

# 'A Pox on the Pax!'

A survey of the Pax Mongolica through Persian, Near  
Eastern and European sources

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# Chapter 1- Introduction

In the 1989 film *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, two American high school students needing to pass a history test go back in time to collect famous historical figures for a live performance exam. In their travels they make their way to Mongolia, where a club-wielding Genghis Khan, seen carousing with various women, is lured into a time machine with the promise of a Twinkie. Upgrading to an aluminium baseball bat once in 1988, he proceeds to decapitate a mannequin at a sports store and go on a rampage in an LA shopping mall.

This image, while comedic, serves to illustrate the problems, both in popular culture and in the academic world, with portraying the Mongols. One does not need to watch 80s cult classics to find such stereotypes, as they are readily found in current films, shows, books, comics etc. While slightly more nuanced, the idea of the Mongol as a weapon-wielding barbarian intent on inflicting damage on civilised populations emerged out of the works of a large number of historians who for many years conceived of 'the Tatar yoke'. This concept, particularly strong in Soviet historiography, had the Mongols as a merely oppressive and backwards force on societal progress. Since the 80s however, much work has been done to counter this image. There are many works that could be mentioned here, but among the most influential remain those of Thomas Allsen, who over several years has provided in-depth analyses of Mongol phenomena, primarily focusing on cultural exchange. Allsen essentially challenges pre-conceived notions about the Mongols by addressing the cultural interactions which they promulgated across their enormous empire. In his work *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Allsen shows how exchanges took place in all sorts of fields- from culinary to medicinal, and religious to scientific.<sup>1</sup> All of this was facilitated by the ambiguously-termed 'Pax Mongolica'. It is this phenomenon which I seek to address in this thesis.

So why the need to discuss the Pax Mongolica? This is a widely accepted term which has been prevalent throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continuing up to today, yet is rarely defined and even seems like a *deus ex machina* when historians use the term to explain phenomena without delving into exactly what they mean when they use the term. Some will question the need to extensively examine terminology, but there are two important points to be made in this regard. Firstly, that we

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<sup>1</sup> T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001)

must remember how pervasive the implications of a term can be. A case in point vis-à-vis the Mongols would be the aforementioned label 'barbarian'. We all conjure images in our heads of what that means as soon as we hear the word used about anyone, let alone a people that for some almost define the term! The dangers of using this misnomer with regards to Eurasian peoples has been extensively dealt with by Christopher Beckwith in a recent publication on Silk Road empires.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, and crucially to this thesis, are the unspoken assumptions which accompany Pax Mongolica that encompass not only huge geographical distances, but also an extended length of time. Declaring uniformity across these regions and throughout this period without significant empirical evidence should immediately make us wary, and to assume this phenomenon as a basis for all other research makes for circular reasoning and bad history.

With these thoughts in mind, let's try and unpick what this term means and how it is used. I have rarely found Pax Mongolica set out and defined clearly, but two attempts to do so will be given here. Nicola di Cosmo in his essay on Italian contacts with the Mongols on the Black Sea defines it as a 'stable political situation across lands separately ruled by Mongols which for about a century allowed for the flow of goods and people across continental Eurasia'.<sup>3</sup> Paul Buell gives a more nuanced definition in his *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*:

"Mongolian Peace." This term has been used to describe the freedom of travel and security occasioned by the Mongolian conquests, which brought much of Eurasia under a single political authority and fostered long-range commerce. Conditions continued to be favorable even after the breakdown of the Mongol Empire, and long-range contacts of every sort briefly flourished again after the end of the disturbances caused by the wars of Qaidu (q.v.) in the early 14th century.<sup>4</sup>

While these two definitions are more recent, it was in the 1990s that this idea became more widely publicised after the release in 1989 of Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony*.<sup>5</sup> In it, the Pax Mongolica was credited with facilitating the development of the first 'world-system', by connecting the dots between several regional sub-systems from Europe to China. Thus the Pax is turned into a

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<sup>2</sup> C.I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, NJ, 2009). Beckwith seeks to level the field when it comes to judging the actions of so-called 'barbarians' in relation to sedentary states. In his fervour he defends some of the Mongols' worst depredations and his analysis that the Chinese were just as bad as the Mongols doesn't deal with all of the other states who were swallowed up by the Mongol machine.

<sup>3</sup> N. Di Cosmo, 'Black Sea Emporia and the Mongol Empire: A Reassessment of the Pax Mongolica', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2010, Vol. 53, p.91.

<sup>4</sup> P.D. Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*, (Lanham, MD, 2003) p.210.

<sup>5</sup> J.L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, (Oxford, 1989).

proto-globalising force, which 'by the end of the thirteenth century, had made prosperity pandemic.'<sup>6</sup> This sort of discourse has only burgeoned for some Mongol historians, with one stating that by the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, 'The Mongols had become evangelical, and their message was one of spiritual, cultural, mercantile, and economic globalization.'<sup>7</sup>

This type of rhetoric serves to illustrate not only how the Mongols' image is being overhauled, but also how the Pax Mongolica has become something far greater than simply travel security. Another dilemma that often affects our ability to separate the concept of Pax Mongolica from an assessment of the Mongol empire as a whole is that those who write most extensively about the Pax accord it a sort of moral position, which counterbalances any negative impact the Mongol invasions had. The reasoning being something like 'Well yes, they may have killed lots of people, but look, Europeans got to see China!'. While this is an oversimplification, it can be quite frustrating to see these tendencies crop up so often. Clearly both processes need to be addressed and any discussion of the Pax Mongolica cannot ignore both the foundations on which it was built and the potential negative effects of the Pax on Mongol subjects. This thesis will delve into both of these questions; attempting to create a more nuanced view of the Mongol Empire and the Pax Mongolica. Whether the term is a useful one will also be examined considering the picture it conveys.

It is through extensive reading of sources that I have come to question the portrayal of the Mongols now being widely academically accepted, and thus it is to the written sources I shall return. This is not to ignore other resources which have been considered, but to try and strip away modern conceptions of the Mongols and see through the eyes of those who lived under their rule. One such resource is the extensive art historical research which has emerged dealing with this period. The role of art history is certainly one which has contributed much to reassessing the Mongols, and long may it continue. Two collections from the 2000s are of particular note; *The Legacy of Genghis Khan* (2002), edited by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, and *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (2006), edited by Komaroff. These works have shown that the Mongols' cultural contribution in Western Asia was a significant one that cannot be overlooked. However, as is evident from the sub-heading of the first volume, *Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia*, Mongol cultural achievements tell us almost nothing about the situation of the huge majority of their subjects. The elite and those who catered to their aesthetic tastes can be studied, but no further. This point was further driven home to me by the essay of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.356.

<sup>7</sup> G. Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, (London, 2006) p.203

Bert Fragner in the 2006 volume where he explains how social scientists have made historians more aware of the downtrodden and the oppressed.<sup>8</sup> I believe that in order to properly assess the Pax Mongolica, we need to analyse how the majority of people were affected by their invasions and rule, not merely the elite few.

My method then will be to thoroughly examine sources from different regions, time periods, and perspectives. So as to grasp the whole of the Pax Mongolica head on, the time frame and geographical scope of the research are quite broad. The sources can be put into roughly three groups: Persian, Near Eastern, and European. For the purposes of this length of paper, I have excluded Chinese, Arabic and Mongol sources. I hope to include these in further research, such as translations allow, but for now the selection at hand will suffice. My language limitations mean that I am reliant on translations, but for many important sources there are excellent editions available.

The importance of having sources from different settings within the Mongol world cannot be overstated. Some works were written before the dissolution of the Mongol empire in 1260, and some after, and the consideration of sources on both sides of the divide is in order to determine whether the situation changed with divisions in the Mongol world. An issue that crops up in the development of Mongol government over time are the generational differences between Mongol administrations, also affected by geographical dislocation. Another reason for choosing works from authors living in many different locations; some under direct Mongol rule, some under tributary powers, and some outside Mongol control. In this way I hope to get a varied picture of conditions across the Mongol world, as well as from different viewpoints. A common complaint about sources for the Mongols is that we have very little written by them themselves. I believe that this is not so great a problem, as we have writings from those whose entire livelihood was supported and based on Mongol rule, while we have others who were hostile or sceptical of the Mongols as well. Hopefully this will provide a balance that avoids questions of anti-Mongol bias in source selection.

I will structure the paper by addressing three themes: an analysis of initial Mongol destruction; the subsequent conditions for those living under Mongol rule, whether direct or indirect; and the Mongol effect on travel and trade. Each theme will be discussed for the divided groups of sources, allowing me to compare how each concept emerges from three different writing traditions. I will begin with the Persian sources, largely written by historians patronised by the Mongols such as Ata al -Malik

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<sup>8</sup> B.G. Fragner, 'Ilkhanid Rule and its Contributions to Iranian Political Culture', in (ed.) L. Komaroff, *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (Leiden, 2006) p70.

Juvaini and Rashid al-Din, but with a notable exception in the vociferously anti-Mongol historian Juzjani. I will then proceed westwards to look at Near Eastern sources of Armenian and Syriac chroniclers. Many of the Armenian sources were written in the kingdom of Cilicia, or Lesser Armenia, which was a tributary and ally of the Mongols, giving us quite a different perspective from the Muslim Persian sources. Finally, I will analyse European sources by missionaries, envoys, and merchants who travelled the length and breadth of the Mongol empire. In this way I will see the different viewpoints of those who went to Mongol lands in service of a European monarch or religious order and those who made the journey voluntarily for profit. Naturally there will be some discrepancies in what our sources provide, as the Armenian chronicles, for example, speak far less of trade and travel than our European sources, as the Armenian authors largely remained within their own lands. However, I believe these methods should encompass all aspects of the so-called Pax Mongolica, and give us a clearer picture of what that entails.

## Chapter 2- Pax Mongolica in the Persian sources

### 2.1 Source Background

Persian sources are some of the most extensive and important for the study of Mongol history. In this chapter I will consider four. The first two were written by contemporaries, who both concluded their accounts in 1260. Ala-al-Din Ata-Malik Juvaini wrote his *Tarikh-e jahan-gosay* (History of the World Conqueror) whilst governor of Iraq under Mongol rule. His brother also served as *sahib-divan* in the Ilkhanate to both Hulegu and his successor Abaqa, though his family's service had been given to the Khwarazmshahs, and even before that to the Seljuqs and the Abbasids<sup>9</sup>. Naturally, as an employee of the Mongols, Juvaini cannot be too openly critical, though John Boyle, the editor and translator of Juvaini's work, states that Juvaini's criticisms are only more subtle.<sup>10</sup>

If we do find Juvaini too flattering of the conquerors, we have the opposite side of the coin by way of comparison in the *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, a universal history of the Islamic world written by Minhaj al-Din Juzjani. Juzjani, an older man than Juvaini, lived through the very first Mongol invasions but was forced to flee his homeland of Ghur to the Delhi Sultanate, where he composed his work. Uninhibited and perhaps even encouraged by his patrons, Juzjani pulls no punches in his assessment of the Mongol invasions, even suggesting that they would bring about the end of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Having considered two sources from the era of the united Mongol empire, we should also give thought to Persian history under the Ilkhanids, the Mongol successor state which ruled until 1335 much of what we now call the Middle East. The most well-known and most comprehensive source for the Mongols is the *Jami al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles) written in the first decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The work was a collective effort by many research assistants, but the supervision was undertaken by the vizier Rashid al-Din. Among the many sources used by Rashid al-Din, other Persian historians' works were referenced, including Juvaini's, for events he did not have first-hand information for. Rashid al-Din was commissioned by the Ilkhan Ghazan to complete a history of the Mongols, and

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed biography of Juvaini, George Lane's entry in the Encyclopaedia Iranica is comprehensive. G. Lane, 'Jovayni, Ala-al-Din', (2009) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XV, Facs.1, 63-68, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jovayni-ala-al-din> Accessed 14th October 2016.

<sup>10</sup> J.A. Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror*, Trans. from the text of Mirza Muhammad Qazvini by J.A. Boyle, (Cambridge, MA, 1958) xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>11</sup> R. Sela and S.C. Levi, *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Historical Sources*, (Bloomington, IN, 2010), 135.



later by Ghazan's brother and successor Oljeitu, to extend the work to include the histories of many other peoples.<sup>12</sup> Naturally, Rashid al-Din's involvement in the affairs of both Ilkhans means that he is often accused of pandering to the Mongols, but also, paradoxically, criticising early Mongol rulers in order to accentuate the need for reforms taken on by Ghazan. Rashid al-Din himself was the driving force behind these measures however, so we must be wary when making stark contrasts between the early Ilkhanid rulers and Ghazan and his successors.

Another government employee of the Ilkhans was Hamd-Allah Mostawfi Qazvini, a financial auditor and governor of Qazvin until the breakup of the Ilkhanate. Hamd-Allah wrote his work *Nozhat al-Qulub* after the death of the last Ilkhan Abu-Said while the fate of the Ilkhanid lands was being fought over by several dynasties. While inspired and influenced heavily by Rashid al-Din, Hamd-Allah wrote his final work in a time of uncertainty, without patronisation. This may help to offset Rashid al-Din's work, though one must keep in mind that Hamd-Allah could in no way be certain that a Mongol or Chingissid ruler would not succeed to the Ilkhanid domains. He also had a complex relationship to the Mongols, with his great-grandfather being killed after the sack of Qazvin; yet he and several of his family members were heavily involved in Mongol administration.<sup>13</sup>

Between these four sources, a broad range of temporal, geographical, and situational differences is included. Ideally this will provide us with a sense of Mongol Persia as it developed over time. While some of the works are quite focused on the Islamic world itself, others, such as *Jamial-tawarikh*, are far more comprehensive, allowing us more insight into the Mongol world as a whole. When this analysis is complemented by our work on European and Near Eastern sources, a clear picture of the Pax Mongolica should start to emerge.

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<sup>12</sup> C. Melville, 'Jame al-Tawarik', (2012) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XIV, Fasc. 5, 462-468.  
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jame-al-tawarik> Accessed 14th of October 2016.

<sup>13</sup> C. Melville, 'Hamd-Allah Mostawfi', (2012) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 6, 631-634.  
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamd-allah-mostawfi> Accessed 14th of October 2016.

## 2.2 Mongol destruction in the Persian sources

Rashid al-Din documents the rise of the Mongols and their initial conquests. His sources for this information were a Mongol general called Bolad Ch'eng-Hsiang, and through him the *Altan Debter*, or Golden Book, which was kept off limits to non-Mongols.<sup>14</sup> Thus for the Mongols' early expansion Rashid al-Din is well-informed. Chingis Khan's brutality is not shirked away from. In one instance Chingis is recorded boiling those of a seditious tribe, the Tayichi'ut.<sup>15</sup> The Merkit fared little better, with Rashid saying that Chingis completely annihilated them.<sup>16</sup> With regards to the campaigns in Northern China, the same seems to have been the case, with Chingis 'destroying every village and town he came to.'<sup>17</sup> Also notable is the famous Tangut campaign, where the Mongols proposed a peace to the Tanguts, but turned on them, with Chingis leading the attack. Chingis received an injury, the complications of which later killed him. In compliance with Chingis' dying wish, his sons apparently had all the Tanguts put to the sword to avenge their father, not to mention the 40 girls buried with Chingis in death.<sup>18</sup> Juzjani relates the same story, with both the betrayal and the promise to eradicate the Tanguts.<sup>19</sup> In one of his many evocative passages, Juzjani passes on the travel account of an emissary of the Khwarazmshah, Baha-ud-Din, who passed by the site of the siege of Zhongdu, describes mountains of bones, ground slick with human fat, and 60,000 virgins jumping to their deaths to avoid Mongol capture.<sup>20</sup> Even the more sober Juvaini describes Mongol conquests in Islamic lands thus: 'Where there had been a hundred thousand people there remained, without exaggeration, not a hundred souls left alive.'<sup>21</sup>

The Mongols' campaigns in Islamic lands naturally are given the most press by our Persian authors. As has been well-publicised, the Mongol invasion of the Khwarazmshah's land took place after in 1218, the governor of the city of Otrar put to death a large group of Mongol Muslim merchants looking to establish trade relations between the two powers. Juvaini states that 'for every drop of their blood there

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<sup>14</sup> T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, (Cambridge, 2001) 84-88.

<sup>15</sup> Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami 'u't-tawarikh, Compendium of Chronicles, A History of the Mongols*, (trans. W.M. Thackston) (Harvard, 1998) 161.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-2, 312.

<sup>19</sup> *Tabakat-I Nasiri: A General History of the Muhammedan Dynasties of Asia, Including Hindustan: from A.H. 194 (810 AD) to A.H. 658 (1260 AD) and the Irruption of the Infidel Mughals into Islam*, Maulana Minhaj-ud-Din Ibn Umar-I Usman, translated from original Persian Manuscripts by Major H.G. Raverty, Vol.1, (New Delhi, 1970) 1096.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 965.

<sup>21</sup> Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror*, Trans. from the text of Mirza Muhammad Qazvini by J.A. Boyle, (Cambridge, MA, 1958) 25.

flowed a whole Oxus'.<sup>22</sup> Rashid al-Din concurs, saying that this action 'destroyed the world.'<sup>23</sup> The fate of Otrar itself differs according to our sources. Juvaini states that it was pillaged, with its people driven out. Rashid al-Din states that most of the people were slain, with the rest levied for further campaigns. Juzjani says that all of its citizens were massacred.<sup>24</sup> Bukhara fared little better. Juvaini and Rashid al-Din have the town being burnt, the people of the city being made levies to fight against the citadel, and after 'no male was spared who stood higher than the butt of a whip'. Both give the figure of 30,000 killed.<sup>25</sup> Juzjani emphasises the burning of the library at Bukhara.<sup>26</sup> The same story occurs at Samarkand as well. At the Khwarazmian capital of Urgench, things got even nastier with street fighting between local levies and the defenders of the city. Naptha was used in the housing district. In the ensuing round-up, Juvaini states that each soldier was given 24 people to execute. He admits himself that he finds the numbers absolutely incredible. On top of this, according to Juzjani, the women who were not executed were made to fist-fight all day for the Mongols' pleasure, then executed- though there is no mention of this in Juvaini.<sup>27</sup>

The fate of Balkh, one of the most glorious cities in the world at that time and an Islamic cultural hub, is one of the more publicised. Despite the city's surrender, Juvaini says that the city was attacked and the entire population massacred. Chingis later arrives at the site and finds fugitives remaining, and slays them all. The Mongols 'wiped out all traces of culture from that region.'<sup>28</sup> Those places where a relative or favourite of Chingis were slain suffered the most. Bamiyan, where Chingis grandson was struck by an arrow, suffered particularly. Juvaini states that even the beasts were slain and that there was no living creature there in his day, and even more than 60 years later, Hamd-Allah Mostawfi states that it remained a ruin. A similar fate awaited Nishapur, where Toghachar, Chingis' son-in-law was killed, and not even the dogs and cats were left alive.<sup>29</sup> Juzjani puts the fate of Khorasan down to a rebellion which took the lives of the Mongol governors, whereupon Chingis allegedly says 'from whence have these people I have killed come to life again?' Khorasan is then subsequently devastated again.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>23</sup> Rashid al-Din, 234.

<sup>24</sup> Juvaini, 84; Rashid al-Din, 242;

<sup>25</sup> Juvaini, 104-106; Rashid al-Din, 247.

<sup>26</sup> Juzjani, 274.

<sup>27</sup> Juvaini, 126-8; Rashid al-Din, 255; Juzjani, 1100.

<sup>28</sup> Juvaini, 131.

<sup>29</sup> Juvaini, 132-3, 175-7; G. Le Strange, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat-al-Qulub*, (trans. G. Le Strange) (New York, 2014) 152-3.

<sup>30</sup> Juzjani, 1048.

The infamous campaign of Jebe and Subedei in pursuit of the Khwarazmshah has gone down in history as one of the bloodiest in pre-modern history. When they had time, the generals took many cities, though they left many untouched. Juvaini rattles off a list of the cities and towns where they massacred the inhabitants, confirmed by Juzjani and Rashid al-Din: Tus, Khubushan, Qum, Zanjan, Zava, Hamadan, Girit, Nakhichevan, Ardabil. It can be quite repetitive and numbing to read of all these attacks, but there is very little in the way of disagreement between the two Mongol-sponsored historians and Juzjani.

Beyond the Islamic heartlands, this continued wherever the Mongols roamed. Rashid al-Din states that the towns of Rus taken by the Mongols had been largely depopulated.<sup>31</sup> Juvaini notes how the Bulgars were largely slain or taken captive, while at the capture of the city of Magas, the Mongols collected 270,000 ears of the slain.<sup>32</sup> In Hulegu's later advance into Persia, he faced up against the Ismaili Assassins. Hulegu tricks the leader of the Assassins, Rukn al-Din, into a peace, then has all of his followers slain, to the babe in its cradle.<sup>33</sup> Hulegu's subordinate Baiju is sent into Anatolia to massacre and pillage. Hulegu's trip to Baghdad is a successful one - the plains around the city were first flooded, then the city was taken, burned and a general massacre enacted which spared only foreigners and Christians. The Abbasid Caliph and his entire family were put to death as well.<sup>34</sup> Aleppo was sacked and subjected to a full week of massacre, while the citizenry of Hama were put to death despite being under amnesty. Diyarbakir and Mosul did little better. Several of the maliks in these cities suffered particularly gruesome fates: one being killed by having his own flesh stuffed down his mouth, while at Mosul, one was devoured by maggots and his son cut in half and displayed on both banks of the Tigris.<sup>35</sup>

This is but a selection of the examples in our Persian sources covering Mongol destruction, and all four authors corroborate these stories. One of the most famous statements about the Mongols made by Hamd-Allah Mostawfi is about Iran, stating 'there can be no doubt that even if for a thousand years to come no evil befalls the country, yet will it not be possible completely to repair the damage.'<sup>36</sup> This statement has often been ridiculed by recent historians, but it is interesting that Juvaini, one of the Mongol apologists, says something very similar: 'even though there be generation and increase until the

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<sup>31</sup> Rashid al-Din, 260.

<sup>32</sup> Juvaini, 269-270.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 723-4.

<sup>34</sup> Rashid al-Din 487, 495-9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 503, 508-511.

<sup>36</sup> Hamd-Allah Mostawfi, 34.

resurrection the population will not attain to a tenth part of what it was before.'<sup>37</sup> Whether we accept these dire claims is another matter, but it is crucial that these type of statements occur across the spread of our selected historians, whether anti-Mongol or no, and in the early and later stages of Mongol rule.

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<sup>37</sup> Juvaini, 97.

## 2.3 Life under the Mongols in the Persian Sources

If the picture painted so far has appeared quite bleak, this is partly to do with the realities of empire-building. No empire was built bloodlessly, and the Mongols were no exception. The concepts of 'Pax' as applied to the Romans, the Mongols et al. usually signify the conditions within the empire's borders. While I believe that the effects of conquest cannot be detached from life under empire, we will now turn our discussion to what it meant to be a Mongol imperial citizen. Even the Mongols were aware that there had to be some change from conquest to rule. Rashid al-Din tells a story of when Nasir al-Din Tusi, the great scholar and scientist, is asked by the Mongols for advice on how to rule. His response is thus: 'We are at present conquerors, not potentates. In times of conquest maintenance of the peasantry is not obligatory. When we become potentates we will dispense justice to those who ask for it.'<sup>38</sup> How did the Mongols rule then?

Juzjani, while stating that Chingis was a butcher, also called him just and resolute, whose followers were honest and always obeyed his commands.<sup>39</sup> He follows a similar pattern to many Muslim authors in criticising Chaghatai for his persecution of Muslims while praising Ogedei for his fair treatment of that religion.<sup>40</sup> He discusses at some length the plans of Buddhists under Mongol rule who wished to incite Guyuk to kill and/or emasculate all the Muslims in his empire.<sup>41</sup> Guyuk's burial is conducted according to Mongol custom, with his wives and slaves buried with him. The power struggle which followed led to the winning party, Batu and Mongke, putting to death 10,000 Mongols, largely eliminating the house of Chaghatai.<sup>42</sup> He laments the fate of Khorasan, stating that 'people were distressed for the necessities of life' due to the effects of the Mongol campaigns there.<sup>43</sup> Naturally, Muslim rulers receive more praise from Juzjani, who praises Berke's commitment to Islam through pilgrimages, enforcing of drinking restrictions on his soldiers, and his destruction of Christian churches.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Rashid al-Din, 501.

<sup>39</sup> Juzjani, 1077, 1079-80.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1106-7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 1157-9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1173, 1186.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1197.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1285, 1290.

We have far more information on life in Mongol lands from Juvaini, who as governor of Baghdad, had live access to conditions under Mongol rule, unlike Juzjani. Juvaini, despite some of his more drastic statements regarding Mongol devastation, does speak for some degree of renewal under Mongol rule. While he states that Khorasan and Iraq remained devastated in his day, that some of the other districts originally attacked by the Mongols had retained their previous prosperity. He praises the efforts of Mahmud Yalavach, the Mongol administrator in Turkestan, in abolishing the compulsory levies which so drained the population- allowing some degree of prosperity to return.<sup>45</sup> Juvaini tells the story of a revolt of the common people, led by a Sufi from Tarab which spilled into Bukhara in 1238/9, which targeted both the Mongols and the wealthy-particularly tax-gatherers and landowners. The elites, supported by the Mongols, and the common people faced off several times, with the Mongols victorious. The Mongols desired to again destroy Bukhara, but luckily Mahmud Yalavach's intervention on behalf of the people of Bukhara saved that city from complete ruin.<sup>46</sup> Bukhara was able to recover largely thanks to the efforts of Sorqaqtani Beqi, the influential mother of Mongke, Qubilai, and Hulegu, who built two madrasas there.<sup>47</sup>

For Juvaini, Chingis was, as the title of his work *Tarikh-e jahan-gosay* suggests, the world-conqueror. It is under his successor Ogedei however that the Mongols become rulers as well as conquerors. Campaigns undertaken by Ogedei were still brutal- the Mongol army's rape of Chin generals and more collections of the ears of those killed in battle suggest as much- but in general, he is quite praiseworthy of Ogedei.<sup>48</sup> His *yasaq*, or laws, highlighted the protection of the weak and Juvaini, in poetic fashion, claims that under his authority 'the dust of disturbances and calamities subsided and all creation was secure'.<sup>49</sup> His protection of Islam and the mediating effect he has on his more traditional Mongol brother Chaghatai are particular strong points for Juvaini. He is generous to a fault and inspired great loyalty in those he ruled.<sup>50</sup>

Juvaini has a good deal of information about Mongol administrators in Khorasan and Iran. The area was not fully pacified by the Mongol general Chormaghun, with many rebels and Khwarazmian emirs acting as a sort of resistance movement. Ogedei's anger at this leads to him ordering the flooding of

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<sup>45</sup> Juvaini, 96-7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-115.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-5.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-3.

Khorasan, but he is put off this course of action by his administrator Chin-Temur.<sup>51</sup> Chin-Temur himself receives a very poor review from Juvaini, who claims that even those lands of Khorasan which had not been ravaged by armies were submitted to heavy taxation and tortured until they were able to pay.<sup>52</sup> The Uighur administrator Korguz is pictured as the man trying to control the madness. He conducts a census, re-assesses taxes, tries to protect property, builds *qanats* (irrigation canals), and attempts to relieve the burdens of the *yam* (postal station network) on the common people.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately the Mongol system was such that there was still a great degree of administrative power in the hands of generals. This system was designed to be a check on the amount of power any one Mongol administrator could have, but it also served to massively inconvenience the population. Juvaini complains that Korguz was prevented from effectively administering many regions as Chormaghun's commanders levied their own taxes, rendering the divan ineffective, and that when Korguz attempted to curb the power of the military commanders, they contrived to have him investigated for corruption and put to death.<sup>54</sup> The governorship of Arghun saw the Mongols trying to extend their tax base. His chief secretary Sharaf al-Din is portrayed as the main villain by Juvaini in this, largely as a method of excusing his patron Arghun and his Mongol overlords. Suggesting that Arghun was powerless to stop Sharaf al-Din's taxation is one example. Surely with the approval of his bosses, Sharaf al-Din 'imposed upon the Moslems a tax beyond the strength and endurance of each individually.'<sup>55</sup> Juvaini attacks Sharaf al-Din for some time, at all times absolving Arghun of any blame. During these administrative changes, the confusion of the times was exacerbated by several long interregna as well.

The ten year period between Ogodei's death in 1241 and Mongke's enthronement in 1251 was both a testing period for the Mongol empire's survival as well as for its subjects. The Mongol world was held together by Ogodei's queen regent Toregene Khatun. Her personal rivalries with key administrators like Mahmud Yalavach and Chinqai saw them displaced and administrative continuity disrupted. In the free-for-all that ensued, Mongol princes, generals, and administrators collected their own taxes, issued their own *paizas* (stamps of authority) and sent their own envoys via the *yam*. Though this practice was ended by Guyuk upon his accession in 1246, his death only two years later saw the same issue arise again.<sup>56</sup> About the demands of the Mongol general Eljigitei Juvaini says the 'constant relay of Mongol tax

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,482-7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 533.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.,493, 501-2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.,502-3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 539.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 241-3, 255, 508-9.



collectors and the levies and demands of Eljigitei reduced the people to indigence.<sup>57</sup> Korguz' replacement as administrator for western Asia was Arghun, who describes the state of the region during the interregnum after Guyuk's death, points out the multiple collecting of the *qubchur* (livestock tax), the repeated levies on the populace, as well as the extra demands of supporting the *yam* stations. The situation was one that infuriated and disgusted Juvaini's father, who served in the divan and sought to retire, but was prevented from doing so.<sup>58</sup>

The reign of Mongke apparently saw great changes in how the empire was run. Arghun was confirmed as governor of most of western Asia, something that may not have pleased the population, but under a different mandate. It was Mongke who requested from Arghun the assessment of the realm from the interregnum period. Arghun was forced to admit his own negligence, and Mongke looked to local dignitaries to provide him with a report of the situation and how it should best be addressed.<sup>59</sup> Mongke sought to lessen the burden on the common people by establishing a more set taxation rate and weakening the power of the *elchis* (envoys) and *ortaq*s (merchant companies) who had used the *yam* stations to excess.<sup>60</sup> However, it was not long before Mongke sent Hulegu on his western campaign. The huge numbers of soldiers had to be provisioned, and this was done by an army of envoys. Near Samarqand, Masud Beg was forced to entertain Hulegu and his army for nearly a month.<sup>61</sup> Hulegu did restore some lands on his way, for example Khabushan, derelict for decades since the first Mongol invasions, was rebuilt, largely due to Juvaini's own influence.<sup>62</sup> However, requisitioning continued into 1256, where provisions had to be taken from all over western Asia to support Hulegu's army. Any livestock could be taken as a sort of emergency tax.<sup>63</sup> From 1252-1258 Hulegu travelled through predominantly Mongol lands, levying and requisitioning for his attacks on the Ismailis and the Abbasid Caliphate. The demands on Mongol subjects must have been punishing.

Juvaini's assessment of Mongol treatment of their subjects hardly makes for impressive reading. Now we will turn to his continuator, Rashid al-Din for further information about Mongol rule, especially post-dissolution in 1260. One of the first things to note is that many began life under the Mongols as slaves. After the victory at Fanakat, for example, Rashid al-Din notes that all of the women and children

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 512.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 517-21.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 516-7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 598-600.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 608-612.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 617.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 621.

were enslaved and those young men who were not killed were levied into the Mongol armies, to be turned onto neighbouring cities and even further afield.<sup>64</sup> For some of the women this would mean entry into the harem of a ruler or prince, for others this would mean forced marriage to a Mongol soldier. While a woman's beauty could allow her a life of ease and luxury in the ruler's camp, to be too favoured meant being buried with the ruler as well, such as the 40 girls killed in memory of Chingis.<sup>65</sup> For those extremely lucky men who were not forced into the levy, if they were craftsmen they could expect forced relocation to another part of the Mongol empire. Qara-Qorum, built by Ogodei, was built by and catered for by both Chinese and Muslim artisans and slaves.<sup>66</sup> These men, apart from their exile and social separation, may have been able to improve at least their fiscal situation while many of them were able to bring their families with them.

Ogodei, as in most Persian histories, is praised by Rashid al-Din for his efforts to rule well. A relief fund of 10% of the grain levy was provided for the poor in the empire while the postal system was increased, connecting northern China and Qara-Qorum.<sup>67</sup> Both interregna after Ogodei and Guyuk's deaths were trying times for the empire. After the death of Guyuk, several courts were set up by his regent, Oghul Gaimish, and his sons Khwaja and Naqu. Each court issued its own degrees, leaving administrators of the empire like Chinqai completely bewildered as to how to proceed. The disputes between the Ogodeid/Chaghadaid families with Mongke and Batu saw the empire's footing grow even shakier. The wide scale purges undertaken by Mongke against his rivals and their families saw the Toluid line win out and Mongke chosen as the Qa'an.<sup>68</sup>

An even more extensive list of Mongke's efforts to improve the empire's situation is given by Rashid al-Din. Some notable acts were the prevention of collecting taxes in arrears from the peasantry and a limiting of both merchants and envoys from requisitioning from the population. The system became more bureaucratized, with many scribes of many different backgrounds being employed to keep up with the plethora of languages and regions of the Mongol world.<sup>69</sup> Hulegu's mission to the west was not just military, but also administrative, as Mongke sought to restore the provinces destroyed by the Mongols in their preliminary invasions. However, supporting the Mongol army was a great drain on the regions they passed through, and luckily, according to Rashid al-Din, Hulegu moved on quickly otherwise

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<sup>64</sup> Rashid al-Din, 243.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 328-9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 324-8.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 395, 403, 405-410.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 411-3.

'territories in submission would have been totally ruined by transport of food and drink.'<sup>70</sup> How feasting at the expense of Mongol administrators for months on end in a six year campaign is described as quick by our author is perplexing!

After the death of Mongke in 1259, the Mongol Empire essentially split into four different khanates. While the Qa'an title was still fought over, and eventually won by Qubilai, he was not recognised in the Chaghadaid Khanate in Central Asia, or in the Qipchaq Khanate in Russia. Only the Ilkhans in Persia nominally submitted, as signified in their adoption of the prefix *il* (submissive). In practice however, they were rulers in their own right. Rashid al-Din, as a vizier for the Ilkhan Ghazan and his successor Oljeitu, had the best knowledge of conditions in Persia, but he is also one of the main sources of information on the post-dissolution Mongol world. As much of the time Rashid al-Din wrote about was filled with conflict between Mongol powers, we will address these conflicts and their effects then go on to focus on life in Mongol lands.

One of the main disputes which continued throughout much of the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was between the Qipchaq Khanate of the Jochid line and the Ilkhanate. The origins of this dispute began when Hulegu laid claim to areas in the Caucasus that had originally been allotted to the Jochids. This was exacerbated by Hulegu's execution of relatives of the Jochid khan Berke, and finally by his murder of the Caliph and his descendants upon capturing Baghdad in 1258, an act condemned by Berke, as he had become a Muslim. Conflict broke out soon after the death of Mongke, with the two khanates supporting different competitors for the position of Qa'an - Berke supporting Arigh Boke, and Hulegu and his successor Abagha supporting Qubilai. An alliance was created between the Jochids and the Mamluks, the rulers of Egypt and Syria who were the Ilkhans' strong rival to the west.

The situation was compounded by the actions of leaders in the Chaghadaid Khanate, who fought against both the Ilkhans and Qubilai in China. Essentially, the situation was a family feud on a world-wide scale. Baraq, the Chaghadaid khan, and Qaidu, a grandson of Ogodei, resented the Toluids for Mongke's execution of their relatives and seizure of the throne, while the Jochids' territorial dispute with the Ilkhans made them natural allies. This culminated in an agreement in 1269 that Baraq, Qaidu, and the Jochid khan Mongke Temur would share revenues and continue to attack the Toluid khanates. This pact was made with the intention of improving the administration of Transoxania, with long-serving Mongol administrator Masud Beg in charge. Baraq had wanted to continue to plunder rich provinces like

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 486.

Samarqand, but this agreement sought to keep the Mongol armies away from the cities and peasantry.<sup>71</sup> The situation almost immediately changed, as Baraq began plundering his own people and Qaidu established friendship with Abagha. Baraq did great damage at Nishapur in 1270, while Abagha responded in 1273 by devastating Bukhara, where many were killed, Masud Beg's madrasa was burnt, and the library destroyed.<sup>72</sup> This attack, under Abagha's lieutenant Aq Beg, continued for 3 years, with Rashid al-Din stating 'such a magnificent city and its countryside was totally devastated. There was not a living soul in the vicinity for seven years.'<sup>73</sup>

Qaidu himself was involved in almost constant warfare with Qubilai until the latter's death in 1294. Qaidu had supported Arigh-Boke, Qubilai's brother and rival for the throne, and continued to further his own interests in both Chaghadaid lands and further afield. The four year succession war between Qubilai and Arigh-Boke had involved armies and different Chingisid princes from across the Mongol Empire, with cities like Dai Liu, Almalyk, Otrar and even Qara-Qorum itself suffering during this civil war.<sup>74</sup> Rashid al-Din sees Qaidu's wars as a continuation of this conflict, stating that 'on account of his rebellion, many Mongols and Tajiks have been annihilated, and flourishing land has been devastated.'<sup>75</sup> Naturally, Rashid al-Din's boss was a Toluid submissive to the Great Qa'an in Daidu, so he naturally saw Qaidu's actions as rebellious. There is no doubt that Qaidu and Qubilai's wars were particularly damaging to those territories which were disputed. After Baraq's death, Qaidu became the real power in the Chaghadaid Khanate, with the Chaghatai khan as his puppet. In 1282, Qaidu appointed Du'a, a son of Baraq, khan, and the two allied against the Toluids once again. Any pretender or rebel in both Yuan China and the Ilkhanate could get support from Qaidu and Du'a, which often turned internal disputes within the khanates into international affairs, dragging levies and the general population in. Uighuristan, Derbent, Diyarbekir and many cities on both sides of the Euphrates 'are fallow and unproductive.'<sup>76</sup> Those that were the frontier between Mongol khanates suffered the worst. Despite a brief peace in 1304, conflict continued on and off between the Chaghadaids and Yuan China until the latter's collapse.

Rashid al-Din's knowledge about conditions within the Ilkhanate make him an excellent source for the period. However, his position as main adviser and promulgator of the reforms which took place in Ghazan's reign mean we must be wary in his portrayal of how bad things were before. To this we should

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 517-22.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 526, 536.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 537.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 421-434.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 756.

also add the caveat that reforms and new laws are not enacted unless there is need for them, and that there was need is confirmed by other sources like Vassaf and Hamd -Allah Mostawfi. In general, Rashid al-Din is not often overtly critical of individual Ilkhans. Rather, the blame for the corruption and tax extortion is laid on ministers or the system itself. This can often lead to seeming contradictions. In the reign of Arghun, for example, Rashid al-Din states that ‘the people rested in the shadow of his clemency’,<sup>77</sup> but lambasts his Jewish vizier Sa’d al-Dawla for his beatings, torture and executions in pursuit of tax arrears.<sup>78</sup> While Hulegu is praised for some of his rebuilding work, such as at Quchan which had been destroyed by the Mongols’ first invasion, and his restoration of the canal system, administrative problems such as usury and corruption began to take hold from Hulegu’s reign, and continued despite the efforts of Hulegu, Abagha, and even the often criticised Geikhatu.<sup>79</sup> According to Rashid al-Din, the attempts of Hulegu and his successors to restore certain areas only made things worse in other provinces, and in the whole land ‘not one tenth of the realm is productive.’<sup>80</sup>

The problem was essentially one of supervision and control, presumably a common issue in pre - modern societies. Viziers made heavy taxation demands, at the behest of the Mongol rulers engaged in warfare at home and abroad, which led to repeated levying of several types of taxes, both Mongol and those which existed previously. The greater freedom allowed to tax collectors and regional governors meant that they could use whatever means necessary to get this taxation, while the lack of supervision entailed extensive embezzlement. The fact that funds weren’t getting through to the central divan usually led to another levy- Rashid al-Din says that the Mongol *qubchur* (livestock tax) was sometimes taken 20 or 30 times a year instead of 10. The matter became more complex as the Mongols often used their envoys as tax collectors. These envoys, catered for by the *yam* stations supported by those in the area, would take extreme liberties by billeting their forces in people’s homes and continuing to extort funds, causing many to flee their homes, further weakening the tax base.<sup>81</sup> Presumably during the more stable reigns of Hulegu, Abagha and Arghun, they were able to mitigate the issues somewhat, but the situation became more acute when several Mongol leaders vied for position. Ahmad and Arghun’s buying off of emirs and soldiers left the treasury essentially broke when Arghun eventually did take control.<sup>82</sup> After Arghun’s death, Geikhatu came to the throne and his generosity and failed experiment

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 577.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 567-8, 571-2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 482, 700.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.756.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 701-10.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 673.

with paper money led to another civil war, involving several Mongol rulers and emirs who taxed or plundered their power bases in order to gain support, with Ghazan eventually winning out.<sup>83</sup>

Of course, for Rashid al-Din, Ghazan is the antidote to all of these problems. His actions are those of a just Islamic ruler. He expels Buddhists and Zoroastrians, while limiting the privileges of Christians and Jews. He embarks on religious building projects and foundations. He limits the power of the army and corrupt ministers. He restores irrigation systems so that agriculture can flourish once again. He regulates taxes to a manageable level while still improving the state of the treasury. He reevaluates the coinage and sets the weights and measures to a rigid standard.<sup>84</sup> These actions were what was expected of an Islamic ruler, though there were some aimed specifically at the Mongol army and *yam* system. Ghazan sought to re-introduce the *iqta* system, which gave the Mongol army lands that they had to maintain. This aimed to prevent soldiers from destroying their own land for profit. He also limited the power of envoys much in the same way Mongke had done, trying to restore their credibility as agents of Ilkhanid power.<sup>85</sup> While these measures did cause improvement, they were limited, even as admitted by Rashid al-Din. Firstly, religious freedom, which had always been a significant plus point in the Mongol column, was now severely limited. Tax exemptions for the religious classes were now limited to Muslims.<sup>86</sup> Rashid al-Din also admits that Ghazan was limited in his attempts to control the Mongol army, as they were his core power base.<sup>87</sup> He also recognises that improvements were regional and that this could often detrimentally affect other areas.<sup>88</sup> His overall assessment of the Mongols, including his own bosses, is hardly as complimentary as many would make out, stating, 'during the days of the Mongols, [when] it is clear and patent to all how much strife, unrest, and disorder have occurred in every revolution.'<sup>89</sup> Even despite Ghazan's reforms, large areas of Islamic lands are 'fallow and unproductive'.<sup>90</sup> Rashid al-Din did have information through Bolad about China, so we will now turn to the Yuan realm to see how it compares.

Rashid al-Din seems to have the most information about Qubilai's reign. He notes that Qubilai was aware of China's wealth, and wanted to maintain and increase this. Part of this was fulfilled with the construction of Daidu, Qubilai's grand capital near modern Beijing. In order to connect this city to the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 584-5, 600-4.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 659, 673-6, 682-4, 706, 721-3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 718, 731-3.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 689.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 678-9.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 719, 756.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 756.

rest of China, he extended the Grand Canal to the capital. The *yam* stations were also established across the country. The infrastructure and amount of information contained at the library at Daidu impress Rashid al-Din, presumably explained to him by Bolad in depth.<sup>91</sup> However, there were significant problems with Mongol employees in China. The Mongols imported their administrators and many of the most able tax collectors were Muslims. The infamous Ahmad Fanakati was Qubilai's main revenue official and according to our author caused great anger and jealousy amongst the Chinese for his power and his ruthless efficiency. He was eventually assassinated, which coincided with Muslim persecution for several years. Muslim rites were banned and several officers put to death in quite gruesome ways, causing many Muslims to leave the country.<sup>92</sup> As well as outward conflicts with Qaidu and Du'a, Qubilai had to face several rebellions at home as well, with one of his generals Nayan turning against him and coordinating with Qubilai's enemies to the west. Another outbreak of rebellion took place in Lung-hsing, in former Song lands, which was crushed and the area plundered.<sup>93</sup> The Persian historian tells us that he has been denied greater information about Qubilai's successor Temur due to the wars with Qaidu and Du'a that saw the roads closed. He is aware of Qaidu's death in battle with Temur, but we get no further information on the state of affairs in Yuan lands.<sup>94</sup> Clearly there was a significant amount of knowledge of affairs in China within the upper echelons of the Ilkhanid court. More information about China will emerge from our European sources, so for now we will turn to life conditions in Persia according to our final source, Hamd-Allah Mostawfi.

Hamd-Allah was an accountant, so it is little surprise that he focuses on figures. Though a protégé of Rashid al-Din when a young man, he wrote much of his work 30 years or so after the vizier's death. In his *Nuzhat al-Qulub* he analyses the revenues of Iran as they developed over time. These statements concur largely with Rashid al-Din's assessment of the state of affairs in Iran over an extended period of time. Hamd-Allah says that there was around a 20% increase in Iranian revenues due to the reforms of Ghazan, but that these had dropped by more than a half due to the collapse of the Ilkhanid state and the coming and goings of armies that attended this uncertainty. The Ilkhanid revenues he compares to both Sassanian and Seljuq times, noting a huge drop. His great-grandfather apparently did have access to Seljuq documents, and for the Sassanian figures, Hamd-Allah quotes the 9<sup>th</sup> century Abbasid source Ibn Khurdadbih.<sup>95</sup> For areas around the western Asia, the Mongol invasions are given as the primary

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 440-4, 467.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 448-52.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 454.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 463, 469.

<sup>95</sup> Hamd-Allah Mostawfi, 33-4, 55.

reason for decreasing funds. The revenues of Arran and Mughan are shown as decreasing by around 90% from Seljuq times, with a figure of around 80% for the Sultanate of Rum. An 80% decrease is also noted for the provinces of Georgia and Abkhazia in the time of their native kings.<sup>96</sup>

Hamd-Allah praises the building works undertaken at Takht-i Sulayman by Abagha, Sultaniyya by Arghun, Tabriz by Rashid al-Din and his son Ghiyath al-Din, Ujan by Ghazan, and at Sultanabad by Oljeitu.<sup>97</sup> He highlights that efforts were made by Ghiyath al-Din, Oljeitu's vizier, to prevent the governors of Khurasan from embezzling funds, though he died before he could fully implement this.<sup>98</sup> However, for all of these efforts, elsewhere Hamd-Allah describes the effects of Mongol devastation. The town of Sarjahan had had 50 villages as dependencies which had all been ruined by the Mongols, though its proximity to Sultaniyyah did allow it to flourish once again.<sup>99</sup> His native Qazvin and Zanjan's walls were destroyed by the Mongols and never rebuilt. The towns of Sajas and Sahmvard were both reduced to the size of villages during the Mongol invasions.<sup>100</sup> The town of Kaghadh-Kunan had been reduced to a village then turned into a Mongol settlement.<sup>101</sup> The great city of Mosul, beautified by Badr al-Din Lulu, was in ruins- though he does not specify how this came about.<sup>102</sup> As previously noted, the city of Bamiyan had been completely depopulated, while Jurjan was also reduced to a very small number of people living in ruins. The famous observatory built by Nasir al-Din Tusi in Hulegu's time had fallen into ruin and not been restored as well.<sup>103</sup> Hamd-Allah's mix of praise and criticism of Mongol actions is typical of Persian historians, whose works have given us a great deal of information on the living conditions of the great majority under Mongol rule. Now we can turn to the topic that is so central to the idea of the Pax Mongolica, travel and trade conditions.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 91, 94-5.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 61, 69, 79-80, 83, 106.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 64, 67-8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 152-6, 88.



## 2.4 Travel and trade in the Persian sources

Much is made of the improvements in travel and trade which occurred under the Mongols. Analysis through our sources can give us some idea of the situation. There is significantly more information in Juvaini and Rashid al-Din on this topic than in Juzjani and Hamd-Allah Mostawfi, so the greater portion of this section will be dedicated to the former writers, though the latter shall not be ignored.

According to Juvaini and Juzjani, the Mongol encouragement of trade is noteworthy early on. Juvaini states that it was the Mongols' desire for fabrics which saw many Muslims heading east with the promise of riches. In order to facilitate this exchange, Chingis began guarding the highways and having the merchants given safe conduct to reach him. Despite complaining about the prices these merchants asked for their fabrics, he still buys all of their goods.<sup>104</sup> Juzjani and Juvaini confirm that it is Chingis' desire to establish trade relations with the Khwarazm-shah that sees him send the group of merchants who are put to death, sparking the Mongol invasion of Khwarazm. Rashid al-Din also states that the Khwarazm-shah had made similar moves to quell unrest and clear the roads of bandits and that Chingis asked him to continue doing this for the merchants coming from his lands.<sup>105</sup> The situation for merchants improved under Ogodei as well. Juvaini says that Ogodei began to sponsor *ortaq*s (merchant companies) and pay 10% over market price for all goods. No wonder then that merchants from all over the world began arriving.<sup>106</sup> The extension of the *yam* from Qara-Qorum to northern China and increased protection along the way is noted by Rashid al-Din. The construction of Qara-Qorum itself required a great deal of provisions from all around the empire, with Rashid al-Din giving the number of 500 carts of food and drink a day arriving there.<sup>107</sup> One anecdote compares the wares brought from the Muslim lands to those from China, listing items like textiles and garments from Baghdad and Bukhara, as well as Arabian horses. Much of this may have been plunder rather than trade goods however.<sup>108</sup> Juzjani says that in the city of Lohor many became merchants, got passes from the Mongols and began toing and froing between Khorasan and Turkistan.<sup>109</sup> Clearly business was good.

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<sup>104</sup> Juvaini, 78.

<sup>105</sup> Juzjani, 272, Juvaini, 79-80; Rashid al-Din, 233-4.

<sup>106</sup> Juvaini, 210, 214-6.

<sup>107</sup> Rashid al-Din, 328-9.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>109</sup> Juzjani, 1133.

The free-for-all which ensued after Ogodei's death must have seemed an opportunity for many merchants. Apparently princes and emirs issued their own *paizas* (tablets of authority) to all and sundry.<sup>110</sup> The uncertainty may have put off some merchants, but for those that were able to take the risk, the lack of oversight of their actions meant they could take advantage of the *yam* with impunity. The accession of Guyuk saw their risk pay off, as he continued to reward the merchants arriving at his court.<sup>111</sup> The same situation arose upon Guyuk's death as well, with several courts being set up by rival princes and regents, with Rashid al-Din saying that very little was done during the regency of Oghul-Gaimish except for dealing with merchants.<sup>112</sup> While Juvaini states that the roads were closed upon Guyuk's death, this must have been temporary as both authors confirm that messengers and tax collectors were sent out in greater force than ever, meaning the 'revenue for several years was exhausted.'<sup>113</sup> The deregulation which occurred even saw people forming *ortaq*s just to escape taxation demands.<sup>114</sup>

The accession of Mongke saw tighter restrictions being placed on merchants. While Mongke sought to reduce their ability to take advantage of the general population, he did not wish to chase them away. Juvaini notes that Guyuk and his family members had set up many agreements with merchants that had not been settled which Mongke paid out on.<sup>115</sup> Despite this, the free rein which *ortaq*s and merchants had held was over. All deals with *ortaq*s now had to be referred to the court. Merchants who had used post station horses and requisitioned from the population were now prevented from doing so. Merchants, who had also fulfilled roles as tax collectors and emissaries, were now designated only as merchants, without *paizas*, to separate them from imperial officials. As part of this, they were no longer permitted to make use of the *ulagh* (food levy) which had been a major inconvenience for those forced to support the merchants. Finally, they were also required to pay formal taxes to the state. While this had always been the case in principle, the strictures were tightened as many merchants had avoided these up till then.<sup>116</sup>

Under Qubilai, merchants certainly would have benefitted from the extension of the Grand Canal and the building of Daidu. Provisions would be required and now much of the Mongol east was

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<sup>110</sup> Juvaini, 255.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 259

<sup>112</sup> Rashid al-Din, 395.

<sup>113</sup> Juvaini, 512; Rashid al-Din, 395.

<sup>114</sup> Juvaini, 598.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 603-4.

<sup>116</sup> Juvaini, 599-600, 606; Rashid al-Din, 411-2.

connected by postal stations and canals. The after-effects of Ahmad's execution and Qubilai's restrictions on Muslims meant there was a decline in Muslim trade in China, though presumably this would have been an opportunity for those of other religions.<sup>117</sup> The continued warfare between Qaidu and Du'a and the Yuan after Qubilai's death meant that the roads between Iran and China had been closed.<sup>118</sup> Naturally, merchants may have chosen to use sea routes instead.

Further west, Rashid al-Din highlights the fact that merchant caravans passed between Iran and Chaghatay lands, though these were often used as cover for intelligence missions.<sup>119</sup> Dealing with banditry was a priority for the Ilkhans, however rogue groups of Mongol troops such as the Neguderi continued to threaten travel safety-in 1278 for example, they attacked Fars and Shiraz.<sup>120</sup> Another independent group, the Qaraunas, were active during the civil war between Ahmad and Arghun. The Kurds were always a threat on the roads, and Arghun had to deal with a group in 1286.<sup>121</sup> Hamd-Allah Mostawfi does state that Sultaniyyah and its environs benefitted greatly from foreigners migrating and trading there.<sup>122</sup> Beyond the disturbances to trade which must have accompanied the conflicts after Arghun's death, the paper money experiment undertaken by Geikhatu was a blow to trade. According to Rashid al-Din, the currency was not accepted even on pain of death, causing the trade within and to Tabriz to completely shut down until coinage was reintroduced.<sup>123</sup> Rashid al-Din's assessment of the situation pre-Ghazan mentions that due to the actions of fake Mongol envoys, travel and trade became quite dangerous. These men, with small private armies, were able to attack caravans and travellers, meaning that 'merchants ceased to come from Cathay and India.'<sup>124</sup>

Stability returned in Ghazan's reign, though early persecution of Christians and Buddhists and the expulsion of the latter must have caused much uncertainty for non-Muslim traders. Ghazan did later rescind harsh measures on Christians and Rashid al-Din talks of the great amount of wealthy foreigners who resided in Tabriz, partly due to the need to import fruit and grain from elsewhere.<sup>125</sup> He tried to deal with highway robbers by putting 10,000 soldiers on the roads to ensure safety, though Rashid al-

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 519.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 538-540.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 559, 566.

<sup>122</sup> Hamd-Allah Mostawfi, 61, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 584.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 715.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 684, 686.

Din admits that despite this 'a certain amount of security [was] regional.'<sup>126</sup> Ghazan's efforts at canal construction and sponsorship of shrines reinvigorated trade in the Kerbela region, while his new city of Ghazania provided caravanserais for merchants, attracting many from Anatolia and Europe.<sup>127</sup> The improvement of coinage and the standardisation of weights and measures certainly would have made trading enterprises easier as well. While we have little information of Oljeitu's reign in our sources, Hamd-Allah does note that he made great efforts to improve and measure the roads in the Ilkhanate.<sup>128</sup>

As we can see, though there were plenty of disturbances which affected trade routes and merchants themselves, the Mongols continued to try and facilitate trade as best they could throughout the lands they ruled. While none of our sources are traders, some, such as Juvaini, provide a substantial amount of information about the Mongol relationship to merchants. This topic will be addressed again at greater length when considering the European travellers who crisscrossed the Mongol Empire.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 719-20.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 683-4.

<sup>128</sup> Hamd-Allah Mostawfi, 160, 168.

## 2.5 Analysis

Between our four sources then we are given a picture of what Mongol conquest and rule looked like. In terms of what we can consider a 'Pax Mongolica' there is little to be said for it. While clearly at times there was a greater safety on the roads, particularly under the longer-lasting Mongol rulers of the united empire, this quickly evaporated during times of internecine Mongol warfare. The insecurity which arose after the death of a ruler often was compounded by competition for the throne and outside intervention. While this is quite typical for pre-modern societies, the scale of the Mongol empire meant huge conflict. Indeed, with the geographical scope and amount of peoples levied to join Mongol campaigns, these conflicts could be called early world wars. They were not consistent and there were times when travel was possible, but what is clear is that any Pax was both temporary and regional. The century-long free trade image as put forward by Abu-Lughod and others doesn't seem to bear up under scrutiny. Adam Silverstein in his work on postal systems is quite controversial in saying that during much of the later 13<sup>th</sup> century 'most scholars would agree that the roads during this period were generally unsafe.'<sup>129</sup> We do not need to take his word for it, as we have seen from our sources, there were many threats to security across Mongol lands after the dissolution of the empire. Silverstein notes that it took Qubilai's envoys five years to reach Abaqa because of the disruption.<sup>130</sup>

While under the united empire it is possible to speak of greater security of travel and trade, there can be little doubt who bore the brunt of supporting the postal network. Silverstein notes that while it allowed 'the unified Mongol lands to enjoy the fruits of their considerable efforts' it was in fact the peasantry who suffered from its existence.<sup>131</sup> While the *ortaqs* were able to make huge profits, they did so in a large degree by extorting and abusing the peasantry who had to support the *yam* stations. As we have seen, Ogodei, Mongke and Ghazan all made efforts to try and reform the system to protect the population from avaricious merchants who were largely unsupervised and unregulated. Anne Lambton points out that merchants who were extremely wealthy already would buy *muqata'a* (tax farming rights) from Ilkhans who were desperate for cash, on the chance that by tax farming they could improve their

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<sup>129</sup> A.J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007) 154-5.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 151.

profits.<sup>132</sup> With the lines blurred between what a merchant, envoy and administrator was, this allowed the merchants who took advantage of Mongol patronage to essentially institutionalise extortion while Mongol rule was in flux. The stronger rulers did attempt to curb the merchants' power, especially by separation of official functions from personal ones. These reforms were limited in several ways, as often the most suitable envoys were those men who had already travelled far abroad and had connections, but also rulers could use the merchants' own business acumen to attempt to further their financial ends as well. Ghazan, for example, sent the merchant Fakhr al-Din as his envoy to China in 1301 with 10 *tumans* (10,000 *dinars*) of treasury money to be traded. Fakhr al-Din was gone for 4 years and died on his return voyage, with no mention of what happened to royal funds.<sup>133</sup> Considering that this money would have been taken from taxation of the general population, even the famous reformer Ghazan, known for his efforts to lighten the Mongol load on the peasantry, played fast and loose in the game of long-distance trade. In this regard it is quite difficult to see how a Pax Mongolica could have benefitted all but the very few.

Even if we accept that merchants and traders had it better off during Mongol rule, we must remember what this rule was built upon. The answer is massive loss of life and oppressive rule. The charges laid at the Mongols' door by Igor Petrushevsky, Anne Lambton, Adam Silverstein, and Timothy May have yet to be fully answered by Mongol revisionists. Petrushevsky and Lambton focused largely on Mongol Persia through the sources I have used and others, and their conclusions are damning. Petrushevsky focuses on Iran's economic decline in this period, with irrigation and agriculture suffering and the excessive *yam* and taxation demands forcing the peasantry to flee. While he acknowledges that trade increased under the Ilkhanate, this did not counterbalance the damage to what was the essential basis of Iranian society, agriculture.<sup>134</sup> Anne Lambton analyses a greater amount of sources than Petrushevsky and still concludes that 'subjection and poverty, which had formerly been temporary and local, now became the common lot of the peasants.'<sup>135</sup> Even accepting some exaggeration on the part of Rashid al-Din in order to highlight his own, and Ghazan's achievements, by using other sources such as Vassaf she confirms that there was an overall economic downturn in Persia caused by both the primary Mongol invasions and subsequent corruption and extortion under the Ilkhans. Adam Silverstein concurs

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<sup>132</sup> A.K.S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Century*, (London, 1988) 335-40.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 341. Lambton has this information from the *Tarikh-i Vassaf*.

<sup>134</sup> I.P. Petrushevsky, 'The Socio-Economic Condition of Iran under the Il-khans', in (ed.) J.A. Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (1968) pp.483-537.

<sup>135</sup> Lambton, 142.

with the economic devastation which occurred in Persia, and particularly the campaigns of Hulegu, stating 'the best efforts of Mongol-friendly revisionism can do little more than put a positive spin on what was a bloody and destructive episode of Mongol history.'<sup>136</sup> Timothy May is generally more forgiving of the Mongols, but still highlights the demographic shifts which occurred due the massive amount of death they caused and the huge number of refugees who fled their invasions. His assessment does address many of the more positive aspects of the Mongol world, but his caveat is a warning to all Mongol apologists: 'it should never be forgotten that the Mongols had little regard for the lives of those they conquered.'<sup>137</sup>

In my opinion, these charges have yet to be answered by the revisionists. It is entirely laudable that greater study be made of the different impacts the Mongols had on their world, but these studies should not seek to overstate how their impact 'made up for' their atrocities. Cultural studies have abounded in recent years, and their results are fascinating. However, the work of art historians focuses only on the upper echelons of society. This has been acknowledged by many, including by the editors of one prominent collection, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*. Unfortunately, this limitation is not countenanced by some. David Morgan, in a piece featured in the follow-up work to the collection above, says that art historians are far ahead of historians in their acknowledgement of Mongol constructiveness. According to Morgan, historians have been too focused on uncritically regurgitating source material about battles and massacres.<sup>138</sup> However, even another author in this volume who discusses the beautifully illustrated Great Mongol Shahnama states that this work was meant for very few people and that reading into one manuscript produced for royalty makes it far too easy 'to underestimate the despotic unaccountable power of the Ilkhan as ruler.'<sup>139</sup> Art history can tell us much about the cultural developments in the Mongol world; what it cannot do is give us a picture of the effects of Mongol rule on the vast majority of the population. In his excellent work on cultural exchanges in the Mongol world, Thomas Allsen notes that 'there were few who recognised and personally realised the cultural possibilities presented by the Mongols trans-Eurasian state.'<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Silverstein, 153.

<sup>137</sup> T. May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London, 2012) 212.

<sup>138</sup> D. Morgan, 'The Mongol Empire in World History', in (ed.) L. Komaroff, *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, 2006) 426.

<sup>139</sup> R. Hillenbrand, 'The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran', in (ed.) L. Komaroff, *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, 2006) 166.

<sup>140</sup> T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, (Cambridge, 2001) 80.

In answer to Morgan's challenge however, I think we must be critical of our sources. We cannot accept the numbers that the authors give us as fact. The landscapes and economies of the cities they describe certainly would struggle to support the amounts of people they talk of. But in reading many medieval sources, numbers in battles or sieges often seem unrealistically or impossibly high, and the general idea is to convey the scale of the Mongol invasions. Indeed, using later authors, it is possible to confirm much of what Juvaini and Juzjani say about destruction of cities. Vassaf and the *Tarikhnama-i Herat* confirm that inter-Mongol warfare devastated Herat, Mazanderan, and Yazd.<sup>141</sup> As mentioned, Hamd-Allah Mostawfi confirmed that many of the cities and towns in Iran were still depopulated in his time. Ibn Battuta in the 14<sup>th</sup> century states that Balkh was still deserted. Lambton notes that a 15<sup>th</sup> century historian Zahir al-Din Marlushi said that Mongol devastation could still be seen in his day.<sup>142</sup> Timurid historians also speak on these issues. Hafiz-i Abru mentions that the Marv oasis became a desert swamp due to Mongol destructions of dams built there by the Khwarazmshahs.<sup>143</sup> Mir Dawlatshah Samarqandi states that the canals of central Asia had largely been closed since Chingis' invasions.<sup>144</sup> Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, who lived in Samarqand for some time, pointed out that the city walls in his day were much smaller than those under the final Khwarazmshah Jalal al-Din due to Chingis' destruction there.<sup>145</sup> Therefore, while it is possible to accept that our authors exaggerated figures, the fact that so many, from different regions, time periods and living under different rulers, confirm the devastation the Mongols caused- at least in the Islamic lands. For further information, we shall turn to non-Persian sources.

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<sup>141</sup> Lambton, note 41, 18.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>144</sup> Mir Dawlatshah Samarqandi, *Tadhkirat al-shu'ara*, in (trans.) W.M. Thackston, *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, MA, 1989) 61.

<sup>145</sup> Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, *Tamerlane or Timur the Great Amir* (trans.) J.H. Sanders (London, 1936) 17.



# Chapter 3- Pax Mongolica in the Near Eastern Sources

## 3.1 Source Background

The grouping of this selection of sources together stems from the desire to get a different perspective from our Muslim Persian authors. Once again, there are differences of time scale, location, and viewpoint. We will divide these sources into two sub-groups, generally Armenian sources and Syriac. These divisions arise from linguistic and religious distinctions between the two sets of authors.

The greater number of our sources come from Armenia. Armenia as a concept is somewhat difficult to grasp, as politically there were two Armenias: Greater Armenia- an area including modern-day Armenia, but far larger, and Cilician Armenia, now south-eastern Turkey. Culturally and religiously they were quite similar, with a significant amount of exchange between the two which had once been fully integrated. Politically, Cilician Armenia was a kingdom, while Greater Armenia, previously subject to Georgia to its north, had many princes with regional control. Once the Mongols moved into the area, Greater Armenia was conquered and its lands became directly ruled by the Mongols and later the Ilkhans. Cilician Armenia became a tributary state to the Mongols, avoiding any invasion and participating in Mongol and Ilkhanid campaigns as an ally.<sup>146</sup> Luckily we have sources from both areas, so viewpoints of both political situations are represented.

From Greater Armenia we have three sources. The most comprehensive is that of Kirakos Gandzakets'i's (1200-1271) which covers Armenian history up to the year 1267. He was a religious figure in the Armenian Church who served under another historian, Vanakan Vardapet, who also wrote a history of the Mongol invasions, though this was lost. Both men were captured by the Mongols in 1236 and served as secretaries to the Mongol general Molar at Tawush. Vanakan was ransomed by fellow Christians, and Kirakos escaped.<sup>147</sup> A fellow student of Vanakan was Vardan Arevelts'i, whose life and work cover the same time period as Kirakos'. Vardan was well travelled, going to Jerusalem, travelling and working in both Greater and Cilician Armenia, while also visiting Hulegu in 1264. He was involved in

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<sup>146</sup> B. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Leiden, 2011) 1-2.

<sup>147</sup> Dashdondog, 11; R. Bedrosian, 'Translator's Preface, *Kirakos Gandzakets'i's History of the Armenians* (trans.) R. Bedrosian, [https://archive.org/stream/KirakosGanjaketsisHistoryOfTheArmenians/Kirakos\\_Gandzaketsi#page/n3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/KirakosGanjaketsisHistoryOfTheArmenians/Kirakos_Gandzaketsi#page/n3/mode/2up) Accessed 08/08/16.

theological disputes with Roman Catholics, and was entrusted with the bolstering of Armenian faith in Greater Armenia.<sup>148</sup> Our third Greater Armenian source is Grigor Aknerts'i, also a student of Vanakan, who wrote his work in Cilicia. Very little is known about the man himself, but his work, *History of the Nation of Archers* is focused on Mongol-Armenian interactions up to 1273.<sup>149</sup>

With regards to our Cilician Armenian sources, they were restricted to Cilicia by duty. The first was that of Smbat Sparapet, the brother of King Het'um I. It covers much of Cilician history through other authors, but is original for the period of 1163-1272. An anonymous continuator took the chronicle down to the year 1331. He was sent as an envoy by his brother first to Batu and then on to Qara-Qorum, though this part of his work does not survive. He does describe some of his experiences in a letter to Henry I of Cyprus.<sup>150</sup> The other major Cilician source is that of Het'um, commonly known as Hayton. Het'um was a Cilician Armenian general and son of Prince Oshin, Lord of Korikos. He was a nephew to both King Het'um I and Constable Smbat. While a general, he fought for three decades in Mongol campaigns, attended the crowning of two Ilkhans, and had excellent sources, including 'histories of the Tartars.' Het'um later became a Roman Catholic monk in Cyprus after his retirement, though his religiosity was questioned by Cypriot sources. His work was commissioned by Pope Clement V and contains a chapter on planning a crusade against the Mamluks with Latin, Armenian, and Mongol cooperation. Written in 1307, it contains information up to 1304.<sup>151</sup>

Our last two sources emerge from two further different Christian backgrounds. The first is the Jacobite Syrian clergyman Gregory Abu'l-Faraj, or Bar Hebraeus, who wrote the 'Chronography'. His translator Ernest Budge claims that the work 'is in reality a chronological and historical encyclopaedia.'<sup>152</sup> He uses another source, the Chronicle of Michael the Great as a basis for his history up until 1196, and is original up until Bar Hebraeus' death in 1286. As his name suggests, his father was a Jew and a physician in the city of Malatyah (Melitene) on the Euphrates. He was born Yohannan, but later adopted the name Gregory, while at some point in his life gaining the Arabic name Abu'l-Faraj. His

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<sup>148</sup> Dashdondog, 14-15; R.W. Thompson, 'The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc'i', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol.43 (1989) 126-7.

<sup>149</sup> Dashdondog, 16.

<sup>150</sup> Dashdondog, 20-1; R. Bedrosian, 'Translator's Preface', *Smbat Sparapet's 'Chronicle'*, (trans.) R. Bedrosian [www.attalus.org/armenian/cssint.htm](http://www.attalus.org/armenian/cssint.htm) Accessed 12/08/16.

<sup>151</sup> Dashdondog, 21-24; R. Bedrosian, 'Translator's Preface', *Het'um the Historian's 'History of the Tartars (The Flower of the Histories of the East' compiled by Het'um the Armenian of the Praemonstratensian Order* (trans.) R. Bedrosian [www.attalus.org/armenian/hetumint.htm](http://www.attalus.org/armenian/hetumint.htm) Accessed 30/08/16.

<sup>152</sup> E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj, The Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus, Being the First Part of His Political History of the World* (trans.) E.A. Wallis Budge, Vol. I, (London, 1932) v.

father had originally planned to flee the city to Aleppo in fear of the Mongols, but was not able to. A Mongo general Shower took the city and fell ill, and was treated by Aaron, who then accompanied Shower to Antioch. Bar Hebraeus studied at Antioch and Tripoli, and became a bishop in the Syriac church in several successive cities, including Aleppo in 1253. He was elected Maphrian of the East in 1264 and in this role travelled to Mosul, Baghdad, Cilicia, Tabriz, and eventually Maragha, where he had access to the library there. He interacted with many of the important religious and political figures of the day, including the author of our second source, Rabban Sauma.<sup>153</sup>

Rabban Sauma was a monk of the Church of the East, or Nestorian.<sup>154</sup> An Onggud Turk from the area where Qubilai would build Khan Baliq, Sauma met his travelling companion and student Mark in 1260 in Shih-tzu ssu in the Fang Mountains.<sup>155</sup> Desiring to visit the holiest Christian and Nestorian sites, they wished to go to the Middle East, and Jerusalem. In 1275 they decided to go west, and travelled to Qubilai's capital of Khan Baliq to get funds to do so. Apparently this was given by both the Nestorian community and the Mongol government. They arrived into Persia around 1279.<sup>156</sup> Here they met the Patriarch of the Nestorian Church, Mar Denha. Prevented from going to Jerusalem because of the Mamluks, they were elected to high office in the Nestorian Church in Persia, with Rabban Sauma becoming Visitor-General, and Mark becoming the Patriarch or Catholicus of the whole Nestorian Church in 1281. Under the name Mar Yaballaha, he served until 1317. Rabban Sauma was sent to western Europe in 1287 by the Ilkhan Arghun, where he met with the Pope and the kings of England and France to discuss an alliance against the Mamluks between the Ilkhanate and Latin Christendom. With his mission fulfilled, he returned to Persia and continued to serve in the Nestorian Church until his death in 1294.<sup>157</sup> The work was continued by an anonymous author until the death of Mar Yaballaha. The work was originally composed in Persian, but unfortunately the original was lost and only a Syriac translation was found. The translator took many liberties with Sauma's work, and cut out much of the non-religious material. However, the life and background of Rabban Sauma and his companion make the work a fascinating source for the study of Mongol history.

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<sup>153</sup> Wallis Budge, v-xxx.

<sup>154</sup> While Nestorian is somewhat of a misnomer, it is used by contemporaries and modern historians, so for the sake of ease I shall proceed with that term.

<sup>155</sup> M. Rossabi, *Voyager from Xanadu: Rabban Sauma and the First Journey from China to the West* (London, 1992) 23, 34.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-6.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-4; E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China: Medieval Travels from China through Central Asia to Persia and Beyond* (trans.) Sir E.A. Wallis Budge, 36-7, 72.

## 3.2 Mongol destruction in the Near Eastern sources

Before the Mongols arrived in Armenia, we have little information about their campaigns in Persia from the Armenian sources, partly due to the speed of Jebe and Subedei's movements, meaning the Armenians were taken completely by surprise. Grigor Aknerts'i does mention that the Mongols took some of the Persian cities and all of their possessions en route to Armenian lands.<sup>158</sup> For further information we must turn to Bar Hebraeus. It is worth noting of course that Bar Hebraeus accessed Juvaini's account of the Mongol invasions due to his time at the library at Maragha. However, he also often disagrees with his sources when he has conflicting information and also would have had access to first-hand accounts of both conquerors and the conquered. He notes that at Utrar, only those who betrayed the city and the fighting men were killed.<sup>159</sup> At Bukhara, the troops were destroyed and the city was burned along with all those still left fighting, though the general citizenry were spared.<sup>160</sup> At Samarqand it was a different story, with those who betrayed the city to the Mongols being spared, and all those left in the city over the age of 20 being killed. The citizens of Urgench were also destroyed, apparently 100,000 of them.<sup>161</sup> In general, while less appalled than the Persian historians, Bar Hebraeus still summarises that the Mongols 'had committed horrible atrocities in all Persia.'<sup>162</sup> Those people that did escape either got lucky that the Mongols bypassed their area or fled further west. Elsewhere, he mentions that in their attacks on Cathay the Mongols took many cities, killed many people in them, and took countless people prisoner.<sup>163</sup> Batu is also described as having destroyed the populations of the Bulgarians and Scythians by the sword and ending their kingdoms.<sup>164</sup>

It is once the Mongols reached Armenia that the native authors go into overdrive. The first assault of Armenia and its neighbour Georgia took place in 1220, with the campaign of Subedei which had already torn through the Middle East in its pursuit of the Khwarazmshah. According to Kirakos, false

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<sup>158</sup> R.P. Blake, and R.N. Frye (eds.) 'History of the Nation of the Archers (The Mongols) by Grigor of Akanc: Hitherto Ascribed to Matak'ia the Monk', The Armenian text, edited with an English translation and notes by R.P. Blake and R.N. Frye, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 12 (Dec. 1999) Nos. 3 and 4, 293.

<sup>159</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 369.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

information that the Mongols were Christians, possibly spread by the Mongols themselves, preceded their attack, meaning that little resistance was organised. The Mongols, contrary to what many historians take as law, killed many who went to them peacefully, as well as those who resisted.<sup>165</sup> Vardan also mentions this attack, giving the number of Mongol soldiers as 20,000, a much more believable number than some of those used in the Persian sources.<sup>166</sup> Another effect of the Mongol invasions further east was to push Jalal al-Din further west. While Kirakos describes him as a wicked man who forced circumcision on the inhabitants of Tiflis, he describes the Mongols as signs of the Antichrist's coming stating 'the evils which afflicted all lands are more than can be related.'<sup>167</sup> One can take these for exaggeration, but Kirakos lived through both invasions, and his statements directly contradict George Lane, who declares without any primary sources to credit such a declaration that 'the ragged remains of the Khwarazmshah's army, led by the bandit king Jalal al-Din Mingburnu, inspired far more fear and loathing than did the disciplined Mongol troops.'<sup>168</sup>

Thus far, the lands of the Armenians and the Georgians had been subjected to only a brief Mongol invasion. Under Ogodei's rule, the Mongols returned to stay. The Mongol general in these parts was Chormaghun. The Mongols began a systematic reduction of the cities of the area, starting at Gandzak. Kirakos states that the inhabitants burned their own possessions in order to prevent the Mongols from getting them, and when the Mongols took the town, in rage at this act, killed man, woman and child. The city remained empty until the Mongols forcibly repopulated it 4 years later, though only with a few people.<sup>169</sup> The lands of Armenia and Georgia were divided up amongst the Mongol commanders, who were to capture those cities in their districts. Their goal was to quickly gain the submission of the Georgian and Armenian lords. Some realised quicker than others the consequences. Vardan states that the prince Vahram had been fleeing the Mongols but figured out that willing submission meant he would be spared. Promptly upon submission, he was reinstated with the lands that had been his before the Mongols' arrival.<sup>170</sup> Unfortunately, some cities did not get the

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<sup>165</sup> Kirakos, 166-7.

<sup>166</sup> Vardan, 213.

<sup>167</sup> Kirakos, 188-193.

<sup>168</sup> G. E. Lane, 'The Mongols in Iran', in (ed.) Touraj Daryaee, *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History* (Oxford, 2012) 251.

<sup>169</sup> Kirakos, 198-9.

<sup>170</sup> Vardan, 214-5.

message early enough, such as Shamk'or, which continued to fight, and was thus massacred and burned.<sup>171</sup>

The Mongols would accept nothing but complete surrender. The Georgian prince Awag, besieged at the fortress of Kayean, attempted to stave the Mongols off through giving them his own daughter as well as many goods. This method failed and the Mongols' demands became increased. A deal was struck in this siege whereby the inhabitants would give their horses and livestock in exchange for access to water. The Mongols agreed, and when the men came down with their families, they took whichever women they wanted and killed their husbands. Awag eventually caved and went to Chormaghun. After being chided for not coming to the general earlier, he is celebrated, feasted in typical Mongol fashion, given back his lands as a Mongol tributary, and is allowed to free many captives.<sup>172</sup>

Mongol campaigns continued. The city of Ani fought back and killed a delegation from Chormaghun. While the princes there were allowed to surrender and depart, the rest of the citizens were permitted no such mercy. All but a few artisans, women and children were slain, while the thousand churches of the city were looted. Unfortunately, the Mongols' 'surrender and live' policy was not strictly applied, which the city of Kars found out. Even those who did survive the Mongol attack on the city were soon taken into slavery by Seljuq forces from Rum.<sup>173</sup> This ruthlessness eventually gained the Mongols the submission of almost all of the key princes and nobles in Georgia and Armenia. Of their actions in these campaigns, Kirakos, who was captured by the Mongols at this time, is unrestrained in describing them: 'suckling children were hurled against the rocks, beautiful virgins were raped and enslaved'. The Mongols had no compassion- 'they pitied not a single mother's tears nor a single grey head, but went on punishing and killing as if enjoying themselves at a wedding or a drinking-bout.'<sup>174</sup> The princes' submission saved Georgia and Armenia from further direct attacks, but Mongol campaigning in the Middle East- now with Georgian and Armenian forces in tow- continued for decades.

Further south meanwhile, the Mongols pressed on through Iran and Iraq. Unfortunately for those in the area, this could mean being attacked multiple times, as the Khwarazmian Shah's forces continued to flee west. Some of the arbitrary cruelty that the Mongols perpetrated in these areas is recounted by Bar Hebraeus. In one campaign near the city of Arbil, the Mongols camped near a church

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<sup>171</sup> Kirakos, 204.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 218-220.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 221-2.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 201.

where some of the nearby villagers had fled for safety. One Mongol noble sat at each of the two doors of the church and when the villagers came out, one noble would let them go and the other would kill whoever came through his door, man, woman or child.<sup>175</sup> Clashes continued in Iraq, with Surmanrai being taken and destroyed. The Mongols briefly confronted the Abbasid Caliph's armies several times in 1238, but were not yet ready to attack Baghdad. Instead, the Mongols were building up to an assault on the Seljuq Sultanate of Rum.<sup>176</sup>

The *noyan* Baiju took over from Chormaghun and pressed the attack of Rum. Karin was the first city to be assaulted. While controlled by the Seljuqs, it had formerly been an Armenian city, so many Christians were there. Unfortunately the Mongols cared little for these differences and put everyone there to the sword. Monasteries in the surrounding countryside were attacked and looted as well.<sup>177</sup> Some cities in Rum surrendered, like Sebastia, and did not suffer, while others such as Erzinjan, and perhaps Caesarea, were captured after resisting and annihilated.<sup>178</sup> Bar Hebraeus follows Grigor in comparing the destruction in the Seljuq cities. Sebastia bought its freedom. At Caesarea, both nobles and free men were tortured and stabbed, while thousands were killed and the young men and women carried off. Erzinjan, which similarly did not surrender, was massacred and utterly destroyed. These actions finally saw the Seljuq Sultan Ghiyath al-Din become a tributary.<sup>179</sup> It was at this point that the Cilician Armenian king Het'um I decided to submit to the Mongols.

The interregna and Guyuk's short reign meant that there were no great Mongol offensives until Mongke sent Hulegu west against the Assassins and the Caliph in 1252. His protracted journey meant that it was not until 1256 that the Mongols began actively campaigning. According to Kirakos, Hulegu was permitted to remove the Mongols in the Caucasus so his troops could have the good pasturage, which forced them into Anatolia, where they proceeded to attack Seljuq cities once again, despite the Sultan being a Mongol tributary.<sup>180</sup> They then targeted the Assassins, and like our Persian sources, Bar Hebraeus states that all of them were put to the sword.<sup>181</sup> Almost all of our sources remark on the

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<sup>175</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 402.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 404-5.

<sup>177</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 307; Kirakos, 241. Kirakos states that the city was later rebuilt by order of the Mongols.

<sup>178</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 311-13; Kirakos, 245; Vardan, 216. There is some confusion here as Vardan states that Caesarea was spared slaughter as it surrendered quickly, while Grigor claims that the city was taken with much bloodshed as it did not surrender. Perhaps Vardan is comparing Caesarea's relatively merciful fate with that of Erzinjan.

<sup>179</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 407-9.

<sup>180</sup> Kirakos, 312.

<sup>181</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 424.

capture of Baghdad by Hulegu. Kirakos is our most direct source, as he was told by the Armenian prince Prhosh Xaghbakean of the events which the prince had witnessed firsthand. Hulegu asked the Caliph to submit firstly, and the Caliph insulted and provoked Hulegu. However, the citizens of Baghdad asked for peace and Hulegu granted this, but when they came out the soldiers took them away in secret and killed them. Once they took the city, they killed for 40 days, though the Christians were saved through the actions of Doquz Khatun, Hulegu's Christian wife. Naturally, Kirakos sees this as just comeuppance for all the evil done by Muslims to Christians.<sup>182</sup> Vardan and Kirakos state that Hulegu killed the caliph with his own hands, though Grigor Aknerts'i gives the more common trampled by Mongol soldiers story.<sup>183</sup> The historian Het'um, writing somewhat later, alleges that Hulegu put the Caliph in a room with all his treasures and told him to survive on that.<sup>184</sup> Constable Smbat, whose brother King Het'um I was a close ally of the Mongols, tells that Hulegu, after being insulted by the Caliph, threatened to kill all the Muslims in Baghdad. He gives us the lurid image of men and women being slain until the Euphrates ran red with blood.<sup>185</sup> Bar Hebraeus says that the Georgians were the most voracious in their slaughter of Baghdadis, and even bribery could not save the people there.<sup>186</sup>

Beyond Baghdad, the Mongols pushed into Syria. The cities of Harran and Edessa were spared, while at Serugh and Mabbugh the people were killed. Damascus also surrendered and was preserved. Not so for Aleppo, where Bar Hebraeus states that there was 'a slaughter like unto that of Baghdad, only more terrible'.<sup>187</sup> Even those Jacobite Christians who sheltered in a Greek church were slain. Kirakos claims that much blood was shed at Aleppo and that Hulegu began destroying it, but that once the Sultan Yusuf and his nobles, who had holed up in the citadel, submitted, the rest of the city was spared.<sup>188</sup> Once again, the Mongols broke their 'surrender and live' rule at Harim, where Bar Hebraeus claims that the citizenry asked for a peace with Hulegu. Hulegu promised this, but suspicious of the Mongols' beliefs, they asked for the Muslim governor of Aleppo, Fakhr al-Din, to swear instead and upon receiving this oath, surrendered. Hulegu, angered by their lack of trust, had all those who surrendered killed, and even Fakhr al-Din for good measure.<sup>189</sup> Even though the Mongols were now allied with the Christian Armenians and Georgians, they as yet did not refrain from attacking Christian cities either.

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<sup>182</sup> Kirakos, 317-9.

<sup>183</sup> Vardan, 217; Kirakos, 317; Grigor Aknerts'i, 335.

<sup>184</sup> Het'um, 47.

<sup>185</sup> Constable Smbat, 110.

<sup>186</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 431.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 435-6.

<sup>188</sup> Kirakos, 324.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 436.



Christians from the city of Sidon, ecstatic at no longer being under Muslim rule, attacked several villages and killed some Mongols. Ket-buqa, Hulegu's Christian general in Syria, immediately sacked Sidon, destroying part of its walls and killing all he could find there, though most had already fled.<sup>190</sup> The defeat at Ayn Jalut saw Ket-buqa killed and the Mongol offensive stalled, as Hulegu had to turn back east in response to the death of Qa'an Mongke and the conflict with Berke of the Qipchaq Khanate to the north. The separate khanate of the Ilkhans came into existence, with Georgia and Greater Armenia under direct Mongol rule, and Cilician Armenia as a vassal and ally.

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<sup>190</sup> Het'um, 51.

### 3.3 Life under the Mongols in the Near Eastern Sources

Life under Mongol rule usually began quite abjectly. Kirakos gives us a rare glance into what it was like to be captured and enslaved by the Mongols. When the commander Molar besieged and took the cave that Vanakan, Kirakos, and those refugees who had joined them there were hiding in, the older ones who could not travel were put in a monastery. Kirakos and the younger priests were taken with the Mongol army, barefoot and driven hard, with regular beatings and harassment. When they stopped, the group were forced to perform their bodily functions in the small buildings they were all housed in. Vanakan, a more important figure in the area, was ransomed by some fellow Christians, but Kirakos was of great use to the Mongols in reading and writing letters, so was forced to stay. Many of the priests with him attempted to flee, and to show the remaining ones what would happen if they did, the Mongols killed two of them in front of the rest. Kirakos was eventually able to escape and return to his old monastery.<sup>191</sup> This is quite a personal recollection, but gives some idea what being a prisoner of war was like under Mongol rule.

For the princes who surrendered to the Mongols, they must have been quite surprised at their early treatment. An interesting case in point was the prince Awag. After the initial siege at Kayean which saw him give his daughter to the Mongols, he submitted. Despite seeing many people die as a result of Mongol trickery, Awag was wined and dined by the Mongol general Chormaghun, who even allowed him to have special food prepared for him. He was honoured by Chormaghun, while his lands were given back to him and protected from further Mongol attacks. His new influence allowed him to ransom many Armenian captives from the Mongols. In order to have his rule confirmed, Awag had to travel to the Qa'an. He was confirmed in his lands and given a wife, as well as support from the Mongols in ruling. His example was soon followed by many of the other nobles in the area.

However, things soon became more difficult for Awag. Mongol demands on him became excessive, including forced requisitioning of horses and pack animals. There still appeared to be a great deal of freedom for the Mongol troops and commanders, with several impinging on Awag. Tension mounted when a lesser Mongol called Joj-Bugha found Awag lacking in respect and beat him. Awag prevented his servants from attacking the man, but was forced into exile with the Georgian queen Rusudan. While the Mongols professed friendship and asked him to return, his lands were given to his

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<sup>191</sup> Kirakos, 210-12.

brother Shahanshah and many of his goods taken by the Mongols. The khan however restored Awag, and he was entrusted with treating with Rusudan in order to get her to submit to Mongol rule, which he did successfully. Awag thus became a loyal Mongol subject, with a significant amount of local influence. While he and other Georgian and Armenian lords were not able to save the Christians of Karin or other cities, they did bring back many of the Christian captives as well as many gospels which had been found at the city. Awag's loyalty to the Mongols was tested by a revolt of the Georgian princes, but he reported the rebellion to them and thereby saved himself and his lands.<sup>192</sup> Awag's success in mediating between the Mongols and Armenians made him an admirable man in Kirakos' eyes, though for many betraying Christians to pagan overlords must have been hard to swallow. The Mongols did not always make things easy for their subjects either.

The reign of Guyuk seems to have been particularly onerous for the Georgians and Armenians. The tax collector Bugha came to Georgia and Armenia and was ruthless in his methods of collecting, even with Mongol troops. One Armenian prince, Hasan Jalal, was beaten in front of the court, while his fortresses were demolished and his goods taken. Only Awag was able to confront Bugha and back him down. The fate of Georgia at this time was also decided. Its queen, Rusudan, had been driven from pillar to post by the Mongols, and both her son and her nephew held hostage by them. Both the Mongol general Baiju and the Jochid khan Batu exerted pressure on Rusudan to submit to them. Caught in the middle of this, Rusudan took her own life. Guyuk then sent for both her son and nephew, both named Dawit. The rule of Georgia was split between the two, and its treasury split into three parts, with a third going to the Mongols which included the throne and crown of the Georgian king. The two kings were essentially played off each other and rendered powerless.<sup>193</sup> It was these actions, along with more intense Mongol taxation, which saw a revolt of the Georgian princes occur in 1249. Grigor Aknerts'i states that the normal Mongol taxes such as the *mal*, *tayar* and *qalan* were taken, but that further demands of items such as gold cloth and horses were too much for the princes.<sup>194</sup> Kirakos claims rather that the Georgian princes were taking advantage of their own subjects, extorting from them despite the Mongol attacks, and in their pride decided to revolt. The Mongols imprisoned the Georgian king and princes, but attacked their districts, as well as those which had not rebelled, and killed many.<sup>195</sup> Presumably the Georgians had sought to take advantage of the interregnum in Mongol rule and the weakness of their own kings to reassert their own authority.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 217-220, 225-6, 229, 241-2, 267-9.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 260-4.

<sup>194</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 321.

<sup>195</sup> Kirakos, 267-9.

With the accession of Mongke, as has been noted previously, the emir Arghun was sent out to take a census. The Armenian sources give quite a different picture of this than the Persian writers, especially Juvaini, whose patron was Arghun. Grigor claims that the taxes were impossible to bear, and put on every man between 15 and 60. Those who tried to escape were beaten and tortured. Het'um was able to intercede for Cilician Armenia, though his concern for Greater Armenia accomplished nothing.<sup>196</sup> Kirakos puts the age at which taxes were exacted even lower, to 11 years old. He states that the Mongols 'demanded the most severe taxes, more than a man could bear; and people became impoverished.'<sup>197</sup> Those who failed to pay were beaten, tortured, and had their children taken as payment. In this enterprise, they were assisted by the Armenian princes. Only the clergy were spared from these exactions.<sup>198</sup> Het'um glosses over these events in his work, only discussing the treaty made between Het'um I and Mongke for Cilician Armenia. He claims that all Christians, whether secular or clergy, were exempted from taxation, though we can see that this was clearly not the case.<sup>199</sup> There is a slightly confusing section in Grigor's account that refers to Mongke's son Xul,<sup>200</sup> who came to Armenia and proceeded to torture and kill clergy, including one Step'annos, who was roasted to death after a Mongol chieftain claimed Step'annos had poisoned him. Indeed, Grigor states that until Hulegu's instalment as commander, many Mongol chieftains, some related to Berke, acted on their own, doing what they willed. Hulegu has Quli and others put to death, causing enmity between him and Berke.<sup>201</sup>

Once the greater Mongol empire dissolved, the Armenians and Georgians were key figures in support of the Ilkhanate; Cilician Armenia as an ally and vassal, and Greater Armenia and Georgia contributing taxation and troop levies for Ilkhanid wars. When facing long-time Muslim enemies, such as the Seljuks, one notes that this military support was wholeheartedly given. Het'um claims that Mongke's alliance with King Het'um had several provisions in this regard, with the Holy Land being given to Cilicia should it be captured and that lands previously taken from them by the Seljuqs would be restored to them.<sup>202</sup> Clearly King Het'um saw an opportunity to improve Cilician fortunes through Mongol support. In the short term, these goals looked realistic. Cilician Armenia did grow and take back lands held by the Seljuqs, while Hulegu and Ket-buqa's moves into Syria and Palestine started off brightly. Unfortunately,

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<sup>196</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 325.

<sup>197</sup> Kirakos, 299.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 299-300.

<sup>199</sup> Het'um, 45.

<sup>200</sup> Identified by Dashdondog as the Jochid prince Quli, Dashdondog, 153.

<sup>201</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 327-9, 337-9.

<sup>202</sup> Het'um, 44-5.

through supporting the Mongol conquests there, the Cilicians gained themselves a mortal enemy who would eventually wipe out the kingdom; the Mamluks.

King Het'um eventually realised he was caught between a rock and a hard place. In 1266, the Mamluk Sultan Baybars came to the borders of Cilicia to treat with him. According to King Het'um's brother Smbat, Baybars wished for peace, but also for some fortresses on the border. Het'um now faced a difficult choice. Turn over the fortresses and avoid immediate attack, but incur the wrath of the Mongols, or take the risk of facing the Mamluks. After seeing the type of devastation the Mongols had wrought elsewhere, Het'um decided the Mamluks were the lesser of two evils and decided to face them. This decision would come at great personal and political cost for Het'um. His forces, under his sons Lewon and T'oros and down to two-thirds of their normal strength due to Cilician commitment to a Mongol campaign elsewhere, were roundly defeated. T'oros was slain, Lewon was captured, as well as our author Smbat's son.<sup>203</sup> Grigor implies that in his grief, Het'um became quite useless, causing some of the Armenian princes to revolt, though he eventually returned to the throne and ransomed his son's life from Baybars.<sup>204</sup> During this time, the Mamluks attacked Cilicia several times, doing much damage. Bar Hebraeus alleges that Seljuqs in the Mongol forces looted Cilicia after retaking those areas that the Mamluks had won.<sup>205</sup> Het'um is in no doubt who was to blame for Cilicia's fate. He claims that Abagha repeatedly refused to aid King Het'um as he was always too busy warring with his neighbours- 'thus forsaken, the Armenian King sent to the Sultan of Egypt to negotiate with him.'<sup>206</sup>

After Het'um's death, his son Lewon continued to struggle with the Mamluks. Smbat states that after his confirmation by Abaqa, he was given 20,000 troops to defend his lands against them.<sup>207</sup> According to Het'um, another Mongol failure was the cause of a significant defeat for the Armenians. Abagha's general Mongke-Temur led an attack on Syria in 1281/2 but at the battle of Homs fled, although the Georgian and Armenian troops had been successful in driving back the enemy on the wings. Mongke-Temur's flight left the Christian troops with a long trek through hostile territory while the Mamluks constantly harried them, causing King Lewon to lose a great many men.<sup>208</sup> Het'um himself experienced frustration with Mongol command, as he was present during the Mongol commander Qutlugh-shah's invasion of Syria. Apparently due to Qutlugh-shah's poor planning, many Mongols,

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<sup>203</sup> Smbat, 117-8.

<sup>204</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 357-71.

<sup>205</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 446.

<sup>206</sup> Het'um, 53.

<sup>207</sup> Smbat, 120.

<sup>208</sup> Het'um, 57.

Georgians and Armenians were drowned when the Mamluk sultan flooded the plain of Damascus.<sup>209</sup> These experiences lead Het'um to be quite pessimistic about the Mongols' ability to cooperate with Christian forces, suggesting instead that the Christians should ally with them but never rely on them tactically, as they might do damage to the Christian forces.<sup>210</sup>

Beyond Cilician Armenia, Georgia and Greater Armenia suffered from the war between the Ilkhanate and the Qipchaq Khanate. Both were right in the middle of the war path, and must have been in dire straits when the Mongol armies traversed the area. These wars did not just involve Mongol troops, as Kirakos states that they mustered troops from all over to fight, with many men dying in the encounters between 1261-1266.<sup>211</sup> The conflict with Baraq also spilled over into Georgia and Armenia, with one Teguder, a Chaghadaid, provoked into rebelling against Abaqa. According to Grigor Aknerts'i, he had 40,000 troops, and pillaged and destroyed villages and monasteries. The Georgians and Armenians complained to Abaqa and willingly joined in his suppression of Teguder.<sup>212</sup> We have little later information on war with the Qipchaq Khanate, as our later authors are predominantly Cilician Armenians who naturally focused on their greater immediate threat, the Mamluks. We can assume that Georgia and Greater Armenia must have dreaded any renewal of hostilities between their overlords and their enemies to the north, considering the demands that were placed on those areas through which Mongol armies travelled.

The wars of the Ilkhanate therefore affected Georgia and Greater Armenia in different ways than it did Cilician Armenia. For the Cilicians, there was a genuine chance of defeating the Mamluks and seeing their Christian kingdom ruling over the Holy Land. Thus, while they often suffered from Mamluk attacks and lack of Mongol protection, they held common interests with the Mongols. For the Georgians and Armenians, their role was largely that of military support - manpower, provisions and funds. They were not able to increase their own lands and they were not independent. Perhaps this is why they revolted on several occasions. Kirakos states that the Georgian king Dawit had given so much in support of the Mongols that he could no longer afford to do so and fled. Hulegu sent the Emir Arghun to bring him back to heel, with the area once again being attacked by the Mongols. Many Georgian nobles were put to death while the Catholicosate at Atsghor and the mausoleum of the Georgian kings at Gelat'i were

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Book IV.

<sup>211</sup> Kirakos, 351-2.

<sup>212</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 375.7.

destroyed.<sup>213</sup> The Mongols would brook no rebellion in their lands, but clearly Georgia and Greater Armenia did not benefit in any way from their wars as the Cilicians did.

Beyond their wars and suppression of rebellion however, we need to consider how our sources viewed life under the Ilkhans. Hulegu generally receives a good review in the Armenian sources, though perhaps not always for the right reasons. Vardan met him and held several conversations with him, both publicly and privately and relates his benevolence and wisdom. The topics were religious, and Vardan hoped to convert him. According to Vardan, both he and his Christian wife Doquz Khatun were greatly mourned by Christians who had been supported by them, a statement echoed by Bar Hebraeus.<sup>214</sup> Grigor called him a 'great shedder of blood, but he slew only the wicked and his enemies.'<sup>215</sup> One can almost sense his delight in the persecution of Muslims that he claims Hulegu enacted; namely, taking pigs as taxes from the Armenians and forcing Arabs to tend to them and eat them, decapitating those who did not. Grigor does praise him for his rebuilding work in devastated areas as well. For some Georgians and Armenians, they became part of Hulegu's *keshig* (household guard), meaning that they would be close in his confidence and gain the most from his successes.<sup>216</sup> Kirakos, however, is less than impressed. Hulegu's campaigns called for further levies, and on top of the *mal* and *qubchur* taxes which Arghun had taken, Hulegu also took the *t'aghar* (in this case a kind of war tax) which included grain, wine, money and livestock. Those who could not pay had their children taken from them. These campaigns were joined by many from Batu's *ordu*, who came through Georgia and Armenia requisitioning and plundering as they went. Kirakos also mentions Hulegu's building work, though again, this is not a positive. In constructing a city on the Darhni plain as his summer residence, Hulegu once again levied taxes and many involved in the construction died through overwork and dangerous conditions.<sup>217</sup>

Despite his ineffectiveness in preventing Mamluk attacks on Cilician Armenia, Abaqa is praised in our sources. Bar Hebraeus says he was 'beloved by all the peoples who were under his dominion.'<sup>218</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i states that 'in the days of his Khanate there was abundance of all things throughout the land.'<sup>219</sup> Het'um sees him as wise, but claims that while Hulegu had wanted to become a Christian,

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<sup>213</sup> Kirakos, 326-330.

<sup>214</sup> Vardan, 220-2; Bar Hebraeus, 444.

<sup>215</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 343.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 343-5.

<sup>217</sup> Kirakos, 310-11, 333.

<sup>218</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 445.

<sup>219</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 353.

Abaqa did not and maintained his idolatry.<sup>220</sup> Perhaps Het'um here made a difference between the two in that Hulegu's wife Doquz was an active supporter of Christians, while Abaqa did not have such a figure influencing him. Bar Hebraeus and Het'um disagreed on the Ilkhan Teguder Ahmad. Bar Hebraeus calls him a friend of the Christians who established peace between the Ilkhans and Egypt, though he was later accused of being incapable of ruling by the other Mongol princes.<sup>221</sup> Het'um however, laments Teguder's conversion, as he began to force other Mongols to convert, as well as to persecute and banish Christians and destroy churches in Tabriz. Linked to this was his peace with the Mamluks, which Het'um would have clearly seen as a betrayal of the Cilician Christians.<sup>222</sup> Rabban Sauma also states that Teguder persecuted Christians, largely due to two envious bishops who told him that Rabban Sauma and Mar Yaballaha had written to Qubilai to back Arghun. While Teguder imprisoned them, they were later acquitted and restored to their positions. Sauma claims that Teguder wished to set himself up as the Caliph in Baghdad.<sup>223</sup>

We have more information about the Ilkhan Arghun. Het'um shows Arghun as a counterbalance to Teguder, restoring Christian churches and wanting to attack the Holy Land but died too early.<sup>224</sup> Rabban Sauma also says that he 'loved the Christians with his whole heart.'<sup>225</sup> Rabban Sauma himself was made director of the church which accompanied Arghun's camp.<sup>226</sup> Christians certainly took advantage of Bar Hebraeus asserts that Arghun was merely returning to the ways of his forefathers and turning away from Islam. His administrators Bugha and Arok are accused of embezzlement and extortion however, and under the supervision of a Persian lawyer Abd al-Momin, many of those who had served these two were beaten, tortured and killed, including the governor of Arbil, Taj al-Din.<sup>227</sup> This seems to be an effort to try to prevent abuse and extortion by Mongol officials in the Ilkhanate. Abd al-Momin was accused of being in allegiance with the Mamluks and killed, replaced by the Jewish official Sa'd al-Dawla. While this man was particularly attacked in Persian sources, Bar Hebraeus is not as accusatory. He claims that the Muslims instead became angry as Arghun decreed that a Muslim should no longer be in administrative power.<sup>228</sup> While this is doubtful, there was certainly a backlash against Jews after

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<sup>220</sup> Het'um, 52.

<sup>221</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 467, 471.

<sup>222</sup> Het'um, 59.

<sup>223</sup> Rabban Sauma, 158-163.

<sup>224</sup> Het'um, 61.

<sup>225</sup> Rabban Sauma, 165.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 198-9.

<sup>227</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 474, 478, 480-2.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 484.



Arghun's death, with Sa'd al-Dawla and many Jews killed after Arghun's death. Religious disputes such as this were apparently common according to Bar Hebraeus, with attacks and retaliations between Christians and Muslims occurring throughout Arghun's reign in Arbil and Mosul.<sup>229</sup>

For the short reigns of Geikhatu and Baidu, as well as the interregnum we have bits and pieces of information. Geikhatu, much maligned by the Persian sources, fares little better in the Christian ones. Bar Hebraeus claims that his drunkenness and debauchery made him hated by all of his administrators and something very similar is stated in Het'um. His repeated tax exactions were a failure, leading to his switch to paper money, the results of which we have already seen.<sup>230</sup> Interestingly, Rabban Sauma says nothing of this. Perhaps his Syriac editor removed this, but there is plenty in his work in praise of Geikhatu. He was apparently generous, just and supportive of all faiths, and supported Rabban Sauma's desire to build a church at Maraghah.<sup>231</sup> It was perhaps his personal support of Sauma and Mar Yaballaha which got him this positive assessment, not found in any other sources. Baidu is shown by Bar Hebraeus to flip-flop between Christianity and Islam to please those groups in their turn, though generally he did revere Christians. Het'um claims that Baidu built Christian churches and it was because of supporting the Christians that his Muslim forces abandoned him when he faced Ghazan. Rabban Sauma also portrays Baidu as a victim of betrayal who had honoured Christians previously.<sup>232</sup>

For the reign of Ghazan, we have quite a different picture than that given to us by our Persian sources. Under the influence of his commander Nawruz, Ghazan issued decrees for the persecution of those of other religions. Churches were destroyed in Tabriz and Baghdad, Jews and Christians were made to wear distinctive clothing or marks to distinguish them from Muslims, and Buddhists were forced to convert or were exiled. King Het'um II was able to alleviate some of the destruction of Christian churches and eventually Ghazan went back on these measures, even allowing the Christians to once again be free from taxation.<sup>233</sup> Het'um notes that at first Ghazan did persecute Christians, but then went back on this once he was more confident in his rule. However, according to the continuator of Rabban Sauma, these persecutions were at times reinstated, with Christians being slain in Baghdad and the girdle and poll-tax being reintroduced. Friendly relations between Ghazan and Mar Yaballaha were restored, and Ghazan seems to have done much to firmly establish this friendship, showing extreme

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 475-6, 484-7, 491.

<sup>230</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 494-7; Het'um, 61.

<sup>231</sup> Rabban Sauma, 201-8.

<sup>232</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 505; Het'um, 62; Rabban Sauma, 206-9.

<sup>233</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 506-7; Rabban Sauma, 213, 221.

generosity toward the Catholicos.<sup>234</sup> We have less information about the reign of Oljeitu, but the continuator of Rabban Sauma gives a long description of the siege of Arbil under his reign. The passage is confusing and awash with statements about the foul Hagarites (Muslims), so it can be difficult to assess what happened. Seemingly, Arbil went into rebellion under the influence of the Kurds, and Mar Yaballaha, who was there, was also accused of rebellion. The Mongols took it back, and despite assurances to protect the Christians living there, killed them when they surrendered. The city was massacred, though the Catholicos was kept on. Elsewhere Oljeitu was praised for his treatment of Mar Yaballaha and the Christians, so the author largely blames his emirs, who were surely acting on his command. After this unsavoury affair, Mar Yaballaha resigns, 'disgusted with the service of the Mongols.'<sup>235</sup> None of our sources continue into the reign of Abu Said.

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<sup>234</sup> Het'um, 62; Rabban Sauma, 239, 251-2.

<sup>235</sup> Rabban Sauma, 258-300.

### 3.4 Travel and trade in the Near Eastern sources

We do not have a great deal of information on this topic from our sources, as most of them spoke little of trade. Some of them travelled extensively; Rabban Sauma all over the Mongol Empire and beyond and Bar Hebraeus and Vardan throughout the Middle East. Unfortunately, the first ever travel account of someone from China going to Europe is extremely lacking in detail, primarily due to Rabban Sauma's translator's priorities. The translator focused almost entirely on religious matters, and gives us nothing like the account of Marco Polo, for instance. Vardan is similarly lacking in any great detail, despite having travelled to Jerusalem. Constable Smbat's account of his journey to Batu and then to Qara-Qorum is unfortunately not extant. However, between our various sources we can give some idea of the situation as it developed.

The first information we have is from Bar Hebraeus, though he merely repeats Juvaini with regards to Chingis' relationship with merchants. He also highlights Chingis' decrees regarding road safety, though again, there is little to be added on that topic.<sup>236</sup> He does mention that during the Mongol invasions of the Middle East in 1235/6 that in the country around Sinjar, a great camp of merchants on their way to Syria was obliterated.<sup>237</sup> Being a merchant therefore did not always save you from the Mongols.

With regards to Armenia, we have information from Kirakos, who states that the Catholicos of the Caucasian Armenians, Nerses, submitted to Chormaghun's wife Elt'ina. She then gave him Mongol guides who took him through his own dioceses, which apparently neither he nor his predecessors had been able to do due to 'the bloodthirsty and bestial nation of Tachiks.'<sup>238</sup> The Cilician Armenian Catholicos Konstandin saw this as an opportunity to harangue the eastern Armenians for their sins, sending Vardan with an encyclical letter to all of the major cities of Greater Armenia and to restore the tomb of the apostle Thaddeus. His agent Yovsep had to appeal to a Mongol *noyan* called Anagurak, who was happy to help. He improved the roads and commanded that no pilgrims to the area be harmed.<sup>239</sup> Clearly Anagurak saw the benefits of having a holy site in within his domains. The refore we can see that

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<sup>236</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 356-7.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>238</sup> Kirakos, 253-4.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 256-260.

deals with each Mongol commander had to be struck in order to traverse his lands, unless the traveller had a *paiza* from Chormaghun or the Khan overriding these more local concerns.

Grigor claims that the *yam* stations in the days of Hulegu and Mongke were intended as restoration projects, with those sent to destroyed areas having to rebuild. These people did not have to pay any taxes, but instead supported Mongol travellers.<sup>240</sup> Kirakos believed that both the Mongols and their Armenian princely tributaries benefitted greatly from merchants in the area, though once again, this damages the land overall. Apparently due to this collusion, prices went up for the general populace, and there were bitter complaints about this.<sup>241</sup> Vardan asserts that there were religious travellers from many regions who visited the court of Hulegu and Doquz Khatun, gaining favour and support. Travel safety could depend on the region however. King Het'um I had to travel in disguise through Seljuk lands on his way to Mongke. Apparently there was still resentment against him for submitting to the Mongols, despite the fact that both Cilician Armenia and the Seljuq Sultanate of Rum were Mongol tributaries and allies. Het'um was given a *paiza* by Mongke and travelled with freedom through Muslim lands in Central Asia.<sup>242</sup> Bar Hebraeus confirms the regional variation in this safety, saying that in 1258 the city of Melitene was being starved out by Turcoman highway robbers preventing anything from entering the city.<sup>243</sup>

In the days of the divided Mongol empire and intermittent internecine Mongol warfare however, things became more difficult for travellers. Grigor states that Teguder (the aforementioned rebel supported by the Chaghadaid Baraq) targeted caravans, watching the roads and plundering merchants travelling between cities.<sup>244</sup> Rabban Sauma and Mar Yaballaha were forced to stay in Khotan for 6 months due to the war between Qubilai and his neighbours. Apparently all the roads had been cut. Eventually they made it to Qaidu's territories, and despite having received assistance from Qubilai, Qaidu also permitted them to continue their onward journey.<sup>245</sup> In 1280, when Sauma's companion Mark was made Metropolitan of China, he could not return there because the roads had been cut off due to warfare between the Mongol khanates.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 345.

<sup>241</sup> Kirakos, 300.

<sup>242</sup> Kirakos, 301-5; Smbat, 108-9.

<sup>243</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 427.

<sup>244</sup> Grigor Aknerts'i, 375.

<sup>245</sup> Rabban Sauma, 139-140.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 148.

Within the Ilkhanate, there were many threats to travel safety and trade. During Abagha's reign, Vardan was robbed and his possessions, including his *Historical Compilation* were taken, then sold on to merchants, who sold it back to Vardan in a market at Tiflis.<sup>247</sup> Rabban Sauma notes that the roads in Georgia were unsafe for them to travel on due to murders and robberies.<sup>248</sup> Bar Hebraeus states that Syrian robber bands came flying through the western borderlands of the Ilkhanate in 1273. In Ayas, in Armenia, people were subjected to Egyptian attack, fled, and were then found by Frankish highway robbers who took all their possessions. In 1276 a great caravan of Christian merchants travelling from Cilicia to Rum were attacked by Turkoman horsemen, and 80 of them were killed, with a huge loss of money. While the Mongols came to restore order, they quickly departed again, allowing the Turkomans to gain strength. Constable Smbat faced them and was killed.<sup>249</sup> A Turcoman group also put to death the Armenian bishop Mar Sargis and his party near Arzinjan, after asking for his *yarligh* from the Mongols.<sup>250</sup> Bar Hebraeus also mentions the Qaraunas, the rebel Mongols who often raided the Ilkhanate, coming into Shiraz district in 1279.<sup>251</sup>

The Mongols did maintain keepers of the highways, but it seems that they were only effective up to a point. Bar Hebraeus notes that Kurdish raiders were often a problem, and on one occasion so incensed Arghun that he sent troops into the mountains to try and hold the roads from them. In frustration at being unable to reach the Kurds in the mountains, the Mongols turned swords onto the farmers, labourers and men who paid tribute. All this did was infuriate the Kurds, who attacked Arbil in retaliation.<sup>252</sup> Trade did continue despite these attacks, though it was dealt a serious blow in the reign of Geikhatu with the imposition of paper money. Bar Hebraeus claimed that Tabriz was deserted for some time, while the merchants were unable to do any business for 2 months.<sup>253</sup> We have almost no information about the affairs of merchants and travellers from Ghazan onwards in our Near Eastern sources. Het'um only mentions that the khans of Chaghadai and the Qipchaq Khanate were at times at war with both the Yuan and with Oljeitu in the Ilkhanate, with the roads being guarded against their incursions.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Vardan, 217, 222.

<sup>248</sup> Rabban Sauma, 145.

<sup>249</sup> Bar Hebraeus, 453-4.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 485-6.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 496-7.

<sup>254</sup> Het'um, 71-2.

### 3.5 Analysis

Our Near Eastern sources are not exhaustive, but make up a greater part of those written from a non-European Christian perspective. In using these sources, we supplement our knowledge and avoid over-reliance on Persian and European writers. Primarily, the Armenian sources focus on local issues, or on events where prominent Armenians and Georgians were involved. Naturally, this means we cannot take their accounts to apply for the whole of the Mongol world, but this case study can add to our knowledge of conditions in one particular area. Bar Hebraeus also provides us with a significant amount of local information about events in Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as events more broadly. Rabban Sauma's account is a tantalising snapshot into many aspects of the Mongol Empire, leaving one wishing that his original work survived so as to find out what this Turkic monk from China thought of Persia and western Europe beyond what relics were to be found there!

What can these sources tell us in answer to our Pax Mongolica queries? Firstly, that our Christians sources almost all confirm Mongol devastation. Rabban Sauma's account only talks of Kashgar being destroyed through wars between Mongol states, but not elsewhere. Those who lived through the first Mongol invasions are the most passionate in their descriptions. Kirakos had the most negative view of them, having been forced into captivity by them and his home monastery of Getik being destroyed by them. In general, however, the early Armenian sources confirm each other and also the assessments of the Persian sources. Mongol devastation in Georgia and Greater Armenia was significant, and their demands were a significant burden on the people. Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog suggests that as the Armenian princes were retained in their lands, Mongol rule in the 1230s 'resulted in almost no change in the lifestyle of Caucasian Armenians.'<sup>255</sup> Unfortunately this is a viewpoint that only considers the elites, once again. Dashdondog admits that the invasions were devastating for Armenia, but it was the princes who collaborated with the Mongols who benefitted, not the general populace. Take for example the siege of Kayean as mentioned previously. Prince Awag's refusal to submit cost the lives of many of his people, who surrendered to the Mongols but were still slain and their women taken by the Mongol troops. Despite Prince Awag's resistance of the Mongols, he was treated favourably by them and given his lands back. This type of discrepancy is common in histories on the Mongols. The success of the elites is taken as a sign that all was well throughout society.

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<sup>255</sup> Dashdondog, 68.

As occurred in Persia, Grigor Aknerts'i confirms that the Mongols took several types of taxes, in addition to random requisitioning of goods as and when required. Any Mongol army which passed through Georgian and Armenian lands either requisitioned or simply plundered what they needed from the inhabitants. Supporting the Mongol armies must have been one of the most difficult for the populace to face, especially as a payment did not mean that another Mongol force could not pass that way and demand exactly the same thing. For Cilician Armenia, some of the demands were tough, but it did not experience the primary Mongol invasions and was exempted from certain taxes as well. As the Ilkhanate's wars with the Mamluks continued, Cilicia began to suffer more and more from Mamluk attacks without adequate Mongol protection. The Mongol conflicts to the north and east prevented the Ilkhans from lending their support to their Armenian allies. So while for a time Cilician Armenian fortunes were on the up, this clearly reversed as the Mamluks were able to launch devastating raids into their country with relative impunity. Once the Ilkhanate collapsed, the Mamluks were eventually able to destroy the kingdom in the 1370s.

Our sources do give an interesting picture of religious relations in this time period. It is often stated that the Mongols allowed religious freedom, and for the most part they did. Weak Mongol control often led to religious clashes, many of which are mentioned by Bar Hebraeus. While for a long time Christian clerics were able to gain the ear of the Ilkhan or an important Christian at court, things became trickier for them once Ghazan came to power. His early persecution of them and intermittent renewals of these actions meant that their status was questioned and legitimised attacks on them by Muslims in the Ilkhanate, angry at Christians and Jews who had lorded it over them in their heyday. The uneasy relationship that Ghazan and his successor Oljeitu had with the Nestorian Church is evident through the history of Mar Yaballaha. While the Nestorians were able to expand in the early years of the Ilkhanate, the Mongol invasions of the Near East were extremely harmful to the Jacobite Church. Bar Hebraeus laments the state of the church saying,

'Supposing I had a desire for Antioch; it is in a state of lamentation and tears. Or for the priestly diocese of Gumya wherein there remaineth not a man to micturate against a wall; or Aleppo, or Mabbugh, or Calonicus, or Edessa and Harran, all of which are laid waste; or the seven dioceses which are round about Melitene, in none of which doth a single house remain.'<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Bar Hebraeus, *Chron. Eccles.* ii, cols.432 f; *B.O.* ii pp.248-63, quoted by E.A. Wallis Budge 'The Life of Bar Hebraeus', xxvi.

Even a man who was quite friendly with the Mongols and is rarely as critical of them as other authors cannot help but mourn the state their invasions left his church in.

With regards to travel and trade, it is clear that the Mongols did make things easier for those travelling through their lands on official business. It is not clear through our sources how much trade occurred, as these were all religious men who had little interest in these topics. From what has been mentioned and as a logical continuation of Mongol actions elsewhere however, trade must have been going steadily in some areas. Those areas affected by Mongol warfare would have been difficult to bypass. Qaidu certainly allowed the Nestorian monks through, so some merchants may have been able to do this also. Whether or not travellers could pass seemed to be on the whim of the individual ruler. The Mongols were not averse to pouncing on trading caravans for their own profit, as has been seen, but trade also would have benefitted elites along the way, whether hostile or not. Merchants were often quite generous with both Mongol princes and local elites, as noted by Kirakos, so it may have been worthwhile to allow them to continue to pass through. At times this must not have been the case, with several of our sources noting road closures in time of war. What should not be forgotten is that the system which allowed the trade to continue also continued to harm the general populace, who had to support envoys and traders in their lands. Though there may have been tax exemptions for those who had to support a *yam* station, the maintenance of travellers was still a major burden, as we shall see in our next chapter.



# Chapter 3- Pax Mongolica in the European Sources

## 4.1 Source Background

We have several European sources for the study of the Mongols, of varying lengths, predominantly written by missionaries, though also by traders. Once again the range of works covers almost a century of the Mongol world by men who travelled to and through different parts of the empire or different khanates. The background of some of the major sources for the period will be discussed here, while more minor letters etc. will be considered within the body of the work where appropriate.

One of the most influential early works written on the Mongols is that of John of Plano Carpini who wrote a *Historia Mongolorum* after having visited the Qa'an Guyuk in 1246. Carpini had been a Franciscan missionary in Europe for some time before being chosen by Pope Innocent IV to undertake a journey to the Mongols. The pope hoped to stem another attack by the Mongols on Europe. John travelled through the recently devastated lands of Kievan Rus on to Batu, who sent him on to the Qa'an where he witnessed Guyuk's coronation.<sup>257</sup> He was also a spy reporting on Mongol military strengths and weaknesses should another attack occur. His age and great weight led to George Lane labelling him 'an unlikely medieval James Bond.'<sup>258</sup> The nature of this account, and Carpini's tendency to report on the fantastical and mythical, mean it is a somewhat limited source, though still vital for the study of the early Mongol empire.

Another Franciscan who travelled to Mongol lands before the dissolution of the united empire was William of Rubruck. Rubruck was a Flemish missionary in the entourage of the French king Louis IX in Palestine. Rubruck's goals were primarily spiritual; ministering to some German slaves captured by the Mongols and enquiring as to the Jochid prince Sartaq's alleged Christianity. Undoubtedly, if Louis thought there was a possibility that Sartaq and other Mongols were Christians he would have been putting out feelers as to a Mongol alliance with Christian powers against the Muslims, but this was

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<sup>257</sup> J. Richard, 'John of Plano Carpini', 2002, in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages* <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780227679319.001.0001/acref-9780227679319-e-1526> Accessed 9th November 2016.

<sup>258</sup> G. Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire* (London, 2006) 51.

unstated. Rubruck travelled via Constantinople through the Black Sea to Sartaq and Batu, then on to Qara-Qorum where he met Mongke around 1254. As Carpini had before him, Rubruck returned with a demand for submission, this time for Louis. On his way back he travelled through the Caucasus to the Mongol general Baiju, before returning to Palestine.<sup>259</sup> Rubruck's account is more sober, avoiding delving into the mythical. Rubruck describes the Mongols' cultural oddities and spends a great deal of time discussing religion, having been involved in a religious debate at Qara-Qorum put on by Mongke himself. Despite being less well-known than Marco Polo, Rubruck's account is equally important for the study of Mongol history.

Our key post-dissolution sources are all Italians. The most famous of course is that of Marco Polo. Not too much needs to be said about the famous man except that he was both a merchant and official in Yuan China. He travelled extensively through the Mongol world as well as by the seaborne spice route on his return. Polo returned on his final mission for the Yuan, accompanying the intended wife of Arghun to the Ilkhanate. Thus his work is significant both for describing the state of Yuan China under Qubilai, but also for travel in the Mongol world after the end of Mongol unity. Another important source is the handbook written for merchants by Francisco Pegolotti. While Pegolotti did not travel Mongol lands, he had contacts with merchants who did. Written in the 1340s, it gives us an interesting further look into trade in the Mongol world during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We also have several accounts of Franciscan missionaries who reached Mongol lands. John of Monte Corvino, who became the first Archbishop of Khan-Baliq in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, wrote two important letters describing his experiences in China. Another Franciscan sent to China was Odoric of Pordenone, who wrote a more extensive account of his journeys, though this account is nowhere near as detailed as Polo's. While Polo witnessed Yuan China as it expanded into Song lands, Odoric gives us a later picture of united China in the 1320s. We also have several other varied letters discussing travel in the east which can help us fill out the 14<sup>th</sup> century picture.

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<sup>259</sup> P. Jackson, 'William of Rubruck', 2012, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/william-of-rubruck> Accessed 9th November 2016.

## 4.2 Mongol destruction in the European sources

John of Plano Carpini passed through Russia soon after the Mongol invasions there took place. He says that the city of Kiev had once been richly populated, but was now reduced to no more than 200 houses. Elsewhere in Russia he saw piles of skulls and bones.<sup>260</sup> He could also still see dead bodies in the area of Comania, while in Khwarazm lands he describes 'innumerable ruined cities and deserted towns.'<sup>261</sup> Carpini confirms what is mentioned in Persian sources that the Mongols would kill all but the artisans when they invaded, saying, 'all those they take prisoner in battle they put to death unless they happen to want to keep some as slaves.'<sup>262</sup> William of Rubruck did not travel through Russia, but also states that it had been completely devastated by the Mongols.<sup>263</sup> According to Rubruck, many towns in the area of Equius<sup>264</sup> had been destroyed in order to make room for Mongol pasturage.<sup>265</sup> On his way back, Rubruck did travel through the Caucasus and says of the city of Nakhichevan in Georgia that it had once been 'a very large and beautiful city, but the Tartars have reduced it almost to a wilderness.'<sup>266</sup> Predominantly travelling through desolate steppe land, it is unlikely that the two travellers saw much civilisation in general, let alone the signs of Mongol destruction. Most of the nomadic tribes in the steppe had already fled west and been destroyed or incorporated into the Mongol world at this time.

Our later authors give us more information on conditions south of the steppe lands. Marco Polo states that Persia had once been a great and noble land, now laid waste by the Mongols.<sup>267</sup> Polo was well aware of the damaging internecine Mongol warfare which occurred during his travels and stay in China. He states that the war between Hulegu and Berke had cost many lives, while further conflicts involving the Chaghadaids and their Toluid neighbours to both the east and the west had left cities like Balkh and Charchan largely deserted. He states that Mongols of both sides would ravage the

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<sup>260</sup> John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, in *The Mongol mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. By a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey (ed.) C. Dawson (London, 1955) 29-30.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-9.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>263</sup> William of Rubruck, *The Journey of William of Rubruck in The Mongol mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. By a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey (ed.) C. Dawson (London, 1955) 112.

<sup>264</sup> Probably in eastern Kazakhstan in old Qara-Khitai lands.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>267</sup> Marco Polo, *The Description of the World* (trans. and ed.) A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot (London, 1938) 113.

borderlands, leaving the population with little option but to flee into the mountains.<sup>268</sup> Some snippets from Odoric indicate that Mongol invasions were still evident in his day. On his way to China he passed through Erzerum, once a great Seljuq and previously Armenian city, which had been greatly damaged by the Mongols.<sup>269</sup> The Iranian city of Kashan likewise was significantly reduced, though it remained an important entrepot when Odoric passed through. When making his way through the Persian Gulf region, he also notes that it had been heavily despoiled by them.<sup>270</sup> According to Polo, Tibet had been laid waste by Mongke's invasion, while the population of the city of Ciangiu was wiped out by the Mongol general Bayan, in revenge for the city's treacherous dealings with Qubilai.<sup>271</sup> Our later Franciscan travellers do not speak much about Mongol destruction. The longer works as noted above do briefly mention this, but the shorter letters do not. Perhaps this is due to the nature of the letters, in that lengthy descriptions of geography etc. did not suit them. They may not have seen any evidence of destruction of course, or they may have seen areas that were in recovery, but without knowledge of the previous situation, would not have been aware of any drastic downturn. Whatever the reasons, there is certainly less to go on in regards to this topic in our European sources. None of these authors experienced Mongol invasions and were focused on writing on other topics. They do have more to say on the conditions of those under Mongol rule, which we shall see in our next section.

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 134, 147.

<sup>269</sup> Odoric of Pordenone, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. I, Odoric of Pordenone (London, 1913) 101.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 104-6.

<sup>271</sup> Marco Polo, 268, 324.

### 4.3 Life under the Mongols in the European sources

According to our early sources, life was extremely difficult for those recently put under Mongol rule. Slavery was a common lot for many in the Eurasian steppe. Carpini claims that the Mongol Emperor took girls from all over the empire every few years, kept those he wanted, and passed on to his men those he did not.<sup>272</sup> A certain Muslim tax administrator sent by Batu and Guyuk into Russian lands made extraordinary exactions. 1 in 3 young boys were taken by him, as well as all unmarried men, women without legitimate husbands and beggars. An exorbitant felt tax was imposed on all the rest, even the very young.<sup>273</sup> William of Rubruck confirms that the Russian families who were unable to pay were taken by the Mongols and forced to look after their flocks.<sup>274</sup>

Carpini and Rubruck's accounts seem to dispel any notion that life improved for most of those enslaved by the Mongols. Carpini states that subject peoples, even those who from the outside would be considered 'Mongol', were made to be the Mongols' patsies; forced to do all the dangerous work and heavy labour, sent first into dangerous situations, and put at the van in battle. If they failed to fight up to the Mongols' standards they were killed, but if they fought well they were convinced to stay, but treated very badly. Unless a skilled craftsman, they were given little to eat and little time to provide for their families. Many of them suffered from the heat in the summer and frostbite in the winter without proper clothing, losing fingers, toes, and limbs.<sup>275</sup> The poverty of subject people groups is also mentioned by Rubruck, who states that many Russian, Hungarian and Alan slaves fled in small groups to form robber bands who attacked travelers.<sup>276</sup> Rubruck states that the Christian slaves he met at Qara-Qorum had to steal from their own masters in order to eat or have sufficient clothing.<sup>277</sup> Mongol generosity to the poor attributed by the Persian authors does not seem so apparent in Rubruck's account. He claims that at Qara-Qorum he had to share his party's food allotment as 'there were so many starving people who were not provided with food.'<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Carpini, 27.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>274</sup> Rubruck, 113.

<sup>275</sup> Carpini, 42-5.

<sup>276</sup> Rubruck, 124.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 161.

We have two personal stories told to Rubruck by Christians he met on his journey. He met a French woman called Paquette who had been captured in Hungary who married a Russian 'builder of houses' and served in the court of one of the Christian Mongol ladies. It was not until Paquette reached the court that life under the Mongols became bearable, as she recounted to William 'the unheard-of privations she had endured before she came to the court.'<sup>279</sup> On Rubruck's return journey, he travelled through Georgia and met a Georgian noble called Sahensa. Rubruck states that Sahensa 'enquired of me whether you (Louis IX) would be willing to keep him if he came to you, for he finds the domination of the Tartars so irksome that, although he is well supplied with this world's goods, nevertheless he would prefer to be a pilgrim in a strange land rather than bear their yoke.'<sup>280</sup> One can imagine how the situation must have been for Sahensa's subjects if even this wealthy noble sought to flee Mongol rule.

The development of separate khanates in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and the preponderance of European sources who went to China via Iran means we have only bits and pieces of information on the situation in the Chaghadaid or Qipchaq Khanates. Our later authors thus avoided the steppe and travelled via more 'civilised' lands to the Yuan realm. Certainly they are vastly impressed by the wealth and splendour of China, and this should come as no surprise. China contained some of the largest cities in the world at the time, far greater than anything our Italian travelers would have been used to. Odoric acknowledges this, saying that Canton was as big as 3 Venices with more ships than all of Italy.<sup>281</sup> Marco Polo also focuses on the exotic wonders of the east, but talks for some time about Qubilai's efforts to support the poor through alms and grain storage for times of famine.<sup>282</sup>

But things were not all well for Qubilai either. The official Ahmad, a Muslim, was one of Qubilai's most trusted advisors, but was brutal in his exactions and depredations on northern China. Polo states that an anti-foreigner revolt took place led by Chin lords who were angry at Muslims and Mongols ruling over them. This revolt spread across many cities and took the life of Ahmad. Qubilai was able to put it down, but was also forced into anti-Muslim legislation to appease his Chinese subjects.<sup>283</sup> Another revolt occurred when the baron Li'tan was given the city of Tundifu and rose against Qubilai, 'with the consent and goodwill of all the people of the cities and villages of the province.'<sup>284</sup> Qubilai's handling of the revolt seems to have done him good stead however, as he only executed the leaders of the revolt and

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>281</sup> Odoric of Pordenone, 180, 184.

<sup>282</sup> Marco Polo, *The Description of the World* (trans. and ed.) A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot (London, 1938) 248-252.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 214-6.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 303-304.

allowed the common people to live. Similarly, Polo remarks upon the people of the city of Fugiu's tendency to rebel against Qubilai, and the Khan's response in keeping a great many men garrisoned in the area.<sup>285</sup>

Unfortunately none of our sources are particularly verbose regarding the common people. There is significant discussion of trade and merchants, which we will address, but rarely of social conditions outside the court or the religious environment. John of Montecorvino, the first Catholic Archbishop of China in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, had a seat at the Yuan Emperor's court and was apparently able to baptise 6000 people in 11 years. He experienced some conflict with the local Nestorians who resented this new brand of Christianity, but despite their attempts to have him convicted as a spy, he was cleared by the emperor. John was able to set up two churches in Khan-Baliq, and eventually a see in Zayton was also set up.<sup>286</sup> John of Marignolli, who travelled through Mongol lands in the 1340s, notes the differences in treatment of Christians across the Mongol khanates. He was well looked after by Uzbek, Khan of Qipchac, who sent him on his way with gifts and financial support for his journey. In Almalig, the capital of the Chaghadaid Khanate, John was able to set up a church, but this was a risky business as only the year before 6 Franciscan friars had been killed by the now Muslim Mongols there.<sup>287</sup> Things improved significantly once John arrived in Khan-Baliq, as he was received in state by the Khan and given imperial apartments with servants. Once he was set up there, he stayed for 4 years, with a huge annual stipend for him and his entourage. For his return journey, John was supplied with 3 years' expenses.<sup>288</sup>

Andrew of Perugia, who became bishop of Zayton in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, confirms the difficulties in getting to China, but once there is astonished at the liberality of the Yuan Emperor. An allowance, or *alafa*,<sup>289</sup> was given to all sorts of people, from orators to jugglers, and envoys to paupers. The total of this expenditure was apparently greater than the revenue of many European kings! He is quite impressed also by the maintenance of law and order in China, where 'no man dares to draw a sword against his neighbour.'<sup>290</sup> Another Franciscan, Pascal of Vittoria, travelled a similar route to John of Marignolli in the 1330s. He had been a monk in a convent at Sarai and he tells the story of one of his

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 348.

<sup>286</sup> Letters of John of MonteCorvino, in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 45-6, 55-7.

<sup>287</sup> John de Marignolli and his Recollections of Eastern Travel, in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 211-2.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 214-5.

<sup>289</sup> An Arabic word for the wages of soldiers.

<sup>290</sup> Letter from Andrew, Bishop of Zayton in Manzi or South China, in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 72-3.

brothers had been killed for by Muslims, apparently for converting to Islam and then re -apostatizing to Christianity. The situation in the Chaghadaid Khanate was also volatile. Pascal was apparently able to preach and debate against Muslims outside a mosque, but in the capital Almaliq he was subject to beatings and poisoning attempts.<sup>291</sup> One interesting source is *The Book of the Estate of the Great Caan*, written by an unspecified 'Archbishop of Sultaniyya' in the 1330s. The man had likely never been to China, but had a good deal of information about it. He also speaks of the generosity of the Yuan Emperor, who kept food reserves for famine times and gave liberally to the poor. His justice and good government are also commended. The author gives the impression of China as a peaceful and wealthy country, abundant in grain and encouraging of foreign visitors.<sup>292</sup> The Archbishop states, 'the Emperor's people are very worthily arrayed, and live in a rich and liberal manner.'<sup>293</sup> From what our author tells us, there were also 30,000 Nestorian Christians living in China, who had beautiful and well-adorned churches, and who held many high offices in the Yuan Empire.<sup>294</sup> All of our later sources have a good deal to say about trade in the Mongol world as well, which we will address in the next section.

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<sup>291</sup> Letter from Pascal of Vittoria, A Missionary Franciscan in Tartary, to his Brethren of the Convent of Vittoria, 1338, in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 82-7.

<sup>292</sup> *The Book of the Estate of the Great Caan*, set forth by the Archbishop of Soldania, circa 1330, in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 90-8.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.



## 4.4 Travel and trade in the European Sources

It is from our two mid-thirteenth century sources that we get the clearest picture of how the postal relay system functioned. Both John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck used the *yam* stations travelling to Mongolia, and it was in the bleak steppe land where these stations were the most necessary, with no handy cities as stopping points along the way. What is clear from both sources is that these stations were very much a product of the environment in which they were situated. We will see for our sources on China that the *yam* stations there were quite different from those that Rubruck and Carpini made use of. The fact that they existed at all in such a hostile environment is an impressive Mongol feat. Carpini suffered from both the pope's political stance towards the Mongols as well as his naivety with regards to Mongol custom. As the pope was not offering submission and tribute, Carpini was not treated as an official envoy. For tribute-bearing emissaries had to be provided with horses, carts and supplies. Those who came for any other reason 'are in a most unhappy position as regards both food and clothing, for poor and inadequate provision is made for them.'<sup>295</sup> Greasing the palms of both the rulers of the areas they passed through and the guides who accompanied them was considered customary, but Carpini was not aware of this, so had little to give. This entailed that his party were only fed once a day despite already having given away much of what they had as expenses. Carpini and his party were still provided with food, tents, and horses; all of which had to be provided by those in the area.<sup>296</sup> Presumably for the more remote locations along the way the stations would have been manned and provisioned by Mongol soldiers or their nomadic subjects. The situation did not improve much for Carpini once he reached Guyuk's camp, stating that there were 4,000 envoys there (presumably for the *quriltai* enthroning Guyuk) of which many suffered from hunger and thirst.<sup>297</sup>

William of Rubruck experienced a similar story a few years later. He was not an official envoy either, and also laments his treatment by the Mongols. While he made use of the *yam* and was able to change horses 2 or 3 times a day, he complains bitterly of hunger and thirst and of the poor quality of horses his party received in comparison to the others in their group. Luckily William's weight meant that he was always given a strong horse.<sup>298</sup> Interestingly, Rubruck preferred the journeys in the wilderness

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<sup>295</sup> Carpini, 27.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 62, 66.

<sup>298</sup> Rubruck, 132. Both Carpini and Rubruck were apparently quite fat. One wonders if they should not have been grateful for their hardship, as would befit two monks of the Franciscan order.

than arriving at inhabited places, as in fact this meant they had to give away ‘presents’ to each captain and share their paltry amount of food with whoever wanted some.<sup>299</sup> Once Rubruck arrived in Mongke’s *orda*, there was a kind of embassy hotel set up where all the envoys from all over would stay in the same place.<sup>300</sup>

We also see some indication that the Mongols sought to restrict the privileges of those who were not official ambassadors as Rubruck states that false envoys were put to death by them.<sup>301</sup> This keenness to root out those who sought to abuse the system presumably stemmed from Mongke’s attempts to limit the exactions on the peasantry by all who travelled the *yam* network. Abuses still occurred however. Rubruck tells an interesting story of a sort of wandering bard/cleric from Acre called Theodolus. Theodolus travelled to Mongke’s court pretending to be an emissary of the French king. Mongke sent a Mongol representative with him carrying a *paiza*, allowing them significant power to abuse. Once Theodolus reached the Byzantine Emperor however, he was found out as a crook and imprisoned.<sup>302</sup> Clearly Mongke could attempt to control those misusing Mongol authority, but it was impossible to completely eradicate misappropriation. The cost of supporting envoys was such that Rubruck notes that Baron Konstandin, father of King Het’um I, and all the Armenian people were celebrating as their country had been granted the privilege of not having envoys enter their territory.<sup>303</sup>

Rubruck talks in some detail about merchants in Mongol lands. His first port of call is Soldaia, on the Black Sea, which he talks of as a great trade entrepot, with merchants from Russia bringing squirrel, ermine and other valuable furs, while merchants from Turkey brought their cotton, silk, and spices.<sup>304</sup> He goes on to mention that the Mongols’ conquests of these lands allowed Batu and his son Sartaq to control the salt production in the area, forcing many traders to come to them from all over Russia.<sup>305</sup> Rubruck notes that the Mongols had an extensive wardrobe, which varied according to season. For the summer, they had clothes of silk, gold, and cotton, while in the winter, they were well stocked with furs from all over Rus lands, Scandinavia, and Siberia. Even then, rich Mongols would line the inside of these furs with silk for extra protection from the cold.<sup>306</sup> Clearly the Mongols had access to products from all

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 158-60.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 218. There were many other reasons for celebration of course, but considering how onerous supporting envoys was, as mentioned in our other sources, it must have been a great relief to the Armenians.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 101.

over their empire, and used these to their gain. He describes large numbers of merchants at Cailac, in what were formerly Uighur lands, while saying that Qara-Qorum, despite being smaller than the village of St. Denis, had a Muslim quarter where large numbers of merchants lived, and also a Chinese quarter with many craftsmen.<sup>307</sup> At Konya, the capital of the vassal Seljuq sultanate, he describes a western European monopoly of the alum trade out of Turkey established by French, Venetian and Genoese merchants.<sup>308</sup>

Marco Polo is one of our most loquacious writers on these topics as a merchant man himself. The borders between the khanates seem particularly dangerous, and it is only with the protection of one of the Khans within their own territory that travel appears safe. Polo describes his father and uncle's journey through Berke's lands as without adventure, but then tells us that they are forced to halt due to conflict between Berke and Hulegu, and once again at Bukhara they are forced to stop due to unsafe roads and the war situation, a situation which thwarted their progression for three years.<sup>309</sup> Only on being joined by an emissary from Qubilai did they feel truly safe. Once on their return journey, the Polos were given a *paiza* by Qubilai, which served as both a passport and symbol of authority. However, as they found, this only extended as far as Toluid lands were concerned. Thus, despite their *paiza*, the Polos were wary as Qaidu was intent on causing havoc for Qubilai, and he was apparently responsible for destroying roads in the desert.<sup>310</sup> Mention is made on two occasions of those sent to accompany the Polos being too afraid to face the journey due to war, both the Christian friars sent by the Pope in response to Qubilai's request for learned Christian men, and the Mongol barons sent to bring Cocachin to Arghun.<sup>311</sup> Apparently a *paiza* from a Mongol khan was not quite the free pass- the Polos were also given one on their return journey to Qubilai by the Ilkhan Geikhatu, but were still extremely worried as many lands under the Ilkhanate were not truly under his control and according to Polo, Geikhatu had no authority. Geikhatu did however provide them with a very large escort, and they were furnished with ample supplies.<sup>312</sup>

Despite Polo's assurance that there were many traders throughout Persian lands, he states that travel in these lands was highly dangerous. At one stage, Polo relates how he was captured by a band of

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 137, 183-184. Many of the Muslim and Chinese craftsmen were slaves brought by Ogodei to construct the city.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>309</sup> Marco Polo, 74-76.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 84, 89.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

Tartars, but was able to escape while some of his companions were taken, with some sold into slavery, while others were killed. He tells us the group responsible were called the Qaraunas, a rebel Mongol group that often robbed travellers. Their leader, one Negodar,<sup>313</sup> who was the nephew of Chaghadai, seems to have led many of these attacks, without respect for any Mongol authority.<sup>314</sup> Apart from this, he describes the Persian kingdoms as full of those who wish to do damage to merchants, and would do so but for the Great Khan. While this seems to imply that they were not able to do so, he goes on to say that they still did much harm to merchants, and unless one travelled in a large group heavily armed there was danger from this direction.<sup>315</sup> In the area of Kurdistan, he states that the Muslim and Christian Kurds were renowned for their attempts at robbing merchants.<sup>316</sup>

Chinese travel and trade was certainly more secure. Polo talks of 1,000 guards at every gate of Khan-Baliq and a 1,000 cartloads of silk entering every day to support Qubilai's great city.<sup>317</sup> He describes the *yam* postal stations in China as 'palaces' which were built in all places, wild and strange. Not only this, but there were many inns along trade routes, leading to 'a multitude of merchants and strangers' frequenting the Khan's lands.<sup>318</sup> Odoric claims that every traveller who used the *yam* system was given two meals a day free of charge.<sup>319</sup> If Polo's claims are anywhere near accurate, this must have been a significant burden for those responsible for providing at these *yam* stations. Polo alludes frequently to the mass of gold, salt, spices, and silk which traversed the byways and waterways (extended by Qubilai to include Khan-Baliq) of China, bringing with it massive revenues for the Khan. Apparently from the great port city of Zayton, Qubilai received 10% of all merchandise brought into his lands.<sup>320</sup> The merchants who brought these items were so numerous at Khan-Baliq that every nation had their own 'factory' where merchants were lodged, and due to the huge number of merchants and foreign envoys in the city, there was a prostitutes' district, where the women paid their taxes in services to foreigners!<sup>321</sup> There is a great deal more information in Marco Polo about trade than can be mentioned here, but we now have an idea of the flourishing exchanges that took place there.

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<sup>313</sup> This is likely to have been the same as Grigor Aknerts'i's Tegudar considering the geography and time period.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 121-122.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 101. This concurs with the information from Bar Hebraeus.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 213, 237.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 243, 256.

<sup>319</sup> Odoric of Pordenone, 232.

<sup>320</sup> Marco Polo, 351.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 235-236.

Our later authors largely confirm the information of Polo with regards to travel. John of Monte Corvino states that the land road via the Qipchaq Khanate was far safer and shorter than the sea routes, but that this road had 'not been open for a considerable time, on account of the wars that have been going on.'<sup>322</sup> These wars had left John with no news of the papal court or any of the affairs of Europe for 12 years bar some apparently incredulous stories told by a Lombard surgeon, perhaps indicating that Europeans were more rarely in Khan-Baliq than has been assumed, especially in times of warfare.<sup>323</sup> Andrew of Perugia suffered many hardships in his journey to China, with his party plundered of even their habits and tunics.<sup>324</sup> Pascal of Vittoria had a largely uneventful journey in the company of a Muslim caravan until he reached the Chaghadaid Khanate where the caravan was forced to stop due to the recent death of the Chaghadaid Khan and the insecurity on the roads as a result.<sup>325</sup> Francisco Pegolotti's handbook similarly advises that interregna were dangerous to travellers, but on the whole that 'the road from Tana to Cathay is perfectly safe.'<sup>326</sup> Pegolotti recommends taking around 60 men from Tana to Sarai, which was apparently the most dangerous part of the journey.<sup>327</sup> From Tana to Astrakhan and from Almaliq to Otrar there were a large number of Mongol police ensuring road safety.<sup>328</sup>

Trade was certainly flourishing in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced through our sources. Odoric of Pordenone describes Tabriz thus: 'this is a nobler city and a better for merchandise than any other which at this day existeth in the world.'<sup>329</sup> Many Christians of all descriptions were to be found there, though he says that almost the whole world traded with that city.<sup>330</sup> John of Monte Corvino was assisted in his evangelical efforts by a merchant who came with him to Khan-Baliq, one Peter of Lucolungo, who paid for the ground for the second Catholic church in the city. Other unspecified benefactors and well-wishers contributed funds to the church, perhaps part of the merchant community in the city.<sup>331</sup> Andrew of Perugia implies that there were several Genoese merchants based in the city of Zayton who helped him calculate what his stipend was worth in florins.<sup>332</sup> Pascal of Vittoria travelled with Greek merchants

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<sup>322</sup> John of MonteCorvino, 48.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>324</sup> Andrew, Bishop of Zayton, 71.

<sup>325</sup> Pascal of Vittoria, 86.

<sup>326</sup> Francis Balducci Pegolotti, 'Notices of the Land Route to Cathay and of Asiatic Trade in the First Half of the Fourteenth Century', in *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, (trans. And ed.) Col. Sir Henry Yule, Vol. II, 152. Tana/Azov was a Genoese port on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 147-8.

<sup>329</sup> Odoric of Pordenone, 103-4.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>331</sup> John of MonteCorvino, 55-6.

<sup>332</sup> Andrew, Bishop of Zayton, 73.

from Tana to Sarai, Armenians on a ship on the Volga, and some 'Saracens' on to Urgench.<sup>333</sup> *The Book of the Estate of the Great Caan* tells of certain products that were traded between the Ilkhanate and the Yuan Empire. Within China, he notes the exchanges that took place along the waterways via houseboats. At the city of Cansai, the Archbishop says there were traders from all over who came for the merchandise available there.<sup>334</sup> Odoric confirms the presence of many Muslim and Christian merchants residing or passing through the city as well.<sup>335</sup> The amount of products available in China was far greater than one could get in Rome or Paris, and it was for this reason that trade was so abundant in spices, silk, and gold cloth.<sup>336</sup> John of Marignolli knew of a *fondaco* at Zayton, which was a sort of lodging house and base for merchants in a foreign city.<sup>337</sup> Pegolotti's work seems to point to the fact that trade was quite common in the Mongol realms. He gives information for the would-be merchant on travel necessities, customs dues, logistics, wares, and even bribes. He himself had never been to China, but apparently knew merchants who had, and was aware of the great amount of trade that took place in Khan-Baliq.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Pascal of Vittoria, 82-5.

<sup>334</sup> *The Book of the Estate*, 95.

<sup>335</sup> Odoric, 201.

<sup>336</sup> *The Book of the Estate*, 95-8.

<sup>337</sup> John of Marignolli, 229.

<sup>338</sup> Pegolotti, 147-169.

## 4.5 Analysis

From reading the above chapter, it is quite clear that there were major differences in the Mongol world according to the sources covering the united empire and those who travelled several different khanates. One of the primary reasons for this, as mentioned already in part, was the difference in landscape. Carpini and Rubruck travelled the bleakest and most hostile territory in their journeys to Mongolia. This meant that they saw the Mongols in their natural habitat, the steppe lands. They were also some of the first Europeans to travel and live among the nomadic Mongols, so the culture clash must have been enormous. For our later authors, they too had to traverse inhospitable deserts and rugged mountainous areas, but they also were able to stop in many of the greatest cities in the world at that time, some of which staggered the Europeans in their size and wealth. Considering that the Mongol invasions of the Song lands were not as devastating as elsewhere, and the fact that most of our European travellers arrived long after these invasions took place, they would not have been able to see whether Mongol rule had had any significant effect. China was far richer and more populous than Europe both before and after the Mongol invasions, so our travellers would have had no sense of perspective about this.

One must also remember that all of our European sources on China were supported by the Yuan state. Marco Polo was an official under Qubilai who became hugely wealthy in his time in China. John of Monte Corvino was at the court of the Khan and would have received a stipend. Andrew of Perugia and John of Marignolli both were provided for handsomely by the Yuan emperors. Just as with Juvaini and Rashid al-Din, we cannot say that these authors were passive observers. They give us information on the court and their own religious concerns, but very little on the overall state of China. China's wealth, which they were able to take advantage of, would have been taken as a sign that all was well in the empire. In comparison, the Chaghadaid Khanate and the Ilkhanate seem in much greater turmoil through much of the time period covered. As time went on, the internecine wars seem to be less common, though the Archbishop of Sultaniyya says that war between Uzbek of the Qipchaq Khanate and Abu Said, the last Ilkhan, took place in 1318.<sup>339</sup>

Our earlier authors have very few positives to note about the effects of the Pax Mongolica. For them, life under the Mongols was unpleasant slavery unless one happened to be an artisan they could

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<sup>339</sup> The Book of the Estate, 90.

use. Certainly, travel was made easier, and presumably through that safety, trade as well. Support of the travel network was a huge burden however, and though often this support entailed tax exemptions, this was not always the case. Rubruck's story about Theodolus shows that opportunists were aware of the power and wealth which could be accrued by gaining a Mongol *paiza*, and sought to take advantage of it. While Mongke certainly attempted to eradicate these abuses, the difficulties in preventing them were hard to surmount. If, as our Persian authors claim, under previous administrations these abuses had been widespread and carried out by envoys, merchants, *ortaqs* and princes, they would have been hugely damaging to Mongol subjects. Both Carpini and Rubruck note the ruthlessness of Mongol tax collectors who took children as payment when their subjects could not front what was required. This could be termed as exaggeration if it was not confirmed by our Persian and Near Eastern sources as well. Peter Jackson labels Carpini and Rubruck 'stubbornly oblivious of the blessings of Mongol overlordship.'<sup>340</sup> While I respect that the two men saw the Mongols as enemies, they also witnessed first-hand conditions under their rule. Carpini did have the tendency to play up the mythical and grotesque, but Rubruck is far more sober, and primarily describes things as he saw them. He may have been a Christian monk who was shocked by the Mongols' invasion of the Christian world, but he was also a bold and committed man who experienced great hardship in order to try and reach Christian slaves captured by the Mongols. We certainly cannot afford to cast aside both men's assessments of the lives of those now ruled by the Mongols.

Once the united empire dissolved, things deteriorated in certain parts of the Mongol world for some time. The only European source we have for the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century is Marco Polo, and as we have seen, travel was not always easy for him. He highlights the damaging wars of Hulegu and Berke, as well as those of Qubilai and Qaidu. Despite this, life in Yuan China seems far more stable and easy than it had been for Mongol subjects elsewhere. There were some revolts, as mentioned previously, which caused concern for Qubilai, with Li'tan's in support of the Song of particular worry. Ch'i-Ch'ing Hsiao notes that it was this revolt which saw Qubilai weaken the power of Chinese military lords and turn to a foreigners-first policy.<sup>341</sup> Many foreigners, including Polo, benefitted from this limitation of Chinese officials as well. Our later authors also lived in some luxury due to the Mongols' encouragement of foreign merchants and religious men, perhaps colouring somewhat their ideas of Yuan China as a whole. The brevity and nature of most of the works does not allow a great deal of room

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<sup>340</sup> P. Jackson, 'The State of Research: The Mongol Empire, 1986-1999', *Journal of Medieval History*, 26 (2000) 209.

<sup>341</sup> C.C. Hsiao, 'Shih T'ien Tse', in (eds) Igor de Rachewiltz, Hok-lam Chan, Hsiao Ch'i-Ch'ing and Peter W. Geier, *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200-1300)* (Wiesbaden, 1993) 38.



for discussion of general social conditions in China either. Considering John of Monte Corvino's interactions with the many Nestorians in Khan-Baliq and the claims of *The Book of the Estate*, this was a halcyon time for Christians in China, with both the Nestorians and the Catholics finding favour under Qubilai and his successors. Basking in the light of these successes, our authors did not stop to notice the plight of the general populace.

To consider this fully would require an in-depth analysis of Chinese sources. Unfortunately the *Yuan-shih* and other works have not been translated and my linguistic skills as well as the scope of this paper do not allow me to do so. A few insights from secondary literature may help us to gain some perspective however. Thomas Allsen's biographies of Mahmud Yalavach and Masud Beg show that in the early years Mongol rule in China was quite difficult. In North China in the 1230s for example, the administrator Abd al-Rahman was particularly harsh in his collection of taxes, exploiting the peasantry and being removed due to corruption and bribery, echoing the problems that were rife in Ilkhanid Persia.<sup>342</sup> Abd al-Rahman also clashed with Chinese officials, and this seems to have been a theme in China. His replacement Mahmud Yalavach ran afoul of Chinese advisors of Qubilai who wished to maintain Confucian standards of government in China. Mongke and his Turkic/Muslim representatives disagreed with this, and sought to tax China according to their own desires and standards.<sup>343</sup>

Judith Kolbas states that Ogodei originally divided north China among his princes, but under the influence of the Khitan official Yeh-lu Chu-tsai instead put his own officers in charge of collecting taxes.<sup>344</sup> While this weakened the power of the princes to the benefit of the central treasury, it simultaneously strengthened those entrusted with collecting those taxes. Thomas Allsen points out that those men were largely Central Asian merchants. These merchants consistently undermined the efforts of Yeh-lu Chu-tsai to protect the Chinese. They had purchased their right to tax farms and saw it as an opportunity to make money. Simultaneously, they lent money at exorbitantly high interest rates, leading to constant indebtedness and foreclosures. Combining this with the burden of supporting the *yam* system left the Chinese peasantry in deep trouble. Abd al-Rahman was one of those who benefitted from this, and while he was replaced by Ogodei, he returned to power under Toregene. Once Guyuk

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<sup>342</sup> T.T. Allsen, 'Mahmud Yalavac, Masud Beg, Ali Beg, Safaliq, Bubar', in (eds) Igor de Rachewiltz, Hok-lam Chan, Hsiao Ch'i-Ch'ing and Peter W. Geier, *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200-1300)* (Wiesbaden, 1993) 125.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>344</sup> J. Kolbas, *The Mongols in Iran: Chingis Khan to Uljaytu, 1220-1309* (London and New York, 2006) 88.

came to the throne Abd al-Rahman was killed, though merchants remained in great favour under Mongke's reign.<sup>345</sup>

Things certainly improved under Qubilai, and this sort of exploitation is not attributed in the south of China, the rich Song lands. Those who suffered the most due to the Mongol invasions were elite Han Chinese, who no longer could hold high office. At local and regional levels, Chinese officials still maintained control, though they assuredly would have had to acquiesce to Mongol demands.<sup>346</sup> While Qubilai and his immediate successor attempted to alleviate the harshness of Mongol rule, things began to change after the death of Temur Oljeitu in 1307. Paul Buell's use of Chinese sources however seems to show that the situation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was not as calm and stable as our European sources seem to imply. Succession wars in the 1320s between conservative Mongol forces and those who were more pro-Chinese were mirrored by growing resistance to Mongol rule in Song lands. Their loose grip on the south saw banditry and the formation of local resistance groups increase. Eventually rebel groups such as the Red Turbans (one of whom was the eventual founder of the Ming dynasty) began to emerge.<sup>347</sup> The idea that China was largely free from the problems that plagued the Ilkhanate can easily be taken from our European sources, but clearly under the surface there were significant problems, even from the beginning. Even the title of one recent work on the Yuan suggests this: *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*.<sup>348</sup> Stability was certainly relative, and without greater knowledge of the social conditions of the Yuan dynasty in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, our conclusions will largely be focused on the 13<sup>th</sup> century state of the Mongol world.

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<sup>345</sup> T. Allsen, 'Mongolian Princes and their Merchant Partners 1200-1260', *Asia Major*, Third Series, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1989) 97-105.

<sup>346</sup> D. Ostrowski, 'The *tamma* and the dual-administrative structure of the Mongol empire', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 61, 1998, 276.

<sup>347</sup> P.D. Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire* (Lanham, 2003) 62-5.

<sup>348</sup> T. Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (London, 2010)

## 5. Conclusion

Having now analysed the Persian, Near Eastern, and European sources to establish just what Pax Mongolica might mean, we can now make some conclusions. Here we must tackle some of the most common opinions held by students of Mongol history nowadays. Nicola di Cosmo states that the Pax Mongolica entailed 'a real and rather beneficial peace.'<sup>349</sup> The difficulty with the term Pax Mongolica is precisely this, that those who use it to refer to greater safety for merchants and envoys also often attribute altruistic motivations and significant social and economic improvements to this concept. Christopher Beckwith is a great defender of Central Eurasian cultures, which he sees as under attack by their more powerful sedentary neighbours. This defence extends to the Mongol Empire as well, with Beckwith claiming that the Mongols' destructive policies were only temporary, while their intentions after the initial conquest phase were to bring peace and security worldwide in order to improve the lives of all within their empire.<sup>350</sup> Di Cosmo echoes these beliefs, stating, 'to the few that could perceive it, the Mongols' arrival had appeared in the thirteenth century as a comet that indicated the way to a brighter future of global trade and unfettered exchange.'<sup>351</sup> This type of rhetoric is bewildering considering a thorough analysis of the sources. The essential claims of Mongol historians such as Beckwith and Di Cosmo are these a) the Mongols intended to create the Pax Mongolica to improve the lives of those in their empire, b) that they were in fact successful and the Pax was a 'good thing'; and c) that its very existence counterbalanced the unfortunate effects of their initial invasions.

Each of these premises can and should be questioned, and hopefully the preceding chapters will have highlighted some of the problems with these assumptions. The first claim is an interesting one as it turns on its head many previously-held beliefs about nomadic cultures and their relationship to sedentary societies. The primary work in this regard is that of Thomas Allsen. In his 2001 work *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, he stresses that the Mongols facilitated cultural transmission and changes, and that they were active players in their promotion of this system rather than simply passive facilitators.<sup>352</sup> Allsen does not attribute any sort of altruism to Mongol motivations, however. He focuses on their wants and desires, which led to significant movement of people, goods and ideas across their

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<sup>349</sup> N. Di Cosmo, 'Black Sea Emporia and the Mongol Empire: A Reassessment of the Pax Mongolica', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2010, Vol.53, 91.

<sup>350</sup> .I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, NJ, 2009) 344.

<sup>351</sup> Di Cosmo, 'Black Sea Emporia', 93.

<sup>352</sup> T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001) 191-3.

empire. He also does not hesitate to pinpoint that these desires often caused immense suffering for many of those within this empire. But we must also stress the difference between intention and consequence. The Mongols' intention in creating a safer travel network was to allow a greater amount of goods, whether traded or taken as booty, to reach back to the centre of authority. This was also a significant tactical and logistical leg-up, allowing the speedy relay of information to decision-makers. Beyond these goals I cannot see any reason to assume the Mongols' had any altruistic economic or cultural motives behind their establishment of the *yam* network. The same 'intention vs. consequence' argument can be made with regards to their conquests. Timothy May points out that the Mongol conquests 'served not only as a catalyst for change, but also were not a regressive force that set back progress in various parts of the world.'<sup>353</sup> May clearly is not stating that the Mongols intended many of the changes that they brought about. Elsewhere he notes that the 'Chingis Exchange' often brought about renaissance, but only after massive destruction forced this on the society.<sup>354</sup> I certainly agree that many changes occurred because of the Mongol invasions, some of them for the better, but this is not something that can be put in the Mongols' credit column. If we are to judge societies' morality, which almost all Mongol historians endeavour to do at some stage, then we can only assess their immediate actions and their intent, not what came about as a consequence of these actions.

To move back to history from philosophy, we can now assess the second part of the Pax Mongolica claim. While the idea that travel certainly became safer is in vogue, there are dissenters to this viewpoint. The late sinologist Herbert Franke doubted that travel from the west to China was any easier under the Mongols than it had been previously, claiming that missionaries and merchants had been present in China in great numbers between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. His assessment of the Pax is quite scathing, 'it seems as if the Pax Mongolica is no more than one of those brilliant simplifications that can serve as chapter titles for world history books.'<sup>355</sup> Indeed, if non-Europeans had been travelling to China for some time, then the real difference in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries is that now Europeans started to travel further east. The shock of the Mongol penetration into the heart of Europe was the primary cause for many of the first Europeans to travel to Mongol lands. John of Plano Carpini certainly would not have known about the safety of the roads before his journey. Another reason for undertaking this journey was possible Mongol help against the Muslims. It is not until the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that we are aware of Europeans travelling far to the east in search of profit. Assuredly, safety

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<sup>353</sup> T. May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London, 2012) 21.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-5.

<sup>355</sup> H. Franke, 'Sino-Western Contacts under the Mongol Empire', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 6, 1996, 49-50.

was patchy, and as we have seen, there were long periods of time where travel along land routes was not possible. Oljeitu himself admitted that the roads were closed before the peace established in 1304 in his letter to Philip IV of France. Timothy Brook notes that international trade was in fact banned several times under the Yuan, in 1303, 1311, and 1320. Even Marco Polo and Rabban Sauma experienced significant problems in their travels. Certain regions were basically off-limits, while changes of route, unplanned delays and even entirely failed ventures were common after the dissolution of the united empire. These conditions were of course common in the medieval world, but we should not fail to mention them when describing how 'safe' travel was in the Mongol world.

If we do accept Pegolotti's assessment that the roads were generally safe in ideal conditions, we must then address whether or not this Pax was as beneficial as Di Cosmo, Beckwith and others believe. Their argument that greater levels of trade lead to an overall economic improvement for society are questionable in their own right, but even more so with regards to pre-modern society. Firstly, as we have seen, merchants themselves were often responsible for the abuse of the peasantry, a problem that led to Mongke and Ghazan's curtailment of their powers. The continued use of merchants as both tax-farmers and envoys meant that the system was always in their favour, allowing them to benefit hugely while the huge majority of the populace struggled with Mongol demands.

Secondly, the idea that greater levels of trade would improve the general economy is not borne out. The halcyon time for merchants was under the reigns of Ogodei and Mongke, with a united empire, the central government paying well over the odds for goods, the *yam* well-established and *ortaq*s forming in order to lessen the risk to individual merchants. According to the above hypothesis then, Ogodei and Mongke's reigns should have seen an improvement in the lives of those who lived in the Mongol Empire. Yet we have seen that taxation demands in China under Ogodei and his Muslim administrators (read merchants) were exorbitant, leading to the impoverishment of Chinese farmers. Likewise, Monke's tax assessments were so demanding that even children were included. How does this indicate an improvement for the whole society? Linked to this, it is quite confusing how exactly international trade in general should have alleviated the plight of the common people. As Janet Abu-Lughod notes, the only things worth trading over long distances were luxury items, not those that contributed to the subsistence of the societies themselves.<sup>356</sup> While she still believes that this trade helped to improve the system as a whole, it seems difficult to reconcile with the lot of the peasantry. A Georgian farmer could not have cared less if his Mongol overlord was wearing the latest in Chinese silks

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<sup>356</sup> Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 13.

if it meant he was still being milked by the same man for all he was worth, especially if the merchant who brought these silks had extorted goods and services from him as well. This argument is extremely weak in my eyes, and certainly needs elaboration if historians are to accept it.

Thirdly, and arguably most importantly, as we have seen it was in fact the peasantry who had to support and provision the *yam* stations which were used by the merchants. Even if the merchants were not abusing the system, which they often were, it would have been an immense burden on those who were forced to support it. While for the sake of posterity, we are glad for the accounts of Marco Polo and Pegolotti, those who bore the brunt of supporting officials and merchants were impoverished. May points out that nomads fled the areas near *yam* stations, while villages in sedentary areas became abandoned.<sup>357</sup> Polo's description of the Yuan *yam* stations as palaces highlights the glaring discrepancy between those merchants who could afford to make such a journey, and those who had to provide for whatever they needed whenever they came calling. Even when regulation was brought in by Mongke, the movement of envoys along this system caused great damage in war times, as noted above by Juvaini and William of Rubruck. The fact that these demands were often extraordinary on top of already excessive taxation meant that at the worst of times the system was almost designed to crush the general populace under heel.

If someone reading the above still believes that the Pax Mongolica, or whatever one wishes to call it, was beneficial, then we must take up the third assumption of Beckwith and Di Cosmo; namely that it was able to counterbalance the original Mongol invasions. Much has been made about the astronomically high figures given for casualties in the Mongols' Persian campaigns by authors such as Juvaini, Juzjani and Rashid al-Din. George Lane claims that the Persian historians were pandering to the Mongols' desire for notoriety. Confusingly, in the same article, he states that Juvaini was 'painting the Mongols not [...] how they wished to be seen but more as he and the Persian elite might wish them to become.'<sup>358</sup> If we disregard the figures for a moment, what our above research shows is that no matter where the sources came from, no matter their standpoint, they all spoke of the massive amounts of life lost during Mongol massacres of cities across Eurasia. For those who wish to downplay the Mongols' actions, presumably they must accept that all of these sources are exaggerating. We have no sources which talk about the invasions that give us a different picture. The confirmation of later authors that Mongol damage was still visible should dispel any notion that their invasions were not damaging. All of

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<sup>357</sup> May, *Mongol Conquests*, 120-1.

<sup>358</sup> G.E. Lane, 'The Mongols in Iran', in (ed.) T. Daryaee, *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History* (Oxford, 2012), 244, 253.

our sources convey the extreme destruction they caused. David Morgan says of Persia, 'One should not be distracted by admiration...for the attempts of Ghazan to put matters right in Persia from recognizing that the Mongol conquests were a disaster on a grand and unparalleled scale.'<sup>359</sup> Morgan has since changed his position on the Ilkhanate's effect on Persia at least, though he does not agree to revisionism of Mongol brutality. Though this work is a dedication to Ann Lambton, he also does not question her analysis of the economic situation of Iran.<sup>360</sup> He elsewhere claims that art history should move us away from the biased sources, but to reiterate, art history cannot give us a clear picture of the situation of the general population. The beauty of illustrated copies of Rashid al-Din's *Jami al-tawarikh* and the Great Mongol *Shahnama* can blind us to the misery of the large majority under Mongol rule.

Did the Pax help those under Mongol rule to recover from their initial invasions? As we have seen above, the answer is no. Loss of life was not the only result of their attacks. Both Lane and Morgan point out the damage to the *qanat* system in the Middle East. *Qanats* were the underground irrigation canals which were vital in agriculture in the more arid areas of the Middle East and Central Asia. Not only were these destroyed in part by the Mongols, their massacre of those who tended to them meant that their upkeep was not continued, and previously cultivated land fell out of use.<sup>361</sup> Anne Lambton analyses the situation in Persia more fully, and surmises that the continued squeezing of a population lessened by the Mongol invasions led to a greater amount of abandoned land. The inability of smaller landlords to support the peasantry and accede to Mongol demands meant more instances of *tulji'a*, where larger landholders bought the land off those unable to pay, so land became increasingly under the care of the great men of the Ilkhanate, such as Rashid al-Din. Ghazan made efforts to provide the peasantry with their most basic needs at favourable rates in order to try and restore the economy, but his tying of the peasantry to the land essentially made them indentured servants. Some of these reforms were continued, but even under the last Ilkhan, Abu Said, a great number of taxes not taken by Ghazan and Oljeitu were collected, suggesting that the treasury was still extremely weak. Hamd-Allah Mostawfi's assessments therefore ring true. Despite the Ilkhans' continued promotion of trade, this did not counterbalance the huge problems that existed with their main revenue source, agriculture.<sup>362</sup> Richard Smith takes this notion more globally, observing that 'The killing off of enormous numbers of people meant a loss in productive capacity that could not be compensated for despite the trade-friendly

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<sup>359</sup> D. Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986) 74.

<sup>360</sup> D. Morgan, 'The Mongols in Iran: A Reappraisal', *Iran*, Vol. 42 (2004) 131-6.

<sup>361</sup> Lane, 'The Mongols in Iran', 248; Morgan, *The Mongols*, 80-1.

<sup>362</sup> Lambton, 118, 139-144, 217.

policies of the Mongols.<sup>363</sup> The quantity of international trade and its nature do not suggest that these in any way were able to compensate for the economic problems of the Ilkhanate. Where Mongol damage was less extreme, such as in China, the picture was quite different of course.

Therefore, it seems difficult to substantiate many of the claims that exist around the Pax Mongolica. Indeed, even in its most basic form, the term can only mean periods of time where safety was surer, in different regions. Some sort of century-long block of unlimited trade and exchange is a myth. The idea that what benefitted merchants benefitted the general populace belongs to modern economic theory discussions rather than one focusing on the history of the Mongols. Whether trickle-down economics works in any form today, applying such theories to 14<sup>th</sup> century Eurasia is missing the point. No amount of international trade and exchange would have saved the peasantry from their burden, or, as noted by Timothy May in fact Mongol expansion of trade also expanded the slave trade, bringing it to a global level.<sup>364</sup> Famine and the demands of Mongol government saw many people selling their own children into slavery.

Greater amounts of cultural exchange are also consistently praised in recent Mongol historiography. Unfortunately what some authors seemingly fail to note is that these exchanges could often bring the bad with the good, with Muslim tax-farmers exploiting China and Chinese paper money damaging the economy of Tabriz. It can be too easy to uncritically accept that the Mongols' forcing of people groups and ideas on other regions was a good thing for those regions. Allsen's work on cultural exchange is admirable, but unfortunately a great deal of the source material focuses on Rashid al-Din, and Allsen spends much of his work discussing the vizier's relationship with Bolad Chingsang. While I also find this interaction fascinating, the cultural exchanges were predominantly limited to those at the very top of Mongol government, thus I cannot see how the countries involved would have benefitted on the whole. After all, the culinary and medicinal improvements Allsen mentions would have only been available to the very richest in Mongol society, though these may have later become more widespread.

With these thoughts in mind, perhaps it is time to move away from the idea of a Pax Mongolica. The implications of this term help to whitewash the Mongols' image. If we as historians are to judge them, we must judge them by their actions. In this regard, perhaps using a different term such as May's 'Chinggis Exchange' is more apt, without moralistic connotations. Students can assess the benefits and

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<sup>363</sup> R. Smith- 'Trade and commerce across Afro-Eurasia', in *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (Oxford, 1993) 247.

<sup>364</sup> May, *Mongol Conquests*, 228-9.



disadvantages brought by greater cultural contacts, while not having to adhere to a set belief system which presupposes the boons of Mongol rule. Studying how society was changed by the Mongols is necessary and indeed, extremely interesting, but trying to cover up for them seems unnecessary. The plight of most people changed for the worse with the advent of the Mongols, though for some it did improve. A more nuanced view is required to address different time periods and regions, as well as the situation before and after the dissolution of the Mongol Empire. Qubilai may have been a Mongol, but he ruled China, not the Qipchaq Khanate. Wars did stop travel for some time, while at times there was greater security. As Franke noted, using the term Pax Mongolica leads us away from a true analysis of the sources. Taking for granted an overall 'peace' established by the Mongols could prevent us from looking closely at the situation in Armenia, or in Khorasan. Such a long period covering such a great amount of the world cannot be easily fit into one paradigm such as this, and trying to do so seems entirely unproductive.

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