideally placed as head of the chancery to know every twist and turn. Nevertheless, he passed over in silence the most fundamental military and...

\footnote{108} Describing the situation in 1332, Adam/Kohler, pp. 552–553, recommends that the pope use the Genoese—for whom he had no great love—as the only ones capable of carrying out crusading naval actions in the Indian Ocean: [...] meo judicio, nunquam per alios alios quam per Januenses posset hoc negocium adimpleri. Et hoc vel quia in mari ceteris gentibus probiores et magis exercitati existunt, vel quia, ad circumeundum et videndum ceteras mundi partes, facilius se exponunt; nec retrahit eos amor proprie patrie, nec retardat, vel eciam quia magis avidi sunt ad lucrum. Jam enim Januenses soli naves faciunt in mari predicto Indie, non tamen causa hic posita, sed spe luceri.


\footnote{110} For the Latin translation, see Belgrano, “Trattato,” pp. 167–175, and for an English version of the preamble together with Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir’s notes from the time, see Holt, “Treaty,” pp. 105–108.
political condition which the Sultan demanded in exchange for granting the Genoese request.\footnote{111}

The principal concession which Alberto Spinola’s team of negotiators accepted features at the very start of the treaty, immediately after the guarantee of safety to the republic’s merchants in Mamluk ports: the Genoese undertake not to interfere in maritime trade in any way, not even when the Sultan is on campaign in Syria—a tricky situation for any head of state.\footnote{112} With these few ill-chosen words, Genoa not only gave the Sultan a free hand on dry land but tied its own hands at sea!

The first clause of the treaty, seemingly entirely inoffensive, guarantees that Genoese merchants will have safety and security in all territories which the Sultan currently holds, and in all those which he may later acquire.\footnote{113} Knowing that his blessing would be fixed in writing, Alberto Spinola gave prior approval on behalf of the republic for all future Mamluk conquests.

By thus formally disengaging from the fray, Genoa not only sealed the fate of the remaining Crusader positions in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also threw away the last of the advantages won for it by Benedetto Zacccaria’s heroic efforts.\footnote{114} Their steadfast ally, Cilician Armenia, was handed over unconditionally for the Sultan to do with as he would: shortly after the fall of Acre, King Hethum II rightly considered that his country was

\footnote{111} This omission is down to Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir’s tendency to present the treaty as a merciful concession on the part of the sultan, which it was not: “The Latin text of Qalāwūn’s instrument […] bears the marks of a bilateral treaty” (Holt, “Treaty,” p. 104).

\footnote{112} Belgrano, “Trattato,” p. 168: \textit{Et precepit dominus soldanus quod pro suo itu in exercitu in Siria vel in alia parte, nec per suo messaticos vel mercatores nauigantes vel per aliquam aliam causam, non possit detineri vel impediri aliqua nauis vel galea, nec alia ligna ullamodo non possint esse detenti}. The first editor of the treaty, Sylvestre de Sacy, remarked in 1827 that its “barbarous style” did not obscure the meaning at all, which is further explicated by Pistorino, “Genova,” p. 144: the clause stipulates \textit{che il commercio marittimo non dovesse subire intervazione alcuna se il sultano fosse in campo aperto contra Siria.}

\footnote{113} Belgrano, “Trattato,” pp. 167–168: \textit{[…] in omnibus terris domini soldani quas habet nec [sic] de cetero acquisierit in mari et in terra.}

\footnote{114} Marino Sanudo held the Genoese directly responsible for the fall of Acre, the last significant Crusader position (though Venetian-dominated), little more than a year after the Genoese-Mamluk treaty was concluded (Sanudo/Monticolo, col. 578; Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 230 note 68); this Venetian view of events might be suspected as partisan, but is confirmed by an Arabic chronicler from the Mamluk sultanate, Ibn al-Furāt (Ehrenkreutz, “Implications,” p. 342; Caro, Genua, II, p. 133, concludes pithily: “Somit gab Genua die letzten Besitzungen in Syrien dem Untergange Preis.” According to an Eastern source (Bar Hebraeus/Budge, pp. 492–493) the Mamluk sultan did not attack Acre until he heard news of Arghun’s death, which indeed happened in the same year.
in a desperate state. The government of Genoa likewise unflinchingly cut away the Cypriot arm of admiral Zaccaria’s military-political alliance when they refused to ratify the treaty made with Henry II. Unsurprisingly, the king never forgave this treachery.

This harsh policy also obliged Genoa to make a third sacrifice in the spring of 1290, when they abandoned the Baghdad-Aden project. Despite growing resistance, this was the actual outcome of the attempt to block the flow of trade in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea: utter failure, just as in the Mediterranean. Defiance toward Egypt dwindled away.

The treaty of May 1290 was the real outcome of the confrontation between Genoa and the Mamluks. Firstly, it explicitly acknowledged the Egyptian victory by sea and on land, and secondly, it implicitly, though no less definitively, recognized that the Ligurian republic had been defeated. Genoa, which had reacted so decisively to the danger that the Silk Road may be cut off, resigned itself to the knowledge that it had risked its entire Levantine trade for a goal which it had failed to reach.

---

115 See the letter of 15th June 1291 to King Edward I of England (Cotton/Luard, pp. 219–223).
116 The treaty was formally repudiated in May 1292 (Doria/Imperiale di Sant’Angelo, p. 322, Caro, Genua, II, pp. 127, 131, Pistorino, “Genova,” p. 114).
117 Doria/Imperiale di Sant’Angelo, p. 322: Ex hoc dictus rex postea Januenses male tenuit et minus honoravit.
118 There is no documentary proof of official involvement in or indeed disengagement from the enterprise on the Tigris; yet even had the sultan known nothing of it at the time he signed the treaty, the first attempt by Genoese galleys to sail freely in the Indian Ocean would have wrecked the agreement and Mamluk ports would once again have closed to merchants from the republic. Proof that Genoa respected the treaty is, rather, e silentio; although the republic’s ships sailed in these waters, no source records that there were engaged in armed action.
119 Guillaume Adam attributes the quarrels which ended work in the Baghdad shipyards to the Italian love of faction (see above, p. 83 note 105). Yet to break out with such force when the shipbuilders had been working together in peace all winter, some new element had to have intruded which led to the violence. The factor provoking the explosion can only have been the order to cease construction, which was in full swing and at a promising stage. Understandably, the order caused shock and rage among those entrusted with the project, while the perspective from which raison d’état could be judged differed drastically from Iraq to Genoa. Given the great interests committed to the plan’s success, the order from home could not but provoke disagreement and resistance. Thus the strong dissension which marked the Ligurian republic in this year was much sharper in Baghdad than in the home city, and the policy dominating the home front was only able to win through on the Tigris after Genoese blood had been shed.
120 It was probable that the regime governing foreigners in Mamluk territory would be extended to Cilician Armenia: Soldanus vero per terras quas tenet non permitti aliquem Christianum transire, qui in Indiam cupiat transfretare (Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23).
The men of the republic thus appeared to have exhausted all moral and practical means to address the besetting problem of the Muslim barrier in the East.\textsuperscript{121}

Appearances were deceptive, however, since—as Marino Sanudo, a keen observer of medieval commerce and merchants, observed—when merchants find one road closed, they “consider, search and find another.”\textsuperscript{122} After the Genoese lost any hope of reaching Central Asia and the Indian Ocean via the well-guarded Fertile Crescent, they went ahead nevertheless.

In order to reach the distant sources of wealth, they had somehow to bypass the semi-circle of the Eastern Mediterranean coast, which the sultan of Cairo had closed to outsiders. Geographically, they had two options: go either by the Atlantic, or by the Black Sea. Driven by the entrepreneurial spirit for which they were famous, the Genoese tried both routes—with entirely different results.

The first attempt to discover a Westward route to India dates from 1291, by the brothers Ugolino and Vadino Vivaldi, close relatives of admiral Zaccaria. The year, and the family connection, point to a causal connection between this venture and the outcome of the Genoese-Mamluk war. Although the two galleys which set out to explore new horizons were swallowed without trace by the vast Atlantic, they stand for the vitality of the republic which would, two centuries later, produce Christopher Columbus.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} The extent to which the fervour stirred up by Rabban Bar Sauma’s embassy had given way to apathy is evident in the treatment accorded to Buscarello de’ghizolfi, one of the most zealous promoters of the Ilkhanid-Genoese alliance, when he bore an identical message calling to arms against the Mamluks. The Ilkhan Arghun’s ambassador was given the cold shoulder in his native city, and returned to Persia accompanied by an English visitor (Desimoni, \textit{Conti}, pp. 20 ff.; Petech, “Marchands,” p. 563; Sinor, “Mongols,” pp. 534–535; Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 217). Nor was the new attitude dictated by a momentary loss of nerve, but was the republic’s enduring policy, forged in the turbulent year 1290. This fixed policy even withstood the wave of enthusiasm which the Ilkhan Ghazan’s victory over the Mamluks in Syria in 1300 unleashed in the Ligurian republic. High-born ladies were offering up their jewels to finance a new expedition overseas. The government however was unmoved by such patriotic sacrifice, and would not jeopardise its good relations with Egypt. This stubbornness led to the abandonment of the last tremor of anti-Mamluk sentiment in Genoa, which was called (probably without ironic intent) the ‘women’s crusade’ (Lopez, \textit{Genova}, p. 245, Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 218, 223).

\textsuperscript{122} Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23: \textit{Nam quando mercimonia constringuntur vel impedientur taliter quod conducit nequeant aliquo per vnam viam, mercatores ad utilitatem suam vigilantes, cogitant, perquirunt \& inveniunt viam aliam, per quam illa conducunt ad locum ipsum}.

From the beginning, a number of factors argued for circumventing the Mamluk barrier by the Black Sea, arguments fully supported by the Genoese-Ilkhanid partnership, which dated back half a century. The impact of this fruitful relationship on the development of commerce in the Black Sea region conclusively shows the Ilkhanid role in the overall Chinggisid contribution to making the Black Sea an important junction for long-distance trade.\textsuperscript{124}

The great web of political and inter-state relations between the khans of Sarai, the sultans of Cairo, the Ilkhans of Tabriz and the Genoese merchants formed the basis for this unique stage in medieval economic history around the Black Sea.

3.3 Political Consequences: The Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz Triangle

Two conflicts played out at critical points on the Silk Road and the spice route—between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate, over Azerbaijan and the priceless city of Tabriz, and between the Mongols of Iran and the Mamluk sultanate over Cilician Armenia and Ayas. These conflicts were not restricted to simple bilateral military confrontations. Rather, they also involved considerable collateral forces, and had far-reaching and long-lasting consequences at the political and commercial level.\textsuperscript{125}

Each of the states involved in the contest was a major power in Eastern Europe, in Western Asia or in North-Eastern Africa and the stakes were unprecedentedly high, leading to sustained and remarkably consistent involvement in the conflict from all parties, with only slight variations in intensity as circumstances changed. Thus the Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz triangle took shape, a network of forces within which the major players were either in alliance or at loggerheads. Given the political importance of these principals, they attracted notable auxiliary forces into their spheres of influence: the Genoese, the Byzantines, the Seljuks. Common to all these secondary alliances was the self-interested tendency to belong to both opposing camps at the same time. The ways in which this duplicity manifested, and the extent to which it succeeded, differed from case to case.

Events around the year 1260 would have much more harmful consequences for the Golden Horde than for either the Mamluk state or the Ilkhanate, since only the Horde was entirely cut off from the benefits of

\textsuperscript{124} Cf. chapter 3.4.2.
\textsuperscript{125} For the effect that these conflicts had on long-distance trade, see chapter 3.4.
Asiatic trade. For this reason, their overwhelming political priority in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was to recuperate their privileged position of the past, when the ulus of Jochi had for two decades shared in the profits of the Silk Road,\(^{126}\) and this was also the most important component of the triangle of forces described here; the repeated failure of their attempts to capture Tabriz set the tone for their relations with the Ilkhanate,\(^{127}\) and laid the foundation for the Jochid-Mamluk alliance against Persia, which in turn led to a decisive downturn in Persian relations with the sultan of Egypt.\(^{128}\)

Apart from this overall coherence, each bilateral relationship in the network had its own specific lineaments, lending each its own character. By comparison, the Ilkhanid-Jochid and Ilkhanid-Mamluk relationships are notably straightforward, both because of the underlying rivalry and because of the predictable way in which hostilities unfolded. The connection between Sarai and Cairo was entirely different, not merely because it was an alliance rather than an enmity, but because it was complex and partly contradictory. The relationship demands closer examination not just for these reasons, but also because it was the only geo-political line of force which crossed the Black Sea in a meaningful manner, thereby massively influencing regional developments in the Middle Ages.\(^{129}\)

### 3.3.1 The Sarai-Cairo Axis and its Allies

A surprising aspect of the Sarai-Cairo axis is how quickly it was established, following the outbreak of the Ilkhanate-Mamluk war in 1260–1261 and the Ilkhanate’s war with the Golden Horde.\(^{130}\)

Although in the long term the Volga khans were to be the more eager partners in the alliance, it was originally proposed by Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars. In 1261 or 1262 he sent an Alan merchant as intermediary.

---

\(^{126}\) Cf. chapter 2.1.2.

\(^{127}\) Cf. chapter 3.1; there is as yet no monograph on relations on the other two sides of our triangle (see following notes), though the various forms which they took in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are addressed rather unsystematically in the chronological sections of Spuler’s great surveys of the Jochids and Ilkhanids (Spuler, *Horde*, and idem, *Mongolen*).

\(^{128}\) Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols*, and idem, “Ghazan,” are monographic treatments of Ilkhaniid-Mamluk relations in the thirteenth century.

\(^{129}\) The Golden Horde’s relations with the Mamluk sultan are the subject of the monograph by Zakirov, *Otnosheniya*; Schmid, *Beziehungen*, similarly addresses a subset of these, Byzantine relations with Egypt in the early fourteenth century.

\(^{130}\) See chapters 3.1, 3.2.
with a letter addressed to Berke Khan, urging him as a good Muslim to take up holy war against his kinsmen in Persia led by the “infidel” Hülegü.131 A fully accredited embassy then left Cairo at the end of 1262,132 and met Berke’s envoys to the Sultan in Constantinople. The two embassies met at the beginning of spring 1263, and then each continued on their way. The Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos was the host at this meeting and went to some lengths to make members of both embassies welcome, taking the opportunity to show them the mosque recently built in his capital, testimony of the steadfast friendship which bound him to the two Muslim rulers, Berke and Baybars. The Emperor also took care to mention, in a letter to the Sultan, that he had equipped the Egyptian envoys with everything that they needed for their onward journey to the Black Sea and the Cuman steppe. These signs of friendship were much strengthened by sending his own representative to Cairo along with those of the Golden Horde.133

Other powers who were also interested in a well-functioning Sarai-Constantinople-Cairo axis added their envoys to the Mongol/Byzantine embassy travelling under Michael VIII’s protection: a Genoese delegation, led by ‘a dean’ (muqaddam) from the Republic, and envoys from the former Seljuk sultan ‘Izz al-Dīn Kaikāwuz, a refugee at the court in Constantinople, made up the numbers in an impressive embassy that disembarked in Alexandria in July 1263 at the latest.134

The discussions that followed in Cairo smoothed out the various powers’ positions, assigned roles and laid the groundwork for the great anti-Ilkhanid coalition, which proved stable for decades on end—despite its shortcomings, its crises and its demonstrable military inefficiency. In order to understand how the coalition functioned in the Black Sea, and in particular to understand how the Golden Horde’s Black Sea policies took shape within this framework, we must examine—however

---

131 The chronicler Rukn al-Dīn Baybars/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 77, gives the year in the Islamic calendar as 659 [= 6th December 1260—25th November 1261]; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, ibid., p. 49, gives the following year, and says that he wrote the message at the Sultan’s dictation, as does al-Maqrizī/Canard, “Un traité,” p. 212; cf. Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 43–44.

132 Al-Mufaḍḍal/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 181; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, ibid., p. 49; on this occasion, some of the Jochid soldiers who had fled Hülegü’s army to Egypt were repatriated (cf. Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 44, Canard, “Un traité,” p. 212).


schematically—what each party to the convergence of interests assembled in 1263 contributed to the goal of destroying the Ilkhanate, what each expected and what they received.

Before all others, the Khan’s common interests with the Sultan should be laid out, since these were the basis of the coalition and brought in the other participants. The purport of the Sarai-Cairo axis was evident from the moment it was established. It was made up of two elements: one military, the joint offensive against the Ilkhanate, and the other commercial—specifically, the Golden Horde’s export of slaves to Egypt.

It has been little remarked, although it is of decisive relevance, that these two strands were actually contradictory and became more so as time went on, leading eventually to the unraveling of the alliance. Where Sarai considered a Mamluk offensive against the Ilkhanate as indispensable if Tabriz was to be retaken, Cairo in its turn saw the import of slaves from lands North of the Black Sea as the absolute priority, particularly after battles against the Mongols in Syria had considerably reduced the sultan’s military capabilities. On the Nile as on the Volga, each capital had justified concerns about the desirability of satisfying its partner’s needs.

For the sultanate, the destruction of the Ilkhanate would open up the worrying prospect of unified Mongol forces in both the Cuman steppe and Persia, which would inevitably be bound for a fatal collision with Egypt. Because of this concern, the Mamluk rulers did all they could to stoke up the Transcaucasian conflict, where the two Mongol states could be pinned down in a war of attrition, and took good care that all planned joint operations on the Caucasus and Euphrates front simultaneously were stillborn.

The khans were similarly chary about the export slave trade, since this beggared their realm of potential soldiers and tax-payers. These losses were certainly never compensated by the profit to be made from selling slaves, and the scale of the losses may be judged from the fact that the Jochid armies were never able to tip the balance lastingly in their favour

---

135 See the contents of messages sent by the khans to the sultans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, passim.
136 Cf. chapter 4.2; Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 204, considers this a “vital necessity” for the Mamluk state.
137 This strategic concept was as simple as it was long-lived, as the decades were to prove; it is first mentioned in Berke’s letter to Baybars of May 1263 (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 51).
138 See the insightful remarks on such operations of Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 4–6, on which he is an authority.
in their clashes with the Ilkhanids, while the Mamluk soldiers, all of them “recruited” from the Cuman steppe, withstood all assaults and finally carried the victory in the Fertile Crescent. Severely constrained by their irksome exclusion from the trade routes after the loss of Azerbaijan and the Arran, the Golden Horde rulers accepted the sacrifice required of them, hoping thereby to push their Mamluk allies to mobilize, though they did not hold back from applying blackmail with an embargo of this strategic supply whenever their Egyptian partners slipped from inertia to flat refusal to give aid.

For the Sarai-Cairo axis to exist and to function, it was indispensable that the other participants in the Cairo conference of 1263 also be kept in coalition. Often enough, the khans and the sultans were of one mind at least as regards the function that each ally had to play.

To keep the Black Sea route open for communication and commerce needed the consent of the Byzantine emperor, who held the Straits. The sultan and the khan were equally in his debt for their ability to use the Bosphorus freely. Although not easily discovered in documentary evidence, these two powerful Eastern monarchs offered their friendship to Michael VIII Palaiologos and thereby contributed very significantly to shoring up the fragile regime of the Palaiologan restoration, threatened by frustrated Western powers. Likewise, the Muslim rulers accorded the Orthodox emperor certain privileges in ecclesiastical matters.

Thus in exchange for recognition of Byzantine protectorate over the Melkite churches in the sultanate, the Emperor granted Baybars the right to bring one or two shiploads of slaves through the Straits every year, in a treaty concluded early in 1262. The establishment of an Orthodox metropolitan see at Sarai in 1261 served the same purpose in Berke’s

---

139 It seems that this was agreed while the Emperor was still in Nicea, thus before he returned to Constantinople in August 1261 (Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 118).

140 The Byzantine historians Pachymeres/Bekker, I, pp. 174–179, and Gregoras/Schopen, I, pp. 101 ff., rightly claim that Baybars adopted this attitude to the Empire because he wished to have the freedom of the Black Sea for ships and merchants headed to the Crimea to buy “Scythian” slaves, who would become Mamluk soldiers. Pachymeres intriguingly claims that Baybars himself was of Cuman descent, and had an unusually high opinion of his nation’s military qualities, finding them incomparably better than the “lazy and effeminate” Egyptians, who were useless in war; he also regrets that the Emperor made these concessions, which contributed to the conquest of Palestine and Cilicia and the subjugation of the Christian population in those parts. The Mamluk encyclopaedist al-Qalqashandi says that the treaty contained a clause on the slave trade in Soldaia (Nystrazopoulou-Pélékidis, Venise, p. 30 note 53; cf. al-Maqrizi/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 420, Canard, “Le traité,” pp. 669–680, Canard, “Un traité,” p. 210 note 1, 211, Spuler, “Außenpolitik,” p. 31, Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 104, Brätianu, Recherches, pp. 61–63).

141 For this date, see Canard, “Un traité,” p. 211.
Byzantium policy. The khan was also geographically better placed than the sultan to help reconquer Byzantine territory: without Mongol consent, if not their active assistance, Michael VIII would have been unable to reconquer the cities of the Western Black Sea coast from the Bulgarians in 1262 or 1263, Mesembria, Anchialos, Sozopol and Ahtopol, and would have even less been able to reimpose his authority on the islands of the Lower Danube, which were under immediate Golden Horde control.

In the same vein, we must mention Berke and Baybars’ plan to restore the exiled sultan 'Izz al-Din Kaikāwuz to his father’s throne in Konya; had it succeeded, this would have been no less advantageous to the Byzantines, since it would have protected their possessions in Asia Minor from foreseeable Persian attack. The scheme was hatched as part of a far more ambitious anti-Ilkhanid project. To reithrone 'Izz al-Din, who had risen against Hulagu, would mean to deprive the Ilkhanate of control over the Seljukid sultanate, and bring Anatolia into the front which the sultan and the khan had assembled. Such a political reorientation would have reversed the positions of the warring states, with profound implications for the commerce in which they engaged: not only would the Straits be entirely removed from Hulagu’s sphere of influence, but the Ilkhanate’s access to the Black Sea and to the Mediterranean would also come under control of the Sarai-Cairo axis—with incalculable consequences. The Jochids and Mamluks aimed at a Seljuk restoration, which would have had no chance of success except as part of a general offensive against the Ilkhanate. This, however, was postponed.

By contrast, it was much more pressing for the allies to engage the services of a maritime power which could ensure their commercial and diplomatic links. The only power which could fully satisfy these needs was the Genoese, who had many qualities in their favor. In the first instance, the Ligurian republic had the capacity to transport enough slaves from the Golden Horde to the insatiable markets of Alexandria.

---

142 Avenarius, “Nikaia,” p. 43.
145 In 1253, Rubruck considered that the Mongols ruled usque ad Danubium (Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, p. 167, Rubruck/Jackson, pp. 65–66).
146 The failure of this scheme would soon bring a further setback; under pressure from Hulagu, the basileus was obliged to close the link between Sarai and Cairo.
The second advantage that the Genoese could offer was their pre-eminent position in the Straits and the Black Sea. Under the treaty of Nymphaion agreed with Michael VIII in 1261, the Ligurian republic became the naval guarantors of the Byzantine restoration, protecting it above all from the warships of vengeful Venice. The Emperor repaid this service with privileges, granting the Genoese and their Pisan allies the sole and unconditional freedom to sail and trade within the Black Sea. The restrictive clause of the treaty imposed on them the obligation to keep the Venetians from the sea, who had dominated there from 1204 to 1261.148

The third inestimable part of the Genoese contribution once they took service with the Sarai-Cairo axis was that they had the political will and the strength required to face disapproval and reprisals from the powers of Western Christendom: they took on an enormous risk when they chose to enter the service of the Mongol khan and the Mamluk sultan, the Crusaders’ deadly enemies, and to defend the “schismatic” Byzantine Emperor against the Latins, who were eager to return to Constantinople.149

It is true that when the Genoese abandoned and betrayed the Western world of which they had been part, they were (so to speak) helped along by the Venetians, who in 1258 had expelled them from Acre, the most significant European-held centre of Levantine trade: the losses that they suffered were sufficiently grave that they were forced to seek other horizons to make good the deficit,150 just as would happen in 1291 to those who had displaced them. This new opportunity was found in the Black Sea, and amply repaid the Republic’s fundamental political choice to tie their fortunes to the Muslim great powers and to Byzantium. Despite all their subsequent difficulties, the Genoese remained faithful to

---


149 The pressure which the citizens of the Republic faced from 1261 onwards, when they were excommunicated for the first time, did not persuade them to renounce their chosen path (cf. Canard, “Un traité,” p. 210–211; Spuler, “Außenpolitik,” p. 31).

150 For this event and its consequences see Caro, Genua, I, pp. 36–79; Brâtianu, Recherches, p. 58; Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 127; Prawer, Histoire, II, pp. 359–373; Balard, Romanian, I, p. 42; Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 215.
the Sarai-Constantinople-Cairo axis and played a key role in maintaining it, with a single rumble of discontent between 1288 and 1290. This “loyalty” did not prevent them from serving Ilkhanid interests at the same time, with much mutual profit.

3.3.2 The Ilkhanid-Genoese Alliance

When the citizens of Genoa responded so enthusiastically to the Ilkhan Arghun’s call to arms against the Mamluks in the winter of 1287/8, they initiated—probably without their knowledge—an alliance which would last nearly a century. Though neither the maximum nor even the minimum victory conditions in the common effort could be attained—the sultan was not overthrown, nor even was the final stretch of the Silk Road brought back under the allies’ control—the failure of the military campaign in 1288–1290 did not mean that the combatants stood down.

On the basis of their strained political relationship, the Mongols of Persia and the Genoese collaborated on an alternative solution, which would lead to one of the most far-reaching changes in Eurasian trade: the Silk Road and the spice route, choked off in Cilicia, were redirected via the Black Sea.

3.4 The Commercial Implications: Connecting the Black Sea to the Eurasian Trade Network

The powerful rivalries centered around Tabriz and Ayas had other results than merely at the political level, where they led to the constellation of forces described above.

---

151 Ehrenkreutz, “Implications,” p. 342: “Genoa’s supremacy in the Black Sea, combined with Egypt’s demand for slaves from the Crimea, put her in an extremely strong bargaining position. One may go so far as to state that in the second half of the thirteenth century the Genoese held the key to the survival of the Mamluk sultanate, a development which Genoa welcomed; and as long as her leverage remained effective, she pursued a policy of cooperation with the masters of Egypt;” it may be mentioned here that the Genoese ships involved in the bulk slave trade were in flagrant breach of the stipulation in the Byzantine-Mamluk treaty whereby the Emperor had restricted trade to “fragile goods” (for the whole problematic here, see Caro, Genua, I, pp. 104–113, Cessi, “Tregua,” p. 2, Brătianu, Recherches, pp. 83 ff., Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 73, Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 45–68, Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 201–205).

152 See above, pp. 77 ff.

153 See chapter 3.2.

154 See chapters 3.2., 3.4.2.

155 See chapters 3.1 and 3.2.

156 See chapter 3.3.
These conflicts, based on trade considerations and aiming at commercial victory conditions, to a great extent developed in ways typical for trade wars. Likewise, both conflicts led to fundamental shifts in the Eurasian long-distance trade networks, with highly beneficial consequences for the Black Sea region, creating branch lines from the Silk Road and the Iraqi spice route that linked the Black Sea to the Asiatic long-distance trade network.

3.4.1 *The Jochid Branch: Urgench-Sarai-Tana/Caffa*

Placed into the context where they naturally belong, the fragments of the trade war reveal the existence of a coherent scheme of economic blockade in the Jochid-Mamluk camp as in the Ilkhanid camp.

As soon as the destruction of the Mamluk sultanate seemed a real possibility, Hülegü, first Mongol ruler of Iran, realised that the coalition ranged against him aimed, even before the war began, to choke the Ilkhanate’s economy by intercepting its trade routes to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea: Berke’s and Baybars’ plan to bring the Seljuk state in Asia Minor under their control, by means of 'Izz al-Dīn Kaikāwuz and his party, was the most obvious proof of this intention.157 The chronicler Waṣṣāf records that Hülegü ordered that “Berke's merchants [...] who had come to Tabriz to trade [...] and had great and innumerable riches, all be killed, and that all the goods they had with them be seized for the exchequer [...] Many of them kept their money and their goods with esteemed men of note in Tabriz. After they had been killed, their wealth remained in the hands of those who had been safeguarding it. Berke [...] seeking in turn to revenge this deed, put to death the merchants from the khan’s realm [= Hülegü’s] and did the same with their possessions. The roads in and out and the merchants' journeys were much reduced, once the devils of enmity had leapt from the jar of time.”158

The Persian author was clearly referring to the road connecting Sarai, the Jochid capital, to the great commercial Silk Road metropolis of Azerbaijan, Tabriz, via the Caucasus—a road much-used by Muslim merchants, as the missionary friar William of Rubruck had attested less than a decade earlier.159

---

157 See chapter 4.3.1.
158 Waṣṣāf/Hammer-Purgstall, p. 94.
159 On the Derbent Pass, the Iron Gate of the Caucasus, Rubruck writes “Here lies the route taken by all the Saracens who come from Persia and Turkia” (Rubruck/Jackson, p. 127).
When the Seljuk sultan became an Ilkhanid vassal, this brought Hülegü control of the Asia Minor routes which the Golden Horde had used to exchange goods with their trading partners in the Near East. Friar William also records the impressive volume of trade on the North-South route crossing the Black Sea and Anatolia.160

The climax of the trade war was the Ilkhanid attempt to block the Straits. This all-out assault aimed to cut off the Golden Horde completely, in response to a similar attempt by the Ilkhan’s enemies, set in motion at the Cairo conference of summer 1263. Under pressure from Hülegü, the Byzantine emperor detained Egyptian envoys on their way to the Horde. The damage that Michael VIII thereby did to the interests of the Sultan in Cairo and the Khan at Sarai provoked these two rulers into responding vehemently to this act of betrayal from an ally: although Baybars did not have the military reach to affect Byzantium, and had to restrict himself to protests and to having the head of the Melkite church excommunicate the emperor, Berke was by contrast able to take massive reprisals, and in the winter of 1264/5 the Mongol army and their Bulgarian auxiliaries devastated Thrace and reached the walls of Constantinople. This punitive expedition proved a salutary warning, and the situation was redressed, the Straits were opened once more and Berke’s successors took good care to preserve this freedom.161

The khan’s success in breaking the Ilkhanid blockade, at least at its Western end, was doubtless vitally important for the future of the steppe state, rescuing it from total isolation, which would have been fatal. From now onward, the Golden Horde had a lifeline in the trade route through the Straits—a vital chance which, naturally, it used to the full.

Berke’s victory in the Black Sea, however, was only a limited success in the confrontation with Hülegü: the Ilkhanid blockade maintained its full force in Asia Minor162 as in the Caucasus, where—for lack of satisfactory documents—it is impossible to know whether the blockade prevailed in the decades to come, as a semi-permanent reminder of strained relations

---

160 “Soldaia […] looks across towards Sinopolis, and there land all the merchants who come from Turkia and wish to visit the Northern regions, as also those who come from the opposite direction, from Russia and the North and wish to cross over to Turkia. These latter carry squirrel and miniver [varium et grisium] and other valuable furs; the others bring lengths of cotton or wambasium, silk cloth and fragrant spices” (ibid. pp. 62–64).

161 See chapter 4.3.1.

162 For the Chinggisids of Persia, there was a separate motive to block the route that connected the Cuman steppe to the Fertile Crescent via the Black Sea and Asia Minor: this was the route that had brought and would continue to bring the slaves from North of the Black Sea which formed the invincible Mamluk army; see chapters 4.1.2, 4.1.3.
between the two neighboring ulus, or whether—as in so many similar situations—the changing needs of commerce proved more powerful than deep-seated enmity.\footnote{On the state of this trade route from the perspective of travelling merchants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see the scant information summarised in chapters 4.1.3, 4.2.}

In any case, even if most of the time the Golden Horde maintained their link to Azerbaijan via the Derbent Pass, this side-route to the Silk Road could hardly replace direct participation in and overlordship of the great Asiatic axis. It proved equally unworkable to try to share in the profits of the great Transcaucasian trade links by investing capital “extraterritorially,” as Berke’s initiative to finance a weaving venture in Tabriz was to show.\footnote{See above, p. 65 note 22.}

Unlike this unconventional enterprise, the response that in fact saved the situation was drawn directly from the classic repertoire of measures that show once again the etymology of the word \textit{rival}: one who takes water from the same river, and argues over its use.\footnote{Valpy, Dictionary, p. 407, citing Ulpian: \textit{Si inter ‘rivales,’ i. e. qui per eundem ‘rivem’ aquam ducunt, sit contentio de aquae usu.}} To make good the losses suffered in the Cuman steppe after the blockade, the solution chosen was simply to divert some of the Silk Road traffic into Golden Horde territory. The old Urgench-Sarai-Soldaia road was upgraded to a major trade artery, which could hold its own against the original Asiatic route in terms of security, ease of transport and an attractive customs regime.

“The situation was most comparable to that at the end of the sixth century, when the Byzantine empire attempted to import Chinese silk by the Turkish Northern route, while the Sassanids of Persia attempted to control the silk trade themselves.”\footnote{This is P. Pelliot’s assessment, adopted whole-heartedly by Brățianu, who concluded that “thus, the same interests determine the same outcome, even at several centuries’ distance” (Brățianu, \textit{Mer Noire}, p. 214; cf. also Brățianu, \textit{Les Vénitiens}, p. 13); unfortunately, although it is key to understanding the Golden Horde’s unrivalled contribution to Black Sea trade, the French historian’s observation was not used to illuminate the unique economic situation in the region during the Chinggisid era; see more explicitly, though without reference to other epochs, Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, I, pp. 2, 6, 9, 12, on the Emperor Justinian’s attempts to win the monopoly on Asian trade especially in silk, and the Persian response, and Vailhé, “Projet,” pp. 206–214, on similar attempts by his nephew Justin, who in 568 concluded a commercial treaty with the Turkish khan of the Eurasian steppes and Transoxiana along with an offensive-defensive treaty against Persia; the Ottomans in the sixteenth century chose the same tactic, this time against the Safavids (cf. Bennigsen, Lemercier-Quelquejay, “Horde,” passim, and İnalcık, “Question,” p. 87).}
Although reports on the crossing of the Cuman steppe are rare, or rather they are unevenly spread both qualitatively and chronologically, nevertheless they allow us to discern three distinct stages unfolding in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The earliest information to filter back to the West was from Dominican friars, who set out in the 1230s to look for “Greater Hungary” on the upper Volga. Fulfilling their mission meant dreadful privations and unusual risks, which conclusively point to a state of anarchy prevailing among the Cumans at the time.\(^\text{167}\)

This is in total contrast to the order that the Mongols imposed once they settled in the steppe, after ending their great campaigns in Central and South-Eastern Europe in 1242. The first Western travellers to enjoy the blessings of this *Pax Mongolica* were the Franciscan friars John of Plano Carpini and, ten years later, William of Rubruck.\(^\text{168}\)

These sources clearly show that once the Golden Horde came into existence, it was possible to travel safely from one end of its territory to the other. Rather less clear are the circumstances under which the route that the friars travelled became one of the great arteries of Eurasian trade: it is certain that the Mongols cleared the road, as it were, but the moment or the period when this happened is unknown. The obscurity surrounding this question is due to a constellation of factors.

The information that we have is far too sporadic, and too random, to reflect accurately what seems to have been the slow and steady evolution of a great trade route. In the absence of quantitative data that would bear rigorous analysis, the image that we have is wholly impressionistic, and risks being gravely distorted by the lop-sided distribution of material: given the scarcity of Eastern sources, the relative abundance of accounts by Western travellers might easily create the impression that Westerners were the main agents in trade on this route, although we cannot exclude the possibility that Eastern merchants made up the bulk of trade with their caravans.\(^\text{169}\)

The earliest reference to trade in the history of the Golden Horde is by Friar John of Plano Carpini, who met merchants from Genoa, Venice and Pisa in Kiev in 1246, on his return from his visit to the Mongols. The

\(^{167}\) Cf. Dörrie, “Texte.”  
\(^{168}\) Brătianu, *Recherches*, pp. 210–211, points to the relative comfort in which they travelled compared to the misery which the Dominicans endured.  
\(^{169}\) On this see Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 289, 308.
friar learnt that they had come from Constantinople, but he did not know where they were headed next.¹⁷⁰

Rubruck has the distinction of being the first to have written of the importance of Chinese silk to the ulus of Jochi,¹⁷¹ proving a trade route between the Cuman steppe and Central Asia at least from the mid-1240s. According to this source, there were only enough wares to satisfy the internal market in the Mongol state, not—as would be the case later—to make silk one of the principle trade goods which the Golden Horde would reexport to the West via the Black Sea.

The next source illustrates the same question from a different angle. Travelling via Constantinople and Soldaia, the Venetians Niccolò and Maffeo Polo, father and uncle of the famous Marco, met Berke in 1260 with his “court” somewhere on the Volga between Sarai and Bulgar. The khan “received Messer Niccolò and Messer Maffeo with great honour and was very glad they had come. The two brothers gave him all the jewels they had brought; and Barka took them willingly and was exceedingly pleased with them, and gave them goods of fully twice the value in return.” Pleased at this unexpectedly successful outcome, the two Venetians decided to return home after having spent a year in the lands of Horde, but when war broke out between Berke and Hülegü, they were obliged to flee onwards and crossed the Volga at Ukek, then took the usual Eastward route to Bukhara, where after waiting another three years they joined the Ilkhanid embassy to Qubilai and thus reached the Great Khan.¹⁷²

Even if they were forced by circumstances, the Polo brothers’ achievement was a historical landmark: they were the first Europeans to reach China by the Northward route.¹⁷³ Berke’s behaviour when he received the two Westerners is also down to their status as pioneers: his joy at seeing

¹⁷⁰ Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, p. 129.

¹⁷¹ “As regards their clothing and appearance, you should know that cloth of silk, of gold and of cotton reaches them from Cataia and other regions in the East, and from Persia and other Southern parts in addition, and these they wear in the summer” (Rubruck/Jackson, pp. 85–86); he also records that they obtained silk and cotton cloth from Asia Minor, in exchange for precious furs from the taiga.


¹⁷³ Cf. Petech, “Marchands,” p. 552. It is hard to believe that Marco’s father and uncle were prevented from returning via the Volga and the Black Sea because of a war fought between the two ulus in the Caucasus and adjacent territories. It is far more plausible that there was some other obstacle; at just this moment, Venetian control over the Straits gave way to their traditional enemies the Genoese. Marco Polo was dictating his memoirs as a prisoner-of-war in a Genoese jail, and it would be understandable if he prudently decided not to describe an episode which might displease his captors. There is not a whisper of anti-Genoese feeling in the whole book.
them in the Horde, the warm welcome accorded them, and not least the prices he paid for their gemstones evidently represented a lively attempt to interest foreign merchants in coming to do business with the Golden Horde. In the same vein must be mentioned the khan’s achievement of opening to Western merchants the road to Central Asia, and thus onward to India and China.174

After this promising start, there then follows a long and mysterious period of silence about the trade route in the sources. As with so many such lacunae, here too the most plausible cause is that the Mongol authorities involved in opening up trade simply produced few documents,175 along with the general discretion in which merchants themselves always shroud their business.176 We can also invoke blind chance to explain this unusually large gap in the sources, selecting and discarding quite at random what little material was written down in this place at this time. There is a whole array of indirect evidence that merchants from both the East and the West continued to ply their trade on the route from Northern Black Sea port cities to the trading cities of Central Asia,177 an assumption also

174 Within the empire, foreigners could only travel with express permission of the chief of the ulus whose territory the petitioner intended to cross; permission, once granted, represented protection from on high, so that the authorities were obliged to help the traveller however they could. This system did not guarantee total comfort, but it did function and fulfilled its intended purpose (see the Franciscan accounts mentioned above, Wyngaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, pp. 27–130 and 165–332, which are unusually informative about how travel was conducted in the Golden Horde). The same strictness was applied to locals travelling within the empire, who were not permitted to leave the territories which the khan had assigned them for pastureland (ibid., pp. 68 and 108).

175 See chapter 1.2.1 on the generally patchy situation for sources on trade.

176 This is suggested by Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 551–552, who holds that it illustrates “une règle presque absolue” for the epoch.

177 During negotiations brokered by the pope in 1269, the Genoese imposed one single clause on a treaty that they would sign with the Venetians; a pledge from their rivals not to put in at Tana (Cessi, “Tregua,” p. 10; cf. Brătianu, Recherches, p. 254, and idem, “Vénitiens,” pp. 15 and 33; Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 202–203); there is ample documentation from later epochs that its location at the mouth of the Don, as the Easternmost trading post in the Black Sea, made it the most convenient collecting point for goods from the Eurasian steppe and forests as well as for caravans from Khwarezm and Transoxiana; judging by such evidence, we may assume that the Genoese demand is also evidence of active and large-scale trade in Jochid-held territory in the 1260s; certainly the stipulation was a fixed part of their anti-Venetian policy in the Northern Black Sea (Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 203 ff.). A Byzantine-Mamluk treaty of 1281 points to the same state of affairs, paying as it does special attention to Egypt’s trade ties with the Golden Horde (Canard, “Le traité,” pp. 673–674, 679–680). A notarial ledger preserved from the same year primarily records contracts between Genoese merchants at Pera, which in themselves prove that there was intense commercial activity in the ports of Gazaria—Caffa and Soldaia—trading in typically regional goods; slaves, oxhides, wax, squirrel and ermine pelts, cheese (Brătianu,
supported by the idea that fundamental features of Eurasian trade are hardly likely to have changed much in the period from the Polo brothers’ journey to 1289, when documentary sources resume.\textsuperscript{178}

The next document to be preserved is a true monument in trade history, a register of the documents lodged with the Genoese notary Lamberto di Sambuceto at Caffa in 1289–90. Amongst a multitude of export goods from the steppe and the taiga, such as slaves, hides, fleece, wheat, barley, millet, wax, salt, cheese, and fish from both the Don and the Kuban,\textsuperscript{179} silk also features, which can only have been of Asian origin. Two sorts of silk recorded are clearly named for the place of manufacture: Great Merv in Sogdiana, and New Khwarezm, which is Urgench. This record shows that there was a trade link from Central Asia to the Crimea, and also shows the Genoese at Caffa content to buy their silk from neighbouring Solkhat, although in later times the Ligurians certainly did not settle for such mediated trade.\textsuperscript{180}

Returning from China to Persia in 1293–1294, Marco Polo talks of the Genoese returning to the Caspian as though this were a recent state of affairs: here they brought precious silk from Gilan, a province on the

\textit{Actes}, pp. 73–169; silk and spices are mentioned only once, with no indication as to their provenance (ibid., p. 128).

\textsuperscript{178} The Byzantine restoration in Constantinople in 1261 and the replacement of Venetian maritime power with Genoese in the Black Sea did not in the least stifle the development of Golden Horde commerce. Quite the opposite.

\textsuperscript{179} Brătianu, \textit{Actes}, pp. 173–297; cf. Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, pp. 175 ff.; Balard, “Notes,” p. 382, Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315. Horses were one of the most important steppe exports but do not feature in the Genoese notary’s record, since the herds of horses were not driven to the Black Sea ports but rather through Central Asia to India; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, pp. 371–374, was impressed by the size and number of these herds.

\textsuperscript{180} Brătianu, \textit{Actes}, pp. 205 (\textit{seta de Merdacaxi}), 210 (\textit{seta merdacaxi […] empta in Sorcato}), 211–212 (a shipment to Genoa of \textit{seta merdacusi et carusmisna}), 213 (\textit{fardello sete de merdacaxi}, bought in Solkhat); Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 673, suggests that \textit{seta merdacaxi} comes from “Merv Chahidjan, centre d’une oase située sur la frontière de Sogdiane, du côté de l’Iran, arrosée par le Mourgâb et qui a de tout temps produit et exporté une grande quantité de soie” (on the location of Great Merv in the Middle Ages, see Le Strange, \textit{Lands}, p. 398); Brătianu, \textit{Actes}, pp. 8 and 25, assumes that \textit{carusmisna} silk come from Khwarezm, though this cannot refer to the province of the same name but rather its capital, New Khwarezm, also called Urgench (Le Strange, \textit{Lands}, p. 449); for the commerical importance of the city see Petrushevskiy, “Pohod,” p. 102; note also that the name is still used today for the particular weave of organy silk (cf. Petech, “Marchands,” p. 558, Lopez, “Importance,” p. 25); \textit{seta […] carrnia} may be a misreading of \textit{seta canzia}, which Racine, “Marché,” p. 405, explains is a “soie provenant de Gandja, au sud de la Caspienne” although this is more likely to be Gangea in Caucasian Armenia. Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” pp. 143–144, point out that Central Asian silk has only a modest place among the transactions recorded by the notary Lamberto di Sambuceto, and that spices are similarly poorly represented.
South-West coast. Polo also recorded that they sailed in their own ships and transported these across dry land,\textsuperscript{181} which must have been via the shortest portage between the Don and the Volga.\textsuperscript{182}

It was probably the popularity of this trade zone that made an anonymous Spanish Franciscan erroneously state, in a geography compiled some time after 1348, that to reach Urgench from Tana, one must cross the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea.\textsuperscript{183} Certainly the Genoese frequented not just the mountains and the sea, but also lands further to the East, also ruled by the ulus of Jochi. This period of relative calm and intense trading activity is well-known thanks to Marco Polo, but also from the writings of the Minorite friar John of Montecorvino, who in 1307 was consecrated archbishop of Khanbalïq [= Beijing] and had described the road East in a letter to the pope two years earlier, pointing out that travelling to China via the lands of the Golden Horde was “shorter and safer” for possible envoys, but that because of frequent wars—doubtless meaning the wars between Toqta and Noghai—it was often closed.\textsuperscript{184}

Although the wars of the 1290s which Montecorvino mentions had a profoundly negative effect on trade, and certainly on foreign confidence in the \textit{Pax Mongolica},\textsuperscript{185} they did not discourage merchants entirely from visiting the Golden Horde once order was restored in the first year of the following century: some of these trusting souls fell victim to Toqta Khan, unexpectedly storming Caffa in 1307, and his order that all merchants travelling in the lands of the Horde be arrested.

\textsuperscript{181} Polo/Benedetto, p. 44: Et novelemant les marchians de Jene nagerent por cel mer, car il v’ont mis leign ou il nagerent. Et d’iluec vint la soie que est appellé G(h)elle. Because of the commercial importance of the product, Polo called the Caspian the \textit{Glevechelan} sea (ibid.), that is the Sea of Gilan (on this Persian province see Le Strange, \textit{Lands}, pp. 172 ff.); other regions around the sea, especially Georgia, had a reputation for producing better silk than the Chinese (cf. Racine, “Marché,” pp. 405–406, 408), for which reason Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 112, states: “Le commerce de la Caspienne semble avoir eu pour unique object le commerce de la soie.”


\textsuperscript{183} Wyngaert, \textit{Sinica Franciscana}, I, pp. 568–569.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 349: \textit{De via notifico quod per Chothay Imperatoris aquilonarium Tartarorum est via brevior et securior, ita quod cum nunciis infra V vel VI menses poterant pervenire; […] via secura non fuit a multo tempore propter guerras, ideo sunt XII anni quod de Curia romana et de nostro Ordine et statu accidentis non suscepi nova.}

\textsuperscript{185} Along with the general worsening or total disappearance of proper trading conditions, we should mention Noghai’s raids on several Crimean towns (see below, pp. 161–163).
Trade was therefore interrupted, and the sources once more fall silent, until 1313, when Özbek Khan restored relations with Genoa and returned to the towns from which they had been expelled in 1308.

Though the sources are typically silent about the state of the Northern route in the last years under Toqta, they are—justifiably—vocal about his successor’s reign. Özbek created an exceptionally good basis for trade, laying the foundation for the fullest use of the Cuman steppe route; foremost among his measures were the ideal conditions offered to the Genoese when they returned to Caffa in 1313, and the opening of the Tana trade to the Venetians in the following decade. It is no mere coincidence that in this khan’s time, the East-West route across the steppe became a veritable via magna, attractive enough to necessitate its inclusion in handbooks written for merchants. The most famous of these, the Florentine Francesco Balducci Pegolotti’s La pratica della mercatura, highlights the route’s importance by giving it first place, in an ambitious and compendious manual that aims to give a complete picture of Eurasian trade and to a great extent succeeds. The description of the route is more informative than any commentary could be, studded as it is with practical

---

186 Marino Sanudo showed exceptional discretion in composing his treatise between 1306 and 1313, where the great trade routes and the Mamluk blockade are the main topics (cf. Sanudo/Bongars, passim). Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 189, noted this odd silence and wondered whether it was not a form of silent boycott, given that these routes were Genoese-controlled, but answers his own question by absolving the Venetian author of any such ill will: “Ce serait la preuve d’une telle petitez d’esprit que nous nous refusons à y croire, surtout sachant qu’il se faisait l’interprète de toute la chrétienté.” Certainly Sanudo calls on all Christendom to intervene in Cilician Armenia to retake the terminus of the Asian trade route which the Mamluk sultan had captured in 1285. The great strategist does not mention however that a colony of his fellow-countrymen continued to trade in the Armenian kingdom despite the considerable downturn in trading conditions once it became subject to Cairo. The Venetian merchants hardly had any choice; after the loss of Acre, their principal Levantine trading post, and the thwarted attempt to find some substitute in the Black Sea when they lost the war of 1294–1299 against the Genoese, their only access was via occupied Armenia. Marino Sanudo’s unspoken view was that an anti-Mamluk crusade could in the first instance serve Venice’s interests. This idea, rooted in the circumstances around the “Armenian variant,” necessarily excluded any mention of Black Sea trade, dominated as it was by the rival Genoese.

187 See chapter 4.2.4.

188 Pegolotti/Evans; according to the editor, the work was written in 1340 (ibid., pp. XIII–XIV); Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 311–313, argues that the Florentine manual shares a common source with an anonymous compilation, which he dates “autour de 1315, avec une approximation maxime d’une dizaine d’années” using rather elastic arguments; he publishes extracts from this other work on pp. 313 ff.; English translation from Yule, Cathay, II, pp. 287–295. The related text published by Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 315–316 does not vary significantly; for commentaries see Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 189–190, Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 286–292.
explanations for travellers of the time. Even today, this advice illuminates the structure and dynamics of the great trade route:

**Information regarding the Journey to Gattaio**\(^{189}\)
for such as will go by Tana and come back with goods

In the first place, from Tana to Gintarcan\(^{190}\) may be twenty-five days with an ox-wagon, and from ten to twelve days with a horse-wagon. On the road you will find plenty of Moccoli [= Mongols] that is to say, of gens d’armes.\(^{191}\) And from Gittarcan to Sara\(^{192}\) may be a day by river, and from Sara to Saracanco,\(^{193}\) also by river, eight days. You can do this either by land or by water; but by water you will be at less charge for your merchandize. From Saracanco to Organci\(^{194}\) may be twenty days’ journey in camel-wagon. It will be well for anyone travelling with merchandize to go to Organci, for in that city there is a ready sale for goods. From Organci to Oltarre\(^{195}\) is thirty-five to forty days in camel-wagons. But if when you leave Saracanco you go direct to Oltarre, it is a journey of fifty days only, and if you have no merchandize it will be better to go this way than to go by Organci. From Oltarre to Armalecco\(^{196}\) is forty-five days’ journey with pack-asses, and every day you find moccoli. And from Armalecco to Camesu\(^{197}\) is seventy days with asses, and from Camesu until you come to a river called . . .\(^{198}\) is forty-five days on horseback; and then you can go down the river to Cassai,\(^{199}\) and there you can dispose of the sommi of silver that you have with you, for that is a most active place of business. After getting to Cassai you carry on with the money which you get for the sommi\(^{200}\) of silver which you sell there; and this money is made of paper, and is called balisci.\(^{201}\) And four pieces of this money are worth one

---

\(^{189}\) Cathai [= China]; Gattaio (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Ghattaio).

\(^{190}\) Astrakan (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Ghattarghati).

\(^{191}\) moccoli, cioè gente d’arme (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Mocholi assai, cioè huomini d’arme tarteri).

\(^{192}\) Sarai (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Sara).

\(^{193}\) Saraijïq [= ‘Little Sarai’] on the river Ural (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Saracingho).

\(^{194}\) Urgench on the lower Amu Darya (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Orchanegi).

\(^{195}\) Otrar on the Syr Darya (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Oltarre).

\(^{196}\) Almalïq (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 315: Armalicchio); on its location see Pegolotti/Evans, p. 397: “It has now been identified with Mazar, Northwest of Kulja, near the entrance to the Talki Pass, in the Ili valley at the Northern border of Chinese Turkestan.”


\(^{198}\) Blank in text.


\(^{200}\) Edler, Glossary, p. 273: “Soma; 1. a pack-animal load, the quantity by one pack-animal (a unit of weight for spices, etc., transported by caravan). 2. a unit of weight for precious metals (in Pera, Tana, and elsewhere; ca. 7–11 Florentine ozs)”; Pegolotti is clearly using the second usage here.

\(^{201}\) The common form in Near Eastern records is balis or balish (Yule, Cathay, II, pp. 196, III, 149 note 1, 2).
sommo of silver in the province of Gattaio. And from Cassai to Gamalecco,202 which is the capital city of the country of Gattaio, is thirty days' journey.

THINGS NEEDFUL FOR MERCHANTS WHO DESIRE TO MAKE THE JOURNEY TO GATTAIO ABOVE DESCRIBED

In the first place, you must let your beard grow long and not shave. And at Tana you should furnish yourself with a dragoman. And you must not try to save money in the matter of dragomen by taking a bad one instead of a good one. For the additional wages of the good one will not cost you so much as you will save by having him. And besides the dragoman it will be well to take at least two good men servants, who are acquainted with the Cumanian tongue. And if the merchant likes to take a woman with him from Tana, he can do so; if he does not like to take one there is no obligation, only if he does take one he will be kept much more comfortably than if he does not take one. Howbeit, if he do take one, it will be well that she be acquainted with the Cumanian tongue as well as the men.

And from Tana travelling to Gittarchan you should take with you twenty-five days' provisions, that is to say, flour and salt fish, for as to meat you will find enough of it at all the places along the road. […]

The road you travel from Tana to Cathay is perfectly safe, whether by day or by night, according to what the merchants say who have used it. Only if the merchant, in going or coming, should die upon the road, everything belonging to him will become the perquisite of the lord of the country in which he dies, and the officers of the lord will take possession of all. And in like manner if he die in Cathay. But if his brother be with him, or an intimate friend and comrade calling himself his brother, then to such an one they will surrender the property of the deceased, and so it will be rescued.

And there is another danger: this is when the lord of the country dies, and before the new lord who is to have the lordship is proclaimed; during such intervals there have sometimes been irregularities practised on the Franks, and other foreigners. (They call Franks all the Christians of these parts from Romania203 Westward.) And neither will the roads be safe to travel


203 Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 6–7 defines Romania as follows: “Entendons que par là ce que les Génois, et avant eux les Vénitiens, désignaient: moins une réalité politique que le vast ensemble des régions qui, à un moment ou à un autre de leur histoire, firent partie de l’empire byzantin, lorsque les Italiens établirent des relations d’affaires avec l’Orient grec; la péninsule balkanique, presque entièrement dominée par Basile II et ses successeurs, le monde égéen, l’Asie mineure avant la conquête des Seljoukides, l’espace pontique enfin. La rétraction de l’empire ne provoque pas immédiatement un changement de vocabulaire: les Génois continuent à parler de Romanie pour désigner des régions qui échappent au pouvoir du basileus. Progressivement toutefois, dans les sources, des noms nouveaux apparaissent, qui distinguent des réalités régionales: Mare Maius (la Mer Noire), Gazaria (la Crimée génoise), Zagora (la Bulgarie), sont employés à la fin du XIIIe siècle tandis que vers 1340–1350, la Turchia devient plus familière aux Génois. Signe de la désagrégation de
until the other lord be proclaimed who is to reign in room of him who is deceased. […]

You may calculate that a merchant with a dragoman, and with two men servants, and with goods to the value of twenty-five thousand golden florins, should spend on his way to Cathay from sixty to eighty sommi of silver, and not more if he manage well; and for all the road back again from Cathay to Tana, including the expenses of living and the pay of servants, and all other charges, the cost will be about five sommi per head of pack animals, or something less. And you may reckon the sommo to be worth five golden florins. You may reckon also that each ox-wagon will require one ox, and will carry ten cantars Genoese weight; and the camel wagon will require three camels, and will carry thirty cantars Genoese weight; and the horse-wagon will require one horse, and will commonly carry six and half cantars of silk, at 250 Genoese pounds to the cantar. And a bale of silk may be reckoned at between 110 and 115 Genoese pounds.

You may reckon also that from Tana to Sara the road is less safe than on any other part of the journey; and yet even when this part of the road is at its worst, if you are some sixty men in the company you will go as safely as if you were in your own house.

Anyone from Genoa or from Venice, wishing to go to the places above-named, and to make the journey to Cathay, should carry linens with him, and if he visits Organci he will dispose of these well. In Organci he should purchase sommi of silver, and with these he should proceed without making any further investment, unless it be some bales of the very finest stuffs which go in small bulk, and cost no more for carriage than coarser stuffs would do.

Merchants who travel this road can ride on horseback or on asses, or mounted in any way that they list to be mounted.

Whatever silver the merchants may carry with them as far as Cathay the lord of Cathay will take from them and put into his treasury. And to merchants who thus bring silver they give that paper money of theirs in exchange. This is of yellow paper, stamped with the seal of the lord aforesaid. And this money is called balishi; and with this money you can readily buy silk and all other merchandize that you have a desire to buy. And all the people of the country are bound to receive it. And yet you shall not pay a higher price for your goods because your money is of paper. And of the said paper money there are three kinds, one being worth more than another, according to the value which has been established for each by that lord.

---

l’empire: le mot Romanie s’efface alors au profit des noms portés par chacun des territoires grecs dans lesquels les Génois se sont implantés: Péra, Chio et Mytilène par exemple.”

204 Edler, Glossary, p. 59: “Cantarò; 1. cantar, a unit of weight, usually 100 ruotoli, but varying from 100 to 750 lbs. in different Mediterranean countries. 2. a measure for grain (in Tana, ca. 5 Venetian bushels).”

205 Ibid., p. 158: “Libbra; pound (varying greatly from place to place, in Italy and other countries. Most cities had two pound weights, a light and a heavy one) […] Libbra genovesca; Genoese pound (used in Pera, Caffa, Tana, and other Levantine cities).”
And you may reckon that you can buy for one sommo of silver nineteen or twenty pounds of Cathay silk, when reduced to Genoese weight, and that the sommo should weigh eight and a half ounces of Genoa, and should be of the alloy of eleven ounces and seventeen deniers to the pound.

You may reckon also that in Cathay you should get three or three and a half pieces of damasked silk\textsuperscript{206} for a sommo; and from three and a half to five pieces of nacchetti of silk and gold,\textsuperscript{207} likewise for a sommo of silver.

Clearly, the fact that the Florentine author of this guide chose to use Genoese units of conversion and measurement proves that the route was used predominantly, though not exclusively, by merchants from the Ligurian republic. Also informative here is the trading venture undertaken in 1338 by a group of Venetians. They crossed the lands of the Golden Horde by the well-known route from Tana to Urgench, but thence did not take the Eastern route to China which Pegolotti recommends, but set out Southward, on a route not described in the famous manual; after they had crossed the Hindu Kush, they reached Ghazna and then Delhi, where the sultan richly rewarded their journey. They returned from India by the same route, although their profits were largely eaten up in bribes and bakshish paid to the generous ruler’s customs agents.\textsuperscript{208}

The extent of Özbek Khan’s involvement in, and contribution, to the development of this impressive economic activity may be glimpsed with the help of several sources, which give fragmentary pictures of the way things were. As well as offering the Genoese and Venetian merchants freedom to trade within his borders,\textsuperscript{209} he was strict in upholding a ruler’s principal obligation to “guests” from other lands, by offering them his protection: when Pegolotti praises the Golden Horde route from the Black Sea to China with the superlative sicurissimo, “by night and by day,” this is also a word of praise for the Chinggisid khan in the Cuman steppe. The visible signs of his concern for the safety of the road were those same “Moccoli, that is to say, of gens d’armes”\textsuperscript{210} whom the merchants encountered at

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{206} Pegolotti/Evans, p. 415: “A silk cloth, possibly damasked or brocaded with gold.”
\item\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., p. 423: “A precious stuff of silk and gold.”
\item\textsuperscript{209} See chapter 4.2.4.
\item\textsuperscript{210} Yule, Cathay, II, p. 287. In this instance, the word Moccol for Mongol is used exclusively as a professional designation rather than an ethnonym, although at least some if not all of the highway patrols (if not the entire internal security apparatus) must have been descended from the group which Batu Khan brought to the country in 1242, not yet assimilated entirely with the local Cuman majority; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémer, Sanguinetti, II,
every turn, and the less visible but no less effective set of very severe laws, inflexibly applied, which put thieves to death in short order.\textsuperscript{211}

Pegolotti’s guide gives a picture of a very favourable set of conditions for trade in the Cuman steppe, instituted by Özbek, and the picture is confirmed and completed from an entirely different perspective by the Arab traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s description of a journey through the lands of the Golden Horde in 1333–1334. One of his most significant additions is missing in the Florentine portrayal, the mention of the Crimean section of the route.

Coming from Sinope, the Maghrebi scholar disembarked at Kerch, whence he headed for the large border town of Caffa, inhabited by Christians, mostly Genoese: it had fine markets and an admirable harbour, where there were around two hundred ships put in, both warships and trading ships, large and small.\textsuperscript{212}

The other important settlement on the South-East coast of the peninsula, Soldaia, likewise had a large and well-appointed harbour, and here the Turks ruled over a number of Greek craftsmen and artisans; the town, which was once imposing, had been largely laid waste in the course of a war between the two groups.\textsuperscript{213} Next on his itinerary was Solkhat, also called \textit{al-Qirim}, a large and beautiful town where the Mongol governor resided.\textsuperscript{214} Tana features under its Cuman name Azak as a “beautifully built” town where the Genoese and others came to trade their goods.\textsuperscript{215}

After reaching Özbek’s camp, where he bathed in the hot springs at Besh Tagh,\textsuperscript{216} the Arab traveller went to Bulghar, gateway to the “Land of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{448} himself makes a neat distinction between the Mongols and the Cumans, indicating that by the 1330s the process of assimilation which ‘Umari/Lech describes, p. 141, had not yet been entirely completed.
\item \textsuperscript{211} Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, p. 364, claims that the severity of the laws against theft saved this nomad people from the trouble of having to watch their flocks at all times.
\item \textsuperscript{212} Ibid., pp. 357–358.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Initially victorious, the Greeks were finally defeated by Turkish forces supported by their compatriots, who then butchered or expelled most of the defeated party so that only a very few remained in the town, which the Arab traveller knew as \textit{Sudaq} (ibid., pp. 414–15); on the dating and circumstances for the war, see below, pp. 193 ff.; the ‘Turks’ are in fact Cumans, called by the name of the larger Turanic group of which they were part.
\item \textsuperscript{214} Ibid., p. 357; \textit{al-Qirim} is an Arabic variant of the Turkish toponym \textit{Qirım}, often preceded by the adjective \textit{Eski} ‘old’ to denote the Mongol capital on the peninsula but without this prefix meaning all of the Crimea.
\item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid., p. 368; \textit{Azaq}.
\item \textsuperscript{216} Ibid., p. 379; like many other spa resorts, the “Five Hills” must be placed somewhere in the Northern Caucasus.
\end{itemize}
Shadows,” source of all the best-quality furs and pelts\textsuperscript{217} and then rejoined the khan’s retinue, with whom he travelled onward to Astrakhan.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa gives the name of the city on the mouth of the Volga as \textit{Al-Hajj Tarkhān}: it benefitted from the khan’s exemption from all taxes—the author explains helpfully that \textit{tarkhān} means just this, a place exempt from taxes, in Turkish—so that the little market grew and prospered until it had become a very beautiful town with considerable markets. Caravans arrived here, and even crossed over to the other side of the river when it was frozen.\textsuperscript{218}

After three days’ travel along the Volga, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa arrived at Sarai (\textit{al-Sarā}), “called Sarai-Berke,” in the midst of a densely settled plain. To walk the length of the city would take from morning until lunchtime, although it only took half the time to walk its breadth. The streets are wide, the houses jammed up tightly together with no room for gardens or empty lots in between them. Mosques, large and small, are numerous. Sarai’s inhabitants are from various stock: local Mongols, the lords of the country, some of them Muslims, Muslim Alans, Cumans, Circassians, Russians, Greeks, all of these Christian. Each group lives in a separate quarter, where they have their markets. Foreigners from Iraq, Egypt, Syria and elsewhere live in a walled quarter where the merchants’ goods are well-defended. The khan’s palace is also in the town.\textsuperscript{219}

Between Sarai-Berke and the city of ‘Khwarezm,’ meaning Urgench, is a desert, which can be crossed in forty days but only by camel, not with horses, because water is so scarce.\textsuperscript{220}

As a traveller with direct and immediate knowledge of the lands of the Golden Horde, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa furnishes details that agree with and support Pegolotti’s information. The draught animals were horses, oxen and camels, setting off in caravan according to a strictly observed daily timetable. The merchants rented wagons from the Cumans.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., pp. 398–402; \textit{Bulghār} is on the Kama, a tributary of the Volga, and in the Mongols’ time the place-name gave way to \textit{Kazan}; see Pegolotti/Evans, p. 414: “\textit{Bolgari, ‘Bulgarian Vair}, included in the list of vairs, the term is clearly geographical, cf. \textit{vai organini, volgari, capaneri, o d’altra parte}.”

\textsuperscript{218} Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, pp. 410–411; it is hard to say whether Astrakhan really did enjoy tax exemption in Özbek’s time or whether this is a little etymological indulgence on the Arab traveller’s part.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., pp. 447–448; the locals were of course not Mongols as such but Cumans.

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., pp. 450–451.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., pp. 357–459, 361–464; the Arab gives the Cuman name of these vehicles, with “four great wheels” and used everywhere in the Crimea and the Cuman steppe, as ‘\textit{araba},
The great traveller was treated as an unusually esteemed guest by the authorities wherever he went: the governors of Solkhat and Tana received him with much honour, and fed and lodged him, and furnished him for the road, their generosity only surpassed by that of the khan Özbek himself and some of his wives.\textsuperscript{222}

It is plausible that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was only lavished with such attentions because he comported himself, as he himself never fails to emphasise, as a pious Muslim at all times, and thus met with great sympathy from his high-ranking coreligionists among the Jochids. Even though in all these cases their shared faith certainly had some part to play, in at least one instance, when he met and spoke with Özbek himself, there was much more at stake, that is to say, the state policy toward foreign visitors. From this perspective, the Franciscan missionary John of Marignolli is an informative source, since he spent the winter of 1339/40 in the lands of the Golden Horde while travelling from the Black Sea and Caffa, then took the well-known route from Almalïq to China: the Muslim khan showered the Catholic missionary\textsuperscript{223} with no fewer gifts and no less favour than he had Ibn Baṭṭūṭa a few years earlier.

Özbek’s consistent and many-pronged strategy of promoting trade and commerce was as profitable as the Cuman steppe Mongols could have hoped: the horde reached the peak of its commercial and political development under his rule,\textsuperscript{224} and these parallel processes were reciprocally determined, however indirect and relational the link may have been. His successors supplied negative proof that this link had existed under Özbek.

Certainly nobody could have suspected that the traders’ paradise which Özbek established would come to such a sudden end: the “total war” which Janibek unleashed against Western merchants in 1343 destroyed his

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., pp. 359–361, 374–375, 447.

\textsuperscript{223} Wyngaert, \textit{Sinica Franciscana}, I, p. 527: \textit{Inde ad primum Thartarorum Imperatorem Usbec pervenimus et obtudimus litteras, pannos, dextrarium, cyticam et dona Pape, et post hiemem bene pasti, vestiti et remunerati magnifice et cum eius equis et expensis pervenimus in Armalec […]}. 

father's achievements at a stroke. Foreigners no longer circulated on the highways of the Jochid ulus, causing great losses to those steppe-dwellers involved in commerce and to the Mongol state itself. It is certainly not a coincidence that Janibek provoked commercial stagnation just at the time that the Golden Horde began its decline.225

The subsequent unravelling of the state was driven by the deep forces in these laws, the inevitable consequence of the central powers’ inability to promote and cultivate commerce, and consequently to reap the benefits: the insecurity continued for almost two decades, marked by internal strife (1361–1380)226—Pegolotti warns merchants of the dangers of the interregnum, and also knows its causes—with undeniably grave effects at the level of trade. An indication of the troubled times is that no documentary evidence survives from this whole stretch of time to attest to the Jochid route being used, although it was so heavily frequented, and consequently well-documented, in Özbek’s day.

Seen from the wider perspective, Toqtamish Khan’s success in reuniting the state from 1380 to 1396 was simply an interlude in a general, and inexorable, decline. It was in the nature of things that his stubborn efforts to restore the Golden Horde’s internal structures and external position would necessarily have a strong commercial element, shown primarily in the treaty concluded with the Caffan Genoese227 and in the war with Timur Lenk, lord of Central Asia and Iran. In the final analysis this was a struggle for control of Eurasian commerce, a conflict between the ruler over the Western half of the Silk Road and the ruler of its branch routes on the Cuman steppe. The final act of this epic rivalry came with the Timurid campaign in the Golden Horde’s lands in 1395/6: the commercial centres of the ulus of Jochi were systematically destroyed, leading—as intended—to the abandonment of the route linking Central Asia to the Black Sea via the Cuman steppe.

It is an irony of fate that Timur’s apologist Ahmad ibn ‘Arabshâh (d. 1450) should express regret for the disappearance of this great route, once so well-trodden that caravans could travel from Khwarezm to the Crimea in about three months in complete security, “without fear and without danger.”228

---

225 See chapter 4.2.5.
226 See chapter 4.2.6.
227 See chapter 4.2.7.
The destruction of this great trade artery, which brought part of the Silk Road commerce to the Golden Horde, by no means meant the cessation of trade in the Black Sea region, nor even in those Northern parts directly affected: Caffa and Tana still saw considerable turnover in the fifteenth century, although without the geographical reach of trade in the previous century.\(^{229}\)

Despite such considerations, the blow that Timur struck was not without effect.\(^{230}\) It was certainly fatal for the Golden Horde’s apparatus of state, which was so dependent upon and sensitive to the flow of commerce and its income. Seen from this angle, and judging by results, we may see years in Tana from 1436, also describes its past in glowing terms; before it was destroyed by Timur Lenk, Astrakhan was one of the great depots of the route, where spice and silk were delivered in huge quantities, and every year the Venetian merchants would bring six or seven ‘great galleys’ to the port on the Don, at a time when such goods could no longer be found in Syria (Barbaro/Skričinskaya, p. 132, Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” p. 127).

\(^{229}\) The Archbishop John of Sultanıye, who visited Caffa in 1404, eulogised it: *Capfa civitas famosa et populosa, ibidemque confluent mercatores de omnibus partibus mundi. Omnes lingue orientalium inveniuntur ibi: ego numeravi aliquando XXXV linguas ibidem. Est in maximum auxilium et favorem Christianorum hec civitas ultra mare. Januenses dominantur ibi, ibidemque pro nunc sunt meliores magistri ad laborandum de serico et chameloto [= camel-hair cloth] ac alis artibus* (Libellus/Kern, p. 107; on the importance of this source see Papacostea, “Fin,” pp. 30, 31 note 5); the Castilian traveller Pero Tafur, who also crossed the lands North of the Black Sea on his journey of 1435–1439, saw the Genoese and the Venetian forts at Tana, but was most impressed by the wealth of Caffa, “as big as Seville or bigger,” and in his opinion twice as populous: “Caffa is bounded on the side towards Persia and India by land, and on the others by the Sea of Tana, the Sea of Ryxabaque and the Sea of Baku [= the Black Sea, Sea of Azov and the Caspian]. They bring there much merchandise, spices, gold, pearls, and precious stones, and above all, from the countries round, come the furs of the whole world and at the cheapest rates;” there is also a thriving trade in slaves, mostly bound to Mamluk Egypt (Tafur/Letts, pp. 132–134). The Venetian senate’s pronouncement of 1460 may be seen as an interim report on the trade done at Tana: *Viagium Tane erat unum de principaliorum viagiis et utilioribus, a que cetera viagia hujus nostre civitatis dependebant et dependent* (Thiriet, *Régestes*, no. 3104, Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, *Venise*, p. 29, Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” p. 194). Basing his conclusion on a comparative study, Thiriet, “Vénitiens,” p. 49, found that, “à bien regarder, les deux premières décennies du XVe siècle ont été probablement les meilleures pour la colonie vénitienne de La Tana.”

\(^{230}\) Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” p. 126, summed up the results of various quantitative studies based on the origins of goods, from both Heers, “Commercio,” and their own work, concluding: “Ces quelques analyses nous permettent de conclure que si le passage de Tamerlan ne doit pas être considéré comme le point final du ‘grand’ commerce de La Tana, il est vrai que dans les années qui le suivent, les routes de l’Inde, voir de la Chine, sont bel et bien coupées; l’absence des épices en témoigne, et si la soie demeure à La Tana, c’est en faible quantité, et la source en est proche, un ‘produit local’, étant en quelque sorte substitué à un article du ‘grand’ commerce.” Between 1338 and 1340 Shams al-Dīn of Shiraz travelled via Herat and Urgench and sold his wares at Sarai at a profit of 430 per cent, but this journey has rightly been considered an isolated case (Hinz, “Handelsunternehmen,” İnalçık, “Question,” p. 85 note 2).
that the East-West route was literally vitally important for the exchequer at Sarai, regardless of what its absolute volume may have been—which is very hard to judge. When the route vanished, this set off a classic chain reaction: the state budget, even in the best of times strained to its limits, could no longer match its costs, and the central institutions which had been a lynchpin for cohesion in the ulus shrivelled away and gradually stopped working, so that the impressive foundations which Batu Khan had laid for his state in 1242 had crumbled by about 1430.

To conclude, the Silk Road’s branch route on the Cuman steppe had been developed by the Jochid khans to compensate for the loss in 1261 of their direct link to the main artery of Eurasian trade, and answered a fundamental need for the Golden Horde—a gigantic steppe polity which suffered from an inborn economic defect which shortened its lifespan, just as had happened to all the empires which arose in this geographic region over time.

3.4.2 The Ilkhanid Branch: Tabriz-Trebizond

Chance would have it that the Mongols in Iran were also using the Black Sea, and reaping the benefits, at the same time as their rivals and kinsmen in the Cuman steppe. Setting aside the countless small differences in detail, the same basic cause, rooted in the problems of Eurasian long-distance trade, was at work in the Ilkhanid court as in Sarai, and produced the same result, by re-directing a large flow of Asian commerce toward the Black Sea basin.

The immediate cause of this profound shift in transcontinental trade networks was the regime change in Cilician Armenia, the entry-way for long-distance trade. Here the fierce rivalry between the Ilkhanate and the Mamluk sultanate over the Fertile Crescent reached a decisive point in 1285, when Cilicia ceased to be a vassal of the Mongols and became instead

---

231 See for instance the precarious situation even in Özbek’s day, when the Jochid state was at the peak of its prosperity (cf. above, p. 10 note 25, p. 165 note 90).

232 The correlation is noted by İnalcık, “Question,” p. 86: “Timur’s intervention in the internal struggles of the Golden Horde in the last decades of the fourteenth century not only contributed to the fall of Azak (Azov), Saray and Astrakhan as international trade centers, but, perhaps more importantly, by destroying the rising power of Toqtamish, further accelerated the process of the dissolution and polarization of the tribal confederations in the Eurasian steppes.”

233 On the Golden Horde, see chapters 3.1, 3.3.1, 3.4.1.
subject to Egypt. The Genoese tried to shatter the Mamluks at the end of that decade, with Persian help, a campaign to restore the kingdom of Cilicia to its old political allegiances: but the attempt failed. Also thwarted was the attempt to restore the previous patterns of trade, bringing the Silk Road and the Iraqi spice route into the Eastern Mediterranean. This drove the allies to seek an alternative sea outlet, beyond the reach of the sultan at Cairo.

The answer they settled upon was to upgrade the Tabriz-Trebizond route to a higher level of trade, as a successful substitute for the Tabriz-Ayas route. This was never a complete substitution, and it must be emphasised that this was merely an epilogue to the joint Ilkhanid-Genoese campaign against the Mamluks, shifting trade from one Christian gateway to Muslim Anatolia to the other.

It seems that when the Ligurian merchants moved from Cilician Armenia to the Trebizond-Tabriz route, they did this not just with the Ilkhan Arghun’s approval but with his support; the best evidence is supplied by a source which has long been known, but whose profound implications in shedding light on long-distance trade have not yet been sufficiently

---

234 See chapter 3.2.
235 See also Ciocîltan, “Genoa”.
236 This is described in detail by Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 28–29; the Florentine was an agent for the Bardi banking and merchant house to Leon V, the king of Cilician Armenia, in 1335, and knew the route very well. On pp. 389–391, Evans identifies some of the numerous and, for the most part, obscure locations where goods were taxed or where guards were paid. Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 112–117, did the same a few decades earlier; regardless of how successful such attempts may be, the Ayas-Tabriz route certainly took in the major urban centres of Kayseri, Sivas, Erzijnjan and Erzurum as fixed points (Pegolotti names the last three). Cf. also Bautier, “Relations,” pp. 281–282.
237 Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 84–85, remarks with unjustified surprise: “Il est très curieux que l’on ne possède aucun diplôme du XIVe siècle, donné par un roi d’Arménie en faveur des Génois, ni, en général, aucun document qui puisse nous renseigner sur la durée des relations commerciales de Gênes avec la Petite-Arménie”; he cites evidence to prove the presence of Genoese merchants in Cilicia from the 1290s until 1375, when the Mamluks annexed the kingdom. The proofs are thin and scattered, but they do show that the history of the large Genoese colony at Ayas did indeed end in 1290. Among other sources showing that the Trebizond route never entirely displaced the old Ayas road, Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 28–29, gives a very detailed description of the trade route through Asia Minor and Cilicia. Another trade manual, also from the first half of the fourteenth century, neatly sums up the symmetry and the similarity in purpose of the two seaward routes from Tabriz: Quelli di Turrisi veghono cholla merchantiania a Trebixonda e all’Aiazo d’Erminia (Bautier, “Relations,” p. 317; Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 231, and above, chapter 3.4.1).
238 Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 92, sees these two gateway cities as sharing common commercial and religious features, drawing attention to the great advantages for merchants of doing business in Christian bridgehead territories in an age still marked by Crusader mentality, when trading with Muslims was much frowned upon.
brought out. It is a unique case in Black Sea political history, for either the Persian or the Cuman Mongol state. In 1290, Arghun extended his protection to the Black Sea by paying for a warship, armed and commanded by the Genoese Vivaldo Lavaggio, to patrol for pirates in these waters.239

This last instance of cooperation between the Ilkhan Arghun and the Genoese marks the beginning of a new era, when new horizons were opened up, of great importance for long-distance trade in general and for the Black Sea trade especially.

The Genoese government signed a treaty with the Sultan of Cairo in May 1290, recognising *ipso facto* the economic subjugation of the Cilician kingdom by the Mamluk dictat of 1285.240 The Genoese colonists in Cilicia chose to leave because of the many taxes imposed on the traffic of goods in the kingdom to meet the new overlords’ demands,241 more perhaps than because of the permanent insecurity.242 How grievous these taxes were may be judged from the reaction of the Venetian merchants, who stubbornly continued to trade in Armenia after it had fallen to the Mamluks. Although the Serenissima, like Genoa, benefitted from “most favoured nation” status,243 the new trading measures introduced by Leon V led them to an uprising by the merchants in the first years of the fourteenth century.244

---


240 The annual tribute was fixed at the enormous sum of 1,000,000 dirhems, to which was to be added half of all the incomes of the saltworks and the customs receipts at Ayas and Portella (Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 89).

241 Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 91: “Pour faire face à cette situation écrasante, les rois d’Arménie se virent à leur tour réduits à imposer lourdement les commerçants étrangers. Ils s’abstinrent de toucher aux traités qui abaissaient ou supprimaient les droits d’entrée et de sortie, ils continuèrent même à accorder des diplômes conçus dans ce sens, mais il leur restait comme ressource les taxes des passages des cours d’eau, les taxes d’ancrage dans les ports, les péages sur les routes, les taxes des marchés etc., dont les traités ne parlent pas […] . Plus le tribut à payer à l’Égypte augmentait, plus les charges imposées au commerce s’aggravaien.”


244 Ibid., p. 91: The uprising was led by the bailey, who led the crews of two galleys in looting Ayas of everything they could get their hands on; subsequent treaties between the Venetians and the king were likewise focused on customs taxes and imposts. The same situation led James II of Aragon to pressure Hethum II in 1297 to respect the terms of a privilege granted to Catalan merchants by his father, Leon II, who died in 1289 (Marinesco, *Catalogne*, pp. 20–23).
Such vexations no longer concerned the Genoese. Having shown themselves to be the only Western power determined to face the Mamluks, whatever the risks, and free Cilician Armenia from the Muslim yoke, they decided in the end to leave the country, once their campaign had failed and royal agents began to impose the numerous new taxes. Their courage in the war can be explained by the extent of their commercial interests in the kingdom, undeniably much larger than those of other Western merchant groups. In choosing to switch from Ayas-Tabriz, in which they were so heavily invested, to the Trebizond-Tabriz route which would need much work and organisation to meet their requirements, the Genoese showed the same brio and enterprising spirit, “knowing no boundaries.”

Their was a mindset used to cool calculations on the risks and profits of a large-scale venture; although from beginning to end the new route had rivals in competitor routes that were shorter, more convenient, and did not make such detours, it remained a going concern for half a century.

Between 1291 and 1293 the English King Edward I’s envoy, Galfredus de Langele [= Langley?], travelled the route in an inaugural journey significant on many levels. Edward had sent Langley in response to Arghun’s invitation to work together against the Mamluks, conveyed by the Ilkhan’s Genoese ambassador Buscarello de’Ghizolfi to the courts of Rome, Paris and London. Although the accounts of the voyage show that on the outward journey he made a curious detour around Asia Minor on disembarking at Samsun, whereby he took in Caesarea and Sivas, on his return journey to Tabriz he took the shortest route via Trebizond, taking the caravan road to Khoy, Erzurum and Bayburt.
The list of purchases made at Trebizond includes a horse bought from the Genoese Benedetto, while baggage was lodged in the house of his compatriot Niccolò Doria. These Genoese citizens were part of a colony whose (first?) consul, Paolino Doria, ended his term in office on 28th April 1290 at latest, proving that Genoese were already living in the Comnenid capital and organised as a group before that date. Two Genoese are recorded in 1291 as having attacked and robbed a Venetian, killing him in the skirmish. One of the perpetrators of this attack was the head of the mint, Niccolò Doria, later even head of the imperial customs, and another was the consul himself, Galvano di Negro, who refused to compensate the victim’s companions or to arrest the guilty parties. They were still at liberty when the Venetian government made representations to the doge of Genoa.

The same anti-Venetian sentiment was again felt, although in a less drastic manner, in another act in 1294. There is no reason to suppose that the Genoese colony in Trebizond disappeared during the Venetian-Genoese war of 1294–1299, although there are no documentary traces.

In the absence of any law legalising the status of Genoese in the city, around 1300 a proposal was mooted granting them the right to settle in their own quarter, Leontokastron—though the date could just as easily have been the late 1280s. In any event, the first clear documentary evidence after the war comes in 1302, when a Genoese court of justice is mentioned, suggesting a well-established internal structure to the colony.

The Byzantine historian Georgios Pachymeres refers to the same Genoese colony in Trebizond in connection with an event of 1304, and mentions that they had long been established there.
The same tenacious will that led the Genoese from the Northern shores of the Black Sea to the depths of the Asian continent also drove them to seek profit from the route they had opened on the other side of the Black Sea. The earliest clear proof of Genoese merchants using the Trebizond-Tabriz route comes from a commercial contract signed at Caffa in August 1289, which stipulates that a certain sum of money is to be repaid at Tabriz: the parties to the contract would certainly have intended to take the Trebizond route, rather than the enormous detour via Ayas. This assumption is strengthened by a similar document, notarised at Genoa in July 1292, whereby a particular payment is to be made either at Trebizond or at Tabriz. Even more conclusive are further documents from the same year, which hint at the quantities involved: for the first time, they mention caravans with Genoese participants.

The chief continental destination from Trebizond was Tabriz, famous for the wealth and astonishing variety of products brought from all corners of the world, and its reputation attracted merchants from East and West. Among these, at least in Arghun’s time, the Genoese held a unique place for their economic influence and political importance. Although the origins of the colony cannot be unriddled from contemporary sources, a well-organised Genoese community was clearly active in Mongol-ruled Persia in the 1280s, since only from among their number could Arghun have recruited those trusted emissaries whom he sent to the West from 1285 back “ohne Zweifel” to the beginning of the thirteenth century! On the origin and development of the colony, cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 95–96 and Karpov, Impero, pp. 141 ff. Bryer, “Fate,” pp. 348–349 draws attention to the fact that from the fall of Baghdad in 1258 to the last decade of that century, Trebizond was not an attractive destination for Italian merchants, while Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 224 note 44, suggests that the choice of Trebizond may have been dictated by Benedetto Zaccaria’s defeat at Tripoli; cf also Ciocîltan, “Genoa,” p. 395.

258 We may assume that numerous embassies, beginning with that of Arghun to the rulers of Western Europe in 1286, took the same route from the Black Sea.

259 Brătianu, Actes, p. 257; see also the document of 11th May 1290 (ibid., pp. 286–287).

260 It is instructive to compare this with similar documents from 1280, when the usual route to the Persian trading city still ran via Ayas and Sivas (Brătianu, Recherches, pp. 314–315, Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 560–561).

261 Brătianu, Recherches, p. 322.

262 Ibid., pp. 179, 320, 322: caterve. Caravan traffic on this route increased significantly in the following period, so that it was the subject of detailed regulations by the Office of the Gazaria (Forcheri, Navi, pp. 14–17, Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 222, 225 and below, p. 183 note 152).

263 The first mention of a Western merchant is of a Venetian in 1264, and then in 1280 Genoese merchants are documented in Sivas, whence they intend to travel onward to Tabriz (Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 560–561); for a survey of the rather rarer visits by merchants from other Italian cities (Pisa, Florence, Siena), ibid., pp. 565–567; cf. also Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 110.
and indeed the many shipwrights who worked in Baghdad in the winter of 1289/90. More detail comes from a document dated to June 1292, which mentions by name three Genoese residents of Tabriz. They were certainly part of the colony which, one or two years later, Marco Polo found dominant among the Western merchants in the Ilkhanid city.

Tabriz was not just a destination in its own right for Genoese merchants, but the entry point to a region which had been an all-consuming goal throughout the thirteenth century, the Indian Ocean, where spices could be bought directly at source. After all attempts to break the Mamluk blockade had failed, in the first half of the century and onwards, it became a viable alternative simply to circumvent this barrier by going through the Black Sea and then taking the Trebizond-Tabriz route onward to Ormuz.

The earliest Western European travellers in the Indian Ocean are John of Montecorvino and Pietro de Lucalongo, already mentioned, the former a Franciscan missionary who describes the latter, his travelling companion, as “a pious Christian and a great merchant.” They left Tabriz in 1291 and took ship at Ormuz. It should be emphasised that this pioneer voyage took place only a year after the Baghdad-Aden project had collapsed, and should therefore be considered essentially a necessarily peaceful sequel to the military project which had met such a sudden end. Another six Genoese intended to travel by the same route in 1293, and drew up a contract of association mentioning Tabriz and the island of Kish near Ormuz. Marco Polo took this route in the opposite direction when he returned

---

265 Brătianu, Recherches, p. 321.
267 The success of this venture was so great and it was remembered so well that a strat-egist of the later Crusades, Beltramo di Mignanelli, believed even a century after the route had fallen out of use that he could revive it, and to this end proposed his ideas to various high-placed churchmen in 1442–1443 (Mignanelli/Hofmann, pp. 83, 85–86); cf. Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 226, Karpov, Impero, p. 34.
268 Once they arrived in the capital of China, Khanbalig [= Beijing], the two stayed in touch; the friar became a bishop, while the merchant donated a considerable sum to the upkeep of the local church in 1305 (Wynegaert, Sinica Franciscana, I, pp. 352–353; cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 132, Brătianu, Recherches, p. 187, Petech, “Marchands,” p. 553).
269 Richard, “Navigations,” p. 355, draws attention to this aspect of the voyage.
from China by sea, and together with his father and uncle crossed the Ilkhanate from South to North in 1293–1294, then returned from Trebizond via Constantinople and Negroponte to Venice.271

The commerce that started to flow along the Tabriz-Kashan-Yezd-Kirman-Ormuz route in the early 1290s, thus laid the foundations for one of the most important shifts in the Eurasian trade network.

River traffic on the Euphrates had never entirely dried up, although it suffered in the wake of the Mongol campaigns, from the consequences of the destruction of Baghdad in 1258 and then again from the permanent state of war on the Ilkhanid-Mamluk frontier.272 Marco Polo remarks on the state of river commerce in 1271 on his way to Ayas.273 He also knew about trade on the Tigris, whether from this stage of his journey or his return from China in 1293–1294, and knew that this other great Iraqi waterway was used for traffic.274 Further information on this commerce in the latter thirteenth century can be found in the Oriental authors Shams al-Din al-Dimishqi and Abu ‘l-Fidā, and particularly in their contemporary Marino Sanudo.275

Although Marco Polo mentions Ayas specifically, it was not the only final outlet for goods brought across the Southern seas into these two great waterways. As well as Cilician Armenia, they reached the whole of the Syria-Palestine region, a natural Mediterranean end-point for goods

---

273 *Encore hi a sor la mer une ville qui est apellé Laiais, la qual est de gran mercandie. Car sachie tout voirement que tutes le speserie et les dras de fraterre [= Euphrates] se portent a ce(st)e ville et toutes autres chier choses; et le mercans de Venese et de Jene et de toutes pars hi vinent et l’acatent. Et tous homes et mercans que vuelent aler en fraterre prenent lor voie de ceste ville* (Polo/Benedetto, p. 14).
274 After praising the trading opportunties to be had in the “kingdom” of Mosul, he described its location and connections as follows: *Et por me la cité passe un flum mout grant [= Tigris] et por celu flum poit (l’en) ben aler en la mer de Yndie. Et hi alent et vinent les mercaant con los mercandies. Et sachie que le flum est lonc, de Baudac [= Baghdad] a la mer d’Endie, bien XVIII jornee. E les mercaans que vuelent aler en Yndie vont por cel flum jusque a une cité qui a non Chisi [= Kish Island] et d’iluec entrarent en la mer de Yndie. Et encore vos di que sor cel flum, entre Baudac et Chisi, a une gran cité que a non Bascra [= Basra] (ibid., p. 18).
275 Cf. Ashtor, History, p. 265; at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Sanudo/Bongars, p. 22, writes of Baghdad’s flourishing situation in the previous century as a centre where the Western-held cities on the Eastern Mediterranean shore could acquire Oriental wares: *Maior enim pars speciariae & mercimoniorum, quae ad Occidentem antiquitus ducabantur, consueuit per Baldac faciere viam suam & exinde per Antiochiam et per Liciam ducabantur ad nostrum mare: & tunc temporis speciariae et alia mercimonia Indiae & habundanti & pro minori praetio habeabantur, quam habentur ad praesens.*
brought across Mesopotamia. It is no accident that in the Oriental sources of the age, Aleppo is known as “little India.”

Such sources categorically show that even in the first decades after the Mongol conquests, Iraq functioned as a commercial link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Surprisingly, when we compare these sources to the detailed picture of the Levantine trade network drawn up in the first half of the following century by Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, the Florentine merchant’s guide makes no reference at all to this route.

This observation, taken along with other evidence, proves that there must have been a restriction of commerce on the Tigris and Euphrates; at the same time we can observe an increase in the volume of goods transported from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea across Persia. The interdependence of these two processes is self-evident, and the obvious conclusion is that Iraqi commerce dried up, or was rather absorbed by Persian commerce, so that Baghdad became not just politically but also economically a victim of Tabriz.

There have been all kinds of disagreements over where to look for the causes of this transfer and the circumstances which brought it about. The fall of the Crusader lands in the Eastern Mediterranean has been much-cited, while in contrast the political and commercial regime change in Cilician Armenia is never mentioned.

277 The omission cannot plausibly be explained as due to a lack of information; Pegolotti lived in Ayas for some time, which according to Marco Polo was one of the end-points for the Iraqi routes, and could not have overlooked any traffic coming in from that direction if it had been at all as lively as it had once been.
278 Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 77–78: “Entre Tauris et Bagdad, la nouvelle et l’ancienne capitale, la concurrence sous le rapport commercial ne tarda pas à se dessiner suivant une progression lente mais régulière. […] en constatant que le mouvement des produits de l’Inde d’Orient en Occident suit toujours la même direction, par le golfe Persique, Basra et Bagdad, Marco Polo signale déjà l’existence de relations entre Tauris et l’Inde. […] en 1307, Sanuto rapporte, de son côté, que les produits de l’Inde qui traversaient la partie occidentale de l’empire mongol, pour être expédiés en Occident, passaient soit par Bagdad, soit par Tauris; mais, de son temps, cette voie était la moins usitée; la plus grande partie prenait le chemin d’Alexandrie.” Ashtor adopts this conclusion whole-heartedly, supporting it with the results of more recent studies and concluding, “The trade of Tabriz developed necessarily at the expense of Baghdad, but the decline of Irak’s share in the Indian trade was slow” (Ashtor, History, p. 264). The same view has lately also been taken by Karpov, Impero, p. 32.
279 Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 77: “Tant que le califat, d’une part, et les états latins, de l’autre, avaient conservé leur existence propre, tous les produits de l’Orient importés par le golfe Persique passaient par Bagdad et arrivaient à la Méditerranée par Antioche et Laodicée;” Ashtor, History, p. 264: “After the establishment of Mongol rule, Tabriz became not only
We might suspect from the start that the same motive that led the Ilkhan’s Genoese allies to the Trebizond-Tabriz route in the 1290s also impelled them onwards via Ormuz to the Indian Ocean, at which they had aimed for so long. Examined more closely, the documentary evidence of Persian trade links in their network in 1291 can only be chronologically and logically explained by the drastic deterioration in trading conditions in the Armenian kingdom from 1285, which the great Genoese-Ilkhanid campaign against the Mamluk overlords did nothing to improve.\textsuperscript{280} Ayas thus to a large extent lost its double role as the end-point of the Silk Road and the Iraqi river routes—a role which from now on it would have to at least share with Tabriz, if it was not to cede it entirely.

The new commercial axis from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf was first opened with great fanfare around 1290, but its development was interrupted by the Venetian-Genoese war, lasting from 1294 to 1299, which generally disturbed the whole Levantine web and brought trade to a halt in the Black Sea basin and adjacent territories.\textsuperscript{281} Shortly after the close of hostilities, Genoese merchants once again began to frequent, in even greater numbers, the route opened some years previously: countless convergent pieces of evidence point to the new route seeing most use in the decade of the 1300s, and it seems to have become Mongol Persia’s most important commercial artery.\textsuperscript{282}

---

the capital of the Ilkhan, but also a great emporium of international trade. Foreign merchants found there both the Indian spices and the products of the Persian manufactures. [...] Ten years after the conquest of Baghdad, the sultan of Cairo captured Antioch, which had been the great commercial town at the other end of the overland route along which the Indian articles were transported from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean. The enmity between the rulers of Tabriz and Cairo, or rather the almost permanent state of war between them, was another reason for the shift of this great trade route.” The conclusions offered by Karpov, Impero, p. 32, are rather too simple, though he does consider of “grande importanza il generale mutamento delle vie commerciali levantine: se prima esse andavano verso la costa siriana e dell’Asia Minore del Mediterraneo e avevano come meta Baghdad, dopo la sua distruzione ad opera dei Tartari nel 1258, quest’arteria venne interrotta. Un secondo colpo al commercio del Mediterraneo orientale fu apportato nel 1291, con la caduta degli ultimi capisaldi dei Crociati in Siria e con la pubblicazione dell’interdetto papale per tutti i Cristiani di commerciare con l’Egitto dei Mammalucchi.”

\textsuperscript{280} See chapter 3.2; Ashtor, History, p. 264, seems not to have known of the outlet to the Black Sea, which in the context of the times was preferable: “A considerable part of the Indian articles which arrived on the shores of the Persian Gulf was sent to Tabriz and then on the route North of Lake Van, via Erzindjan, to Little Armenia.”

\textsuperscript{281} See chapter 4.2.2, pp. 160 ff.

\textsuperscript{282} Balard, Romanie, I, p. 140, analyses commercial documents and reaches the following conclusion: “Les liens d’affaires des Génois avec Tabriz sont surtout florissants de 1300 à 1314, puis de 1338 à 1344: les minutierns notariaux nous ont livré 21 actes commerciaux concernant Tabriz et des investissements s’élevant à 38,951 livres 17 sous, soit par acte une
The main agents in this new development in Persian trade were again the Genoese, who until the collapse of the Mongol state in 1335 continued to form the central pillar of the last two ilkhans’ trade policies. Their exceptional status was doubtless due to the prestige Genoa enjoyed among ruling circles as a naval power,\textsuperscript{283} and no less to the republic’s earlier unparalleled contributions to the Ilkhan Arghun’s grandiose diplomatic, military and commercial projects.\textsuperscript{284} Despite the failure of the armed war against the Mamluk sultanate in 1288–1290, the alliance forged in this struggle lasted until the Chinggisid dynasty lost power in Persia, with a few inevitable coolings-off but with no lasting breaks. Whether at the military or commercial level, the partnership was based from start to finish on the common interests of these two powers and on the complementary means which they contributed to the grandiose joint enterprise.

It is unfortunately impossible to give any but the vaguest of answers to the question of what concrete form Ilkhanid policy toward the Genoese may have taken, since not only are sources generally scarce but the principal document is missing, the charter of privilege whereby a head of state regulates the activity of foreign merchants in his country. There can be no doubt that some such accord existed, but the written record has either been lost, or—more likely—never actually existed, and there was only ever a simple verbal agreement.\textsuperscript{285}

Setting aside such formal aspects, the presence of a Genoese colony in Tabriz in 1304 with their consul Raffo Pallavicini\textsuperscript{286} attests to the existence of some legal framework for Genoese merchants trading in the Ilkhanate.

\textsuperscript{283} As grand vezir to the Ilkhan Ghazan, Rashīd al-Dīn describes Genoa in an exaggerated fashion that probably reflects the republic’s official line: “Her lord possesses 200 galleys, each with 300 warriors. All the Frankish merchants who desire to reach Egypt, Syria, the Maghreb, Byzantium and Tabriz, begin their journey in this port” (Rashīd al-Dīn/Jahn, p. 51).

\textsuperscript{285} Such verbal agreements seem to have been a speciality of the Genoese, as encountered for instance in their relations with the sultan of Cairo (Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 75), with the khans of Sarai and with the emperors of Trebizond (Karpov, Impero, p. 143 and above, p. 184 note 165).

\textsuperscript{286} Brătianu, Recherches, p. 187, Spuler, Mongolen, p. 436, Petech, “Marchands,” p. 565; Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 130, plausibly enough claims that the Genoese also installed their consuls in other Persian cities, such as Sultaniye, but provides no source for this.
In the absence of any more direct information, we might suppose that they paid the usual taxes, recorded in Pegolotti’s manual.\(^{287}\)

We have much better information on the customs at Trebizond,\(^{288}\) unavoidable for all those going to or coming from the Ilkhanate.\(^{289}\) The Genoese did not hesitate to resort to violence on two occasions—in 1304 and 1313–1314—to force the Emperor Alexios II to grant them complete exemption from customs, and a strip of land in the capital city as well, where they could settle in complete freedom. While the latter demand was satisfactorily settled in the peace negotiated after the first outbreak (1304), their principal demand to be allowed to transport and sell their goods tax-free was rejected, with justified obduracy, on both occasions, and the Genoese reconciled themselves to paying the Trebizond taxes.\(^{290}\)

The Genoese merchants were just as headstrong at the other end of the route in Ormuz, where another, no less important, problem awaited them, of an entirely different sort. This was the sea voyage to a world which was as enticing as it was uncertain and perilous. What the Genoese actually did in the Southern seas, where and how they arrived in India and China, is one of the least-known chapters in the history of the Levantine trade: the long-distance merchant’s habitual discretion on the secret of where he sourced his goods seems in this case to have been even more strictly observed, understandable enough when we consider how distant and inaccessible were the lands in question. What little light is shed on

\(^{287}\) Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 27–28: *Diritto die mercantia che si paga a Torissi*. Di ciò comperi o vendi al peso di Torissi paghi bisanti 5 meno 1/2 aspro di camunoca per centinaio. Drapperia di lana e tele e pellicerie e cimbelotti e stagno e di ciascuna cosa che si vende a minuto e a misura si paga di camunoca 4 meno 1/3 per centinaio. E di senseraggio si paga uno mezzo per centinaio e piu quello che ti piace de fare cortesia al sensale. Argento e perle sono franche, che non pagano tamenga nè all’entrare né all’uscire.

\(^{288}\) Ibid., p. 31: *Diritto die mercantia che si paga a Trabisonda*. Chi porta mercantantia in Trabisonda o vendela nella terra a paesano, si paga allo imperatore de Trabisonda 3 per centenai, ma se la vendesse a genovesi o altre genti latine non paga niente. E se quella mercantantia che porti in Trabisonda non la vuol vendere in Trabisonda e vuolitene andare con essa a Torisi o vero mandaravi, si paghi al detto imperadore aspri 28 per soma e anche aspri 1 per soma al consolo. E chi viene di Torisi a Trebisonda con mercantantia si paga in Trabisonda aspri 15 per soma tanto di spezie come d’ogn’altra mercantantia tale chente ell’ene, aspri 14 allo imperatore e aspri 1 al consolo.

\(^{289}\) Based on somewhat uncertain information, Brătianu, *Recherches*, p. 258 note 3, wonders whether there was a “Mongol corridor” along by Batumi, which allowed the Ilkhanate direct access to the Black Sea; if any such convenient route ever existed, it would certainly have been used to avoid the customs of the Empire of Trebizond.

\(^{290}\) For the most detailed and insightful analysis of the sources, see Karpov, *Impero*, pp. 143–150, which convincingly arranges the primary material into an intelligible series of events.
this commerce is rather indirect, mostly provided by men who themselves had nothing to do with the world of trade, but who accompanied the merchants to the ends of the known world at the time: Franciscan and Dominican missionaries.

In 1314 Odoric of Pordenone made a new start in the fourteenth century, and was followed by four other Franciscans, three of whom were martyred at Tana in India in 1321. Only Jordan of Severac survived, and was destined for a long and successful missionary career. In 1329 he was elevated to be bishop of Kulam, a large port on the Malabar Coast with a Franciscan monastery, which saw high volumes of spices shipped and was famous as a centre of the pepper trade. Speaking of the tragic events of 1321, the prelate remembers that “many Latin merchants came” to witness the friars’ martyrdom. One of these, Jacopo of Genoa, sent a written report to the bishop of Tabriz. He learned of the sea route from India to Ethiopia from these same travellers.

Merchants who felt the urge to travel even further preferred to go East, to where the riches of China awaited. The famous port city of ‘Zayton’ [= Quanzhou] seems to have been the favoured long-distance destination for merchants not intending to travel within the empire. Just as in Kulam in India, here too there was a relatively well-established community of “Latin” merchants with their own fondaco for lodgings, with baths. They established three “very beautiful and rich” churches for the care of souls, served by Franciscan friars. Unlike the bishop of Kulam, the bishop here not only had freedom to preach and to convert, but was also paid a salary by the Great Khan. In a letter of 1326 the first to hold the see, Andrew of Perugia, confirms that the Genoese were the most important group of Western merchants in Zayton (as might be expected from their dominance in all regions beyond the Levant) although they were not the only group, even if bishop Andrew mentions no others.

Several scattered documents consistently show that the Ligurians were the most active of the Western merchants on the coast of India and in China. One example is that of Jacopo di Oliverio, *trafegando et mercando* for some ten years from 1330 in Beijing, who multiplied five-fold his initial

---


stake of 4,313 Genoese lira—the largest known Western capital investment on the Far Eastern markets in the fourteenth century.\footnote{Lopez, “Luci,” p. 452.} His compatriot Andalò di Savignone must also have made a respectable fortune, although he is better known as a diplomat, having successfully carried out an embassy to the pope for the Great Khan Toghan Temür in 1336.\footnote{Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 554–555.}

An especially interesting case is that of Benedetto Vivaldi, who seems to have inherited the drive to seek a new India route: after his uncles had died trying to circumnavigate Africa a quarter-century before, their nephew founded a company in 1315 to ply the sea route from the Persian Gulf to India and China with its own ships.\footnote{Cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 143.} Because of the paucity of sources, it is unclear whether the Dominican archbishop of Sultaniye, Guillaume Adam was referring to this venture in his dossier submitted to the pope in 1332, or to another group of Genoese.\footnote{Adam/Kohler, p. 553: *Jam enim Januenses soli naves faciunt in mari […] Indie, non tamen causa hic posita, sed spe lucri* [commerce rather than war]; cf. Richard, “Navigations,” p. 358.} Whatever the truth, for all their technological superiority the Genoese ships posed no threat to the overwhelming numbers of local vessels in the Southern seas: both Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mention local ship-building techniques and the greater number of craft, especially in the waters between India and China.\footnote{Cf. Richard, “Navigations,” pp. 357–358.}

Certainly, the sea route onward from Ormuz could only be used as long as the preconditions were in place and access was open, via either the Iraqi waterways or the Persian overland route. In 1344 the Genoese merchant Tommasino Gentile fell victim to a set of events which well illustrate this interdependence, and at the same time mark the closing of the trade route which the republic’s merchants used, from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and from Persia to the Indian Ocean.\footnote{Petech, “Marchands,” p. 555: “Un dernier renseignement sur un voyage de marchands génois au Cathay est donnée par une sentence d’un tribunal génois de janvier 1344. Tommasino Gentile, en route pour le Cathay, ‘tomba malade et resta à Ormes’ (Ormuz dans le golfe Persique). […] il retourna en Europe en passant par Tabriz; mais en agissant ainsi, il viola le boycott proclamé par le gouvernement de Gênes contre les princes djou-baniens, seigneurs de la ville. La sentence du tribunal l’absout de ce délit, en reconnaissant le cas de force majeure.” The last references to the Genoese in China in the second half of the fourteenth century are collected in Lopez, “Luci,” p. 455, and idem, “Mondus,” pp. 351–352.}
In summing the data on Italian merchants on the South Asian sea route, we reach an apparently paradoxical conclusion: although the route was known to some extent in Europe, along with other invaluable information on parts of the medieval East (largely thanks to the “revelations” of Marco Polo), for the first half of the fourteenth century it was overwhelmingly a Genoese creation. The Genoese kept it a closely-guarded secret, thereby defending it for their own exclusive use.300

The unique position which the Ligurians enjoyed in the Indian Ocean was merely an extension of their practical monopoly on trade in the Ilkhanate, dating back to their cooperation with Arghun. We may see how strong a position they occupied from the fact that it endured even after the initial conditions had vanished. Moreover, the Genoese very successfully used the positions they had gained earlier to resist the last ilkhans’ attempts to counterbalance their dominance with Venetian help.

The Genoese star began to wane in Mongol Persia once the republic signed a truce with the Mamluks in May 1290, bringing hostilities to a permanent end: it responded neither to Ghazan’s nor to Öljeitü’s subsequent calls to arms against the sultan, addressed to all Western powers.

The rulers of the republic did not trouble to inform their great Eastern ally Arghun that they had signed the truce even by 1291, the last year of his life and reign. When Ghazan launched an offensive in Syria at the end of the decade, his initial successes stirred up a certain enthusiasm among some circles in Genoa but his allies came from other quarters. Where once the admiral Benedetto Zaccaria had commanded the galleys which were to cut off the sultan’s communications in the Eastern Mediterranean, this role was now taken by Cypriot warships blockading the Egyptian port of Rosetta with the help of the Ilkhân’s designated ambassador, the Pisan Ozolo. This naval arm of the combined operation ended just as ignominiously as the war on land.301

300 Cf. here the arguments advanced by Lopez, “Luci,” pp. 451–452 and taken up by Petech, “Marchands,” p. 554; we should add that apart from the three Polos, there is not the least indication that any other Venetian had ever travelled this route, and since they returned from China as part of the Great Khan’s embassy to Persia, they constitute a special case. The Venetians who arrived in Delhi in 1338 had set out from Tana, turned South at Urgench and travelled via Kabul to Ghazna, which was in Heyd’s term (Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 140) the second gateway to India after Ormuz; the Venetians recorded in China at this time (Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 559, 567–570) seem exclusively to have used the Northern route via the Cuman steppe and Central Asia; the only Venetian attempt to reach the Indian Ocean was too late: “Pendant l’anarchie totale qui s’ensuivit, en 1339, un certain Marco Morosini envoya ses agents à Sultaniyeh et à Ormuz” (Petech, “Marchands,” p. 569).

Once enthroned, Ghazan’s brother Öljeitü behaved typically as a new ruler, full of confidence and ready to take on risks. In 1305 he sent an embassy to the monarchs of Europe, one member of which was the Siennese Tommaso Ugi, acting for the Persian state. It announced that the Ilkhan had been enthroned, and recognised by the Great Khan in China, and that there was now peace between the rulers of the four Mongol ulus, allowing him finally to mobilise all his forces against the Muslims in Syria and Egypt. The moment was ripe for a new joint operation. His proposal was taken up by Pope Clement V, who managed to assemble a fleet. This never reached its destination however: the Crusaders who took ship intending to fight the Saracens and conquer their country were in the end content to take the island of Rhodes.

It goes without saying that Öljeitü, like his predecessors Arghun and Ghazan, had gambled on having a reliable naval partner in his anti-Mamluk plans, a fleet which could fight dangerous, large-scale engagements. However, the only powers that could fit this bill were Genoa and Venice. The former had been out of play since 1290, so that the Ilkhan now turned all his attention to the Serenissima.

In 1305 he offered the doge the chance to resume their old trading relations, conclusive proof that he was interested in recruiting the republic in his planned war against Cairo. Öljeitü promised that no Venetian merchant would have to pay taxes or be held to account for crimes committed by his fellows, and that the Venetians would be allowed to found their colony, to be governed by a bailey. The extremely attractive terms offered and the context in which the offer was made, as part of a general call to arms for the West, show that the Persian ruler desperately needed to involve Venice in both policy and commerce in the Ilkhanate, after the Genoese had defected in 1290.

The Venetians either passed over the tempting offer in silence, or less likely refused it only after limited negotiation in 1306–1307. Either way, the result was the same: no source mentions them anywhere in the region until 1319, when Alexios II granted a privilege allowing them, as others already did, to cross Trebizond’s territory, of which the Venetians

---

302 His letter to Philip the Fair of France has been preserved, and published with a translation and philological commentary by Haenisch, “Briefe,” pp. 229 ff.; for the historical context see Soranzo, Papato, pp. 349 ff.; Petech, “Marchands,” pp. 566–567.


304 DVI, I, p. 47, dates the document to 1306, which Petech, “Marchands,” p. 567, convincingly corrects to 1305; cf. also Desimoni, Conti, p. 40.

305 Petech, “Marchands,” p. 568, assumes so, with no documentary evidence.
made use in 1320. In that year they obtained a similar privilege from the last Ilkhan, Abū Saʿīd, to trade in Persia. Here they would make their presence felt in the next two decades with several run-ins with the authorities.

When the Ilkhan Öljeitū tried to win the merchants over to his cause with exceptional privileges, they resisted re-establishing their trade ties with Persia: this is all the more curious since a little while before, from 1294 to 1299, they had been engaged in a life-or-death struggle with the Genoese for exactly the prize of the Black Sea link to the great Chinggisid trade routes. The matter become even more puzzling once we see that it was not an isolated case, and that the Venetians resisted such offers for about twenty years.

The above-mentioned war provides one possible explanation for such a long abstention: the finger seems to point to Genoa, which had so fiercely defended its pre-eminence in the Black Sea. This suspicion is strengthened by the extraordinary tenacity with which Genoa tried to prevent the Venetians from taking any share in the Golden Horde trade in the fourteenth century, in everything from trifling local tussles to grand general engagements. Compared to the much better-documented and more thoroughly investigated situation to the North of the Black Sea, Venetian reticence toward the Ilkhanate shows itself to have been an attitude not chosen freely but rather imposed by their adversaries. It is all the more unusual after they lost their principle position in the Levantine trade, Acre, in 1291. The ways in which the Venetian-Genoese rivalry played out

---

306 The document, published in DVL, I, pp. 122–124, emphasises that the Venetians enjoy the same conditions as the Genoese, primarily concerning imperial taxes—generally higher than in other cities of Asia Minor (Zakythinos, Chrysobulle, pp. 32, 54–61, Zachariadou, “Trebizond,” p. 534)—and the right to establish a colony led by a bailey in their own quarter of the capital, where they could govern themselves as they wished (Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 100–102, Brătianu, Recherches, p. 117, Nystazopoulou-Pélekidis, Venise, pp. 33–34, Karpov, Impero, pp. 77–79).

307 The privilege (DVL, I, pp. 173–176) sets out in detail all the liberties granted by the government: the Venetians may go where they wish with their goods, without being constrained to sell at staples or to pay supplementary taxes other than those established by usanza antiqua. These are not specified in Abū Saʿīd’s privilege, but Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 28–29, gives information on the number and variety of taxes to be paid in Mongol Persia at just this time, where the ilkhan is called Bonsaet (cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 102, Ashtor, History, pp. 265–266, Petech, “Marchands,” p. 568).


309 Papacostea, “Tana,” passim, teases out this basic theme and shows the variety of means whereby the Genoese strove to realise it (see also chapters 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5).
in the two Mongol states on either side of the Black Sea show, *mutatis mutandis*, a striking symmetry.

The first bad omens for the Venetians came from the Ilkhan Arghun himself: in what was certainly an intentional oversight, he let slip his real feelings about the enemies of his Genoese friends.\(^\text{310}\)

After 1290, when the Ilkhanid-Genoese alliance had unravelled, the Ligurian merchants found that they had to defend their interests for the next few years with the help of Trebizond, and then, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, alone.

Their decision to keep their dangerous enemies away from the new India route rested on the violent attack on a Venetian trader in Trebizond in 1291. The attack was carried out in an atmosphere of complicity at high levels between Genoese colonial representatives and the imperial authorities, giving it a deeply political cast: it was evidently meant as a deterrent.

The warning seems to have been taken seriously, for in the following period no other Venetian tried to gain access to the sea through this route. The next victim was none other than Maffeo Polo, who arrived from the other direction with his brother and his nephew Marco, and did not know any other route than this closely-guarded one (or did not know how to evade the guardians): the Emperor John II, prompted by the Genoese, took his profits.\(^\text{311}\)

The same year saw an interruption to such events when the first great war for the Black Sea broke out, overshadowing the jostling and manoeuvres. The two republics exerted their strengths in other theatres of war instead.

The new balance of power was established with the peace of Milan, concluded in 1299, but was not essentially different from the pre-war situation. Venice had started the war to obtain an advantageous position in the Black Sea, and saw its hopes shattered. It had to undertake to send no more *galee armate* into these waters for the next thirteen years, and the

---

\(^{310}\) Petech, "Marchands," p. 562: "Un document vénitien nous parle d’un voyage de commerce fait en 1286 par Pietro Viadro et Simeone Avventurato à la cour d’Arghun; […] ils firent présent au souverain mongol (*quod castellum portavi et dedi regi Tartarorum Argono*); en retour il était sous-entendu que le roi devait s’acquitter avec des présents d’une valeur au moins équivalente; mais pour une fois, le Mongol accepta les dons sans rien donner en échange."

\(^{311}\) In order to recover this loss of 4,000 hyperpyra, the Venetian admiral Giovanni Soranzo took Trebizond merchants hostage during the occupation of Caffa in 1296 (cf. Orlandini, "Marco Polo," p. 14, Karpov, *Impero*, pp. 75–76.)
number of trading vessels was also reduced to the symbolic number of
two per year for the same period.312

Certainly, Genoa did not waste the opportunity to draw breath and con-
solidate its position in the Black Sea. Once the grace period had expired
in 1313, it controlled naval bases at three strategic points around the sea:
Pera,313 Caffa314 and Trebizond.315

These conditions alone explain why the Venetians declined the Ilkhan
Öljeitü’s generous offer of 1305 allowing them to trade in Persia: clauses
in the treaty of Milan outright forbade them any Black Sea access to the
Mongol routes. Alexios II made similar overtures, and with the same
result,316 all the more understandably when we consider that by 1304 he
knew how exposed Trebizond was to Genoese aggression, to which he
hoped the Venetians would act as a counterweight.

The Serenissima did not stick to the treaty of 1299 from any formal
scruples but because the existing balance of power in the Black Sea was so
entirely unfavourable317 that the republic had to proceed with the greatest
cautions.318 Significant in this regard is the hesitation they showed even
after the thirteen years had elapsed: the Liber officiorum, the official reg-
ister of the republic’s officials and agents, does not mention them in the
Black Sea at all until 1319.319

312 Because it is not clearly represented in the sources, the exact contents of the peace
of Milan are hard to judge. This has led to diametrically opposed interpretations; the treaty
has been seen as a “white peace,” whereby Venice made clear gains over the pre-war situ-
ation and drew equal with Genoa, or as quite the opposite, as an acknowledgement that
the Serenessima had been beaten and outclassed and that the Genoese had the victory in
the Black Sea. The most complete and systematic analysis of the question in the specialist
literature is that of Papacostea, “Gênes,” who reaches the latter conclusion (pp. 233–235).
It is the only study which fully sets out the political and commercial state of affairs in the
Black Sea basin in the first two decades of the fourteenth century.
313 Emperor Andronikos II granted them this quarter of Constantinople, also known as
Galata, in 1303, and a year later also gave them the right to fortify their houses. They then
abused this right to the extent that they made their sector of the Byzantine capital an
autonomous and impregnable district (cf. Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 182 ff.).
314 See chapter 4.2.1, 4.2.4.
315 See pp. 118, 124 ff.
317 They had no holdings anywhere on the Black Sea, making them uncommonly vul-
nerable to Genoese attack from any of the three naval bases mentioned (cf. ibid., p. 75).
318 The presence of a few Venetian ships which sailed for the Black Sea on the Senate’s
orders in 1303, 1306 and 1312 could not have breached the terms set down at Milan (Berin-
319 Venetian participation in Black Sea trade is mentioned in 1315, 1317 and 1319, but
is noticeably sparser than their engagement in the following period (cf. Karpov, Impero,
p. 74, Ciocîltan, “Bürgerkrieg”).
Venetian fears were abundantly confirmed when they first ventured onto the Persian spice route, thanks to the trade privileges granted by Alexios II in 1319 and by Öljeitü the following year.\(^{320}\)

Even their settlement in the quarter which the emperor had granted them in Trebizond led to violent reprisals from the Genoese which, it hardly need be said, had no legal basis. Now that the Ligurians found that neither force of arms nor their diplomacy could keep the Venetians away from the regions which they wished to keep for themselves, they turned to a new method to rid themselves of their rivals, spreading rumours to stir up local dignitaries against the newcomers. This shadow war was later notoriously effective in Tana, and soon made the Venetians suspect in Tabriz: in order to counter such tactics, the Venetian Senate allocated a special fund with which to buy the neutrality of imperial officials.\(^{321}\)

It should be no surprise that the Venetians did not have an easy time of it in the Ilkhanate either: the Ilkhan's privilege was granted at too high a level to protect them entirely from local authorities, in a market dominated by their Genoese adversaries. Unlike the latter, who went about their business in peace, the Venetian colony in Tabriz, attested in 1324, was subjected to all sorts of harassment,\(^{322}\) so much so that the members’ status became uncertain and had to be renegotiated by a go-between from Trebizond in 1332.\(^{323}\) The abuses continued until the collapse of the Ilkhanate, although from 1334 the Venetians were able to obtain the patronage of Abū Sa‘īd’s mother.\(^{324}\)

Given that their interests were so efficiently sabotaged in Persia and Trebizond, despite the legal protection offered by the Ilkhan and the Emperor, any voyage into the Indian Ocean, where the Genoese were untrammelled by any law, would be fatal from the outset. Clearly, the Venetians never tackled this risk.\(^{325}\)

\(^{320}\) In order to defend Genoa's interests in the region, the Officium Gazarie forbade the republic's merchants to accept foreigners in their caravans or their camps and lodgings (Forcheri, Navi, p. 17, Sauli, “Imposicio,” col. 347, Balard, Romanie, I, p. 140).

\(^{321}\) Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 101–102, Karpov, Impero, p. 79. The Genoese would behave in exactly the same way when the Venetians settled at Tana some years later (see below pp. 196 ff.).

\(^{322}\) Petech, “Marchands,” p. 568.


\(^{324}\) Petech, “Marchands,” p. 568.

\(^{325}\) See above, pp. 127 ff.
Venetian merchants suffered such great losses both by sea and on land after 1320 that several times the Senate decided to limit or even entirely to ban trading ventures on the Constantinople-Trebizond-Tabriz route.\footnote{Karpov, Impero, pp. 79--80.}

Their patchy presence in the period 1320–1335 barely built upon Venice's almost total absence in trade in the Ilkhanate from 1290 to 1320, and these periods taken together cover the whole period of the Trebizond-Tabriz-Ormuz route's existence as a major trade artery. Such a poor bottom line lay well below the republic's potential, and was largely due to the Genoese, who effectively blocked dealings between the two powers, even when one or the other of them strongly desired a trading relationship.

From the historical perspective, partnership with the Genoese was, \textit{volens nolens}, a fundamental part of Ilkhanid trade policy from the 1290s onward. From the same perspective and in the same period, Trebizond played a crucial role. Having become a Mongol vassal in 1244, in the first few decades the miniscule Great Comnenid Empire—like Cilician Armenia—enjoyed the lightest of overlordship.\footnote{Wyngaert, \textit{Sinica Franciscana}, I, p. 167, Rubruck/Jackson, p. 65, sets out the situation in 1256; Trebizond had exchanged Seljukid for Chinggisid sovereignty in 1243, when the Anatolian sultanate collapsed.} It seems that the two states had such a strong shared interest in keeping the Tabriz-Trebizond route open that the original relationship of force gradually gave way to one of simple cooperation.\footnote{Fallmerayer, \textit{Geschichte}, pp. 118 ff., 121–124, 128 ff., 153–155, asserts that the Mongol protectorate ended in 1265, while Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, p. 58, says that it lasted until at least that year; Kuršanskis, "Coinage," uses numismatic arguments to stretch it out until 1282, while Bryer, "Fate," p. 347, uses a questionable mention in Rashid al-Din to push the date as far as 1290; Zachariadou, “Trebizond,” p. 352, gives evidence of the political arrangement, while Karpov, \textit{Impero}, p. 40, mentions the goods which were traded between the two states. The only known instance of an Ilkhan actively intervening in Trebizond’s internal affairs came in 1280, when the Emperor George allied himself politically with forces hostile to the suzerain power and interrupted commerce; he was deposed on Abaqa’s orders and replaced by John II, at a time when the Tabriz route was being established (cf. Bryer, "Fate," pp. 340 ff.).} A conclusive piece of evidence for this view is the unification of the systems of weights and measures, which must have been based on an agreement intended to facilitate trade.\footnote{Golubovich, \textit{Biblioteca}, II, p. 265, Pegolotti/Evans; cf. Brătainu, \textit{Recherches}, p. 190, Bryer, "Fate," p. 339; it was probably the Ilkhanate which took the initiative here, with the standardisation being applied generally across all its territories (d’Ohsson, \textit{Histoire}, IV, pp. 363–369, Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, p. 254).}

These external aspects of Ilkhanid commercial policy necessarily had corresponding internal effects—for the Chinggisid dynasty on the throne of Persia were no less effective in internal policy than their rival kinsfolk.
Here, as everywhere, the sovereign’s foremost obligation for an effective partnership with the mercantile class was to ensure security. Great efforts were made in this direction, but the results left something to be desired.

The system of road wardens which Arghun had organised rapidly worsened: either the watchmen demanded taxes higher than the official rate to allow merchants to pass the guard stations, or they delivered them into the hands of brigands and then shared the loot. The second of Arghun’s successors, Ghazan, fought them with relentless energy: executions thinned the ranks of the highwaymen, and at the same time the discretionary powers granted to the 10,000 road wardens were considerably curtailed, with their duties shared out to the locals in each area and the official taxes engraved in stone tablets openly displayed.330

It is impossible to tell exactly how long the reformed security system maintained its full vigour after Ghazan’s death. All that is certain is that under the last Ilkhan, Abū Sa’īd, it once more had grave problems, as Pegolotti showed, in full knowledge of the causes. He remarks that of the 209 aspers which it costs a merchant to take a fully laden beast of burden from Ayas to Tabriz, 50 of these coins—very nearly a quarter of the whole cost—were taken *per forza* by “the Mongols, that is by the Tartar highwaymen.”331 Although there are no sources touching on the situation on the Tabriz-Trebizond route, it cannot have been much different, so that it seems that when merchants grouped themselves into large caravans, as Genoa recommended that its merchants should do, this was also done to ensure better protection for the travellers and for the goods transported.332

331 Pegolotti/Evans, pp. 28–29, Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 119, interprets the phrase *moccoli, cioè tartari scherani* as “bandes de Mongols, coureurs de grand chemin;” since we know that law enforcement and the watch was entrusted to the Mongol minority in the Ilkhanate—as in the Golden Horde, where they carried out their duties correctly (cf. p. 105 note 191)—they seem rather to have been corrupt officials, given that they did not take the whole spoils, as any highwayman would, but rather took ‘their’ share. This sort of abuse of power by office-holders does not exclude the existence of actual bands of brigands; the abuses though were certainly widespread, with officials of all ranks indulging in such practices (cf. Spuler, *Mongolen*, p. 358). In the privilege granted in 1320, Abū Sa’īd promises to protect the Venetians from this abuse: Item, che tatauli, charauli e podageri del chamin debia prender dali nostri Veneciani solamente el so drito liabilmente, senz alguna forza far a quelli (DVL, i, p. 173).
332 Forcheri, *Navi*, pp. 14–17, Brătianu, *Recherches*, p. 179, Balard, *Romanie*, i, pp. 140–141, Papacostea, “Gênes,” p. 225; there is a remarkable local tradition which holds that the Genoese actually held the right to construct fortifications along the route (Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 121, contests any historical basis for this); Pegolotti, who collected much of his
Ghazan also made a name for himself with his initiatives to impose some order on the actual workings of commerce itself. He ordered that merchants’ account books be checked rigorously, but also that profit margins and prices should be within reasonable limits.\textsuperscript{333}

Ghazan and his immediate successor Öljeitü had justified reputations as promoters of commerce, and showed much more concern than any other Ilkhan to secure the infrastructure needed for trade to flourish: under their patronage, an entire merchant quarter was built at Tabriz, with 24 large caravanserais, 1,500 shops of all kinds and countless craftsmen’s workshops.\textsuperscript{334}

There were other attractions however which encouraged the Western merchants to make the long journey from the Black Sea to Mongol Persia, more even than these amenities.

Above all we should note the extraordinary variety and abundance of goods brought to Tabriz from all corners of the known world. The political geography of the Chinggisid era had made the city the commercial crossroads of the most significant trade routes.\textsuperscript{335}

The Ilkans thus secured the fundamental preconditions for an increase in trade, very attractive for Western merchants: as well as providing security, they contributed in two ways to ensuring that the prices for goods from distant Persia were competitive on Mediterranean markets, where many of the goods, particularly spices, faced fierce competition from wares offered in the ports of nearby Egypt.\textsuperscript{336}

\textsuperscript{333} Spuler, \textit{Mongolen}, pp. 335, 358.
\textsuperscript{334} Karpov, \textit{Impero}, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{335} See above, pp. 47–49.
\textsuperscript{336} If we bear in mind that sea transport makes goods cheaper whilst transport overland makes them dearer, we can well understand that the Mamluk state had incomparable advantages in its ability to levy customs duties on the traffic on the shortest land route between the two great sea basins which produced complementary wares, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Sanudo/Bongars, p. 23, describes the situation as follows: \textit{Per magnam vero commoditatem navigii sive dextrum, quam vel quo habent Saraceni, maior pars speciariae et aliorum mercimoniorum quae ab India conducantur ad Occidens, ab ista parte [= Cairo] in Alexandriam conducuntur; de quibus percepit Soldanus in diversis locis tantum de thelloneo quod tertium valoris omnium specierum aerarium suum intrat, propter quod thesaurizat, preter immensam utilitatem quam mercatores et populi sui exinde consequuntur.} By comparison, the spices brought into Western Europe suffered economically from having arrived by the longer route through the Ilkhanate and the Black Sea (cf. chapter 1.1.3).
Their first contribution was to moderate the taxes levied on their territories, while the second—no less important—was the freedom accorded to foreigners to cross Persia in order to buy directly at source, which boosted the merchants' share of the profits and reduced the number of middlemen. By these two measures, the Ilkhans kept the Persian spice route economically feasible, even though it was longer and more expensive, vastly outclassed by the rival Egyptian route.

The Mongol rulers of Persia thus worked with Western merchants to bring about a state of affairs which was a remarkable, though artificial, achievement in itself: yet the level of taxes imposed on goods in transit, dictated by the nature of the route that had been created and by its very length, had deleterious effects upon the state's already strained budget. In the crisis of 1294 the state introduced paper banknotes by fiat, seeking a way to replenish the Ilkhanate's finances, which turned out to be an illusory hope: from this year onward, the gap between the state's meagre income and high expenditure yawned ever wider. Although Ghazan had managed to slow the deficit somewhat, it increased under his successors, so that at the death of the last Ilkhan, Abū Sa'īd, in 1335 the state was bankrupt and collapsed, although there were certainly other reasons as well for this implosion.

Several signs boded ill both for commercial activity in the Ilkhanate and for the existence of the state itself. Among these was the central authorities'...
inability to organise a trade promotion policy which could both effectively protect individual merchants and ensure that income from trade reached its rightful recipient, the Ilkhan.\(^{341}\) The last Mongol rulers’ economic base became increasingly sapped by wide-spread corruption and as their income shrank, so too did their ability to pay the functionaries charged with carrying out vital duties for the state.

The inevitable unravelling of this process came with the collapse of the Ilkhanate, which ceased to be the provider of security: this triggered certain disaster for the merchant class as well, though they had done the most to keep the security network on its feet and had perhaps benefited from it more than any others. Their fates had been closely tied to those of the Persian Chinggisids, as can be seen from the tentative Genoese and Venetian efforts, after the Ilkhanate collapse, to travel the old Tabriz road once more.

After the Mongol state fragmented, Tabriz became part of the territory of the Chobanid Hasan (1337–1343), whose simplistic trade policy extended no further than the capricious confiscation of goods. Genoese traders suffered such great losses that the republic was forced to use the final sanction in such a situation: the council of the Otto savi alla Navigazione declared a total boycott against Tabriz in 1340, and repeated it in 1342.\(^{342}\)

This *devetum* hurt the tiny principality’s exchequer enough for the new ruler al-Malik al-Ashraf, upon taking power in 1344, to send an embassy promising the Genoese government complete compensation for those his predecessor had mistreated and urging the resumption of commercial ties. Having refrained from trade for such a long time, the Ligurian merchants responded to the invitation in great numbers. It is uncertain whether the new Chobanid prince had acted in bad faith from the very start, or whether his resolve wavered when he saw the wealth of the merchants.

\(^{341}\) Cf. pp. 134 ff.

\(^{342}\) Lopez, “Luci,” p. 393. Lopez, “Documents,” p. 454. Bautier, “Relations,” p. 277. Petech, “Marchands,” p. 569; see also above, p. 127 note 299, for the case of Tommasino Gentile, who unwittingly breached the embargo and was brought before a tribunal in Genoa in January 1344 to answer the charge. At the same time, trouble began with Trebizond, where the internal unrest of 1340 had demonstrated the weakness of imperial authority. The Emperor could not prevent the outbreak of anti-Latin sentiment among the Greek population in 1344, whipped up by the arrival of Genoese and Venetians from Tana. Decisive steps were taken toward normalising relations toward the end of the decade, although the old commercial vigour of Ilkhanid times no longer obtained in the new arrangement, which would remain almost unchanged until Trebizond fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1463 (Gregoraz/Schopen, II. p. 687, Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 103–107, Karpov, Impero, p. 85).
Whatever the truth, the instinct for brigandage proved stronger than the interests of state, and he acted just as his predecessor had done, with the difference that the spoils from this act of theft were very much greater: many of the merchants were thrown into the prisons of Tabriz.\textsuperscript{343}

The Venetians learnt their lesson from the misfortunes of the Genoese. Marco Foscarini, the Venetian bailey in Constantinople, received instructions in 1344 to be as careful as possible in dealing with al-Malik al-Ashraf’s messengers, orders which he duly followed: his caution was so great that no agreement was ever reached.\textsuperscript{344}

Sheikh Uwais, who became sultan of Baghdad, also sought to re-establish ties when Azerbaijan became part of his realm in 1357. He sent an ambassador to Venice and in 1369 invited the merchants to return to the markets of Tabriz. In a letter of response sent in August 1370, the Venetians who had come to Trebizond sent bitter reproaches: a \textit{magna carauana} had been forming there for two years, they wrote, and new arrivals by sea swelled its numbers every day, all waiting for merchants to arrive from Tabriz and assure them that the route was safe. They asked that the sultan intervene so that Venetians could again travel the road from Trebizond to Tabriz in peace, as they did in the days of \textit{Bonsaich}, Abū Sa‘īd, but these pleas seem to have gone unanswered—not because Sheikh Uwais was indifferent to Venetian interests, which so closely matched his own, but because he was simply unable to ensure law and order on the route. In 1373, two years later he sent a reply intended to prove his good intentions and to encourage his partners, telling of the punishment inflicted on brigands who had been preying on merchants.\textsuperscript{345}

The Venetians did not receive sufficient guarantees for their journey to Tabriz, and decided to wait for better times. These never came.\textsuperscript{346}


\textsuperscript{344} Petech, “Marchands,” p. 569; the two Chobanids also flew in the face of economic good sense in dealing with their own merchants, who turned to Janibek, khan of the Golden Horde, for succour (cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, \textit{Orda}, pp. 263–264, and the current work, pp. 200–201).


\textsuperscript{346} For more on the collapse of the commercial systems which the Ilkhan had built up and on the networks which came after it, cf. İnalcık, “Question,” p. 89, and Zachariadou, “Trebizond,” p. 356.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE GOLDEN HORDE AND THE BLACK SEA

There is very little to choose between the two Mongol states, that of the Cuman steppe and that of Persia, from the perspective of their contribution to Black Sea geo-politics and integration into the great Eurasian trade routes: each contributed in its own particular way to the process, and neither was less significant in its contribution.¹

Nevertheless, the Golden Horde is categorically different from the Ilkhanate in the immediacy of its Black Sea initiatives. While the Mongol lords of Persia only rarely intervened in the region,² their opposite numbers in Sarai, whose lands bordered the Black Sea, showed that they had a consistent and coherent policy approach and well-defined goals and methods. In this latter case, it is perfectly appropriate to say that they had a Black Sea policy as such.

In pursuing this policy, the khans of the Golden Horde had two fixed goals: cooperation with the Italian thalassocracies, and the freedom of the Straits.

4.1 The Origin of the Golden Horde’s Black Sea Policy

Before achieving its mature form, the Jochid approach to Black Sea questions developed and went through several stages. These are hard to understand without reference to previous circumstances, specifically the Cuman approach to this sea and to its maritime commerce.

4.1.1 The Cumans and the Black Sea Trade

In this as in so many other regards, the Cumans were the fore-runners for their Chinggisid conquerors and successors, participating in and benefiting from Black Sea commerce.

¹ See chapters 3.3 and 3.4.
² Only two Ilkhanid political initiatives can be considered as genuinely Black Sea-oriented: the first is Hülegü’s insistence that the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII cut off communications through the Bosphorus between the Jochids and the Mamluks, in 1263/4 (see below, p. 243), and the second is Arghun’s arming of a Genoese galley, at his own cost, to hunt pirates in the Black Sea in 1290 (see above, p. 158 note 65).
The Arab chronicler Ibn al-Athir notes the earliest significant sequence of events, set in motion when the Mongol generals Jebe and Sübödei led their expedition through Transoxiana in 1219 and onward into Persia by 1223. Their long campaign took them through the Caucasian lands and the Cuman steppe, into Volga Bulgaria, and the incursions had an effect on trade: "Arriving at Sugdāq [= Soldaia], the Mongols took it, while the inhabitants scattered to different destinations: some of them fled with their families and possessions into the mountains, others crossed the seas and arrived in the Land of Rūm [= Asia Minor], which is held by Muslims from the nation of Kilij Arslan."4

Soldaia was the most important centre of the region to the North of the Black Sea, and its destruction was a grave blow for all trade in the Black Sea basin. The situation again became critical after the extended wars of 1223, when the Mongols shattered the army of the Russian knyazï at Kalka, having previously defeated the Alans and the Cumans. Only the Bulgars held out in their fortified capital on the Volga.5

There was thus a state of war in the Crimea and the Cuman steppe, and total insecurity, so that from 1223 onwards merchants could not pursue their trade: this led to a crisis on Near Eastern markets which found themselves starved of goods from the Eurasian steppe and forest. Again, Ibn al-Athir takes up the story: "Ties with the Cuman steppe were broken with the arrival of the Mongols, and no wares were received, no furs of black fox or of squirrel or beaver, nor any of the other things which are brought from that country; then once they [= the Mongols] returned to their own country, the road was opened again and the goods began to arrive once more, as they had before."6

Although the Arab chronicler’s account has to do with matters of the day, it also gives indirect testimony, by his use of contrast, to the ‘normal’ state of affairs in the longer term, the constant and well-established exchange of goods between the steppe to the North of the Black Sea and the Fertile Crescent: a few months of turmoil in the sea’s vast hinterlands was enough for the distant markets of the Muslim East to feel the

---

3 See above p. 29.
4 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I. p. 26; the events are also recorded by Rashid al-Din/Arends, I/2, p. 229, and in the synaxarion of Soldaia, which gives a date of 27th January 1223 (Nystazopoulos, Sougdaia, p. 118); cf. Spuler, Horde, p. 12, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 50.
5 Cf. Spuler, Horde, pp. 12–13, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 50 ff.
6 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I. p. 28; cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 51–52.
cessation of ‘Cuman’ commerce acutely, as an unusual interruption to a dependable import trade.

This commercial route had been in place since at least the beginning of the thirteenth century. The same chronicler mentions it in describing an event that had taken place around 1205: “Ghiyāth al-Dīn Hasan Shah, the Seljuk prince of Rūm, prepared to march on the city of Trebizond, and besieged the ruler of the city to punish him for his disobedience. For this reason, links with Asia Minor, with the lands of the Russians, the Cumans and others were broken, by sea and by land. Nobody from these regions any longer came into the lands of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. This was the cause of much suffering among the Muslims, for they traded with those nations and visited them. Merchants from Syria, Iraq, Mosul, Mesopotamia and other lands would travel there. Many of them also came to the city of Sivas. While the roads were closed, they suffered great losses, so that those who managed not to lose their capital were very happy.”

Although Ibn al-Athir gives little information, it is enough to allow us to reconstruct a North-South trade axis crossing the Black Sea at its narrowest point, Soldaia-Sinope, in the first half of the thirteenth century, and crossing Asia Minor via Sivas and Kayseri to reach Syria or Iraq.

It should also be remarked here that alongside the furs mentioned by our chronicler, the same route from the steppes and forests was used for the export of slaves, much appreciated in the East for their military virtues.

This commercial link seems to have been the principal route for Black Sea trade at the time, and was doubtless no less profitable to the Cumans than it was to their trading partners, the Seljuk sultans, whose power was, not coincidentally, at its peak in the period when they controlled the Asia Minor stretch of this route, in the first half of the thirteenth century.

---

8 Cf. Cahen, “Commerce,” pp. 92–95, on the Seljuk sultans’ initiatives to bring trade onto this route, and their attempts to capture the whole of Anatolian commerce, including the Trebizond trade mentioned.
9 The Mamluk Sultan Baybars was shipped from Soldaia as a young man, and sold as a slave at Sivas (Thorau, “Battle,” pp. 19, 35–36; cf. the studies collected in Ayalon, Outsiders, and below, chapters 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5).
10 Cf. ibid. The Mongols ended their prosperity, not only defeating them decisively with military force at Köse Dagh but reorganising the Eurasian trade networks in the wake of the battle, from which the Seljukid state could only lose. In the context of the trade war between the Jochids and the Ilkhanids, once these latter had brought the Seljukids under their suzerainty they forbade the import of Cuman steppe slaves along this route, since these swelled the ranks of the Mamluk army, with whom the Ilkhans were almost constantly at war. Starved of this vital export trade, and most probably of other articles from
Certainly the Cuman territories were also connected, via the Black Sea, to other commercial networks: although the documentary evidence leaves much to be desired, there is no doubt that Crimean coastal towns had ties to Trebizond under the Great Comnenid dynasty, and to Constantinople when it was occupied by the Crusaders and the Venetians in 1204: for example, two years after the occupation a ship left the city usque in Soldadea [= Soldaia].

William of Rubruck attests to the fact that the Cuman nomad chieftains profited greatly from trade, which was probably in the hands of Greek and Armenian long-distance merchants, until the Mongol invasion. Rubruck crossed the Crimea in 1253 but knew enough to report on the recent past of the peninsula’s ports: “Before the Tartars came, the Comans used to live in this plain and would force the cities and fortresses I have mentioned to pay them tribute.”

The Mongol incursion of 1223 only briefly upset Black Sea trade, but the Cuman princes’ ability to draw revenue from this commerce was brought abruptly to a close in 1238, when the Mongols invaded for good and all. Friar William records the aftermath of the invasion as recounted to him by a merchant who had been present at this second attack on the Crimea: “When the Tartars appeared, the Cumans entered the province in such numbers, all fleeing as far as the sea coast, that they would eat one another, the living those who were dying; so I was told by a merchant who saw the living seizing on and tearing with their teeth the raw flesh of the dead, as dogs do with corpses.”

4.1.2 Batu: Black Sea Trade in the Shadow of Tabriz

The earliest Westward wave of pan-Mongol expansion was unleashed between 1236 and 1242, and led naturally into the anti-Seljuk expedition of

---

11 For this and for other, less specific references in the sources to the same theme, see Brătianu, Mer Noire, pp. 227–228, and his general conclusion on Black Sea trade under the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204–1261): “While the Cumans ruled the steppe, the rich Kuban valley was held by a multitude of minor Alan nobility, fractious and quarrelsome, so that regional commerce never attained more than local significance, with the possible exception of the slave trade which had flourished since antiquity.”
12 Rubruck/Jackson, p. 70; these civitates et castra are Kersona, Matrica [= Tmutarakan] and Soldaia.
13 Ibid.
1243; the immediate consequences were the creation of the Golden Horde and the extension of Mongol hegemony into South-East Europe and the Near and Middle East.14

These changes had profound consequences for the fate of the Black Sea peoples, even for those who remained beyond the conquerors’ direct control, and the whole Black Sea balance of power was shifted. William of Rubruck gives a clear and faithful account of the state of affairs in 1253, and has the merit of recording each case in its relation to the Chinggisid central powers, whether this was direct rule, acknowledgement of hegemony or autonomy. A series of remarks on trade completes his tour of the Black Sea. The most interesting information that the Franciscan records is as follows:

...Around the middle there are two spits of land, one in the North and the other in the South. (The one in the South is called Sinopolis and is a fortress and harbour belonging to the Sultan of Turchia; that to the North is a territory which is nowadays called Gasaria by the Latins, while to the Greeks who live there along the sea coast it is known as Cassaria—that is, Caesarea. There are other promontories jutting out into the sea Southwards, in the direction of Sinopolis. From Sinopolis to Cassaria it is three hundred miles.) So it is seven hundred miles from these [two] points heading diagonally [*in longum et latum*] towards Constantinople, and seven hundred going Eastwards, to Iberia—that is, the territory of Georgia. [...] In the middle on the South side—at the apex, as it were—lies a city called Soldaia, which looks across towards Sinopolis, and there land all the merchants who come from Turkia and wish to visit the Northern regions, as also those who come from the opposite direction, from Russia and the North and wish to cross over to Turkia. Those latter carry squirrel and miniver [*varium et grisium*] and other valuable furs; the others bring lengths of cotton or *wambasium*, 8 silk cloth and fragrant spices. And on the Eastern side of this territory lies a city called Matrica, where the river Tanais flows down into the Sea of Pontus through an estuary twelve miles wide.

Before this river enters the Sea of Pontus, it has formed to the North a sea which is seven hundred miles in length and and nowhere reaches a depth of more than six paces. For this reason large vessels do not enter it, the merchants from Constantinople landing at the aforesaid city of Matrica and sending their boats as far as the river Tanais in order to buy dried fish, namely sturgeon, shad, eel-pout and other fish in vast quantities. [...] Beyond that estuary is Ziquia, which is not subject to the Tartars, and further East the Sueni and the Iberi, who are not subject to them. Next, to the South, lies Trebizond, which has its own lord, named Guido, of the family of the emperors of Constantinople, and he is subject to the Tartars. Next

---

14 See chapter 2.1.2.
comes Sinopolis, belonging to the Sultan of Turkia, who is likewise subject. Next, the territory of Vastacius, whose son is named Ascar after his maternal grandfather and who is independent. But Westwards from the mouth of the Tanais as far as the Danube everything is theirs, and even beyond the Danube in the direction of Constantinople, Blakia—Assan’s territory—and Little Bulgaria as far as Sclavonia all pay them tribute, and over and above the tribute stipulated, in recent years they have further levied on each household one axe and all the unwrought iron that has been found.

And so we put in at Soldaia on the 12th Kalends of June [21 May 1253].

At that I spoke [...] to the prefects [capitaneos] of the city, or rather to the prefects’ deputies, since the prefects had gone to Baatu with the tribute during the winter and had not yet returned. [...] The merchants from Constantinople advised me to take wagons, or, better still, to buy my own covered wagons, in which the Russians [Ruteni] carry their furs. [...] There are lofty promontories along the sea coast from Kerson as far as the mouth of the Tanais, and between Kerson and Soldaia lie the Forty Settlements [quadraginta castella], of which nearly every one has its own dialect: the population included many Goths, whose language is Germanic. [...] Towards the far end of the territory there are many large lakes, and one their shores are salt-water springs [...]. These salt-springs yield Baatu and Sartach a sizeable revenue, for men come there for salt from all over Russia and give for every cartload two cotton cloths worth half an yperperon. In addition, many ships arrive over the sea for the salt, all paying tax according to their capacity [secundum quantitatem sui].

Now on the third day after we left Soldaia, we encountered the Tartars; and when I came among them I really felt as if I were entering some other world.15

William of Rubruck’s report on the state of affairs in the Black Sea region a decade after the Golden Horde’s foundation are irreplaceable as a summary of the changes which the local political and commercial regimes underwent as a result of the region’s integration into the immense Chinggisid realm.

The surprising feature of the Franciscan friar’s survey of these two aspects is the contrast between the scale of strongly-marked political change and the absence of any comparable transformation in the structures of Black Sea commerce. The most conclusive proof of continuity here is precisely that in the first decade of Mongol rule the dominant commercial axis of Soldaia-Sinope still functioned on the same scale as it had

15 Rubruck/Jackson, pp. 61–71.
before their invasion. Here William of Rubruck's testimony confirms Ibn al-Athīr, the older source, in every respect.16

In turn, the relative scarcity of Constantinopolitan trade with the Northern Black Sea region under the Latins continued into the era of the first khan of the Golden Horde. The friar mentions no commercial activity other than some Western merchants buying salted fish from the Sea of Azov, while he is noticeably much more impressed by the intensity of trade on the Soldaia-Sinope axis.

According to this well-informed witness, even the system of gathering tax from Black Sea trade by levying customs in the Crimean ports remained unchanged, save in one detail: the prefects of these cities now sent their tributes to Batu Khan, instead of to the Cuman potentates.

The khan on the Volga also shared his predecessors’ attitude to the question of the Straits, though after his death Sarai would be deeply interested in the matter. According to Rubruck, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was not among the subject states, which certainly indicates no failure of Batu’s but simply a lack of interest in the Bosphorus on the part of the man who was justly considered the most powerful figure in the Western half of the Mongol empire at the time.17

Bringing together all of the above, we reach the conclusion that the first Jochid khan introduced no particular innovations in Black Sea commerce. We might suppose that the inherent virtues of the Pax Mongolica stimulated trade even in these peripheral regions, but this is impossible to prove from the available documentary evidence: there is certainly nothing to suggest that Batu was anything but utterly uninterested in such matters.

The reason for his neglect of Black Sea trade becomes clear once this is seen as part of his wider commercial policy, which was truly transcontinental in scale. Batu was single-minded in his concentration on consolidating Jochid claims to Tabriz, and conquering the Fertile Crescent,18 and could not see the Black Sea as anything but a secondary problem, a side-issue, in relation to the great currents of East-West trade.

Proof that the Black Sea was a victim of Tabriz’s importance during Batu’s reign comes in the time of his successors, for whom the loss of that

---

16 See p. 142 ff.
17 See above, p. 52.
18 See chapter 2.1.2.
Persian city meant that they had no other choice but to concentrate on the sea, and develop a Black Sea policy worthy of the name.

4.1.3  Berke and the Loss of Tabriz: The Basis of the Golden Horde’s Black Sea Policy

In the whole history of the Golden Horde, there is no more radical break than that which came approximately mid-way through Berke’s reign, and which divides into two the existence of the ulus of Jochi.

The wider historical frame for these events was the disintegration of the Chinggisid Empire as a whole. For the Mongols settled on the Cuman steppe, the division of the Western half of the empire into two distinct states was to have consequences as disastrous as they were irreversible. With the Great Khan’s support, the newly-founded Ilkhanate drove the Jochids away from their Central Asian and Transcaucasian fiefs, so that the Golden Horde found itself isolated in the steppes, and lost its access to the Silk Road at the same time as it lost any prospect of sharing in the profits of the Iraqi spice route.19

Thus in 1261 the Mongols of the Cumans steppe found themselves afflicted by lasting losses on many levels, which provoked strong reactions. Their varied responses aimed either at recapturing their lost greatness or at adapting to the new conditions as an act of necessity.

Seen from the longer-term historical perspective, it is striking that on the one hand these two strategies were almost permanent fixtures of policy, and on the other hand that Berke, first to apply the strategies, was able by the time of his death in 1266 to build a lasting basis for the Golden Horde’s new foreign policy. In his initiatives, whether fully developed or merely sketched out, we see a complete list of all his successors’ deeds, when they either tackled his plans anew or brought them to completion.

Berke Khan set his political and military plans into motion so speedily that they give the impression of having been fully formed from the start. After all diplomatic attempts to recover Tabriz from the first Ilkhan Hülegü were thwarted, Berke launched the Transcaucasian campaign of 1262/3, and at the same time sealed the alliance with the Mamluk Sultan Baybars against their common enemy in Persia. Thus Berke decisively drew up the lines of the fateful triangle of geo-political force within which his successors at Sarai would move, unvaryingly.

19 See chapters 2.1.2, 2.2, 3.1.
It should be noted that these diplomatic and military efforts had a powerful commercial dimension. Further, Berke also pioneered the constructive approach to the loss of Tabriz, attempting to develop an East-West trade route of his own to compensate.\textsuperscript{20} Hence the generosity which he showed to the Polo brothers when they came from Constantinople seeking to increase their capital, and hence also, in particular, his permission for them to travel back to the West, probably with his aid and support, even if this was not their original purpose.\textsuperscript{21} All of this was in anticipation of the caravans of Genoese and Venetian merchants who would take the same road across Golden Horde territories to Central Asia and China in the first half of the following century.\textsuperscript{22}

As part of these large-scale changes, the fate of the Black Sea also underwent a change. From having been a subject of secondary importance at best for the Golden Horde during the first two decades of their existence, it now became an absolute priority for the Jochids, thanks to the storm of events unleashed in 1261. The specific causes for this radical transformation of the Black Sea’s significance are most properly sought in the geopolitical reconstruction of the whole expanse of lands controlled directly or indirectly by the Mongols. This reordering, which had far-reaching commercial implications, came about as a result of the fragmentation of Chinggis Khan’s empire.

Hülegü’s fundamental strategic plan was to isolate the Golden Horde completely: this was the guiding principle for all of his diplomatic, military and commercial initiatives, once the rivalry with Berke intensified. This gave rise to a blockade of impressive dimensions, stretching from Central Asia through Persia and Asia Minor as far as the Straits.\textsuperscript{23}

The khan on the Volga tried in vain to reopen the Golden Horde’s two main arteries, the Caucasian route through Derbent and the Black Sea Soldaia-Sinope axis.\textsuperscript{24} His only success was in breaking the blockade on the Straits by military means, attacking Byzantium in the winter of 1264/5.\textsuperscript{25} Neither his defeats nor his victory were simple manifestations of a given, temporary configuration of forces, but rather—as later events were to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} See chapter 3.4.1.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} See chapter 3.4.1.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} See below, pp. 243 ff.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} See chapter 3.1 and Canard, “Un traité,” p. 211.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} See below, pp. 243 ff.
\end{itemize}
show—were lasting effects of the new balance of power in Western Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

Thus the first major clash between the Mongol rulers of Persia and the Cuman steppe left the Golden Horde with no other route than the Black Sea and the Straits at their disposal, through which to maintain their economic and political contacts with Mediterranean Muslim and Christian states. The circumstances set out above thus led to a unique constellation of forces which necessarily made the Black Sea a political priority for the Golden Horde.

It must be emphasised here, to avoid any confusion, that the Black Sea in and of itself was no more than a subset of the triangle of forces Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz, a triangle which was born of commercial rivalries and alliances; thus the Golden Horde’s Black Sea policy cannot be understood without reference to this network of forces.

Just as the larger framework for the Sarai khans’ Black Sea initiatives was set down in Berke’s day, so too the two fundamental components of every Golden Horde policy to come were set down at this time: cooperation and confrontation with the Italian thalassocracies, and the freedom of the Straits.

4.2 Cooperation and Confrontation with the Italian Merchant Republics

Obviously, no matter how pressing and sustained the Jochids’ interest in promoting Black Sea trade as a vital recompense after their loss of Tabriz, there would have been no actual history of such trade without a suitable trading partner. From the outset, the Genoese showed themselves to be well suited to the task, having both the logistical requirements and a desire to see commerce flourish.

By remarkable coincidence, the Ligurian merchants were themselves looking for a commercial recompense at this juncture, driven by the same necessities. In 1258, Venetian galleys had shattered the Genoese fleet before Acre, forcing them to abandon a city pivotal for Western trade in the Orient.²⁶

Genoa took its revenge, striking back with the Treaty of Nymphaion and wresting dominance in the Black Sea and the Straits away from the Venetians, who had held it since 1204. The treaty was concluded with the

Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos on 13th March 1261, and took effect in summer of the same year when the Byzantines retook Constantinople and brought an end to the Latin Empire.27

In two simultaneous and symmetrical processes, the Mongols of Persia shut the Golden Horde out of the profits of Near and Middle Eastern trade, and the Venetians did the same to the Genoese. Thwarted, both powers were pushed toward the Black Sea. It was inevitable that they should meet there, and their decision to work together was based on convergent interests and the complementary means which the land-based and maritime powers could command. This alliance would form the basis of Jochid-Genoese relations, which over time would withstand not just the ups and downs, the highs and lows inherent in such cooperation, but also all external attacks, above all those from the Venetian republic.

The Volga khans’ attitude to the Genoese was decisively influenced by their involvement in the Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz triangle, as indeed was the whole of the khans’ Black Sea policy.28 Similarly, the Ligurian merchants’ conduct toward their Mongol trading partners on the steppe was determined by the merchants’ position on the shores of the Fertile Crescent, the Levantine ports par excellence.

The earliest example illustrating this close interrelation has just been invoked: pushed from Acre in 1258, the Genoese weighed anchor for the Black Sea, where they arrived in 1261. Equally clear, and equally well accepted in the historiography, is the Venetian response when the Mamluks conquered Acre in turn in 1291, and they too sought to recoup their losses in the Black Sea.29

Historians have however overlooked another episode which can certainly be included under the same heading, possibly because its documentary traces are both more scattered and more exiguous. This is the mass exodus of the Genoese from Cilician Armenia, once the kingdom became a Mamluk vassal in 1285 and conditions for trade in this bridgehead to the Silk Road and the spice route deteriorated so drastically. The Genoese resigned themselves to the situation in 1290, having fought and lost a war against Cairo.30

---

27 Cf. the extensive bibliography on the question given by Balard, Romanie, I, p. 42 note 99.
28 See chapters 3.3.1, 3.3.2.
29 See chapter 4.2.2.
30 See chapters 3.2, 3.4.2.
This second Genoese push into the Black Sea, after that of 1261, is crucial to understanding the history of the sea and of the main powers acting on and around it in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. The new wave of Ligurian merchants arriving in the latter 1280s did not just intensify the volume of trade in the region. Far more importantly, they changed the nature of Genoa’s Black Sea policy.

The Genoese were determined to exploit the *Pax Mongolica* for all it was worth, both in the Ilkhanate and in the Golden Horde. They thus embarked upon a series of initiatives meant to protect their Black Sea interests against the local peoples as much as against their Venetian rivals. Most significantly, they surrounded the Black Sea with a ring of their own naval and commercial bases, which certainly did not go unremarked by those affected.

When they turned Caffa into one such fortress at the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongol khans of Sarai felt this to be a provocation: as time went on they reacted more or less vigorously, but they were never indifferent. Once the problem appeared on their horizon, it became a major part of the Golden Horde’s Black Sea policy: from this perspective, it marks off two distinct stages in Jochid-Genoese relations.

4.2.1 *The Beginnings*

The motives which drove the Mongols and the Genoese to form their partnership are thus clear: nevertheless, the early stages of this collaboration are shrouded in obscurity, especially the legal framework.

It seems to be no accident that the khan’s privilege, without which no trade could be done, is missing, for this merely echoes other cases when the Ligurian merchants were known to have been active in such-and-such a state’s territory, but historians have been unable to produce their founding charter. Given that it is inconceivable that foreigners would have been able to buy and sell in any host country without the rulers’ consent, here as elsewhere we must ask whether a written privilege actually existed and has since been lost, or whether there was only ever a verbal

---

31 See chapter 3.4.2.
32 See chapter 3.4.1.
33 The situation was the same in Trebizond (see p. 118 note 254), and in the Ilkhanate and the Mamluk Sultanate (p. 124 note 285; see also p. 178 note 141).
agreement. All of the sources invoked date from a later period, and none has been able to resolve the question.\(^{35}\)

There is however some indirect testimony from a Mamluk source, not previously considered in the historiography on the question, which is chronologically and thematically very close to what we assume to have been the original agreement between the Mongols and the Genoese after the upheavals of 1261 in the Black Sea and the Straits: the source records those who took part in the ‘congress’ of Cairo in summer 1263, which laid the foundations for the great anti-Ilkhanid coalition. As well as delegations from Khan Berke, from Emperor Michael VIII, from Sultan Baybars and from the Seljuk ex-sultan ‘Izz al-Dīn, there was also ‘a dean’ (\textit{muqaddam}) sent by the Genoese.\(^{36}\) This reference shows that the Golden Horde and the Genoese were allies in the same cause.

Given that the Northern Mongols had no naval power at all, and that the Mamluk fleet was extremely weak, we might assume that from the very beginning, the Genoese republic’s task as a sea power was to maintain diplomatic and commercial ties between the two land powers. Sadly, the documentation is too sparse to confirm such a supposition, and what sources we have are too scattered. Nevertheless, it is known that the Sultan of Egypt negotiated two treaties with Michael VIII Palaiologos, in 1261/2 and in 1281, for the right to bring slaves imported from Soldaia through the Straits, and to allow passage for the ambassadors who maintained contact

\(^{35}\) In the mid-fourteenth century, Gregoras/Schopen, II, pp. 683–684, mentions in rather vague terms a privilege whereby the Genoese were free to trade in the khan’s territories and were obliged in turn to pay the usual taxes. A Venetian treaty of 1344 gives more exact details, saying that the Ligurian republic \textit{habet terram Gaffe ab imperatore cum certis conditionibus et pactis} and that the Mongols administered the customs (Morozzo della Rocca, “\textit{Notizie},” p. 291); it may be that this refers to Özbek’s charter of 1313, allowing the Genoese to return to Caffa—and this charter too is missing! (see below, pp. 178–179)—rather than to the original charter. Even the Genoese chroniclers Stella, Caffaro and Giustiniani cannot accept the incorroborated statement of the Englishwoman Maria Guthrie, who says that she saw the document in Russia at the close of the eighteenth century (cited by Papacostea, “\textit{Gênes},” p. 222 note 36). Further evidence that there never was a written document seems to come in negotiations for a new treaty signed by the Mongols and the Genoese in 1380, whereby customs tariffs were to be fixed \textit{segundo premere usansse} (see below, pp. 184, 227–228). The diplomatic conventions of the day would have required that a written agreement be invoked, rather than “the old usage” (compare the treaties confirming that of 1380, pp. 232 ff., and those confirming Özbek’s charter to the Venetians of 1332, pp. 220 ff.).

\(^{36}\) See above, p. 90; there is also an early and intriguing report that a number of \textit{nuncii Tartarorum} were in Genoa in 1269, but this is inadmissible as evidence, since there is no way to tell whether these envoys came from the Golden Horde or from the Ilkhanate (Caffaro/Petech, “Marchands,” p. 560).
between the capitals on the Nile and the Volga. It is also well-known that the Genoese were involved in this trade, as attested for instance by documents notarised at Pera in 1281. However, it cannot be established for certain whether the republic’s ships were already bringing slaves from the Crimea to Alexandria in the second half of the thirteenth century, as they would the following century: either they still refrained from a trade which was condemned by the Christian authorities, or they took part so circumspectly that this escaped contemporary notice.

Even if they did not act as intermediaries in this particular strategic trade between the Golden Horde and Egypt, the Genoese could only profit from the restructuring of Black Sea commerce in 1261. Soldaia had abandoned its traditional partner at Sinope and turned to Constantinople instead, and this development put wind in the sails of the Genoese merchants who dominated the Straits.

Having become the most important actors in the new patterns of trade in the Black Sea, the Genoese settled in the Crimea, probably around the same time that they consolidated their presence in Pera: confident that they dominated the Crimea, in 1269 they were persuaded to allow the Venetians to trade there alongside them, on the condition that the latter did not go on to Tana.

---


40 Pachymeres/Bekker, I, pp. 174–179, writes at length about the slave trade and deplores the emperor’s decision to allow free transit of slaves to Egypt, where they swell the ranks of the Mamluk army and thus contribute to attacks on Christians in Palestine and Cilicia; on the papacy’s attempts to put an end to the trade, cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 35 ff. The Genoese showed themselves to be ‘bad Christians’ from at least the second half of the thirteenth century, when they broke the papal embargo and shipped prohibited goods from Cilician Armenia to Egypt: wood, iron and tin (Otten-Froux, “Aïas,” pp. 161–162).

41 In the Byzantine-Mamluk treaty of 1281 there is a clause allowing the “people” of Soldaia and its “inhabitants” to ship slaves through the Straits, but also granting the same permission to “those coming from” the town (Canard, “Le traité,” pp. 673–674, 680), so that Canard, “Un traité,” p. 210 note 1, wonders whether the Genoese are included here; Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 117, 118 note 82, notes the question but dismisses it, on no very strong grounds.

42 See above, chapter 4.1.3, and Canard, “Un traité,” p. 211.

43 Balard, Romanie, I, p. 113; this was in 1270 at the latest.

There is no question that even after 1261 Soldaia continued to be the chief commercial centre in the Northern Black Sea for quite some time. There is documentary evidence for Genoese presence in the great port from 1274, when the merchant Lanfranchino di Savignone and the notary Federico di Piazzalonga are attested.\textsuperscript{45} The Pisans appear in 1277 and the Venetians only in 1287, when they have a consul whose jurisdiction extends over all Gazaria.\textsuperscript{46}

It is much more difficult to discern when exactly the town which would go on to displace Soldaia, and take over its function, first made its presence felt. This was Caffa, whose origins were obviously so modest that at the time, they went unrecorded: when Genoese chroniclers in the following century tried to record how the great city was founded, nobody knew for sure, so that they came up with a long string of conjectures, a historiographical habit which still endures today.

There is no doubt that the Genoese gained the right to settle and trade in Caffa in the usual way, under the standard conditions which the Mongol rulers granted to foreign merchants;\textsuperscript{47} these conditions must have been the same as their Genoese and Pisan predecessors enjoyed at Soldaia. Soldaia itself was clearly adequate for any strictly commercial needs, and the fact that the Genoese were not content simply to pursue their business there but sought another market nearby indicates that they had ulterior motives from the very start, and the future development of Caffa would lay these bare.

Having learnt from the recent experience of their expulsion from Acre in 1281, the Genoese knew how dangerous it could be to depend on their host’s good will, and had no desire to repeat the lesson on the Northern Black Sea coast. Thus they chose the location of their new settlement as a safe haven where the colonists could not be reached, and their criteria were that the town should be both commercially viable and secure, by sea and by land.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{48} Gregoras/Schopen, II, pp. 683 ff., relates Genoese methods in such instance in his description of the founding of Caffa, starting with scouting for a location and ending with the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty with the local authorities that sets out their reciprocal obligations exactly.
Of the many settlements on the Crimea’s South-East coast, the only one which could compete with Soldaia as a gateway to Solkhat, the administrative and commercial capital of the peninsula and the end-point for the great steppe trade routes, was ancient Theodosia.\(^{49}\) Located to the North of Soldaia, it was closer to Tana on the mouth of the Don, and thus more convenient as an entrepôt for steppeland and forest products, later to become an outpost for the major trade routes from Central Asia and China.\(^{50}\) The Genoese also chose Theodosia for its topography: it stands on the shores of a small gulf,\(^{51}\) so that the port could be developed unhindered, and by the first half of the fourteenth century the harbour could accommodate at least two hundred ships, while the terrain permitted fortification with ramparts and palisades from the start, later expanded into defensive walls and towers.\(^{52}\)

Theodosia must have been a ruin at best when the Genoese arrived, economically and demographically insignificant: indeed it had to be so for the operation to succeed. It was only in such a location that the “visitors” could be the majority, indispensable if the colony and its surroundings were to be developed for their final purpose: independence from the Mongol horde.

The history of Caffa from the moment the first Genoese disembarked to the moment of full independence is a long-drawn-out process of development, complex and full of incident, in which the only constant factor is the Genoese merchants’ determination to succeed.

The earliest documented mention of Caffa’s existence is from 1281, when the notary Gabriele di Predono drew up contracts in Pera for some of his countrymen, whose business took them there.\(^{53}\) In 1282, and then again two years later, we find mention of the spice trade, in fairly modest quantities.\(^{54}\)

The colony is attested as an organised community in 1284, when the first consul is mentioned, Luchetto Gambono.\(^{55}\) Mongol customs at

\(^{49}\) Cf. the map of the region in Balard, Romanie, I, p. 153.

\(^{50}\) Cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 158, and above, chapter 3.4.1.

\(^{51}\) This was easy of access and offered excellent facilities as a harbour thanks to North winds (Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 158).

\(^{52}\) See the stages of this process in Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 199–215, and the map on p. 203.


\(^{54}\) Balard, Romanie, II, pp. 720, 723.

\(^{55}\) Ibid. p. 902.
Caffa are documented in 1289–1290, and are a sign of good relations and cooperation.\textsuperscript{56}

It is well known that in the following century, the Genoese tried hard to concentrate all of the Northern Black Sea trade in their port,\textsuperscript{57} and they can hardly have made fewer efforts in this direction in the early stages; nevertheless, comparative data from 1281 show that the new trade centre was not yet able to meet the needs even of the Genoese merchants themselves. In the contracts notarised by Gabriele di Predono at Pera, the volume of trade transacted at Caffa amounts to only 1,476 hyperpyra, compared to 3,453 in the other Crimea ports and 3,421 at Vicina.\textsuperscript{58}

However haphazard such evidence may be, it demonstrates the relative insignificance of Caffa (in volumetric terms) and the extent of Genoese commercial activity on the peninsula—clear indications that the town was still at an early stage, though later it would become the Northern Black Sea’s main depot and entrepôt. The process of becoming such an important commercial centre was closely bound up with the achievement of independence.

Both processes were much accelerated from 1285, when the Genoese took a much greater interest in the Black Sea in the wake of one of the largest shifts in the history of Eurasian trade.

4.2.2  \textit{Noghai and Toqta, the Genoese and Venetians: The Battle for the Black Sea Trade}

Increased Genoese mercantile activity after 1285 is well-attested and has been remarked in the scholarship.\textsuperscript{59} The brothers Benedetto and Manuele Zaccaria, major traders in their own right, extended their interests to Caffa in 1286, and within a few months the number of contracts notarised in Genoa concerning the Caffa trade had risen remarkably. As well as these scattered documents, chance has preserved a more complete set of sources, the registers of the notary Lamberto di Sambuceto, who worked in the town in 1289–1290.\textsuperscript{60} Even if we restrict our reading to the contracts

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., I, p. 459 note 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” and below, chapters 4.2.3, 4.2.7.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 118: “Après 1285, les mentions de Caffa dans les actes notariés génois se multiplient.”
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Brățianu, \textit{Actes}, pp. 173–299, Sambuceto/Balard, passim.
\end{itemize}
which di Sambuceto notarised, these furnish a comprehensive picture of how Caffa’s commerce entered a whole new phase.\textsuperscript{61}

The phenomenon is easily explained when seen in the broader Black Sea-Mediterranean context: it was one effect of the second wave of Genoese expansion into the Black Sea, after trading conditions in Cilician Armenia worsened drastically once the kingdom had become a Mamluk vassal in 1285.\textsuperscript{62}

The setback in the Eastern Mediterranean fed Genoese interest in trade with the Golden Horde and in opening a Black Sea route to the Ilkhanate, with this latter goal becoming increasingly evident after the war to liberate Armenia was lost in 1290. The two processes were closely related, not just in their actual development and effects, but in perception and aspiration.

Thus Benedetto Zaccaria, mentioned above as trading with Caffa in 1286, was also the admiral who was to attack Egypt two years later.\textsuperscript{63} Because of this close relationship, the Caffans were not slow to help fellow Genoese threatened by the Mamluk Sultan on the Syrian coast at Tripoli.\textsuperscript{64}

It was a frequent complaint at the time that the Genoese were driven only by the desire for gain, and they paid no heed to political tensions except, of course, where these affected their material interests. One example of this attitude was their consistent approach to Black Sea trade, as though the bitter commercial rivalry between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate were not played out in Black Sea waters as well. The same merchants and sailors could offer their services equally to these two rival powers. Vivaldo Lavaggio, commanding a galley armed and furnished by the Ilkhan Arghun, captured pirates and returned their booty to the Armenians from whom it had been stolen, which earned him a commendation in Caffa in April 1290.\textsuperscript{65} A month later, Pietro di Braina set off from the same town, bound for the Mongol ruler’s horde at Tabriz.\textsuperscript{66}

As such details illustrate, Genoese policy was to deal in as even-handed a manner as possible with the two rival Chinggisid states, and they did not

\textsuperscript{61} Balard, Romanie, II, p. 852, remarks that the volume of trade increased with the number of contacts.
\textsuperscript{62} See chapter 3.2, 3.4.2.
\textsuperscript{63} See above, pp. 80 ff.
\textsuperscript{65} Brătianu, Actes, pp. 271–272.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., pp. 286–287; although the exact message which he carried is not known, it must have been a political mission, given the destination and recipient.
swerve from this line. Their determination here was doubtless highly profitable as well, but is to some extent admirable in itself, since we can easily imagine that both Mongol trading partners exerted constant pressure on the Genoese, each in the hope of tipping the balance of trade in its own favour. The Venetians too were eager to exploit the situation in the Black Sea in order to gain a foothold in this aspect of Levantine commerce, and sought to undermine Genoa’s position.

Caffa also had an extremely important strategic role, since together with Pera it formed the axis upon which Genoese naval power in the Black Sea was based in the later thirteenth century. It was thanks to this power that the Ligurians were able to lay down the law in the Black Sea, despite Venetian wishes and, when necessary, defying even Byzantium.

Aside from any other considerations, Genoese political neutrality in the Black Sea was dictated by the enduring ambition to control all the major trade routes around its shores. Seen in these terms, the route between the two Mongol states was one of the most active, since complementary wares and goods were exchanged on the Caffa-Trebizond route. In this case at least, economic interests overrode political tensions.

The new impetus in Black Sea trade after 1285, driven mostly by the Genoese, was still some way from achieving the full commercial potential which it would unfold in the following century, and suffered setbacks despite promising beginnings. Its initial vigour was sapped by two almost simultaneous wars: a war on land between the Mongols of Toqta and of Noghai, and at sea between the Genoese and the Venetians. Caffa was directly caught up in both conflicts.

After the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, Venice had given up hope of being able to retake Constantinople by force and thus became more accommodating,

---

67 Despite received opinion; Brătianu, Recherches, p. 261, Spuler, Mongolen, p. 75, Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” p. 116; Soranzo, Papato, p. 324 note 2, observes the same neutrality in the Genoese (and Aragonese) approach to the Ilkhanid-Mamluk conflict, where the Ligurian merchants managed to maintain commercial relations with both powers after 1290.


69 This route largely came to replace Soldaia-Sinope (see above, pp. 142 ff.), except in the matter of the slave trade which was redirected via the Straits; the Caffa-Trebizond trade is heavily attested in the notary documents from 1289–1290 of Sambuceto/Balard; in the following century, ‘Umari/Quatremère, p. 386, recorded that merchants were constantly travelling from one shore to the other (cf. Zachariadou, “Trebizond,” p. 353). A similar episode is recorded for the parallel Caucasian route; the Persian chronicler Mirkhond noted that “while the border at Derbent was closed, Abaqa allowed only merchant caravans to pass” (Spuler, Mongolen, p. 358).
concluding a treaty with the Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos in 1285 which allowed them to take part in Black Sea commerce. This placed great strain on anybody trading with the Genoese.\textsuperscript{70} The fall of Acre in 1291 deprived Venice of their main base for the Oriental trade,\textsuperscript{71} and the loss was aggravated by a papal embargo against the Mamluk sultan, announced right after the catastrophe. They then tried to force their way into the Black Sea, and the inevitable result was that the first war of the Straits between the two Italian naval and commercial powers broke out in the last decade of the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{72}

Among the first Venetian actions which announced the new course of events was the Senate’s decision on 10th April 1291 to send an envoy \textit{ad imperatorem noqa}, to the “emperor Noghai,” who was to stay in the Mongol capital for three years if the mission was a success.\textsuperscript{73} There is no doubt that the Venetians intended to supplant the Genoese as the Golden Horde’s trading partners.\textsuperscript{74} Noghai was beyond question the most powerful figure in the \textit{ulus} of Jochi,\textsuperscript{75} well able to take such a decision, and was just at that moment engaged in replacing the ruling (and rightful) khan of the Golden Horde, Töle Bugha, with Prince Toqta.

There is no record that any such accord was ever reached, and the question that remains—and may probably be answered in the negative—is whether the Venetians acted in concert with Noghai when they moved against Caffa in the final years of the century. The Venetians were the first to attack Crimea, following Genoese attacks in the Eastern Mediterranean at Coron in 1293 and off the port of Ayas in 1294. The Serenissima mobilised its forces and in 1296 launched an attack on the Straits and the Black Sea. The assault came in two waves, the first squadron burning Genoese Pera and the second, a large fleet commanded by Giovanni Soranzo, doing the same to Caffa in the autumn.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{70} Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 228–229.
\textsuperscript{71} On the Genoese part in the fall of Acre, see above, p. 85 note 114.
\textsuperscript{75} See chapter 4.3.2.
Although the fate of the Genoese seemed to have been sealed when their two bases in the Black Sea were destroyed, two years later they were dealt a very different hand when they struck back convincingly at Cuzola in the Adriatic. In the subsequent Peace of Milan of 1299, Venice to all intents and purposes recognised her rival’s Black Sea hegemony for the long term.77

While the Genoese were still savouring their Adriatic victory, a new threat struck their Eastern colonies. Triumphant after his first battle with Toqta, khan of Sarai, for supremacy in the Golden Horde,78 Noghai hurried to reap the economic fruits of his success, and nowhere in the whole ulus of Jochi were these more abundant than in the trading towns of the Crimea.

The first victim was Soldaia. “In the year 698 [= 9th October 1298–30th September 1299] merchants coming from Sudak brought news [to Cairo] that the king Noghai, who sat on the throne of Berke’s kingdom, had arrived at Sudak in the month of Rabī’ al-awwal [= 7th December 1298–5th January 1299] and had ordered the inhabitants that all those who were of his party should leave the town with everything they had. His party, which made up more than a third [of the population], came out. After this, he surrounded the town with his troops and began to call those who had remained behind to him, one by one, tortured them, took their belongings and killed them, and in this way he put them all to death. Then he burnt [the town] and destroyed it, so that it seemed as though it had never been. He did these things since the taxes [customs] and other revenues from Sudak were divided among four Mongol kings, among them Toqta, who had dealings with the lord of Egypt and sent him letters and gifts. Reportedly the kings who shared his [= Noghai’s] rule cheated his governors in dividing the income. This prompted him to act as he did.”79

The Caffans demonstrated that they were of Toqta’s party in no uncertain terms, as recorded in an Arab chronicle in a chapter entitled ‘On how Aqtaji, son of Noghai’s daughter, was killed at Caffa’: “In the year 698 the said personage was killed in the town of Caffa, since his grandfather Noghai, having defeated king Toqta and taken possession of his country,

---

77 The peace treaty has been variously interpreted; I have followed Papacostea, “Gênes,” pp. 232 ff., since this is the only reading that convincingly explains developments in the Black Sea over the following two decades (see chapters 3.4.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4).

78 See chapter 4.3.2.

79 Al-Mufaḍḍal/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 184; there is an almost identical account in Jazarī/Sauvaget, p. 84; on the three other ‘kings’ alongside Toqta, see below, p. 251.
had sent his grandson to *bilād Qirim* [Crimea] to collect tribute due from the inhabitants. He came to the town of Caffa, which belongs to the Genoese Franks and is between Istanbul and *al-Qirim* [= Eski Kürim, Solkhat], and demanded the money from the townsman. They treated him well, served him food and wine to drink. After he had eaten and drunk, he felt dizzy. Then they attacked him and killed him. News of his death reached his grandfather Noghai. He sent a great army to Qirim, which plundered the town and burnt it. [The soldiers] killed a great many [of the townsfolk] in Qirim and robbed the wares of the Muslim, Alan and Frankish merchants. Then they plundered *Saru Kirmān* [= Chersonesus], *Kirk (Yeri)*, Kerch and other towns.”

Strange though it may seem, this account shows that the Genoese at Caffa emerged unscathed from Noghai’s punitive expedition to Crimea, which they had themselves unleashed by killing Aqtaji. Only those caught in Solkhat suffered reprisals. It is hardly likely that the Arab chronicler would list the towns which suffered, and forget to include the very town which had brought about the disaster. There is another, much more convincing explanation.

We can hardly imagine that, when they killed the grandson, the Genoese did not consider the possibility that the grandfather would take revenge. After his recent victories, nothing could prevent Noghai’s vengeance: Toqta was defeated, and had fled beyond the Don, and all Crimea was open to him, as Aqtaji’s presence at Caffa demonstrated. The all-powerful emir on the Danube was kingmaker and had recently proclaimed himself khan; if the leaders in the town chose to provoke him in a way which could only incur the most extreme reprisals, they must have been relying on their strong fortifications to resist the attack which would follow. From all appearances, they were correct.

Thus in 1298–1299 the Genoese acted with breathtaking confidence, relying on the fortress at the edge of the Mongol world to protect them. Such an act was simply another manifestation of a mindset already attested in the sources as early as 1269, when the Genoese allowed the Venetians to trade alongside them in the Crimea, but not to go to Tana. This condition could not have been imposed unless the Genoese already had a coastal stronghold on the peninsula, which can only have been Caffa although it was not named at this point.

---

The settlement began almost anonymously, but by the end of the thirteenth century it was known overseas as a town of the “Genoese Franks” and the Mongols discovered to their chagrin that its fortifications held firm. The settlement and development of the town probably proceeded in gradual, discrete phases.\(^81\)

The 1290s were thus an eventful decade, and its course indicates how important the Black Sea trade was both for the Italian naval powers and for rival Mongol rulers. Regardless of the actual outcomes of the land and sea battles, they were focused on the common goal of Caffa. Toqta could certainly not remain indifferent to the fate of the town which had risked its existence for his sake in defying Noghai.

4.2.3 Toqta: Cooperation and Rupture

Genoese cooperation with Noghai was thus forged and quenched in the bloody confrontations in the ulus of Jochi, and on the Black Sea, at the end of the thirteenth century.\(^82\) With the khan victorious, the Genoese seemed assured of more success in the future when Toqta became sole ruler of the steppe Mongols in the first year of the following century. Numerous Genoese merchants travelled as far as Sarai, the heart of the ulus, and probably even beyond the Volga, assured of good prospects.

There was nothing in this atmosphere of mutual understanding to indicate that the days of goodwill were numbered. The victims had no inkling of the shattering blow which Toqta was about to deal them: when his order to arrest merchants and confiscate their goods was carried out, they

\(^81\) The notary Lamberto di Sambuceto’s registers contain twenty acts of sale relating to buildings and property in Caffa in 1289–1290; Balard’s conclusion on examining these is certainly important, though it is hard to say exactly what it tells us about local government: “On peut enfin remarquer qu’un seul acte de vente fait mention des droits éventuels du khan mongol sur les terrains ou les immeubles de Caffa, alors qu’à Péra, les contrats de vente réservent les droits du basileus” (Sambuceto/Balard, p. 57); the document in question was signed on 11th August 1290, and concerns a plot of land outside the walls (positam in territorio de Caffa, extra licias dicti loci de Caffa), and the seller pledges to the buyer: promitto tibi legittime defendere et expedire in iudicio et extra, a quacumque persona collegio et universitate, excepto ab imperatore et comune Janue (ibid., pp. 372–373, Brătianu, Actes, p. 40).

\(^82\) Brătianu, Recherches, pp. 256, 261, 271, 282–283, remarks that the naval war between Genoa and Venice for control of the Black Sea trade tied into the internal warfare in the Mongol state; the Serenissima allied itself with Noghai, while the Genoese stayed loyal to Toqta, the rival. They paid dearly for this loyalty when Noghai, after his first victory over the khan of Sarai, entered Crimea and destroyed Caffa along with the other towns. This narrative is however based far more on “the logic of events” that on incontrovertible documentary evidence.
were taken by surprise within Golden Horde territory, going about their ordinary business.

Though the confiscated goods were certainly a welcome addition to the treasury at Sarai, Toqta’s principle goal was not to rob the Genoese but simply to remove them from Jochid territory. According to a Genoese source, it was much more difficult for the khan to achieve this goal than the initial balance of power would suggest: Toqta’s son Ilbasar had to besiege Caffa for eight months before the last Genoese put it to the flames and abandoned the town, leaving by sea on 20th May 1308.83

As for what prompted Toqta’s sudden change of attitude and made him proceed so violently against those who had been his trading partners, the anonymous chronicler invokes only a rather riddling explanation that the Genoese had “acted in a prideful manner in his kingdom.” It seems that their arrogance toward the khan was much the same as they showed around the same time to Alexios II, Emperor of Trebizond, when they demanded exemption from customs duties and their own precinct within the city, with extraterritorial rights: they backed up the request by invoking the recent treaty with Byzantium as their model.84

The two situations were nevertheless considerably different. While the Genoese were mere petitioners in the Great Comnenid capital, when dealing with the Mongol khan they could point to the *fait accompli* that they had a fortified town which had already shown its strength a decade before. The fortifications were strikingly similar to those of Pera, completed no

---

83 Continuazione da Varagine/Promis, pp. 500–501: Anno domini MCCCVII in festo beati francisci toctai imperator tartarorum in dominio gazarie propter multas superbiais quas Januenses fecerant in suo imperio precepit quod omnes Januenses erant capiti per totum suum imperium in here et persona, quod et factum fuit quod mercatores qui erant in saray capiti fuerunt et deportati sed postea ex precepto dicti imperatoris persone eorum usque in sulcati ducti fuerunt et aliqui in Caffa venerunt. reliqui remanserunt ibi incarcerati qui postea quasi toti frigori gladio et desasio perierunt. Dicto autem M° dictus thoctai missit ad destructionem caffe elbasar filium suum qui applicuit in gazario dicto M° de mense novembris et ibi conregavit exercitum suum inter equites et pedites centum milia et venit in caffâ. erant Januenses CCC et greci CCC ac esperantes in adutorio dei ad se defendendum et familias eorum et contra dictos inimicos dei se viriliter posuerunt. et cum multis preliis et incendii dictam terram caffâ dicti tartari fere per menses VIII duriter aflixissent. ultimo videntes Januenses ibi existentes quod propter deficitiam quam non habebant terram tenere non potuebant. feecerunt consilium generale in quo deliberatum fuit dereliquere terram et ascendere in lignis. itaque die XX maij MCCCVIII derelicta fuit caffâ et tota igne combusta manibus dictorum Januensibus.

84 Karpov, Imperio, pp. 144 ff.
longer ago than 1303:85 we can clearly rule out the idea that the Caffans would have been able to resist the Mongol siege for eight months without such defences.

The Genoese merchants' effrontery met with similar rebuffs wherever they pushed their demands: while Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos gave way unconditionally, since Byzantium was at the end of its strength,86 Alexios II Comnenos resisted the brazen Genoese demands at Trebizond and won the dispute.87

If we ask whether Toqta’s action in 1307 was in the same category as the Emperor of Trebizond’s actions against the Genoese in 1304, or Janibek’s actions four decades later,88 the answer can only be conjectural given the scarcity of sources. Whatever disagreements there may have been over Caffa’s status cannot have been the only cause of the rupture.

The Mamluk sources are less detailed and descriptive than the Genoese chronicler quoted, but they do give a precise cause for the reprisals: the khan “took his revenge on the Genoese Franks” because they stole Mongol children and sold them in Egypt.89 From this account we realise that Toqta’s actions were not just punitive, but preventative as well: all sources, including the Arabic, agree that the Genoese were expelled, which put an end to the slave trade on the Cuman steppe.

Export of slaves was certainly a major source of income and other material benefit for the Mongol khans,90 but it was also a source of concern. Notarial documents clearly show that younger, more able slaves fetched a premium price, so that the constant haemorrhaging of valuable human capital from the Golden Horde’s lands deprived it of soldiers as well as

---

86 Ostrogorsky, Geschichte, p. 404.
87 See above, p. 125.
88 Papacostea, “Tana,” passim, and below, pp. 204 ff.
89 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 95 (Baybars), 140 (al-Nuwayrī); the author of the Soldaia synaxarion notes only that the Mongols laid waste to Caffa on 21st May 1308 (Nystazopoulos, Sougdaia, p. 129).
90 The khan’s agents had two sources of profit from this trade, through customs duty and—indirectly—through tax. A Muslim merchant records that “the whole population pays tribute to the lord of the country; this is demanded even in poor years, when plague has killed the animals or when much snow has fallen and there are heavy frosts; in order to be able to pay the tax, people sell their children” (‘Umari/Lech, p. 140). Since the Mamluk sultanate depended on the import of slaves (cf. especially Labib, Handelsgeschichte), the Mongol khans benefitted in another, very important, way when we consider the international context of the trade, which gave them a further weapon against the Ilkhanate.
tax-payers. The inevitable result of bleeding away such subjects could only be that the ulus became dangerously anaemic. A general survey of Jochid foreign trade reveals that despite these unwelcome consequences, the khans at Sarai rarely interrupted Italian merchant activity (implicitly, the export slave trade), only a few times in the whole history of the Mongol state. Thus the question is, what prompted Toqta to stop this well-established phenomenon in 1307? The Arab sources suggest that the khan’s intention was to stop an illegal practice, reporting that the Genoese had been “kidnapping” children from the steppe-land and that this was why they were expelled, in an act which they call revenge.

With only minor variations which do more to confuse than clarify the question, this explanation has become part of the historiographical tradition. Whatever supporting arguments are then introduced often

---


92 There is a discussion of the problem and a brief bibliography at ‘umarī/Lech, pp. 299, 300 note 28; it is easy enough to judge how severe the effects on the Mongol state were when we consider the size and strength of the Mamluk army, entirely made up of slaves from the steppe. For two and a half centuries, the army preserved the greatest Muslim power in the Near East from all threat, including sustained attacks by the Crusaders and Mongols.

93 Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 170, says that the khan learnt (ayant appris) that the Genoese were taking Mongol children to sell, and thus expelled them. This formulation rather implausibly suggests that the khan of the Golden Horde had only just learned of the existence of the slave trade, a position for which there is no documentary basis. Brătianu, *Recherches*, p. 283: after assuming sole control, Toqta “fit aussitôt sentir aux colonies italiennes de Crimée le poids de son autorité, en pretendant interdire le commerce des esclaves, qui lui enlevait chaque année un grand nombre de sujets.” In this instance, the “aussitôt” actually represents no less than six years, which excludes the possibility that there is any real causal link between Toqta’s seizure of power and the expulsions. Spuler, *Horde*, p. 84, suggests that the khan threw out the Genoese “da ihm ihre Zusammenarbeit mit Tabriz und ihr ständiger Kinderraub zu lästig wurde” though we do not learn from this explanation why these two offences would suddenly become intolerable for Sarai in 1307, when the Genoese had already been behaving this way for more than a quarter century. Nor does the link that Balard, *Romanie*, I, p. 151, suggests make much sense: “La prépondérance génoise à l’embouchure du Don devient si éclatante que les khans s’inquiètent. Prenant pretexte des excès de la traite pratiquée par les Génois au détriment des populations qui lui étaient assujetties, le khan Tokhtu fit arrêter en 1307 les marchands génois qui se trouvaient à Sarai, confisqua leurs biens puis vint assiéger Caffa”, a hypothesis which he props up with the unsupported conjecture that the slave trade had begun to affect the “ruling minority” in the state; he draws a distinction between these “Mongols” and the mass of “Tartar” subjects, at a time when it is attested that the initial small cadre of conquerors was well assimilated into the local population, which were Cuman rather than any other group (‘umarī/Lech, p. 141). Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, pp. 116–117, and Berindei, O’Riordan, “Venise,” p. 246, note the information from the sources with no further comment. Schmid, *Beziehungen*, p. 248, is the exception here in noting a causal connection
appear unconvincing, but they do reveal that scholars feel the need to find law-enforcement reasons for Toqta’s actions, and an immediate cause which led to the expulsion. Such explanatory surplus is indeed indispensable in this case, since the Genoese slave trade was certainly no more “illegal” in 1307 than in the preceding years, and would not justify the blow that the khan dealt.

The extended military effort, stretching over several months, that was required for the Mongols to dislodge the Italians from Caffa also shows that Toqta’s decision was not a whim but the result of unusually compelling circumstances. The same well-informed Mamluk sources describe the critical situation which may have strained Mongol-Genoese relations to the breaking point: in the years leading up to Toqta’s fateful decision, the Golden Horde had suffered successive calamities—the wars, a prolonged drought, a famine—which could in and of themselves, or by their secondary effects in boosting slave exports, have sapped the human capital of the ulus to an even more dangerous extent than usual, thus necessitating the khan’s protectionist measure.

Toqta’s radical step was incontestably also aimed at correcting the two Genoese offences—their erosion of the Jochid demographic base, and the Caffans’ increasing separatist tendencies—but the decisive impulse for the great expulsion came from elsewhere, and aimed at another end.

The khan could not have been ignorant of the fact that although the interruption of the steppe slave trade affected the Genoese by depriving them of one of their richest sources of income, it had a much greater effect on their principal customers, the Mamluks of Egypt, for whom it was not simply a matter of material loss but rather of the very existence

---

94 The two great battles between Toqta and Noghai at the end of the thirteenth century led to very high mortality on the battlefield (Veselovsky, Khan, pp. 45 ff., and below, pp. 252 ff.); to these must be added the number of prisoners-of-war sold as slaves to Egypt, in quantities which impressed the Mamluk chroniclers (Baybars/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 191, 197, Ibn Khaldūn, ibid., p. 370, ‘Umari/Lech, p. 300). The other misfortunes are described by al-‘Ayni/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 483: “In the year 702 [= 1302/3] there was a drought, famine and high prices in the Northern kingdom, Toqta’s realm. The people sowed for three years on end without bringing in a harvest, and the horses and cattle died. The famine was so great that they offered their children and wives for sale in the marketplaces. The Franks and [Muslim] merchants bought them and took them away to every country, but most of all to Egypt” (cf. also ‘Umari/Lech, p. 299).

95 Starting from 1270–1275, “slaves are first and foremost among Oriental trade goods” shipped by the Genoese (Balard, Romanie, II, p. 785).
of their state, a mostly military structure which depended for its continuation on importing slaves from the Jochid lands.96

The "offence" which the Genoese had given to the khan is repeatedly mentioned in contemporary documents, but by contrast no source mentions expressis verbis any complaint which Volga could have put to Cairo to justify cutting off the slave trade. Despite this absence of a specific motive, the course of Jochid-Mamluk relations in the period immediately preceding the break is conclusively documented, and points to the sultan as the principle target of Toqta’s action. The known stresses and strains in the relationship in the early 1300s cannot be understood except as a function of the Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz triangle.97

Perhaps in an attempt to make up for time lost in the internal struggles which had paralysed Jochid foreign initiatives in the 1290s, once Toqta was unchallenged lord in the steppelands, he promptly and enthusiastically picked up the traditional foreign policy toward his state’s old allies and enemies.

As was to be expected, given the prime importance of the dispute, the newly-established ruler first turned his attention to the Ilkhan Ghāzān.98 Toqta took the initiative in making contact, sending envoys from his realm on the steppe across the mountains to present a message to the Mongol ruler in Persia in May 1301, though the chronicler who records their journey passes over the actual content of the message in silence.99 However, the chronicler reveals the Sarai khan’s motives when he mentions a Jochid expeditionary force that was annihilated before even joining battle, at the end of the same year. The incident did not lead to war, and the chronicler finds the whole episode worth recounting together with its consequences for commerce: an agreement was made, and the Caucasus route was reopened for merchants trading between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate.100 The subsequent Ilkhanid overstretch and the

---

97 See chapter 3.3.
98 Spuler, Horde, pp. 79–80.
100 Spuler, Mongolen, Schmid, Beziehungen, pp. 221–222. Another Persian chronicer, Waṣṣāf, probably refers to the same events, though he places the resumption of trade a decade earlier: “When Toqta took the throne after Möngke Temür [actually Töle Bugha, in 1291], the road was opened to merchants once more […] after envoys and messages had been exchanged between the two countries. Everything needed for the safety and comfort of travellers, was done. The lands around Arran were a hubbub with the great number of tents and carriages, horses and sheep, and all kinds of goods, rare items from many lands
way that events turned against them in Georgia and the Mamluk frontier in Syria gave Toqta hope that he may be able to persuade Ghāzān to cede the Transcaucasian provinces by diplomatic means. To this end, he sent an impressive embassy in 1302 or 1303, with over 300 horsemen, which presented to the Ilkhan the old demand for the restoration of Azerbaijan and the Arran. Ghāzān’s brusque reply—“I conquered these lands by the sword and I will defend them by the sword”—led to a further cooling of relations between the two neighbouring states. Toqta’s envoys subsequently concluded a peace treaty with the new Ilkhan, Öljeytü, in December 1304 but Sarai—and Tabriz on the other side—considered this only a pause to recoup strength for future clashes.

Toqta knew from his own experience and his predecessors’ that the Ilkhanid forts in the narrow valleys of the Caucasus represented an insurmountable obstacle for Jochid cavalry, used to fighting in open terrain. Under these circumstances, a military attack against Persia only had any real chance of victory if the Caucasus front were sufficiently undermanned, which would only happen if the Ilkhanate had to commit massive forces to a war with the Mamluks.

In the four decades since the Golden Horde’s formation, this reasoning had become a cornerstone of its foreign policy, and formed the basis of Toqta’s diplomatic overtures to the Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad

which had begun to flow once more in great numbers” (Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 89). Rubruck mentions the route as flourishing, half a century earlier: “Here lies the route taken by all the Saracens who come from Persia and Turkia” (Rubruck/Jackson, p. 127).

As grand vezir, Rashīd al-Dīn certainly would have known this embassy’s message as well, dated to 2nd January 1302 (or in another manuscript, 23rd November 1302), but it seems that he judged the content to have been embarrassing to his master from the point of view of “international law,” and therefore left it out of his chronicle (Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II, p. 79); Wāṣṣāf/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II, pp. 82–83, who dates the first embassy to 30th January 1303, does not seem to have shared the vezir’s reservations; cf. Spuler, Horde, pp. 80–81, and idem, Mongolen, p. 86, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 67–68.

In a letter to Philip the Fair of summer 1305, the Ilkhan reports that the peace was approved by all the Mongol princes, beginning with the great khan of China, so that he could propose to the French king a resumption of their joint campaigns against the Mamluks (Haenisch, “Briefe,” p. 230); cf. Mostaert, Cleaves, Lettres, pp. 56–57, Grosset, Empire, p. 460, Desimoni, Conti, p. 40, Soranzo, Papato, p. 350, Vernadscky, Mongols, pp. 82, 193–194, Spuler, Horde, p. 83, and Howorth, History, II, 1, pp. 142–144, Schmid, Beziehungen, pp. 246–247.

The defeat that Toqtamish’s cavalry suffered in winter 1386/7, as they tried to break these defences, is instructive here; the Mongol army was bottled up in a valley at the mercy of Timur’s archers, who occupied secure positions on the slopes around (cf. Ciocîltan, ”Restauraţia,” p. 586, and below, p. 293).

Cf. Spuler, Horde, pp. 40 ff., and chapter 3.3.1.
ibn Qalâwûn, after his initial plan to recover Arran and Azerbaijan, with the priceless prize of Tabriz, by his own efforts had failed. In 1304/5 an embassy from Sarai disembarked at Alexandria, bringing rich gifts, slaves both male and female. The khan announced to the sultan that he had warned the new Ilkhan, Kharbende, to surrender the lands “from Khorasan as far as Tabriz” and had threatened war if he did not comply. He then proposed, “Let us unite and chase him [Öljeitü] from the realm. The lands which your horsemen take shall be yours, and the lands which our horsemen take shall be ours.” The sultan treated the Mongol envoys well, but the honours shown them could not mask his—categorical—refusal to accede to Toqta’s request. “He answered that Allah had called Ghâzân to him, and that his brother Kharbende was already asking for peace.”

The Sarai khan’s next step underlines the cardinal importance of the Mamluk element in Jochid foreign policy; although the mission to Egypt of 1304/5 had quite evidently failed, this did not destroy Toqta’s hopes for an alliance with the sultan: clinging stubbornly, and quite unreasonably, to this anti-Ilkhanid handhold, he repeated the same diplomatic overtures as early as 1306/7, with exactly the same result.

The Sultan’s second refusal forced the khan to resort to extreme means of persuasion, indeed the only means available to him: choking off the export slave trade. It was entirely evident to all that such a step had the gravest consequences for the Mamluk state, and the most perplexing aspect is that there was absolutely no attempt to pass the blame onto the Sultan in order to justify Toqta’s actions. The only plausible explanation

---

106 Kharbende or Khodabende are further names for the Ilkhan Öljëitü.
107 Al-Mufaḍḍal/Tiesenhausen, Sborník, I, p. 185; al-Maqrīzī, ibid., p. 424, adds that the envoys reached Cairo on 2nd September 1304, and left the city with gifts the following February; Baybars, ibid., p. 94 speaks of a single envoy, Kurukji, who accompanied an Egyptian embassy back from the Horde; cf. Spuler, Horde, pp. 81–82, Labib, Handelsgeschichte, pp. 108–109, Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 222, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 68.
108 Al-Maqrīzī/Tiesenhausen, Sborník, I, p. 424; al-Mufaḍḍal, ibid., p. 185, implies that the Ilkhan had sought a peaceful arrangement with the sultan, fearing that the Jochid-Mamluk alliance may become active and operational; a Persian source confirms that an Ilkhanid embassy left for Egypt in January 1305 (Qâshânî/Parvisi-Berger, p. 49; Öljëitü allowed Mamluk merchants into Persia as a sign of goodwill (Spuler, Horde, pp. 80–81 and Mongolen, p. 106) and addressed the sultan of Cairo as his “brother” (Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 244); cf. also Spuler, Horde, p. 82, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 68.
109 Tiesenhausen, Sborník, I, pp. 95, 98 (Baybars), 144 (al-№wayrî), 181, 185 (al-Mufaddal), 424 (al-Maqrīzī) 256 (‘The life of the Sultan al-Malik an-Nâṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalâwûn’); Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 109, notes that this embassy was a simple repetition of the previous one; cf. also Spuler, Horde, pp. 83–84, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 70.
for such an oversight is that the Tartar ruler wanted to be able to mend relations with Egypt in the event that his embargo had the desired effect; in the meantime, internal sources reveal that the silence surrounding his motives made both Cairo and Genoa believe that the Mamluks were simply the victims of Jochid squabbles with the Genoese merchants who controlled the slave trade. There are several reasons to believe that Toqta’s silence on the subject, to the Sultan at least, was a stratagem.

The most cogent reasons are offered by his successor Özbek. There is a positive argument in the mandate given to the first ambassador he sent to Cairo after his enthronement (in 1313), Manghush, who was charged with the “question of peace” with the Sultan,110 which presupposes that Jochid-Mamluk relations had completely deteriorated in the period immediately preceding. There is more evidence in Özbek’s behaviour in an analogous situation: unlike Toqta, he never ceased to complain of Egypt’s policy of appeasing the Ilkhan, and threatened to forbid the slave trade expressis verbis.

On the other hand, the chronology of events does in itself suggest a causal relationship: the last exchange of envoys between Cairo and Sarai took place in 1306/7, and anti-Genoese reprisals in the Golden Horde started in November 1307. If we seek to prove that Toqta’s measure was aimed at mobilising the Mamluks against the common Ilkhanid enemy, then the reaction that the khan’s decision provoked in Cairo is more conclusive in this regard.

The Genoese merchants who monopolised the slave trade were expelled in May 1308.111 There is no doubt that the expulsion was understood

111 It seems that diplomatic and commercial ties between the Golden Horde and Egypt depended entirely on Genoese ships, since neither the Mongols nor the Mamluks had any naval power adequate to the task (on the precarious state of the Mamluk fleet see Ayalon, “Mamluks,” and idem, “Wafidiya”). Some sources seem to suggest that Egyptian vessels nevertheless reached the Black Sea at the time, taking advantage of the right to traverse the Straits, guaranteed by treaties with Byzantium from 1263 and 1281 (on these treaties, see Canard, “Un traité,” p. 210 note 1, and idem, “Le traité,” pp. 673–674, 680); for instance, the Franciscan Fidenzio da’Padova’s assertion: Nam soldanus solitus mittere annuatim aliquas naves ultra Constantinopolitan ad mare majus et de juvenibus nationum illarum qui morantur circa illud mare, facit emi in magna quantitate (Golubovich, Biblioteca, II, p. 48); Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 80 note 23, quite rightly remarks that the text makes no distinction between Egyptian ships, and foreign craft which the sultan may have hired; the same uncertainty is found in the statement of Gregorius/Schopen, I, p. 102, that the Egyptians sent one or two ships through the Straits each year (cf. Pachymeres/Bekker, I, pp. 177–179, and Brătianu, Recherches, pp. 206–208); an interesting and thought-provoking case is that of the Genoese Segurano Salvaigo, a great slave merchant, whose ships sailed
correctly in Cairo, as shown by the Sultan’s response in September/October of that year: once news reached Egypt of a clash in the Caucasus between Jochid and Ilkhanid frontier brigades, “he decided to equip a unit of the victorious army to prevent [threats] from near and far. […] When such preparation had been made, trustworthy men brought news that the accursed enemy’s advances had been halted, and the [expeditionary force] was disbanded.”

The “accursed enemy” was the Muslim Ilkhan Öljeitü, whom the Sultan refused to attack a few months later when Toqtä demanded, telling his Jochid ally, who was a shamanist, that his faith did not allow him to attack a co-religionist. However, as we shall see, the Egyptian “pillar of Islam” came to consider the security of the state, jeopardised by the interruption in the supply of slaves, as more important than religious solidarity with the Persian rulers.

The khan at Sarai was not convinced by Cairo’s anti-Ilkhanid initiative, which looked more like a hastily improvised feint than a reliable diplomatic measure. Toqtä was disillusioned by his recent experiences, and cut the Egyptian dimension entirely from his plans for war against Persia. The only message which contemporary sources record him as having sent between now and his death was mere formality: when a Mamluk embassy reached Sarai bringing news of al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn’s third enthronement in 1310, he confined himself, in 1311/2, under the Mamluk flag (Adam/Kohler, pp. 525–526, cf. Brătianu, Recherches, p. 229, Kedar, “Segurano,” pp. 75–76); Guillaume Adam, archbishop of Sultanïye, explicitly mentions the Genoese role as the principal actors in commercial and diplomatic exchange (Adam/Kohler, p. 533, Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 88). The Venetians never succeeded in supplanting their Genoese rivals as intermediaries between the two land-based powers, or in seriously threatening their dominance in the slave trade, which remained a Genoese speciality (Balard, Romanie, II, pp. 785–786).
to congratulating the Sultan on his return to power and wishing him continued victories.\textsuperscript{115} 

Given the functional connection between the Golden Horde’s Mamluk policy and Ilkhanid policy, it is not surprising that the same resignation seen in relations with Egypt also sapped Toqta’s energy in the matter of retaking Transcaucasia in the last years of his reign: this feeling of powerlessness can be read in the Ilkhanid chronicles’ dry report of the last embassy to arrive in Persia from Sarai across the mountains, on 30th May 1310.\textsuperscript{116}

Toqta’s Black Sea policy in the first decade of the fourteenth century showed itself first and foremost in relations with the Genoese: the policy was a subset of the triangular relation Sarai-Cairo-Tabriz, or more exactly, of the khan’s relations with the Sultan, so that shifts in policy closely followed the course of these relations. Genoese merchants profited most, as intermediaries between the two states, while good relations lasted, but were also the first to suffer from the khan’s measures directed against the Mamluks.

Such a reading of Toqta’s Genoese policy finds support in his successor Özbek’s attitudes to the merchants: determined by the same basic factors, pursuing the same goals, relations followed essentially the same course.

4.2.4 Özbek: Cooperation Reaches Its Peak

Toqta died childless in August 1312,\textsuperscript{117} and his nephew met with several months’ resistance from rebellious princes and emirs who supported other candidates before he could succeed. Özbek was only able to take the throne in January of the following year, whereupon he unleashed a bloodbath of his adversaries.\textsuperscript{118}

The key player, to whom the new khan quite literally owed his throne, was Qutlugh Temür, the “emir of Sarai,”\textsuperscript{119} who served Toqta as a minister.

\textsuperscript{115} Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, pp. 144–145 (al-Nuwayrī), 185 (al-Mufaḍḍal), 316 (Ibn Duqmāq), 484–485 (al-ʿAynī), 98 (Baybars, who records the message as arriving in Cairo in 1310/1, so that Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, p. 71, considers that there must have been two consecutive embassies; cf. Spuler, \textit{Horde}, p. 86 note 9).

\textsuperscript{116} Qāshānī/Parvisi-Berger, pp. 127, 230 note 294; Spuler, \textit{Horde}, pp. 84–85.

\textsuperscript{117} See ibid., pp. 127, 230 note 294; and Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Ibid.}, p. 371, who follow Qāshānī’s account, while other Oriental chroniclers simply mention a change of ruler (cf. Spuler, \textit{Horde}, p. 86 note 9).

\textsuperscript{118} Given this curious title in Qāshānī/Parvisi-Berger, p. 127.
A statesman in the fullest sense of the word, during the turbulent period of the struggle for the throne he showed that he had not only the acuity needed to lead his candidate to victory, but also the clarity of vision to lay the basis for future Jochid external relation even during short-sighted internal conflicts. From the very start of the succession struggle, he consistently followed the goal of salvaging the affairs of the Jochid state from the blind alley where Toqta had left them, and restoring its former vigour and dynamism.

As could be expected given its importance, the new rulers of the Horde first addressed the question of recovering Transcaucasia. Özbek sent a message to the Ilkhan Öljeytü, which the Jochid envoys read out in solemn audience on 8th April 1333. The text of the message is uncommonly significant on a number of levels: “You are the older, and I the younger, and there is understanding between us. If you need soldiers, I will send you as many as you demand. In exchange, return to us those Iranian lands which belong to us according to the imperial edict of the Great Khan Möngke, so that the roads which have been cut off can be reopened and we can exchange goods and our woven fabrics, which are lying about in heaps rotting, and which both parties need, and so that merchants and travellers may take to the roads once more, to their advantage.”

The same court chronicler also recorded the Ilkhan’s response, in rather fewer words: he gave the envoys some proofs of his favour and allowed them to leave.

Özbek’s proposal to Öljeytü about the return of Arran and Azerbaijan is surprisingly different from his predecessors’ diplomatic initiatives, including Toqta’s, in one crucial way: where they had issued ultimata and threatened the use of force, he proposed nothing less than to make the ulus of Jochi into an Ilkhanid vassal.

This offer constitutes the most conclusive proof of the extraordinary value which Sarai placed on the two Northern Persian provinces, and Öljeytü’s refusal to accept the deal confirms that the opposing camp valued them equally highly. The text cited illustrates, in the clearest possible way, why exactly the two provinces were so highly prized: the core of the matter, at stake in the dispute, was certainly commercial.

Özbek’s message reveals not only the Golden Horde’s obsession with reclaiming the lands, but also, far more tellingly, the hardship caused by the trade crisis. The “roads which have been cut off”—which must have

120 Ibid., p. 128.
happened in the last year of Toqta’s reign, though the precise circumstances are unclear—condemned the steppeland state to isolation, completely cut off from the Silk Road trade. April 1313’s attempt to unblock the Derbent route between the Eurasian steppe and the Persian plateau failed, forcing Özbek, like his predecessors and successors on the throne at Sarai, to recourse to the known alternative, redirecting traffic to the Northern Black Sea ports, whence most goods reached Mediterranean markets.122

The powerful emir Qutlugh Temür recalled that religious differences had contributed decisively to the dissolution of the traditional Jochid-Mamluk alliance, founded by the khan Berke and Sultan Baybars in 1261/2 to wage “holy war” against the “infidel” Ilkhan Hülegü, and was continued by their successors as such.123 Accordingly, Qutlugh made it a condition of his support that Özbek convert to Islam before seeking the throne.124 Aware that they were losing ground, his opponents indicated that they would be willing to recognise the youngster as rightful khan as long as he did not force them to abandon Chinggis Khan’s decreed constitution (yassa) for Islam. Özbek’s response was unambiguous: the new khan’s loyal soldiers rounded up the emirs, along with over a hundred princes gathered for the negotiations, and executed them.125 This savage purge assured not only internal stability under a single power centre, but the Golden Horde’s image as a purely Muslim state.

Özbek’s first message to the Mamluk Sultan shows that the operation was planned from the start for external consumption (as well as for its obvious internal benefits), and the khan dwelt upon his successes as a champion of Islam: his envoys, reaching Cairo on 13th April 1314, first of all congratulated the Sultan for spreading the word of Islam “from China to the borders of the Western lands” and then reported that after his enthronement, their pious lord had destroyed those of his enemies who refused to embrace Islam, killing some of them and making others slaves.

---

122 The disastrous effects when this trade route was itself cut may be appreciated from an instance of 1344, when a Genoese embargo had been in place for a year and the inhabitants of Crimea and the steppe complained loudly of their losses: *Omnes mercatores de Sorgati et omnis populus multum desiderat habere pacem et similiter populus Tartarorum habere pacem desiderat, et similiter omnes dicunt non in occulto sed pallam ex incomoditate quam sufferunt* (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 277–278; cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 206); on the vital importance of trade for the Chinggisid states, see Ciocîltan, “Cinghizhanizii,” p. 293, idem, “Politica,” pp. 233 ff., idem, “Migratori,” pp. 94–101, and chapter 2.2.2.

123 Zakirov, *Otnosheniya*, pp. 43 ff; see also above chapters 3.1, 3.3.1.


To add weight to their reports, the embassy was made up of more than one hundred and seventy members and brought unusually rich gifts.\footnote{126 Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, pp. 145 (al-Nuwayrī; the Jochid and Mamluk messengers were “as usual” accompanied by Byzantine envoys), 186 (al-Mufaḍḍal; they arrived at Cairo sometime between 19th March and 16th April 1314), 256 (the anonymous biographer of Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir), 316–317 (Ibn Duqmāq), 424 (al-Maqrīzī, who adds the detail that the returning Egyptian envoys had been in the lands of the Horde during Toqta’s sickness and last days; the anonymous biographer gives the same details), 485–486 (al-‘Aynī; cf. Spuler, \textit{Horde}, pp. 92 ff., Dölger, \textit{Regesten}, IV, p. 62, Schmid, \textit{Beziehungen}, p. 205, Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, pp. 74–75.} In order to consolidate the religious basis for the coalition, the Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir was named in prayers in all mosques in the \textit{ulus} of Jochi immediately after the khan, who upon his conversion to Islam had taken the name Muḥammad (also given as Ghiyāth al-Dīn) Özbek.\footnote{127 Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, p. 77, Spuler, \textit{Horde}, pp. 86–88.}

The conspicuous Islamic revival in the Golden Horde was intended to make the khan a more obvious partner for the Sultan’s favour than the Muslim Ilkhan. The wily Qutlugh Temūr also thought of another way to tip the balance toward the Jochid cause: he charged Manghush, Özbek’s first ambassador to Egypt, with proposing a marriage alliance to al-Malik an-Nāṣir, offering a princess of the Chinggisid blood: this was Tułunbek, daughter of Bürlük, brother to the dead khan Toqta.\footnote{128 Al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, p. 485; Spuler, \textit{Horde}, p. 93; Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, pp. 75 ff.; Grekov, Yakubovskiy, \textit{Orda}, p. 92; Vernadsky, \textit{Mongols}, pp. 197–198, wrongly concludes that this was the Sultan’s idea.} The proposed marriage alliance was something new in Jochid-Mamluk relations, even if it was intended to consolidate them, and did not have the effect that Sarai hoped for, although the lengthy preceding negotiations, and the outcome, accurately reflect developments in the triangular relation of forces which has been our concern here.

In sore need of commercial and diplomatic links between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, Özbek hastened to call on the Genoese, who had filled that role perfectly for the two great land-based powers before their expulsion from Caffa. The man of the moment in this new phase of Jochid-Mamluk relations, pivotal in bringing Genoese ships back to serve the axis, was Segurano Salvaigo.\footnote{129 See the monograph by Kedar, “Segurano.”} A scion of Genoese nobility who had become one of the largest slave merchants in the trade\footnote{130 In the report submitted to the Pope in 1317, the Dominican Guillaume Adam writes that Salvaigo and his clan are said to have transported 10,000 slaves from the Golden Horde to Egypt (Adam/Kohler, p. 526, Kedar, “Segurano,” pp. 76, 88).} and carried
political messages between Sarai and Cairo: his career exemplifies the course of Jochid-Egyptian ties in the 1310s, and Genoese relations with the two Muslim states within this framework.

Sources record him presenting rich gifts to the Mamluk ruler in 1303/4. Sakran, as the Egyptians called Segurano, won the favour of the Cairo court to such an extent that the Sultan called him “brother.” He certainly enjoyed an unusual degree of trust in these circles, as proven for instance by the weight accorded his words when he helped the crown of Aragon in negotiations with Egypt in 1306–1308, or to an even greater degree by the incident in 1312/3 when some of his compatriots offended the Sultan. Sakran became famous as a skilled merchant with a wide network of contacts in the Golden Horde as well as in the Christian world, which was difficult or even impossible for Muslim merchants to reach, especially given the Papal embargo against the Mamluks. This reputation made him an ideal trading partner for the Sultan’s court.

---

131 Guillaume Adam once more: *Quod fautor Sarracenorum existat manifeste apparet, quia cum soldanus aliquam legacionem vellet mittere, vel nuncios, ad imperatorem Tartarorum aquilonis, pro culto sarracenico ampliando, ipse hujusmodi legacionem et nuncios transvehbat. [...] Has vero societates duo imperatores per se tractant et firmant, scientibus et cooperantibus Januensibus, sine quibus has collegaciones inter se minime facere possent, nec soldanus ille Tartaro imperatori facarios, id est monachos sarracenos, et alios nuncios, ad pervertendum eum et suam populum, nec Tartarus soldano posset mittere pueros et hujusmodi encenia pravitatis. Quicquid isti duo, videlicet Tartarus et soldanus, sibi mutuo volunt mittere, hoc Januenses transvehunt in suis navibus et galeis* (Adam/Kohler, pp. 525–526, 531; Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 88).

132 The Dominican accused him and his kinsmen of setting a bad example for his compatriots to follow: *Non solum autem ipse, et fratres ejus et nepotes et propinqui, per hunc modum Sarracenis talem fortitudinem prebuerunt, sed et multi alii Januenses, quos, exemplo suo, attraxit ad similia peragendum* (Adam/Kohler, p. 526, Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 88).


134 Guillaume Adam’s account of the Genoese merchant’s closeness to the Sultan may be suspected of exaggeration; writing to the Pope, he can scarcely restrain his rage when writing of this *caput peccati*, who works against God and the church to strengthen the Saracens, enemies of the Cross. His account is confirmed however by al-‘Ayni, who has no motive to misrepresent the facts (Adam/Kohler, pp. 522–526, Tiesenhausen, *Sborník*, I, p. 493, Kedar, “Segurano,” pp. 88, 90).


136 A ship returning from the Crimea with Mamluk envoys and Toqta’s emissaries was captured by the Genoese of Chios. Around sixty persons were put up for sale as slaves in the Syrian port of Tripoli, although no buyers came forward. Once the Sultan learned of what had happened, he arrested “Frankish” merchants in Egypt in retaliation. Segurano Salvaigo’s intervention helped secure the release of both sets of prisoners (al-Mufaḍḍal/Tiesenhausen, *Sborník*, I, pp. 185–186, al-Nuwayrī, ibid., pp. 144–145; Maqrīzī/Quatremère, II, pp. 101–102; Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 89; Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, p. 76).


138 There were probably numerous investments made from these quarters, but Mamluk chronicles only record an arrangement with the qadi Karīm al-Dīn, “chief of the Sultan’s
All these qualities made Segurano Salvaigo a leading proponent of reopening the Caffa-Alexandria sea route, as did his own self-interest. His involvement in the troubles of 1311/2, when he saved the Jochid ambassadors, the Mamluk ambassadors, and his own countrymen, made him a key political player in the process of restoring the Golden Horde's relations with the Sultan to the level they had been at before they were effectively frozen in 1307/8. His kinsmen helped him in his efforts to re-establish ties between the two Muslim states. While Segurano's base of operations was in Egypt, one of his brothers, probably Ambrogio, held a similar position in the Golden Horde, and is attested as a member of Özbek's large embassy to Cairo in 1313/4, made up of three hundred persons, “great and small, slaves both male and female; the brother of the Frankish merchant Sakran came with [the ambassador] and in his service.”

This brief notice records the resumption of the old links between the Jochids and Mamluks. As well as recording the Genoese contribution (and in particular that of the Salvaigo family) to the re-establishment of the Muslim alliance, it sheds some light on the related problem of the great slave route and its resolution.

However important the Genoese were in reopening the trade, they were no more than tools in the service of the two rulers. Özbek’s contribution must be emphasised here, since in the final analysis, the course of events depended entirely on his political designs.

The khan’s strong interest in long-term, large-scale links with the Mamluk state is evident in his dealings with the Genoese, who were keen to return to their stronghold on the Crimean coast: he offered uncommonly generous conditions for them to do so.

---

139 The identification is proposed by Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 78.
140 Ibid. al-Dawādarī/Roemer, p. 280, Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 89; cf. Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 76; this is probably the same embassy as mentioned above, p. 171, in which case the ambassador was Mangush.
141 The only explicit mention of the privilege is in an anonymous Genoese chronicle: Anno domini MCCCXVI redifficata fuit civitas Caffa per dominum antonium gallum et dominium niculaum de pagana syndicos comunis Janue per gratiam sibi concessam per Usbech imperatorem tartarorum (Continuazione da Varagine/Promis, p. 502; cf. Ciocîltan, “Origines,” passim); the phrasing does not reveal whether the khan’s grant was also made in 1316, but it is more likely to have already been made in 1313, when the Genoese were certainly in the town, complaining that the people of Trebizond had robbed them (Balard, Romanie, I, p. 202 note 30). There is no evidence to back up Balard’s opinion that some Genoese may
Like the original privilege granted in the preceding century, this second act of foundation, at the beginning of Özbek's reign, is not preserved, nor is it referred to in even the vaguest terms in subsequent treaties between the Jochids and the Genoese, as would ordinarily happen. However strange it may seem, a number of indications support the idea that there never was a treaty *en bonne et due forme*, concluded in the early fourteenth century and subsequently lost, that set down the conditions under which the Genoese settled anew in Caffa.

have visited the markets of the Golden Horde after 1308, protected by the Mamluk Sultan (as Segurano Salvaigo was); the idea rests on Kedar, “Segurano,” pp. 82–83, who supposes that the Genoese could have traded under the Mamluk flag and that Toqta still considered the Sultan a “major ally,” which must be mistaken given the downturn in relations that year. Curiously, Kedar goes on to advance a convincing explanation; when, in an act of supreme hypocrisy, Genoa’s leaders imposed an embargo in March 1316 on their own subjects who transported slaves from the Northern Black Sea to Egypt (Sauli, “Imposicio,” columns 371–376, Forcheri, *Navigi*, p. 18, Soranzo, *Papato*, p. 476), some of those affected took to sailing under the false flag. It should be noted that Pope John XXII’s thunderous attacks on these sins and the sinners who commit them also date from 1317, and that he also attacked the conniving Genoese citizens and leaders, mentioning the use of false flags as an example of their guilt; on this topic see Sanudo/Bongars, II, pp. 27–28, Boutaric, *Notices*, p. 200, Mas Latrie, *Histoire*, II, pp. 119–120, Verlinden, “Venezia,” pp. 605–606, Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, p. 65; although it cannot be shown that the Genoese were in Caffa between 1308 to 1313, nor indeed elsewhere in the Crimea or on the steppe, they are recorded at Tana in 1311, when the notary Riccobono Palmieri was working there (Balard, *Romanie*, I, p. 152 note 130).

142 Despite the continuing efforts by specialists to unravel the riddle, the origins of Genoese Caffa are shrouded in mystery even today (see a survey of the problem and of the various hypotheses in Balard, *Romanie*, I, pp. 114–118, and here in chapter 4.2.1).


144 Many gaps in the historical record are rightly blamed on the ravages of time, which make so many traces of the past vanish, including written evidence. However, in the current case this more general explanation runs into some difficulties. Such gaps are suspiciously frequent in the Genoese archives, especially when compared to the much better-kept Venetian treaties with the Mongols which have been preserved without exception (cf. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, *Venise*). The contrast may be easily explained by the known difference in how these two states were constituted and ran their affairs: the first was as lax as may be, while the second was rigorously centralist, including when it came to preserving official documents. Practically no documents survive from the Golden Horde itself, so that this very fragmentary archive is of no help in the current case, while in contrast the Mamluk chancery’s very ample documentation does not support the deduction: “Zwar legen uns hinsichtlich Genua keine Verträge, wie in der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts zwischen Venedig und Ägypten geschlossen vor, doch darf uns diese Tatsache nicht ohne weiteren Schluß ziehen lassen, daß die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Staaten weniger eng gewesen seien” (Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, p. 76). It would follow that the Genoese in Egypt did not act under a written agreement with the Sultan, even though they had their own *fondaco* in Alexandria at the time (ibid., p. 75, Balard, “Escales,” p. 247 note 11). By analogy, this situation suggests that Özbek’s consent for the Genoese to return to Caffa may have been a verbal agreement; cf. the identical situations
The treaty did not exist because it was in neither party's interest to have an official written record, the contents of which might incriminate either one of them: the risk that the agreement may cease to be confidential led the partners to refrain from writing it down at all.

Understandably enough, Papal pressure against the “bad Christians” who traded with the infidel was fiercely directed against Genoa, and determined the republic’s course in choosing to forego negotiations with Egypt at the level of state, instead encouraging their citizens as much as they could to keep their dealings with the Mamluk Sultan “under the table,” be these diplomatic or commercial: the same pressure shaped their conduct toward the ulus of Jochi.

On the other hand, the state’s extreme adaptability to all kinds of external conditions when its citizens’ interests so demanded gave free rein to private initiatives, which made the very most of local conditions wherever they could take gain a foothold. The republic showed itself capable of astonishing shifts and transformations, and even of disappearing entirely, as in the case under discussion. This was a Genoese speciality par excellence and made best possible use of the ambiguity inherent in any verbal agreement, so that an initial concession could evolve in a new de facto status at the opportune moment without being unnecessarily encumbered by clauses and precise details.146

It would have been equally inconvenient for the Volga khan to have his pact with the Genoese publically known, since the agreement was essentially “unconstitutional.” Özbek was a ruler well aware of the Chinggisid ideals of world conquest, and his mission was thus to increase the territory of his ulus, by no means to diminish it.147 Thus in 1313 he would

\[145\]
\[146\]
\[147\]
have had to give his formal consent to a concession which went against his principal mission: he would have flagrantly breached one of the basic principles of governance by granting what amounted to a territorial concession. As well as all its other advantages, a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ here also saved the appearances.

Özbek thus showed the Genoese generosity above and beyond what was allowed to a ruler of Chinggis Khan’s blood. His motive, as may easily be imagined, was the project of relaunching the Mamluk alliance, which could not be revived without the help of a marine power. The khan intended to bring what he could to the table in reviving the coalition with the sultan and keeping it running smoothly, whether by political, commercial or religious means, and as part of this, he used what means were available to him to set up and protect a naval *via magna* between his lands and Egypt. The conditions of Genoese return to Caffa are incontrovertible proof that Özbek did not shrink from any sacrifice, not even an infringement of his ‘constitution’, to make Caffa a strong bridgehead, as quickly as possible, for a project in which Sarai once again had a great deal invested.

The “favours” which the khan showed to the Genoese in 1313 formed a lasting foundation on which the merchants built their hegemonic position in the Northern Black Sea. Subsequent assaults from land or by sea could not dislodge them from the position, until the end of their history in the region in 1475. The concession which they gained was partly capitalised upon straight away, and partly in the following decades.

When Özbek granted the Genoese the right to resettle Caffa, it can hardly have escaped his attention that the town’s defensive capacity had been amply proven over several months in 1307/8, against the Mongol army. This veritable milestone in the art of resisting a siege is all the more striking not just because of the vast disparity in numbers between besiegers and besieged, but because of the town’s rudimentary defences, which consisted only of a ditch and an earthen rampart, probably topped with a palisade.148

Seen from this perspective, Özbek’s action is shown to have been unusually serious: the chronicler’s simple and straightforward phrase noting the event also incontestably identifies the khan as morally and politically

---

responsible for the reconstruction of Genoese Caffa.\textsuperscript{149} A foreign town was built on Jochid soil, inexpugnably, under his patronage, and for the rest of his reign, when relations with the Genoese had their ups and downs, there is no record that he ever denied his founding contribution, or tried to undo his work.

For all its confidential character, the extraordinary character of Özbek’s gift could not have escaped the attention of interested parties, revealed as it was by the rapidity with which Caffa grew once more from its own ashes.

With remarkable instincts for the course of history, some residents of the Black Sea coast sensed that the Jochid-Genoese agreement opened a new era for the Republic to realise its hegemonic aspirations in the sea. These powers themselves participated in and benefited from regional commerce, and justifiably feared harmful repercussions for their own income. The size of the danger which the Genoese return to Caffa was seen to pose is shown clearly in the speed and scale of their response: in 1313/4 a coalition took shape and took action, formed by the Emperor of Trebizond, the Turkish Emir of Sinope and the Mongol governor of Solkhat, the Crimean capital. Their concerted effort to uproot the newly-planted polity was a failure.\textsuperscript{150}

It is of course no surprise that along with the neighbouring powers on the Black Sea shore, the governing bodies in Genoa also appreciated the crucial significance of the privilege which their colonists obtained in 1313. The measures which the mother-city took to make best use of Özbek’s gift were so wide-ranging, yet coherent, that they show how Genoa planned to play the dominant role once more in the Black Sea through her Crimean colony.

As a direct result of their agreement with the Mongol khan, in November 1313 the \textit{Officium Gazarie} was created in the Ligurian capital as an Office for the Crimea.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{149} See above, p. 178.


\textsuperscript{151} Or perhaps for the whole of Golden Horde territory, since the geographic term was used for the entire Eurasian steppe since the time of the Khazars and carries this meaning at least in the usage of \textit{lo imperio de Gazaria}, mentioned in the Jochid-Genoese treaty of 1380 (cf. Ciocîltan, “Restauratia,” pp. 590–591 note 53, and below, pp. 226 ff.). According to its own statutes (\textit{imposicio}), the office was created \textit{occassione Gazarie} (Sauli, “Imposicio,” col. 305, Forcheri, \textit{Navi}, p. 7, Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 202).
The office was endowed with all powers necessary to address the whole array of Black Sea problems and resolve them in the Genoese interest,\footnote{The preamble to the statutes defines its field of competence: \textit{Super factis maris maioris et Gazaria et Persie et navigandi ultra Scicliam} [= Sicily] (Sauli, "Imposicio," col. 309, Forcheri, \textit{Navi}, p. 7).} and obviously concentrated in the first instance on relations with the Mongols,\footnote{Spurred by the worrying news that \textit{hominis Ianue esse ad presens inordinatos ualide ac paratos ad commitenda tala vel deteriora quam hinc retro comiserint}, the republic took on the responsibility, via its newly-appointed council, of curbing those actions of its subjects which might imperil friendly relations with Özbek (Sauli, "Imposicio," col. 305, Forcheri, \textit{Navi}, p. 10).} and on rebuilding Caffa as quickly as possible.\footnote{\textit{ut [Caffa] cicius et volocius rehedificetur.}} The Republic took this interventionist step in 1316 since only it had the necessary state power to speedily collect the funds needed for such an ambitious investment, which was declared to be in the commonwealth’s interest.\footnote{\textit{Pro bono utilitate et securitate mercatorum ire et uti debencium in Mare Maiori} (ibid.).} The usual terms and conditions for frontier town incomes were applied to Caffa, and additionally the most important provision, that all ships sailing East beyond the town were obliged to put in there, on their outward and return journey, and to pay the port authorities the anchorage fee.\footnote{Ibid., Sauli, "Imposicio," columns 378–379.} The consul levied various fines, which were likewise earmarked for the general budget allocated to rebuilding the fortifications, the public buildings, roads, streets and port facilities.\footnote{Ibid., Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 171. Caffa was planned using the widespread medieval model of concentric rings, and divided into three zones: the citadel (\textit{castrum}), the town (\textit{civitas}) and the periphery. On the successive stages of building the defensive works, see Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, pp. 101–115.} Private persons also took part in the fast-paced and uniform development of the town: a private individual who bought a plot of land from the Genoese authorities, who owned and administered the urban fabric, was obliged to build upon it in a year and a half at most from the date of purchase, which was not considered actually feasible.\footnote{Ibid.; on the cityscape’s development and fortification systems in the fourteenth century, see Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, pp. 202 ff.}

The set of measures which the Office of the Gazaria took in 1316 resulted in a building boom, and left Caffa in excellent shape. By the mid-fourteenth century, it was noted as a rich and beautiful fortified city with vast lands around.\footnote{Gregoras/Schopen, II, p. 19, Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 205.} An eye-witness source some two decades later praises
the city’s port as one of the most famous in the world, able to harbour two hundred ships.\textsuperscript{160}

As well as its concern to promote Caffa directly, the Office also pursued the same objective by the indirect means of appeasing or neutralising adversaries. The merchants republic’s chosen weapon was the commercial boycott, used against declared enemies or potential rivals in the Crimea (Soldaiia and Solkhat), on the coast of Asia Minor (Sinope) and on the North-West Black Sea coast (the Bulgaria of Theodore Svetoslav).\textsuperscript{161} The conflict with Trebizond is an exceptional case here, both for the prize that was fought over and the course of hostilities.\textsuperscript{162}

Özbek’s grant provided not just the basis on which Caffa was physically built, but the legal framework. For all the disadvantages that an unwritten agreement may offer from the point of view of rigour, it provided a legal space within which the colonial possession could be planted. Although its status was hardly clear, due to the deficiency just mentioned and other elements which suggested an equivocal status, the government of Caffa verbally built on the khan’s words in 1313 in practice removed the town from Golden Horde jurisdiction.

The powers with which the Office of Gazaria invested the consul leave no doubt that he, together with his councillors, was the real governor at the local level and exercised his power in the name of the republic.\textsuperscript{163} The consul’s position becomes especially clear when compared with Özbek’s supposed representatives in the town, whom the documentation of his reign passes over in silence. These are the Mongol customs agents, such as were recorded in Caffa in 1289–90,\textsuperscript{164} who in 1380 drew 3\% of commercium for the khan’s use.\textsuperscript{165} This subsequent mention in the sources is specified with the phrase \textit{segundo le premere usanze}, so that it becomes obvious that the officers were carrying out their duties even in 1313. Their presence in a place that enjoyed functional autonomy, tacitly recognised by the ruler on the Volga, does not throw any doubt on the basic problem.\textsuperscript{166} Their presence was also balanced out—to a varying but measurable extent—by a corresponding Genoese agency, founded within the Office of Gazaria in

\textsuperscript{160} Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémy, Sanguinetti, II, p. 358.
\textsuperscript{162} Cf. Karpov, Impero, pp. 146–149, and chapter 3.4.2.
\textsuperscript{163} Sauli, “Imposicio,” columns 387 ff., Forcheri, Navi, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{164} Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 459 ff.
\textsuperscript{166} The Mongol customs officers taxed all trade that passed through.
1316, which, *nota bene*, required all those involved in commerce to pay customs duties,¹⁶⁷ not just Genoese citizens, as would have been normal for an office on foreign territory.¹⁶⁸

The consul’s preeminence is even more clearly demonstrated when we compare his position with that of his Mongol counterpart, the *tudun*. The “governor”¹⁶⁹ was delegated to represent the interests of the khan’s subjects in the town, and his purview was exclusively jurisdictional. From the beginning, his writ ran only to cover disputes between Mongols, or between Mongols and others, and over the course of time was curtailed more and more.¹⁷⁰ The *tudun*’s office can by no means be compared with the position of the “lords” of Solkhat or Tana, who governed in the khan’s name,¹⁷¹ but by an irony of fate may more properly be classed as a sort of consulate, representing the Mongol minority in their dealings with the Genoese authorities in Caffa.¹⁷² By contrast, and uniquely in Golden Horde territory, the Genoese consul acted as a true governor, with all executive powers, thus acting as the equivalent of the above-mentioned Mongol “lords.”

Equally distinctive for Caffa’s extraterritorial status was the way land and property was administered. There is no doubt that the Genoese behaved as though they were absolute masters of the land on which the town stood: not a single property transaction contract in the whole of the fourteenth century makes even the slightest mention of the khan

---

¹⁶⁸ Among many other cases which might be cited here, see that of the Genoese consulate at Tana in 1386 (ibid., p. 155). The dispute which took place in Caffa in 1344 is most instructive here: While the Genoese insisted that the town belonged to them, and that they therefore had the right to levy duty on all trade passing through, the Venetians affected to argue that the settlement was part of the khan’s “empire” and that the local authorities were only entitled to levy their own compatriots’ *comercium* (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 291, Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 211–212). It seems that there was a widespread perception in the West that Caffa had ambiguous legal status (cf. chapter 4.2.5, pp. 204–205).
¹⁶⁹ The word is recorded with this meaning in various Turkic languages (cf. Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 371).
¹⁷² Some contemporaries, such as the well-informed Francesco Balducci Pegolotti, believed in the existence of a *signore de Caffa*, who levied duty of 3 per centinaio (Pegolotti/Evans, p. 26), probably identical with the *tudun*, but modern scholarship convincingly argues otherwise: “La présence à Caffa d’un *tudun* et d’un commerciaire ne signifie nullement que l’on reconnaissait la souveraineté du khan sur la ville. […] le rôle [du *tudun*] ne semble pas dépasser celui que jouent les consuls des puissances étrangères, établis dans les grandes villes des États d’aujourd’hui” (Balard, *Romanie*, I, p. 459).
having any rights in this sphere.\textsuperscript{173} As well as selling lands at auction, the
town relied for a large part of its income on rents, especially from Greeks
and Armenians.\textsuperscript{174} By contrast, elsewhere on Jochid soil, for instance in
Tana where they were considered “guests” just as the Venetians were, the
Genoese paid rent in their turn to Mongol functionaries.\textsuperscript{175}

Although it was deliberately kept quiet, Özbek’s concession to the
Genoese of 1313 was thus revealed by its material and institutional effects,
both immediately and over the course of time. The importance of the act
and its ramifications cannot be sufficiently emphasised.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge that the khan had taken an
irreversible step affecting both his own state’s Black Sea policy and the net-
work of commercial forces in and around the sea. For as long as Genoese
relations with the Golden Horde were to last, Caffa’s autonomy was never
destroyed, not even when challenged by force of arms, as by Janibek in
the mid-fourteenth century,\textsuperscript{176} or tacitly, though not formally, acknowl-
edged, as in the Mongol-Genoese treaties which Toqtamiş concluded
four decades later.\textsuperscript{177} Further, this autonomy was consolidated inasmuch
as it became a corner-stone for Genoa’s supremacy on the Northern Black
Sea coast and at the mouths of the Danube. Although Genoa’s aspira-
tions to monopolise trade in the region were never completely realised,\textsuperscript{178}
Caffa indisputably fulfilled its intended purpose, laid down by the earliest
ordinances of the Office of Gazaria, of becoming principal regional depot
where wares were collected and redistributed.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., p. 204: \textit{introitus terraticorum}. Even monastic orders settled in the town had
to turn to the Genoese for their building needs; an illustrative example is that of the friar
Franco of Perugia, who founded a Dominican house there at Pope Boniface VIII’s request:
\textit{Disponente aut Deo, venit in Chaffam terram que ad imperium pertinet Tartarorum, ibidem
locum recipiens a Ianuensibus sibi datum. Ecclesiam quoque edificavit} (Loenertz, “Menego
Schiavo,” p. 67).
\textsuperscript{175} Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, \textit{Venise}, p. 35 note 78.
\textsuperscript{176} Cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 211, and chapter 4.4.5 below.
\textsuperscript{177} Several clauses in these agreements reveal that Toqtamiş, like Özbek, was careful
not to reveal in writing that he had ceded territory; nevertheless, the phrasing shows that
the Mongol negotiators tacitly admitted Caffa’s autonomy as a basis for discussion (cf.
\textsuperscript{178} The most serious breach in their trade system was caused by the presence of their
Venetian rivals at Tana, on the basis of the charter granted by Özbek in 1332 (cf. Papa-
\textsuperscript{179} The drastic restrictions placed in 1366 on the republic’s citizens trading in Soldaia,
Solkhat or Tana were intended to serve the same goal (Sauli, “Imposicio,” columns 379–
Genoese Caffa was reborn in 1313 with all essential features intact, ensuring that it was a secure, functioning town. From the grand context of state and inter-state politics sketched out above, it becomes clear that Caffa’s rebirth was the most significant fruit of Özbek’s Black Sea policies, conceived as part of the khan’s relations with the Sultan in Cairo.

The khan remained unswervingly dedicated to the initial concept, and after 1314 left no effort untried in his attempt to revive the alliance against the Ilkhanate. The frequency with which embassies were exchanged in this period perfectly illustrates the efforts made to win Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn’s assent in what Sarai considered a common cause. In the whole history of the alliance, stretching over more than a century, there was no period comparable to that which followed this re-establishment of contact with Egypt, with the possible exception of the initial phase, when the hopes attached to the relationship had not yet been ground down by reality. Mamluk chronicles reveal the feverish pace of diplomatic activity between Sarai and Cairo, lasting nearly a decade (1314–1323): not a year went by without the khan and sultan exchanging envoys, and one source close to the Cairo court remarks that they bore unusually rich gifts.

Qutlugh Temür, the éminence grise who had conceived of the Golden Horde’s foreign policy while his master was merely a pretender to the throne, had doubtless helped Özbek toward the insight that lifting the embargo on the export of slaves, and proofs of his zeal in promoting Islam in the Jochid state, were indispensable conditions before relations with the Mamluk ruler could return to normal; it would require a great deal more, however, before the sultan who had categorically refused to go to war against the Muslim Ilkhan Öljeitü at Toqta’s request would change his position to one diametrically opposed. For lack of any better means, Özbek and his adviser hoped that princess Tulunbek, destined for the Sultan’s harem, would be the decisive addition that would reorientate the Mamluk Sultan’s foreign relations.

The bride-to-be embodied political capital of which the khan intended to make use, out of raison d’État, and which should certainly not be

---

180 See chapter 3.3.1.
181 Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 75–86, meticulously excerpts, arranges and commentaries these reports, almost exclusively from the fragmentary sources edited by Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I.
182 Al-Nuwayrī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 141; a list of the gifts which so much impressed the Sultan’s entourage is found in Ibn Duqmāq/ibid., p. 319; cf. Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 77.
overlooked. As was expected, al-Malik an-Nāṣir responded positively to the khan’s offer, and in 1316/7 sent a delegation to officially request the princess’ hand. Once the Sultan had taken the bait, Özbek believed that he could play him as he wished. With this in mind, he stoked up the groom’s interest in his niece, and delayed the moment of the marriage until, in his estimation, the decisive moment had come for concerted joint action against the Ilkhanate.

The decisive moment for a diplomatic charm offensive in Cairo came when military operations against the Ilkhanids began, and the Volga khan thus hoped to crush Persia with the help of his allies from the West.

At the beginning of winter 1318/9, Özbek sent Qutlugh Temür with a force to support the offensive of Yasaul, son of Boraq, captain of the Central Asian Mongols, in invading Persian-held Khwarezm, while he himself invaded the Mungan plain in Transcaucasia. Mamluk entry into the fray to complete the encirclement across the Euphrates was strategically vital, an integral part of the campaign which could not be delayed.

Forced by circumstances, Özbek had hastily brought an end to the long-drawn-out negotiations and in spring of that year the princess Tulunbek had left for Egypt with an impressive entourage of more than two thousand. As well as the Sultan’s ambassadors, returning from the Volga capital to the Nile, and those of the Byzantine Emperor, the prestigious delegation included some of the most highly-regarded figures in the ulus of Jochi. Segurano Salvaigo was also reported as being in the company.

---

183 However hardworking, pious and powerful they may have been, the Mamluk sultans suffered from a permanent lack of legitimacy and were never able to shake of the stigma of their slave origin. Thus the offer of marriage from Sarai opened up a perspective of dynastic ties with the “celestial” Chinggisid dynasty, and ameliorated these inferiority complexes.

184 Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 317; the proposal “pleased the high dignitaries” in Cairo; see also al-Nuwayrī, and al-‘aynī, ibid., pp. 146, 486.

185 Al-Nuwayrī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 146.

186 The khan used two methods to inflate value here: in order to make the proposed marriage appear to be a serious matter of state, he convened a formal assembly of seventy emirs, who were to debate this unprecedented step in Chinggisid family history (ibid.); the other method was the bride-price, for which the khan demanded a staggering sum (al-‘aynī/ibid., p. 487).

187 Özbek’s attack broke the most recent treaty of 1314 with Öljeitü (Qāshānī/Parvisi-Berger, p. 145); the anonymous author of the ‘History of Sheikh Uways’/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II, p. 100, connects the invasion to Öljeitü’s death in 1316, from which the Volga khan sought to profit; Ilkhanid troops led by the emir Choban, forced the Jochid army of about 20,000 men to retreat (Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 319–321, Spuler, Horde, p. 94, and idem, Mongolen, p. 100).

188 On the wearisome negotiations see Zakirov, Otnosheniya, pp. 77–81.
Given his occupation, he must have been involved somehow or other in transporting the massive contingent of slaves, both male and female, which certainly made up the largest part of the bridal party. The reception which the guests met with in Cairo was also most impressive, as were the festivities for the marriage itself in April/May 1320: some well-placed observers called it unique in the annals of the Mamluk sultanate.\textsuperscript{189} Overwhelmed by the attentions lavished on them, the Mongol envoys returned to the Horde in the autumn.\textsuperscript{190}

Judging by these displays, the marriage seemed to have attained the political goal for which it was conceived: by all appearances, Jochid-Mamluk relations were now at a \textit{non plus ultra}. The time had come for Özbek to test whether the alliance was as well-founded as impressions suggested.

The crucial diplomatic mission was a true trial by fire for his entire foreign policy, and was faultlessly planned and timed. In order to make the most of the psychological impression which the alliance through marriage had made on the Sultan, the khan sent a new embassy to Cairo, which arrived there in the same year the marriage had taken place, 1320. The message asked the Sultan to join battle alongside the Northern Mongols against the emir Choban, regent for the Ilkhan Abū Sa‘īd, still a minor.\textsuperscript{191}

Despite ceaseless efforts over so many years, during which Özbek had sacrificed literally all that he could to rouse Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir against the Persian enemy, the response was negative. Learning of this disastrous result, the khan treated the Mamluk ambassador accordingly: on their return in 1321, they complained of humiliating cold treatment from the khan, who explained his behaviour by saying that “it had been agreed that [Mamluk] troops would be sent to Iraq to destroy Choban.”\textsuperscript{192}


\textsuperscript{191} Al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, p. 490, Zakirov, \textit{Otnosheniya}, p. 82. The emir had defeated Jochid incursions from the North and West in 1318/9, and held power in Mongol Persia from 1316 to 1327 during the minority of Abū Sa‘īd, who reigned from 1316 to 1335. Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, pp. 317–318, says that on Öljeitü’s death in December 1316 he had invited Özbek to come to take the Ilkhanid throne, but that Qutlugh Temūr warned the khan that if he left for Persia, he risked losing power in the Golden Horde, so that he refused; Spuler, \textit{Horde}, p. 94 note 44, considers the story implausible.

The sources do not support the idea that such an agreement ever existed: Özbek, despairing of his cause, was probably indulging in wishful thinking here.

In any case, a further embassy, dispatched urgently, cleared the matter up definitively. In the message they carried, the khan sought to convince the Sultan, in strident terms, that the Ilkhans were “your enemies and our enemies, and we intend to wipe them out from between us […] so that [all these lands] may become one land.” The sultan’s reply, which reached Sarai in 1322/3, carried by Egyptian envoys, removed any doubt and crushed all hope. “We have made peace with the king Abū Sa’īd for the sake of his Muslim faith, he and those around him having converted to the true faith. He must not be prevented from making the pilgrimage [to Mecca]. He is a pillar of Islam and will have a part in the victory of religion and of peace. As for what the king [Özbek] says about having forbidding merchants to buy slaves, we—praise be to Allah!—have no need of slaves. If you wish to continue in friendship and love towards us, then we are companions.”

Before all else, the khan’s reaction to this refusal reveals that he was keenly aware of the catastrophe that had taken place, namely that the Sarai-Cairo axis, nearly a decade in the making at the cost of great stubbornness and many sacrifices, the most significant pillar of Golden Horde foreign policy, had collapsed. The way in which Özbek resigned himself to fate and punished those responsible for the failed policy is revealing: the mind behind the plan, who had worked it out and watched over its execution, Qutlugh Temür, the “emir of Sarai,” was marginalised by being made governor of Khwarezm. Meanwhile his foreign collaborator, the Genoese Segurano Salvaigo, whose services to the restoration of Jochid-Mamluk relations were a matter of public knowledge, was killed in 1322/3, executed on the khan’s orders.

---

193 Al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 491, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 83.
194 Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 321, Spuler, Horde, p. 94, Zakirov, Otnosheniya, p. 84.
195 Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 321, al-‘Aynī/ibid., p. 492. Spuler, Horde, p. 95; the emir’s fall may be judged from the reports of al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 486, who was appointed at the peak of the emir’s influence and writes that at the beginning of Özbek’s reign, “he had control of the imperial treasury and public works and the tributes received.”
Judging by the victims chosen, it seems self-evident that Özbek’s repri-
sals were intended to begin the job of liquidating the whole Genoese-
Mamluk network. In the end, they did no such thing: the first fit of rage
soon subsided, after the emir and the merchant had fallen victim, and the
shift in Jochid foreign policy that it seemed to announce went no further
than this stormy beginning.

The khan’s own sense of the realities of the situation forced him to
temper his reaction drastically. First and foremost, he did not have the
necessary means to change any of the underlying factors.

While princess Tulunbek was a card who could be played only once, the
export of slaves was, at least in principle, a constant factor which could
be used to bend the Sultan in Cairo to Sarais’ will. Unfortunately for the
khan, this leverage no longer worked. The Sultan’s declaration that he no
longer needed these wares from the steppe was no mere bravado, a provo-
cation in response to Sarai’s threats, but an actual statement of fact: once
the conflict with the Ilkhanate had ceased, and a peace duly concluded in
1323, the freed Egypt from the very costly need to replenish the ranks
of its army constantly when soldiers fell in the war against Persia.

The first sign that Özbek had decided, despite all appearances, to restore
relations with the Sultan dates again from 1322/3, when he disclaimed any
responsibility for Segurano Salvaigo’s execution to the Egyptian envoys,
who were otherwise treated with all the coolness Özbek could muster to
salvage his prestige. He told them that the Genoese merchant, who had
worked under the aegis of the Mamluk sultan, had been killed by “a king
of the islands.”

The first embassy which the khan sent after he had got over the initial
shock is very revealing here: it reached Cairo in 1324, bringing a reproach
from the khan for refusal to join the war against Abū Sa‘īd and his regent

---

197 Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 321, Mufaḍḍal/Blochet, II, pp. 73 ff., 119, Weil,
Geschichte, Spuler, Horde, p. 94, and idem, Mongolen, p. 103, Labib, Handelsgeschichte, p. 71;
Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 247, correctly calls this “der eigentliche Friede,” after earlier efforts
in the fourteenth century; the great Egyptian merchant Abu l-Majd al-Sallāmī played his
own part in bringing about the agreement (Labib, “Marchands,” p. 210). Before the treaty
was concluded, Özbek had unleashed his grand diplomatic offensive aimed at drawing
the Mamluks into the war waged in the spring of 1319, and al-Malik al-Nāṣir made his
choice and communicated it to Abū Sa‘īd: “[Özbek] wished us to send an army from Egypt
to aid him against you, but I refused” (al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 491, Zakirov,
Otnosheniya, p. 83).

198 Al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 493, Kedar, “Segurano,” p. 91; the ‘king’ is impos-
sible to identify.
Choban, but at the same time bringing the customary gifts. Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir received Özbek’s envoys with the usual shows of goodwill and in 1324/5 sent a friendship mission in response as though nothing had happened.

The failure of all attempts to win Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir’s support had crucial implications, with multiple and profound effects: the Jochid state lost a goal which had stimulated all its energies for a decade, channelling them towards a precise end, and as a result its foreign policy lost vigour and coherence, in a manner strongly reminiscent of what had happened during the final years of Toqta’s reign. The consequences of this second eclipse were much more lasting, some of them indeed were decisive.

Without this driving project, the political aspect of Jochid-Mamluk relations understandably soon lost its vigour and dwindled into little more than an exercise in diplomatic protocol, without content. Compared with the frequent contacts of the period immediately preceding, the rarity with which embassies were exchanged after 1325 is telling in itself: the same Arab sources which recorded the prior diplomatic activity reveal that the Jochid and Mamluk courts sent envoys, in one direction or the other, in 1328/9, 1332, 1334/5, 1337, 1338 and 1340/1.

The immediate effects of the Egyptian ‘defection’ were felt on the Caucasus front. Özbek’s campaign, launched in 1319, which had staked its success on Mamluk intervention, took a turn very much for the worse after the peace concluded between Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir and Abū Sa’īd in 1323. In a surprising twist in the long history of the wars between these two Mongol states, Choban, the Ilkhanid regent, began a counteroffensive in 1324/5 once his rearguard at the Euphrates was secure, marched through the Caucasus valleys as far as the river Terek and took many prisoners (Spuler, *Horde*, p. 95, and idem, *Mongolen*, p. 104). Following this humiliation, Özbek needed ten years to recover to the point where he dared once again to try his luck against the Persian enemy, this time alone. On this occasion also he made few gains, but profited from the sudden death of Abū Sa’īd in November 1335, creating extremely favourable conditions for the foray since the Ilkhan’s death also marked the extinction of his dynasty. A succession crisis was unleashed which was irreversible, and in the end fatal to the state, drastically diminishing its capability to defend itself (al-‘Aynī/Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik*, I, p. 497, the ‘History of Sheikh Uwais’, ibid., II, pp. 229–230, Spuler, *Horde*, p. 94, and idem, *Mongolen*, p. 107). With his political horizon to the South blocked off, Özbek sought compensatory initiatives after 1325 to the North and West (Spuler, *Horde*, p. 97, Schmid, *Beziehungen*, p. 248). While his actions in Russia had long-lasting effects (Spuler, *Horde*, p. 97), the final outcome of his Western initiatives was nothing but a long, weary and confused failure (cf. Laurent, “Assaut,” who discusses only the Byzantine project but whose conclusions may be generalised; cf. Spuler, *Horde*, pp. 97–98).

In sharp contrast to the dwindling political aspect, the commercial side of the relationship was spared. The decision to do so was doubtless made in the hope that in future, Cairo might look shift to a new and more favourable position toward the Golden Horde, a hope that was all the more hollow because there was no serious alternative. Perhaps Özbek also gave more weight to a lesson which he had learned from history, having been a part of it himself. This was the experience of his predecessor isolating his realm, an action which cast a shadow over the beginning of Özbek’s own reign: with the Caucasus route closed off by the war with the Ilkhanate, if the second trade route that connected the steppe to the Mediterranean via the Black Sea were also cut off, the ulus of Jochi would be entirely removed from the major trade circuit. The prospect posed a mortal danger to the state’s very existence.

These considerations formed the basis for Özbek’s policy toward the Genoese, who were the main beneficiaries of normalised Jochid-Mamluk relations. Having paid a bloody price with the death of their compatriot Segurano Salvaigo, they now enjoyed their privileged position at Caffa undisturbed. Thus when Özbek sent the courier Qara Bulat to Toghluq Temür, commander of ten thousand men (tümen) and governor of the Crimea, to harass the Greeks in the neighbouring town of Soldaia in two rounds of punitive raids—August 1322 and January 1323—the Genoese again felt the benefits.202

To explain this eruption of violence, it must be noted that one of the worst outbreaks of religious violence in Egypt’s medieval history had taken place in Cairo in April 1322: as well as claiming numerous lives, it saw 59 churches and countless shrines devastated.203 The Sultan, taken by surprise, tried from the outset to protect his non-Muslim subjects, but pressure from the fanatical masses forced him to sharpen the laws under which the Christians lived.204 When word of this outbreak reached the

---

202 The sinaxary of Soldaia records that churches were desecrated on both occasions (Nistazopoulou, Soldaia, p. 123). The town was under uncontested Jochid rule and Toghluq Temür held the kefale, headship, and resided in Solkhat (Kirim), where Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, p. 359, met him in 1333/4, holding the same office. The famous traveller also records that the area was primarily settled by ‘Turks’ meaning Jochid Tartars, who protected the less numerous group of Greek merchants (al-Rūm); “the town was formerly very extensive, but was for the most part laid waste in the wars between the Greeks and the Turks” (ibid., p. 415). Here the “war” was evidently the events of 1322 and 1323; cf. also Brătianu, Recherches, p. 260, and idem, Vicina, p. 76.

203 The sad result is tallied by al-Maqrīzī/Schmid, Beziehungen, p. 207.

Cuman steppe, it arrived just in time for Özbek, still striving to win over the Mamluk Sultan, to seize the occasion to show that Muslims under his reign could feel and act in unison with their brothers in Egypt. This piece of flattery by imitation was no more use than all his other sacrifices and stratagems in swaying al-Malik an-Nāṣir from neutrality toward the Ilkhanate.

Some interpretations hold that the khan primarily intended the raids on Soldaia to dislodge the Genoese. Not only does this not reflect reality, it is even directly contradicted by the facts. Shortly after their return to the peninsula, the Genoese merchants resumed their systematic and sustained efforts, evident in the last century as well, to topple Soldaia from its position as Crimea’s commercial capital, a haven for their Venetian rivals, and replace it with their own settlement of Caffa. The Genoese were never able to give the rival trading town the coup de grace by their own unaided strength, not while Golden Horde state power was at its height, but instead the khan, de jure and de facto ruler over the town, himself destroyed much of it for them.

Regardless of whether or not Özbek intended to hand the Genoese such an advantage, the raids on Soldaia certainly had this (possibly unintended) consequence: the port was heavily damaged and definitively lost the race with Caffa. The town’s irreversible decline was harshly hastened by the Mongol raids of 1322–1323, and helped along by the trade boycott which Genoa declared in 1316 and reinforced in 1336. In hindsight, it can be seen to have given the deathblow to Venice’s hopes of creating a bastion on the Crimean coast which would have been able to compete successfully with their rivals’ rapid assumption of hegemony in the region, or at least slow it down.

---

205 Vernadsky, Mongols, p. 96: “Presumably the leading role in the Soldaia conflict belonged not to the Greek, but to the Genoese.” None of the sources support this opinion, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, p. 359, provides proof positive that the Jochids were attacking al-Rūm, the ‘Romans’ meaning the Byzantine Greeks (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, p. 359).


207 Cf. the views of Spuler, Horde, p. 87, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 89–90, who agree on this point.

208 Forcheri, Navi, p. 20, Balard, Romanies, I, p. 158. The absence of any reference to Soldaia in commercial documents until the mid-fourteenth century shows that the devetum was observed during this period.

209 Expelled by the Jochids in 1343, the Venetians made some final, vain efforts to gain a lasting foothold in Soldaia; in 1356 the governor of Crimea forbade them to settle anywhere but at Provato, a nearby spot with no commercial value. Although his successor granted
Thus by his actions in the decade 1313–1323, Özbek furnished the Genoese with extremely suitable conditions for expansion, whether or not he had wanted to do so. Their colonies and commercial expansion took them from the Northern shore, to all of the rest of the Black Sea.210

The course of events in the Near East was also unexpectedly favourable, at the state and inter-state level. One crucial event, persisting throughout and beyond the period, considerably changed the continental trade structures and ipso facto made the Genoese possession in South-East Crimea much more valuable. In 1321 the Mamluk Sultan's troops occupied Ayas (Laiazzo) in Cilician Armenia, the ‘antechamber’ to the Silk Road,211 an action which definitively choked off the great commercial artery, forcing merchants engaged in trade with Central Asian and Indian Ocean goods to seek some alternative route around the Mamluk blockade. Given the geopolitical situation, all such routes necessarily led to the Black Sea, whether through the Ilkhanate and Trebizond or through Golden Horde territory and the Northern Black Sea ports. Following this major shift in trade patterns, Caffa took over a good part of the role that Ayas had previously played as a vital centre of Eurasian commerce, leaving the impression that fate was now kinder to the town than ever before, and that it was just on the threshold of its greatness.212 However, developments in the Genoese city of Caffa in the years to come would show that it had already passed its peak.

The benefits of the khan’s working arrangement with the Genoese were incontestable; yet the picture was not entirely rosy. Indeed, a dark shadow fell across it.

---

210. These consequences will be the subject of a further study.
211. The deed was done before the Ilkhan could respond to the pleas for aid from his faithful vassal, the king of the small Christian kingdom of Armenia (RHC DA, I, p. 757); Abu ‘l-Fidā’ (Labib, Handelsgeschichte, pp. 66–67) stresses the huge importance of this event for Egyptian commerce; a text of 1337 reports 2,000 Muslim merchants active in the kingdom (ibid.). For the history of Ilkhanid-Mamluk clashes at the end of the thirteenth century, in which Genoa played a major part: Amitai-Preiss, “Ghazan,” Ciocîltan, “Genoa,” and chapter 3.2.
212. In the opinion of Bautier, “Relations,” p. 276, Caffa’s greatness would last for the next quarter century. This opinion overlooks, among other circumstances, the fact that in 1343 the Italian merchants went to war against the Jochids, changing the whole frame of reference.
Özbek's protégés showed themselves to be far bolder than expected, and took advantage in unforeseen ways of the various privileges granted to them: the khan could not have been indifferent to the fact that they were using Caffa as a base from which to build a barrier stretching the length of the Northern Black Sea, affording them the highly rewarding role of commercial middlemen.  

Finding that his own role was that of sorcerer's apprentice, Özbek sought not to destroy his creation but to moderate its excesses. For two decades after Caffa was returned to Genoese rule, their monopolist tendencies had become ever more intransigent and ever more troublesome to the khan: his decisive first step toward correcting these tendencies would affect Genoese interests in the Black Sea in the long term. In 1332 he granted Venetian merchants a charter to lease land in Tana, with the right to construct public and private buildings and provisions for the jurisdictional as well as commercial status of these “guests” on Jochid soil. This was a serious breach in the Genoese barrier. The rift gave the Serenissima’s merchants access to a market which, by its geographical nature, was a perfect gathering place for wares from the steppe and the Northern Eurasian forests, from Turkestan and the Far East. Genoese efforts to dislodge their rivals from a position where they could trade these wares directly, with Özbek’s permission, were mere chicaneries, carried out at the local level, and never achieved their aim.

---

214 As well as defining the precise extent of the land concession, the principal clauses ruled that disputes between Venetians and locals would be solved by common accord between the Jochid “lord” and a council assembly, and that the “imperial customs duty” would be 3% (DVL, I, pp. 243–244); for the dating, see Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 181 note 4; commentaries are Brătianu, Les Vénitiens, pp. 18–19, Skržinskaja, Storia, p. 8, Berindei, Veinstein, “Tana-Azaq,” p. 118, Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 205, Ciocîltan, “Bürgerkrieg”.
215 Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 202 ff., shows the exceptional importance of this event from the point of view of Genoa’s Black Sea strategy: Genoese embargo on Venetian visits to the emporium at the mouth of the Don was a central link in a programme followed since the thirteenth century (cf. also Ciocîltan, “Bürgerkrieg”).
216 See Skržinskaja’s monograph; the importance of this commercial emporium is tellingly emphasised in the Venetian authorities’ preamble to a document of 1460, a date late enough to make the opinion count as a considered one: viagium Tanae erat unum de principaliorum et utilioribus, a que cetera viagia hujus nostre civitatis dependebant et dependent (Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, Venise, p. 29; Ciocîltan, “Bürgerkrieg”).
217 As well as direct attacks, it seems that the Genoese colonists at Caffa were able to suborn the Jochid governor and turn him against the Venetians, causing them a great many troubles despite the charter and rights they had been granted by the highest authority in the state (cf. Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 184, Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, Venise, pp. 28–29).
The document of 1322 is unprecedented in Jochid diplomacy\(^{218}\) and has naturally attracted a great deal of scholarly interest which has—probably baselessly—made much of its importance. Certainly, the charter granted the Venetians, in written form, a legal framework within which they could trade, but we should not lose sight of the fact that it did not spring forth full born, but rather recognised and regulated an older, existing state of affairs, even if it also added some last-minute changes.\(^{219}\)

Since its indirect effects show that the agreement was clearly hostile to Genoese interests, there is some suggestion that its origins should be sought in the crisis of their relations with Özbek, in the early 1320s, to which Segurano Salvaiço fell victim.

The most conclusive indication here is that convoys of Venetian ships put in to harbour at the mouth of the Don in that decade.\(^{220}\) The number of merchants from the Serenissima must also have been great enough to require the presence of a consul, documented in 1326.\(^{221}\) The charter of 1332 is rooted in such privileges, which must have enjoyed the khan's approval from the start. Only such protection can explain why the Genoese, who were vitally affected by the Venetian arrival in Tana, did not defend their interests with their usual obstinacy, which had long ago crystallised into an inflexible monopolist doctrine.\(^{222}\) It seems that this development placed the commercial centre of exchange in the Northern Black Sea zone of Tana, right up until the Jochids broke off their dealings with the Italian merchants in 1343, and that by the principle of displacement, this may have caused a drop-off in trade at Caffa.\(^{223}\) By the nature of things, the settlement at the mouth of the Don then became the focus of Venetian-Genoese conflict.\(^{224}\)

The charter of 1332 exploiting this rivalry was one of the most important innovations in the Golden Horde’s Black Sea policy. Özbek’s two

\(^{218}\) The text is preserved in a Latin translation from the Cuman, copied down in 1333 (Heyd, *Histoire*, II, 181 note 4), and is the first such text in Jochid relations with Italian merchants.


\(^{220}\) Ibid.: “Chaque année pratiquement, à partir de 1320, les *muda* de Romanie font le voyage de la mer Noire et il est souvent question de Tana.”

\(^{221}\) Heyd, *Histoire*, II, p. 182, about 1325; Berindei, O’Riordan, “Venise,” p. 247, as mentioned in a document of 1326 but appointed earlier.

\(^{222}\) Cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” Ciocîltan, “Bürgerkrieg”.

\(^{223}\) This is certainly a logical claim to advance, and it is made by Berindei, O’Riordan, “Venise,” p. 247, basing their analysis of the flow of trade in the two towns on documentary evidence which I have not been able to see.

\(^{224}\) Cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” passim.
successors, Janibek and Berdibek, also appreciated how useful this rivalry could be, and also blocked Genoa in her aims to impose herself as sole political partner and commercial middleman for the Jochid state.

As well as this coercive function, which clearly achieved its end, settlement of the Venetians at Tana served another Jochid purpose: although there is not enough documentary evidence to judge exactly how much income the khan drew from their trade, there can be no doubt that they stimulated trade volume on the Northern Black Sea coast and that this helped the khan’s finances.

In dealing with the Italian merchants, their strengths and weaknesses, Özbek showed a keen sense of the possible and the necessary. The same is shown in the history of Caffa, the most important result of his Black Sea policy and a clear illustration of how external factors came to influence decisions made in Sarai. Caffa was a base line of the policy, as a barometer of shifting circumstances sensitive to many different influences.

During Özbek’s long reign, the settlement’s history can be measured in both economic and political terms. It was revived in 1313, and grew quickly for a decade thanks to truly exceptional conditions created by Özbek, imposed at least in part to meet the basic Golden Horde need to reopen Black Sea-Mediterranean trade after the stifling isolation which was Toqta’s legacy, but also to cultivate diplomatic contacts with the Mamluk ally. When this latter prop of Jochid policy failed in 1322/3, the consequences for the Genoese colony were most damaging: the khan partly cut off the flow of trade to Caffa and redirected it to the Venetians, in Tana.

Compared to the destructive actions of both his predecessor and his successor, who used force against Caffa in 1307/8 and then in 1343 onwards, Özbek’s Black Sea policy is characterised by a certain balance and judiciousness highly profitable to the Golden Horde’s economy. His conduct was at the very least a contributing factor in the flourishing of the ulus of Jochi at this peak of its development.225

The most convincing proof in this regard is furnished by his successor Janibek, who attacked the very foundations of his father’s Black Sea policy. For a decade and a half he obstinately pursued a hostile policy, mostly against Genoese Caffa, which rebounded disastrously upon the

---

225 Despite differing ideological viewpoints, there is a prevailing consensus among authors who have surveyed Golden Horde history that this was the high point of its development; cf. Spuler, *Horde*, pp. 87, 99, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, pp. 89–90, 262.
Golden Horde—thus demonstrating by contrast how wise khan Özbek’s Black Sea policy had been.

4.2.5  Janibek: The Great Rupture

After bloodily disposing of his brothers and taking the throne in Sarai in 1342, Janibek turned his attention to foreign policy with the same vigour which had characterised his father at the beginning of his reign.

An obsessive concern to recover Azerbaijan and the priceless city of Tabriz had governed Jochid foreign policy for nearly a century, and the same concern sealed Janibek’s political fate. This was more evident in his case than with any of his predecessors, however, since after a long line of Jochid rulers had wasted their energies on the goal, he was the first actually to conquer the famous town. An anonymous Persian chronicler of the opposing camp summed up this absolute priority of his reign, in words at once entirely objective and somewhat reproachful: “[Although] his realm flourished and his power grew, [Janibek] coveted Persia.” If his achievement in conquering Tabriz impressed contemporaries, it did the same to later historians as well.

Janibek did no more than attain a goal for which his predecessors too had striven ceaselessly, yet the conditions for his brief, late success in 1356 were entirely different from conditions in their time. He was single-minded in exploiting the opportunities presented by the geopolitical configuration which had taken shape during the last decade of Özbek’s reign, which his father had not turned to Golden Horde advantage either because he was too weak or he no longer wished to.

The decisive factor which forced Janibek to reconsider Jochid policy was the collapse of the Ilkhanate in 1335. When the Mongol state fell apart into a multitude of quarrelsome rival fragments, it created a power vacuum which sharpened the Jochid appetite for expansion, long kept in check. When Abū Sa‘īd died, and his dynasty with him, this left the steppe Mongols as heirs to the Ilkhanate. Though they thus had new legal grounds

228  Cf. Spuler, Horde, p. 99, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 263–266.
229  For the numismatic evidence for this date of the occupation of Tabriz, cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 254–266.
for their claim to the old Transcaucasian territories, there remained the problem of confronting the Chobanids, the emir Choban’s heirs, who had installed themselves as rulers in Azerbaijan and Persian Iraq.\footnote{The most important member of this local dynasty was al-Malik al-Ashraf (1344–1356) and Sheikh Uwais (1356–1374); cf. Spuler, *Horde*, pp. 114–115, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, p. 263. Al-Malik al-Ashraf’s dispute with Janibek on the legitimacy of his claim is recounted in ‘History of Sheikh Uwais’/Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik*, II, p. 102.}

As rulers, their position vis-à-vis their subjects was weakened not by a lack of legitimacy but by their inability to meet the needs of a vital segment of society and the state, the great merchant class. However hard the usurpers tried to satisfy mercantile requirements, they could do no more than their little power allowed: they could not guarantee security and infrastructure, the indispensable preconditions for commerce, beyond their principalities’ narrow borders. Such poor substitutes were not enough for the long-distance merchants, who were used to being able to travel the great Asian roads as far as Eastern Europe under Chinggisid protection, risk-free and without the inconvenience of customs. When Persia, including its Chobanid component, fell apart, this gave the coup de grace to long-distance trade in the Middle East.

The only ruler far and wide who was ready to press a legitimate claim as successor to the whole of the Ilkhanate, and who to all appearances was powerful enough to do so, was Janibek. Such succession certainly included taking over as protector of the merchant class.\footnote{See chapter 1.2.2.} It is thus no surprise that the upper strata in the great Persian cities saw the Volga khan as a veritable saviour on whom they could pin their hopes: “as a result of al-Malik al-Ashraf’s oppression, many of the hajjis of Tabriz, Shiraz, Ardabil, Bailakan, Barda and Nakhchivan came to him.”\footnote{‘History of Sheikh Uwais’/Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik*, II, p. 101. The Russian editors and translators suggest ‘gorodskie bogatey’ [= ‘rich town dwellers’] to explicate the term hājj, literally ‘pilgrim’ (ibid., note 3).} Religious leaders energetically promoted the merchants’ cause: the famous qadi Muḥyī al-Dīn of Barda had become court preacher at Sarai, and publicly invited Janibek to bring his army across the Caucasus and topple the illegitimate ruler of Tabriz.\footnote{Zayn al-Din/Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik*, II, p. 94; cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, p. 264.}

The anarchy in Persia also made it commercially unwelcoming for Western businessmen. Beginning in 1340, Genoa forbade its subjects to
travel to Tabriz,\textsuperscript{235} and in 1346 we have the last recorded instance of the Venetian Senate sending ships to Trebizond to take the caravan route to Azerbaijan.\textsuperscript{236}

From Sarai’s point of view, the transmontane situation not only made post-Ilkhani Persia finally ripe for a campaign with some chance of victory: it was in fact a positive invitation to conquest. Right from the beginning of his reign, these conditions had brought Janibek closer than any of his predecessors had ever been to achieving the great Transcaucasian goal, and he restructured Golden Horde foreign policy accordingly.

Once convinced that he could recover the territories from an enfeebled Persia by the strength of his own armies, Janibek immediately concluded that the Mamluk alliance was no longer the Golden Horde’s primary interest. After 1335, the alliance with Egypt against the Ilkhanate lost any meaning for the Jochid state.

The political/military purpose of the alliance had always been the driving force behind Sarai’s relations with Egypt, and now that it had vanished, the lesser, economic side of the relationship was also thrown into question. The Jochid khans had always considered the export of slaves as a necessary sacrifice to keep friendly relations with Egypt, but it was also a plague which had exhausted the Golden Horde for a century. Thus with no further need for the sultan’s friendship, Janibek saw that unlike his predecessors, there was nothing to stop him from staunching the chronic demographic outflow.

A further factor, also unknown to his predecessors, had appeared a few years after the khan took the throne, strengthening demographic concerns and adding to the arguments for stopping the slave trade: this was plague in the full, biological sense of the word.\textsuperscript{237} Although the extent of its ravages in the Golden Horde are not known, it was certainly one cause


\textsuperscript{236} Cf. Karpov, \textit{Impero}, pp. 84–85, and above, pp. 138 ff.

of the polity’s irreversible decline. The scourge of the plague introduced a new, acute haemorrhage into the Horde, calling for radical steps to safeguard its human resources.

With the political aim of the alliance against the Ilkhanate and the economic component of the slave trade both gone, Jochid relations with the Mamluks lost any relevance. During the fifteen years of Janibek’s reign only two embassies were sent to Cairo: the first in 1342/3 to announce his enthronement, and the second in 1357 to announce the conquest of Tabriz. They were merely protocol visits.

By abandoning the Sarai-Cairo axis, Janibek had put an end to one of the most important Golden Horde political projects, which Berke Khan had embarked upon almost a century before. This fundamental shift in Jochid-Mamluk relations would obviously have repercussions for Jochid Black Sea policy, and strong ones at that: here too, Janibek had broken with the past. The difference between the khan’s rule and his father’s was nowhere more obvious than in their Genoese and Venetian policy.

Janibek’s first step, in 1342, was to reconfirm Özbek’s grant of a decade earlier to the Venetians at Tana, and the son seemed to be following in his father’s footsteps here. Nevertheless, a year later Janibek departed drastically from the judicious Italian policies of the latter half of his father’s reign, designed to curb and exploit the profitable Venetian-Genoese rivalry.

According to contemporary sources, the last straw that broke the camel’s back and saw the khan’s patience run out was one of the numerous scuffles that broke out in Tana, in this instance started by a Venetian and leading to the death of a Mongol. Determined to uproot the evil

---

240 Spuler, *Horde*, p. 100: “Es waren reine Höflichkeitsakte ohne praktischen Wert.” Zakirov, *Otnosheniya*, p. 90, says the same and adds that the drop-off in diplomatic visits was due to the Persian situation, where Spuler (ibid.) mistakenly sees the cause in Ottoman domination of the Straits, which would not be the case for a century: “Die osmanischen Türken hatten große Teile Anatoliens erobert und griffen um 1354 nach Gallipoli über, um sich von dort aus auf dem Balkan auszubreiten. Dadurch wurde dem Qypcaq der Weg durch die Meerengen abgeschnitten, seine Beziehungen zu Byzanz und Bulgarien verloren fast ganz ihre Bedeutung. Was die Absperrung vom Mittelmeer bedeutete, braucht kaum gesagt zu werden: der Weg nach Ägypten und damit die Verbindung zur großen Politik an den Gestaden des Mittelmeeren war fast unterbrochen.”
242 See the exchange of letters between the doges of Genoa and Venice on the subject (*DVL*, I, pp. 259–260).
entirely, Janibek decided to expel all Italian merchants from every part of the Black Sea coast under his control.\textsuperscript{243}

Most accounts of the events present the khan’s action as the result of a fit of rage, and a desire to see justice done.\textsuperscript{244} The scale of Janibek’s military operations shows, however, that the killing of Acamar\textsuperscript{245} must be seen as an incident which merely provided the pretext for a campaign which had been long planned, and which by no means aimed to restore the \textit{Pax Mongolica} on the Northern Black Sea coast. Quite the opposite, since disputes between Venetians and locals at the mouth of the Don were none of the khan’s business, but rather were under the purview of the town council and the Mongol governor, who according to the treaty of 1342 were to discuss these matters \textit{simul sedentes}.

Shortly after the Westerners were easily removed from Tana\textsuperscript{246} and from Soldaia,\textsuperscript{247} Venetian envoys shrewdly guessed the principal target of the action, since they had to work out the khan’s true intent in order to be able to offer acceptable peace terms. The Serenissima’s agents learnt from trustworthy sources that Janibek’s original goal had been the destruction of Caffa all along.\textsuperscript{248}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{243} As might be expected, the event was much-noticed, and recorded by several chroniclers: Stella, de Monacis, Sanudo, Gregoras, Kantakouzenos (extracts from Venetian sources can be found in \textit{DVI}, I, p. 268); the most detailed description of events based on these sources is in Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, pp. 187 ff.; cf. also Nystazopoulo-Pélékidis, \textit{Venise}, p. 31, Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 154, Papacosta, “Tana,” p. 206.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, pp. 187 ff., adopts this view uncritically: “Geanibek-khan, outré du meurtre commis sur un de ses sujets dans son propre pays, résolut d’en finir une foi pour toutes avec les colonies d’Occidentaux;” Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 154, considers that the khan took the murder as a pretext to put a stop to customs fraud by the Venetians and Genoese which was harming the Golden Horde.
\item \textsuperscript{245} Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 283; this was probably a corruption of ‘Khodja Omar,’ as Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 187, suggests.
\item \textsuperscript{246} Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 187.
\item \textsuperscript{247} The Venetians lost most, having a consulate here; despite their attempts to regain the position, it was lost permanently (for the twists and turns of Soldaia’s fate in the fourteenth century, see Thiriet, \textit{Régestes}, I, 77, 82, Nystazopoulo-Pélékidis, \textit{Venise}, pp. 26–27, Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 158, Ciocîltan, “Restaurația,” pp. 590 note 32, 591 note 68).
\item \textsuperscript{248} They sent a report to the Senate in Venice about Caffa: \textit{Per illud quod apparat omnimo Imperator intendit habere terram Gaffe et ista fuit sua intencio principalis primitus quando ipse dispositus se transire flumen Til [= Volga] pro destruendo Gaffa et ad dapnum et destructionem omnium Christianorum. Et non credat vestra dominacio quod novitates quam fecit dominus Imperator fecisset pro morte Acamar qui mortuus fuit in Tana […] sed principaliter propter destructionem Gaffe movit se dominus Imperator, ut dictum est, et hoc nos scimus per fratres minores et predicatores et multos gentiles homines Ianuenses et isti IIIior qui hic sunt pro communi lanue habent pro certo quod ita sit veritas} (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 283; cf. Papacosta, “Tana,” p. 211).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The siege began in 1343 and lasted, on and off, until at least 1346, in vain, but these repeated attempts do show how determined the khan was to destroy the stronghold on the Crimean coast. Özbek had created Caffa in 1313 to serve the Jochid-Mamluk alliance, and once this relationship with Egypt was definitively dissolved, the town neither served Sarai’s purposes nor obeyed its government.

The meaning of the military operations of 1343 is as clear as can be: Janibek was attacking the city government by force, contesting the autonomy that his father had granted exactly thirty years before. The unspoken nature of the original concession left the Genoese merchants without legal recourse to prove the Republic’s sovereignty over Caffa. The Venetians took advantage of this lacuna to consolidate their position in treaties with their ancient rivals, who had become expedient allies, and the khan too

---

249 According to Heyd, *Histoire*, II, pp. 187–188, 195–196, there were two attacks, in 1343 and 1346, the second ending “with no hope of return;” Petti Balbi, “Caffa,” p. 219, believes that there were two further attempts after the initial siege in 1343, which the khan lifted in 1344, and that these were also fruitless; cf. also Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 206 ff.

250 See chapter 4.2.4.

251 In the protocol drawn up in October 1344 by Marco Ruzzini and Giovanni Steno, Venetian envoys in Caffa, we find the official Senate position on the conflict, namely that whoever can settle the problems and prerequisites of commerce is the rightful ruler of the town: *Et si per vos dominos sindicos et ambaxatores communis Ianuae vellet dicere quod mercaciones possent fieri in Caffa, vollendo dicere ipsum Caffam esse communis Ianue et non Imperatoris Çanibec, nos sindici et ambaxatores communis Veneciarum dicimus quod hic dicere de racione non potestis, cum commune Ianu habeat terram Caff a Imperatore cum certis condicionibus et pactis et quod ipse dominus Imperator teneat in Caffam suos rectores et officiales qui faciunt iustiziam et racionem in omnibus gentibus excepto quam in Ianuensibus, qui officiales etiam nomine ipsius domini Imperatoris exigunt in dicto Caffa nomine comerci tria per centenario tam a Ianuensibus quam a quibuscumque allii persos, sicquie ipse faciunt in Tana, ita quod commune Ianu in dicta terra Caffa dicere iurisdictionem habere inter suos Ianuenses tantum et non in aliqua allia persona. Et si per vos dominos sindicos et ambaxatores commune Ianue vellet dicere quod vos in Caffa excucitis comerclum, nos sindici et ambaxatores communis Veneciarum dicimus quod comerclum quod excucitis est tantum solomodo a vestris Ianuensibus, quibus licitum est a vobis ipsum ab ipsis excutere tamquam a vestris civibus, sed a nulla aliqua persona comerclum non excucitis nec de racione facere non debitis, ita quod si aliquis vellet ipse Caffa non esset in Imperio Imperatoris Çanibec, hoc de ratione et cum veritate dicere non posset* (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 291); for the fundamental unsoundness of the Venetian attempt to compare Caffa with Tana from a governmental perspective, despite some similarities, see p. 184; on the course of Genoese-Venetian relations during the war with Janibek, see particularly Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 206 ff.; the only counterargument which the Genoese advanced was the *fait accompli*, legitimised by its own past and certainly dating back to Özbek’s day. The envoy Giovanni Steno reported to the senate: *[...] allegantibus ipsis [= Genoese] quod non habebant nec habent, quod locus predictus Caffė sit et includatur in imperio Zanibechi imperatoris predicti sed habebant et habent, quod sit ipsius domini Ducis et communis Ianue* (*DVL*, I, pp. 329 ff.). In the absence of a written charter, the Genoese based their claim to govern Caffa on evidence which was as strong in 1344 as it had been in previous years, and
may have referred to the lack of legal status—if he troubled at all with such arguments before resorting to armed force.

The second source of tension after the matter of Caffa’s extraterritoriality and Sarai’s sovereignty was the administration of trade in the city, which the Genoese had modified as their conflict with the Jochids escalated.

At the same time as they declared their independence, the Genoese colonists declared that as the true rulers in Caffa, they were imposing customs duties on foreign merchants. Although the sources only mention protest from the Venetians, we can suppose that the measure affected all those doing business in Caffa, including Golden Horde subjects. Nevertheless, it seems that the Genoese neither expelled Mongol officials nor did away with the imperial customs duties, probably not wanting to throw away all hope of a peaceful compromise with Janibek.

More profitable than customs duties on all trade passing through Caffa (which contributed to the public purse) was the staple right, also derived from the colony’s position of de facto autonomy, which enriched particular merchants. By imposing themselves as the obligatory middlemen for all wares traded in and around the city, the Genoese hurt the interests of foreign merchants arriving by sea, mostly Venetian, and those who came overland from the Horde. The khan could not remain indifferent to the losses incurred to Jochid subjects.

which no contemporary actually familiar with the facts on the ground on the Northern Black Sea coast would have been able to ignore.

---

252 Which may have come first, chronologically (cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 211).
253 In their document issued at Caffa in October 1344, the Venetian envoys used the present tense for the khan’s rectores et officiales in the city; Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 291).
254 According to Giovanni Steno’s report to the Venetian senate of 1344, the Genoese were adamant in claiming and enforcing the right: dicentes inter alia quod mercationes fierent in Gaffa per lanuenses (DVL, I, p. 329; cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 211). After the peace of Torino (1381), whereby the Venetians agreed not to visit Tana for two years, a similar staple right was instituted and is described by the Venetian Daniele di Chinazzo: Onde vedendo quelli della Tana e tutti i altri marchandanti di quelle parte, che soleva condur le soe caravane de specie et altre chosse in la Tana, non poder andar navilio de questi do chomuni a la Tana a tuor alguna merchandantia, Zenovexi feva raxon che tutti i merchandanti de quelle parte dovesse condur le soe specie e merce in Gaffa et tuor el chorsel molto a la Tana, e facendo raxon Zenovexi de fornirise in Gaffa de tute quel fosse mestrer, chome i feva in la Tana, e ten-gir muodo che nigun podesse comprar da persone che conduksesse merchandantia in Gaffa se non Zenovexi e i citadini proprii de Gaffa, chome e uxança in Venixia, che nigun no pó comprar da negun forestier che conduga merchandantia in Venixia s’el non è proprio citadin de Venixia. Et per simel modo Zenovexi feva raxon che da possa che Veniciani non podeva uxor a la Tana per quali do anni, che andando a Gaffa i non podesse comprar qua deli che conduksesse le merchandantie in Gaffa, anci che chonvegnive comprar dai homeni de la tera e
Far more harmful to their interests was the Genoese effort to bring all the trade of the Northern Black Sea coast through Caffa, where it would be taxed and levied as described above. However paradoxical it may seem at first, Janibek’s declaration of war in 1343 created the necessary conditions to realise this grand plan.

The Genoese colonists originally conceived the scheme in the preceding century in order to forestall the development of a rival commercial centre at Venetian Tana, and this became more pressing once Özbek granted the charter of 1332, renewed by his son ten years later and offering the Serenisima’s merchants the required legal framework to tap into major Eurasian trade routes directly from their town at the mouth of the Don.255

Since they could neither influence nor reverse decisions taken by the Jochid grandees, the Genoese subjected the Venetians instead to countless chicaneries, which were not enough to dislodge them or diminish the threat from this strong competition.256 Seen from this perspective, the expulsion of all Italians from Tana and Soldaia in 1343 was a true blessing for the Genoese merchants. They had never themselves been able to mend the breach that Özbek had made in their monopolist system, but Janibek closed it with one blow. Certainly the Genoese as well had to suffer being turned out of Tana, where they traded side by side with their rivals, yet seen in larger context, when Westerners were expelled from the mouth of the Don, the Mongols defeated the Venetians and the Genoese emerged victorious.

Self-evidently, a victory obtained when the wheel of fortune turns so surprisingly must be consolidated. The Venetians, declared unwanted guests wherever the Mongols controlled the Black Sea coast, found themselves forced to appeal to the Caffans to take them in. The Genoese duly offered shelter to their rivals in need, but took care to exact a price. The khan’s actions in 1343 forced the Venetians to accept an unequal alliance with their former enemy, accurately reflecting the new balance of power between the two maritime powers in the region: Venice’s envoys duly signed a treaty on 18th June 1344 committing them to uphold the


256 Cf. especially Heyd, Histoire, II, pp. 183–186, who assumes that any moves against the Venetians by Mongol authorities were also due to Genoese intrigue, an opinion shared by Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 206 note 10.
principal Genoese claim against the Jochids, the independence of Caffa. The two parties also agreed that during the year of the treaty's validity, neither party would conclude a separate peace with Janibek or trade in his empire.

This latter clause very clearly expresses the allies' determination to institute the feared devetum, the trade boycott, against the Golden Horde. Serious cracks in the alliance nevertheless became clear once the treaty began to be enforced. The Genoese interpretation of the clause forbidding Italian merchants to trade in the Jochid state was that Caffa, being a Genoese possession under the doge, was not subject to the embargo. The Venetian took quite the opposite view, based on the common-sense approach that if they were to attain their aim, wear down the economy and bring the khan back to negotiations, the sanctions had to be total: thus Caffa could not break the blockade. The alliance was undermined from the start by mutual distrust, and such disagreements inevitably led to crisis: seeing themselves disadvantaged by the Genoese version of commercial embargo, the Venetian envoys argued vehemently against their allies' legal claim to govern the city, although a few months earlier, in the treaty of June 1344, they had engaged to support their partners' position in any future negotiations with the Mongols on this bitterly disputed matter.

---


258 Ibid., p. 283: [..].

259 The Venetian envoys complained of frequent Genoese violations, when they traded with the Mongols either openly or on the quiet, and wrote to their doge in October 1344 to draw attention to the political repercussions of such actions, citing the khodjas of Solkhat: Frater Petrus redivit Caffa, qui [...] dixit quomodo in Sorgati per multos coça fuit dictum ei et similiter publice dicebatur per omnes quod, si non fuissent et essent mercationes que facte sunt et que fiunt, concordium inter dominum Imperatorem Çanibec et Christianos a modo factum esset, mirando multum de tantis sapientissimis viris qui sunt in Caffa quoniam ipsi non prohibebant quod dicte mercaciones non fierent ad hoc ut ista facta finem caperent (Morozza della Rocca, "Notizie," pp. 290–292; for more on the illicit commerce, ibid., pp. 279, 281).
Although the Caffans advanced practical arguments to justify such trade as necessary for their town’s survival, these very likely did less to bring the Venetians round to the *fait accompli* than the offer to let them trade there alongside the Genoese, especially since the Venetians had no practical alternative.  

Janibek’s stubborn refusal to bargain with representatives of the two Italian republics forced them to renegotiate their own treaty once the original agreement expired. The compromise agreement was signed on 22nd June 1345, and concentrates—of course—on Caffa. The Genoese were pressured by the possibility of a separate Jochid peace with the Venetians, which would certainly have allowed the latter to return to Tana: they thus offered them considerable concessions, to preserve both Caffa’s autonomy and its advantage over its rival on the Don, which threatened to rise once more if the khan ever changed his mind. The Genoese exempted the Venetians from all taxes and duties, and allowed them to trade in their two holdings of Caffa and Pera, while other towns of the Northern and Western coasts, whether directly held by the Golden Horde or tributary, were still subject to strictest *devetum*. To avoid any possible ambiguity, Tana is the only settlement explicitly mentioned as the target of joint embargo.

---

260 The Venetian envoys reported this offer to the doge, along with other news, in December 1344: *Excussacio quam isti domini habent, per quam ipsi permittunt facere mercaciones suos Iauenses in isto mare, est quia ipsi dicunt quod si exstringerent sua navigia et suos mercatores, terra Gaffe non posset retinere et illud quod faciant pro conservacione dicte terre Gaffe faciunt, et quodipsi essent contenti et placeret eis quod mercatores vestri venirent in Gaffa ad faciendum mercaciones, sicut faciunt sui Iauenses. [...] Et si ipsi debent facere mercacionem et gens vestra in toto esset exclusa non possendo mercacionem facere in isto Imperio, nobis videtur maximum dapnum et detrimentum vestris civibus et fidelibus et honori vestre dominacioni. [...] Et ideo nobis videtur quod esset meliùs quod gens nostra posset hic in Gaffa venire ad faciendum mercacionem, antequam ipsi faceret et gens vestra in toto esset exclusa, et hoc quod acta non sit no volendo facere mercacionem* (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 280–281).

261 The possibility was considered: The Venetian envoys wrote to the republic’s leaders in January 1345 advising against such a step, since they suspected that any such offer from Janibek could not be taken seriously and was merely a strategem whereby the khan hoped to split the allies and finally take Caffa. Venice had nothing to gain from the fall of the only Christian bridgehead to which, for good or ill, they had access and where they could trade with the Mongols on their own terms (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 283–284).

262 The text of the new Genoese-Venetian treaty is published in *DVL*, I, pp. 303–305, and contains the following principal provisions: *Nec [...] possit aliquis dictarum parcium [...] facere [...] merces ad aliquas terras vel loca dicti imperatoris Ianibech [...] saluo ad locum et ciuitatem Caffa, et ab inde infra versus occidentem siue versus Peyram, ipso loco siue ipsa ciuitate de Caffa comprehensa. Ad que quidem loca de Caffa, et ab inde citra versus Peyram et occidentem, liceat et licitum sit dictis partibus [...] mercari [...] Nec possit aliquid*.
For all that the new treaty clearly shows the Genoese making sacrifices in order to maintain the alliance, there is no doubt that the advantage was overwhelmingly theirs: though the text does not explicitly mention Caffan autonomy, the Venetians recognised the *fait accompli* and also signed up to protecting Genoese commerce from themselves as competitors. It is surprising that the Venetians received not the least material recompense in return for such significant political support: a citizen of the Serenissima, drawing up a balance of the Caffan episode, found that their stay there actually led to losses, despite the conditions which the Genoese had promised in the treaty of June 1345.

By rallying the Venetians to their doctrine of hegemony in the Northern Black Sea, the Genoese not only made them acknowledge certain crucial legal aspects but also gained a huge practical advantage which was a decisive advantage for Caffa’s defence in the critical years of the war with the Jochids. Although the Venetians took no active part in the Genoese defence effort either by land or by sea, their neutrality indirectly made the prolonged Caffan resistance possible.

Venetian non-intervention was particularly useful in Black Sea waters since it left Genoese vessels free to supply two vital needs for the besieged city: they could continue to bring in supplies and provisions, and protect it from any attacks from the water.

Janibek understood the Genoese strategic advantage once his troops, armed with siege engines, showed themselves powerless against Caffa’s walls, and he knew that the port city would never surrender as long as its maritime links were intact. Under the circumstances, the khan took a decision which was unique in Golden Horde history, decreeing that the Jochid state, an eminently land-based power, was to have its own naval force.

---

*dictarum partium […] ultra dictum locum siue dicatm ciuitatem de Caffa […] versus orientem sive Tanam ire*; the treaty was valid until March 1346, during which time Venetians coming to Caffa would be *liberi et immunes in dicta ciuitate ab omnibus drectibus, cabellis, introyitibus, comercijs, seu exactionibus, que in ipso loco colliguntur; ita et taliter, quod an nullum drichtum uel commercium soluendum ipsi Veneti uel eorum merces conpelly […] pos-sint*; cf. commentaries at Heyd, *Histoire*, II, pp. 196–197, Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 207–208.

263 The chronicler Lorenzo de Monacis was unambiguous in summing up the situation: *Tunc coeptum est negotiari a Venetis in Gaffa, fere usque ad annum MCCCL suo utique incommodo, at ingenti Januensium emolumento* (Monacis/Corneliu.s, p. 207; cf. Lopez, *Storia*, p. 332, Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 208).

264 A Venetian agent in Caffa brought this to the doge’s attention in January 1345: *Et iusta, si dominacio vestra atabit se asque Genuensium cum Imperatore, Gaffa non poterit se tinere, et est destruction lanuensium* (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 284).
After the military setbacks of 1343–1344, Janibek planned a combined land and sea operation for spring of the following year to encircle the city. To guarantee success, he decreed that while the land forces were gathering in Solkhat, galleys should be built in the Crimea’s Western ports, and in nearby Soldaia, to blockade Caffa by sea. Several centuries of experience in naval warfare certainly told in favour of the Genoese when they responded, promptly and efficiently, to the threat from the steppe sailors: a squadron was swiftly prepared in Genoa in March 1345, and destroyed Janibek’s naval programme in its early stages.

With the Venetians neutral, Genoese naval supremacy proved just as powerful elsewhere in the Black Sea: rumour had it, credibly enough given the circumstances, that the Emir of Sinope intended to send a fleet of Muslim warriors to help his Jochid coreligionists, but this remained only a rumour.

---

265 Venetian envoys sent this news too to the doge, in January 1345: De extra sentimus quod Imperator facit fieri ad Cibanum, Calamitam et per Gotiam galleas XXX. vel circha et, ut predicitor, in Sorgati facit preparari (e)difficia et gentem et, ut apparent, ipse Imperator intendit in isto primo tempore veniendi ad obsessum Gaffe per mare et per terram (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 282; cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 212); further information came three months later from a Genoese who had been charged with spying out the region: Die .XV. mensis marcii applicuit in Gaffam dominus Federicus Pichameio cum illa gallea armata que possita est ad custodiam istius terre, que gallea missa fuit per istos dominos per riperiam Gotie usque in Cressonam causa sciendi novam. Qui dominus Federicus dixit quod in Calamita fiunt .V. galle, de quibus ipse vidit .III., et in Soldaia dicitur quod similiter .IIIIor. galle fiunt et aliqus galiote, que galle quosque huc videntur malle esse ad pontum. Fuit datum domino Imperatori magnum intendmentum et magnum spep predictorum galearum et incepte fuerunt cum magna (s)ponte et trionfo, sed, sicut nobis apparebat, mediocum effectum habebunt. […] Item dixit […] quod civitas Cressone at omnes marine *** (deser) tantur et quilibet trait se infra terram et hoc de precepto domini Imperatoris ad hoc ut aliquo v(ictualia) detur Gaffe. Dixit etiam […] quod […] dice(batur) publice de adventu Mogalbey, […] qui, ut dicitur, venit cum magni exercitu ad obseum Gaffe (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 288–289).

266 A Venetian letter sent to the doge from Caffa at the end of March described the Genoese construction drive and the outcome: In ista terra sunt facte multe galiote a viginti usque in .LX. remis, cum quibus intendunt cursiare et derobare per riperiam marinarum istii Imperii (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 288–289).

267 No other source reports the fact noted by a Venetian agent on 5th April 1345: Istri domini .IIIior. [= Caffan leaders] determinaverunt mitendi dominum Ranierium Spinolam cum una galiota a .XXXor. usque in .XL. remos usque Sinopim et ibi videre si veritas est quod iste Calabi intendit armare omnes suas galiotas et galleam et contra eos ire et oviare ipsos in mare (ibid., p. 289). The Emir’s intention to come to the aid of the Jochids against the Genoese is plausible enough if we consider that the Venetians accused their Genoese partners vos probitis cum vestris naviqiis etiam lignis illis de Sinopi qui sunt in partibus Turchie, quod ipsis in Imperio predicti Imperatoris Çanibec venire non deberent ad marcadicandum (ibid., p. 291). An embassy sent by Ratana, qui est dominius tocius Turcic Marin Maius disembarked at Caffa in September 1344 on the way to Janibek, and does not seem to have been an attempt
When the Genoese thus scoured the Crimean coast of rival ships, they not only confirmed once more their dominance in the Black Sea but also, as a direct and very important consequence, opened a new chapter in their colonial history in this part of the world. The naval expedition probably set sail from Caffa in 1345, or the next year at the latest, and as well as destroying Jochid shipping, they carried out an action which was profoundly innovative in Genoese Black Sea policy, occupying Cembalo, the economic and strategic keystone of the peninsula’s Western coast.268

Scholars agree that the operation was intended only to safeguard Caffa, and as a strike against the Jochids, yet it fits seamlessly into a string of other, similar initiatives whereby the Genoese wrested a number of other possessions on the Northern Black Sea coast from the Golden Horde in the following years, either by force of arms or by treaty.269

Taken together, these acquisitions reveal a perfectly planned scheme with a precise goal: the preservation of Caffa’s autonomy and its function as the dominant commercial centre in the Northern Black Sea. Annexation of these territories into a hinterland satisfied Caffa’s need for grain and food, and also created a true physical barrier between the Horde and the Venetians, since holdings such as Balaklava were strategic points. Herefore the Genoese had never been able to impose themselves as exclusive middlemen even in favourable circumstances, but now they came to control the vital flashpoints. When the Genoese took Cembalo it thus served as a touchstone for dividing two historic stages, and two different ways to pursue one goal: Caffan domination in the region, at any price.

Understandably, the Genoese naval victory of 1345 or 1346 also had a direct effect on the course of the war. Janibek had staked victory on a Jochid fleet, and now knew that Caffa could not be taken or quashed. The khan clearly took this discovery to heart, since there were no further large-scale military operations as there had been in the first half of the decade: Caffan sources reveal instead that the Mongols were playing a

---

268 Today Balaklava; the Caffans described the settlement to Doge Giovanni de Murta at a difficult moment in the interlude of 1347–1350: Ac eciam Tartari multum sperant in castro Cimbali, quia si castrum ipsum haberent, possemus dicere amissesse mare et fore obsessos omnium victualium et refrescamentorum; ex quo dictum locum multum opportet habere optimum et suficientem custodem in dicto castro (Petti Balbi, “Caffa,” p. 226, Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 212–213); in 1345 Janibek had ordered the locals to withdraw from the coast to inland Crimea, leading to a shortage of provisions for Caffa.

269 Cf. for Soldaia Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, *Venise*, pp. 26–27, while for *Gotia* see chapter 4.2.7.
waiting game, hoping that the exorbitant cost of holding the city and the plague which had thinned the defenders’ ranks would weaken its defences enough for it to be captured.²⁷⁰

The most puzzling aspect at first sight is that this description best fits not the war, as might be expected, but the peace which the Genoese concluded with the Jochids in 1347.²⁷¹ Understandably, Janibek had reservations about the truce, and the same well-informed sources in Caffa knew that it was a fragile peace.²⁷² It is equally understandable that the khan had his reasons for accepting the armistice.

The very nature of Chinggisid rule made it difficult to make a lasting peace with the khan, which would have depended on his accepting humiliation in war and the independence of Caffa. A ruler who believed that ‘he rules the whole world’, as the Genoese observers report, at once irked and amused, would find it impossible to concede territory. He needed to save his prestige, yet needed at the same time to meet certain economic needs in his state, no less pressing, which pushed him in the opposite direction. The outcome of these two contradictory urges was the truce of 1347—once again, a verbal agreement!—which was to last a long while, acknowledging a basic reality of Jochid-Genoese relations that endured until 1380: neither peace nor war.

Doubtless when Janibek launched the operation to expel the Western merchants, he could not have suspected how long the campaign would last, how much it would cost nor how unfavourable the outcome would be. The khan became bogged down in a war which, judged by its long-term consequences, wasted Golden Horde potential just as badly as it marked the state’s final fate.

²⁷⁰ An undated letter to the Doge Giovanni de Murta (1344–1350) from the latter 1340s asks for financial aid from the mother city for the hard-pressed Black Sea colony, quia Tartari oculum non habent nisi dumtaxat quod espensse deficiant et locus bellatoribus denudetur, maxime quia sperant de infinita pestilencia mortalitatis, que infinitos bellatores pros-travit, et taliter sunt consumpti quod pauci remaneant viri (Petti Balbi, “Caffa,” p. 226).


²⁷² The same letter to Doge Giovanni de Murta: Cum Caffa locus fuerit longevis temporibus expugnatus […] ad finem honorabiliem pervenerimus cum illo qui toto mundo dominari se credit, ex quo secuta est pax, licet incerta et non secura, ymo pocius sedicia pro Tartarorum parte (Petti Balbi, “Caffa,” p. 219).
There are several indications that the severe death toll caused by war and plague led to a serious economic downturn in the Horde, just as among the besieged Genoese in Caffa. The main cause for this downturn was the sheer length of hostilities, which made their impact felt in various areas including, first and foremost, commerce. Janibek’s direct intervention in this area was truly catastrophic: forbidding his subjects to trade with the Venetians, he condemned the Golden Horde to renewed isolation, with results as inevitable as they were harmful.

Venetian reports sent from Caffa to the Republic’s government in 1344–1345 constantly accuse the Genoese of trading with the Mongols, breaking the joint boycott, and do not forget to mention that this illicit activity also went against the declared will of the khan, and was sometimes even carried out by the very Jochid officials entrusted with enforcing the embargo. For all that these sources offer yet further historical proof of just how far a merchant can distribute his wares, we should not be misled by the actions of Caffan Genoese in trading with Jochid subjects against the will of practically all major powers in the region, the Golden Horde itself and Venice. All parties involved in the conflict imposed restrictions, one way or another, and while these did not create an impermeable barrier, they will have certainly caused a significant drop-off in trade in the Northern Black Sea lands.

The same Venetian reports which mention the cracks in Janibek’s embargo also mention its main effects: large quantities of goods built up in the interior of the Golden Horde, prohibited for export, either local produce or Asian wares brought across the Cuman steppe. These reports...
remind us of the depreciating and spoiling wares which Özbek found at the beginning of his reign as a result of Toqta’s anti-Genoese policy, just as Toqta’s policy reminds us of Janibek’s.

More far-reaching were the external repercussions when Jochid exports were choked off: Byzantium suffered an acute shortage of both grain and salt fish, while the price of silk and spices doubled in the West.\textsuperscript{275}

The interruption to commerce also caused problems for inhabitants of the Horde. Their losses were so great that already in the autumn of 1344 the merchants and ‘all the Tartar people’ did not hold back from protesting loudly against the war,\textsuperscript{276} an audacity which was all the more remarkable since the whole world knew that the war had been begun by the khan, their absolute overlord.

Though this only sheds light on losses by private persons, the report gives some idea of the scale of the losses which the treasury at Sarai must also have incurred. After five years of war, Janibek found that his situation offered no hope of a military solution and that he was economically exhausted: the Jochid government was of course dependent on trade revenues.\textsuperscript{277} In spring 1347 he resigned himself to a peace without honour with the Genoese, whereby he would—however tacitly—recognise their sovereignty in Caffa.

The same need to renew trade also forced the khan to open negotiations with the Venetians at the same time: by May 1347 at the latest, they again had the right to trade at Tana,\textsuperscript{278} although the charter confirming this was not granted until December.\textsuperscript{279}

---


\textsuperscript{276} Returning to Caffa that autumn, the Franciscan Petrus told the Venetian \textit{proprio suo ore qualiter omnes mercatores de Sorgati et omnis populus multum dexiderat habere pacem et similiter populus Tartarorum habere pacem dexiderat, et similiter omnes dicunt non in oculto sed pallam ex incomoditate quam suferunt} (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” pp. 277–278).

\textsuperscript{277} See chapter 1.2.2.

\textsuperscript{278} A merchant from Candia writes on 16th May 1347: \textit{La pacie de la Tana è fatta e molti navi so’ andate dentro} (Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie,” p. 274); cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 208.

\textsuperscript{279} \textit{DVL}, I, pp. 311–313; the charter refers to the grants of 1332 and 1342, and the only significant difference is in the levying of customs duty, which has been raised from 3% to
Reopening trade so completely to the Genoese and to the Venetians was tantamount to a wholesale restoration of Jochid Black Sea policy from the second half of Özbek’s reign, and in both instances the policy depended on playing the Venetian card against the Genoese. The difference between the two situations, similar though they are, is not obvious at first sight but is crucial: while the old khan was strong enough as a ruler to keep the Venetian-Genoese rivalry in check, his son was a lesser man, and had already clashed with the Genoese to no good end, thus losing that advantage—which had grave results for the rest of his reign in Sarai.

Janibek concluded separate peace with the Genoese and the Venetians in 1347, allowing the latter back to Tana, and must have known that he was thus restoring the ‘normal’ context for the rivalry of these two commercial republics. The result of this manoeuvre fell far short of all expectation: the war between the Italian powers was transferred from land to sea, and between 1350 and 1355 it in turn paralysed all commercial activity in the Black Sea, then in the peace treaty that followed the parties agreed to boycott Tana for three years. Even if this last clause was won at great cost and was only valid for three years, it marks a new victory in the Genoese policy of maintaining Caffa’s autonomy and primacy in the region—a state of affairs which was a thorn in the flesh for both Jochids and Venetians.
The merchants of the Serenissima must have been greatly tempted to revive the market at Tana, and knew that they would have had the support of their steppeland partners, but the risk of starting a new war with the Genoese on the scale of the war just finished was too great and the Venetians were forced to observe the letter of the treaty. There remained however the option, with Jochid help, of breaking the spirit of the accord, by breaching the Genoese blockade at some point not covered by the devetum.

The spot chosen to take over Tana’s function was Provato. Following orders handed down by Janibek-Khan, in 1356 the governor of Crimea and lord of Solkhat, Ramazan, granted the Venetians the right to trade in that port and to have a consulate there, undertaking to build houses for them where they could live as they wished, fixed the customs levy at only 3% and ruled that disputes between the locals and their ‘guests’ would be jointly settled by the consul and himself.

It is not difficult to understand the reasoning of the Golden Horde authorities here: Provato, on the coast between Soldaia and Caffa was well placed to serve as a port for Solkhat, and the charter under discussion explicitly mentioned such a function. The intention to divert Solkhat’s traffic away from Caffa to Provato is as obvious as it is understandable: Solkhat was the political capital of the Tartar Crimea, with a thriving mercantile life, and shared an interest with Sarai in escaping from Caffa’s stifling monopoly, though only if the new port was acceptable, convenient and practicable. The Jochid-Venetian treaty of March 1356 shows

\[ \text{in forti manu procedere contra eos} \] (Papacostea, “Tana,” p. 213). Similar disappointment must have reigned among the Horde.

\[ ^{284} \] Known to historiography as the Second War of the Straits, this conflict pitted the Genoese against the Venetians from 1350 to 1355 and was in fact a struggle to control access to the Black Sea, though its origins lay in Janibek’s charter of 1347 to the Venetians at Tana, and in the Genoese reaction to the grant (cf. Papacostea, “Tana,” pp. 209–210).

\[ ^{285} \] A Mamluk source of 1349 mentions a person of the same name, Ramaḍān, holding the same office (Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 450).

\[ ^{286} \] The settlement must have been in the early stages of construction, judging by the document: \text{lo Provato, che a nome Citade Nova} (DVL, II, 25).


\[ ^{289} \] DVL, II, 24: \text{Vignando li marcadanti Venetiani che li debia vegnir in lo Provato. Trazando le sue mercadantie a vendando quele in Sorgati, debia pagar III per centener.}

\[ ^{290} \] This was not always the case; see for example chapter 4.2.7.
that the parties to the contract thought the project realistic. The targets of this hostile measure, the Genoese, were much more sceptical, and future developments bore them out: Caffa was not toppled from its position of hegemony.291

This outcome was certainly the darkest blot on Janibek’s reign, which had from the start been driven by an obsessive desire to conquer Caffa, whether by Jochid strength alone or with Venetian support after 1347.

The ultimate effects of his Black Sea policy were not confined to this evident defeat. The state of permanent insecurity and the lengthy imposition of sanctions against merchants must have led to a steep drop in trade on the Northern Black Sea coast, although there are few documentary sources to confirm this, and this would have considerably reduced the khan’s income from customs. This in turn affected expenditure, including military spending, and the khan’s army shrank in direct proportion to his dwindling budget. Janibek’s ill-advised Black Sea policy thus had knock-on ill effects far beyond its own limits. Clashes with the Christian powers of East-Central Europe and the Transcaucasian campaign would both show just how much the Golden Horde’s military capacity had been diminished by the war with the Genoese, and additionally by the plague, though it is impossible to determine exactly what contribution this had.292

Although the Russian knyazī could still be firmly controlled,293 by contrast neighbouring Christian powers exerted steady pressure on the Western and North-Western fronts for the first time. Although Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian and Romanian military campaigns as yet had no

---


292 Timur’s campaign of 1395/6 demonstrates how susceptible the Golden Horde was to downturns in trade even when its demographic health was not affected by natural disaster; he destroyed the Jochid commercial centres in the Cuman steppe, leading to its final decline and disintegration; cf. chapter 1.1.2.

293 Cf. Spuler, *Horde*, pp. 103–108; Brătianu, *Vicina*, p. 77, points out the link between this Western front and the Northern Black Sea coast.
irreversible effects, they certainly marked a shift in the balance of power against the Jochids.\textsuperscript{294}

The most surprising aspect of the Transcaucasian expedition, given that the state of affairs in Persia was so favourable to intervention and had been since the beginning of Janibek’s reign in 1341, was how long it took for Jochid troops to invade and how brief their resounding victory was: Tabriz was not occupied until 1356, and was only hold for a year and some months.\textsuperscript{295}

The reason for the campaign’s long delay must surely be sought in Tartar entanglement in clashes on the Golden Horde’s Western frontier and on the Northern Black Sea coast. It was only when these two fires had been smothered, or rather banked down, that the khan was able to lead his army to invade Azerbaijan. It is instructive here to observe the political and diplomatic preparations for the campaign of 1356.

Janibek probably reached an accord with his principal enemy on the Western borders, Casimir III of Poland, by 1353,\textsuperscript{296} while by contrast conditions did not favour a settlement on the Northern Black Sea coast which might somehow eclipse Caffa’s position until late 1355, after the end of the Second War of the Straits and the subsequent peace, when the Venetians were open to negotiations with the Jochids. The chronology of the charter of 2nd March 1356, grafting a Venetian settlement alongside Caffa designed to neutralise the great Genoese trade centre for a while at least, suggests that it was intended as a political step allowing the immediate launch of the campaign in Transcaucasia.


\textsuperscript{296} It was probably in 1353 that Janibek recognised the transfer of Ruthenia, a Golden Horde vassal principality, to the Polish crown, in return for a tribute payment; in any case, by 1355–1356 Jochid-Polish relations were as good as they could be, and steppeland cavalry fought alongside Casimir against the Lithuanians; in January 1357 Pope Innocent VI felt obliged to chide Casimir for concluding \textit{fedus et ligam} with the Tartars (Rhode, \textit{Ostgrenze}, pp. 186, 194–195, 197, Knoll, \textit{Rise}, pp. 138, 140, 156–157, Spinei, \textit{Moldova}, pp. 268–269). We might remark here that the arrangement was not ideologically sound from the Golden Horde perspective either, since a Chinggisid ruler could not bargain vassal territory away but was supposed to defend it at all costs; Janibek’s deal thus offers further proof of the deplorable state of Jochid military strength and finances under his reign.
This inference reveals how gravely the Jochid state was generally affected by the khan’s stubborn anti-Genoese fixation, which for a decade and a half had been a principal obstacle to the conquest of Tabriz—the Golden Horde’s absolute priority, as vital during his reign as it had been for Berke-Khan at his coronation.

Janibek was only able to shake off his obsession too late, with fatal consequences for himself and his successors. His victory in Tabriz was a last gasp, when the Horde was exhausted by its many delays and previous attempts: it was compromised from the start, and could only be a brief triumph. When the occupation forces withdrew abruptly, one consequence was that the great Muslim merchants gave up any hope of a restored Ilkhanate under Jochid rule.

Yet the gravest flaw at the end of Janibek’s reign was the internal situation in the ulus itself: the price of pursuing his idée fixe, the conquest of Caffa, combined with the effects of the plague to threaten the Golden Horde’s future. His successor Berdibek could only await the outcome.

4.2.6 Berdibek and Mamai: The Low Point

In Janibek’s time the decline was only obvious at the level of external events, but during the next two decades it engulfed the interior of the Jochid state as well. A new factor, unprecedented in Golden Horde history, was the crumbling of the central power. Though such anarchic tendencies were probably never absent in the Cuman horde, before Berdibek’s time, the khans had been able to reign them in. Warning signs of state disintegration at the beginning of his short and violent reign were confirmed by the end, with four further khans minting money alongside Berdibek in 1361. Such pluralism was diametrically opposed to Chinggisid governmental tradition, and marked the end of the Golden Horde’s existence as a centralised state for some time.

298 The most obvious and threatening example being the self-proclaimed Khan Noghai on the Danube (cf. Veselovskiy, Khan, Decei, “Horde,” and chapter 4.3.2); Özbek himself did not come to the throne without first destroying rival factions in a bloodbath (Spuler, Horde, p. 109, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 270–271).
299 Nikonovskaya Letopis’, X, p. 229, records for 1357 that “in this year the quarrels within the Horde did not end, rather they became worse and spread;” for more on his reign, Spuler, Horde, p. 109.
300 Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 270–271; Spuler, Horde, p. 109, dates his death earlier, to 1359, on the basis of a late (probably mistaken) Mamluk source.
Berdibek presided over the transition from one epoch to the other, and his Black Sea policy was consistent with such a reign: he was the last khan who tried to pursue the long-established goals. Harking back to the privileges issued by Özbek and Janibek to emphasise the continuity of their friendship, on 24th September 1358 Berdibek renewed the grant of Tana to the Venetians under the same conditions as found in the document his father had issued.\(^{301}\) Two days later the new governor in Solkhat, Qutlugh Temür,\(^{302}\) also undertook to open Crimean harbours: Venetian merchants could trade in the ports of Soldaia, Provato and Calitra.\(^{303}\) Customs duties were levied at 3% here, as opposed to 5% at Tana, showing that the Jochids wished to stimulate Venetian trade in an area dominated by Genoese Caffa.

The resulting influx of capital into the treasury at Sarai was meant to consolidate the tottering state, but could not save the central government or state cohesion: the forces which held all parts of the empire together in a functioning whole had begun to slacken shortly after Janibek took the throne, and the process of disintegration was far too advanced for Berdibek to be able to halt the collapse of the Golden Horde with his attempted economic remedy.

Beginning in 1360–1361, the chaos of civil war engulfed the steppe Tartars for almost two decades. Characteristic for this stage in the ulus of Jochi’s collapse is the succession of numerous khans who were recognised in larger or smaller territories: for the twenty years from 1360 to 1380, chronicles and numismatic evidence attest no fewer than twenty-five such rulers, none with any great political profile.\(^{304}\)

When Khizir was enthroned at Sarai in 1361, this was unprecedented in Golden Horde dynastic history: he was a prince of the White Horde, and came after a long line of khans who had all come from one family, from Batu onward. More important than the genealogical aspect was the underlying reality that Khizir marked the beginning of White Horde dominance over the Blue Horde, when former Eastern vassals prevailed.

---

\(^{301}\) *DVL*, II, pp. 47–51.


\(^{304}\) Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, p. 271.
over the ruling ulus on the Volga.\textsuperscript{305} This inversion of power relations was taken to its logical conclusion once Khan Toqtamïsh took power in 1380, and its profound importance was felt throughout Jochid lands: the new order between the hordes lasted until the end of the Mongol state on the Cuman steppe. This dominance of the periphery over the centre may also be called part of the disastrous legacy of Janibek and Berdibek.

When the usurpers were enthroned in Sarai-Berke on the left bank of the Volga, this provoked a loyalist reaction around the emir Mamai, the most prominent figure in this turbulent period. He governed ably and energetically, in the name of the khan Avdula (Abdullah) until 1370, and then in the name of Bulaq.\textsuperscript{306} These two camps, the Blue Horde and the White, each had their own internal disputes,\textsuperscript{307} and the line between them was fixed at the Volga, with Sarai and Astrakhan changing hands between rulers several times.\textsuperscript{308}

Forced to abandon the whole of the Eastern half of the ulus to their kinfolk, Mamai’s Tartars to the West of the Volga and on the Crimea had lost a great part of the power base which had so far allowed them to impose their rule on their Northern neighbours, the Russians and Lithuanians. While details varied from case to case, the underlying factors determining the new relations in 1360–1380 were the same, namely a shifting balance of power: while centralised rule was breaking down in the Horde, in the neighbouring states it was coalescing, more quickly in Lithuania, more slowly in the Russian world which was still subject to the ‘Mongol yoke.’ Telling evidence for the state of Tartar-Lithuanian and Tartar-Russian relations during the civil wars of the Horde is furnished by the Lithuanian victory at Sinie Vodï in 1362 or 1363 and the Russian victory at Kulikovo in 1380.

Although the details of the Battle of Blue Waters (Sinie Vodï) are uncertain, chronicles of the event agree on one undisputed fact: the army of Algirdas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, met no more than modest resistance on the battlefield from a few local brigades commanded by three Tartar princes—clear proof of how far the disintegration of the Horde had

\textsuperscript{305} On the distinction between the Blue Horde and the White Horde, Kök Orda and Aq Orda, cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 261–262, and Fedorov-Davidov, Stroy, pp. 143–150.
\textsuperscript{306} Cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 279, 283.
\textsuperscript{307} Cf. the attempts of Spuler, Horde, pp. 112–124, to use numismatic evidence to reconstruct the holdings of the various khans and pretenders.
\textsuperscript{308} Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 280.
progressed. The annexation of Podolia that followed then stimulated Lithuania’s appetite for expansion at the expense of the Golden Horde: after 1365, Tartars watched without intervening while Kiev, with a great part of the Ukraine, was brought within the Grand Duchy’s borders.

The Genoese could only profit from the manifestly rudderless state of the ulus of Jochi. In 1365 they occupied Soldaia, without meeting the least resistance from the steppe. If we bear in mind the limited value of the ports of Provato and Calitra, the occupation is shown to have weighed as much against the Venetians as against the Tartars, rendering almost completely pointless the Jochid grant of Crimean bridgeheads to merchants from the Serenissima. Genoa’s new territorial acquisition was the second, after the conquest of Balaklava twenty years earlier, and continued the same effort to consolidate Caffa’s dominant role on the Northern Black Sea coast. Genoa’s strategy met with an unexpected Tartar response: at some point between 1376 and 1380, Mamai reconquered Soldaia. This action was the only move by the Jochid state in two decades of violent convulsion that may be called an active expression of Black Sea policy, and even this was a spasm from a febrile state. The return of the town to Jochid rule was far too short-lived to be of any economic benefit either to the Tartars or to the Venetians.

Otherwise, it was impossible to have a trade policy such as had been the norm until 1361, since the crumbling of Jochid state power had completely changed the conditions for long-distance trade in the Cuman steppe: in the vast territory between the mouth of the Don and the Amu Darya, there was no longer any supreme authority such as had hitherto offered exemplary safety, infrastructure and facilities for merchant caravans to travel. During the whole period of the civil wars, there is no mention of Venetian consuls at Tana, an unmistakable sign of the decline of trade in the Golden Horde interior and at its Black Sea periphery. Nor

---


310 According to Spuler, Horde, p. 119, this took place sometime between 1365 and 1370; Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 282, agree that it was “after 1365.”


312 A Genoese garrison of 42 men is attested here for the last time in 1376 (Balard, I, p. 159), while Toqtamish’s treaty of 1380 restoring the citadel to their rule mentions that Mamai had chased them out (Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 54; Ciocîltan, “Restaurația,” p. 580).

313 Cf. the list published in Nystazopoulou-Pélékidis, Venise, p. 48.
did the Genoese visit the port at the mouth of the Don during this period, completely exposed as it was to events on the steppe.\textsuperscript{314}

The Genoese had struck deep roots on the Northern Black Sea coast and withstood the troubles of the times far better than their Venetian rivals. They did not cease to extend and reinforce the walls of Caffa during the latter fourteenth century,\textsuperscript{315} and sheltered by these walls, they tried to win the goodwill of the “emperors” of the day and, of course, of Mamai, who visited the city in October 1374 where he was received with splendid pomp. A few months later, the Genoese sent him gifts of rich clothing, and the consul gave envoys sent out to the Horde similar gifts to deliver.\textsuperscript{316}

The Caffan authorities’ diplomatic charm offensive met a definite setback at a crucial nexus of Tartar-Genoese relations, since it did not prevent Mamai from taking Soldaia back by force.\textsuperscript{317} Setting aside this incident, and other factors which complicated the relationship, it is possible that shared commercial interests led the Tartars and Genoese to an arrangement, tacit as always. Unfortunately any such understanding could only have been of limited geographical reach, and politically shaky—an expression of the erosion of Jochid power, no longer able to guarantee the needs of long-range commerce.

The decline of the Golden Horde was remarked far and wide\textsuperscript{318} and could not have escaped the attention of the Tartars’ closest and most numerous vassals, who up until now had also been the most obedient: the Russians. Jochid weakness was to waken the latent tendencies for emancipation, and these joined together in a very dangerous grouping of forces. During the last years of Mamai and the early reign of Toqtamish, who succeeded in 1380, this was the most important and most problematic issue. It would decisively worsen both the internal developments in the Tartar state and its foreign policy, the latter including Black Sea policy.

The Grand Prince of Moscow, Dmitriy Ivanovich (1362–1389), was the moving spirit of unification among the Russian knyazates and of the anti-Mongol insurgency, two developments which converged and became

\textsuperscript{314} Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 155.
\textsuperscript{315} Cf. ibid., pp. 207–214.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid., p. 457 and Iorga, \textit{Notes}, I, pp. 32–33.
\textsuperscript{317} Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, p. 457 note 4, loses sight of the Genoese garrison that he had registered at Soldaia in 1376 (on p. 159) and contradicts himself when he wrongly dates the Jochid reconquest: “L’événement est sans doute antérieur à 1374–1375, puisqu’alors Mamaï est bien accueilli par les autorités de Caffa.”
\textsuperscript{318} Among other accounts, see the conclusive diagnosis offered by the Byzantine Demetrios Kydones in 1366 (Jireček, \textit{Geschichte}, I, 428).
fused. In order to put an end to such dangerous developments, Mamai sent a punitive expedition against the rebellious vassals. Its defeat at the Battle of the Vozha River served only to give an idea of the strength of the enemy and to give the Kremlin an important psychological victory alongside its military one.

For the next two years, both camps prepared for the decisive battle. As well as mobilising all the resources he could draw upon, Mamai “paid for the Fryazï, the Circassians, the Yashï and others besides” and obtained promises of aid from Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania, whose rivalry with Dmitriy Ivanovich was well-known. Despite the defection of Oleg, Duke of Ryazan, who joined the Tartar-Lithuanian alliance, a vast ‘national’ army from all Russian lands fought under Moscow’s banner.

The decisive confrontation took place by the Don, at the field of Kulikovo, on 8th September 1380. Battle was joined with great ferocity, and after massive losses on both sides the hard-fought victory went to the Russians, led with unequalled bravery by Dmitriy Ivanovich, remembered in history as Dmitriy Donskoy after the river where he won the day.

News of the victory spread like wildfire, and historians have always stressed its implications: it was the first time that such a large Tartar army had been defeated, and the Horde was no longer invincible. For all the tribulations that the Russian people were yet to endure until their final liberation, the course had been set by the Grand Duke of Moscow and confirmed at Kulikovo. The battle of 1380 marked the low point in the Golden Horde’s precipitate slide from power.

319 Nasonov, Mongoli, p. 126: “The first steps toward the unification of Russia around Moscow were characterised by resistance to Tartar rule.” Certainly, Moscow’s attempts to impose themselves as leaders of concerted resistance to the Golden Horde are older, but the Grand Prince brought a new force and a consistent, inexorable approach to the project.


321 Cf. Egorov, “Orda,” pp. 174–213, who examined changes in the internal structure of the Golden Horde from the mid-fourteenth century to 1380; he minutely examined the social and economic causes in the period which led to centrifugal tendencies and the crumbling of the Jochid feudal state.

322 Nikonovskaya letopis’, XI, p. 65; the Russian word Fryaz corresponds to Franc, meaning ‘Western, Catholic;’ the Yashï are the Alans (cf. Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 935).

323 Despite this agreement, Lithuanian troops never joined forces with the Tartars, although they were near the site of the battle (cf. Beskrovnïy, “Bitva,” p. 234).

324 Although the lists of participants differ from one chronicle to another, historians estimate around 70,000 Russian soldiers and 50–60,000 in Mamai’s army; there are much larger numbers given in Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 292.

Many historians studying this epoch-making event have seen the battle as valuable evidence for Russia’s continuing liberation struggle and the unification process.\textsuperscript{326} By contrast, it was not very significant in terms of its immediate practical results either for the victors or the defeated, paradoxical though this may seem.

Mamai, the main actor on the legitimist side in two decades of struggle against the rival khans of the White Horde, did not have enough military strength to expel the invaders from the East and to reunite the ulus of Jochi, but he did at least have the strength to prevent his enemies from doing the same from their side. His defeat at Kulikovo created a power vacuum in the territories West of the Volga. For the first time a khan of the White Horde, Toqtamish, entered these lands and in 1380 easily scattered Mamai’s remaining forces at Kalka.\textsuperscript{327} With one blow, the new arrival ended the disintegration of the steppeland state and restored a central power that could act in both internal and external affairs just as it had in the period before the civil wars.\textsuperscript{328} Thus the victory of the Russian knyazate at Kulikovo in September 1380 had an unexpected effect in the short term: by allowing Toqtamish’s victory over Mamai at Kalka a few weeks later, it contributed decisively to restoring the ulus of Jochi to its former unity and strength.

4.2.7 Toqtamish: A Brief Revival

Although the new khan’s rule was recognised throughout the empire after 1380 and his triumphant march across the Volga, the work of rebuilding the state and of imposing himself as the central power was nevertheless a fairly long-drawn-out process, with distinct stages.

Toqtamish was driven by the idea of restoring the Golden Horde to its former glory, and each step he took was directed toward this great goal. His long-term strategic goal was based on the principle of dealing with his enemies one by one. The plan was consistently applied and gives Tartar actions during the first decade of Toqtamish’s reign remarkable coherence in a context as vast as it was clearly demarcated.

Toqtamish’s Black Sea policy was anchored in as a basic component of the Sarai strategic plan, and made itself felt throughout all phases of state reconstruction. Circumstances changed from one stage to the next, but

\textsuperscript{326} On the battle’s consequences on many levels, see Grekov, “Mesto,” pp. 113–141.
\textsuperscript{327} Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 320–321.
the underlying political plan kept the same essentially unitary character once it had been so suddenly revived in 1380. It was also a remarkably original plan. While the khans’ efforts had for half a century been directed toward policies aimed against Genoa and obviously favouring the Venetians, Toqtamish took exactly the opposite approach to ties with the Italians: he was unprecedentedly generous to the Genoese merchants, and in another innovative move, did not hold back from putting this into writing in a series of official treaties. These reflect the political circumstances in which they were concluded.

The earliest of the treaties was signed on 27th November 1380. The “great commune” of Caffa was represented at negotiations by a delegation led by Gianone del Bosco, the consul of Caffa and of all Genoese on the territory of the Golden Horde. The Tartar delegation was led by Cherkez, as “lord of Solkhat and of the people of the Crimea” and as the khan’s representative.

329 Sacy, “Pièces,” pp. 53–55, published the text of the treaty as it was written in Genoese and translated it into French (pp. 55–58); the Genoese version represents a translation of the lost original in lingua Ugaresca (Cuman, written in Uighur characters), written down by order of the consul at Caffa, Meliaduce Cataneo, on 28th July 1383; this is the only copy of the treaty that has been preserved, and is also published by Desimoni, “Trattato,” pp. 162–166; cf. Ciocîltan, “Reichspolitik,” pp. 261 ff.

330 These latter are referred to as Franchi conachi; Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 55 note 2, interprets the second word as a calque of the Cuman konak, meaning ‘auberge, hôtellerie [...] hôte, étranger à qui on donne l’hospitalité’ with the same connotations as the Latin equivalent hospes used in Central and Western Europe. The treaty refers to Franchi conachi [...] in toto imperio di Gazaria, important for the evidence this provides about the usage of this geographical term: Gazaria is frequently encountered in Genoese documents and referred not just to the Crimea (as some scholars imagine) but to the Golden Horde as a whole unless further specified.

331 Sometimes called Jharcasso in the text and sometimes Zicho. Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 56 note 1, supposes that the latter name is a corruption of sheikh, but it is rather the singular form of Zichi, a name widely used in the Middle Ages for the Circassians, alongside Jhar-cassi (cf. also Smirnov, Khanstvo, p. 134); the Zicho of the document is probably the same as Sichibey, signor de la Tana, mentioned in 1347 (DVL, I, p. 312) and as Hajji Cherkez, who had been governor of Astrakhan in Mamai’s day (Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 391, Smirnov, Khanstvo, pp. 230–231).


333 Although the khan is not named, we are certainly dealing with Toqtamish here and not Mamai, as Brătianu, Mer Noire, p. 274, supposed, or with Konak Bey, as Basso, Genova, p. 99, assumes on no evidence; the document makes a clear distinction between imperao and Mamai segno (Sacy, “Pièces,” pp. 55, 57). Cherkez came to negotiate cum lo paysam de lo imperao, which S. de Sacy (p. 56) takes to mean “avec les gens du pays,” although paysa is in act a Mongol term, payza, baysa, meaning a tablet of gold, silver, iron, bronze or wood, bestowed upon a khan’s plenipotentiary (Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 472).
Cherkez had been sent to seek peace and friendship, on condition that the Genoese remain faithful and loyal to the khan, friends of his friends and enemies of his enemies, that they not receive his enemies or traitors to the empire in their towns, and that they enlarge his fame. This was the basic political framework within which matters of common interest were to be discussed and resolved.

The debate over the status of Caffa and its government had to be at the centre of discussions. The issue had poisoned Tartar-Genoese relations for a long time and was now settled in favour of the Republic: although no single clause in the treaty explicitly mentions Genoese sovereignty over Caffa, it was the unspoken assumption and basis for negotiation for all legal and commercial stipulations of the November 1380 treaty.

Thus the treaty text reserves to the Genoese consul the right to adjudicate not just in disputes between residents of Caffa, whatever their status, but also in disputes between the ‘guests’ (cunachi) and the ‘khan’s men’ (canluchi) that developed within the city. The only cases in which he was not empowered to judge were disputes between Tartars who had come to the city on business, which were to be resolved by a tudun, the khan’s highest representative on the spot. Comparison of the two roles shows that the consul was the supreme authority in the city, and the tudun simply the head of all Tartar guests in Caffa. This unequal division of jurisdictional powers between the two local dignitaries indicates that Genoese sovereignty was recognised, and further conclusive proof comes from the understanding that the ‘khan’s men’ would be allowed to visit the city—a meaningless distinction if Caffa was seen to belong to the Golden Horde rather than to Genoa.

Caffan autonomy as an unspoken precondition of the treaty was also important in the treaty’s commercial provisions: these clauses were

---

335 On the ethnic composition and social stratification of Caffa’s residents, and their professional specialisation, cf. Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 229–354, and Airaldi, Studi, pp. 62–98; the laws governing citizens according to their wealth, status and occupation in the fifteenth are examined by Malowist, Kaffa, pp. V–IX; slaves had no recourse to justice, and the only mention of slaves in the treaty is that if they flee to Caffa or Solkhat, they are to be returned to their masters, and that whoever apprehends a runaway will be rewarded with a fixed sum of 35 aspers (Sacy, “Pièces,” pp. 54–55).
337 Titano in the Genoese text (Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 54); on the meaning of the term, cf. Iorga, Notes, I, p. 12 note 1, and Smirnov, Khanstvo, pp. 39–43; Cherkez himself only judged cases between the khan’s subjects at Solkhat (Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 55).
carefully worded on this basis, but autonomy also explains an apparent omission. The treaty fixed in writing the Tartar guarantee that all merchants who could show proof of Genoese citizenship may travel freely wherever they wished in the empire, in full safety, without having to pay any more than the usual taxes; in return, a Tartar customs collector would reside in Caffa to collect the moneys due to the khan under the old usage. It seems odd though that the treaty makes no reference to the Genoese customs, although there is clear data showing that they existed in Caffa at the time. There is a simple explanation for the omission: from the moment when the Tartar admitted Genoese sovereignty over Caffa, however tacitly, the Genoese customs became an internal matter for the commune and no concern of the khan at Sarai.

Further proof that the Golden Horde representatives had granted unusual concessions in these negotiations comes with the extensive land concessions which they agreed, directly contravening Chinggisid law and practise which forbade such surrender of lands from the ulus. The treaty text is unambiguous: “The eighteen villages which were subject to Soldaia and annexed to that town when the commune occupied it, and which lord Mamai took back by force of arms, will be at the commune’s disposal and the consul’s, and are released from the empire. Also Gothia, its villages and people, who are Christian, from Cembalo to Soldaia, will belong to the commonwealth, and the above-mentioned villages, their people and lands and waters shall all be freed. Lord Cherkez has given them to the commonwealth, and has pledged and sworn that he will not go back on these words.”

Taken together, the provisions of the November 1380 treaty thus recognise in the clearest possible manner a Genoese victory and Tartar defeat: khan Toqtamisch not only resigned himself to recognising the fait accompli

---

338 *Che chi se spaiha per Zenoveyse* also had the right to graze their herds and drive their carts and wagons wherever they wished on Tartar soil.

339 The few surviving trade registers from the city contain accounts of sums collected as customs duty in 1375, 1382 and 1387 (Balard, *Romanie*, I, p. 409); this was a surprising low levy of 1% of value of goods, compared with the duty levied by the Tartars which varied from 3% to 5%. Although such liberal policies inevitably hurt municipal income, the marketplace became more attractive and the volume of trade rose, this leading to increased income from the staple right, which was certainly more profitable than the customs even if it benefited individual merchants rather than the commune as a whole.

of Caffan autonomy but also conceded to Genoa full rule over a number of settlements which had hitherto been Golden Horde territory. The presence of *a tudun* and customs officers does not even begin to make up for the immense advantages the Genoese had won. The suspicion that this unequal treaty was matched by some compensating arrangement is an obvious one. Certain events in the Horde in the run-up to the negotiations of autumn 1380 supply the clarification we need.

A Russian chronicler reports that after the defeat at Kulikovo, “a tsar of the East,” named Toqtamïsh deposed Mamai. The source records that Toqtamïsh triumphed and Mamai fled, betrayed by his emirs and hunted by his enemies’ men, and sought refuge in Caffa. The city authorities granted him shelter, but then seeing that he had arrived “with uncounted wealth, with much gold and silver, gems and pearls” they killed him and took his riches. The chronicler concludes that “this is how Tsar Toqtamïsh took Mamai’s Horde and all its dependencies.”

These are the only events that the chronicler records between 8th September 1380, the date of the battle of Kulikovo, and 27th November the same year, when the first Genoese-Tartar treaty was signed. It is obvious that the author knows nothing of any agreement between Toqtamïsh and the Caffan authorities. Working only with what information he had, he concluded that Mamai was killed for strictly material motives. Once we add other information, however, we may reach different conclusions.

However tempting Mamai’s treasure may have been for the Genoese, under the circumstances his head was worth even more: the colonists relieved Toqtamish of a political rival by assassination, which was their service in exchange for the unprecedented concession. When we read the treaty text alongside the chronicler’s account, we realise that this was a mutually advantageous bargain: in return for recognising Caffan autonomy and transferring Gothia to Genoese possession, Toqtamïsh was rid of a threatening enemy and was left sole lord of the lands this side of the Volga, including the Crimea. The unity of the Golden Horde was thus restored, at the cost of important Genoese gains at the khan’s expense.

There was a surprisingly short interval between the first treaty of 27th November 1380 and the second, of 24th February the following year. Some

---


342 *Nikonovskaya Letopis’*, XI, p. 69.

historians have taken this, along with the fact that the treaties were identical in content, to mean that the first copy we have preserved was in fact nothing more than a draft of the official treaty, concluded three months later.\footnote{Desimoni, “Trattato,” pp. 162–163, as the title of his study reveals, considers that there was only one treaty, negotiated over the period November 1380–February 1381. Heyd, \textit{Histoire}, II, p. 205, reaches the same conclusion, observing that the first example was unsigned and taking this as proof that the treaty itself was only definitively concluded on 23rd February 1381; this argument is considerably undermined once we remember that the first text was not the original treaty of 27th November 1380 but a later copy, which we might expect to be unsigned but which nevertheless mentions all Tartar and Genoese parties to the treaty; the notary who drew up the copy confirms that it was taken from Caffian official documents (cf. Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 55), and the absence of signatures is in the normal manner of things; the notary provided authentication.} Once we realise however that the leader of the Tartar delegation had been replaced, and once we tease out the political implications here, it becomes clear that the second document is a confirmation of the first.

When Ilyas Bey was named as chief negotiator in place of Cherkez, this was not a routine piece of business as usual for the central power but expressed deep shifts at the core of the Golden Horde following the victory at Kalka. It did not take long for the demoralising effect to make itself felt. “Mamai’s knyazï took council among themselves and said: ‘It is not good that we live under Mamai’s rule, we are a laughing-stock wherever we go and we are destroyed by our enemies; what does it help us to live under his rule? Let us go to the tsar Toqtamish and we will see how things are under his rule.’”\footnote{Nikonovskaya \textit{Letopis’}, XI, p. 69.} There is no doubt that this is what they did, and that the new khan was glad to have the services of the renegade emirs in return for various advantages, including recognition of their status and privileges.

Among the high-ranking defectors was Qutlugh Bugha,\footnote{The treaty of 23rd February 1381 sets out the family relations; \textit{Ellias segno fijo de Inach Cototoloboga seando mandao segno in Sorgati} (Desimoni, “Trattato,” p. 162). We find \textit{Inach} along with other corrupt forms in various Genoese documents, \textit{Inat}, \textit{Ina}, \textit{Ayna} (Iorga, \textit{Notes}, I, pp. 15–16), and it was understood as part of the personal name of Qutlugh Bugha (which is also much mangled in the transmission); it is actually the noble title \textit{inak}, used by the Golden Horde Tartars to mean ‘courtier, person close to the khan’ (Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sborník}, II, p. 302, Fedorov-Davidov, \textit{Stroy}, pp. 46–47).} whose status in the Horde grew considerably once he had embraced the victor’s cause. There appear to be records of the mid-fourteenth century that link him to Crimean affairs,\footnote{\textit{Cotloboga} (\textit{Cotulubuga}) appears as a witness to the treaties with the Venetians of Janibek in 1347 and Berdibek in 1358 (\textit{DVL}, I, p. 313, II, p. 51), and one of the Tartar commanders who fought the Grand Duke of Lithuania at the Battle of ‘Blue Waters’ in 1362} and in the last years of Mamai’s reign he seems to have
been governor of the peninsula. This would explain why his son Ilyas took
over the office in the autumn of 1380, while Qutlugh Bugha was caught up
in the maelstrom of the war, then surrendered the position to his father
once more in 1382 when he returned to the Crimea to take up his function
as ‘lord of Solkhat.’

When Ilyas fought to defend his family’s ancient rights during the events
of 1380–1381, this is revealing of the relations of a nascent local autonomy
with the central power and with the neighbouring coastal Genoese. Like-
wise, when Toqtamish named Cherkez, the leader of the Tartar delega-
tion in November 1380, as ‘lord of Solkhat and the people of the island of
Solkhat,’348 this meant that Ilyas, who had been lord in the Crimean capi-
tal until that moment, was deposed. Though there are no direct references
to tell how Qutlugh Bugha’s son responded to this demotion, his reaction
must have been extremely vehement, since on 20th November, no more
than a week before the treaty was signed with Cherkez, the government
of Caffa paid a certain Teofilatto Segnorita to kill the ‘Saracen of Solkhat,’
described with unusual rancour in the source (a city accounts book) as an
enemy of mankind and of the Genoese.349

The crisis could not be solved there on the spot: Ilyas was unable to pre-
vent the consul of Caffa from making the treaty with Toqtamish, through
Cherkez, and the Genoese were unable to eliminate their enemy from
Solkhat. Instead the conflict was solved on a much larger scale, taking in
the whole of the Golden Horde, and based on a reconciliation between
the nomad aristocracy of the Western part of the ulus of Jochi and the
invading khan from the East. A ruler from the White Horde now sat on
the throne at Sarai, the first such to be recognised by Tartars from both
the right and the left bank of the Volga. The emirs who had abandoned
Mamai had not in vain submitted to Toqtamish, who confirmed their old
privileges and opened for them the path to high state office. The case
of Qutlugh Bugha demonstrates the unifying khan’s conciliatory attitude
toward former adversaries.

348 The treaty text records that the appointment was simultaneously with his nomina-
tion as negotiator: Cum [. . .] de lo imperao Jharcasso segno, quando elo fò mandaao per segno
in Solcati e do lo povo de la ysora de Sorcati per cercare la amistai e lo amo (Sacy, “Pièces,”

349 Iorga, Notes, I, p. 17.
Appointed as the new ruler’s councillor as a well-informed veteran of dealings with Europeans and the West, Qutlugh Bugha was charged with a highly sensitive mission shortly after the battle of Kalka, when he was put in charge of an embassy to the Lithuanians to tell them of the victory and present his master’s hegemonic claims.

The exceptional honours bestowed upon Qutlugh Bugha from the start of his collaboration with the new khan led to the resolution of the vexed Crimean question. Toqtamîsh had made the ‘outsider’ Cherkez his representative in the Crimea before reaching an agreement with the local dynastic potentates, but now removed him and gave his mandate to Ilyas, son of Qutlugh Bugha, a move that contributed significantly to the general pacification in the Golden Horde during the winter of 1380/81. These internal changes in the Horde explain the existence of two identical treaties with two different heads of the Tartar delegation.

One of the most obscure features of the treaty of 1381 is Toqtamîsh’s motive in making so many concessions, when these infringed considerably on rights traditionally held in the Crimea by Qutlugh Bugha’s family, recently back in favour with the khan. It is possible that the Caffans may have been holding Mamai hostage all winter until the Horde’s place in Crimea was settled, then sacrificed this pawn only after the second

---

350 Qutlugh Bugha became inak sometime before 23rd February 1381, when he is attested as such in the Genoese treaty.

351 He is first mentioned in high office in a treaty of 1387 as dominus Solcatensis et brachii recti imperii Gazarie (Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 62), but probably held the post from 1380, given his early responsibilities for the new ruler (see following note).

352 The embassy is not precisely dated but must have set off shortly after the coronation; the only reference is in the preamble to a document addressed to the King of Poland in 1393: “I, Toqtamîsh, address Jagiello […] We sent you our envoys before now, led by Qutlugh Bugha and Hasan, and you have sent us your envoys to perform submission” (Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 324). Hasan was the son of the former governor of the Crimea, Ramazan, and led an embassy to Egypt in 1384/5 (Fedorov-Davydov, Stroy, p. 135); he is another example of the ‘reconciled emir.’ At the time of the first Tartar embassy, Jagiello was only Grand Duke of Lithuania, becoming King of Poland in 1385 with the Union of Krewa between the Polish and Lithuanian states.

353 The chronology is relative here; Mamai’s emirs must have defected after the battle of Kalka, which is undated but certainly took place after the battle of Kulikovo, 8th September 1380, and probably after the Genoese treaty with Cherkez, 27th November. The emirs must have been reconciled to Toqtamîsh before Cherkez was removed in favour of Ilyas at the khan’s orders; the unification drive in the state is also illustrated by the khan’s monetary reform (Fedorov-Davydov, Stroy, p. 151).

354 The implicit recognition of Caffan autonomy affected the Tartar lord of Solkhät, but more immediately, so did the official concession of eighteen villages which had been under his sway before 1380.
treaty was signed,\textsuperscript{355} which they had every reason to consider more reliable. Another and more plausible explanation for why Toqtamïsh chose to continue to sacrifice so much for friendly relations with the Genoese in early 1381 is that the Golden Horde had a new foreign policy priority: the war against the Russians.

The rapid revival of Golden Horde power, and its territorial integration and internal consolidation, made it vital that the state now redefine its relations with the surrounding powers.

The Golden Horde’s sharp contraction over the past two decades had been sealed by the defeat at Kulikovo. This was a worse defeat than any before, since it confirmed that the new balance of power in Eastern Europe was tilted against the Horde. By the end of 1380, Toqtamïsh was already planning how to return his state to its former great power status.

The Russian chronicler recording the events of these years realised the urgency of this political course for Toqtamïsh, and wrote that in the very first days of his reign as khan of the whole horde, he “sent envoys that autumn to Dmitriy Ivanovich in Moscow, and to all the Russian knyazï, giving them news of his arrival in the empire of the Volga and of how he had taken the throne and defeated Mamai, his enemy and theirs, and that now he held power in the empire of the Volga.”\textsuperscript{356} The Tartar ambassadors were not just paying a protocol visit. They demanded that the victor of Kulikovo return to his old obedience to Sarai, and render the tribute due. Dmitriy Donskoy, like the other knyazï, submitted immediately and “sent his envoys, Tolbuga and Mokshya, with gifts and tribute to the horde of Toqtamish, the new Tsar of the Volga.”\textsuperscript{357} The chronicler attributes convincing motives to Dmitriy: the fearsome battle of 8th September 1380 had “exhausted all Russian lands, and the voyvodes and their serfs and soldiers, so much that there was great fear in all the Russias.”\textsuperscript{358}

\textsuperscript{355} This theory is supported by a register entry in Caffa’s public accounts from 17th March 1381, recording expenditure to buy falcons which were presented to the khan’s ambassadors and to Mamai (text published in Iorga, \textit{Notes}, I, p. 11). Balard, \textit{Romanie}, I, pp. 457–458, thus concludes that the emir was still alive at this point and died afterwards, no later than November of that year, when khan Toqtamïsh received Genoese ambassadors as sole and undisputed ruler; however, this reading overlooks the fact that the date in the register refers to the date of payment, rather than of purchase, and that it unambiguously states that the birds were accepted as a gift by Mamai’s men: \textit{captis temporibus retroactis in Soldaia}.

\textsuperscript{356} \textit{Nikonovskaya letopis’}, XI, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid.
When the Grand Duke of Moscow sent tribute, this was nothing but a tactical manoeuvre, forced by the fact that his military strength was at that moment exhausted. Even after Toqtamïsh took the throne at Sarai, the hero of Kulikovo did not give up hope that ‘the Russians’ might triumph. He continued to gather troops from all the Russian knyazates with the same vigour as he had shown before 1380, with an eye on the inevitable confrontation with the new khan on the Volga.\footnote{Grekov, Yakubovskiy, *Orda*, p. 327; very few responded to his call, however; the new khan was evidently much stronger than Mamai, and Russian military capacity much reduced after Kulikovo, so that there was no doubt as to the outcome of the next battle.}

These provocative mobilisations proved to Toqtamïsh that the menace had not vanished even though Dmitriy Donskoy had feigned submission, and he knew that war with the Russians was inevitable. The defeat inflicted on the Golden Horde had to be avenged: the Horde’s great power prestige depended on a decisive victory to cancel the material and psychological victory which the Russians had won at Kulikovo.\footnote{Spuler, *Horde*, p. 128, emphasises this point, saying that the principle motive of Toqtamïsh’s Russian campaign was to set an example.}

All of Toqtamïsh’s foreign policies were triangulated around this point, between autumn 1380 when the envoys were sent to Dmitriy and the summer of 1382 when the Tartars burnt Moscow.

These were the prevailing influences when Ilyas Bey concluded the treaty of February 1381 with the Genoese, at the khan’s orders. All the evidence suggests that Tartar concessions were strategic sacrifices made for the sake of the Russian campaign, and that the lengthy and complex diplomatic and military preparations excluded opening a new front in the Crimea. Even more convincingly, the third Tartar-Genoese treaty served the same end. Tartar relations with the Genoese in 1381–1382 were thus subordinated to Russian concerns, and developed very smoothly, as proven by frequent Caffan contact with the authorities in Solkhat and with the imperial capital in Sarai.

Ilyas Bey, who had been the commune’s mortal enemy in November 1380, became the consul’s close friend after the treaty of 23rd February following was signed: the city’s public accounts registers contain a brief account of the splendid feast which welcomed the lord of Solkhat to Caffa in autumn 1381.\footnote{Iorga, *Notes*, I, pp. 14, 18.} The same source reveals that the Genoese colonists had frequent dealings of all kinds with notable Tartars from Ilyas’ entourage and that of his father Qutlugh Bugha.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 11–19.}
The generous amounts of money spent on cultivating relations with the Tartars show that it was a Caffan priority, and this was not confined to local Crimean magnates: embassies were sent to Toqtamîsh in February and November 1382, and in March an envoy from the Horde, a ‘baron of the empire’, received rich gifts, all of this showing that the Genoese were in direct communication with the khan and his court.

The Russian campaign was planned for summer of that year, and as the time drew near, the khan took further steps to ensure its success, ordering the arrest of all merchants who may let slip details of preparation and planning. Toqtamîsh’s diplomatic initiatives in Crimea also served the same overriding purpose, and led to a new treaty with the Genoese, the third. No less a person than Qutlugh Bugha was appointed to negotiate it, suggesting the importance that the khan placed on good relations with the Caffan colonists at this juncture.

Qutlugh Bugha was busy with other duties, but probably returned to his dynastic lands at the beginning of 1382. Between January and March, the Genoese showered him with honours and gifts, with good reason: in February, he appointed his son as lord in Solkhat. The third Tartar-Genoese treaty was probably concluded next month, though it is only recorded in a brief mention in a similar document from 1387. Judging by the political

---

363 Ibid., pp. 11, 16–17.
364 Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 325–326.
365 Caffan accounts record expenditures on 6th February 1382 pro confectis et speciis finis, pro tenendo coppam domino Elie, quando recessit de Sorchati pro eundo Lordo. […] Item, ea die, pro confectis Ayna Cotolbogam quando aplicuit Sorcati (Iorga, Notes, I, p. 15).
366 In the peace treaty concluded on 12th August 1387 by the Genovese ambassadors Gentile dei Grimaldi and Gianone del Bosco and Qutlugh Bugha, lord of Solkhat, there are references to quibusdam instrumentis pacis, preceptis et conventionibus [between Toqtamish and the commune, at an unspecified date], necnon de quibusdam alis conventionibus et pactis, factis inter prefatum magnificum dominum Cotolboga, nomine dicti domini imperatoris, ex una parte, et Bartholomeum de Iacob, jurispruditum, tunc consulem Caffe, ex altera parte, scriptis in littera Ugarica mCCCv […] (Sacy, “Pièces,” p. 63); the first such agreements mentioned can only have been those of 1380 and 1381, while the emperor who made them must have been Toqtamish; the most important clue to the exact date of the last treaty is the name of Bartolomeo di Iacopo, attested in a document of 7th March 1382 as electus in consulem Caffae (Heyd, Histoire, II, p. 207 note 1, although Heyd does not say what document this is; nevertheless there is no reason to doubt that it existed, meaning that we must consider Bartolomeo di Iacopo to have been consul of Caffa from March 1382 to March 1383, rather than Pietro Cazano, named in the list of Schlumberger, Numismatique, p. 463, but with no documentary evidence at all). The most likely date for the third treaty is March 1382, shortly after Qutlugh Bugha named Ilyas to his post and the new consul started his term in office, when the city ledgers show that there was direct contact with the recently-appointed lord of Solkhat, rather than in any subsequent months when the gifts from the city’s budget cease to be sent (cf. Iorga, Notes, I, pp. 15–19).
context of this treaty, it was probably nothing but a confirmation of the previous agreements of 1380 and 1381, guaranteeing lasting links to the Genoese in Qutlugh Bugha’s name while the Tartars prepared the great campaign against Russia.

The expedition against the Russian knyazates in summer 1382 culminated in August with the burning of Moscow, the banner of the liberation struggle.\footnote{For the course of the campaign, cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 324–329.} This Tartar victory had a profound and lasting effect: the Russians were subject to the ‘Mongol yoke’ for a further century.\footnote{Ibid., discussing the immense material losses incurred, call this a “raiding expedition” and lose sight of its political purpose; according to Barthold, Turkestan, p. 851, the most important result was a further century of Tartar rule in Russia.} Thus the result of the battle of Kulikovo was completely neutralised: in 1382, the Golden Horde again became a great power after four decades of decline, the arbiter of Eastern European affairs.

On the other hand, the victory of 1382 marked the end of this first stage in Jochid external assertion: having regularised relations with Lithuania\footnote{The formal act of submission by the Lithuanians actually amounted to little more than a non-aggression pact (which the Grand Duke only agreed to in exchange for keeping Ukraine) but this nevertheless gave Toqtamish considerable advantages; the Grand Duchy’s neutrality secured his flank during the campaign in the Russian lands, and then his back during the long war with Timur, and the Lithuanians supported him after the defeat of 1395 (Spuler, Horde, pp. 128 ff.).} and reduced the Russian principalities to vassal status once more, Toqtamish had settled affairs on the Northern frontier and could now turn his mind to the empire’s Southern flank, where a number of problems awaited their solution.

In the years to come Sarai’s attention was on two distinct areas: in the first instance, relations with Toqtamish’s former patron Timur, who had become his main rival once the Golden Horde was reunited,\footnote{Toqtamish owed his rise prior to 1380 entirely to Timur, a debt which may have made the khan hesitant to attack his former protector directly until 1387 (Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, pp. 317–320, 329–334); the decision to go to war met with opposition from the emirs of the ‘left bank’ of the ulus, partisans and allies of Timur, who abandoned Toqtamish once war had broken out and crossed to his enemy’s camp (Fedorov-Davídov, Stroy, pp. 152 ff.).} and secondly relations with the Genoese, which were to be adapted to Toqtamish’s planned reorientation of Tartar foreign policy following 1382’s ‘normalisation’ of the Russian knyazates.

The two matters developed in parallel until 1387, when the khan hastily yoked them together, by confirming once more the established
Tartar-Genoese treaties. This fourth treaty, in the summer of 1387, followed much tension in the aftermath of the emir Bulat’s attacks on Caffa in 1383.\footnote{A report in an Armenian source from Trebizond (Sanjian, Colophons, p. 100) gives Bulat (Pulad) the title of khan, suggesting that he ruled jointly with Toqtamish; the confusion is resolved once we remember that the title was not reserved to ruling sovereigns but was also used by some members of the Tartar high aristocracy, for instance Janibek’s and Berdibek’s emissaries, mentioned as cannì or cannì signori in Venetian treaties (DVL, I, p. 313, II, p. 51). Bulat is the same as oghlan Bolat, who marched with Toqtamish on the campaign of 1392 against Timur (Tiesenhausen, Shbornik, I, p. 376; Fedorov-Davydov, p. 46; oghlan is a prince of Chinggisid blood) and as Bek Pulad, mentioned in a letter of 1392 from Toqtamish to Jagiello of Poland (Fedorov-Davidov, Story, p. 154).} This was apparently a local conflict after two years of mutually beneficial cooperation, but the hostilities concealed serious difficulties between the signatories of the 1380–1382 treaties, and the fact that the attackers were so highly-placed in the Horde reveals more about the trouble. Bulat-Bey was a close kinsman of Qutlugh Bugha and one of Toqtamish’s favoured generals, a commander of the Tartar troops and holder of many other imperial privileges.\footnote{The Metropolitan Pimen of Moscow passed through Vulat’s camp on the lower Don, near Tana, on his way to Constantinople, either before or after Bulat and twelve other oghlans led Toqtamish’s campaign to Tabriz in winter 1385/6 (Howorth, History, II/1, pp. 232, 235). In an entry in the Caffan accounts book of 2nd February 1382, Olat bey appears as frater domini Sorchati (Iorga, Notes, I, p. 16), probably brother of Ilyas Bey and son of Qutlugh Bugha, if the latter had not replaced his son in Solkhat at this point, or otherwise brother of Qutlugh Bugha and uncle to Ilyas. There is a Pulal-beg who governed briefly from 1407 (Iorga, Notes, I, p. 19 note 4) but this is a different person despite the closeness of the name and the chronology. The oghlan was mentioned frequently in documents of the 1380s and 1390s and was executed on Toqtamish’s orders, probably in 1393 (Ibn Khaldûn/Tiesenhausen, Shbornik, I, p. 376). Beg, bek or bey correspond to the Mongol noyon or Arabic amîr.} The lord of Solkhat, who had signed the treaty of 1382, and the khan, in whose name it was signed, were thus both involved in the attack against Caffa, suggesting the depth of the crisis and foreshadowing the larger war of 1386–1387.

We might easily suppose that Tartar-Genoese relations worsened once the conditions which had led to a balance of power, and maintained it from 1380 to 1382, disappeared. The Genoese had actively or passively supported Toqtamish’s efforts against Mamai and Dmitriy Donskoy, but once these enemies were out of the game, the khan had no further reason to make such concessions as he had. Once these counterbalancing factors were eliminated, the accords became flagrantly one-sided: Toqtamish had recognised Caffan autonomy and ceded several Crimean settlements, and in 1383 was left with very little to show for it. Hence the clashes and confrontations of 1383–1387.
The intensity of the conflict peaked toward the end of the period when, after two years of relative calm (1384–1385) it became what Genoese sources at least called “a war with the Solkhat and the emperor.” Cembalo and Soldaia were fortified, their garrisons strengthened and a brigantine armed to watch the Kerch straits. In May 1386, the colonists scored a few successes against the Tartars of Solkhat.

Such small victories were mere episodes. By the time hostilities ended in August 1387, the Caffans were not even able to quash a revolt by the inhabitants of Gothia at the edge of their lands. The government of Caffa tried to drag Moldavia into the fight with the Tartars in spring 1387 but this did not break the stalemate and they were forced to sue for peace. Several embassies were sent to Qutlug Bugha, who was still lord of Solkhat and governor of Crimea, and to khan Toqtamish at Sarai, with the obligatory presents but these were not enough to soften the Tartar stance and the war still raged at the beginning of summer 1387. There was no prospect of an end to a war bogged down in pointless military and diplomatic action, when—suddenly and unexpectedly—a new treaty of friendship was signed on 12th August by Qutlug Bugha in the name of the khan and Gentile dei Grimaldi and Gianone del Bosco for Genoa.

---

373 Musso, “Note,” p. 79: la guerra con Sorcati e con l’imperatore.
374 The ship was outfitted in 1386 occasione guerre ad Vospolum pro Matrega (Balard, Romanian, I, pp. 157, 159).
375 Expenses are noted on 4th May for several botte di vino [...] pro victoria habita and goods plundered from the Tartars were sold at auction (Musso, “Note,” p. 79).
376 Balard, I, Romanian, p. 161, considers that heavy taxation by the Genoese was the principal cause of the revolt. Most of the rebellious locals were Goths, ceded by the Horde to the Republic by the treaties of 1380–1382; the Caffan soldiers sent pro damnificando inimicos were unable to bring the Goths to heel.
377 Preparations were already being made to send envoys to Akkerman on 2nd May 1386, but it was only on 24th August that expenses were noted for the boat qui portavit Carolium de Orto et Illarium de Duria Muocastro, ambaxiatores euntes Constantino et Petro veyvoda occasione guerre de Sorcati (Papacostea, “Începuturile,” p. 45; pp. 43–49 for the identity of Constantinus with Costea Voyevoda, his part in unifying Moldavian territory, and ending Tartar rule in the region).
378 Moldavia’s anti-Tartar stance, proven by the fact that Vasily Dmitriyevich, son of Dmitriy Donskoy, fled there in 1386 when he escaped from Mongol captivity, might be good reason to assume that the Caffan envoys found a willing audience; if Moldavia intervened in the conflict at all, however, this was not enough to change the course of the war.
380 On 18th June the doge of Genoa advised his counterpart in Venice to forbid Venetian citizens from visiting the war-torn Northern Black Sea, since they might be affected by Tartar raids; for the course of the war, Murzakević, Istorija.
This restoration of ‘good and true peace’ brought all provisions of the treaties of 1380–1382 back into force, expressis verbis.382

As with previous concessions, there were external causes for the khan’s new conciliatory approach. The first three treaties were politically linked to Toqtamish’s wars with Mamai and then with Dmitriy Donskoy, while the fourth owed its existence to the khan’s rivalry with Timur. This enmity was nothing more than a revival of the old clash of interests between the steppe Tartars and their Persian kinfolk over control of the Silk Road. Toqtamish’s political strategy from 1383 clearly reveals the commercial tendency of his plans, when he fixed his sights on the three great nodes of East-West long-distance trade: Urgench in Khwarezm, Tabriz in Azerbaijan and Caffa in the Crimea.

The first open move which the khan made against his old patron and protector was in 1379 when he retook Khwarezm, the ancient Golden Horde territory annexed in 1379: at this point, Timur did not respond.383

The real bone of contention was still Azerbaijan, with the wealth of Tabriz. This was an old dispute which had retreated into the background during the civil wars, and was reignited in the winter of 1385/6 when Toqtamish’s troops comprehensively plundered the city.385 Timur was busy with the conquest of Eastern Persia and could not reach Azerbaijan before the Tartars withdrew to the steppe. The following winter, Toqtamish attempted another invasion via Derbent, but the way down from the pass was blocked by the Timurid army, which won the battle in the Caucasus. Timur’s forces took advantage of the same fortifications with which the Ilkhanate had turned back countless Tartar invasions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, under Toqtamish’s predecessors.

It seems that the brute facts of geography thus persuaded the khan to change his basic strategy in bringing the fight to his enemy: following this defeat, in the first half of 1387 he decided to launch a surprise attack against Timur’s Central Asian bases while Timur himself was in Persia.

382 Ibid., p. 63; Qutlugh Bugha further committed to issue good money in sufficient amounts, as did his son Ilyas. For a comparative analysis of this treaty and that of 1381 (though 1380 and 1382 are not mentioned), see Balard, Romanie, I, pp. 458–461, who observes that although Caffa’s autonomy had been recognise de facto since 1380, it was only officially proclaimed in the new city statutes of 1449, when the consul took over all judicial powers previously held by the tudun.

383 Barthold, Turkestan, p. 851, identifies coins minted in Toqtamish’s name in Khwarezm in 1383.

384 See chapter 3.1.

A campaign on this scale, over such distances, required the mobilisation of all available resources, and required that conflicts smouldering on the Golden Horde’s Western border be banked down. The great army invaded Transoxiana in winter 1387/8 at the latest.\footnote{According to a Persian source, the campaign began in the Muslim year 789 = 21st January 1387–10th January 1388 (Tiesenhausen, 
\textit{Sbornik}, II, p. 153).}

Thus the hasty treaty with the Genoese of 12th August was forced upon Toqtamīsh by the urgent need to restore peace on the Western frontier of the \textit{ulus}—under unfavourable conditions, once again—for the duration of his campaign in Central Asia.

The accommodation that the Genoese reached went rather beyond what was recorded in writing. In exchange for the guarantees offered in the new treaty, the Genoese actively supported Toqtamīsh’s bold and hazardous campaign: a contingent of Caffan mercenaries is recorded in the khan’s army in late 1388, alongside other auxiliaries.\footnote{The Persian chronicler Sharaf al-Dīn ’Ali Yezdī notes Russians, Circassians, Bulgarians, Cumans, Alans and Bashkirs in Toqtamīsh’s army, along with Caffans and troops from Tana (ibid., p. 156).}

Examination of the circumstances of the Tartar-Genoese treaties of 1380–1387 reveals a common denominator: khan Toqtamīsh was always willing to make far-reaching concessions as and when these were needed as temporary sacrifices, tactical moves to allow him to pursue other goals in rebuilding his power. The attempt to restore the balance between 1383 and 1387 did not last beyond the beginning of the clash with Timur’s forces, since this conflict struck the death-blow for the Tartars. The war which Toqtamīsh launched in his squabble with Timur Lenk for Azerbaijan lasted intermittently from 1387 to 1396, and destroyed the basis upon which the Golden Horde could be rebuilt.\footnote{Grekov, Yakubovskiy, \textit{Orda}, pp. 333 ff., offers the most detailed account of the war.}

During the decade of the 1380s, Tartar-Genoese relations were always rooted in Toqtamish’s broader policies, and they worsened considerably in the following period as the Golden Horde unravelled. In 1395–1396 Timur’s troops systematically destroyed all the commercial centres of the \textit{ulus} of Jochi, and the irreversible decline of the Tartar state crushed any desire that Sarai may have felt to pursue a more coherent Black Sea policy.

This was not, to be sure, the end of Tartar history on the Black Sea: the Crimean khanate continued as an autonomous fragment after the dismemberment of the Golden Horde around 1430, and played an important role in events in the sea. Yet that is another story.
4.3 The Problem of the Straits and the Tartar Solution

The Black Sea is a largely enclosed sea, communicating with other seas and ultimately the ocean through a single exit, the Straits, composed of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. It is therefore obvious why every great power with Black Sea interests has sooner or later had to pay close attention to this vitally important strategic point. The Tartars were no exception.

Khan Berke, who laid the foundations for the Golden Horde’s Black Sea policy,\(^{389}\) was able to recognise the importance of the Straits at a crucial moment and seek a remedy. Shortly after the alliance against the Ilkhanate was concluded at Cairo in 1263,\(^{390}\) the Straits became an urgent problem on the geo-strategic map on which the great powers of Western Asia and Eastern Europe played their game. Since none of the powers involved—the Golden Horde, the Ilkhanate or the Mamluk Sultanate—had a geographic reach that extended to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the struggle to control them was largely played out through intermediaries.

4.3.1 The Battle for the Straits and for the Seljuk Sultanate

Once the Mongol state in Persia was established, its founder Hülegü considered himself the rightful suzerain of the Anatolian sultan.\(^{391}\) One of his first acts was to depose 'Izz al-Dīn Kaykāwuz, who was sharing the throne with his brother Rukn al-Dīn Kilij Arslan, for having made an alliance with the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars.\(^{392}\)

'Izz al-Dīn took refuge in Antalya and petitioned the Byzantine emperor to shelter him and his people, and give them a new ‘homeland.’\(^{393}\) Michael VIII Palaiologos looked favourably on his request. Together with his retinue, he crossed the sea to Constantinople where he was received and treated with great honours.

After he had spent some time in the capital on the Bosphorus, the ex-sultan had another request for the emperor: ‘We are a Turkish people. We cannot live forever in the city. If we had a place, and a homeland, then

\(^{389}\) See chapter 4.1.3.

\(^{390}\) See chapter 3.3.1.

\(^{391}\) See chapter 2.2.2.

\(^{392}\) This is the explanation given by al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Bībī (Canard, “Un traité,” p. 212 note 1).

\(^{393}\) Cf. Decei, “Problema,” p. 170, a work which I have chosen as a standard reference from the wealth of specialist literature on 'Izz al-Dīn and the settlement of a large group of Seljuk Turks, led by the dervish Saru Saltuq, from Asia Minor to Dobruja.
we would bring our tents from Anatolia and settle there.’ The emperor acceded to his request and gave him the land he had asked for in Dobruja. 'Izz al-Dīn secretly notified his men in Asia Minor, who travelled to Üsküdar, under the pretext that they would winter in Iznik, and crossed the sea to Rumelia. The dervish Saru Saltuq Dede led the refugees, and “since then there have been two or three Muslim towns in Dobruja and thirty or forty Turkish villages. They fought the emperor’s enemies and wiped them out.”

'Izz al-Dīn and his courtiers stayed near Michael VIII’s court.

There is no doubt that these events took place after the Byzantine return to Constantinople in summer 1261. This was the period of treaty negotiations which set up the Sarai-Constantinople-Cairo axis when the strategy of the anti-Ilkhanid party was to restore 'Izz al-Dīn to his father’s throne, currently held by his brother as a client of Hülegū. Success here would remove the Seljuk sultanate from the Persian orbit and add it to the ranks of those arrayed against the Ilkhanate, and would necessarily cut Ilkhanid access to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean via Anatolia—creating an immense advantage for the Volga Horde in the commercial war between the two Chinggisid states.

Berke was tempted by the prospect and, as his successors on the throne at Sarai would do after him, adopted 'Izz al-Dīn’s cause enthusiastically, sparing no effort to recruit Emperor Michael VIII and Sultan Baybars for the purpose. In a letter of May 1263 the khan sets out his proposals for military alliance against Hülegū, and goes on to recommend 'Izz al-Dīn to the Sultan at Cairo, requesting that Baybars support the ex-sultan as worthy to be included among the “four brothers in jihād.”

Berke’s request merely emphasises that he was of one mind with Baybars about the Seljuk situation, since the Mamluk Sultan had protected the exiled prince long before the khan. Although there is little information about the meeting of the allies at Cairo in mid-1261, Tartar, Mamluk, Byzantine, Seljuk and Genoese, in the light of the aforesaid we might suppose that the Tartar and Mamluk delegations offered 'Izz al-Dīn’s ambassadors considerable support.

394 Ibid., p. 171.
395 See chapter 3.3.1.
397 See chapter 3.3.1.
This aside, the grand coalition was in the best of shape when the treaty was signed, and was ready to begin hostilities when Hülegü unexpectedly struck a counterblow which broke the alliance: under pressure from the Ilkhan, Byzantium defected.

Though his allies were taken by surprise, Michael VIII Palaiologos’ defection was rooted in a political double game that he had been playing ever since he returned to Constantinople, or even the year before: at one and the same time, or at any rate within the space of a very few months, the Emperor had reached bilateral agreements with Baybars, Berke, 'Izz al-Din, the Genoese and also with their implacable enemy, Hülegü.398

Michael VIII’s volte-face took place in the context of his first major foreign policy review, when he was trying to reach an understanding with Western forces hostile to the Byzantine Restoration, chief among them Venice and the Papacy. His initiatives in this direction dealt a blow to his recently-made allies, especially to Genoa, threatened with the loss of the advantages it had secured at Nymphaion in 1261. Genoa reacted with the conspiracy of its podestà in Constantinople, Guglielmo Guercio, who in 1264 plotted to depose the emperor and surrender the city to the Latins under Manfred of Sicily.399

Given this political context, it is unsurprising that the Ilkhan did not need to exert excessive pressure on Byzantium to get what he wanted.400 However nimbly he played the great powers off against each other, Michael VIII could not avoid the inevitable, given Byzantium’s weakness and its position at a major geopolitical faultline. The earthquake came after the Cairo ‘conference’ of 1263 had ended, and indeed as a direct result. When Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars learnt in July 1264 that his envoys to the khan at Sarai, who had left Cairo a year before, had been held in Constantinople, he flew into a rage.401

---

400 Hülegü had attempted a similar stratagem in 1262, when he sent ambassadors to the West to call Crusading forces to war against their common enemy, the Mamluk sultan; unlike his success in Constantinople, this attempt was a failure, and his envoys were captured by King Manfred, who was on friendly terms with Sultan Baybars (cf. Papacostea, “Crise,” p. 347; nevertheless it was only the first in a long series of such attempts, continued by his successors (see chapter 3.1, pp. 77 ff.).
401 Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir/Tiesenhausen, Schornik, I, p. 52, and al-Mufaḍdal, ibid., p. 178, say that the ambassadors were bringing unusually rich gifts, including exotic animals; they were returning from the Golden Horde along with Berke’s envoys, whose fate is unrecorded.
Mamluk chroniclers reporting the incident elaborate upon it and explain: “In the year 622 [= 4th November 1263–24th October 1264] the news came [to Cairo] that the envoys to king Berke had been detained by al-Ashkarī [= Michael VIII] for so long that most of their animals had died. The Sultan called to his presence the patriarch [of Alexandria] and the bishops and asked them: ‘What does a man deserve who had broken the oath that he has sworn?’ They answered that he should be excommunicated from his church. The Sultan made them put this down in writing, and then showed them al-Ashkarī’s treaty and said: ‘He has dared to detain my ambassadors, and he has paid tribute to Hūlākū.’ Then he sent to him a monk, a Greek philosopher, a priest and a bishop, to excommunicate him. He wrote him a letter of denunciation. He also wrote a letter to king Berke, sending it with the emir Fāris al-Dīn Aqūsh al-Mas‘ūdī, with gifts for Berke. When this arrived to al-Ashkarī, he immediately released [the first envoys] who went onward to king Berke.”402

Al-Maqrīzī’s version is complemented by al-Mufaḍḍal, who purports to quote Michael VIII himself: The Egyptian ambassadors found envoys from Hūlāwūn [= Hülegü] at Michael’s court, and the emperor justified holding the earlier group sent from Cairo by explaining that he “was in fear that Hūlāwūn would find out.”403 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir gives the same explanation.404

The Byzantine emperor also drew blame from his allies in the coalition against the Ilkhanate through his wavering attitude to ‘Izz al-Dīn. At first the emperor had received the refugee sultan and his men generously at court, and part of the group had been settled in Dobruja under Saru Saltuq Dede, but this goodwill gave way to its opposite. News reached Egypt that “al-Ashkarī has changed his mind, and has shut him away in a fortress”405 which Pachymeres identifies as Enos, at the mouth of the Maritza on the Aegean.406 According to Pachymeres, Michael VIII held the ex-sultan in a form of palatial house arrest as a result of an understanding with Hülegü: the Ilkhanate could consolidate its dominion while “‘Izz al-Dīn was held far from ‘Persia’.”407 By this arrangement, the emperor could secure his

---

402 Al-Maqrīzī/Tiesenhausen, Shornik, I, p. 421.
403 Ibid., p. 179.
404 Ibid., pp. 52–53.
405 Al-Dhahabi/ibid., p. 200.
own holdings in Asia Minor, but at the same time he was exposing other Byzantine possessions, more important ones, on the Balkan Peninsula.

On the Volga, these two affronts from the emperor (the interference with diplomatic contact between Sarai and Cairo, and the imprisonment of 'Izz al-Dīn) were considered casus belli. To restore the situation, Berke ordered a great expedition against Byzantium, where Bulgarian troops and Seljuks from the Dobruja took part alongside Tatars.408

Where the Mamluk chroniclers consider that 'Izz al-Dīn's liberation was a secondary objective of the campaign, Byzantine accounts see it as the main purpose, and even consider the Seljuk ex-sultan to have been its instigator.

Pachymeres writes that after waiting in vain to be restored to his throne, 'Izz al-Dīn realised that his hopes were unfounded when he learned of Michael VIII's pact with Hūlegū. He thus took the first opportunity to send a faithful messenger to a powerful kinsman to the North of the Black Sea, asking for help. He asked his relative to march against Byzantium with the Tatars and the Bulgarians of Tsar Constantine Tikh, since although the emperor pretended to be their friend he was in fact an enemy.409 They responded to his call sometime between summer 1264 and the following winter.410 After a hard-fought siege at Enos, 'Izz al-Dīn was freed, after which the invading troops spread out and raided all the way to the walls of Constantinople. The Tatars took a great number of slaves and stolen cattle with them as they withdrew.411

Byzantine and Seljukid sources contain no reference at all to the Egyptian ambassador Fāris al-Dīn Aqūsh al-Masʿūdī's role as mediator between the emperor and the commander of the invading forces: Mamluk sources though show him playing a crucial part in smoothing over the Byzantine-Tatar conflict and resolving the matter of 'Izz al-Dīn.

During 1265 Michael VIII sent two embassies seeking assistance from Baybars.412 The sultan sent the response he had hoped for: “If you have detained my envoys because your friendship with king Berke has been

---

410 Dölger, *Regesten*, III, p. 47, suggests summer, but the Seljuk chroniclers mention the Danube as having frozen over so that the Tatar cavalry could ride across (Decei, “Problema,” p. 185).  
broken since his troops came to plunder your lands, then you should know that I can make peace between you.’ The sultan wrote to Berke, requesting with all the force he had that he make peace.”

Another Mamluk source goes into more detail: While the Tartar army was plundering and burning the lands around Constantinople, “the emperor, who was within the walls, fled, and sent Fāris al-Dīn Aqūsh al-Mas‘ūdī to the commander of Berke’s army, to say that his country [= Byzantium] was allied with Sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir [Baybars] and that the khan [Berke] was at peace with [the emperor] because he was an ally [of the sultan]. The commander asked for this in writing. He [= al-Mas‘ūdī] wrote this down and swore to it [adding that] he remained [in Constantinople] of his own free will and that nobody had prevented him from going on to Berke. Then Berke’s army left the walls of Constantinople and took sultan ‘Īzz al-Dīn with them, who had been held prisoner in one of Constantinople’s fortresses. Then the emperor gave al-Mas‘ūdī all that he needed for the road [and sent him] to Berke together with an envoy of his own with a letter, undertaking to send three hundred brocade coats as annual tribute so that [the khan] would support him and not invade his country. Al-Mas‘ūdī went to Berke. When he arrived, [the khan] reproached him for his late arrival, but he said: ‘The lord of Constantinople detained me.’ Then Berke showed him the document which he had written, and which [Berke] had from the commander of his troops, and said: ‘I will not punish you, for al-Malik al-Ẓāhir [Baybars’ sake].’ Then sultan ‘Īzz al-Dīn wrote to sultan al-Malik al-Ẓāhir and told him everything, and also told him what had come about because of the negligence of Fāris al-Dīn Aqūsh al-Mas‘ūdī.”

Although the invaders could have taken Constantinople by force, while the emperor did not have the troops to defend himself, it seems that the Egyptian ambassador used his good offices to persuade the Tartar commander to withdraw. Despite this act, Tartar-Byzantine relations continued to be strained until Berke’s death and the enthronement of Möngke Temür in 1267.
Another unexpected but favourable circumstance helped to restore relations between Sarai and Cairo: at the beginning of 1265, Hülegü died, considerably reducing Ilkhanid ability to pressure Byzantium. Abaqa faced difficult problems in taking over power, among them Berke’s opportunistic attack through the Caucasus, and he accepted the Byzantine bride who had been intended for his father, one of many signs that he accepted Michael VIII’s offer to broker a general peace.417

Thus about three years after war had broken out between Berke and Hülegü over Transcaucasia,418 the conflict between the two Chinggisid powers spread to include the Straits, which briefly became a flashpoint. The chain reaction among all those chagrined by Byzantine defection was however concerted enough to bring Michael VIII back into line with the allies he had deserted.

Berke formed the Golden Horde’s policy in Asia Minor, taken up and continued by his successors, who enjoyed no more success than he had done. ’Izz al-Dīn arrived in the Horde in 1265 with the Tartar army which had rescued him from Byzantine captivity, and received the rich Crimean towns of Soldaia and Solkhat as his appanage.419 A Seljukid chronicler recorded the grant with a shrewd appreciation of the reason for the honour shown to the ex-sultan and his suite, namely the hope that they would be restored “to their old position and homeland.”420 It was an empty hope, just like the expectations pinned on Mas‘ūd, one of ’Izz al-Dīn’s sons. He took the throne in Konya after his father’s death in 1287, and was at last in a position to effect the long-awaited political shift in Asia Minor, but brought Sarai nothing but further disappointment: although he had been raised in the Golden Horde with the idea of ‘restoring’ his sultanate, Mas‘ūd showed not the least sign of bringing the Seljuk state out from Ilkhanid vassalage.421

The khans’ capacity to influence the course of events in Anatolia was limited by their inability to project military force into the region from the Volga, across the sea. An awareness of this limitation comes through clearly in the letter which Berke sent to Baybars in 1263 asking him to support ’Izz al-Dīn, since the Egyptian ally was in a position to send troops

417 Baybars however categorically refused the offer (cf. Canard, “Un traité,” p. 219).
418 See chapter 3.1.
420 Ibid., p. 173.
to the Seljuk sultanate, as proven for instance by the great expedition of 1277.\textsuperscript{422}

The crisis of 1264–1265 revealed the supreme importance of the Straits, and the inability of the recently-formed coalition to impose a regime there. It also shed light on the only way the great power on the steppe could impose its will on this vital spot connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean—which was by force of arms, against Byzantium. This state of affairs spurred Sarai’s decision to create a Tartar outpost on the Danube, which would serve several purposes, not least among them to keep watch from close at hand over the free navigation of the Straits.

4.3.2 \textit{A Guardian of the Straits: The Khanate of the Lower Danube}

The mission of creating a vanguard on the Golden Horde’s furthest South-West frontier was entrusted to one of the most powerful personages in Jochid history, Noghai, an emir of Chinggisid blood.\textsuperscript{423} It is not known when exactly the decision was taken to create this predominantly military entity, any more than the date is known when it first became an effective force. The final phase by contrast is much better known, when the marcher lordship reached the peak of its development and its captain proclaimed himself khan in his own right, to the considerable detriment of the Golden Horde and of other polities in Central and South-East Europe.

The initial phase is recorded by Pachymeres, who although based some way from the action, gave a detailed account of Noghai’s rise to power and connects the process to the rupture in Tartar-Byzantine relations in 1264–1265: “Now the [above-mentioned] uncle [of 'Izz al-Dīn], coming to Constantin [Tikh], Tsar of the Bulgarians, or rather to his wife,\textsuperscript{424} revealed to them his plans against the emperor (Michael VIII) and convinced them, since they had long been inclined to this. Then he sent word calling a multitude of Tokhars [= Tartars], since—he said—they would quickly win [battles and plunder] if they invaded together with himself and the

\textsuperscript{422} See above, p. 74 note 61.

\textsuperscript{423} Cf. the genealogical source-work in Veselovskiy, \textit{Khan}, pp. 22 ff., showing his descent from Jochi via a lateral branch; this is so far the only monograph on the emir; cf. also Ciocîltan, “Khanat”.

\textsuperscript{424} Irina Lascaris, sister of the Byzantine Emperor of Nicea John IV Lascaris (1258–1261), who had been deposed and blinded by Michael VIII Palaiologos, his former regent; she nourished understandable resentments toward Michael (cf. \textit{FHDR}, III, pp. 444, 445 note 10).
Bulgarians. And they [= the Seljuks of Dobruja], who were still a horde in their own right (for they had not yet completely submitted to Noghai, for at this point Noghai was only just beginning to revolt against his masters and lived as an equal with them [= the khans at Sarai] as a friend, for although he had been sent with them [= the Seljuks] by [the khans], he did not conquer the lands for the khan—as they called him—but rather, when he saw that the lands were rich, he claimed them for himself and his companions [the Seljuks]), when once they heard this, they rushed in, devouring the rich lands like dogs. After this the marriage with Noghai was not carried through, which the emperor was supposed to arrange, giving him his illegitimate daughter Euphrosyne as wife. This was how things stood and, while the emperor set off for Constantinople, passing through the Western regions, the other invaded together with Constantine [Tikh], passing the straits of Haemus with all their forces, striking their tents for all to see. And they did not have a single body as a regular army which would stay in one place, but rather they scattered in bands and gangs, attacking together with the others, in squads, terrorising, killing, enslaving, and there was no excess which they did not perpetrate. When the emperor heard of their deeds, as of course he must (because they did not invade secretly or cautiously, but rather swept through the whole region like wildfire), his mind was much troubled by the news which reached him, he was greatly disturbed and did not know which way to turn.”

The passage is not only valuable because it casts the first light on Noghai’s involvement in Balkan affairs, but also because it sets out the methods he used to consolidate his power on the peninsula and vis-à-vis the khans at Sarai. These two processes were closely linked.

His rise began with the courage and clear-sightedness he displayed fighting Ilkanid forces in the Caucasus between 1262 and 1266. Oriental sources maintain that these qualities added immeasurably to his prestige in Berke’s eyes, so that the khan charged him with conducting operations

425 Ibid., pp. 446–447; the corresponding passage in Gregoras/ibid., pp. 501, 503, 505 does not differ greatly. The thorniest problem presented by the passage is identifying ‘Izz al-Dīn’s ‘uncle.’ A late chronicler writing on Seljukid history, Aksarayi, states that the ex-sultan was related to Berke, one of the khan’s wives being ‘Izz al-Dīn’s aunt on his father’s side, so that many scholars have assumed that the uncle mentioned here was Berke (İşiltan, Seltschukengeschichte, p. 55, Ibn Bībī/Duda, p. 141, Decei, “Problema” p. 184, FHDR, III, pp. 444, 445 note 7); nevertheless, Pachymeres’ text here incontrovertibly suggests that this identification is false, and that the mysterious uncle must be sought among the Dobrujan Seljukid nobility. There is however no documentary basis to support the identification with their leader Saru Saltuq Dede, as G. Balashchev did (Decei, “Problema,” p. 184). The narrative makes no sense if the ex-sultan’s kinsman is taken to be anything but a Seljuk.

It is hardly likely that Berke was the khan who posted him to the Danube, since sources mention Noghai at Berke’s side until the khan’s death on campaign in the Caucasus (again) in January 1267.\footnote{427} 

Although sources reveal little of the emir’s activities before 1267, it is certain that he became a key figure in carrying out the policies of the court at Sarai that set Tartar-Byzantine relations during Möngke Temür’s reign.\footnote{428} 

Noghai took one further decisive step in consolidating his political power under the next khan, Töde Möngke: several independent sources confirm one another in reporting that power in the Golden Horde was shared. At least in its outward manifestations, the duumvirate was harmonious, proven by the two rulers’ joint proposal to the Great Khan Qubilai that he convene a \textit{qurultai}. However well-balanced this power-sharing agreement, however, it was the exception in a state with a pronouncedly centralist doctrine, and could not last long: Töde Möngke, probably uneasy with the company he was keeping, turned his back on worldly power in favour of spiritual exercises among Muslim mystics, and abdicated in 1287.\footnote{429} 

During the time of his nephew and successor Töle Bugha, the balance of power shifted rapidly, and massively, in the established direction, so much so that the appearance of joint rule could no longer be preserved. Serious cracks were already beginning to show in 1285/6, when the emir and prince Töle Bugha led Tartar campaigns first to Transylvania and then to Poland,\footnote{430} and these were merely the warning signs of more decisive ruptures later. Töle Bugha was forced to share power from the very
moment he took the throne, which did not bode well for his reign, and was captured in an ambush set by his overmighty co-regent in 1291 and handed over to Toqta and his brothers, the sons of Möngke Temür, who executed him.

This brazen show of force took Noghai to the peak of his power and assured him his own political entity, directed mostly against Toqta and conceived as a simple instrument of his will. The message which Noghai sent in 1293 via his wife Bulaq-Khatun to the titular khan reveals much about the new balance of power in the Golden Horde: “Your father sends you greetings and tells you that there are still some thorns which must be cleared away from your path.” He asked her, ‘What does that mean?’ She named the emirs who had supported Töle Bugha against Noghai. Toqta summoned them and killed them all.

Although Toqta had followed his ‘father’s’ advice in this instance, such a form of regency (expressed very clearly in the chosen mode of address) could not be endured indefinitely: Rashid al-Din, the well-informed vizier of the Ilkhanate, plainly states that the war between Noghai and Toqta at the end of the century broke out when the khan on the Volga refused to acknowledge himself any longer subject to the emir on the Danube. In a final attempt to bring the ‘rebel’ to heel, Noghai decreed that three of Toqta’s brothers should be co-regents, and proposed assembling a qurultai to approve this division of supreme power, offering—tof course—himself as guarantor of the arrangement. The ruler on the Volga rejected his regent’s offer, so that there remained no choice but to take up arms.

431 Franciscan missionaries were well received in 1287 by the two ‘emperors’ (Golubovich, Biblioteca, II, pp. 444–445, Brătianu, Vicina, p. 38).
434 Compare the result when Chinggis Khan used the same terms in addressing the sultan of Khwarezm, chapter 2.1.1.
435 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II, p. 70; the Egyptian chronicler Baybars (ibid., I, p. 88) offers a strikingly similar assessment: “[Toqta] launched a war against Noghai and his sons, who had become his open enemies when they opposed him; this happened because for a long time Noghai had been the steersman of the kingdom, picking and choosing among the members of Berke’s family without restriction, removing those of their kings who displeased him and putting on the throne he who he had chosen himself. [...] he wanted this state of affairs to stay as it was, so that he could be continue to be the leader of the country; Toqta however was not content to remain a subject; he decided to fight.” Chroniclers from the Mamluk sultanate (ibid., I, pp. 84–87, 89–90, 137) mention as the cause other events—plots, betrayals, assassinations, with various emirs involved—but these were merely secondary effects of the underlying conflict.
Rashid al-Din also provides one of the most complete accounts of the great internal conflicts in the ulus of Jochi. In autumn 1298, Toqta mobilised his army to the Dnieper, but could not cross because the river had not yet frozen for the winter. He made his summer camp on the Don, where Noghai and his army found him and defeated him. Toqta fled beyond the Volga to Sarai. Noghai was convinced that he had defeated his enemy and ordered a retreat, entering the Crimea where he plundered Solkhat, then crossed the Dnieper and the Dniester to where he had pitched his “old tent.” Contrary to his expectations, Toqta had regrouped his forces and had begun a counter-offensive. Soon nothing stood between the two adversaries but the waters of the Dniester, and Noghai tried to infiltrate troops across the river under the command of his son Chaka. Toqta’s scouts discovered the stratagem and the khan ordered his forces across the Dniester. Both sides suffered considerable losses in the battle, which Toqta won. The aging Noghai was taken captive by a Russian soldier and died as he was being taken to the khan, while his sons sought refuge with a mere thousand cavalry, fleeing to the Hungarians.437

The most surprising account contained in the Mamluk chronicles is al-Nuwayri’s, which sets out the two stages of the war as distinct and well-defined episodes. According to this, in 697 [= 19th October 1297–8th October 1298], Toqta “declared war against Noghai and his sons, who had more than two thousand cavalry [. . .] They fought by the river Yaṣī [= Pruth],438 which runs between Toqta’s lands and Noghai’s lands. Toqta and his soldiers were defeated, and fled to the Don. Some of them crossed the river and were saved, some of them drowned. Noghai ordered his troops not

437 Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, II, pp. 71–72; the names of the rivers pose few problems, except for the Dniester, which the editor transliterates as Tarку (with variants). Given that the Arabic-Persian script differentiates only minimally between -k- and -l-, it is clear the two letters have been confused here, so that the root of the word is actually t.r.l.w/u, with pronunciation determined by the order in which the great steppe rivers are mentioned in the text; Törlü is the Turkish name of the Dniester, while Uzi (strictly: Özü) appears in the same passage for the Dnieper. For ‘Hungarians’ from the term kelar and bashghurd, cf. Ciocîltan, “Angaben,” pp. 116 ff. During this period, requests for help reached the Ilkhan Ghazan from both Jochid commanders; the Ilkhan refused, and offered to mediate (Rashid al-Din/Boyle, p. 102, Soranzo, Papato, p. 392 note 1).

438 For the river names and their identifications, cf. Veselovskiy, Khan, p. 45, Vernadsky, Mongols, p. 188, Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 937. Polo/Benedetto, pp. 239–444 (= Polo/Latham, pp. 315–318) describes the first clash remarkably precisely, and indeed this account closes his Il Milione; on p. 315 he says that it took place on the ‘good, wide plain of Nerghi’; the Persian word means a ‘line,’ and Vernadsky, Mongols, pp. 187–188, supposed that the name might refer to the Valley of Traian, between the Dniester and the Pruth, which is plausible.
to follow them as they fled and to leave the wounded in peace. He took booty, prisoners and [his enemy's] baggage train and returned home.”

The same author provides this description of the second battle: “In the year 699 [= 28th September 1299–15th September 1300], Toqta again thought to make war against Noghai. It happened that some of Noghai’s emirs, in whom he placed great trust, crossed to Toqta’s party. Thanks to these 30,000 cavalry, [the khan’s] courage grew. When Toqta was preparing the expedition, the news reached Noghai, who also prepared for war. […] They met at Kukan L.k and began to fight. Noghai was defeated at sunset. His sons and his army fled, but he—seated on his horse with his eyebrows covering his eyes, for he was an old man—was caught by a Russian from Toqta’s army, who wanted to kill him. He revealed his identity and said: ‘I am Noghai, take me to Toqta. I must speak to him.’ The Russian paid no attention to his words, killed him and brought his head to Toqta, saying: ‘Take this, it is the head of Noghai.’ [The khan] asked him: ‘Who told you that this is Noghai?’ [The Russian] told him what had happened, which saddened Toqta. He ordered that Noghai’s killer be executed, and said: ‘Under the law, his life must be taken, because those of his class should not dare to kill such great men.’ After that, Toqta went back to his home.”

Thus, seen from the perspective of relations with the central authority, Noghai’s career revealed the fatal contradictions of his course. Although at its peak his power incontestably eclipsed that of the legitimate leaders of the ulus—proof being that he was the kingmaker, or khanmaker, in the 1290s—the principle of legitimacy was too deeply rooted in Mongol minds to be violated, which prevented him from fitting the form of his rule to its practical content: even on the eve of the decisive battles with Toqta, he did not dare declare himself khan of the whole Golden Horde. His attempts to impose himself on the Volga khan as a ‘father’ show Noghai seeking a solution which was in fact more suited to his interests in the

---

440 Ibid., p. 138; variations include Baybars (ibid., p. 91) who adds a raid on the Crimea (p. 89; see chapter 3.2.2) and al-Maqrizi (p. 423); the site of the battle, Kukan L.k, cannot be further identified; Vernadsky, Mongols, p. 188, proposes the river Kagamlyk, which flows into the Dnieper in the province of Poltava; for other opinions, see Spinei, Moldova, p. 171, or on both battles Veselovskiy, Khan, pp. 46 ff., Bratianu, Recherches, pp. 282 ff., Spuler, Horde, pp. 74–77, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 116 (mentioning the great number of prisoners which the victors sold into slavery in Egypt), Paraska, “Orda,” pp. 183–184, Decei, “Horde,” pp. 62–63.
given situation: it would have saved the appearances of legality and at the same time reserved actual power in the ulas of Jochi to himself.

Having reached the peak of his power in the last years of the century, and of his life, Noghai abandoned all pretence and proclaimed himself khan441 in the regions where—according to Pachymeres—he held sway unchallenged. Pachymeres specifies that he held and ruled the regions of the ‘Upper Euxine’, resisting pressure from the centre with diplomacy and force of arms.442

Muslim authors give more specific details, saying that Noghai’s residences were “from Sakjī [= Isaccea] along the Danube river as far as the Bāb al-Hadīd [the Iron Gates]”443 with the Eastern boundary of his lands fixed either by the Pruth or—more likely—by the Dniester.444 Toward the end of his life Noghai ruled an area which extended into Ruthenia445 and the Severin Banate, a vast semicircle enclosed by the Carpathians and the two great rivers of the Danube and the Dniester, forming natural borders for the mountain chain. The command centre, chosen for its optimal position between the two wings, was at Isaccea.

Among Noghai’s most important auxiliaries were the Seljuks of Dobruja,446 and the Alans stationed in the North, in Moldavia and Ruthenia, with contingents of Tartar cavalry between these two ethnic groups on the Bujak steppe.447 Among the Danube khan’s other subjects we find mentioned the ‘Russians,’ probably Ruthenians, and ulakh, ‘Romanians.’448

Some idea of the solid economic basis of the Danube khanate is given by the extraordinary wealth of Vicina, the commercial capital; although

441 Money was minted at Isaccea in the name of Noghai and his son Chaka between 1296 and 1300, and this has rightly been taken as an incontrovertible sign of the status of khan, albeit self-confirmed; issuing coin is the expression of sovereignty par excellence; cf. Oberländer-Târnoveanu, Atelier, pp. 296–299, idem, “Contributions,” idem, “Documente;” with Gh. Mânucu-Adameșteanu idem, “Monede;” with Irina Oberländer-Târnoveanu, “Descoperiri.”
444 The arguments and opinions favouring the Dniester frontier are given in Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” pp. 936 ff., and Iliescu, “Contribution,” p. 162, recording a coin struck with Noghai’s tamga at Akkerman; Sakjī [= Isaccea] was the ‘capital’ and sheltered the principal mint.
446 Cf. Decei, “Problema,” passim.
its site is not precisely known, it was certainly somewhere within Noghai’s domain when it reached the height of its development.\textsuperscript{449}

Thanks to its economic and military strength, this Mongol polity was able not just to play a determining role in Golden Horde internal politics, but to develop its own foreign policy. This policy’s reach, in turn, was decisive for Danubian influence on internal Jochid matters, which grew constantly right up until the moment the khanate collapsed.

Friendly relations with sultan Baybars, established in 1270/1, offer further proof of Danubian foreign relations and influence: Noghai assured the sultan that he was following the true path, meaning the path of Islam, laid down by his spiritual and political ‘father’ Berke.\textsuperscript{450} Cairo appreciated this attitude to an unusual degree, seeing it through the lens of the campaign against the Ilkhanate at a moment when khan Möngke Temür’s earlier impressive grudge against the Persian Mongols was flagging somewhat. From this moment on, Noghai was a constant presence in the Mamluk sultans’ letters to the Volga khan.\textsuperscript{451}

Noghai’s rise from a Tartar general to a significant political figure in his own right is also attested by his alliance with the imperial dynasty of the Palaiologoi, through marriage to Euphrosyne, Michael VIII’s illegitimate daughter, sometime after 1265, probably in 1271 or 1272.\textsuperscript{452}

The growth in his strength and influence is also reflected in the Russian world, among the knyazë who were the Tartars’ most important vassals. Although the conflict with Töle Bugha is only sporadically evident, by contrast the rivalry with Toqta provoked a veritable political polarisation, with some of the princes recognising the emir of the Danube as their tsar, while others acknowledged the khan on the Volga.\textsuperscript{453}

The kingdoms of Hungary and Poland were geographically well within Noghai’s range of action, and keenly felt the presence of this dangerous neighbour. His Central European expedition of 1285 demonstrated once again his outstanding qualities as a military leader, in contrast to prince Töle Bugha.

\textsuperscript{449} Brătianu, \textit{Vicina}, pp. 46 ff; for the location and identity of Vicina-Măcin, see Ciocîltan, "Argumete."


\textsuperscript{453} Cf. Vernadsky, \textit{Mongols}, pp. 183–185, who concludes that “the division of the authority in the Golden Horde resulted in the formation of two rival groups among the Russian princes;" cf. also Veselovskiy, \textit{Khan}, p. 27.
Along with his qualities as a commander, Noghai’s actions show that he had a coherent strategic vision for dealing with his Northern and Western neighbours: pivotal to this conception were the knyazate of Halych-Volyn’ and the Severin Banate.

According to one well-placed source, Noghai was principally responsible for making Ruthenia into a spear-point aimed at Lithuania, Poland and Hungary, armed with Alan auxiliaries.454

Given that its border was enclosed by the arc of the Carpathians, the Hungarian state was extremely vulnerable to incursions from across the mountains. On one of these raids in 1285, doubtless via the pass at the Carpathian bend, Noghai attacked Brașov.455 His actions around the Iron Gates were by the very nature of things much more systematic and more far-reaching, since the area is just as geopolitically and strategically important as Ruthenia. From 1291 onwards, the bans of Severin are no longer present in the hierarchy of Arpadian royal offices, marking the moment when Hungarian suzerainty over the Banate ended and it passed into the Danubian khan’s overlordship.456

This annexation was presumably to consolidate Tartar power at the head of the Lower Danube in response to the assassination the previous year of Ladislas IV, ‘the Cuman’ (1272–1290), Noghai’s puppet king in Hungary, who had fallen entirely under Isaccea’s sway after the campaign of 1285, despite the papacy’s energetic attempts to prevent this political més-alliance between the crown of St Stephen and the pagans.457

---

454 This is the Halych-Volyn’ Chronicle, the most important internal source for the Ruthenian knyazate, which concludes in 1292. Ždan, “Dependence,” pp. 509–510, summarises the most important entries here: “[The Chronicle], mentioning Danylo’s son Lev’s request for aid against the Poles, which he submitted to the khan Mönke Timur (1274), adds ‘because all the princes were then under the Tartars.’ The dependence of Halych-Volyn’ Rus on the Mongols is confirmed by the apparently friendly message of Nogay to the Halych-Volyn’ princes, about which there is a notice in the chronicle under the year 1277. In this message Nogay expresses himself in this way: ‘You always complained of Lithuania; see, now I myself give you my army and the general Mamshiy with it, so go with them against your enemies.’ When, to continue our argument, Lev contemplated extending the boundaries of his realm with the help of the same Nogay, after the death of Boleslaw of Cracow, all other princes had, ‘under Tartar pressure,’ to assist him in his campaign against Poland. The expression ‘all princes being Tartar underlings’ is repeated once again in the chronicle under the year 1285, on the occasion of the Mongol invasion of Hungary, and also in the account of the advance of the Mongol army against Poland in 1286 with Halych-Volyn’ regiments as auxiliaries;” on the role of the Alan defensive works around Sniatyn, cf. Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 946.


Campaigning in the Severin Banate was then complemented, on the opposite bank, by bringing the banate of Mačva under Tartar control, along with the despotate of Vidin and Braničevo. These annexations put pressure on the Serbian border, so that prince Milutin chose to submit and sent his son Stephen as a hostage to Noghai’s court along with several great boyars.\textsuperscript{458}

For all that the khan paid particular attention to the region in the 1290s, it was never anything but a flank, of secondary importance in a Balkan policy which ever since 1261,\textsuperscript{459} that is to say even before he had arrived on the Danube, had been principally oriented toward Tarnovo and Constantinople.

Although at first Noghai was merely Sarai’s agent in settling Tartar-Byzantine affairs after the crisis of 1264–1265, he had become in independent player by 1272 at the latest, with sufficient political clout to be considered worthy of a Byzantine alliance. His marriage to Euphrosyne was a fundamental political act which created a new basis for relations between the states of the Western Balkans. A new political structure came with it, born of an alliance between Byzantium and the Danube khanate against the Bulgarian empire, which lasted unchanged until the khanate itself collapsed.\textsuperscript{460}

The Bulgarians, from their capital at Tarnovo, were chagrined by the loss of important territories, first and foremost Mesembria (Nesebar) and Anchialos (Pomorie) which had been reoccupied by the Byzantines shortly after the Palaiologan Restoration.\textsuperscript{461} Michael VIII Palaiologos thus conceived of the treaty of friendship with the ‘great Scythian’ on the Danube as a way to counter Bulgarian resentment: the threat from the North kept Constantine Tikh in check and in 1271 or 1272 he broke off preparations for war against Byzantium.\textsuperscript{462}


\textsuperscript{459} See chapter 4.3.1.


The tsar lost a great deal of prestige and support as a result, and in 1277 was forced to surrender the throne to the people’s hero, Ivaylo, who had successfully confronted several Tartar raids. The Byzantines moved against the new ruler in 1279, bringing with them their pretender candidate Ivan Asen III, and together with a Tartar contingent they besieged the capital at Tarnovo, whence Ivaylo fled to Silistra. Rebellious boyars then deposed the Byzantine/Tartar candidate and in 1280 elected as their tsar George Terter, of Cuman lineage. By this time Noghai held all the most important strings in Bulgaria’s internal politics, conclusively shown by the fact that both Ivaylo and Ivan Asen simultaneously appealed for his help: the former was killed, and the latter allowed to leave for Constantinople.\textsuperscript{463}

Noghai performed one last service for his brother-in-law the emperor just before Michael VIII died: In 1282, he sent troops to support Palaiologos against the sebastocrator John I Doukas of Thessaly.\textsuperscript{464}

The growing power of the Mongol entity on the Danube was also reflected in the shifting balance of power between Sarai and Isaccea in the 1290s, marking a decisive break in its Balkan policy. The Bulgarian empire was the first power to feel this change, with Tartar pressure on Tarnovo becoming much more intense than it had been in earlier years.\textsuperscript{465} George Terter, installed as tsar by the boyars in 1280, was forced to send his son Theodore Svetoslav as a hostage to Noghai’s court, and one of his daughters for the harem of the khan’s son Chaka.\textsuperscript{466}

There is no sound documentary explanation for Terter’s disgrace and the enthronement of Smilets in 1292, but these events occurred in the context of Noghai’s growing power in the Balkans, especially in the North-West of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{467}

This intervention in Bulgarian affairs was Noghai’s last show of force in external affairs. After his death, Toqta was forced to change Golden Horde policy in South-East Europe radically, and this included policy regarding the Straits.


\textsuperscript{465} On this aspect, cf. Nikov, Otnosheniya, p. 16.


\textsuperscript{467} Cf. ibid., and Papacostea, Români, p. 168.
Tartar Policy Between the Carpathians and the Straits After the End of Noghai’s Khanate

Following two devastating civil wars, at the start of the fourteenth century the Golden Horde was exhausted but had swept the secessionist khan on the Danube from the field.\textsuperscript{468} Although Toqta now had no rival to his rule, his victory did not mean the end of all resistance in rebel areas. Even after Noghai’s death, it proved extremely difficult to bring these regions back under central command. After vain attempts to maintain the borders—under his command, naturally—Toqta was forced to reconsider Sarai’s policy in the region at a fundamental level.

The well-informed Mamluk chroniclers reveal through their accounts that Toqta’s victory over Noghai was not in itself enough to undo the military and political disposition which had split the Danube away from the ulus of Jochi.

Chaka, son of the self-proclaimed khan of the Danube, tried to continue his father’s work in unusually turbulent circumstances: “When Noghai’s army was put to flight, and he himself had been killed, his sons took over his lands, but it was not long before they squabbled. Chaka […] killed his brother Teka. Chaka began to rule alone in his father’s lands and appointed a lieutenant, called Tunghuz. His supporters began to leave him nevertheless, realising that they could not expect anything from one who had killed his own brother. His lieutenant Tunghuz formed an understanding with Taz, son of Munjuk, Noghai’s son-in-law, husband of Tughulja, to raid the Romanian and Russian lands.\textsuperscript{469} The two of them set out on their way, and discussing Chaka’s bad behaviour, they agreed that they would capture him after their return. They had the same intent as they came back. Learning of this [plot, Chaka] fled with 150 cavalry and entered the Alan land,\textsuperscript{470} where he had been earlier with a tümen, and remained there. His lieutenant, Tunghuz, and Taz son of Munjuk […] entered his lands, plundered them and occupied them. While Chaka was in the Alan lands, many men from his army came to him secretly. They gave him their


\textsuperscript{469} \textit{bilād ūlāq wa al-rūs} probably refers to the Romanians of Bucovina and the Ruthenians in the Western knyazate, putting them together to make a single ‘land;’ cf. Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 943 note 74.

strength and they set out to do battle with Tunghuz and Taz son of Mun- juk. They met, and they fought. Chaka won, and took back his lands. His sister Tughulja also took part in the battle. Defeated, her husband and those who were with him wrote to Toqta for aid, who sent his army under his brother Bürlük, son of Möngke Temür. When he had come to their aid and the war began again, Chaka could no longer resist and fled to the Romanian lands,\footnote{bilād īlāq can only be the empire of the Asen dynasty, since the capital is mentioned as t.r.n.w., ‘Tarnovo’ (Ciocîltan, “Componenta,” p. 1113).} where the king and ruler were his kinfolk by marriage. Chaka took shelter here, but the governors told [the tsar], ‘He is Toqta’s enemy and we cannot rule out that he will find out that he has fled here, and come upon us unexpectedly with his army, and we will be unable to resist him.’ Then [the tsar captured him, shut him up in a fortress named Tarnovo and told Toqta what he had done. [The khan] ordered that he should be killed this year, that is to say in 700.\footnote{16th September 1300–6th September 1301.} Thus Toqta’s kingdom was relieved of its great trouble.”\footnote{al-Nuwayrī/Tiesenhausen, \textit{Sbornik}, I, pp. 138–139.}

The details of the Mamluk source are confirmed by the Byzantine Pachymeres, who offers some further information: “At this time, Tuktais [= Toqta] triumphant, took the throne of the Tartar lands under his lord- ship, with only a few Tartars remaining with Noghai’s son by Alakka, named Chaka: he had put his trust in them when he invaded the land of the Bulgarians. Because Terteres,\footnote{George I Terter, Bulgarian tsar (1280–1292).} fleeing from the threat of Noghai, had turned to the emperor\footnote{Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328).} and was living somewhere near Adrianople, because the emperor had refused his pleas [for help], for fear that he might be sent for if he, the emperor, had received him kindly, as is right with one seeking refuge, which would stir Noghai’s anger. As for his son Chaka, after Noghai’s death, trusting in his strength and his men, he attacked the Bulgarians, not without reason for he had the daughter of Terteres for his wife. And he also brought with him from his lands her brother Ospendislavos,\footnote{Theodore Svetoslav, Bulgarian tsar (1301–1322).} and wanted to rule over the Bulgarians with him. He however, being poor, met with a man called Pantaleon,\footnote{Probably Pantaleo de Vecina, whom Brătianu, \textit{Vicina}, p. 48, sees as more likely to have been Greek than Italian, given the name.} who had grown rich in business, though he was of good birth and of the imperial stock, for love of wealth he married into the family of the afore-mentioned and of
a low-born man, marrying his niece, the daughter of a certain Mangusis, after she had been sponsored for divine baptism by Noghai’s wife Euphrosyne. And after he had allayed the Bulgarians’ doubts with gifts and behaved toward Chaka as one behaves toward a lord, he conquered Tarnovo together with him. A little later, using an opportunity that presented itself, Osphendislavos, who was a Bulgarian on his mother’s side (although his father had been a Cuman), though until now he had been very friendly to the Bulgarians in Chaka’s name, attacked his brother-in-law, seizing him by trickery and giving him to be watched by trusted guards; then, using Jewish servants whom he entrusted with such matters, he strangled him in prison, and dethroned the patriarch Joachim, as one who had been suspected earlier of having given himself into the hands of the Tokhars [= Tartars]. And thus by such crimes he became supreme ruler.”

By murdering Chaka, Theodore Svetoslav won the favour of the khan on the Volga. However, the Bulgarian tsar did not become the Golden Horde’s plenipotentiary governor in the Danube region until after Toqta had failed to bring the region back under direct Jochid rule, with the help of his closest kin.

“Bürlük, the son of Möngke Temür, began to rule in Noghai’s lands in his brother Toqta’s name. Of all the sons of Noghai, only the youngest, Turai, remained. Toqta […] sent him two of his own sons, Tukul (?) Bugha and Ilbasar. Tukul Bugha occupied Isaccea on the Danube and all the lands to the Iron Gates which had belonged to Noghai. Ilbasar took the river Iaik. He also installed his brother, Sarai Bugha. In the year 701, Noghai’s son Turai rode out to revenge himself on Toqta for having killed his father; he was not able to do this on his own and so he went to Möngke Temür’s son Sarai Bugha, whose brother Toqta had put him in Noghai’s place. Turai had friendly relations with him, was inseparable from him and never ceased trying to persuade him of how good it would be to rebel against his brother Toqta and became lord in his own right. At last Sarai Bugha agreed, set out from his lands at the head of his tümen, crossed the river Itil [= Volga], then left his army and went alone to his brother Bürlük, telling him of what was planned and asking for his agreement. He [pretended] to accept the request. [But] Bürlük hurried to his brother Toqta and told him that Sarai Bugha was in league

478 FHDR, II, pp. 448–449.
479 The Ural.
480 6th September 1301–25th August 1302.
with Noghai’s son Turai. Toqta set off with his guards straight away. He sent out men who brought him [the plotters] and ordered them killed. Both were killed before his eyes. He set his son in the place that he had given to Sarai Bugha. When Toqta killed Turai, Chaka’s son, Qara Kishek, Noghai’s grandson, fled. Two of his kinsmen fled with him, Cherik Temür and Yulukutlu (?). Bürlük sent [troops] to follow them, though he [Qara Kishek] had fled with those two into the lands of tsar [Michael] Shishman, to a place called Vidin, near the king. Around 3,000 cavalry had fled with him. Shishman sheltered them, and they stayed there, raiding here and there and living off what they could claim by the sword, until the end of Toqta’s life.”

The fragments of narrative from Mamluk and Byzantine sources clearly reflect the military upheavals and political instability in the realm which Noghai in his time had ruled alone, with an iron hand. The temptation to restore the former khanate, free from Sarai’s rule, was so strong that not only Noghai’s heirs Chaka and Turai yielded to the urge, but even Sarai Bugha, whose brother had charged him to bring the rebel provinces of the lower Danube back under central authority. Another indication of the Volga khans’ difficulties in attempting to control the Jochid Far West is the unusually high number of governors Toqta appointed to the task. The last scion of the ruling house to be sent to the region, his son Ilbasar, called from his fief on the river Ural, was also an insignificant figure, dying before his father, in 1307/8484 or 1309/10. The times were past when news of the Danube khan’s doings would echo through the four corners of the known world.

Though Toqta’s operations succeeded at great cost, the centrifugal tendencies which had so gravely threatened the unity of the Jochid state could

---

481 Al-Nuwayrī/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, pp. 139–140; Toqta entrusted his sons with rule over two branches of the Noghaid clan, which later became known as the Great Noghai Horde and the Lesser Noghai. Tukul Bugha (whose real name seems to have been Mengli Bugha, according to the account in Ibn Khaldûn/ibid., p. 371) was appointed in the Danube region, whence in all probability the Noghais spread out all along the Northern Black Sea coast), while Ilbasar was appointed in the steppes around the lower Ural basin (Vernadsky, Mongols, p. 190, though both he and Spuler, Horde, p. 79 note 10, are mistaken in thinking that Qara Kishek’s 3,000 cavalry took refuge around Kraków).

482 The text of the chronicle is obviously abridged and does not present these Tartar governors in succession, but rather gives the probably misleading impression that Toqta sent his kinsmen to rule the Danube by committee.

483 Baybars/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 94: “In the year 704 [= 4th August 1304–23rd July 1305], Toqta sent his son Ilbasar to the place which earlier he had given to Sarai Bugha.”

484 Al-Nuwayrī/ibid., p. 140.

485 Baybars/ibid., p. 98.
only be stamped out at the cost of massively reduced Tartar presence and influence in the Carpathian-Balkan region. The khans would never again be able to control events in the regions as directly or as completely as in Noghai’s time.

The change of rule in the region contributed decisively to the general weakening of the Golden Horde that had continued for some years after the end of the civil wars. The two great battles with Noghai had seriously thinned the ranks of the Jochid army, and were followed by natural disasters which further reduced the Volga khan’s military capacity: “In the year 702 news reached Cairo of drought in Toqta’s country, which lasted three years, after which plague struck the cattle and sheep, and it reached the stage when the people did not have anything to eat and sold their children to the merchants, who took them to Egypt and other countries.” Although he had a dependable income from the trade, the khan was alarmed at the loss of potential taxpayers and soldiers, and decided to stop the trade at a stroke: in 1307/8 he expelled the Genoese, the principal agents in the slave trade, from Caffa. The same raison d’état made him send a peremptory command to Emperor Andronikos II, ordering him to return the Alans who had fled to Byzantium from the Eastern Carpathian region after the death of their khan Noghai.

Even this precarious situation did not prevent Toqta from gathering what forces were left to him with the intention of invading the Ilkhanate in 1305 together with his Mamluk allies. As with his predecessors and

---

486 Not only through the unusually high number of battlefield casualties, but also because prisoners-of-war were sold abroad as slaves (Veselovsky, Khan, p. 50, Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 88).
487 26th August 1302–14th July 1303.
488 Al-Maqrizi/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 424; similar reports in al-'Ayni/ibid., p. 483.
489 See chapter 4.2.3.
490 Pachymeres/FHDR, III, pp. 450–453. Gregoras/ibid., p. 508–509; it is not clear whether the khan’s order was followed (Dölger, Regesten, IV, p. 46) since they are later mentioned in Byzantium as mercenaries in the years 1305 and 1323 (Brătianu, Vicina, p. 44) and as ‘Muslim Alans’ in the army of Tsar Ivan Stratsimir of Vidin in his war against Louis of Anjou, king of Hungary, in 1365 (Gjuzelev, B’lgariya, pp. 104–105, Pavlov, “Mongolotartari,” p. 119), but also in 1330 as members of the ‘Alan domain’ (yashko gospodstvo) on the future territory of Moldavia (cf. Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” pp. 938 ff.).
491 Al-Maqrizi/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 424: “In the month of Rabî' al-awwal in the year 704 [= November 1304] envoys from king Toqta, lord of Sarai and the Cuman steppe, came [to Cairo]. They brought letters from their king, containing [the news] that he was preparing towide to war against [the Ilkhan] Ghazan and asking him [= the Sultan of Egypt] to lend him aid;” further detail in al-Mufaḍḍal/ibid., p. 185. This matter had become a concern in 1301—a significant date that shows its importance—after the victory over
successors, this was the overriding thrust of Toqta’s plan for external affairs, and absorbed the greater part of the khan’s interest and strength, to the detriment of the Balkan front.

The turmoil of these years led to a new political structure in the Carpathian-Balkan region. Where the Mongols had been directly present and all-powerful in the 1280s and 1290s, they were now far removed from the scene, replaced instead by local elements: although largely shaped by Tartar control, Bulgarian and Romanian political life had entered a new and much freer stage. This transfer was decisive for national forces to develop their own organisational forms, and took place in the context of a new variation of the Tartar hegemony, which itself went unchallenged until the mid-fourteenth century.

Several contemporary sources indicate that Bulgarian and Romanian political life underwent change once returned more closely to Sarai’s orbit. Thus al-Mufaḍḍal says that in 1307/8 Toqta’s lordship extended “as far as Constantinople’s borders”, an expression used again in his chronicle for 1320/1, during Özbek’s time. Al-‘Umarī adds important details: “Byzantium became a neighbour of the Golden Horde. There was not a moment in which the Byzantine emperor did not address his numerous wishes and complaints [to the khan]. Despite his Greek Fire, the multitude of his troops and the number of his allies, [the emperor] went in fear of [the khan] and tried to win him over to his side by flatteries so that he could live in peace with him at all times. All the while that the khans of the Chinggisid dynasty ruled there, it was like this, and Byzantium’s attitude did not change.” The Syrian scholar describes the Serbs and Bulgarians as being in an even less enviable position: “They danced attendance on the sultan of the Cuman steppe, because of the power he had over them and because he held them by the throat, being so close by them.”

From these accounts it becomes clear that Tartar strength was not equally firm throughout the Balkans. It is quite credible though that compared to Byzantium, better protected by geographical distance, direct propinquity to the Golden Horde and the imbalance of power between

---

493 Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik*, I, pp. 185, 186.
494 Ibid., p. 214.
495 Ibid., p. 141.
the two states was a fatal weakness in the history of the Bulgarian empire even in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Comparing the information from sources about Bulgarian dependence on its steppeland hegemon, we learn not only that the state was “the slave of the Tartars” but that the khan “held the tsar by the throat,” indeed that the empire had become a mere province of the Golden Horde. This is the only way to explain repeated assertions in Mamluk sources that the Golden Horde bordered on Byzantium. For Abu ‘l-Fidā’, there was only one country, inhabited by Bulgarian and Tartars.496 We might conjecture that Egyptian and Syrian scholar-secretaries were unfamiliar with the geopolitics of South-East Europe and made mistakes, but this does not take into account the Muslim traveller Ibn Batṭūṭa, who crossed the Balkan Peninsula in the early 1320s. Even for him, who had eye-witness knowledge of the realities on the ground, Bulgaria has no place on the political map of the region: ‘Baba Sultaq’—Babadag—is the last city governed by the Turks, after which comes a desert which takes 18 days to cross before the first Byzantine fort.497

The Arab view of the region is perfectly matched in the data from medieval Western cartographers. The map by the Mallorcan Angelino Dulcert of 1339 carries a revealing inscription which is taken over word-for-word by other portolans: the great empire of Özbek finit in provincia Burgaria versus occidentem.498 Any remaining doubts about Bulgaria’s incorporation by the Golden Horde vanish when we see that the country’s status is unequivocally specified as ‘provincia’ and that the Eastern border of the Tartar state is described with the same words and formula, and that both phrases carry the same inclusive meaning: finit in Organcium versus orientem.499 Urgench, the commercial centre on the lower Amu Darya, is well-known to have belonged to the Golden Horde.500

496 Abu ‘l-Fidā’/Guyard, II/2, p. 318.
497 Ibn Batṭūṭa/Defrémery, Sanguinetti, II, pp. 417–418. Ibn Duqmāq/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 316, provides an interesting note on Ibn Batṭūṭa’s travelling companion, the princess Bayalun, which seems to have escaped scholars (cited at CSŢR, I, p. 4 note 2) seeking to identify her: “He [Özbek] married Bayalun-khatun, the [former] wife of his [spiritual] father, who had helped him [take the throne]. He [= ‘Imād al-Dīn, son of Maskirī, an Islamic jurist] had allowed this since his father [Toqta] had been an infidel and thus the marriage was not legal. Thus [Özbek] took her for his own.” Thus Bayalun is Maria, illegitimate daughter of Andronikos II, who had been sent to Toqta as a bride in summer of 1297 (Dölger, Regesten, IV, p. 27).
499 Ibid.
500 Cf. Grekov, Yakubovskiy, Orda, p. 467, and above, pp. 42 ff.
Paradoxically, in Toqta’s new Balkan policy, geopolitical relations between the steppeland colossus and its appendage below the Danube worked to the tsar’s benefit after the preceding period of Noghai’s pernicious dominance.\footnote{Cf. Nikov, Otnoshesniya, p. 14, and above, pp. 239–240.}

Once the khan was forced to destroy his rebellious border march on the Danube, an alternative solution naturally presented itself: the Bulgarian state was brought firmly under Sarai’s control and was entirely at the khan’s beck and call, having been very much weakened by the upheavals of preceding decades. The Bulgarian tsar was hopelessly subordinate to the khan on the Volga, and this very subordination was a solid guarantee of loyalty. Thus the khan appointed the tsar as mandated agent of Tartar policy in the region which Noghai had ruled.

The sources show that Theodore Svetoslav made himself noticed in Sarai by certain personal qualities which would make him a key player in the Balkans. First and foremost, the assassination of Chaka attested to his loyalty to Sarai and was generously rewarded: while Bulgarian power had been limited in Noghai’s day, it now spread both to the South, where in 1304 it took Mesembria and Anchialos from Byzantium,\footnote{Bulgaria had lost the towns in 1263 and had tried in vain to recover them during the period of Tartar-Byzantine cooperation (cf. bibliographical notes in Ciocîltan, “Geneza,” p. 92 note 44).} along with other towns, and to the North, to Bujak and the banks of the Dniester.\footnote{Brătianu, “Bulgares,” passim, gathers sources on the event and uses these in other studies as well; Spinei, Moldova, p. 172, rejects them on not wholly convincing grounds.}

The Northward expansion of the tsar’s rule is extraordinarily significant both for the facts on the ground and for the spirit of Bulgarian-Tartar relations as instituted by Toqta and continued by Özbek. Mamluk sources which attest the Bulgarians at Akkerman\footnote{Abu ‘l-Fidā’/Guyard, II/2, p. 318 (completed by 1321): “Aqā Kermān […] is a town in the land of the Bulgarians and the Turks, on the shores of the Black Sea, by the mouth of the river Törtü [= Dniester].” Al-‘Umari (Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 213) is not as specific as Abu ‘l-Fidā’ but also associates Akkerman with Bulgaria, saying that both pay tribute the khan: “The merchant sharif Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Kerbelā’ī told me his story in the months of Rajab al-fard in the year 738 [= 23rd January–21st February 1338] when he returned from that country [= the Golden Horde]. He travelled there and then coming Westwards [the last three words, missing in Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, are found in the manuscript used by ‘Umari/Lech, p. 140] arrived at Aqīja Kermān in the land of the Bulgarians [bilād al-bulghār].”} are confirmed by Western information. Angelino Dulcert’s nautical chart illustrates Abu’ l-Fidā’s cartographic statements about political realities in the region and makes
them explicit: “Bulgaria is placed North of the Danube. […] Alongside
the inscription Burgaria, above Maur(r)o Castro is drawn a flag with the
crescent moon and tamgha, the symbol for regions under Mongol rule.”505
Nothing could be clearer: Bujak was included in Bulgaria, but—nota
bene—a Bulgaria that had the status of a Golden Horde province.506

Even more significant for the profound changes which the Carpathian-
Balkan region underwent at the start of the fourteenth century is the fact
that both Bujak and Dobruja, territories with sizeable Tartar populations,
were placed under a foreign prince’s rule. Evidence from the sources
shows that Theodore Svetoslav made fullest use of the powers which
Toqta delegated to him when he recalled his kinsmen from positions of
command in the Carpathian-Balkan region: Western sources describe
concrete instances of Bulgarian high-handedness at Akkerman.507 Also
symptomatic for this transfer of power is the widespread reflection of the
fact in sources: while these are quite clear that events in Bujak transpired
under Theodore Svetoslav’s authority, no source mentions any Tartar cap-
tain or leader of any political importance in the region.

If the Bulgarians distinguished themselves by their brutality in the dis-
tant town at the mouth of the Dniester, it is obvious that their attitude
in the Dobruja would be no gentler. Among the principal victims were

505 This is Spinei’s description of the map (Spinei, Moldova, p. 173), although he denies
that it shows the true state of affairs; for identical descriptions see Brătianu, “Bulgares,” pp. 61
ff. We should also consider the text by an anonymous geographer of 1308: Bulgaria est unum
imperium magnum per se. Sedes autem imperii dicti est apud budinium [= Vidin] ciuitatem
magnam. Imperatores autem eiusdem imperii [omenes] vocantur cysmani [= Shishman]. Terra
est multa lata et spatiosa. […] Etiam per medium istius imperii transit danubius (Izvoare/
Popa-Lisseanu, II, p. 27); evidently this author did not know that there were two Bulgarian
states, since his emphasis on the size of the country leads us to suspect that he had con-
flated the Despotate of Vidin, the only state he knew first-hand, with the very much larger
empire ruled from Tarnovo. If this is so, then the Danube “flowing through that empire” is
the stretch separating Dobruja from Bujak, both under the tsar of Tarnovo’s direct control.
Otherwise, if our anonymous geographer was thinking only of the Despotate, it is hard to
accept that Shishman’s rule extended into the Severin Banate (cf. Pavlov, “Mongolotatari,”
p. 117, and Spinei, Moldova, p. 173), since the Despot only occasionally intervened on the left
bank of the river and this only in the following decade (see below, p. 273).

506 Iorga, “Momente,” pp. 103–104, saw this clearly, describing Theodore Svetoslav’s Bul-
garia as an “annex of the Mongol Empire.”

507 In 1314 the Franciscan Angelo of Spoleto was killed in Mauro Castro […] per Bul-
garos (Moule, “Textus,” p. 106); the violence also affected Genoese merchants, prompting
the mother-city to proclaim a devetum on 22nd March 1316, banning subjects from trad-
ing with Bulgarians in countries ruled by Fedixclauus [= Svetoslav], tam in Mauro Castro
quam alibi (Sauli, “Imposicio,” col. 382). The Bulgarian tsar’s action against the Genoese
anticipates Dobrotich’s conflict with the Republic’s merchants by about half a century, and
seems to have been caused by the same underlying economic factors.
the Seljuk Turks who had been settled here in the previous century to escape the attentions of the ‘beys’ unleashed upon them by the Bulgarians, some emigrated back to their Anatolian homeland in 1304, while those who remained abandoned their Muslim faith and became Christianised. The conversion of Seljuk Muslims into Christian Gagauz was an unsparing and wholesale process, for which the tsar had the advantage of an unusually favourable religious-political context thanks to his patron at Sarai, Toqta, being a shamanist, one of the very few to stray from the long line of Muslim rulers of the Golden Horde. As such, Toqta could only approve of the Bulgarian leadership’s fanatically Orthodox policy, since it strengthened Golden Horde hegemonic interests in the region. If a Muslim khan—by definition, the defender of the faithful—had occupied the throne at Sarai, no such persecution of Islam by an unbeliever could ever have taken place.

Although the expulsion of the Seljuks had striking religious consequences, the principle motivation was of another kind. Just like the Alans, whose lands between the Carpathians and the Dniester had been a focus

---

509 The passage from the chronicle of Yazïjîoghlu ‘Ali reads, in the version of Decei, “Problema,” p. 174: “AN ACCOUNT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF BYZANTINE LANDS AFTER THE DEATH OF SULTAN EBU SEYYID GHAZAN KHAN: At this time Muslim nomads from the province of Dobruja in Rumelia crossed by ship to the lands of Karasi with Khalil Eje, because there was an interregnum in Anatolia and the news had spread; and the ulgar beys [= Bulgarians] of Rumelia revolted, rising against the fasilevs [= basileus, Byzantine emperor], taking the greater part of Rumelia. For this reason, in order to be free of them, they moved and went to Anatolia. Those who remained in Rumelia after the death of Saru Saltuq became apostates;” according to the same Ottoman chronicler, Saru Saltuq Dede died shortly after the Ilkhan Ghazan, who died on 17th May 1304 (ibid., p. 188).
510 The ethnonym is derived from the name of the Seljuk sultan ‘Izz al-Dīn Kaykāwuz, who in 1261 fled with his adherents first to Byzantium and then to the Golden Horde (cf. Decei, “Problema,” pp. 188–192, for the long list of scholars who support this etymology). They were probably settled as colonists from the Cuman steppe to Dobruja in 1280 (ibid., p. 188).
511 Documented as such by al-Birzali/Tiesenhausen, Sbornik, I, p. 173, and al-Asadi, ibid., p. 443.
512 Spuler, Horde, pp. 216 ff.
513 Toqta was not a Christian, as Golubovich, Biblioteca, III, pp. 170–171, and Soranzo, Papato, p. 546, claimed, but he encouraged hopes that he might become a protector of the Christians after his victory over the Muslim Noghai: Anno Domini MCCCI. Unus dominus Tartarorum invasit alium, videlicet imperator, que dicebatur Theka [= Toqta], vir bonus, qui multum favorabiles erat Christianis, imperatorem Nocha [= Noghai], qui pessimus nigromanticus et persecutor omnibus boni, et desiruxit eum in toto et factus est dominus in toto aquilone, Asia et parte Orientis (Lucca/Schmeidler, p. 237). Indeed the Orthodox in Bulgaria were favoured, just as in the Russian kniazates, where in 1308 the khan renewed the yarlik of protection as a gift to the Metropolitan Peter of Moscow (Spuler, Horde, p. 228).
for Chaka’s organised resistance against Toqta’s party, the Seljuks were not only compromised but were probably suspected of being potential partisans for Noghai’s heirs, given that they had served the Danubian-Tartar dynasty for a long time. Just as in the Seljuk case, in the absence of other documentary proof it seems reasonable to suppose that Theodore Svetoslav played an essential role in the Alan exodus from the East Carpathian region. At least two arguments support such this presumption: the parallelism of the situations, and the Alans’ request for political asylum in Byzantium rather than in neighbouring Bulgaria.

If it was the case that the tsar was not merely carrying out the khan’s order but was persecuting Noghai’s men on his own initiative, this was part of the normal order of things, starting with the assassination of Chaka, whereby the vassal in Tarnovo sought to fulfil his lord’s wishes even before they had been expressed. Theodore Svetoslav’s zeal seems to have gone against Toqta’s expectations, and even worked against his interests: his request that the Alan refugees who had fled to Byzantium be returned, suggests as much. Tartar-Bulgarian relations were not affected by this disjunction, since it did not cast doubt on the tsar’s loyalty to the khan: quite the opposite.

The support lent to Theodore Svetoslav during Toqta’s reign proved to be such a good investment that his successor Özbek found it convenient to maintain the policy unchanged until the tsar’s death in 1322. Under the new khan, the Golden Horde reached the peak of its state development, on the basis of which he claimed the right to rule all Europe, and it is certain that after his faithful vassal at Tarnovo died, Özbek continued Toqta’s political line on the lower Danube: the same underlying relationship of strict dependency, the same discrete and almost imperceptible

---

515 Ibid., p. 940.
516 Spuler, Horde, pp. 87, 99.
517 Winterthur/Baethgen, pp. 162–163: Item fertur, quod in his temporibus imperator seu rex magnus Tartarorum tam excellentis potentiae fuit, quod quingentos principatus concedere habuit, quorum minimum regno Boemie veraciter comparari valebat. Quí ad mercatores solitus erat tunc temporis venientes de regionibus christiculós ad regiones imperii sui causa mercacionis dicere: 'Imperator Romanorum et Rex Francorum deberent de iure a se in regnis suis infeodari et quia facere hoc contempnunt malo titulo ea possident cum injuria mea magna.'
518 Al-‘Umarī’s comments are very general in character and do not specify names, but it is likely that the historian, who based his description of the Golden Horde in great part on reports by merchants who travelled the Cuman steppe during Özbek’s reign, had the latter in mind when he wrote that the khan had the Bulgarian and Serbian rulers by the throat (see above, pp. 265 ff.).
suzerain presence which was nevertheless enough to protect the Bulgarian state and his own interests. The most eloquent proof for continuity here is an argumentum e silentio: not one source mentions any Tartar attack on the Bulgarians during Özbek’s reign, while his repeated raids on Byzantium in 1319, 1323, 1328, 1332 and 1337 were widely reported in contemporary sources.\footnote{Kantakouzenos/FHDR, III, pp. 482–485, Gregoras/ibid., pp. 510–513, Pavlov, “Mongolotatari,” p. 119.}

This being the case, there can be no doubt that when magnates in the Carpathian-Balkan region planned and directed their major foreign policy initiatives, they were governed by the Tartars and their projects were, if not dictated, then at the very least supervised by the khan on the Volga. One of the farthest-reaching changes on the political map of the region could not have taken place without the suzerain’s assent, this being the unification of the Bulgarian states under the sceptre of Michael Shishman (1323–1333): “At this time, the leadership of the Moesians [= Bulgarians] passed after their sovereign Terter\footnote{George II Terter (1322–1323).} had died without issue to the ruler of Vidin, Michael, […] they proclaimed him tsar and entrusted to him Tarnovo, where the royal residence is, and the rest of the country as well.”\footnote{Kantakouzenos/FHDR, II, pp. 482–483.}

An even more transparent instance is that the khan took this occasion to adjust the Bulgarian state’s Northern border. The tsar’s domain had grown considerably to the West when the Despotate of Vidin was reincorporated, but by contrast it shrank significantly in the North: according to Nicephoros Gregoras, a contemporary, “Michael Shishman was given lordship over the Bulgarians this side of the Danube,”\footnote{Gregoras/Schopen, I, p. 391, Spinei, Moldova, p. 173.} thus on the right bank. The Byzantine scholar thus evidently felt the need to specify this, to mark a change in circumstances since his remark would otherwise have been superfluous. His implication that Bulgaria no longer ruled in Bujak after 1323 is confirmed by the silence of all other sources on the subject, with the exception of portolan maps—which are notorious for picking up and perpetuating anachronistic information, this being practically a besetting malady for this category of sources.\footnote{Cf. the cartographical material cited in Spinei, Moldova, p. 172.}

It is of the first importance for a clear understanding of the political context in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe during this period that the
decision to shift Bulgaria’s Northern border be properly attributed. Certainly, the newly-enthroned tsar can hardly be suspected of having chosen to cut away some of his own territory: this would have been going entirely against type. Nor is his neighbour on the left bank of the Danube, Basarab, the founder of the Wallachian Principality, likely to have shifted the border at the expense of the tsar at Tarnovo, firstly because at the time Romanian-Bulgarian relations were not merely amicable but closely intertwined, as manifested by joint political and military initiatives. Having ruled out these possibilities, our attention naturally turns to the only person capable of changing the status of Bujak, a zone of the utmost geopolitical significance: khan Özbek.

Thus in 1323 the sovereign of the Golden Horde oversaw a reallocation of part of the Tartar hegemony, with the obvious goal of bringing the mass of Romanians North of the Danube under one leader in order to promote Sarai’s interests in the Carpathian-Balkan region. He made good the loss of Bujak to the Bulgarian empire through an uncommonly adroit political move, promoting Michael Shishman to the imperial throne at Tarnovo and thus awarding him and his dynasty a boost which greatly compensated for the loss of territory.

Chronologically, the earliest common denominator for these two neighbouring dynasties was their role in defending the Far West of the Tartar hegemony against the king of Hungary’s expansionist impulses. The first of the Angevin kings coveted the Severin-Vidin region, just as the Arpads had earlier and as his successors later would, a region of uncommon strategic significance, so much so that the name of a relatively tiny area, the Iron Gates on the Danube, was known as far afield as Egypt as the Westernmost limit of Noghai’s lands. The same Mamluk sources that note this geographical term also report that Toqta, victorious, took over his defeated rival’s territory on the Lower Danube and appointed princes from his own family to administer it.

None of Toqta’s kinsmen named as governor here distinguished himself as a guardian of the Western frontier, since for as long as he governed the region, the Hungarian kingdom had not yet recovered sufficiently from the collapse at the end of the thirteenth century to make any move. The new king, the Angevin Charles I, made no attempt to restore the hegemony of

---

the Arpads in the trans-Danubian and trans-Carpathian lands. Once he considered himself strong enough, in the 1310s, to have any chance of success at reconquering the previous dynasty’s territories, lost in 1291 after Noghai’s Danube offensive, the Hungarian ruler did not delay political and military action on the South-Eastern front. Within this region, the Severin-Vidin area rapidly proved a strategic priority.

The Carpathian-Balkan wing of the Tartar hegemony had recently undergone structural modifications which meant that the Hungarian king found himself facing local magnates, supported of course by Tartar contingents. The Romanian voivode at Argeș, the Despot of Vidin and the Tsar at Tarnovo fought back in a largely coordinated manner. Although we do not have as many sources as we might wish for a full explanation of events, nevertheless a series of documents does cast light upon at least part of the story, and allows a plausible reconstruction of the outlines.

In 1314 Pope John XXII circulated a letter seeking to console Hungarian Catholics and those in neighbouring regions for losses inflicted “by the schismatics, the Tartars, the pagans and the other unbelieving nations” with predictably little result. Then in 1319 the pope, outraged by the schismatics' continued depredations, made a more concerted attempt to stamp out this ‘plague’. The king in turn also complained to the supreme pontiff in 1325 about the maltreatment which Catholics in the borderlands suffered from the schismatics, the Tartars and the pagans, and repeated his complaint two years later. The stability of the kingdom was particularly threatened by cooperation between forces from beyond the Carpathians and the Transylvanian rebels led by the voivode Ladislas Borsh, deposed in 1315. This opportunist alliance was directed against Hungarian royal authority in Transylvania, and was merely a passing threat

---

525 When Béla IV granted a charter to the Knights Hospitaller in 1247, this was a reflection of the Buda monarchy’s limited capacity to command in the territories between the central Carpathians and the Danube (DRH D, I, pp. 21–24).

526 Documente/Hurmuzaki, I/1, pp. 574–575. Although the term schismatici refers to the members of Greek Rite Orthodox in general, a document of 1352 from the Hungarian chancery restricts its sense to the Romanians, significantly for fourteenth-century affairs: per gentes schismaticas, videlicet per Olachos (Codex Andegavensis, p. 603).

527 Pascu, Contribuțiuni, p. 19.

528 Ibid.

529 A document of 1319 reveals that the rebels had support from schismatics both within and beyond Transylvania, so that the Pope advised the king to go to war against them (ibid.). These friendly relations between rebels and Orthodox provide the context for Ottokar of Styria’s anecdote about Otto of Bavaria being held prisoner by the Transylvanian voivode Ladislaus Kán in 1307, who then handed him over a year later to the “voivode of the Romanians,” Basarab (cf. ibid., and Papacostea, Români, p. 169).
when compared to the more fundamental enmity of Romanians from both sides of the mountains, whose solidarity was based on religious and even on national factors. In 1319 the pope wrote of a dangerous conspiracy, pointing out its causes and warning of plots laid against the crown of St Stephen.\(^{530}\) In 1334 the Pontiff again urged Charles I to go to war against the “schismatics and Tartars,” seeing this as the only way to uproot the evil. His call went unheeded, but in 1335 “the Tartars entered the Burzenland [Ţara Bârsei] three times and were in Transylvania for many years, where they caused great damage.”\(^{531}\) It seems that the king’s only victory during this period came in 1326, when he is implausibly recorded as having slain 30,000 invading Tartars: even if there is any truth to the report, it did not change the underlying problem.\(^{532}\)

The advice arriving from the papacy was much more fervent than it was realistic, and blithely ignored the actual balance of power in the region. The earliest indication here is the Hungarian kingdom’s notably feeble attempts—as reported in the sources already mentioned—to deal with several aggressive neighbouring powers which surrounded it, with united strength, from the the South and East.

Concrete documentary evidence in the matter begins with Charles I’s diploma of 1317; John, the son of the ban Theodore Voytech, had revolted in Mehadia, which the document describes as a Hungarian stronghold: he had support from the Despot Michael Shishman, but was stopped in his tracks by the royal agents to whom the diploma was addressed.\(^{533}\) The fortress commanded the Timis-Cerna corridor, thus controlling access between the kingdom and Severin or Vidin, and remained in Hungarian possession under the leadership of the royal steward and castellan Dionysius Szécsi,\(^{534}\) entrusted with the mission of defending the border “against the Bulgarians, against Basarab the voyvode over the [Carpathian] Mountains, against the schismatic king of Serbia and also against the Tartars who constantly invade.”\(^{535}\) A document of 1329 rewarded the castellan’s services in defending the border, and also recorded an offensive operation:

\(^{530}\) Pascu, Contribuţiuni, p. 18: Regnum Ungarie et quedam partes adiecentes […] scismaticis […] in clandestina machinamenta conglutinet in perniciem animarum.

\(^{531}\) Codex/Kretzulescu, p. 53.

\(^{532}\) The unlikely news is taken from the Prussian Chronicle, and can be found at Minea, “Războiul,” p. 328, and Iosipescu, “Românii,” p. 72.

\(^{533}\) Holban, “Raporturile,” p. 40: cum potentia domini dezpoth de Budinio.

\(^{534}\) Recorded (ibid. p. 41) in 1322 as Dyonisius de Sydowar et de Myhald [= modern-day Jdioara and Mehadia, in Romania], p. 41.

the commander had conquered “the castle of Guren in Bulgaria, whence the men of the Despot or the duke at Tarnovo,” Michael Shishman, had often raided the Hungarian borderlands.\textsuperscript{536} This was far too tenuous and isolated a foothold however to serve as a Hungarian strategic bridgehead on the Southern bank of the Danube which might support Angevin interests on the Balkan Peninsula.

Charles I’s attempts to recover lands lost to the Wallachian Principality met with even less success. Documents dating from the period when the king was officially at peace with the voyvode reveal tensions explicable by the unusually contentious nature of the Romanian-Hungarian dispute. From the very start, there was very little real chance of reconciling Charles I’s desire to reconstitute a Hungarian ‘domain’ South of the Carpathians with the new political reality in lands that made up a unitary state under a single ‘Grand voyvode.’\textsuperscript{537} The Angevin monarch refrained from decisive action against the ruler who had ‘usurped’ the rights of St Stephen’s Crown in lands between the Carpathian and the Danube, since he was well aware that the Romanian Principality now made up part of a power bloc which the Hungarian state could provoke only at its extreme peril. Charles I’s dealings with Basarab show that he had taken note of this reality when he made peace with the Romanian lord, concluded in 1324 at the latest, but also when he made war against him in 1330.

In July 1324 the king rewarded \textit{magister} Martin, son of Bugar, count of Sâlaj [= Szilágyi], for a series of services, the last in the list being “carrying messages […] many times over to our voyvode in the Wallachian Principality”\textsuperscript{538} suggesting that the accord was concluded as the result of repeated and (presumably) wearisome negotiations sometime not long before the royal diploma was issued, thus at the earliest a few months before July 1324. Further, the treaty should be placed in the context of efforts made in the summer of that year to solve Transylvania’s difficult internal and external problems. Charles I carried out military operations from June to August to put down a Saxon revolt,\textsuperscript{539} and at the same time sought a comprehensive settlement of relations with his troublesome neighbours over the mountains. The final stage of negotiations with Basarab most

\textsuperscript{536} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{537} Papacostea, \textit{Români}, p. 169.

\textsuperscript{538} \textit{DRH D}, I, pp. 36–37.

probably coincided not just with these internal matters, but—food for thought—also with an embassy to the Tartars, led by Phynta, son of Samuel de Mende, the purpose or content of which is not known.540

In his effort to settle these external relations, the Hungarian king could not afford to lose sight of the constellation of forces that had taken shape the year before: in 1323 the recently-crowned tsar of Tarnovo, Michael Shishman, “gathering his armies and receiving not a little help from from the Ungaro-Vlachs541 and the Scythians [= Tartars]542 attacked Byzantium. To this constellation we must also add Stephen, son of the Cuman count Parabuh, who in 1325—according to the outraged testimony of the church preceptor at Titel in Hungary—“praised Basarab across the mountains, unfaithful to the Holy Crown, to the detriment of the king, saying that the power of our lord king could not stand against the power of Basarab.”543

The Serbian tsar Stephen Dušan included an autobiographical note in the preface to his law code, the Zakonik, which is even more revealing about the composition of the great coalition and the position held by the Romanian ruler: he records that the army which Michael Shishman led against his Serbian forces at the battle of Velbujd (1330) contained, along with Bulgarians and Byzantines, “Basarab Ivanko, tsar Alexander’s544 father-in-law, black Tartars that live nearby, the lord of the Alans and other rulers with them.”545

The most conclusive proof that forces in the Carpathian-Balkan region were integrated into a coherent military-political system is furnished by the presence of ‘black Tartars’ and Alans in the alliance. Although Romanian participation at Velbujd could be explained by the voyvode’s particular interest in fighting alongside the Bulgarians against the Serbs, this argument cannot remotely be used in the case of the other two ethnic

---

541 The first time that a Byzantine source uses this term for inhabitants of the Romanian Principality.
542 Cantacuzino/FHDR, III, pp. 482–483. Even with help from the Romanians and Tartars, the Bulgarian army was unable to win the day in battle with the Byzantines near Philippoi and at Adrianople in 1323–1324, forcing the tsar to seek a negotiated peace with the emperor (Vernadsky, Mongols, p. 196, Iosipescu, Românii, pp. 69–70).
544 Ivan Alexander was at that point not yet Bulgarian tsar (ruled 1331–1371).
545 There are various recensions and readings, more or less divergent; I have chosen the solution proposed by Mihăilă, Contribuții, p. 274 (cf. also Dushan/Radojić, p. 84, Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 939, idem, “Bătălia,” pp. 28 ff.).
groups mentioned: they lived on the territory of the future Moldavia, and we can rule out the idea that they had any particular quarrel with the kingdom of Serbia. Their involvement in the Balkan conflict, like the cohesion of the whole great alliance gathered around Argeș and Tarnovo, must have been directed by a higher will, and under the circumstances this can only have been the all-powerful khan Özbek.

The Zakonik list of those fighting in the Northern wing does not allow us to deduce a hierarchy among members of the alliance under Golden Horde patronage. The Zakonik relates that the ‘black Tartars’ dwelt in a land with rich pastures for their herds of horses and flocks of livestock, neighbouring the Wallachian Principality, and this can only have been the Bujak. At that time, as in times to come, the lower Siret river formed the Eastern boundary, and in later documents is noted as dividing Muntenia from “Tartar lands.”

The Serbian source thus offers us the first political map of the Romanian Principality, and what most clearly emerges is the classic outlines and centralised structure of Wallachia, fully formed by 1330, at which moment the country formed part of the Golden Horde hegemony.

The mere existence of such a state went directly against the fundamental interests of the Hungarian kingdom. Thus it should be no surprise that Charles I attempted to change the status quo between the middle Carpathians and the Danube, sending many envoys to Basarab for the purpose. The great voivode accepted Hungarian suzerainty in exchange for recognition of the Romanian Principality and his own position as ruler, and was prepared to pay tribute. In order to reduce the pressure which the Hungarian kingdom was exerting on his state with the established support of the Roman Catholic church, Basarab also made confessional concessions: in 1327, when he founded the princely church (Biserica Domnească) at Curtea de Argeș the pope called him an “unbending pillar” of Catholicism, and asked him to continue to support the church.

---

549 Thus in the diploma of 1324 he is called Bazarad, woyuodam nostrum Transalpinum (DRH D, i, pp. 36–37).
Basarab, the founder of the state, thus inaugurated the Romanian Principality’s policy of equilibrium between two worlds, arising from a geopolitical fate which was to mark the state throughout history. Wallachia was constantly forced to strike a dangerous balance which could never simultaneously satisfy both powerful neighbours, to the East and the West. The long series of such frustrations, with all their hard consequences, began at this moment.

The principal source on Romanian-Hungarian relations in the 1320s emphasises that although the voyvode scrupulously fulfilled all his feudal obligations toward the suzerain at Buda, nevertheless the king invaded in September 1330, bringing a large army through the mountains. The objective of the campaign is stated in similarly clear language, and reveals just how unsatisfied the king was with the compromise of 1324: the invasion aimed to depose Basarab and replace him with a candidate from the Hungarian court. The plan to make the Romanian Principality into a Hungarian province was set in motion: once the king reached the fortress at Severin, he entrusted it to the castellan of Mehadia and Jdioara, Dionysius Szécsi, together with the title of ban. The Chronicon Pictum goes on to relate in similarly objective terms how the voyvode attempted to stop the royal army from advancing further—rightly, as the chronicle sees it—by offering a substantial sum of money and promising to cede territory, and then recounts the truly disastrous outcome of the expedition.

What the chronicler does not seem to know, given that he seems surprised at the unprovoked and unjustified Hungarian invasion of the Romanian Principality, is that Charles I, as well as strongly desiring to reconquer territories lost to Basarab, was also taking advantage of a favourable set of circumstances which, he hoped, would help him crush his adversary.

Just as the show of force by the Romanian-Bulgarian coalition, with Tartar support, in 1323, had had the side-effect of persuading the king

551 The Chronicon Pictum Vindobonense (Izvoare/Popa-Lisseanu, XI, p. 109) does not accuse the voyvode at Argeș of anything that might have justified the invasion, rather noting that *ipse princeps censum debitum regie maiestati semper fideliter persolvisset*.
552 Holban, “Raporturile,” p. 15, says that for Charles I the agreement was “merely provisional, and could be abandoned at the earliest opportunity.”
553 Ibid.; cf. Achim, “Vechimea,” pp. 233–234: “In Hungarian documents of the fourteenth century, the ‘ban’ and ‘banate of Severin’ were to all practical purposes a programme of expansion into the Romanian Principality, to recover the Arpad dynasty’s holdings in Oltenia of the previous century and to attain suzerainty over the state that had encompassed the territory;” see also idem, Política, pp. 38 ff.
of Hungary to recognise the Romanian Principality, so the news of their defeat at Velbujd in 1330 had the opposite effect. The haste with which the king sought to take advantage of this situation shows that he was gambling that the coalition would fall apart for a while, and that he could take his adversary by surprise, unprepared and isolated: he did not take the time to gather his forces from the various fronts where they were scattered,555 which allowed him to enter enemy country in September, only two months after Velbujd.556

The gamble was mistaken: even without support from Tartar detachments,557 the Romanians not only withstood the attack but won a great victory.

Even if the defeat at Velbujd had routed the losers, this was only a temporary state of affairs. After the Hungarians were chased out of the Romanian Principality, Basarab chalked up another victory: his young son-in-law Ivan Alexander was enthroned at Tarnovo. The steppeland hegemon also made its presence felt once more in this sensitive region, which had been so stubbornly fought over in preceding years.558

The alliance of forces in the Carpathian-Balkan region would endure under the protection of the great Cuman power, without encountering any further resistance worthy of note, until khan Özbek’s death in 1341.

* * *

After the khan’s death, the Golden Horde contracted significantly, and this was felt in the Carpathian-Balkan region which, to all intents and purposes, escaped from the Horde’s control.

Although Janibek delegated his brother-in-law Atlamush to lead the Bujak Tartars, they had dwindled from a force to be reckoned with in their own right to become only a memory of their former power: where Noghai had gone from victory to victory, ruling expansive lands with an iron hand and governing countless peoples until he was overthrown by

555 Ibid., pp. 108–109: [...] cum rex copiosum exercitum, non tamen totum suum posse, quia ad confinia regni sui in diversas expediciones contra adversarios eisdem regni, quam plurimos destinauerat pugnatores.


557 The much-discussed charter of Louis of Anjou from 1351 is not only very late, but is also biased by the king’s need to justify his father’s defeat by the voivode, who supposedly had "all his strength and that of his pagan neighbours" (Documente/Hurmuzaki, 1/2, p. 14). The document’s value as a source is certainly less than that of the Chronicon Pictum, which does not say a word about any such help.

558 A letter from one Ragusan noble to another in December 1331 expressed the worry che Tartari erano vinudi aprovo Bedino [= Vidin] (Jireček, “Würdigung,” p. 257).
his own kinsmen, his successor on the Lower Danube was a mere shadow, his name only remembered in connection with the first defeat that the Tartars ever suffered at the hands of the Hungarians and the Romanians, in the 1340s.559

The last known Bujak magnate is Demetrius, princeps Tartarorum, recorded in 1368 as ruling over a mere enclave,560 probably independent of Sarai and not under its protection, which would shortly be swallowed up into Moldavia’s borders.561

---

559 A Hungarian and a Romanian chronicle both present Atlamos as the chief of the Tartars at the mouth of the Danube, and Janibek’s brother-in-law; an anonymous Romanian ballad remembers him as ‘the haiduc Alimoş’; cf. the sources and secondary literature at Ciocîltan, “Pârţile,” p. 351.

560 Bujak was a domain par excellence reserved for the Tartar nomads, who grazed the lands with their herds and flocks. A document notarised on 11th February 1361 at Chilia by Antonio di Ponzò records that Thorboch tartarus de miliario Coia de centanario de Rabech de decena de Boru had sold a slave to Bernabò di Carpena, witnessed by a number of Genoese and also by Bechangur nuncius Coia, Aruch et Oia tartari habitatores lavarii, thereby proving that the Tartars continued to live in the traditional Chinggisid regimental structures (Ponzò/Balard, p. 16; cf. Ciocîltan, “Alanii,” p. 947, and on the broader subject of this chapter, idem, “Hegemonia”).

561 Chaka at the beginning of the century and Atlamos in the 1340s gave way to the last magnate of Bujak, who appears in the source documents in 1368, Demetrius; his title of ‘prince of the Tartars’ indicates that he was an independent chieftain at this stage of the Golden Horde’s disintegration (Brătianu, “Demetrius,” and Spinei, Moldova, p. 75).
Study of the sources and secondary literature on Chinggisid influence on Black Sea trade in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries leads to two major conclusions.

As the state of affairs in the sea in the interval of 1241–1261 proves, even while the fabled *Pax Mongolica* reigned over most shores of the Black Sea, this peace and security across vast stretches of Asia and Eastern Europe did not in itself change the conditions of trade on and around the sea, but there is no doubt that it provided the indispensable foundation for the exceptional economic development in the Black Sea after 1261, along with its two transcontinental connecting routes. The inclusion of the Black Sea basin into the long-distance trade network—with its two axes of the Silk Road through the Golden Horde (Urgench-Sarai-Tana/Caffa) and the Spice Road through the Ilkhanate (Ormuz-Tabriz-Trebizond)—was the two Mongol states’ most important contribution to making the sea a “crossroads of international commerce”.

In this context, one of history’s great oddities deserves to be pointed out: the closest recorded working relationship between European and Asian powers in the medieval period, achieved by the joint efforts of the Chinggisid rulers and the Italian merchant republics, was not realised via the usual geographic channels of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent, but rather by roundabout routes to the Black Sea. Thus at the same time as the sea fulfilled its function as a crossroads of long-distance Eurasian trade, it was also a bypass.
THE MAIN CHINGGISID RULERS

Great khans

Chinggis Khan d. 1227
Ögödei 1229–1241
Güyük 1246–1248
Möngke 1251–1259
Qubilai 1260–1294

Khans of the Golden Horde

Batu 1242–1256
Berke 1257–1267
Möngke Temür 1267–1280
Töde Möngke 1280–1287
Töle Bugha 1287–1291
[Noghai ?–1300]
Toqa 1291–1312
Özbek 1313–1357
Janibek 1342–1357
Toqtamish 1380–1395
Berdibek 1357–1362

Ilkhans

Hülegü 1261–1265
Abaqa 1265–1282
Aḥmad Tegüder 1282–1284
Arghun 1284–1291
Geikhatu 1291–1295
Ghazan 1295–1304
Öljeittü 1304–1316
Abū Saʿīd 1316–1335
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Achim, Politica = V. Achim, Politica sud-estică a regatului ungar sub ultimii Arpadieni, Bucharest 2008.
Ahrweiler, Byzance = H. Ahrweiler, Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe–XVe siècles, Paris 1966.

— —, Studi = G. Airaldi, Studi e documenti su Genova e l’Oltremare, Genoa 1974.


ASLSP = Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria.


— —, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, London 1928.


Bell, "route" = M. S. Bell, "The Great Central Asian Trade Route from Peking to Kashgaria," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 12, 1890: 57–93.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Charrière, Négociations = E. Charrière, Négociations de la France dans le Levant, I, Paris 1848.


D’Ohsson, Histoire = A. C. M. d’Ohsson, Histoire des Mongoles depuis Tchinguïs-Khan jusqu’à Timur Bey ou Tamerlan, I–IV, Amsterdam 1892.
—, Conti = C. Desimoni, I conti dell’ambasciata al chan di Persia nel MCCXCI, Genova 1879.
Documente/Hurmuzaki = Documente privitoare la istoria românilor (colecția inițiată de E. de Hurmuzaki).
Doria/Imperiale di Sant’Angelo = Iacobi Aurie Annales ann. MCCLXXX–MCCXXXIII, Annali genovesi di Caffaro e dei suoi continuatori dal MCCCLXXX al MCCLXXXIII, a cura di C. Imperiale di Sant’Angelo, V, Rome 1929 (Fonti per la Storia d’Italia, XIV bis).
Doria/Pertz = Iacobi Aurie Annales genuenses, ed. G. H. Pertz (MGH SS, XVIII).


EI² = The Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition.


Fallmerayer, Geschichte = J. Ph. Fallmerayer, Geschichte des Kaiserthums von Tapezunt, Munich 1827.

Fedorov-Davidov, Stroy = G. A. Fedorov-Davidov, Obshchestvennyi stroy Zolotoy Ordii, Moscow 1973.


Golubovich, Biblioteca = Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e del Oriente francescano, a cura di G. Golubovich, I–IV, Quaracchi 1909–1929.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

— —, Bor’ba = B. D. Grekov, Bor’ba Rusi za sozdanie svoego gosudarstva, Moscow-Leningrad 1945.
Hammer-Purgstall, Geschichte = J. von Hammer-Purgstall, Geschichte der Goldenen Horde im Kipchtak, das ist der Mongolen in Russland, Pesth 1840.
Höllmann, Seidenstrasse = Th. O. Höllmann, Die Seidenstrasse, Munich 2004.


———, Veneţia = N. Iorga, Veneţia in Marea Neagră, I: Dobrotici; II: Legături cu Turcii și cu creştinismul din Balcani de la lupta de la Cosovo la cea de la Nicopole (1386–96); III: Originea legăturilor cu Ștefan-cel-Mare și mediul desvoltării lor, Bucharest 1914.


İşiltan, Seltschukengeschichte = F. İşiltan, Die Seltschukengeschichte des Akserayi, Leipzig 1943.


——, "Croisade" = V. Laurent, "La croisade et la question d’Orient sous le pontificat de Grégoire X (1272–1276)," RHSEE 22, 1945: 105–137.


Liou, Silk Road = X. Liou, The Silk Road in World History, Oxford 2010.


——, "Venise" = R. S. Lopez, "Venise et Gênes: deux styles, une réussite," in idem, Su e giù per la storia di Genova, Genoa 1975: 35–42.


——, Storia = R. S. Lopez, Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo, Bologna 1938.


*MGH SS* = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Series scriptorum.*


Nikon, Otnosheniya = P. Nikon, *Tatarobulgarski otnosheniya prez srednite vekove s ogled kem caruvaneto na Smileca*, Sofia 1922.


——, Ciocîltan, Marea Neagră = Ş. papacostea, V. Ciocîltan, Marea Neagră, răspântire a drumurilor intercontinentale (1204–1453), Constanţa 2007.
Pascu, Contribuţiuni = Şt. Pascu, Contribuţiuni documentare la istoria românilor din sec. XIII–XIV, Sibiu 1944.
Polo/Benedetto = Marco Polo, Il Milione. Prima edizione integrale a cura di Luigi Foscolo Benedetto, Florence 1928.
Polo/Latham = The Travels of Marco Polo, Transl. by R. E. Latham, Harmondsworth 1959 (reprint 1982).
RESEE = Revue des études sud-est européennes.
RHSEE = Revue historique du Sud-Est européen.
RIS = Rerum Italicarum scriptores.
Sacerdoțeanu, Guilláume de Rubrouck = A. Sacerdoțeanu, Guilláume de Rubrouck et les Roumains au milieu du XIIIe siècle, Paris 1930.
———, Invazie = A. Sacerdoțeanu, Marea invazie tătară și Sud-estul european, Bucharest 1933.
Sadeque, Baibars = S. F. Sadeque, Baibars I of Egypt, Dacca 1956.
Safargaliev, Raspad = M. G. Safargaliev, Raspad Zolotoy Ordï, Saransk 1960.
Schlumberger, Numismatique = G. Schlumberger, Numismatique de l’Orient latin, Paris 1878.
Schwarz, Iran = P. Schwarz, Iran im Mittelalter nach den arabischen Geographen, III, Leipzig 1912; IX, Stuttgart-Berlin 1936.
Smirnov, Khanstvo = V. D. Smirnov, Krïmskoe khanstvo pod verkhovenstvom Otomanskoy Porti do nachala XVIII veka, Saint Peterburg 1887.
Soranzo, Papato = G. Soranzo, Il papato, l’Europa cristiana e i Tartari. Un secolo di penetrazione occidentale in Asia, Milan 1930.
— —, History = B. Spuler, History of the Mongols: based on eastern and western accounts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; translated from the German by Helga and Stuart Drummond, London 1972.
Stella/Muratori = Georgii et Iohannis Stellae Annales Genuenses, ed. L. Muratori, Milan 1730 (RIS, XVII).
Tiesenshausen, Sbornik = V. Tizengausen, Sbornik materialov otnosyashchikhsya k istoriy Zoaltoy Ordii, I-Sankt peterburg 1884; II: Moscow-Leningrad 1941.
INDEX

Abaqa, ilkhan 68, 71–73, 247
1281 invasion of Syria 74
armistice with Qubilai 72
death 74
deposition of George of Trebizond 134n328
raid on Damascus 74
Abbasid caliphate 14, 15, 27, 56
Abblastin 73n60
Abu 'l-Fidā', Muslim historian and geographer 57n95, 71n46, 121, 265, 266
Abu 'l-Majd al-Sallāmī, Muslim merchant 191n197
Abū Sa'īd, ilkhan 11n31, 49n51, 130, 135, 137, 189–191
death 199
peace with sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn 192n200
Abū Tammām, Arab poet 24n73
Acamar, Tartar killed in Tana 203
Acre 73n59, 104n86, 150
1291 Mamluk conquest 34
expulsion of Genoese 94, 151, 155
fall of 85, 130, 160
Genoese attack 79n85
Mamluk attack 71
Adam, Guillaume, archbishop of Sultaniye 86n119, 127, 177n34
Aden 83, 84, 86, 120
Adrianople 260
battle of 275n542
Aegean Sea 244
Afghanistan 23
Africa 16, 88, 127
Ahmad Tegüder, ilkhan 41
shift in Ilkhanid policy 75, 77
embassy to Cairo 75
persecution of Christians 75, 78n84
Ahtopol 93
Akerman (= Cetatea Albă, Bilhorod) 215n282, 238n377, 254n444, 266, 267
Aksaray 249n425
Alakca, wife of Noghai 260
Alan, Alans 110, 142, 144n11, 224, 254, 268, 275
exodus to Byzantium 269
lands 259
mercenaries 240n387, 257, 263
merchant 89, 162
al-Asadi, Mamluk chronicler 268n51
al-Askari / al-Ashkarī see Michael VIII Palaiologos
al-'Aynī, Islamic scholar 167n94, 173n15, 176n126, 177n134, 178n138, 188n185, 189n189, 190n193, 191n198, 192n200, 200n239, 250n426, 263n488
al-Bira (= Birecik) 71n48, 75n71
al-Birzali, Arab chronicler 268n51
al-Dhahabi, Arab chronicler 66n27, 244n405
al-Dimishqi, Arab chronicler 121
Aleppo 23, 57n96, 69n41, 71, 122
Alexandria 16, 21, 80n91, 82, 90, 93, 144n10, 154, 170, 178, 244
staple right 16
spice trade 79n88
see also Mamluk sultanate
Alexios II Komnenos, emperor of Trebizond 125, 129, 132, 133, 164, 165
Algirdas, grand duke of Lithuania 221
Al-Ḥajj Tarkhan see Astrakhan
Alimoş, Toma, hero in a Romanian ballad 279n559
al-Malik al-Ashraf, Chobanid ruler in Iran 138, 139, 200, 218n295
al-Malik al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al Ġawrī, Mamluk sultan 71
al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, Mamluk sultan 74–76
al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz, Mamluk sultan 57n100
al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muhammad ibn Qalāwūn, Mamluk sultan 169, 170, 172, 176, 189
letter to Hethum II 81n97
marriage to Tulunbeg 187–189
Özbek's embassies 187, 189–192
peace with Abū Sa'īd 192n200
al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars, Mamluk sultan 71, 73, 93, 96, 97, 143n99, 241, 246
alliance with Golden Horde 89, 148, 175, 255
agreement with Byzantium 243
correspondence with Berke  66n27, 90, 91n37, 242
death  74
embassy from Byzantium  245
to Egypt  153
right to transport slaves through Straits  92
takes the throne  73n60
truce with Bohemond IV  72n56, 73n59
Almalïq  105, 111
al-Maqrīzī, Arab chronicler  90n131, 92n140, 170n108, 176n126, 193n202, 241n392, 244, 253n440, 263n488
Almeida, Francisco de, Portuguese nobleman, soldier and explorer  17
al-Mu'aṣṣal, Arab chronicler  61n4, 66n26, 67n31, 90n132, 161n79, 170n107, 173n15, 176n26, 243n401, 244, 263n491, 264
al-Muṣṭa'īṣim, the last Abbasid caliph in Baghdad  56n91
al-Nuwayrī, Arab historian  76n26, 165n89, 167n94, 170n109, 173n15, 176n26, 177n36, 187n182, 188n85, 189n190, 192n199, 250n426, 251n433, 252, 254n443, 260n473, 262n481
al-Qalqashandi, Arab encyclopaedist  92n140
al-Qirīm see Crimea and Solkhat
al-Serā see Sarai
al-'Umarī, Arab historian  66n27, 264, 266n504, 269n518
America  15
Amin al-Din, merchant of Herat  38
Amu Darya  50, 55, 222, 265
Anatolia  50, 58, 63n11, 70, 93, 97, 115, 242, 247, 268n509
consolidated Mongol domination  58
Seljuk sultanate  73
Anchialos see Pomorie
Andrew of Perugia, Franciscan friar  126
Andronikos II Palaiologos, emperor of Byzantium  165, 260n475, 263, 265n497
Anfusi, Tommaso degli, Genoese merchant and diplomat  120n264
Angelo of Spoleto, Franciscan friar  267n507
Ankara, battle of  11, 262n481
Antalya  241
Antioch  121n275, 122n279, 123
principality of  57n95, 69n41
fortress  71, 72n56
Aqaba, Gulf of  69n41
Aq Orda see White Horde
Aqā Kerman see Akkerman
Aqtaiji, grandchild of Noghai  161, 162
Arabia  24
Aragon  72, 177
Arāl Sea  35
Ardabil  200
Arghun, ilkhan  35, 49n51, 50, 53, 80, 83, 85n14, 124, 128, 129, 131
change of Ilkhanate policy  77
envoys to Western Christendom  77, 78
Genoese alliance  79, 95, 115
arming galley  141n1, 158
emissaries  117, 119
protection over Black Sea  116
system of road wardens  135
Argonus see Arghun Aqa
Arghun Aqa, Batu khan's tax-gatherer  53, 63n11
Arigh Böke, son of Tolui, khan of Mongolia  67
Armalec, Armalicchio see Almalïq
Armenia, Cilician  34, 46, 70, 86n20, 195
change of regime  114
embassies to Abaqa  72
king of  54
Genoese colonists  116
exodus  117, 151
war of liberation  81, 115, 158
Mamluk invasion  71–74, 76
Mongol domination  58, 143
spice route  35
confluence with Silk Road  68
submission to Mamluks  79, 85, 115
trade  104n186
treaty with Mamluks  77
Armenians  48, 53, 58n60, 72, 76, 81, 144, 158, 186
Arpadians  256, 271
Arran  29, 47, 52, 63, 65n25, 66, 92, 168n60, 169, 170, 174
occupation by Chormaghun  43
Golden Horde rule  47
Arsuf  71
Aruch, Tartar witness  279n560
Asia Minor  22, 46n36, 53–59, 73, 93, 96, 97, 100n71, 115n237, 117, 130n306, 136n332, 142, 143, 149, 184, 212n267, 241n393, 242, 245, 247
Assan, tsar of Blakia  146
INDEX

Astrakhan
   khanate 19
   lord of 226n330
   town 18, 105, 106, 110, 114n232, 221
   destruction by Timur Lenk 113n228

'Atā Malik Juwaynī 4, 45, 46, 50, 51, 63n1

Atlamos, Tartar chieftain 278, 279

Avdula (Abdullah), khan of the Golden Horde 221

Avventurato, Simeone, Venetian merchant 131n310

Ayas (= Laiazzo) 46, 79, 82, 88, 95, 116n240, 119, 121, 122n277, 123, 135, 136n332

Genoese attack 160

Mamluk occupation 195

Tabriz route 78, 81, 115, 117

Venetian looting 116n244

Aylah 69n41

'Ayn Jālūt, battle of 57, 70

'Ayn Tāb 75n71

Azak, Azag see Tana

Azerbaijan 29, 38, 43, 50–52, 63, 88, 92, 96, 139, 169, 170, 174, 199, 201, 218, 239, 249

Chobanid rule 200

occupation by Chormaghun 43

Golden Horde rule 47, 218n295

Azov, sea 113n229, 147

Baatu see Batu

Baba Saltuq see Saru Saltuq

Babadag 265

Bāb al-Ḥadīd see Iron Gates

Bāb al-Mandabi (= Babelmandeb) see Aden

Babil see Baghdad

Baghdad see Baghdad

Baghdad 16n48, 23, 27, 48, 49n52, 63, 66n27, 84, 120, 123n279, 139

fall of 1258 15, 56, 121

Genoese shipbuilding 83

shifting of trade routes 122

shipyards 86n19

Baghras 72n56

Baiju, Tartar general 63

Bailakan 200

Balaklava see Cembalo

Baldac, Baldaco see Baghdad

balis or balish 105

Balkan Peninsula 245, 265, 274

Balkhash 42n23

Barcelona 73n59

Barda 200

Bar Hebraeus (= Gregory Abu 'l-Faraj), catholicos of the Syriac Orthodox Church, historian 83n105

Barbaro, Iosafato, Venetian merchant 112n228, 113n228

Basarab Ivanko, voyvode, founder of the Wallachian Principality 271–278

Bascra, Basora see Basra

Bashkirs 240n387

Basra 23, 83n105, 121n274, 122n278

battle of 34

Batu, khan of the Golden Horde 10n29, 18n58, 42, 50, 63, 108n210, 114, 146, 220

condominium with Möngke 52, 62, 66

conquers Fertile Crescent 147

death 55, 66

dispute over Tabriz 49

hegemony over Central Asia 54

founder of the Golden Horde 43, 44

government 45

lack of interest in Black Sea 147

letter from Baybars 90

policy toward Silk Road 46

privileges to Seljuks, Cilician Armenians and Syrians 53

protector of merchants and trade 45

relationship to Güyük 51

yarlıks to Seljukids 46

Batumi 125n289

Baudac see Baghdad

Bayalun-khatun, wife of Özbek 265n497

Baybars see al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars

Baybars, Rukn al-dīn, Mamluk historian 66n27, 90n131, 162n80, 165n89, 170n107, 172n112, 173n115, 250n426, 251n435, 253n440, 254n443, 255n450, 262n483

Bayburt 17

Bechangur nuncius Coia, Tartar witness 279n560

Bedouins 24, 25

Beijing 106, 120n268, 126

bishop of 103

capture by Chinggis Khan 37

Qubilai’s court 67

Beirut 79n85

Béla IV, king of Hungary 45n34, 272n525

Berdibek, khan of the Golden Horde 198, 219–221, 237n371

governor of Tabriz 218n295

Berke, khan of the Golden Horde 18n58, 62, 72, 93, 96, 202, 219, 242, 249n425, 250, 255
alliance with
Baybars 148, 175
Byzantium 243
attack on Byzantium 149, 245
Black Sea policy 241
campaign
against Aqa 68
in Transcaucasia 148, 247, 250
conflict with Hulegu 65n25, 66, 67, 148, 149, 247
conversion to Islam 66n27
correspondence with Baybars 66n27, 91n137, 246, 247
death 68
elected Khan 63
embassy
to Egypt 153
to Persia 67
invasion of Ilkhanate 71
loss of Tabriz 148
new foreign policy 148
plot with Muslim merchants 63
receives Georgia from Mongke 53
receives the Polo family 100, 149
reprisals against Byzantium 97
successors 148
victory over Hulegu 67
Besh Tagh 109
Birecik see al-Bira
Black Sea 1, 2, 18, 21, 23, 31–36, 87–90, 93, 97, 114, 122, 125n289, 127, 144, 145, 158, 161, 176, 182–184, 196, 213, 238n380, 241, 242, 245, 266n504, 281
Arghun’s protection 116
attempts at domination by Janibek 30
connection to Silk Road 95, 96
Cuman 141, 144
Egyptian ships 171n11
free navigation for Venice 79
Ilkhanid policy 141, 240
Marignolli’s travel 11
Mediterranean trade 198
Mongol policy 90, 98n166, 100, 141
northern
coast 119, 147, 196–198, 202, 218, 222, 262n481
port cities 101, 142, 143, 155, 173, 198
pirates 141n1
reopening trade by Janibek 215
route to Persian Gulf 123
Rubruck’s report 146
Silk Road route to China 108
abandonment of route 112, 113
slave trade 179n41
Tabriz-Tebrizond route 49n52, 120
trade 144, 157–160, 163
“turntable” of Eurasian trade 1
Venetian
attack 160
interest 104n86
participation in trade 132n39
Venetian-Genoese wars 131, 163n82
Western merchant travels 136
Blakia 146
Blue Horde (Kök Orda) 220, 221
Blue Waters see Sinie Vodi
Bohemond IV, Prince of Antioch 56, 57n95, 72n56, 73n59
Boniface VIII, pope 186n74
Bonsaet, Bonsaich see Abū Sa’īd
Boraq, captain of the Central Asian Mongols 188
Borsh, Ladislas, voyvode of Transylvania 272
Bosco, Gianone del, consul of Caffa 226, 235n366, 238
Bosphorus 33, 92, 154n37, 141n1, 147, 241
see also Straits
Braina, Pietro di, Genoese merchant and diplomat 158
Braničevo, despotate of 257
Brașov 256
Brătianu, Gheorghe, Romanian historian 1, 7n19, 34
Bucovina 259n468
Bujak 254, 266, 267, 270, 271, 276, 278, 279
Bukhara 38, 100
Bulaq, khan of the Golden Horde 221
Bulaq-Khatun, wife of Noghai 251
Bulat-Bey, Tartar general 237
Bulgars 109, 142
Bulgaria 184, 267
Little 146
incorporated into Golden Horde 265
Volga 143, 142
Bulgarians 93, 261, 275
auxiliaries to Mongol army 97, 240n387, 249, 267, 268, 270, 273, 275
Empire 43, 257, 258, 264, 266
lands 260
troops 245
INDEX

violence against Genoese merchants 267
Bulghar see Bulgaria, Volga
Bürlük, brother of Toqta 176, 260–262
Burzenland 273
Byzantine Empire see Byzantium
Byzantium 12035, 14, 15, 35, 93, 94, 97, 159, 164, 165, 243, 248, 257, 263, 264–266, 269, 270, 275
attack by Berke 149, 245
conquest in 1204 by Crusaders 33
defending the Fertile Crescent 69
embassy to Cairo 90, 242
Mamluk treaty 154n41
shortage of grains and salted fish 214
Caesarea 71, 73n60, 117, 145
Caffa (= Theodosia, Feodosia) 35, 102, 109, 111, 113, 119, 132, 194, 195, 196, 239
attack by
Bulat 237
Toqta 103
autonomy 227, 229, 232n354, 237
citizenship 228
consul 185, 227, 234, 235n366
treaty with Toqtamish 231
declaration of independence 205
embassies to Toqtamish 235
expulsion of Genoese merchants by Toqta 171, 263
extending walls 223
extraterritorial status 185, 205
foreigners paying rent 186
fortifications 164
Genoese
customs 228
settlement 154, 181
sovereignty 214, 227
hegemony in the Black Sea 217, 222
killing of Aqtaji 161
mercenaries for Toqtamish 240
Mongol
customs 157
agents 184
origins 155, 156, 162, 163
plague 21
political neutrality in Black Sea 159
possession of Gothia 228, 229
reconstruction under Özbek 182, 183, 204
return of Genoese merchants 104, 182
siege by
Ilbasar 164, 165
Janibek 201n237, 203, 204, 209, 212
staple right 205
strategic role 159
Tartar customs collector 228, 229
trade with Mongols 207, 208
treaties with Mongols 186, 212
Venetian
occupation 131n310
settlement 218
tax exemption 208
visit by Mamai 223
Caffaro di Rustico da Caschifelone,
Genoese chronicler 153n35
Cairo 16n48, 57, 75, 76, 202, 244, 263
conference of 1263 90–92, 97, 153, 241–243
see also Mamluk sultanate
Calamita 210n265
Calitra 220, 222
canluchi 227
Cape of Good Hope 15, 16
Carpena, Bernabò di, Genoese merchant 279n560
Carpathians 42, 43, 254, 256, 268, 272, 274, 276
Casimir III, King of Poland 218
Caspian Sea 47, 49, 102, 103, 113n229
Cataneo, Meliaduce, consul of Caffa 226n329
Caucasus 23, 29, 42, 49, 54, 58, 91, 96, 97, 100n173, 168, 169, 172, 192n200, 193, 200, 239, 247, 249, 250
mountains 103
Cazano, Pietro, consul of Caffa 235n366
Cembalo (= Balaklava) 31, 211, 215n282, 222, 228, 238
Census of the Mongol empire 9
Central Asia 18, 21, 22, 28, 34, 37, 41, 46, 47, 49n52, 52, 53, 69, 87, 100, 101, 102, 112, 128n300, 148, 149, 156, 240
Central Europe 8, 248
Chaghathai, son of Chinggis Khan 42n23
heirs 52
Chaka, son of Nogai 252, 254n441, 258–262, 269, 279n561
assasination 266
Charles I of Anjou, king of Hungary 271–276
invasion of Wallachia 277
Charles IV, king of France 11
Chartres, Niccolò of, squire 117n248
Cherik Temür, kinsman of Noghai's grandchild 262
Cherkez, Tartar governor of Crimea 226–228, 230–232
Chersonesos see Kherson
Chilia 279n560
China 3, 8, 30, 40–42, 49, 55, 61, 64, 67, 100–103, 111, 121, 125–129, 149, 156, 1755, 213n274
account of Pegolotti 105–108
death of Möngke 57
Marco Polo’s voyage 4, 32
Northern conquest by Chinggis Khan 38, 39
Southern Silk Road 20
trade connections to Black Sea 18, 21
Chinazzo, Daniele di, Venetian chronicler 205n254
Chinggis Khan, founder of the Mongol empire 10n25, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 37, 40, 47, 55, 64, 149, 175, 181, 251n434
campaign against Muhammad II 41
capture of Beijing 38
confronts Muhammad II’s merchant envoys 38
conquest of the Silk Road 42
descendants 30
destruction of Eastern Persia 29
family 8
imperial vision 25
messengers to Muhammad II 38
reforms 24
rule over eastern Silk Road 3
successors 32, 43
testament 42
warriors 24
yassa 175
youth 24
Chinggisids 1, 4, 6–8, 10, 11, 26, 27, 35, 41, 55, 58, 69, 134
economic achievements 12
loss of power in Persia 124
Chingissid state see Chinggisids
Chios 177n136, 215n282
Choban, Mongol emir 188n87, 189, 192n200
Chormaghun, Mongol emir 29, 43
Giban 210n256, 213n273
Circassians 110, 224, 226n331, 240n387
Clement V, pope 129
Columbus, Christopher, Genoese explorer 15, 87
commercium 184
Constantin Tikh, Bulgarian tsar 245, 248, 249, 257
Berke’s expedition of 1264/65 97, 246
Latin Empire of 147, 151
Mamluk-Mongol meeting 90
occupation by crusaders 144
Polo family’s return voyage 121, 149
see also Byzantine Empire
Coron 160
Costea, voyvode of Moldavia 238n377
Cotulubuga see Qutlugh Bugha
Cotulubuga see Qutlugh Bugha
Crimea 19, 31, 43, 92n40, 102, 142, 144, 156, 161, 162, 163n82, 175n122, 177n136, 179n14, 182, 184, 195, 212n268, 216, 221, 226, 229, 231–235, 239, 252
attack by Mongols 144
Venetians 160
caravans from Khwarezm 112
governor of 193, 203
slaves 95n151, 153, 154
 crusaders see crusades
 crusades 5, 33, 34, 56, 57n95, 69, 71–74, 80, 81n93, 85n114, 87n21, 94, 104n86, 115n238, 120n267, 122, 129, 144, 166n92,
 Cumans 45n32, 99, 108n210, 109n213, 110, 142
 armies 43
 Black Sea trade 141
 chieftains 144, 148
 lands of 143
 mercenaries 240n387
 profits from trade 144
 Cuman steppe (= Desht-i Qipchâq) 3, 397, 17, 18, 30, 42–47, 49n52, 53, 55, 63, 67, 69, 90–92, 97n162, 98–100, 104, 108, 109, 110n221, 111, 112, 114, 128n300, 141, 142, 143n10, 145, 148, 150, 165, 194, 213, 217n292, 221, 222, 250n426, 263n491, 264, 268n509, 269n518,
cunachi 227
Curtea de Argeș 276
Customs duties 6, 12, 33, 81, 164, 184, 185, 205, 220
Curzola 161
Cyprus 81, 215n282
Dagobert I, Merovingian king 13
Damascus 23, 57, 69n41, 74
Damietta 8n93
Dandolo, Andreolo, Venetian merchant 108n208
Danube 44, 146, 245n410, 248, 250, 251, 254, 257, 259, 266, 267, 274, 276
Delta 42
Lower 93, 269
mouth of 186
Dardanelles 33, 241
Delhi 108, 128n300
Demetrius princeps Tartarorum 279
Derbent 23, 49, 65n25, 149, 159n69
pass 63, 68n35, 96n159, 98, 239
route 175
Desht-i Qïpchāq see Cuman steppe
Devetum 138, 194n208, 207, 208, 216, 267n507
dīnār râ‘ij 49n51
Diu 17
Dmitriyevich, Vasiliy, grand prince of Moscow 238n377
Dnieper 15, 252, 253n440
Dniester 252, 254, 266n504, 267, 268
Dobrotich, Bulgarian tsar 267n507
Dobruja 241n393, 242, 244, 245, 249, 254, 267, 268n509
Dominican friars 99
Don 14, 15, 102, 103, 145, 146, 162, 222, 224, 237n372, 252
mouth of 21, 156, 166n93, 196n214, 203, 206, 222
Donskoy, Dimitriy, grand prince of Moscow 224, 233, 234, 237, 238n377, 239
Doria
Lamba, Genoese merchant 78n84
Niccolò, Genoese merchant 118
Paolino, consul at Trebizond 118
Dulcert, Angelino, Mallorcan cartographer 265, 266
Eastern Europe 14, 35, 45, 88, 200, 233, 241, 281
Edessa 57n95, 69n41
Edward I, king of England 73n59, 117
1288–1290 Ilkhanate campaigns against 34, 69n41, 79, 158
arrest of foreign merchants 177n136
conquest by Selim I 17
failed conquest by Mongols 58, 73
flight of Jochid princes 64n15, 90n82
naval blockade of 80
negotiations with Aragon 177
Özbek’s embassy 170, 171, 176, 178
ports 136
religious uprising 193
Silk Road route 46n37
slave trade 91, 95n151, 113n229, 153, 154, 165, 167n94, 170, 171, 176n30, 179n41, 191, 253n440, 263
spice route 46n37, 56, 58, 59
trade with Golden Horde 154, 171n11
truce with Genoa 86, 87n21
tribute from Cilician Armenia 76
Eljigidei, Tartar emir 51, 54
England 72
Enez (Enos) 244, 245
Enos see Enez
Erzijnan 152n36
Erzurum 23, 152n36, 117
Ethiopia 126
Euphrates 16, 35, 57, 70, 192n200
river traffic 121, 122
Euphrosyne, Byzantine wife of Noghai 249, 255, 257, 261
Eurasian trade 1, 4, 5, 11, 12, 15, 18, 22, 34, 95, 99, 102, 104, 114, 141, 157, 281
network of routes 20, 22, 121, 143n10, 206
North of Black Sea route 142
Fadl Allâh Rashid al-Din, Persian dignitary and historian 4, 51n61, 55n87, 56n93, 61n1, 63n11, 64n17, 67n34, 71n48, 124n283, 134, 328, 142n4, 168n99, 169n101, 250n426, 251, 252, 254n444
Fakhr al-Din, merchant from Bukhara 38
Fāris al-Din Aqūsh al-Mas‘ūdī, Mamluk ambassador 244–246
Fars 50
Fertile Crescent 30, 34, 46, 55, 56, 68–70, 73, 87, 92, 97n162, 114, 142, 147, 151, 281
Foscarini, Marco, Venetian bailey in Constantinople 139
France 72
Franciscan missionaries 126, 251n431
monastery in Kulam 126
Friar William see Rubruck, William of Fryazi 224
Gagauz 268
Galâta 132n312
Gama, Vasco da, Portuguese explorer 15, 16
Gambono, Lucheto, consul of Caffa 156
Gattaio see China
Gazaria 155, 164n83, 226n330
Geikhatu, ilkhan 117n249
Genghis Khan see Chingis Khan
Genoa 13, 21, 31–33, 93
Acre defeat 150, 151, 155
alliance with
Arghun 79, 95
Golden Horde 151–153
Henry II, King of Cyprus 81
Noghai 163
Venice 204
anti-Byzantine conspiracy 243
attack on Egypt 79, 158
attempt to restore Cilicia 115
Black Sea
arrival in 151
commercial expansion 195
doctrine of hegemony 209
naval supremacy 210, 211
policy 152
boycott
against Crimean towns 184
of Tabriz 138, 201
colony in
Quanzhou 126
Tabriz 124
Trebizond 118
defeat at Kulikovo 224
delegation to Egypt 90, 153, 242
invitation from Al-Malik al-Ashraf 138
involvement in crusades 34, 78
killing of Aqtaji 161, 162
leaving Cilician Armenia 117, 151
merchants 19, 20, 35, 79, 82, 84, 88, 115
arrest by Toqta 163, 164
contract of association 120
expulsion from Caffa by Toqta 171, 263
in Kiev 99
travelling to Sarai 163
muqaddam 90, 153
occupying
Cembalo 211
Provato 195
Soldaia 222
Office of the Gazaria (Officium Gazarie)
82n104, 133n320, 182–184, 186
Ormuz route 123, 125
Otto savi alla Navigazione 138
paying
rent in Tana 186
taxes in Trebizond 125
peace of Milan 131, 161
Persian trade 124
position in the Straits and Black Sea
94, 132, 154
presence in
India 126
Soldaia 155
privileges from
Andronikos II Palaiologos 165
Leon III 81
Özbek 178–181
relations with
Mamluks 82, 84
Özbek 103
reprisals
by Toqta 165, 171
against Venetians 133
return to Caffa 104, 153n35, 179
revolt against Alexios II 125
robbed by al-Malik al-Ashraf 138–139
routes to India 87
settlement in
Caffa 154, 181
Pera 246n146
slave trade 154, 166–168
embargo 179n144
end of 165
shipbuilding
in Baghdad 83
technology 127
trading in the Ilkhanate 124
treaty with
Janibek 212, 214, 215
Mamluks 84–86, 116, 128
Qutlugh Bugha 235
Toqtamīsh 112, 186, 222n312,
first 226–229
second 229
third 234–236
fourth 237, 238, 240
Venice 153, 206–208
Trebizond-Tabriz route 119, 123
tribute from Russians 234
war with
Mamluks 85–87, 123, 151
Toqtamīsh 238
Venice 118, 123, 130, 159, 160, 215
Genoese see Genoa
Gentile, Tommasino, Genoese merchant
127
George, emperor of Trebizond 134n328
George Terter, Bulgarian tsar 258, 260
George II Terter, Bulgarian tsar 270, 271
Georgia 50, 58n104, 145, 169
Ghāzān, ilkhan 61, 66n27, 124n283, 129,
169, 170, 252n437, 263n491
death 268n509
reforms 110n3, 136
road security 135
relations with Toqta 168
victory in Syria 87n121
INDEX

Ghazna 108, 128n300
Ghiyāth al-Dīn see Özbek
Ghizolfi, Buscarello de', Genoese ambassador 87n121, 117, 120n264
Gibelet 79n85
Gilan 102
Giustiniani, Agostino, Genoese chronicler 153n35
Goa 17
Golden Horde 3,12n37, 17, 18, 30, 42–44, 100, 103, 112, 174, 188, 193, 241, 247, 255 anti-Genoese reprisals 171 anti-Mongol insurgency 223 attempts to recover Tabriz 89 birth 43, 145 Black Sea policy 90, 141, 150 burn Moscow 234, 236 calamities 167 campaigns in Poland 250 Transylvania 250, 273 conflict with the Ilkhanate 7m9, 89 crisis 19, 219, 220 decline 112, 124, 212–214, 217–219, 222, 223, 262 economy 18 internal conflicts 163, 251, 252, 259 invasion of Transoxiana 240 Islamic revival 176 isolation in steppes 148, 175 Jochid successor states 1 meeting in Constantinople 90 plague 213, 263 principle of legitimacy 253 reconciliation of Western and Eastern parts 231, 232 relations with neighbours 45 restoration 225 rights over Khorasan and Central Asia 53 settlement in the steppe 44 shared power 250 South-West frontier 248 successor to the Mongol Empire 35 suzerainty over Wallachia 275, 276 treaty of 1347 with Venice 31 tribute from Russians 234 vassals in Iran 47 war with Russians 233 see also Mongols
Goths 146
Gothia, coastal region of Crimea 210n265, 228, 229 revolt against Caffa 238
Greeks 110 in Soldaia 109, 193 merchants 144 paying rent in Caffa 186 Gregoras, Nicephorus, Byzantine historian 92n140, 138n342, 153n35, 155n48, 203n243, 249n425, 257n462, 263n490, 270 Grimaldi, Gentile dei, Genovese ambassador 235n366, 238 Guercio, Guglielmo, Genoese podestà in Constantinople 243 Guren 274 Guthrie, Maria, Englishwoman in Russia 153n35 Güyük, great khan 49, 51, 54
Haemus 249 Halych-Volyn’ 256 Hama 57n96 Hamadan 47 Hamd Allāh Qazwīnī, Persian historian 67n34 Hammāl, merchant of Meragha 38 harem 258 Harran 57n95 Hasan Choban, ruler in Iran 138 Henry II, king of Cyprus 86 Herat 38 Hethum, king of Cilician Armenia 54n83, 73 vassal to Hülegū 56 envoys to Abaqa 72 Hethum II, King of Cilician Armenia 81, 85, 116n244 Heyd, Wilhelm, German historian 6 Hindu Kush 108 Holy Sepulchre 33 Homs, battle 71, 74, 75 Hormuz, principality of 177n55 Hülegū, ilkhan 10n25, 56, 57, 62–64, 70, 74, 90, 93, 96, 242–244 agreement with Byzantium 243, 245 blocking the Straits 14n2, 149 campaign for Near and Middle East 54, 58 conflict with Berke 65n25, 66, 148, 149, 175, 247 conquests Aleppo 70 Nusaybin 57n95 control over Silk Road 59, 97 death 247 defeat by Berke 67n34
execution of Berke’s envoys to Persia 67
“nationalisation” of Tabriz 65
proclaimed ruler of Persia 59, 64, 241
successors 60
Hungary 43, 255, 256, 277, 278
Iacopo, Bartolomeo di, consul of Caffa 235n366
Iaik (= Ural) river 261
Ianibech see Janibek
Ianua see Genoa
Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, Mamluk dignitary and chronicler 66n27, 76, 82n101, 84, 85n11, 90n131, 91n37, 243n401, 244
Ibn al-Athīr, Arab historian 47, 142, 143, 147
Ibn al-Dawādarī, Mamluk chronicler 74n61, 178n140, 189n189
Ibn al-Furāt, Mamluk chronicler 85n114
Ibn al-Wardī, Mamluk chronicler 201n237
Ibn 'Arabshāh, Aḥmad, Arab historian 112
Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Arab traveller 49n52, 102n179, 108n210, 110–111, 127, 184n60, 193n202, 194n205, 265
Ibn Bibi, Seljuk historian 241n392, 245n408, 249n425
Ibn Duqmāq, Mamluk chronicler 171n10, 173n15, 176n26, 187n182, 188n184, 189n90, 190n194, 191n197, 265n497
Ibn Kathir, Mamluk chronicler 65n24, 67n34
Ibn Khaldūn, Arab historian 167n94, 173n18, 237n372, 241n392, 262n481
Ibn Wāṣil, Mamluk chronicler 67n34
Ilbasar, son of Toqta 164, 261, 262n481
Ilkhanate (= Mongol state in Persia) 3, 5, 52, 241
anarchy 200
attempt to block Straits 97, 141
Black Sea policy 141
blockade 33, 34
campaigns against the Mamluk sultan 34, 123
commercial policy 134, 137
creation 59
conflict with
Golden Horde 71n9, 89
Mamluk sultanate 35, 60, 70, 89, 255
Möngke Temür 255
collapse 29, 138, 199
legitimation of 61
successor to the Mongol Empire 35
taxes on trade 136
trade policies 124
usurpation 62
Ilkhans 34, 59, 61n5, 62, 64, 69, 72, 74, 88, 136, 137, 139n346, 143n10, 190
Ilyas Bey, Mongol governor of Crimea 230, 231, 234, 235n366, 237n372, 239n382
Inok 232n350
Inalchik, governor of Otrar 40
India 15, 16, 23, 48, 80n91, 83n105, 87, 101, 102n179, 108, 113n229, 121n275, 126–138, 131
Innocent IV, pope 45n34
Innocent VI, pope 218n296
Iran 3, 22, 28, 41–43, 46–49, 52, 56, 63, 69, 102n80, 112, 114
Eastern 38, 52, 72
Mongol tax system 50
See also Ilkhanate
Iraq 22, 30n98, 34, 46n37, 54, 58, 67, 110, 122, 143
Chobanid rule 189, 200
conquest 58
spice route 35, 46n37, 56, 58, 59, 68, 96, 115, 122
Irina Lascaris, Byzantine princess 248n424
Iron Gates 254, 256, 261, 271
Irytsh 42n23, 43
Isaccea (= Saqjï) 254, 256, 258
Ismaili 56
Itil see Volga
Ivan Alexander, Bulgarian tsar 275, 278
Ivan Asen II, Bulgarian tsar 258
Ivan Stratsimir, Bulgarian tsar 263n490
Ivanovich, Dmitriy, grand duke of Moscow 223, 224, 232, 234
Ivaylo, Bulgarian tsar 258
Iznik 242
'Izz al-Din Kaykāwuz, Seljuk (ex)sultan 90, 93, 96, 153, 241, 242, 247, 248, 249n425
appanage 247
ethnonym of the Gagauz 268n510
imprisonment by Michael VIII 243–245
liberation 245, 246
INDEX

Jacopo of Genoa, merchant 126
Jaffa 72n56
Jagiello, Władysław II, grand duke of Lithuania, king of Poland 224, 232n352, 236n369
James I, king of Aragon 73n56
James II, king of Aragon 116n244
Janibek, khan of the Golden Horde 111, 139n344, 207, 216, 221, 237n371, 278 accord with Casimir III of Poland 218 attempts at domination in the Black Sea 30 campaigns 217 change of foreign policy 201 claims as successor to Ilkhanate 200 conquest of Tabriz 202, 218, 219 death 218n295 embargo on Caffa 213, 214 embassies to Egypt 202 enthronement 199, 202 expulsion of Italian merchants 203, 206 fixation on Caffa 218, 219 naval programme 209, 210 peace with Genoa 214, 215 siege of Caffa 201n237 Transcaucasian expedition 218 treaty of 1347 with Venice 31, 32, 214, 215 treaty of 1356 with Venice 217 tribute for Ruthenia 218n296 war with Genoese 186, 198 Japan 30 Jharkasso see Cherkez Jdioara 277 Jebe, Mongol general 29, 41, 142 Jochi, eldest son of Chinggis Khan 42n23, 43 see also Golden Horde Jochids see Golden Horde John, archbishop of Sultaniye 113n229 John I Doukas, sebastocrator of Thessaly 258 John II Komnenos, emperor of Trebizond, 131, 134n328 John III Doukas Vatatzes, emperor of Byzantium 55n86, 146 John IV Lascaris, emperor of Byzantium 248n424 John VI Kantakouzenos, emperor of Byzantium 203n243, 270n519 John XXII, pope 179n, 272, 273 John of Marignolli, Franciscan missionary 111 John of Montecorvino, Franciscan missionary 193, 196 Joseph, Jacobite 83n105 Justinian, emperor of Byzantium 98n166 Justin II, emperor of Byzantium 98n166 Juwaynī see 'Atā Malik Juwaynī Jūzjānī, Persian historian 28n93, 37n3, 45, 46, 47n39, 53n73, 62n8, 63n10, 66n26, 72n56 Kabul 23, 128n300 Kafā see Caffa Kaganlyk river 253n440 Kalka, battle of 142, 225, 230, 232 Kama river 110n217 Kamchu 105 Kān, Ladislau, voivode of Transylvania 272n529 Kandahar 23 Karakorum see Qara Qorum Karim al-Dīn, chief of the treasury in Cairo 177n138 Kasai 105n199 Kashan 121 Kayseri 115n236, 143 Kazakhstan 43 Kazan khanate 19 Kerch 109, 162 straits 238 Kerği see Kerch Kerson see Kherson Ket Bugha, commander-in-chief of the Mongol army 56, 57 Khanbaliq see Beijing Kharbende see Oljeitu Khazar Empire 14, 15, 17, 18, 21 Khazar khaganate see Khazar Empire Kherson 146, 162 Khīzīr, khan of the Golden Horde 220 Khodabende see Oljeitu Khoja Omar see Acamar Khorasan 49n51, 53, 56, 59, 71 Khoy 117 Khurasan see Khorasan Khwarezm see Khwarezm Khwarezm 14, 22, 29n94, 41, 42, 239 caravans to Crimea 112 governor 190 Mongol invasion 188 northern half 46 Kievan Rus 15, 21 Kiev 43, 99, 222 Kirakos of Gandzak, Armenian chronicler 52n65 Kirman 121
INDEX

Kish 120
Knights Hospitaller 272n25
Kırk Yeri 162
Kök Orda see Blue Horde
Kök Tengri 25
Konak Bey, Tartar nobleman 226n333
Konya 93, 247
Köse Dagh, battle of 143n10
Kremlin see Russia
Kuban 102
Kukan L.k, battle of 253
Kula 105
Kura 67n34, 68
Kurdestan 57n96
Kydones, Demetrios, Byzantine theologian and statesman 223n318

La Tana see Tana
Ladislas IV the Cuman, king of Hungary 256
Lajazzo see Ayas
Langley, Galfredus de, Englishman, traveller in the Ilkhanate 117
Langley see Langele
Laodicée see Latakia
Latakia 74n61, 122n279
Latin Empire (of Constantinople) 33, 144n11, 147, 151
Lavaggio, Vivaldo, Genoese in the service of the Ilkhan Arghun 116, 158
Layas see Ayas
Leon II, king of Cilician Armenia 16n244
Leon III, king of Cilician Armenia 76, 81
Leon V, king of Cilician Armenia 116
Leontokastron 118
Lev, son of Danylo, Knyaz of Halych-Volyn’ 256n454
Levant 30
Ligurians see Genoa
Lisbon 16
Lithuania 221, 222, 232, 256
Louis I of Anjou, king of Hungary 263n490
Louis IX (= Saint Louis), king of France 73n39, 81n93
Lucalongo, Pietro, Genoese merchant de 120

Mačva, Banate of 257
Maghreb 109, 124n283
Mahmûd Yalavach, Muslim merchant, Chinggis Khan’s envoy 39

Malabar Coast 126
Mamai, Tartar emir 219, 220, 222, 226n330, 231, 232, 239
defeat at Kalka 225, 230
Kulikovo 224, 225
Vozha River 224
deposed by Toqtamish 229
visit to Caffa 223
Mamluk sultanate 15, 18, 241, 242
alliance with Golden Horde 89
ambassadors captured at Chios 177n136, 178
armistice with Tyre 72n56
blockade 104n196
conflict with the Ilkhanate 35, 60, 70, 89
conquest of Jaffa 72n56
decline 17
destruction of Cilician Armenia 72
Genoese-Ilkhanid campaign in 1285 against 123
great expedition of 1277 74n61, 248
Ilkhanid campaign of 1288–1290 against 34
meeting in Constantinople 90
papal embargo 160
sultans 21
treaty with Armenia 77
Byzantium 154n41
Genoa 84–86, 116
victory in 1260 over Mongols 34
war with Genoa 85, 86
outcome 87, 153
Mamluks see Mamluk sultanate
Mamshi, Tartar general 256n454
Manfred, king of Sicily 243
Mangu see Mönge
Mangush, Tartar envoy 171, 176
Mangusis, low-born man 261
Mar Yahballaha III, Nestorian patriarch 75n67
Mare Indicum, Mare Indie see Indian Ocean
Mare Ponti, Mare Ponticum see Black Sea
Maria see Bayalun-Khatun
Maritza 244
Martin, son of Bugar, magister 274
Mas’ud, son of Izz al-Din Kaykâwuz 247
Matrega, Matrica see Tmutarakan
Maurocastro see Akkerman
Mecca 190
Mediterranean Sea 2, 8, 16, 18, 22, 31–33, 42, 58, 69n41, 70, 71, 77, 84, 86, 107n24,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Range</th>
<th>Reference(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>121, 122, 123n279, 127, 136, 175, 176, 193, 198, 242, 248</td>
<td>Eastern 20, 23, 34, 35, 46, 56, 68, 72, 82, 85, 87, 128, 158, 281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>closed by Egypt 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genoese attacks 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ilkhanate’s trade 93, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim states 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ports 59, 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silk Road 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273, 277</td>
<td>Mehadit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92, 97</td>
<td>Melkite church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38, 47</td>
<td>Mengi Bugha see Tukul Bugha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Meragha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>Catalan 16n244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>envoys to Chinggis Khan 38, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>foreign 12, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>function in the state 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“foundation of the state” 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian 128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expulsion by Janibek 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Muslim of Central Asia 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Iran 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>payments to Mongol budget 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79, 94, 99</td>
<td>Pisan in Soldaia 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Portuguese professional 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>relationship to Mongol rulers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46n37</td>
<td>yarlıks from Batu Khan 46n37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Merovingian state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102, 143</td>
<td>Merv, Great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mesembria see Nesebar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59, 122, 143</td>
<td>Mesopotamia Upper 69n41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33, 73, 79, 90, 92, 93, 241–243, 247, 248, 255, 257</td>
<td>Michael VIII Palaiologos, emperor of Byzantium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243, 245</td>
<td>agreement with Hülégtü 243, 245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>Constantin Tikh 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141n2</td>
<td>blocking the Straits death 258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97, 243, 244</td>
<td>detains Mamluk envoys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>embassy to Egypt 153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94, 150, 151</td>
<td>treaty of Nymphaion 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29, 33, 55, 69, 145, 151, 200</td>
<td>Milan peace of 131, 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>treaty of 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>Milutin, Stefan Uroš II, king of Serbia 257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124n282, 159n69</td>
<td>Mirkhond, Persian historian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233</td>
<td>Mokshya, Dimitriy Donskoy’s envoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238, 254, 259n470, 263n490, 279</td>
<td>Moldavia 238, 254, 259n470, 263n490, 279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209n263</td>
<td>Monacis, Lorenzo de, Venetian chronicler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10n29, 28n93, 54–56, 63, 64n17, 174</td>
<td>Möngke, great khan Möngke, great khan 9, 10n29, 28n93, 54–56, 63, 64n17, 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>centralization policy 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52, 62, 66</td>
<td>condominium with Batu 52, 62, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51, 236</td>
<td>election as great khan 51, 236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>gives Georgia to Berke 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>mandate to Hülégtü 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57, 58, 66</td>
<td>death 57, 58, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72, 168n100, 246, 250, 251, 255, 260, 261</td>
<td>Möngke Temür, khan of the Golden Horde 72, 168n100, 246, 250, 251, 255, 260, 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>administrative apparatus 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>alliance with crusaders 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151, 152</td>
<td>Genoa 151, 152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8, 17</td>
<td>army 8, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>campaign of 1264/5 against Byzantium 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30, 40, 254</td>
<td>cavalry 30, 40, 254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50, 59</td>
<td>chieftains 50, 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>defeat in 1260 at ‘Ayn Jālūt 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>organisation 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>strength 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>warriors 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>conquests 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>attack on Crimea 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25, 30, 58</td>
<td>expansion 25, 30, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>functionaries 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43, 56</td>
<td>great expedition of 1236–1242 43, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>horsemens 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>horses 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 144</td>
<td>invasion 15, 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>massacres and looting 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>nobility 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>nomadic way of life 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26, 28</td>
<td>of Persia see Ilkhanate pastoral economy 26, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>trade policy 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>ulus 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143m10</td>
<td>victory over Seljuks at Köse Dagh 143m10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mongolia 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>monotheism 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128n300</td>
<td>Morosini, Marco, Venetian merchant 128n300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223–224, 233–234, 236</td>
<td>Moscow 223–224, 233–234, 236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23, 50, 71n48, 121</td>
<td>Mosul 23, 50, 71n48, 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>Mugan plain 188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Muḥammad, Prophet 24
Muḥammad II, Khwarezmshah 29, 37
Chinggis Khan’s campaign against 41
embassy to Chinggis Khan 38, 40, 41
Otrar murders 40
response to Chinggis Khan 39
Muḥammad Özbek see Özbek
Muhī al-Dīn, qadi of Barda 200
Murta, Giovanni de, Venetian doge 212n272

Nakhchivan 200
Near East 28, 29, 33, 34, 46n37, 48, 50, 55, 97, 145, 151, 166n92, 195
Negro, Galvano di, Genoese consul at Trebizond 118
Negroponte 121
Nerghi, plain of 252n438
Nesebar (Mesembria) 93, 257, 266
Nicea see Iznik
Nile 16, 21
Nocha see Noghai
Noghai, Berke’s general, and khan at the Lower Danube 103, 157, 248, 251, 256, 258, 278
Balkan rule 249, 257, 265
Central European expedition 255
raids 256
conflict with Töle Bugha 255
Danubian khanate 256–259
death 252, 253, 259
destruction of Soldaia 161
heirs 260–262
Horde
Great 262n481
Lesser 262n481
influence over Balkans 257, 258
loss of eye 68
Lower Danube 256
marriage to Euphrosyne 249, 255, 257, 261
minting money at Isaccea 254n441
posting to Danube 256
reprisals at Solkhat 162
rise to power 72n57
self-proclaimed khan 219n298, 254
war with Toqta 159, 161, 162, 251–253, 255, 263
Noqa see Noghai
Nymphaios, treaty of 79, 94, 97, 150, 242
Nusaybin 57n95
Odoric of Pordenone, Franciscan missionary 48, 126

Ögödei, great khan 28, 29, 42n23, 50
death 44, 57
heirs 51, 52
securing the Jochid lands 43
Oia, Tartar witness 279n560
Oleg, duke of Byzanz 224
Olgierd see Algirdas
Oliverio, Jacopo di 126
Öljeitü, ilkhan 11n31, 49n51, 124n282, 128, 136, 170, 172
ascension to throne 129
death 189n191
embassies to Europe 129
letter to Philip the Fair of France 129n302, 169n103
on Volga 14
offer of privileges to Venice 129, 130, 132
treaty with Özbek 188n187
Toqta 169
Oltarre see Otrar
Oltenia 277n553
Organcium see Urgench
Ornes see Ormuz
Ormuz (= Hormuz, Ormuzd) 17n55, 36, 48, 120, 128n300, trade route 49, 121, 123, 125, 127, 134, 136n332, 281
Orto, Carolus de, Genoese envoy 238n377
Osphendislavos see Svetoslav, Theodore
Otrar 38
incident 37, 40, 41
Oxus (= Amu Darya) 48
Özbek, khan of the Golden Horde 10n30, 18n57, 112, 114n231, 188, 190, 191, 198, 271
accession to power 173, 219n298
Balkan policy 264, 265, 269
Black Sea policy 198, 214
campaign in Caucasus 192n200
Russia 192n200
conversion to Islam 175, 176
creation of Caffa 204
death 278
defeat by Choban 192n200
embassy to Egypt 171, 175, 176, 178, 187, 189–192
message to Öljeitü 174
peace with Ilkhanate 191
privilege charter for Venetians 186n178, 196, 206
protection to foreign merchants 108, 109
INDEX

raids on Byzantium 270
reception of Ibn Battūta 111
recovers Transcaucasia 174, 175
relations with Genoa 104, 178, 180, 181, 184, 186, 196, 197

treaty with Öljeitū 188n187
war with Ilkhanate 191, 192
Ozolo the Pisan, envoy 128

Pachymeres, Georgios, Byzantine historian 92n140, 93n243, 118, 154n40, 171n11, 244, 245, 246n145, 248, 249n425, 250n426, 254, 257n461, 258n463, 260, 263n490
Palestine 70, 121
Pallavicini, Raffo, Genoese consul in Tabriz 124
Palmieri, Riccobono, Genoese notary in Tana 179n141
Pannonia 29
Pantaleon de Vicina, rich businessman 260
Pax mongolica 1, 18, 20, 32, 99, 103, 147, 152, 202, 281
Pegolotti, Francesco Balducci, Florentine merchant and politician 5, 76n72, 104, 105n196, 108–110, 112, 115n236, 122, 125, 135, 158n172
Pera (= Galata) 101n177, 105n200, 107n203, 132, 154, 156, 157, 159, 160, 163, 164, 180n45, 208, 215n282, 246n146
perspective of Christians 75, 78n84
Persia 29, 36, 41, 69n41, 136
destruction of Ismaili fortifications 56
Eastern
destruction by Chinggis Khan 29
conquest by Timur 239
Mongol

domination 58, 70
campaign 142
rule of Hülegü 59
see also Ilkhanate
Persian Gulf 17n55, 23, 27, 46n37, 49, 56, 59, 69n41, 83n106, 122, 123, 127
Persia see Persia
Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow 268n513
Petrus, Franciscan friar 214n276
Peyra see Pera
Piazzalonga, Federico di, Genoese merchant 155
Pimen, Metropolitan of Moscow 237n372
Pirenne, Henri, Belgian historian 13
Philip IV the Fair, king of France 129n302, 169n103
Philippi, battle of 275n542
Phynta, son of Samuel de Mende, Hungarian ambassador 275
plague 201, 202, 212, 213, 263
Plano Carpini, John of, Franciscan missionary of 32, 99
Podolia 222
Poland 43, 250, 255, 257
Poltava 253n440
Polo
family 128n300
Berke's generosity 149
Maffeo (uncle of Marco), Venetian merchant and traveller at Berke's court 100
confiscation of goods 131
Marco (son of Niccolò), Venetian merchant and traveller 48, 65, 100n173, 103, 120, 131
account of Genoese-Ilkhanid alliance 83
Genoese ship-building technology 127
return from China 102, 120, 121
voyage to China 4
Niccolò (father of Marco), Venetian merchant and traveller at Berke's court 100
Pomorie (= Anchialos) 93, 257, 266
Ponzò, Antonio di, Genoese notary at Chilia 279n560
Portugal
suzerainty over Hormuz 17n55
Predono, Gabriele di, Genoese notary in Pera 156, 157
Provato 194n209, 216, 220, 222
Pruth river 252, 254
Pulad Bey see Bulat-Bey
Qal‘at al-Rūm 74n62
Qalâwūn see al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalâwūn
Qara Bulat, Tartar envoy 193
Qara Qorum 10n29, 42, 51, 53, 56
Qara Khitai 42n23
Qara Kishkek, Noghai's grandson 262
Qazwīnī see Ḥamd Allāh Qazwīnī
Quanzhou 126
Qubilai, great khan 30, 55n86, 64, 67, 72, 100
Qurultai 42, 64, 250, 251
of 1206 8, 25
of 1229 43
of 1251 53, 54
of 1260 59
Qutlugh Bugha (= Cotlobuga, Cotulubuga), governor of Crimea 230–232, 234–238, 239n382
Qutlugh Temür 173, 175, 187, 188, 189n81 governor of Khwarezm 190
Solkhut 220
Qutuz see al-Malik al-Mużaffar Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz

Rabban Bar Sauma 75n38, 77, 78, 87n21
Rabech, Tartar military ruler 279n560
Ramazan (= Ramaḍān), Zayn al-Dīn, governor of Crimea 216
Rashid al-Dīn see Faḍl Allah Rashid al-Dīn
Ratana, Turkish ruler in Asia Minor 210n267
Recco, Luchetto de, Genoese merchant 78n84
Red Sea 16, 21, 27, 46n37, 83n106, 86 route 15 spice route 56
Rhodes 129
Romania (= Byzantium) 106, 215n282
Romanian lands 259, 260, 263
Romanians 254, 259n469
Rome 21, 25, 114
Rosetta 128
Rūm see Asia Minor
Rurikids 15
Richthofen, Ferdinand von, German traveller, geographer, and scientist 22
Rukn al-Dīn Kılıç Arslan, Seljuk sultan 241
Rumelia 242, 268n509
Ruthenia 218n296, 254, 256
Ruthenians 259n468
Russia 192n200, 224
Russians 14, 110, 143, 221, 223, 224, 254 knyzates 43, 223 knyazī 45, 142, 217, 233 lands 259 mercenaries 240n387 vassals to Golden Horde 236, 255 war with Golden Horde 233
Ruzzini, Marco, Venetian envoy in Caffa 204n251 Ryazan 224

Safad 71
Sakji, Saqjī see Isaccea
Sakran see Salvaigo, Segurano Sālaj 274
Salvaigo

Ambrosio, Genoese merchant 178
Segurano, Genoese merchant and diplomat 82n104, 171n11, 176–179, 188 death 190, 191, 193, 197
Samarkand 22
Sambuceto, Lamberto di, Genoese notary at Caffa 102, 157, 158, 163n81
Samsun 117
Sanudo the Elder, Marino, Venetian author of crusading plans 5, 16, 74n61, 85n14, 87, 104n86, 121, 203n243
Benedetto, Venetian envoy 16
Sārā see Sarai
Saracano, Saracingho see Saraijiq
Sarai 18, 47, 53, 105, 107, 163, 238, 243, 247, 252, 258, 279 court 114, 250 Golden Horde 216, 221, 234, 236, 259 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s travels 110 installment of the Golden Horde 44 khanate 51 Metropolitan see 92 treasury 214, 220 usurpers 221 White Horde ruler 231
Sarai-Berke see Sarai
Sarai Bugha, brother of Toqta 261, 262 Saraijiq, Saraijiq 105 Sarnicki, Stanisław, Polish chronicler 222n309
Sartach see Sartak
Sartak, son of Batu 62, 146
Saru Saltuq Dede, spiritual leader of the Seljuk Turks in Dobruja 242, 244, 249n425, 268n509
Savignone, Andalò di, Genoese merchant 127 Lanfranchino di, Genoese merchant 155
Scami, terra see Syria
Scandinavians 14
Scicilia see Sicily
Sclavonia 146
Scythia 44
Scythians see Tartars
Sea of Pontus see Black Sea
Segnorita, Teofilatto, paid killer in Caffa 231
Seidenstraße see Silk Road
Selenga river 42n23
Selim I, Ottoman sultan 17, 19
Seljukids see Seljuks
Song (= Sung), ruling dynasty in China 28
Soranzo, Giovanni, Venetian admiral, and doge 131n310, 160
South-Eastern Europe 95, 145, 150, 248, 258, 270
Sozopol 93
Spices 97n160, 102n177, 113n228, 120, 126, 136n336, 145, 201n235, 214
Black sea route 95
doubling of prices 214
Egypt route 58, 59
great routes 55
Indian trade 35, 79n88, 123n179
Iraqi route 58, 59, 68, 96, 148
Persian route 27, 133, 137
route 35, 36, 88, 95
trade 16, 35, 156
Spinola
Alberto, Genoese diplomat 82, 85
Ranierio, Genoese naval commander 210n267
Spuler, Bertold, German specialist in oriental studies 3, 5, 6, 69, 70
St Stephen, king of Hungary 256
Staple right
of Alexandria 16
of Caffa 205
of Tana 205n254
Stella, Giorgio, Genoese chronicler 153n35, 203n243, 222n311
Steno, Giovanni, Venetian envoy in Caffa 204n251
Stephen of Serbia, son of Milutin, hostage at Noghai’s horde 257
Stephen, son of the Cuman count Parabuh 275
Stephen Dušan, Serbian tsar, grandson of Milutin 275
Steppe
Bujak 254
Cuman (see also Cuman steppe) 3n7, 17, 18, 30, 42, 43, 46, 67, 69, 98, 111, 142, 213, 222
crossings 99
Mongol conquest 44
Silk Road 114
Eurasian 28, 35, 42
Mongol 24, 25
Straits (see also Bosphorus) 93, 241, 247, 248
Baybars’ right to transport slaves through 92, 153, 154n41
Genoese prominence 94
Ilkhanid attempt to block 97
reopened to Mongols 97
second war of 216n284, 218
Toqta’s policy 258
Venetian attack 160
Sübüdei, Mongol general 29
expedition against Muḥammad II 41
through Transoxiana 142
leading the 1236 great campaign 43
Sulcatum see Solkhat
Sultaniye
John, archbishop of 113n229
Guillaume Adam, bishop of 127, 176n126, 177n134
Svetoslav, Theodore, Bulgarian tsar 184, 258, 260, 261, 264–267, 269
Svyatoslav 14, 15, 19
Syr Darya 38, 42, 43, 56
Syria 15, 22, 46, 50, 54, 56, 69n41, 110, 142, 169
1259 invasion 57
1281 Mongol campaign 74
1288–1290 Ilkhanate campaigns 34
Mamluk 70
spice route 35
Silk Road route 46n37
conquest by Mamluks 57
Szécsi, Dionysius, castellan of Mehadia and Jdioara 273, 277
Tabriz 23, 36, 47–9, 68, 95, 96, 133, 199, 237n372, 239
Ayas route 78, 81, 114, 115, 117
Berdibek as governor 218n295
boycott by Genoese 138, 201
conflict between Jochids and Ilkhanids 65
conquest by Janibek 202, 218, 219
hajj of 200
loss by Berke 148
merchant quarter 136
Mongol rule 122n279, 147
Ormuz route 121, 134, 136n332
shifting of trade routes 122
Toqta’s efforts to recover 170
Trebizond route 114, 115, 117, 119, 123, 134, 135, 136n332, 139
Tafur, Pero, Spanish traveller and writer 113n229
Talki Pass 103n196
INDEX

Tamberlane see Timur Lenk
Tana 18, 21, 35, 103, 105–107, 111, 133, 154, 156, 162, 185, 216, 222, 223
Cuman name 109
Genoese-Venetian embargo 208, 215
expulsion of merchants by Janibek 203, 206
Genoese boycott 186n179
incidents 202
in India 126
land lease by Venetians 196, 197, 202, 220
mercenaries 240n387
opening to Venetian trade 104, 186n178
statute of foreign merchants 186
Venetian right to trade 214, 215
Tanais see Don
Țara Bârsei see Burzenland
Tarnovo (= Veliko Tarnovo) 257, 258, 260, 269–271, 274
Tartars 3–5, 34, 43–46, 76, 81n97, 135, 144–146, 166n93, 175n122, 186n174, 193n202, 211n268, 212n270, 214, 218, 220–224, 227, 228, 231, 239, 247, 250, 258, 260, 264
banate of Mačva 257
'black' 275, 276
burn Moscow 234, 236
campaigns in Transylvania and Poland 250, 273
customs 21
Danube outpost 248, 250, 256
delegation to Caffa 230–232
domination over Carpathian-Balkan region 260–266, 270–272, 276
envoys 153n36, 226
expedition against Byzantium 245, 246
in Bujak 267, 278, 279
in Dobruja 267
of Solkhat 238
route 214
rule over Tabriz 47, 48
suzerains of Russia 255
three princes 221
treaties with Genoa 226–229, 234–236, 240
Taurinum see Tabriz
Tauris see Tabriz
Taxes 9, 10
Taz, son of Munjuk, Noghai's son-in-law 259, 260
Teka, son of Noghai 259
Terek river 68, 192n200
Terter,
George I, Bulgarian tsar 258, 260
George II, Bulgarian tsar 270
Thetha see Teca
Theodor Voytech, ban 273
Theodosia see Caffa
Thessaly 258
Thoctai see Toqta
Thoros, son of the Armenian king
Hethum I 72n54
Thrace 97
Tigris 35, 121, 122
Tikh, Constantin, Bulgarian tsar 245, 248, 249, 257
Til see Volga
Timiș-Cerna Gap 273
Timur Lenk, conqueror of West, South and Central Asia 19, 236
campaign of 1358–1396 18
1395/6 112, 113, 217n292
conquest of Eastern Persia 239
destruction of Astrakhan 113n228
relationship to merchants 11
war with Toqtamish Khan and victory 112, 169n104, 239, 240
Titel 275
Tmatarakan (= Matrega) 144n12, 145
Töde Môngke, khan of the Golden Horde 230
Toghan Temür, great khan 127
Togluq Temür, Tartar commander of a tümen 193, 220n302
embassy to the pope 127
Tokhars see Tartars
Tolbuga, envoy 233
Tôle Bugha, khan of the Golden Horde 160, 250, 251, 255
Tolui, son of Chinggis Khan 42n23, 51
Toluids 66
Toqta, khan of the Golden Horde 61n4, 66n25, 103, 157, 166n93, 167, 168, 172, 176, 192, 259, 260
arrests Genoese merchants 163, 164
Black Sea policy 171–173
brothers 251
change of policy in South-East Europe 258, 259, 264, 266
death 173
defeat by Noghai 162, 252
diplomatic ouvertures to al-Malik 169, 170
embassy to Egypt 170
envoys captured at Chios 177n136, 178
khan 160, 163
legacy 198
Mamluk embassy 172
peace treaty with Öljeitü 169
relations with
Ghāzān 168
Svetoslav 267–269
reprisal against Genoese 165, 171, 214, 263
stopping slave trade to Egypt 170
war with Noghai 159, 161, 251–253, 263
Toqtamīsh, khan of the Golden Horde 221, 228, 231, 233, 234, 237–239
arrest of merchants 235
battle of Kalka 225
Black Sea policy 225
Caffan embassies 235
mercenaries 240
defeat from Timur 239
deposing Mamai 229
early reign 223
plans for revival of state 225, 226
reunification of state 112
Russian campaign 235, 236
treaty with Genoese 112, 186, 222n312
first 226–229
second 229
third 234–236
fourth 237, 238, 240
war with
Genoa 238
Mamai 239
Timur 112, 169n04, 239, 240
Töreghene, Ögödei’s widow 50
Türü see Dniester
Torino, peace of 205n254
Transcaucasia 7n9, 29, 50, 59, 63, 68, 69
quality of pastureland 65
war over 247
Transcaucasus see Transcaucasia
Transcontinental trade see Eurasian trade
transport costs 20, 21
Transoxiana 29, 38, 41, 70
under Batu Khan’s rule 46
Golden Horde invasion 240
Transylvania 250, 272–274
Trebizond 23, 36, 49, 118, 129, 145, 215n282
attack on Venetian merchant 131
customs 125
Genoese
colony 118
colonial base 132
Great Comnenid Empire 134, 144
Mongol vassal 134
Polo family’s return voyage 121
Tabriz route 114, 115, 117, 119, 123, 134, 135, 136n332, 139
tribute to the Mamluk sultan 76
Venetian quarter 133
Tripoli 72n56, 158
Genoese occupation 80
Mamluk conquest 82
siege by Mamluks 73n59
tudun, Tartar official 185, 227, 229
Tughulja, wife of Munjuk 259, 260
Tukul Bugha, son of Toqta 261, 262n481
Tulunbek, Tartar princess 176, 187, 191
tümen, military unit of ten thousand men 193
Tunghuz, lieutenant of Chaka 259, 260
Turai, son of Noghai 261, 262
Turanic peoples 29
Turchia, Turkia 55n86, 145, 146, 210n267
Turkistan 43
Tyre 79n85
armistice with Mamluks 72n56
Ugi, Tommaso, Sienese envoy of Öljeitü 129
Ukek 100
ulus, ‘people’, ‘nation’ 221
Ulus of Jochi see Golden Horde
‘Umar Khoja, merchant from Otrar 38
umma, ‘nation’, community of the faithful 24
Umayyad caliphate 14
Ungaro-Vlachs 275
Upper Euxine 254
Ural (= Iaik) river 262
Urgench 22, 47, 102, 103, 105, 110, 128n300, 214, 239, 265
route to Tana 108
Üsküdar 242
Varangian lands 15
Vastacius see John III Dukas Vatatzes
Velbujd, battle of 275, 278
Venetians see Venice
Venice 13, 16, 21, 33, 94, 194, 213, 216, 222, 243
Acre loss of 151, 160
victory over Genoa 150
at mouths of Don 196n215, 197, 206
attack on
Caffa 160
Crimea 160
Pera 160
Black Sea trade 104n86
colony in Tabriz 133
consulate in Soldaia 203n247
envoy to Noghai 160
grant of Tana 202, 214, 220
invitation from Sheikh Uwais 139
land lease in Tana 196, 197
Liber officiorum 132
merchants 16, 19, 79
attack in Trebizond 131
in Kiev 99
in Soldaia 155
Tana route 104
trading in
Armenia 116
Crimean ports 220
uprising in Armenia 116
neutrality 209, 210
occupation of Constantinople 144
offer from Öljeltü 129, 130, 132
patronage of Abū Sa‘īd’s mother 133
peace
of Milan 131, 161
with Janibek 214, 215
quarter in Trebizond 133
reprisals from Genoese 133
settlement in
Tana 197, 198
Provato 194n209, 216
tax exemptions in Caffa 208
trading privileges from
Abū Sa‘īd 130
Alexios II 129, 133
Berdibek 220, 230n347
Janibek 202, 214, 230n347
Öljeltü 129, 133
Özbek 186n178, 196, 206
tavel to India 108
treaty
with Andronikos II 79, 160
with Genoa 153, 206–208
of 1347 with the Golden Horde 31, 32
of 1356 with Janibek 216, 237n371
of Milan 132
war with Genoa 118, 123, 130, 159, 160, 215
Vicina 157, 215n282, 254, 255
Vidin 262, 271–273
despote of 257, 270, 271
Vivaldi,
Benedetto, Genoese explorer 127
Ugolino and Vadino, Genoese explorers 87
Volga (= İtil) 14, 15, 103, 110, 245, 252, 261
khans see Golden Horde
Vozha river, battle of 224

Wallachia 274, 276–278
Waṣṣāf, Persian historian 65n25, 67n34, 96
White Horde (Aq Orda) 220, 221, 225, 231
William of Rubruck, Franciscan
missionary 31n102, 32, 44, 49n52, 55n86, 93n45, 96, 97, 99, 100, 144–147
William of Tyre, historian of the Latin East 16

yarlık, khan’s decree 46, 62, 268n513
Yasaul 188
Yashi see Alans
Yaši see Pruth
yassa, Mongol code of law 175
Yazjioghlu ‘Alî, Ottoman historian 268n509
Yeh‘lu Ch’u-ts’ai, advisor to Chinggis Khan 28n93
Yezd 121

Zaccaria,
Benedetto, Genoese merchant, and admiral 80–82, 85–87, 128, 157, 158
Manuele, Genoese merchant 157
Zakonik, law code of the Serbian tsar
Stephen Dušan 275, 276
Zayn al-Dīn, Persian chronicler 200n234
Zayton see Quanzhou
Ziquia see Circasia
1. Black Sea (XIII–XIV centuries)
2. Mongol states (after 1261)
3. Trade Routes before 1241
4. Trade Routes, 1241–1261

5. Trade Routes, 1261–1291
6. Trade Routes, 1291–1335

7. Trade Routes, 1335–1395