

Jack Wilson

**The Role of Nogai in Eastern Europe and the Late Thirteenth-Century**

**Golden Horde: A Reassessment**

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University

Vienna

May 2021

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A Reassessment**

by

Jack Wilson

(Canada)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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External Supervisor

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# Abstract

For the late thirteenth century Golden Horde, the figure of Nogai (*c.*1237-*c.*1300) is usually presented in secondary literature as an all-powerful kingmaker who actively appointed and deposed khans at will from 1270-1300. Generally presented as controlling the khans, clamoring for independence, declaring his own autonomous kingdom, or otherwise deliberately undermining the khan, Nogai often appears as the dominant figure of Golden Horde politics in much of the scholarship. However, this depiction does not align with the primary source materials, which show Nogai uninvolved with any of the successions except for the overthrow of Tele-Buqa Khan in 1291. I offer a suggestion to the origins of this khanmaker image, and reinterpretation the events of Nogai's life without the khanmaker dynamic, ignoring the common depiction of the secondary literature to instead focus on the surviving primary source material. Instead of the primary power broker of the Golden Horde, I found Nogai to largely have worked in cooperation with the khans of the Golden Horde, usually more concerned with his own affairs and not seeking independence or to undermine the khans. Only once threatened by the reigning khan, do the primary sources depict Nogai taking part in his removal, a far more limited role than ascribed to him by literature of the last century.

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# Table of contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Secondary Literature .....	5
1.1. Nineteenth and Twentieth Century General Histories.....	5
1.2. Veselovskij.....	6
1.3. Post-Veselovskij studies .....	7
1.4. Nogai, Mamai and Edigu .....	10
Chapter 2: Primary Sources.....	14
2.1. Islamic sources (Golden Horde, Ilkhanate, Mamluk).....	14
2.2. Rus' sources .....	18
2.3. Latin Christian and Byzantine sources .....	19
2.4. Marco Polo.....	21
Chapter 3: 1265-1280.....	25
3.1. Family and Berke-Hulegu War .....	25
3.2. Nogai in the post-Berke period .....	28
3.3. Nogai's arrival in the west, 1267-1270.....	30
3.4. Letter from Nogai to Sultan Baybars, 1270 .....	38
3.5. Nogai in the 1270s.....	42
3.6. The Death of Mongke-Temur .....	45
Chapter 4: 1280-1287.....	48
4.1. Nogai and Tode-Mongke Khan, ca.1280-1287.....	48
4.2. Second Invasion of Hungary, 1285 .....	56
4.3. The overthrow of Tode-Mongke Khan, 1287 .....	60
Chapter 5: 1287-1300.....	63
5.1. Nogai and Tele-Buqa Khan, 1287-1291.....	63



5.2. Nogai and the overthrow of Tele-Buqa Khan, 1291 .....	67
5.3. Nogai and Toqta Khan, 1291-1298 .....	69
5.4. The Reign of Nogai Khan? 1298-1300.....	74
5.5. After Nogai .....	80
Conclusion .....	83
Bibliography .....	87
Primary Sources: .....	87
Secondary Literature: .....	88
Glossary .....	98
Appendices .....	99

# List of Figures

Figure 1: Chinggisid family tree .....	99
Figure 2: Jochid family tree .....	100
Figure 3: Map of the Golden Horde, c. 1290s.....	100

# Introduction

For the late thirteenth-century Golden Horde, the westernmost khanate of the fractured Mongol Empire, no individual is as infamous as Nogai (*c.*1237-1300). A great-great-grandson of Mongol Emperor Chinggis Khan (r.1206-1227) via his first son, Jochi (d.1225), Nogai was the key intermediary between the Golden Horde and Europe from the end of the 1260s until his death in 1300. Over his life, he interfered in the Rus' principalities, Bulgaria, Serbia, the Byzantine Empire, the Hungarian kingdom, the Polish duchies, and the Golden Horde itself. He undertook diplomacy with the Mamluk sultans of Egypt, the Mongol ilkhans of Iran and representatives of the Venetian republic. It was under his command that Mongol armies returned to Hungary and Poland in the 1280s, that Mongol authority was asserted over the Balkans, Moldova and Wallachia, and the threat of his horsemen forced the Byzantine emperor to marry off a daughter to him for peace.

His influence by the end of his life was vast, directly ruling from the Iron Gates of the Danube, from the borders of Thrace to the Dnieper and the Crimean Peninsula. He is most famous for his role as a kingmaker, or in this case, khanmaker. Modern descriptions of Nogai make him the primary power behind the Jochid throne, appointing and deposing khans of the Golden Horde as it suited him. Such actions are mirrored in Europe, where he made the Bulgarian tsars his puppets and enforced his might over neighbouring kingdoms. Nogai's appearance as a khanmaker has been the central viewpoint from which the historiography has investigated his career, painting all his actions as constantly undermining khans to assert his own supreme power. The standard descriptions by historians will often go as follows: with the death of Mongke-Temur Khan in 1280, Nogai first appoints Tode-Mongke (r.1280-1287), Tele-Buqa (r.1287-1291) and finally, Toqta (r.1291-1312) to the Jochid throne. In the dramatic conclusion, Nogai finds himself challenged by his final appointee, Toqta, and failing to replace

Toqta as he had his predecessors, Nogai declares himself khan and goes to war. The old dog is finally overcome and killed by Toqta after a brief civil war, leading to the dissolution of Nogai's "khanate."

This khanmaker depiction has been the key underpinning of Nogai's career in much of the modern scholarly literature. Scholars of different academic fields, from archaeology, history to oriental studies such as Curta, May, Pochekaev, Vásáry, Kovács, Tanase, and others have interpreted Nogai's life in different ways but persistently have him replace and appoint khans.<sup>1</sup> However, the primary sources do not offer direct evidence for such an interpretation. I offer a more nuanced approach, interpreting Nogai's life without the khanmaker role attached to them. With an absence of sources from the Golden Horde itself, we are most reliant on sources from the Ilkhanate of Iran and Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. These surviving chronicles—the Mamluk authors Baybars al-Mansuri and al-Nuwayri, and the great Ilkhanid historian and vizier Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadani—provide the main descriptions of the transitions between the Jochid khans in this period. In the accounts of these authors, Nogai is involved in only a single removal, a joint effort with Toqta in 1291 to overthrow Tele-Buqa Khan.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the sources of the Rus' principalities and Byzantine Empire have Nogai uninvolved in successions except for the overthrow of Tele-Buqa. It is only in a garbled account in the final chapter of Marco Polo's *Description of the World* that Nogai appears to also remove Tode-Mongke

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<sup>1</sup> Florin Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1300)* (Boston: Brill, 2019), 713; Szilvia Kovács, "The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 13 (2016): 51; Marie Favereau, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World* (London: Belknap Press, 2021), 191-92, 194-97, 201; Timothy May, *The Mongol Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 289-91; Roman Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 229-31; Thomas Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogaï et la Géopolitique de la mer Noire en 1287 à travers un document missionnaire: la Lettre de Ladislas, Custode de Gazarie," *Annuario dell'Istituto romeno de cultura e ricerca umanistica di Venezia* 6-7 (2004-2005): 277; István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185-1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 86-88.

<sup>2</sup> Rashiddudin Fazlullah, *Jami' u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols* trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1998), 356-60; [Vladimir Tiesenhausen] Владимир Тизенгаузен, *Сборник Материалов, относящихся к истории золотой орды* [Collection of materials related to the history of the Golden Horde], vol. 1. (Алматы: дайк-Пресс [Almaty: Dyke Press], 2005), (Baybars al-Mansuri) 94-98, (al-Nuwayri) 124, 126-27, (ibn Khaldun), 271-72.

Khan.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a re-assessment of this question is justified on the basis of the primary source materials.

It is common as well for historians who accurately report that Nogai was uninvolved in these transitions to still present him as either totally independent from 1270 onwards, in a constant conflict with the Jochid khan, or conflictingly the “mayor of the palace,” “co-ruler,” or “true master” of the Golden Horde.<sup>4</sup> Collectively, I refer to these as the “khanmaker depiction.” Even when not having him replace khans, his career is still often coloured in the scholarship by an understanding that he was actively undermining them in some manner. Additionally, all manner of claims have grown around him without support from the relevant primary sources, such as Vernadsky’s association of Nogai with the Manghit tribe, a claim that rests entirely on the association between the Manghit and the fifteenth-century Nogai Horde, which has no relation to the thirteenth-century Nogai.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis will explore where this discrepancy between some aspects of the modern scholarship and primary sources has emerged. In the process, I will re-evaluate Nogai’s life and career. As his long tenure on the western edge of the Golden Horde has been viewed primarily through the understanding that he was the khanmaker, how can we then re-examine his career without such a lens? Furthermore, I will explain what did lead him to take part in the overthrow of the khan in 1291, and his war with Toqta Khan. I argue that a significant part of the modern scholarship has thoroughly misrepresented Nogai’s life: rather than overthrowing

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<sup>3</sup> Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, ed. and trans. A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938), 483-89.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia: 980-1584*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 189; Bertold Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde: Die Mongolen in Rußland, 1223-1502* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), 65. Spuler says of Nogai, “Der grosse Emir war nie mehr denn ein Hausmeier, der praktisch über dem Khan stand.”; Tanase, “Le ‘Khan’ Nogai,” 277, where Nogai is the “true master” of the Horde; For ‘co-ruler,’ see George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953): 174-76.

<sup>5</sup> Aleksandar Uzelac, “An Empire Within an Empire? Ethnic and Religious Realities in the Lands of Nogai (c.1270-1300),” *Chronica: Annual of the Institute of History* 18 (2018): 275; Vadim Trepavlov. “The Manghit Yurt (the Nogai Horde),” in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017): 829; Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, 164, 175.

khans or exerting power over the Golden Horde, Nogai's primary concern was his autonomy within his own *ulus* between the Danube and the Dniester, only gradually taking a larger role in the Golden Horde. According to this hypothesis, only once Tele-Buqa threaten him did Nogai take part in overthrowing the khan. This incident gave Nogai his greatest pretensions, leading to the conflict between himself and Toqta that led to his defeat and death by 1300.

To examine this matter, this thesis will be in two halves. The first two chapters will focus on the sources and historiography of Nogai as the khanmaker and seek to understand the origins and development of this image, and why it has become so prevalent. I will offer a critical survey of the literature depiction in the first chapter, and how it aligns with the primary source materials as provided in the second chapter, tying them back again and again to the image of the khanmaker, looking at which historians make these claims and how these differ from the primary sources.

With the relevant primary sources and historiography established, I then offer my reinterpretation of Nogai's life. For this, I will divide Nogai's career into sections to detail his interactions with the Jochid khans: 1262-1280, 1280-1287, and 1287-1300. In these years are events used as oft-cited evidence for his desire for independence. Chapter 3, covering 1262-1280, covers from Nogai's first mentions in the sources, in the Berke-Hulegu War (1262-1266), his transfer to the western steppe, his purpose there, and the first of the Jochid successions relevant to this study. This chapter deals with Nogai in the reigns of Batu and Mongke-Temur Khan. Chapter 4 will cover 1280-1287, the reign of Tode-Mongke Khan when Nogai's autonomy and power are supposed to have increased. The 1285 attack on Hungary and overthrow of Tode-Mongke are addressed here. Finally, in chapter 5, discussing 1287-1300, looks at the reigns of Tele-Buqa Khan and Toqta, Nogai's conflict with both men, and the 1291 coup, concluding with Nogai's possible declaration of independence c. 1296.

# Chapter 1: Secondary Literature

Before re-evaluating Nogai's career, it is necessary to outline the secondary scholarship depiction of the khanmaker image. Its development is difficult to trace but seems to relate to a persistent over-exaggeration of Nogai's influence over time, and a desire to place him into a lineage of Golden Horde kingmakers. The matter of exaggeration shall be addressed first.

## 1.1. Nineteenth and Twentieth Century General Histories

It might be assumed this interpretation originated with d'Ohsson's and Howorth's mid-nineteenth-century general histories on the Mongols. Highly influential, these materials continue to be cited even today and continue to be a source of some pieces of outdated information. D'Ohsson for instance, appears to be the source for erroneous claims that the Mongols were victors in the first engagement with the Volga Bulgars in 1223. Recent popular, though often dubiously researched, works like Chambers' *the Devil's Horsemen* (1988) or McLynn's *Genghis Khan* (2015) used d'Ohsson to cite this battle on the Volga as a Mongol victory. This is despite the primary sources, as Zimonyi has thoroughly demonstrated, indicating a clear Mongol defeat.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, they accurately do not show Nogai appointing or replacing khans, though Howorth describes Nogai as practically independent after Mongke-Temur Khan.<sup>7</sup> Grousset in *L'empire des steppes* (1939) did not directly make Nogai the

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<sup>6</sup> Abraham d'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols depuis Tchinguiz-Khan jusqu'à Timour ou Tamerlan*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (The Hague-Amsterdam: Les Frères Van Cleef, 1852), 346; Frank McLynn, *Genghis Khan: His Conquests, His Empire, His Legacy* (Boston: First da Capo Press, 2015), 343-44; James Chambers, *the Devil's Horsemen: the Mongol Invasion of Europe* (London: Cassel Publishers, 1988), 35; István Zimonyi, "The Volga Bulgars between Wind and Water (1220-1236)," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 46, no. 2/3 (1992/3): 350; István Zimonyi, "The First Mongol Raid Against the Volga-Bulgars," in *Altaistic Studies. Papers at the 25th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference at Uppsala*, ed. G. Jarring and S. Rosén (Stockholm, 1985): 197-204.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham d'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols depuis Tchinguiz-Khan jusqu'à Timour ou Tamerlan*. Vol. 4 (The Hague-Amsterdam: Les Frères Van Cleef, 1834-35), 750-51; Henry H. Howorth, *History of the Mongols: From the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century*, part 2, *The So-Called Tartars of Russia and Central Asia* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co. 1888), 1012-18.

khanmaker, but called him the “real master of the khanate,” and that he appointed Toqta as khan after the death of Tele-Buqa.<sup>8</sup> Despite their prominence, these works do not appear in the direct lineage of most modern claims. Instead, we must go to the work of Veselovskij.

## 1.2. Veselovskij

Veselovskij’s posthumously released 1922 monograph *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды: ногай и его время* was perhaps the most significant work on Nogai of the previous century.<sup>9</sup> It is continually suggested and referenced when it comes to Nogai’s life, relied upon in Vernadsky (1953), Spuler (1965), Halperin (2009), Ciocîltan (2012) and Jackson (2nd ed., 2018), among others.<sup>10</sup> Veselovskij offered for the first time a biography of Nogai, though tended to focus on the source depictions of events in the Golden Horde in the period. For example, a lengthy section is devoted to course of the Berke-Hulegu war in Ilkhanid, Armenian and Mamluk sources.<sup>11</sup>

Veselovskij’s work was a reaction to contemporary Russian historiography. He disagreed with arguments of Markov and Leonid, who called Nogai a khan and founder of his own “Nogayid *ulus*.”<sup>12</sup> Veselovskij rallied against this, arguing that not only did Nogai never take the title of khan, he was fully prevented from doing so, being born to a concubine and therefore unable to legally claim the throne.<sup>13</sup> While Leonid saw Nogai as an independent power from 1270 onwards, Veselovskij disagreed, seeing Nogai’s power tied to the Horde

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<sup>8</sup> René Grousset, *L’Empire des steppes*, 4th ed. (Paris: Payot, 1965), 479-80. “Le véritable maître du khanat était Nogaï, ce Djõtchide d’une branche cadette que nous avons vu à la tête des armées dans les expéditions contre la Perse sous Berké [...]”

<sup>9</sup> [Nikolaj Veselovskij] Николай Веселовский, *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды: ногай и его время* [From temnik to khan of the Golden Horde: Nogai and his time] (Petrograd: Russian Academy of Sciences, 1922).

<sup>10</sup> Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. Samuel Willcocks (Leiden: Brill, 2012): 254; Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke: The Image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2009), 85; Peter Jackson, *Mongols and the West: 1221-1410*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 168, see note 13; Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 64; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 164, 174.

<sup>11</sup> [Veselovskij] *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 4-22.

<sup>12</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 39, 51-52.



itself. His position was based on the legitimacy provided by the Golden Horde, of which he took advantage, but never stood as khan in his own right.<sup>14</sup> To explain Nogai's influence, Veselovskij instead made Nogai the full power behind the throne with the Jochid khans as mere puppets, directly comparing it to Emir Temur's (Tamerlane) usage of puppet khans.<sup>15</sup> To Veselovskij, Nogai rose during the reigns of Berke and Mongke-Temur Khan in alliance with Mongke-Temur's wife, Jijek-Khatun, and then abandoned her once he had achieved the position he required: a secure base on the Danube, military backing, and influence which, in Veselovskij's view, allowed Nogai to control khans.<sup>16</sup> His own illegitimate heritage prevented him from making himself the khan without serious revolts among the Mongol elite. So, Veselovskij argues, Nogai needed to work through his puppet khans to maintain legitimacy and order. And when those khans did not cooperate, he had them removed.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.3. Post-Veselovskij studies

Veselovskij's reading of Rashīd al-Dīn, Baybars, al-Nuwayri, ibn Khaldun, Pachymeres and other relevant authors seemed to him to support such a view. But Veselovskij's conclusions are not tenable. As I will demonstrate, the sources Veselovskij relied upon, largely the Russian translated collection of Islamic sources by Tiesenhausen, do not describe Nogai involved with the transitions between khans except in the fall of Tele-Buqa. The Mamluk and Ilkhanid sources provide plenty of motivation and explanation for the outcome of these successions without the need to place Nogai as a puppet master behind them. Notably, it is only in the case of Tele-Buqa that Veselovskij could describe how Nogai removed him.<sup>18</sup> In his attempt to provide an explanation for Nogai's influence that advanced and stood out from the

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<sup>14</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 22, 39.

<sup>17</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 37-39.

arguments of the contemporary Russian historiography, Veselovskij's work resulted in the popularization of the khanmaker image in western European, specifically English, historiography.

As the only significant monograph of Nogai for the twentieth century, Veselovskij's work remained unchallenged as "the classic study," to quote Halperin.<sup>19</sup> In the absence of another full work on Nogai in both Russian and English scholarship, it became a definitive reference by default, and thus popularized the khanmaker image. Prior to that, such as in the works of Howorth and Grousset, Nogai was influential but not actively appointing and deposing khans. After Veselovskij, Nogai became the grand master of the Golden Horde, a forerunner to late fourteenth and fifteenth century khanmakers in the Jochid *ulus*, Mamai and Edigu. In his popular *The Mongols and Russia* (1953), Vernadsky, who cited Veselovskij, does not make Nogai appoint or depose Tode-Mongke, but rather makes Nogai the khan of "the Mangykt," and "a virtual co-ruler with the new Khan," writing:

Whatever may have been Nogay's legal status, he actually became more powerful than the official Khan of [the Golden Horde], although not powerful enough to eliminate the latter altogether. The result was an unstable duality in government, and while at the times the two khans cooperated with each other, on several occasions they insured contradictory orders which created utter confusion, at least in Russian affairs.<sup>20</sup>

Vernadsky's work will be returned to throughout this thesis, as he added many additional myths to the image of Nogai.

By the time of Vásáry's excellent study *Cumans and Tatars* (2005), the influence of Veselovskij can be detected, though he does not discuss the problem as a central question to his arguments:

In his own native Golden Horde he became the strong man, a real kingmaker, as Batu Khan had been earlier; all three successive khans, Tuda-Mengu (1280-7), Telebuga (1287-91) and Toqta (1291-1312), owed their accession to the throne to Nogay's

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<sup>19</sup> Halperin, *the Tatar Yoke*, 85, note.

<sup>20</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174-75.

effective help and power. Soon his appetite grew, and his attention turned to Bulgaria, where he wanted to play the same kingmaker role.<sup>21</sup>

Followed shortly by this description:

Prince Nogay, the kingmaker, must have been dissatisfied with his latest choice. Telebuga, who ascended to the throne in 1287, was headstrong and seemingly did not want to play the role of an obedient puppet, so Nogay soon decided to make away with him. He was ensnared and killed by Nogay and his men, and Nogay's new protege, Mengu-Tamur's son Toqta, was given the khan's throne in 1291.<sup>22</sup>

A similar interpretation is presented by Pochekaev. Aware that Rashīd al-Dīn and Mamluk sources do not ascribe the removal of Tode-Mongke to Nogai, but to Tele-Buqa, Pochekaev attempts to combine the primary sources with the literature depiction:

Nogai, who was outraged even by Khan Tode Mongke's tentative attempts at limiting his power and influence, soon established friendly relations with the pugnacious [Tele-Buqa] and soon persuaded him and several of his brothers and cousins to carry out a coup d'état. In 1287, the tsareviches declared Tode-Mongke insane and removed him from the throne (with his own permission, according to the official historiography). The next in line to be declared khan was Tula-Buga, Nogai's associate [...] However, Nogai believed him to be too hot-tempered and pugnacious, so he forced him to share supreme power with his brother Kunchek and cousins Algui and Tughril, sons of Mongke-Temur, at the insistence of the *beklyaribek*, who was in fact the temporary ruler of the Golden Horde.<sup>23</sup>

A totally conflicting version was put forth by May in his 2018 overview of the Mongol Empire. In May's version, the cause of Tode-Mongke's removal was not a flimsy attempt to reign in Nogai, but instead a *failure* on the part of Tode-Mongke to exert any power.

Tode-Mongke, however, failed as a ruler and lacked the ability to make difficult decisions, which led him to abdicate after a brief civil war, while the Rus' princes who had fallen from favour with the Jochid court took refuge with Noghai. The fact that Noghai forced Tode-Mongke to abdicate indicates that Noghai was, at least initially, looking for more than a puppet. As Noghai rose to power during the reigns of two very strong rulers in Berke and Mongke-Temur, he may have sought a similar ruler before settling onto his new *modus operandi*.<sup>24</sup>

May, citing Vásáry, then simply mentions how Nogai placed Tele-Buqa on the throne.

Favereau's 2021 *the Horde* is one of the most recent additions to historiography of the Golden

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<sup>21</sup> Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 86.

<sup>22</sup> Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 88.

<sup>23</sup> Pochekaev, "First Ruler of the Ulus of Jochi," 231.

<sup>24</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 291.

Horde and adheres fully to the khanmaker interpretation. In Favereau's work, Nogai is constantly scheming against the khans from Mongke-Temur onwards, with an independent foreign policy to the Mamluks and Ilkhanate, placing Tode-Mongke on the throne, then forcing him to abdicate and replacing him with Tele-Buqa.<sup>25</sup> Favereau's study demonstrates how Nogai's khanmaker persona is present even in the newest literature. Where the primary sources have Tele-Buqa and his cousins lead a coup against a feeble Tode-Mongke without Nogai, the scholarship has turned this into Nogai exerting near total control on the succession.

## 1.4. Nogai, Mamai and Edigu

Nogai as a khanmaker has been easily accepted by the scholarship as it also fits into a cycle of Golden Horde kingmakers, with Nogai as a forerunner to Mamai and Edigu. These later historical figures influenced the interpretation of Nogai, although the relevant primary source materials are rather different in their depictions. At the same time, the later examples can seem to indicate a presence of a pattern. With the Golden Horde's "Time of Troubles," after 1360, the authority of the khan broke down as multiple claimants fought over the throne while the Black Death, economic struggles and invasions destabilized matters further. In this period true kingmakers who reduced the khans to figureheads emerged. In the Mongol Empire's successor states, non-Chinggisid figures (*qarachu*) had to maintain puppet khans of Chinggisid lineage, as the Turkic-Mongolian elite only recognized a member of the *altan urag*, descendants of Chinggis Khan, as legitimate rulers. For example, Tamerlane's 1370 "enthronement" was actually the enthronement of his first puppet Chinggisid with Tamerlane as his "protector."<sup>26</sup> In contrast, in c. 1365 in the eastern Chagatai Khanate, the Dughlat emir

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<sup>25</sup> Favereau, *The Horde*, 191-92, 194-97, 201.

<sup>26</sup> Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Temür and the early Timurids to c. 1450" in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, eds. Nicola di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank and Peter B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184.

Qamar al-Din sought to take power without a Chinggisid khan, and due to this faced continued armed resistance from the local Mongol chiefs even in the face of invasions by Tamerlane.<sup>27</sup>

The common assumption is that any influential power figure in a Mongol state who was not a Chinggisid had to operate via a puppet khan, in order to avoid serious revolt.

In the Golden Horde, the first khanmaker was Mamai (d.1381), a non-Chinggisid based in the western steppes who continually fought to exert his influence over the Horde's capital of Sarai, taking the city multiple times and installing his own puppet khans, but never able to dominate the Golden Horde itself. His influence lasted from the beginning of the 1360s until his defeat at Kulikovo in 1380 and death fleeing the powerful Khan Toqtamish soon after.<sup>28</sup> After Tamerlane's devastating campaigns against the Golden Horde in the 1390s, he approved another kingmaker alongside a puppet khan, a non-Chinggisid named Edigu (d.1419). Edigu grew as the real power in the Horde, to the point that in Tamerlane's final days he considered allying with the deposed Toqtamish to remove him. The new *beylerbey* in charge of the Horde was the last figure to hold the fracturing khanate together. Pushed from power and killed by a son of the late Toqtamish in 1419, the loss of Edigu precipitated the disintegration of the Golden Horde into regional khanates.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hodong Kim, "The Early History of the Moghul Nomads: The Legacy of the Chagatai Khanate," in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, eds. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Text Vol. 24. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 299-300.

<sup>28</sup> Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 224, 236-37; May, *the Mongol Empire*, 303; Ilnur Mirgaleyev, "The Time of Troubles in the 1360s and 1370s," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 690-91; István Vásáry, "The Jochid Realm: The Western Steppe and Eastern Europe," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. Nicola di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank and Peter B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81-82.

<sup>29</sup> Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403-1406*, trans. Guy Le Strange (Routledge: London, 2006), 156; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 388; May, *the Mongol Empire*, 308-09; Ilnur Mirgaleyev, "Attempts to Restore the Golden Horde at the End of the 14- Beginning of the 15th Century," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau, (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017): 696; Roman Reva, "Struggle for Power in the First Half of the 15th Century," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau, (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017): 700-03; Vásáry, "the Jochid Realm," 83-84.

The might of khans like Toqta (r.1291-1312) and Ozbeg (r.1313-1341), followed by the weakening of the khans after 1359 and emergence of the khanmakers Mamai and Edigu has made it convenient for dividing the Golden Horde's history into a series of kingmakers punctuated by periods of strong khans, and therefore desirable to see Nogai as a precursor to Mamai and Edigu. Vásáry, for instance, wrote "during Temür-Qutlugh's reign [1395-1399] and the first two decades of the fifteenth century, Edigü, whom we can consider the third great king-maker of the Golden Horde, similar to Noghai and Mamai, emerged."<sup>30</sup> Of Mamai, Vernadsky wrote "in a sense Mamay's realm was a replica of Nogay's Empire, though it did not extend as far west," and of Edigu, "their support [the Manghit] greatly helped Edigey in seizing power in the Golden Horde—as it had helped Nogay about 130 years earlier."<sup>31</sup> May in *the Mongol Empire* took this further and made Edigu a descendant of Nogai, stating the former was acting in the role of his ancestor by becoming a kingmaker.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Edigu is considered the ancestor and "folk hero" of the Nogai Horde, a non-Chinggisid Turkic successor-state to the Golden Horde that emerged in the fifteenth century, has fueled confusion in this matter. Despite its name, the Nogai Horde bears no connection to the thirteenth century Nogai and was founded by the sons of Edigu after his death.<sup>33</sup>

The Golden Horde's history, in this model, becomes cyclical. Strong khans (Batu to Mongke-Temur, 1241-1280), kingmaker (Nogai, 1280-1300), strong khans (Toqta to Janibeg, 1300-1359), kingmaker (Mamai, 1360s-1380), strong khan (Toqtamish, 1380-1395), kingmaker (Edigu, 1395-1419). Such a model has encouraged focusing on the one coup and raising of a khan that Nogai did take part in (the fall of Tele-Buqa and enthronement of Toqta) in order to fit into this cycle. To put Nogai into the mold of Mamai and Edigu required forcing every event of Nogai's career into this khanmaker dynamic.

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<sup>30</sup> Vásáry, "the Jochid Realm," 84.

<sup>31</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 246, 282.

<sup>32</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 308-09; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 282.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 388; Trepavlov, "The Manghit Yurt," 836.

Not all modern authors follow this interpretation. Uzelac, for instance, has remarked on this inaccurate depiction in his most recent works and strenuously avoided it.<sup>34</sup> Yet even for authors who do not have Nogai removing khans, the idea of him as the true power within the Golden Horde or an independent power has been difficult to move beyond. Every event in his life has been understood as plots against the Jochid khans. Due to this, further significant misinterpretations of the sources have thrived in the scholarship. The next chapter will therefore outline what the primary sources say on the matter of these royal transitions and demonstrate how they clearly do not describe Nogai as a khanmaker.

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<sup>34</sup> Uzelac, “An Empire within an Empire?” 271. In his older works, Uzelac called Nogai the khanmaker. See Uzelac, “Tatars and Serbs at the End of the Thirteenth Century,” *Revista de istorie Militară*, 5-6 (2011): 9, 11, 15-16.

## Chapter 2: Primary Sources

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the relevant primary source traditions which form the basis of our knowledge of Nogai's career: namely, the contemporary Mamluk and Ilkhanid sources, then the supporting, but less informed, accounts from the Byzantine Empire, Rus' principalities, and sparse accounts from western European sources. This will illustrate how some historians have relied on earlier secondary literature rather than revisiting the primary sources. To compare the accounts, I focus on the transitions between khans in the late thirteenth-century Golden Horde: from Mongke-Temur Khan to his brother Tode-Mongke Khan (1280/1282), Tode-Mongke to Tele-Buqa Khan (1287) and Tele-Buqa to Toqta Khan (1291), and see how each source describes Nogai's involvement, or lack thereof. These events will be examined in further detail in the following chapters. What will be apparent is that the primary sources only place Nogai in the overthrow of Tele-Buqa Khan in cooperation with Toqta 1291, with no source showing him in his oft ascribed khanmaker depiction.

### 2.1. Islamic sources (Golden Horde, Ilkhanate, Mamluk)

No primary source material from the Golden Horde for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries survives, leaving us reliant on accounts from outside of the Horde to reconstruct its internal history. Only from the sixteenth onwards do sources emerge from some former regions of the Golden Horde, such as the Khiva-based *Qara-Tawarikh* of Ötemish Hajji, but these appear to largely repeat oral folktales or Persian accounts, rather than an independent historiographical tradition that sheds light on the thirteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Of the contemporary

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<sup>35</sup> See Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 143-44 and Charles J. Halperin, "The Missing Golden Horde Chronicles and Historiography in the Mongol Empire," *Mongolian Studies* 23 (2000): 1-15; Утемин-хаджи [Ötemish Hajji] *Қара таварих [Qara-Tawarikh-The Black History]*, trans. Inur Mirgaleev (Kazan: Sh.Marjani Institute of History, 2017), 6-12.



foreign accounts, the most detailed information comes from the Ilkhanate, the Horde's Mongol enemies in Iran, and the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, the Horde's diplomatic ally against the Ilkhans. Administrators from both states wrote detailed chronicles that are the basis for most of our understanding of the Golden Horde's political history. For Nogai and his career, we are mainly concerned with authors writing in the first years of the fourteenth century.

From the Ilkhanate we have the mammoth universal history of the vizier and historian Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318). A Jewish physician who converted to Islam and served in the ilkhan's *keshig*, from the 1290s onward he occupied the highest position at the Ilkhanid court and was contemporary to many of the events he wrote about. Highly educated and well read, he had access to now lost Mongolian language sources and genealogical documents and placed great reliance on Mongolian sources for his history. As much as possible, he verified his data through discussions with prominent figures, from the ilkhans, judges from the Yuan Dynasty and diplomats from the Golden Horde. The result of his efforts was the Persian language *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh*, a unique "world history," providing chronologies of events in China, the Muslim world and Europe, as well as forming one of the single most important sources on the Mongol Empire.<sup>36</sup>

Rashīd al-Dīn gives an overview of the political history of the Golden Horde and details Nogai's own interactions with the Ilkhanate, particularly his role in the Berke-Hulegu war (1262-1266). The *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh* briefly describes the transitions from Mongke-Temur

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Though some of Ötemish Hajji's information was collected from the Volga Basin, it was written in Khiva, Uzbekistan, to legitimize his Shibanid masters, a periphery branch of the Jochids who were relatively recent arrivals to Central Asia. The *Qara-Tawarikh* does not mention Nogai or his life.

<sup>36</sup> Terry Allen, "Byzantine Sources for the *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh* of Rashīd al-Dīn," *Ars Orientalis*, 15 (1985): 121; Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 75; Christopher P. Atwood, "Rashīd al-Dīn's Ghazanid Chronicle and Its Mongolian Sources," in *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*, eds. Timothy May, Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan and Christopher P. Atwood, (Boston: Brill, 2020), 53-56, 62-63, 81-83, 109; John Andrew Boyle, "Rashīd Al-Dīn and the Franks," *Central Asiatic Journal* 14, no. 1/3 (1970): 62-63; Jonathan Brack, "Rashīd al-Dīn: Buddhism in Iran and the Mongol Silk Roads," in *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, Intellectuals*, eds. Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 217-20; Stefan Kamola, "A Sensational and Unique Novelty: The Reception of Rashid al-Din's World History," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 58 no. 1 (2020): 50-51; May, *Mongol Empire*, 245-46.

Khan to Tode-Mongke (here dated 1282-3) and Tode-Mongke Khan to Tele-Buqa (1287). In both cases, Rashīd al-Dīn makes no mention of Nogai, while also specifying that Tele-Buqa seized the throne and ruled jointly with a group of Jochid princes, who Rashīd al-Dīn lists as Alghui, Toghril, Konchak and Tartu.<sup>37</sup> It is only for the overthrow of Tele-Buqa Khan and his princes in 1291 that Rashīd al-Dīn finally gives Nogai a role. In contrast to the secondary literature, Nogai is not the proactive party. In Rashīd al-Dīn's account, he only intervenes on the request of Toqta, a son of the late Mongke-Temur Khan on the run from Tele-Buqa. Fearing for his life, Toqta fled to Nogai for shelter. Nogai then tricked Tele-Buqa and his party to come to his camp unarmed, where Toqta kills them. Toqta then became Khan with Nogai's assistance but was not appointed by him.<sup>38</sup>

Working for a state hostile to the Golden Horde, Rashīd al-Dīn was not driven by any need to glorify Nogai or the Jochids, whom he alludes to as Gog and Magog, illegitimate rulers from the Land of Darkness kept at bay by his employers, the illustrious Ilkhans.<sup>39</sup> With pleasure does Rashīd al-Dīn describe Nogai's reaction to learning of the approach of 30,000 Ilkhanid reinforcements during the Berke-Hulegu war: “[Nogai] took fright at these words and turned pale. Tucking his tail between his legs, he said nothing more.”<sup>40</sup> Most of Rashīd's information on the Golden Horde and Nogai was likely taken from diplomatic channels with the Jochids, which as vizier he had unparalleled access to.

Histories written in the nearby Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt in the early fourteenth century generally align with the account of Rashīd al-Dīn. This is significant, as the Mamluks were favourable to the Jochids and antagonistic to the Toluid Ilkhanate. The writing of Rashīd al-Dīn and the early Mamluk authors occurred independently of each other. While several

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<sup>37</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356, 506-14, 563.

<sup>38</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356-60.

<sup>39</sup> Stefan Kamola, “History and Legend in the *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh*: Abraham, Alexander, and Oghuz Khan.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25 no. 4 (2015): 565, 567-68, 571-73.

<sup>40</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh* 508.

Mamluk authors, such as al-Nuwayri, al-'Ayni and even ibn Khaldun, give account of events in the thirteenth century Golden Horde, they largely drew from Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Mansuri (c.1247-1325) and his *Zubdat al-Fikra*.<sup>41</sup> Baybars al-Mansuri was, like his contemporary Rashīd al-Dīn, in a privileged position to collect information, spending years among the highest echelons of the Mamluk state, serving as *dawadar* and *nā'ib al-saltāna* (vice-sultan).<sup>42</sup> As a top level bureaucrat dealing with foreign correspondence, Baybars al-Mansuri had access to letters sent by Nogai to the Mamluk Sultanate, as well as, in the opinion of Porsin, information from a first-hand observer of Nogai's final years. Indeed, Porsin suggests that Baybars' informant was associated with Nogai's daughter Togulja and her husband Taz.<sup>43</sup> Baybars' account of the royal transitions within the Jochid *ulus* follows that of Rashīd al-Dīn, with a few added details. For instance, Baybars' specifies that Mongke-Temur Khan died of a throat abscess; Tode-Mongke Khan renounces the throne for Tele-Buqa after going insane, becoming obsessed with "sheikhs and fakirs,"; and the cause of Tele-Buqa and Nogai's falling out stems from their conflict following the withdrawal from Poland and Hungary, causing Tele-Buqa to plot against Nogai. Nogai learns of Tele-Buqa's plotting, and with Toqta similarly tricks and kills Tele-Buqa Khan.<sup>44</sup> Just like Rashīd al-Dīn, Baybars al-Mansuri gives Nogai no role in the succession of the khans until the overthrow of Tele-Buqa. In both traditions, Nogai is not the instigator even for the overthrow of Tele-Buqa, acting only once Toqta involved him or Tele-Buqa threatened him.

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<sup>41</sup> Reuven Amitai, "al-Nuwayrī as a Historian of the Mongols," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt: (c.950-1800)* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Brill: Leiden, 2000), 33; [Artem Porsin] Артем Порсин, "ИСТОЧНИК ИНФОРМАЦИИ РУКН АД-ДИНА БЕЙБАРСА В ОСВЕЩЕНИИ ИМ МЕЖДОУСОБНОЙ ВОЙНЫ В ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЕ В КОНЦЕ XIII – НАЧАЛЕ XIV ВЕКОВ" [Source of information of Rukn al-Din Baybars in his description of the civil war in the Golden Horde in the 13th-early 14th centuries,] *Golden Horde Review*, 4 (2015): 30.

<sup>42</sup> D.S. Richards, "A Mamluk Amir's Mamluk History: Baybars al-Mansuri's *Zubdat al-Fikra*," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt: (c.950-1800)* ed. Hugh Kennedy, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 37-38.

<sup>43</sup> [Porsin,] "Источники информации Рукн ад-Дина Бейбарса," 36; DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, 88.

<sup>44</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 94-98.

Rashīd al-Dīn completed the *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh* by 1311, covering dates up until 1306. The *Zubdat al-Fikra* covers events up to 1311, and Baybars was arrested in 1312, spending five years in prison before release and quiet retirement. It is not clear if Baybars worked on the *Zubdat* after his arrest, so the *Zubdat al-Fikra* and *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh* were essentially completed around the same time, c. 1311. Therefore, Baybars did not use Rashīd al-Dīn as a source for his own writing.<sup>45</sup> While Rashīd al-Dīn worked for a state antagonistic to the Golden Horde, the Mamluk Sultanate considered the Jochids their allies, even if the early fourteenth century was a period of cooler relations between the Golden Horde and Mamluks.<sup>46</sup> With this combination of factors, I believe we can rely comfortably on the version of events described by Rashīd al-Dīn and Baybars.

## 2.2. Rus' sources

The above sources from Islamic writers are by far the most informed on the political events of the late thirteenth-century Golden Horde. Despite being dominated by the Horde, the sources of the Rus' principalities provide only few hints for anything that did not affect them directly. *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, for instance, makes no mention of any of the successions until 1291, when it laconically states that “The same year there was tumult among the Tartars; Tsar Nogui killed Tsars Telebeg and Algui.”<sup>47</sup> A similarly brief statement is made in the *Nikonian Chronicle*, where Toqta and Nogai overcome “Khans Tele Buga and Sool-gui [Algui].”<sup>48</sup> *The Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* describes in detail the fallout between Nogai and Tele-Buqa after the Hungarian and Polish campaigns, but makes no mention of the

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<sup>45</sup> Allen, “Byzantine Sources,” 121; Rashiduddin, *Jami u't tawarikh*, vii; Richards, “Mamluk History,” 38; [Porsin,] “Источник информации Рукн ад-Дина Бейбарса,” 36.

<sup>46</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 170-71.

<sup>47</sup> *The Chronicle of Novgorod 1016-1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes, (London: Camden Society, 1914), 111.

<sup>48</sup> *The Nikonian Chronicle*, trans. Serge A. Zenkovsky and Betty Jean Zenkovsky, vol. 3 (Princeton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1986), 81.

outcome of their feud.<sup>49</sup> These sources comment on events concerning the Rus' directly, such as Grand Duke Dmitri Alexandrovich's fraught relations with the khans or punitive raids against the Rus' by the Mongols, or the actions of *basqaqs* (tax-collectors), but do not mention the deaths of khans between Berke and Tele-Buqa. Tode-Mongke Khan is not even mentioned by name in the Rus' chronicles.<sup>50</sup> The Rus' sources are not well informed on events within the Horde but do have the tendency to refer to Nogai as *tsar*.<sup>51</sup> It is true that the Rus' referred to the Jochid khan as *tsar*, and based on this Vernadsky asserted that Nogai must have been using the title of khan since the early 1280s.<sup>52</sup> Note however, how the above quote from the *Chronicle of Novgorod* calls both Tele-Buqa and Algui *tsar*; yet, the Mamluk and Ilkhanid sources do not indicate Algui, one of the princes in Tele-Buqa's coup, took the title of khan. As will be demonstrated in chapter 5.4, *tsar* seems to have simply marked a Chinggisid prince. As already noted, the Rus' chronicles are not well informed on events that took place amongst the Jochids, and thus too much reliance cannot be placed upon their usage of *tsar* as an indication of relationship or rank. Regardless, the Rus' sources do not present Nogai interfering with the appointment and removal of khans before the overthrow of Tele-Buqa, matching the depiction from the Islamic sources.

### 2.3. Latin Christian and Byzantine sources

From Latin Christian sources, little can be gleaned for events within the Golden Horde. There is certainly evidence that Europeans saw Nogai as very powerful. One example comes from a late thirteenth-century letter from a Franciscan monastery in Crimea. Dated to 1287, the letter refers to envoys arriving from Nogai and Tele-Buqa, dubbed "*imperatores enim*

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<sup>49</sup> *The Hypatian Codex II: The Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, trans. George A. Perfecky, (Munich: Wilhem Fink, 1973), 96-98.

<sup>50</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 63-64, 69, 71-74; Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 63; Halperin, *Tatar Yoke*, 82-83.

<sup>51</sup> Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 64; Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 274; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174-75.

*Thelebuga et Nohay*,” “the emperors Tele-Buqa and Nogai.”<sup>53</sup> Ciocîltan similarly reports that the Venetian senate in 1291 decided to send an envoy “*ad imperatorem noqa*,” “to the emperor, Nogai.”<sup>54</sup> As described in the work of Simon of St. Quentin, written in the 1240s, “this name “khan” or “chaam” is a title and it expresses king or emperor [*imperator*] —or even eminent or glorified — but the Tartars assign this exclusively to their ruler, refraining from using his own personal name.”<sup>55</sup> Evidently *imperator* was used as equivalent to *khan*. However, I do not believe it is evidence for Nogai’s actual holding of the title, but indicative of the influence he held within the Jochid *ulus*, as the *beylerbey* and *aqa*, senior prince of the lineage.<sup>56</sup> No contemporary European source, barring one exception described below, appears to discuss the transitions between the Jochid khans.

Of the Byzantine sources, the main source for Nogai and the Golden Horde is the *Historia* of Georgios Pachymeres (1242-c.1310). A high-ranking member of the patriarchal hierarchy, Pachymeres spoke with diplomats to the Golden Horde for much of his information.<sup>57</sup> His account is the most detailed of the Byzantine authors for the period 1261-1300 and serves as the basis for other fourteenth-century Byzantine authors discussing these years. Nikephoros Gregoras, for instance, when discussing the Golden Horde lifts directly from Pachymeres.<sup>58</sup> While Pachymeres discusses the Mongols (whom he calls Tocharians) at length, he and his successors wrote of the Ilkhanate with more detail and interest, seeing the Ilkhans

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<sup>53</sup> Kovács, “The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun,” 50; see Tanase, “Le ‘Khan’ Nogai,” for a French translation of the letter, pg. 268 onwards.

<sup>54</sup> Ciocîltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 160.

<sup>55</sup> *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, ed. Stephen Pow, Tamás Kiss, Anna Romsics, Flora Ghazaryan, Accessed February January 5, 2021, [www.simonofstquentin.org](http://www.simonofstquentin.org), bk 32, ch. 34. “Et hoc quidem nomen chan sive chaam est appellativum idemque sonat quod rex vel imperator, sive magnificus vel magnificatus, sed hoc Tartari singulariter attribunt domino suo, nomen ejus proprium reticendo.” Thanks to Stephen Pow for confirming the usage.

<sup>56</sup> Uzelac, “An Empire within an Empire?” 271.

<sup>57</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 160.

<sup>58</sup> Nathan John Cassidy, “A Translation and Historical Commentary of Book One and Book Two of the *Historia* of Geōrgios Pachymerēs,” PhD dissertation, University of Western Australia (2004): xv-xvi; Kaldellis, *Ethnography*, 164; Dimitri Korobeinikov, “The Ilkhans in the Byzantine Source,” in *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*, ed. Timothy May, Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan and Christopher P. Atwood (Boston: Brill, 2020), 398.

as more civilized. He gives a laudatory eulogy for the Ilkhan Ghazan (r.1295-1304), who despite being a Muslim, Pachymeres treated as an almost ideal Christian ruler, one he hoped would rescue the Byzantine Empire from the threat they faced from Turks in Anatolia.<sup>59</sup> Pachymeres saw the Mongols embodying a idealized “noble savage,” trope, who were uncorrupted (unlike the Byzantines) while also a step above other “Scythians” due to having a lawgiver (Chinggis Khan) and purpose (conquest), something picked up by other Byzantine writers of the fourteenth century like Theodoros Metochites and Nikephoros Gregoras.<sup>60</sup> Pachymeres’ account has several episodes with Nogai, focusing on Nogai’s interactions with the Byzantine Empire and Bulgaria and shows little awareness of events within the Golden Horde. At one point, he quite erroneously makes Toqta Khan the heir apparent of Ghazan Ilkhan.<sup>61</sup> Pachymeres depicts Nogai’s autonomy on the western edge of the Black Sea and at one point calls him the leader of the “Western Tatars,” but then notes how Nogai was sent to the lower Danube by order of the Golden Horde khan.<sup>62</sup> Pachymeres, despite showing the influence of Nogai, does not describe him appointing or removing khans. The Byzantine sources are only concerned with events as they directly impact the Byzantine Empire.

## 2.4. Marco Polo

The only source which gives Nogai a role in a deposition of a khan prior to Tele-Buqa is Marco Polo. He had only returned to Venice in 1295 from the Yuan Dynasty when he was

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<sup>59</sup> Cassidy, “Translation,” 96; Kaldellis, *Ethnography*, 160; Korobeinikov, “Ilkhans in Byzantine Sources,” 398, 400, 402-04; Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 134.

<sup>60</sup> Kaldellis, *Ethnography*, 159-65; Korobeinikov, “Ilkhans in Byzantine Sources,” 396, 402.

<sup>61</sup> Korobeinikov, “Ilkhans in Byzantine Sources,” 403. Pachymeres’ remark that Ghazan’s kingdom belonged to Toqta because of his birth may be a hazy recognition of the original Jochid claims on the Caucasus (where most of the Ilkhanid capitals were situated).

<sup>62</sup> Korobeinikov, “Ilkhans in Byzantine Sources,” 395-96; *Georges Pachymères Relations Historiques*, part 1, *Livres I-III*, ed. and trans. Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984), III.4; *Georges Pachymères Relations Historiques*, part 2, *Livres VI-VI*, ed. and trans. Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984), V.3.

swept up in war with Genoa and captured in c.1298/1299.<sup>63</sup> While imprisoned he dictated his famous *Description of the World* to his cellmate and ghostwriter, Rustichello. At some point prior to or during his captivity, he learned of events going on simultaneously within the Golden Horde. A brief history of the Golden Horde and the war between Nogai and Toqta make up the final pages of the *Description of the World*. Polo's source of information is unclear. He may have collected some during his trip through the Ilkhanate and Anatolia over 1294-1295, aided by his knowledge of Turkic languages. While his father and uncle visited the Golden Horde, Marco never saw it himself, and all his information came from second- or third (or more) hand accounts.<sup>64</sup> His most likely sources were the Italian merchants in the Black Sea. The Venetian presence there increased in the second half of the thirteenth century, joined by the Genoese in Crimea after 1261.<sup>65</sup> Polo's uncle maintained a house there in Sudaq in the 1260s.<sup>66</sup> On his return to Venice, Polo may have heard from Crimean merchants of events among the Mongols, a topic he would surely have been interested in. Polo's failure to mention Nogai's December 1298 attack on Sudaq and other Crimean cities hosting Italian merchants suggest his information was gathered prior to this.<sup>67</sup> The result is an account which, despite featuring a recognizable outline of events as portrayed in the Islamic sources, features notable errors.

Polo gives a slightly different order of khans, switching the order of Tode-Mongke and Tele-Buqa, having Tele-Buqa now overthrown by Nogai and Tode-Mongke. After Tode-

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<sup>63</sup> Stephen G. Haw, *Marco Polo's China: A Venetian in the Realm of Khubilai Khan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41, 51.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen G. Haw, "The Persian Language in Yuan-Dynasty China: A Reappraisal," *East Asian History* 39 (2014): 10-18. Based off Polo's usage of Turkic terms and other references from the text, Haw suggests Polo knew several Turkic languages.

<sup>65</sup> Michel Balard, "The Greeks of Crimea under Genoese Rule in the XIVth and XVth Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49 (1995), 23; Eric Slater, "Caffa: Early Western Expansion in the Late Medieval World, 1261-1475," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 29 no. 3 (2006): 271; Aleksander Uzelac, "Latin Empire of Constantinople, the Jochids and Crimea in the mid-Thirteenth Century," *Golden Horde Review* no. 3 (2015): 70-71.

<sup>66</sup> Louise Buenger Robbert, "Rialto Businessmen and Constantinople, 1204-1261," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49 (1995): 55.

<sup>67</sup> Roman Hautala, "The Fictional Tatar Massacre of Greeks in Sudak (Crimea) in 1278: The Problem of Forced Interpretation of a Single Source (*unis testis*)," in *Tieto vai mielikuvat? Kohtaamiset, representaatiot ja yhteisöt muuttuvassa maailmassa*, ed. Kari Alenius, Maija Kallinen and Maria Julku, (Societas Historica Finlandiae Septentrionalis: Rovaniemi, 2019), 198-200.



Mongke's death, the sons of Tele-Buqa go to the new khan, Toqta, seeking revenge for their father's death, which in Polo's account leads to war between Toqta and Nogai.<sup>68</sup> However, in the 'F' manuscript of the *Description of the World* the names of Tele-Buqa and Tode-Mongke are transposed partway through the chapter, and it becomes the sons of Tode-Mongke demanding revenge.<sup>69</sup> Thus for some lines of one manuscript tradition ('F') the *Description of the World* refers to Nogai as if he had removed Tode-Mongke Khan as well. This is the only instance, as far I am aware, of a medieval source implying Nogai overthrew a khan of the Golden Horde other than Tele-Buqa. It seems entirely attributable to a fourteenth-century copyist or translator's confusion with "Tatar names." The 'F' tradition of the *Description of the World*, written in Franco-Italian in the early 1300s, is the oldest and best surviving of the extant early Polo manuscripts, and among the most popular.<sup>70</sup> Moule and Pelliot note that only some editions end with the correct outcome of the war. That is, some manuscripts (such as 'F') end on a premature declaration of Nogai's victory over Toqta, indicating that the original version of the *Description of the World* was written before news of Nogai's final defeat reached Europe.<sup>71</sup> Polo's depiction of the overthrow of Tele-Buqa will be returned to in chapter 4.3.

In the primary sources briefly examined here, only in one account, Polo's, is there a hint of Nogai taking part in the removal of a khan other than Tele-Buqa. Despite Latin, Byzantine, and Rus' statements indicative of Nogai's influence, in none of these sources, most importantly the highly detailed Mamluk and Ilkhanid sources, does Nogai ever appoint and remove Tode-Mongke Khan, or appoint Tele-Buqa Khan. In contrast the Mamluk authors have Tode-Mongke assert himself over his own nephews to take the throne, and Tele-Buqa leads the

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<sup>68</sup> Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 483-84.

<sup>69</sup> Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 484, see note 1, which reads "Here and in every instance below the names Totamangu [Tode-Mongke] and Tolobuga [Tele-Buqa] are transposed in F. In the version the correct name is restored."

<sup>70</sup> Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 41.

<sup>71</sup> Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 489, note 2. The 'F' manuscripts end with Nogai forcing Toqta and Tele-Buqa's sons to flight, while 'Z' manuscripts have a short epilogue where Tele-Buqa is avenged and Nogai killed by Toqta.

coup against Tode-Mongke in conjunction with a group of Jochid princes.<sup>72</sup> The only direct evidence for Nogai taking part in the removal of a khan is the overthrow of Tele-Buqa in 1291, acting alongside Toqta. This is agreed upon in Ilkhanid, Mamluk and Rus' sources. It is also not clear that Nogai placed Toqta on the throne, as it may have been on Toqta's initiative that Nogai intervened in the first place. Likewise, when war broke out between Toqta and Nogai in the 1290s, the matter does not seem to have arisen out of Nogai attempting to remove Toqta, but their relationship will be explored in chapter 5.

The next chapters will offer a re-examination of major events of Nogai's life used as evidence for khanmaker role, and answer the questions: if Nogai was *not* the khanmaker, then what was his role in the Golden Horde? And if he was indeed not the khanmaker, what led to him taking part in the overthrow of Tele-Buqa, and final conflict with Toqta Khan in the 1290s?

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<sup>72</sup> Baybars and Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 94-95 and 124, 126, respectively.

## Chapter 3: 1265-1280

With the discrepancy between primary and secondary sources established, Nogai's life can be revisited. This chapter will focus on events from Nogai's role in the war with the Ilkhanate in the 1260s, until the death of Mongke-Temur Khan at the start of the 1280s. These years represent the first stage of Nogai's career, from military commander in the Caucasus to his establishment on the western edge of the steppe and the beginning of his interactions in Eastern European, the Byzantine Empire, and Mamluk Sultanate. Over the course of this chapter, details normally cited as evidence for Nogai's khanmaker disposition will be placed in a different context. I argue that in this period, Nogai rarely stepped out of line with the khans of the Golden Horde and made no effort to claim independence or undermine the khans. In fact, his operations were in line with that of other Mongol *tamma* commanders of the thirteenth century. The transitions between khans in these years will be highlighted: first, the death of Berke in 1267 and ascension of his grand-nephew, Mongke-Temur; and the death of Mongke-Temur in 1280 or 1282, and ascension of his brother Tode-Mongke. What each of the main sources say on these successions will be presented, highlighting how they make no mention of Nogai among the relevant actors.

### 3.1. Family and Berke-Hulegu War

To explain certain aspects of Nogai's life and address some of the myths around him, first it will be useful to note his family background. Nogai was born in the late 1230s, a great-grandson of Jochi, the oldest son of Chinggis Khan. Uzelac suggests Nogai was born around 1237/1238, the Year of the Dog in the 12-year Inner Asian animal calendar, and perhaps the

source of Nogai's name: "dog," in Mongolian.<sup>73</sup> His early life is unknown to us. The primary succession among the Jochids was restricted to the line of Jochi's second son Batu (d.1255/56). In the *Jāmi' al-tāwarikh*, Rashīd al-Dīn mentions Jochi having forty children, though only names and provides the genealogies of fourteen of them. In these lists, Nogai was a grandson of Jochi's seventh son Bo'al, known to the Mamluk authors as Muval or Mogal.<sup>74</sup> Minor princes within the Jochid hierarchy, Bo'al and his descendants, including Nogai, could not make claims to the Jochid throne. This privilege belonged to the descendants of Batu, except for Berke (r.c.1257-1266), until late in the fourteenth century.<sup>75</sup> Bo'al's son Tutar was among three Jochid princes who commanded contingents sent to assist Hulegu in his campaigns against the Nizari Ismailis and Baghdad in the late 1250s. Tutar, Quli and Balaghi annoyed Hulegu by enforcing Jochid rights upon lands and cities in Iran and the Caucasus they considered belonging to their lineage. Hulegu accused a Jochid prince of sorcery, and after receiving permission from Berke to punish him, Hulegu executed the offender. The other two

<sup>73</sup> [Alexander Uzelac] Александар Узелац, *Под сенком Пса - Татари и јужнословенске земље у другој половини XIII века* [Under the Shadow of the Dog - Tatars and South Slavic Lands in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century] (Belgrad: Утопија 2015), 123. For the Mongols, it was not derogatory to name a child after a dog. In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, Chinggis Khan called his top generals his "four dogs" (*dörben noqas*) of war. "When I sent you, Qubilai, Jelme, Jébe and Sübe'etei, my 'four hounds', to the place I had designated [...] then my mind was completely at rest." *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* vol. 1, trans. Igor de Rachewiltz (Boston: Brill, 2004), § 209. For Mongol and Qipchaq custom to name people after dogs and wolves, see Peter B. Golden, "Wolves, Dogs and Qipčaq Religion," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung. Tomus* 50 no.1-3 (1997): 87-97. The custom still exists among Turks and Mongols to name children after unusual things (*Nergui*, "noone," *Sorqaqtani*, "pox girl," *Ghazan*, from Persian "kettle") to confuse evil spirits that may bring misfortune. Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File Inc, 2004): 398-99.

<sup>74</sup> Baybars and Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109 and 123; Boris Cherkas, "Territorial Organisation of the Ulus of Jochi (Territory to the West of the Don,)" in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 155; Rashīd al-Dīn, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. John Andrew Boyle, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 99, 113; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 344, 349. Bo'al's name is also rendered as Boqal, Buval or Bo'ol. The Bo'al/Muval connection is clear, as Rukn ad-Din Baybars (Muval) and al-Nuwayri (Mogal) both identify him as Nogai's grandfather.

<sup>75</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 302; Roman Pochekaev, "The Golden Age of the Ulus of Jochi: The Rule of Oz Beg and Jani Beg," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau, (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 254; [Alexander Uzelac] Александар Узелац, "Почети Норајеве власти у западној степи на доњем Дунаву (с. 1267-1273)" ["The Beginnings of Nogai's Rule in the Western Steppes and in the Lower Danube (c. 1267-1273)"] *Историјски часопис [Historical Journal]*, 62 (2013): 17. The final Khan from the line of Batu is identified as Berdi Beg (d.1359) or Nawruz (d.1361), both sons of Janibeg Khan (d.1357).

princes died in the aftermath of the sack of Baghdad in 1258.<sup>76</sup> Their deaths were one of the main contributors to the outbreak of war between Berke and Hulegu in 1262. The Berke-Hulegu war (1262-1266) fought concurrently with Toluid Civil War (1260-1264) between Khubilai and Ariq Boke in Mongolia, formed the two wars that led to the breakup of the unified Mongol Empire by the end of the 1260s. It was during the conflict between Berke and Hulegu over the Caucasus that Nogai first appears in the historical record.

Nogai first appears as a comrade-in-arms to Berke and may have converted to Islam at the same time as him, though there is no precise information on when either converted.<sup>77</sup> Never-the-less, Nogai's association with Berke and his "Islamic party" is notable as Islam was then uncommon among the Mongols. An ally of Berke by the 1260s, Nogai was given command in part to avenge the death of his father Tutar at Hulegu's hands. From 1262 until 1266, Nogai and Berke fought Hulegu and his successor, Abaqa (r. 1265-1282) over the Caucasus. The war did not go well for the Jochids. Nogai lost several battles, an eye to an arrow or a spear, and ultimately his Khan: Berke died in 1266, while marching to Tbilisi.<sup>78</sup> With Berke's death, the Jochid forces, including Nogai, withdrew from the frontier with the Ilkhanate, returning to their capital of Sarai to choose Berke's successor.

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<sup>76</sup> *The Mongols in Iran: Quṭb Al-Dīn Shīrāzī's Akhbār-i Moghūlān*, trans. George Lane (New York: Routledge, 2018), 60, 91; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 349, 355-56; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic*, 144-45; J.A Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 5 *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J.A Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 353. Quli was a son of Orda, Jochi's first son, and Balaghi (or Balaqan) was a son of Jochi's fifth son Shibān. Rashīd al-Dīn, Shirazi and other sources which mention the episode differ on which prince was charged with sorcery, and the exact year they were killed. Regardless, all three Jochid princes were dead, on Hulegu's order, by 1260.

<sup>77</sup> DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, 83-88; Muhammad Abdul Karim, "Baghdad's Fall and its Aftermath: Contesting the Central Asian Political Background and the Emergence of the Islamic Mongol Dynasties," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 56 no. 1 (2018): 200; Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 91-92. In various sources, Berke is raised a Muslim, converts before his ascension to the throne in c.1256 or afterwards. Nogai's conversion is only known for certain by 1270, from his letter to Sultan Baybars.

<sup>78</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 506-08, 514; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 123; Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 110 and 152; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79-80; Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns," 353-56.

### 3.2. Nogai in the post-Berke period

As shown, Nogai was occupied from 1262-1266 in the war against the Ilkhanate. Rashīd al-Dīn, Baybars al-Mansuri and al-Nuwayri all attest to his presence throughout the conflict. Therefore, one of the most persistent myths about Nogai can be addressed: that he took part in a raid on the Byzantine Empire in 1263. The *basileus* Michael VIII Palaiologos, who had only in 1261 retaken Constantinople, was holding the Seljuq Sultan of Konya ‘Izz ad-Din Kaykaus II captive in his court. ‘Izz ad-Din, it seems, reached out to the Jochid *ulus* for aid. His timing was good, capitalizing on Bulgarian-Byzantine animosity with local “Tatar” troops available to take part. A joint Bulgarian-Mongol attack took place between 1263-1265, and it is unknown who commanded it, or if it was even sanctioned by Berke Khan. Regardless, Sultan ‘Izz ad-Din was freed and escaped to the Jochid *ulus* where he spent the remainder of his life.<sup>79</sup> The attack is of interest for this thesis, as it is commonly attributed to Nogai in the scholarship. From Grousset, Vernadsky, Broadbridge, Amitai-Preiss, Spinei to Favereau, Nogai is often at the head of the army sent to free Sultan ‘Izz ad-Din.<sup>80</sup> As Vásáry and Uzelac have noted, the relevant sources discussing the attack —Nikephoros Gregoras, Pachymeres, Baybars al-Mansuri, al-’Ayni, al-Maqrizi and Aq-Sarayi— do not put Nogai in the raid. Nogai’s placement in this campaign likely emerged from confusion with an attack Nogai *did* lead on the Byzantine Empire in 1271/72.<sup>81</sup> As I have already demonstrated, Nogai was fighting in the Caucasus

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<sup>79</sup> Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 73-77. Vásáry provides succinct coverage and the source depiction.

<sup>80</sup> Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 80; Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 56, 58; Favereau, *the Horde*, 154, 184-85; Grousset, *L’Empire des Steppes*, 479, “Le véritable maître du khanat était Nogai, ce Djötchide d’une branche cadette que nous avons vu à la tête des armées dans les expéditions contre la Perse sous Berké, en 1262 et 1266, et contre l’empire byzantin en 1265.”; [Victor Spinei] Виктор Спинеи, “Господство золотой орды в Валерии и Молдавии.” [“Domination of the Golden Horde in Wallachia and Moldavia”] *Golden Horde Review* 4 no. 4 (2016): 745; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 163.

<sup>81</sup> Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhomäische Geschichte: Historia Rhomaike*, ed. and trans. Louis Van Dieten, vol. 1 (*Chapters I-VII*) (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1973), 113-14; Pachymeres, part 1, III.25; Aleksandar Uzelac, “The Golden Horde and the Balkans (13th-14th Centuries),” in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau, (Kazan: Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 2017), 380; Uzelac, “Beginning of Nogai’s rule,” 14; [Uzelac] *Под сеньком Пса*, 136-37; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 73, 75.

throughout the 1260s, and it is unlikely Berke would have removed one of his primary commanders from the most important front to take part in a minor raid on Byzantium.

Nogai had no discernable role in the transition after Berke's death in 1266. Berke was succeeded by his grand-nephew Mongke-Temur as khan. The first fully independent khan of the Golden Horde, Mongke-Temur minted coins in his own name, conducted a census, granted tax exemptions to the Rus' Orthodox Church and set out his own foreign policy.<sup>82</sup> With the Ogedeid prince Qaidu and Chagatai Khan Baraq at a conference at Taraz in 1269, they divided territory between themselves without the permission of Great Khan Khubilai, and in 1276 Mongke-Temur received Khubilai's captive sons Nomukhan and Kokochu.<sup>83</sup> The mechanics of Mongke-Temur's succession to Berke are unclear. Berke left no surviving sons, leaving it to the *quriltai* to determine his successor. Despite the claims of Vernadsky, there is no evidence the childless Berke "probably would have designated Prince Nogay," as his heir.<sup>84</sup> Mongke-Temur seems to have been the favoured choice and the sources ascribe no mention of Nogai at all in the process. As a grandson of Berke's older brother Batu, the well-regarded master of the Jochid *ulus* from the 1240s until 1255, Mongke-Temur was in a prime position to succeed Berke. Batu's initial successors were his sons Sartaq and Ilagchi, who died early in their reigns, possibly by Berke's hand.<sup>85</sup> Berke's rule was something of an aberration, and Mongke-Temur (likely the oldest and most prominent descendant of Batu) was therefore returning the throne

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<sup>82</sup> Vadim Trepavlov, "The Formation of the Ulus of Jochi," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau, (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 141; Vásáry, "The Jochid Realm," 78.

<sup>83</sup> Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 1997), 22-29. The conference was held either at Taraz in 1269, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, or on the Qatwan steppe in 1267, according to Wassaf; Cherkas, "Territorial Organisation," 154; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 227; Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times. Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 108-09. Nomukhan and Kokochu were taken captive by a rebellion of princes in Mongolia and delivered to Mongke-Temur.

<sup>84</sup> Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 227; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 163-64.

<sup>85</sup> Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 151. Ilagchi may have been Sartaq's son, and hence Batu's grandson. According to Armenian sources, Berke and his brother Berkecher poisoned the Christian Sartaq. The convenience of young Ilagchi's sudden death soon after his enthronement, and Batu's widow Boraqchin's execution for 'treason,' are usually cited as foul play on the part of Berke; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 224.

to the line of Batu. At least one source, the fourteenth century Mamluk historian al-Mufaddal, explicitly describes Mongke-Temur as Berke's designated heir, leading Pochekaev to suggest this was an official agreement to gain the support of Batu's descendants for Berke's rule.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps indicative of this, Rashīd al-Dīn and the Mamluk historians make no mention of any internal issues surrounding Mongke-Temur's ascension, simply mentioning his enthronement after Berke's death. Rashīd al-Dīn, for instance, laconically states, "when Bärkä died, Mōngkä Temür was enthroned."<sup>87</sup> It is only in the Rus' chronicles that a hint comes at a more complicated process. In an entry for 1266, the year of Berke's death and Mongke-Temur's ascension, the *Volynian Chronicle* states "a revolt took place among the Tatars themselves. They slaughtered [as] many [of their own people] as there are grains of sand in the seas."<sup>88</sup> While it may indicate that Mongke-Temur fought off rivals for the throne, it may also have been how the Rus' interpreted rumours of the Berke-Hulegu war and Berke's death. Regardless of the matter, Mongke-Temur securely held the Jochid throne by 1267, with no source providing Nogai any role in his ascension, or support for Vernadsky's suggestion that Nogai was a claimant, or Pochekaev's claim that Nogai backed another contender.<sup>89</sup> As one of the most prominent military leaders under Berke, it seems probable that Nogai, and most of the Jochid elite, simply backed Mongke-Temur in the *quriltai*.

### 3.3. Nogai's arrival in the west, 1267-1270

Nogai's actual movement to Moldavia and Wallachia can now be addressed. Undertaken after the ascension of Mongke-Temur Khan, Nogai's transfer from the Caucasian front to the westernmost end of the steppe is sometimes depicted as Nogai's first move to

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<sup>86</sup> Al-Mufaddal in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 193; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 226; [Uzelac], "Почечи Ногајеве власти," 17.

<sup>87</sup> al-Nuwayri and al-'Ayni in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 153 and 510; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh* 356

<sup>88</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 228.



independence.<sup>90</sup> Both Curta and May, for instance, wrote of Nogai already being autonomous on the Danube by the time of Berke's death, while Tanase dated the emergence of Nogai's "principality" to 1265 and giving Berke's death as 1267.<sup>91</sup> Favereau has Nogai stay in the region following the 1263 raid to free the Seljuq Sultan.<sup>92</sup> As with so much of Nogai's life, this is an event which must be put into its proper context.

His movement is sometimes associated with some connection to family lands. Pochekaev wrote that "Nogai stayed put in his family domain, the Cis-Dniester River Region, throughout the ruling period of the first Khan of the Golden Horde [Mongke-Temur]. Mengu-Temur excluded him from the Golden Horde's affairs, but did not interfere with Nogai's ulus or his activities in the neighbouring states."<sup>93</sup> This attribution of the lands of the western steppe as belonging to Nogai's family comes from an effort to identify a figure in the account of the Franciscan diplomat John de Plano Carpini with Nogai's grandfather Bo'al.

John de Plano Carpini, during his journey through the Golden Horde in 1245 to the Great Khan's court in Mongolia, mentions a prince named "Mauci" or "Mochi" controlling the territory on the east bank of the Dnieper.<sup>94</sup> Some historians, like Cherkas, have suggested that Mauci was a corruption of Muval, by which Nogai's grandfather Bo'al is known in the Mamluk accounts.<sup>95</sup> Based on this identification, Cherkas suggests, Nogai's move west in the late 1260s was simply him returning to the family appanage, and his return led to the "Muval wing" growing in prominence and power.<sup>96</sup> This attribution is doubtful for several reasons. The name Moche is closer to Muji, a son of Chagatai, while the Dnieper territory that Carpini ascribes to

<sup>90</sup> [Uzelac], "Почеци Ногајеве власти," 19.

<sup>91</sup> Curta, *Eastern Europe*, 713, 715; May, *Mongol Empire*, 289; Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 227.

<sup>92</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 154.

<sup>93</sup> Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 228.

<sup>94</sup> Cherkas, "Territorial Organisation," 155. *Mission to Asia: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, trans. a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey, ed. Christopher Dawson, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 55.

<sup>95</sup> The Mongolian *B* and *J* often shifted to *M* and *Y* in Qipchaq Turkic. See for example, the consistent rendering of *Jebe* to *Yeme* in early Islamic sources on the Mongols. Nogai's grandfather was certainly rendered as Bo'al, the Mongolian term for a house slave. My thanks to Stephen Pow for assistance with this matter.

<sup>96</sup> Cherkas, "Territorial Organisation," 155-58.

Moche was never held by Nogai even at the height of his influence.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, Nogai's movement to the western steppe was *not* to reclaim lands belonging to his family.

While on the topic of Nogai's family and their lands, another misconception can be addressed. Vernadsky appears to be the origin of the claim that Nogai was the head of the Manghits, with his family land not located along the Dniester or Dnieper, but along the Ural River north of the Caspian Sea, and that Nogai was elected their khan.<sup>98</sup> Some later writers have repeated Vernadsky's claims, either saying Nogai ruled the Manghit or that his family hailed from the Ural region.<sup>99</sup> This, however, is totally baseless. The entire connection of Nogai to the Manghits is based on the Manghit making up a core tribe of the fifteenth-century Nogai Horde, a successor khanate to the Golden Horde inhabiting the region north of the Caspian Sea. While the etymology of the Nogai Horde is uncertain, there is no indication that it had any association with the thirteenth century Nogai.<sup>100</sup> No thirteenth or fourteenth century source links Nogai to the Manghit tribe or the Ural-Caspian region. Instead, the Nogai Horde traced itself to the sons of Golden Horde khanmaker, the non-Chinggisid Edigu (d.1419).<sup>101</sup> As far as can be gathered from the contemporary sources, Nogai's family—the descendants of Jochi's son Bo'al—were not provided lands along the Dniester, the Dnieper, or the Ural. Whatever grazing lands they were granted are unmentioned in the extant sources.

As Nogai's movement to the west *c.*1270 was unrelated to family lands, the cause can now be addressed. The matter is in fact, not a complicated one, as it is outlined by the sources.

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<sup>97</sup> Cherkas, "Territorial Organisation," 155; [Uzelac], "Почеди Ногајеве власти," 19-20.

<sup>98</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 164, 174-75.

<sup>99</sup> JJ Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 245; John Fennell, *the Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 144; Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 189.

<sup>100</sup> Paul D. Buell, *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 407; DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, 448; Trepavlov, "The Manghit Yurt," 829. DeWeese suggests the *Nogai* in Nogai Horde may stem from a Persianized Turkic curse, "*ne ongǵay*," "will not succeed," and therefore an independent etymological origin from the Mongolian "*nokhoi*," "dog." The curse was apparently used by non-Muslims to refer to Manghit converts to Islam, calling them *ne ongǵays*. The appellation, the story goes, was adopted and over time transformed into *Nogai*.

<sup>101</sup> Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 388.

The Byzantine author Pachymeres (1242-c. 1310) wrote “This Nogai was a mighty man among the Tatars; astute strategist and experienced in business, it is with very many forces, composed of Tatars of the same race, that these people call Mongols, that he was sent by the chiefs of his nation, who were on the Caspian and that they call khans,” and later in book IX, “So Nogai, who has been spoken of before, was originally sent by the leaders of his nation; he was not the leader, but their lieutenant.”<sup>102</sup> Pachymeres is very clear: Nogai was ordered to the region by the khan of the Golden Horde. Baybars al-Mansuri’s brief depiction largely agrees with this, stating “We have already said how he advanced and strengthened in these countries thanks to the wife of their king Mongke-Temur, named Jijek-Khatun, who ruled (the state) during the time of her husband and during the reign of Tode-Mongke, who sat on the throne after him.”<sup>103</sup> For the Mamluk historian, Nogai’s movement to the west was on the urging of Jijek-Khatun, one of Mongke-Temur Khan’s chief wives, a Muslim, and a widow of Berke.<sup>104</sup> Baybars al-Mansuri and Pachymeres are the only sources which provide a motivation for Nogai’s establishment on the western edge of the Golden Horde, and both agree that the motivation came from the highest echelons of the Jochid state.

Nogai’s position in what is now eastern Romania was not a return to family lands or a move to establish an *ulus* for himself but was instead an order coming from the leadership of the Golden Horde, perhaps a reward for his support for Mongke-Temur’s election.<sup>105</sup> As the area Nogai was moving to, on the borders of the Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria and the Hungarian

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<sup>102</sup> Pachymeres, part 1, V.3, “Ce Nogai était un homme puissant parmi les Tatars; stratège avisé et rompu aux affaires, c’est avec de très nombreuses forces, composées de Tatars de même race, que ces gens appellent Mongols, qu’il fut envoyé par les chefs de sa nation, qui se trouvaient sur la Caspienne et qu’on appelle khans” ; *Georges Pachymérés Relations Historiques*, part III, *Livres VII-IX*, ed. and trans. Albert Failler (Paris: Institut Français d’Études Byzantines, 1999), IX.26, “Donc Nogai, dont il a été parlé auparavant, fut envoyé à l’origine par les chefs de sa nation ; il n’était pas le chef, mais leur lieutenant.”

<sup>103</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109. “Мы уже говорили о том, как он выдвинулся и усилился в этих странах благодаря жене царя их Менгугемира по имени Джиджек-хатун. Она правила (государством) во времена мужа своего и в царствование Туданменгу, севшего на престол после него.”

<sup>104</sup> al-Mufaddal and al-‘Ayni in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 193 and 507.

<sup>105</sup> [Uzelac], “Почеци Ногајеве власти,” 22.

Kingdom, was territory at the limits of the Horde's control, placing an experienced military commander in the region was a means to shore up the Jochid position there. As Mongke-Temur concerned his reign with establishing the Golden Horde as an independent kingdom, Nogai's arrival to the edge of Europe was entirely within Mongke-Temur's policy.<sup>106</sup>

Nogai's position, I suspect, was then a typical one for a Mongol commander: the head of a *tamma* force. The *tamma*, commanded by a *tammachi*, were in the words of Buell, "a special military force, comprised of selected chiliarchies from the total Mongolian levy and sent into conquered areas to secure and hold them, and, if possible, expand Mongolian power and influence."<sup>107</sup> Employed since the days of Chinggis Khan, the *tamma* were (sometimes permanent) garrison forces usually made up of mobile troops from various backgrounds (usually nomadic and local non-Mongolian troops commanded by a Mongol) stationed on the frontiers of the empire, who served as the first line of offense and defense. From expanding the empire through outright conquest, or raiding to disrupt enemy states to levy tribute, *tamma* commanders served as governors conducting diplomacy and war on behalf of the khan until a more permanent civilian administration could be established. Upon the establishment of such an administration, the *tamma* then advanced with the frontier to continue the conquests. Some of the most well-known Mongol commanders headed *tamma* forces, such as Mukhali in North China in the early 1220s and Chormaqun, who largely completed the Mongol conquest of Iran and the Caucasus in the 1230s.<sup>108</sup> The duties of the *tamma* commander fit well with Nogai's actions, as I shall demonstrate. Whatever Nogai may have done at the end of his life, it seems

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<sup>106</sup> Vászary, "The Jochid Realm," 76-78.

<sup>107</sup> Paul D. Buell, "Kalmyk Tanggaci People: Thoughts on the Mechanics and Impact of Mongol Expansion," *Mongolian Studies* 6 (1980): 45.

<sup>108</sup> Buell, "Kalmyk Tanggaci People," 45-46; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 82; Timothy May, "Mongol Conquest Strategy in the Middle East," in *the Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*, ed. Bruno de Nicola and Charles Melville, (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 17-20; Donald Ostrowski, "The 'tamma' and the Dual-administrative Structure of the Mongol Empire," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 61 no. 2 (1998): 263, 269.

his initial posting was that as *tammachi*, and thus his actions over the 1270s fall in line with other such individuals in the Mongol conquests.

The precise dating of Nogai's arrival in the west is uncertain, but he was there by the very beginning of the 1270s. As pointed out by Uzelac, a few European chronicles record a resumption of Mongol raids on Hungary and Eastern Europe around 1270, perhaps indicating that Nogai was directed to remind the region of the Mongol threat, though these sources do not name Nogai or provide specific details.<sup>109</sup> In 1272 came a major raid on Byzantine territory, with the Mongol troops invited by the rebellious *sebastokrator* of Thessaly to attack the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII. The campaign led by Nogai was successful. Thrace was devastated by his army, and Michael was forced to seek peace by marrying off his illegitimate daughter, Euphrosyne, to Nogai.<sup>110</sup> This 1272 attack on Byzantium is often presented as entirely Nogai's initiative, taking advantage of local conditions. Ciocîltan, for example, wrote that:

Although at first Noghai was merely Sarai's agent in settling Tartar-Byzantine affairs after the crisis of 1264–1265, he [Nogai] had become an independent player by 1272 at the latest, with sufficient political clout to be considered worthy of a Byzantine alliance. His marriage to Euphrosyne was a fundamental political act which created a new basis for relations between the states of the Western Balkans.<sup>111</sup>

Yet as Uzelac has noted, the Mamluk sources are consistent in placing this attack on the order of Mongke-Temur Khan due to his displeasure with Michael VIII.<sup>112</sup> Mongke-Temur wanted Constantinople more compliant, as the *basileus* had married another daughter to Ilkhan Abaqa in 1265.<sup>113</sup> Allying with the Jochid khan's foes was unacceptable, as Constantinople could hamper the movement of envoys between the Golden Horde and the Mamluk Sultanate through

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<sup>109</sup> [Uzelac], "Почечи Ногајеве власти," 26. Hungary's King Bela IV died in 1270, so Mongol attacks may have taken advantage of this.

<sup>110</sup> Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 79; Pachymeres, part 1, III.5.

<sup>111</sup> Ciocîltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 257.

<sup>112</sup> [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (al-Nuwayri) 153-54, (ibn Khaldun) 380, (al-Maqrizi) 434, (al- 'Ayni) 511; [Uzelac], "Почечи Ногајеве власти," 27-28.

<sup>113</sup> Maria Isabel Cabrera Ramos, "Maria Paleologina and the Il-Khanate of Persia. A Byzantine Princess in an Empire between Islam and Christendom," *Imago Temporis. Medium Aevum*, 11 (2017): 220. The daughter, Maria, was originally to marry Abaqa's father Hulegu, but Hulegu had died before her arrival.

the Dardanelles. Indeed, in the early 1260s Michael VIII had briefly detained Mamluk envoys and prevented them from reaching the Golden Horde.<sup>114</sup> Nogai was therefore acting as the enforcer of Mongke-Temur's will, reminding everyone where the balance of power lay. So effective was Nogai's attack that for the rest of his reign Michael VIII worked effectively with the Golden Horde.

The union of Nogai and Euphrosyne should not be seen as an independent marriage alliance of his own organization, but more likely something done with the approval of Mongke-Temur, a reward for Nogai's effectiveness in enacting the khan's will. In the thirteenth century it was rare, but not unknown, for the khans to award royal wives to prominent commanders: both Sübe'etei and *tammachi* Chormaqun were awarded Chinggisid princesses in the 1230s.<sup>115</sup> Generally, foreign princesses were married directly into the Mongol imperial family. Chinggis Khan, for instance, in addition to taking wives from the Jin Dynasty and Tangut, upon the capture of the Khwarezm-shah's harem, dispersed the shah's daughters amongst his primary sons with Borte and many of his lesser sons and relations.<sup>116</sup> For Nogai as a prominent military commander to marry royalty was hardly impossible but would have needed approval by the khan. Secondly, it may suggest that Nogai's apparent illegitimacy—the focus on the supposed concubine status of his mother or grandmothers—has been overstated by the scholarship.<sup>117</sup> That is, that Nogai was not merely seen as a member of the military, but a proper, albeit minor, member of the Chinggisid royal family. He was therefore eligible for marriages with royal powers, but with the permission of the Golden Horde khan.

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<sup>114</sup> Vászary, *Cumans and Tatars*, 72.

<sup>115</sup> Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 461; Christopher P. Atwood, "Titles, Appanages, Marriages and Officials: A Comparison of Political Forms in the Züinghar and Thirteenth Century Mongol Empires," in *The History of Mongolia*, vol. 2, part 3, *Yuan and Late Medieval Period*, eds. David Sneath and Christopher Kaplonski, (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2010), 620; Dashdondog, *Mongols and Armenians*, 52; Stephen Pow and Jingjing Liao, "Subutai: Sorting Fact from Fiction Surrounding the Mongol Empire's Greatest General (with Translations of Subutai's Two Biographies in the *Yuan Shi*)," *Journal of Chinese Military History* 7 (2018): 60.

<sup>116</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 92-100.

<sup>117</sup> Charles Halperin, "On Recent Studies of Rus' Relations with the Tatars of the Jochid Ulus," *Golden Horde Review* 8 no. 1 (2020): 34-35.

In Byzantine ideology, marrying a daughter to a “barbarian infidel” as Nogai was an unthinkable degradation of their political standing, but by the thirteenth century it was a matter of utter necessity and a common tool of the Palaiologoi.<sup>118</sup> The weakness of the various Byzantine successors after the fall of Constantinople in 1204 forced all of them to make drastic decisions for survival. In 1246 for example, Manuel I Komnenos, the Emperor of Trebizond who considered himself Roman Emperor (and highest-ranking sovereign in the universe), may have personally gone to Karakorum to offer his submission to Guyuk Khan (r.1246-1248).<sup>119</sup> Michael VIII understood the fragility of his position, both of his empire and status as emperor after his coup. To ensure alliances and good relations, both Michael VIII and his son Andronikos II made the marrying of Byzantine princesses to foreign powers a common part of their diplomacy.<sup>120</sup> Michael VIII during his reign married off his niece to the Despot of Epiros, a daughter to the Emperor of Trebizond, his son Andronikos to the daughter of Stephen V of Hungary and married the daughters of his immediate predecessor, Theodore II Laskaris, to Italian and Bulgarian nobles.<sup>121</sup> The Emperor’s most important marriage alliances were with the Mongols. In 1256, during his exile in the Seljuq court, Michael VIII fought alongside the Seljuqs at Aq-Saray. There, he had the opportunity to witness the Mongols in action with his own eyes, as forces under *tammachi* Baiju violently crushed a Seljuq uprising and permanently broke their power.<sup>122</sup> Understanding keenly the threat of the Mongols, Michael was careful to use marriages to earn good will from both the Ilkhanate and Golden Horde. His illegitimate daughter Maria was married to Abaqa Ilkhan in 1265 and Euphrosyne to Nogai c. 1273.<sup>123</sup> His son Andronikos II continued the policy, marrying a daughter to Toqta Khan c. 1297, offering

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<sup>118</sup> Nicol, *Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 74; Anna Linden Weller, “Marrying the Mongol Khans: Byzantine Imperial Women and the Diplomacy of Religious Conversion in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* no. 2 (2016): 177, 179.

<sup>119</sup> Kokobeinikov, “The Ilkhans in Byzantine Source,” 393.

<sup>120</sup> Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 31.

<sup>121</sup> Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 44-45, 68, 75, 93, 119, 151.

<sup>122</sup> Korobeinikov “Ilkhans in Byzantine sources,” 394; Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 30.

<sup>123</sup> Korobeinikov, “Ilkhans in Byzantine Sources,” 386, 396

a marriage alliance to Ilkhan Ghazan and finally marrying a princess to Ghazan's successor, Oljeitu. Andronikos' grandson Andronikos III married a daughter to Ozbeg Khan, though some argue she was the same daughter of Andronikos II.<sup>124</sup> The marriage between Euphrosyne and Nogai was therefore hardly unusual for the contemporary Byzantines, a marker of their general weakness of the period.

### 3.4. Letter from Nogai to Sultan Baybars, 1270

In 1270 after his arrival in the west, Nogai sent a letter to the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik az-Zahir Baybars al-Bunduquri, not to be confused with the contemporary historian Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Mansuri. This letter is one of the most cited examples of Nogai's ambitions, often used to suggest that he was already independent by 1270. DeWeese describes this letter as Nogai "proclaiming his sincerity in his new faith and quite transparently seeking the support of the Egyptian ruler."<sup>125</sup> Broadbridge wrote that Nogai wanted to present himself to Baybars as a favourable Muslim alternative to the tengriist Khan Mongke-Temur, who around that time had also made a peace treaty with the Mamluks' sworn enemies, the Ilkhanate.<sup>126</sup> Tanase presents the letter as Nogai's attempt to build an alliance with the Mamluks in order to support his own power networks within the Horde, and describes Nogai as then taking over the Horde's diplomacy with Egypt.<sup>127</sup> Most recently, Favereau wrote "Still, Nogai tried to amass decision-making power during Möngke-Temür's reign. In 1270 Nogai contacted the Mamluk sultan Baybars in an effort to forge his own alliance with the Mamluks without involving the khan."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Korobeinikov, "Ilkhans in Byzantine Source," 409, 412; May, *Mongol Empire*, 312-13; Nicol, *Last Centuries*, 74, 80-81, 127, 140; Weller, "Marrying the Mongol Khans," 185, 198. This wife of Ozbeg, Bayalun Khatun, was met by ibn Battuta, who accompanied her to Constantinople in the 1330s. Battuta clearly identifies her as the daughter of Andronikos III. Given that Battuta spent quite some time with her (so not gathering information second-hand), and that she returned in order to give birth, it seems likely this was a distinct woman from the one Toqta married over 30 years prior. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*, vol. 2. trans. H.A.R. Gibb, (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1962), 488, 497-514.

<sup>125</sup> DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion*, 88.

<sup>126</sup> Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 59-60.

<sup>127</sup> Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 274-77.

<sup>128</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 192.



The letter from Nogai is framed as a part of his aspirations, an effort to establish a personal relationship with the Mamluks. To better understand this letter, it must be placed into its context. Recorded in the *Zubdat al-fikrah* of Baybars al-Mansuri, the letter reached Cairo in late 1270 or early 1271. The text of letter is as follows:

This letter was sent from Isa-Nogai to al-Malik az-Zahir [Sultan Baybars]. I praise Allah Almighty for the fact that he included me among the faithful and made me (one) of those who follow the obvious faith [...] This message was sent for two purposes: the first is greetings and congratulations from us to you. The second is because of what we heard from Arbuga: to consolidate our alliance with our father Berke Khan, he [Sultan Baybars] wished to have information about the sons and relatives of [Berke] and who of them converted to Islam. When this was communicated (to us), we [Nogai] sincerely fell in love with al-Malik az-Zahir, who is true to his word, and said: his knowledge about us (comes) only from his zeal for Islam and the sincerity of his striving to strengthen alliances. We sent this message with the assistance of Urtemur and Tukbug to notify (you) that we entered Islam and believed in Allah, in what came from Allah, and in what was revealed by Allah. What we have said is trustworthy; we follow along the path of our father Berke Khan, follow the truth and avoid lies. Let the sending of letters (between us) not stop. You and I are like the tips of the fingers on a hand: we act in concert with those who agree with you, and we resist those who oppose you.<sup>129</sup>

Nogai's letter to Baybars focuses on Nogai's conversion to Islam, his connection to the late Berke and the need for maintain the relationship already established with Sultan Baybars, with whom Nogai desired to maintain correspondence.<sup>130</sup> Baybars' reply was courteous, congratulated Nogai on his conversion and urged him to continue battling the unbelievers (the Ilkhanate).<sup>131</sup> There is however, no support for claims Nogai was using this letter to build an alternative power base to the Jochid khan or start an independent foreign policy. Notably,

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<sup>129</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 101-02. "Отправлено это письмо Ису-Ногайем ал-Малик аз-Захиру. Хвалю Аллаха Всевышнего за то, что он включил меня в число правоверных и сделал меня (одним) из тех, которые следуют вере очевидной." Затем (следует): Это послание наше заключает в себе две цели: одна из них - привет и поздравление от нас тебе, другая та, что от Арбуги услышали мы: для скрепления союза своего с отцом нашим, Берке-ханом, он (султан) пожелал иметь сведения о сыновьях и родственниках его (Берке) и о том, кто из них принял ислам. Когда это было (нам) сообщено, то мы искренне полюбили ал-Малика аз-Захира, который верен своему слову, и сказали: осведомление его о нас (происходит) только от усердия его к исламу и искренности стремления его к укреплению союзов. Мы написали это послание при содействии Уртимура и Тукбуги для оповещения (тебя), что мы вступили в ислам и уверовали в Аллаха, в то, что пришло от Аллаха, да в ниспосланного Аллахом. То, что мы сказали, заслуживает доверия; мы идем по пути отца нашего Берке-хана, следуем за истиной и уклоняемся от лжи. Да не прекратится пересылка писем (между нами). Мы с тобой, как кончики пальцев на руке: действуем заодно с тем, кто с тобой в согласии, и противимся тому, кто тебе противится."

<sup>130</sup> The letter may indicate Nogai took an Islamic name, *Isa*, though Mongol *Yesü*, "nine" is possible.

<sup>131</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 102

Nogai points out the letter was not written from his own ambition. He notes that Arbuga, a man who had served as an envoy from Berke to Sultan Baybars, told Nogai of the Sultan's interest in learning who else among Berke's family had converted to Islam. Nogai's letter was a response to this inquiry by Baybars. Then Nogai wrote that the letter was only written in assistance with two other members of the Mongol elite, Urtemur and Tukbug. Both were commanders of Mongol detachments stationed in Crimea, with Tukbug, like Nogai, only having been recently transferred to the region by Mongke-Temur Khan.<sup>132</sup> Nogai did not have influence in Crimea, so these men were not his subordinates but equals in the khan's service.

It was also not merely the prerogative of the khan to undergo diplomacy with foreign powers. Throughout the Mongol conquests, there are numerous examples of *tamma* commanders contacting foreign powers, usually to demand their submission.<sup>133</sup> Nogai contacting the Mamluks was not an act which itself violated the khan's authority. The fact that Nogai was undertaking the letter after being in touch with other Jochid commanders and diplomats likely indicates the letter was done with some amount of approval from Sarai. Furthermore, Nogai's letter did not set off a flurry of correspondence between him and the Mamluk Sultans. Of the 27 recorded embassies between the Mamluks and Golden Horde from 1262 (the beginning of contact) until 1300 (Nogai's death), Nogai is only known to have reached out to the Mamluks twice: the aforementioned letter in 1270, and once during the reign of Sultan Qalawun (r.1279-1290).<sup>134</sup> Nogai was the recipient of at least three embassies from

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<sup>132</sup> [Uzelac], *Под сенком Пса*, 133-34.

<sup>133</sup> For example, *tammachi* Chormaqun and his successors as chief Mongol commander in the Middle East, Baiju and Eljigidei, partook in extensive diplomacy. Most of southern Iran submitted to Chormaqun diplomatically rather than through conquest, while Baiju exchanged letters with and took the submission of the Seljuq Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw, and received the Dominican embassy headed by Friar Ascelin in 1247. Eljigidei sent an embassy to King Louis IX of France while he was in Cyprus in 1248. Dashdondog, *Mongols and Armenians*, 60-61, 63; May, "Mongol Conquest Strategy," 22-25; *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: his Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253-1255*, ed. and trans. Peter Jackson and David Morgan (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990), 31, 33-37.

<sup>134</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, "Careers in Diplomacy among Mamluks and Mongols, 658-741/1260-1341" in *Mamluk Cairo, A Crossroads for Embassies: Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics*, ed. Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche (Boston: Brill, 2019), 280-84; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов (Biography of Qalawun)*

the Mamluks, usually alongside the Jochid khan, and was listed among the princes of the Horde who received gifts from Mamluk embassies.<sup>135</sup> This is not indication that Nogai had an exceptional relationship with the Mamluk sultans or received special treatment among the Jochid princes. Nogai certainly did not take over diplomacy with them, as Mongke-Temur, from 1267 until his death in 1280/1282 sent a recorded five embassies to the Mamluk sultans, and almost always received a response. In this same period, Nogai's only recorded letter was in 1270.<sup>136</sup> The evidence for Nogai conducting his own diplomacy with the Mamluks rests entirely on two mentions of his letters and embassies arriving in Cairo, much rarer than those of Mongke-Temur or his successors.

At the same time as Nogai's letter Mongke-Temur made peace with the Ilkhanate after his own inconclusive attempt to seize the Caucasus. After Abaqa Ilkhan's victory over the Chagatai khan Baraq in 1270, Mongke-Temur sent congratulations and gifts to Abaqa.<sup>137</sup> As the Mamluks depended on the Jochids to keep pressure on the Ilkhanids, peace between the house of Jochi and Hulegu was not to the advantage of Sultan Baybars. Further, unlike Berke, Nogai or Baybars, Mongke-Temur was not a Muslim. Perhaps to maintain diplomatic and economic ties with the Mamluk Sultanate, who were still useful as allies to the Jochids when it came to dealing with the Ilkhanate, Mongke-Temur encouraged Nogai's contact with Baybars. Nogai, as a Muslim and a known associate of Berke, could remind Baybars of the

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67, (ibn al-Furat) 362. Ibn al-Furat gives a date of 1282 for Nogai's second embassy, while the anonymous *Biography of Sultan Qalawun* gives 1286-7. This is described as his ambassadors arriving "at the highest court" along with an ambassador of the Byzantine Emperor. Its purpose is not mentioned.

<sup>135</sup> Broadbridge, "Careers in Diplomacy among Mamluks and Mongols," 282-84; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов, (Biography of Qalawun)* 67, 69. In the *Biography of Qalawun*, for example, the embassy sent to Mongke-Temur Khan in 1282 brought gifts for the Khan, as well as for his brother Tode-Mongke, the wives of the Khan, and top princes of the Horde, which included the head of the Blue Horde, the son of Seljuq Sultan 'Izz ad-Din and for Nogai.

<sup>136</sup> Broadbridge, "Careers in Diplomacy among Mamluks and Mongols," 281-84. Mongke-Temur sent five embassies, in 1268, 1272, twice in 1276 and in 1277, the last of which arrived after the death of Sultan Baybars.

<sup>137</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 531. Only a year or two prior, Mongke-Temur made an agreement with Baraq and Qaidu Khan regarding the division of Central Asia at Taraz and encouraged the joint attack between Qaidu and Baraq on Ilkhanid territories.

amicable relationship they had and existence of pro-Islamic factions with the Golden Horde. Hence why the letter so strongly stresses Nogai's conversion to Islam yet remains vague in terms of actual military cooperation. If true, then not only was the letter not Nogai's attempt to 'strike out on his own' but very much a part of Mongke-Temur's skillful, broader foreign policy. The letter then demonstrates that Nogai was simply acting in concert with the khan in Sarai.

### 3.5. Nogai in the 1270s

After his marriage to the Byzantine princess Euphrosyne in 1273, Nogai primarily spent the 1270s consolidating the Golden Horde's position in eastern Romania. After the withdrawal of Batu in 1242, Wallachia, Moldova and Bulgaria were not occupied by the Mongols or directly incorporated into the Horde, instead left tributary.<sup>138</sup> Much like how the noyan Burundai forcibly reduced the brief independence of Galicia-Volhynia in 1259, a territory left only tributary after the initial invasion, so too was Nogai tasked to strengthen the Horde's control in this area.<sup>139</sup> Burundai was a non-Chinggisid, a son of Chinggis Khan's close companion Bo'orchu. Yet, unlike Nogai, Burundai's command is never seen as an undermining of the authority of the Jochid khan. Acting in his role as a *tamma* commander, Nogai's job was to expand the Golden Horde and weaken its regional enemies, a task he handled skillfully.

In contrast to the statements by Vernadsky, Nogai's power base in the region was not a "core of Manghits," but a varied force of nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary peoples,

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<sup>138</sup> Alexandru Madgearu, *The Asanids: The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)* (Boston: Brill, 2016), 233-34.

<sup>139</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 76-79. Burundai is also known as Boroldai. In the fifteenth century chronicle of Jan Długosz, Nogai and Tele-Buqa are erroneously given command in Burundai's campaign, which Długosz conflated with Nogai and Tele-Buqa's 1287 attack on Poland. This is the source for modern claims of their presence in this campaign, and Nogai's Wikipedia article as of May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, still repeats it. The *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* never places either prince on the 1259/1260 campaign. See *The annals of Jan Długosz: Annales seu chronicle incliti regni Poloniae*, trans. Maurice Michael (Charlton, UK: IM Publications, 1997), 203.

including a *minghaan* of Adargin Mongols, Cumans, Alans, Vlachs and Rus'.<sup>140</sup> He exerted influence over, and received tribute from, the local urban centres along the Black Sea coast. At some point in the period, he began to use the city of Isaccea, called Saqchi by the Mongols, along the lower Danube in Romania's Tulcea county as a base of operations.<sup>141</sup> With a local headquarters and powerful military behind him, Nogai greatly altered the regional balance of power. His attack on the Byzantine Empire at the start of the 1270s brought it into the orbit of the Golden Horde, and Nogai exerted similar pressure on the Bulgarian Empire. After the death of Tsar Ivan Asen II in 1241, the Bulgarian throne was occupied by short-lived boy tsars, and suffered from Mongol attacks in the 1240s and Hungarian expansion along the Danube in the 1250s. The ascension of Konstantin Tikh as Tsar in 1257 brought stability and a chance to strike back at the Hungarians and Byzantines, but Nogai's arrival cut short the restoration of Bulgarian influence.<sup>142</sup> Nogai, filling the role of the *tammachi*, began disrupting the states bordering the Golden Horde. First was his already described attack on Byzantium, followed by continued raids on Bulgaria over the 1270s. The situation in Bulgaria grew dire and Konstantin Tikh's inability to repel the Mongols contributed to a peasant uprising in 1277, headed by the swineherd Ivaylo.<sup>143</sup> The result was a three-year period of anarchy, with Ivaylo killing Tsar Konstantin, making himself tsar and marrying Konstantin's widow. At the same time, Byzantine military forces attempted to install a pro-Byzantine candidate, Ivan Asen III, all while Nogai's forces, apparently on the encouragement of Emperor Michael VIII, ravaged Bulgaria. The Bulgarian boyars accepted neither Ivaylo nor the Byzantine candidate and put forward one of their own, George Terter I, in 1280. Both Ivaylo and the Byzantine candidate

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<sup>140</sup>Uzelac, "An Empire within an Empire," 273-75; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 179

<sup>141</sup> Madgearu, *The Asanids*, 259-60

<sup>142</sup> Alexandru Madgearu, "The Mongol Domination and the Detachment of the Romanians of Wallachia from the Domination of the Hungarian Kingdom," *De Medio Aevo*, 12 (2018): 225; Madgearu, *The Asanids*, 242-59.

<sup>143</sup> Madgearu, *The Asanids*, 262; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 79.

fled to Nogai. At the behest of Michael VIII, Nogai executed Ivaylo and allowed Ivan Asen III to return to Byzantium.<sup>144</sup>

While this episode has been seen as Nogai as a defender of Byzantine interests and providing himself with links to a power outside of the Golden Horde, I do not believe this to be true.<sup>145</sup> Nogai's relations with Constantinople in the 1270s have been framed as his own alliance against the Bulgarians, with Nogai's military forces cooperating with the Byzantines against the various Bulgarian factions, and again during Michael VIII's 1282 campaign against John of Thessaly.<sup>146</sup> However as already described, the marriage between Nogai and Michael VIII's daughter likely occurred with Mongke-Temur Khan's approval, and there is no indication that Nogai's actions during and after Ivaylo's uprising were done without the knowledge or approval of the khan. When seen from the point of view of Nogai operating as a *tammachi*, the disruption of Bulgaria caused by Mongol raids and harbouring of fugitives is perfectly in line with his responsibilities. While Michael VIII may have asked for Nogai's military assistance, for the Golden Horde this was cooperation with a vassal and an excuse to raid. Weakening a resurgent Bulgaria was a step towards the subjugation of the region, and indeed by 1285 George Terter's son was in Nogai's court, his daughter married to Nogai's son Chaka and Bulgaria thoroughly under his thumb.<sup>147</sup> Neither was Nogai acting in total concert with Michael VIII, for he only allowed Ivan Asen III to leave his *ordu* alive on the intervention of his Byzantine wife, Euphrosyne.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ciocîltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 258; Madgearu, *The Asanids*, 262-65; Georges Pachymères *Relations Historiques*, part 2, *Livres IV-VI*, trans. and ed. Albert Failler and Vitalien Laurent (Paris: Société D'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1984), VI.18-19; Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 381-82; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 79-83.

<sup>145</sup> Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 382.

<sup>146</sup> Ciocîltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 257-58; Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 381.

<sup>147</sup> Uzelac, "Tatars and Serbs," 11; Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 382.

<sup>148</sup> Pachymeres, part 2, VI.18-19. This is the only anecdote of Euphrosyne after her marriage to Nogai. It is noticeably similar to how *tammachi* Baiju's wife intervened to prevent his executing Dominican envoys in the 1240s. *Simon of St. Quentin*, bk. 32 chp. 44. Accessed May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### 3.6. The Death of Mongke-Temur

The death of Mongke-Temur Khan is commonly remarked as a turning point in Nogai's life, the time from which he began to act in defiance of Sarai, usually with a remark that Tode-Mongke ascended the throne with the backing of Nogai.<sup>149</sup> Mongke-Temur was a powerful khan who made the Golden Horde fully autonomous, and his death left Nogai a senior member of the Jochid lineage. A 1283 letter from the Ilkhan Ahmad Teguder to Mamluk Sultan Qalawun refers to Nogai as *aqā*, literally meaning elder brother, a respectful address for senior men and commanders.<sup>150</sup> For instance Chagatai, during the reign of his younger brother Ogedai Khan was referred to as Chagatai *aqā*.<sup>151</sup> As a powerful member of the Jochids with respectable military backing and experience, it is easy to assume Nogai interfered with the succession after Mongke-Temur and appointed Mongke-Temur's brother Tode-Mongke as khan.

Tode-Mongke's rise to the throne goes unmentioned in Rus' and Greek sources. The Islamic sources which do provide detail make no mention of Nogai having any involvement in the 1280/1282 ascension of Tode-Mongke.<sup>152</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn only states that after Mongke-Temur's death in 1282, Tode-Mongke ascended the throne that same year.<sup>153</sup> The Mamluk authors offer more information. Baybars al-Mansuri and al-Nuwayri specify that Mongke-

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<sup>149</sup> Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia*, 407; Buell, *Historical Dictionary*, 406; Favereau, *the Horde*, 191; May, *Mongol Empire*, 209; Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 161; Uzelac, "An Empire within an Empire," 272; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 69, 86; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174; [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 22.

<sup>150</sup> Judith Pfeiffer, "Ahmad Tegüder's Second Letter to Qalā'ūn (682/1283)," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honour of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer, Sholeh A. Quinn and Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2006), 189. For the usage of *aqā*, see Francis Woodman Cleaves, "Aqa Minu," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 24 (1962-1963): 64-81; Pavel Rykin, "The System of Kinship and Affinity Terms in Middle Mongolian," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungarica* 64 no. 1 (2011): 32, 36, 45.

<sup>151</sup> Cleaves, "Aqa Minu," 69.

<sup>152</sup> While 1280 remains the most common date for Mongke-Temur's death in scholarship based on some primary sources (such as al-Nuwayri), others (such as Rashīd al-Dīn) put it to 1282. There are also coins minted in the name of Mongke-Temur up until 1282. See [Uzelac], *Под сенком Иса*, 149. Tode-Mongke was certainly khan by 1282, when a Mamluk embassy finds Tode-Mongke on the throne.

<sup>153</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356. On the succession to Mongke-Temur, Rashīd al-Dīn wrote only "After Möngkä Temür had ruled for sixteen years and died in the year 681 [1282-83], Tödä Möngkä, Toqoqan's third son, assumed the throne that same year and ruled for a time."

Temur died of botched surgery to address a throat abscess. Unlike Rashīd al-Dīn, both Mamluk authors remark that Tode-Mongke did not immediately replace his brother. Rather, Mongke-Temur left behind nine sons who tried to claim the throne themselves, likely putting their names forward at the *quriltai* only to be outmaneuvered by their uncle Tode-Mongke. As the oldest of Mongke-Temur's surviving brothers, Tode-Mongke “kept the sons of his brother out of power and established himself in the kingdom after his brother.”<sup>154</sup> The Mamluk authors were best informed of the matter and indicate that it was not a seamless transition of power, but a perhaps expected level of bickering in the election process to choose the new khan, hardly unique in a *quriltai*. Neither was it unusual for the succession to pass brother-to-brother before passing to the next generation. Berke himself had succeeded his brother Batu after the short reigns of Batu's sons, and in the Chagatai Khanate the six sons of Du'a Khan (d.1307) all succeeded each other.<sup>155</sup> Presumably Mongke-Temur's sons were too young, inexperienced, and lacked military backing to push their claims, allowing the older Tode-Mongke to claim it for himself after months of arguing, bribery, and threats. There is simply no mention of Nogai in the ascension of Tode-Mongke, and no need for his interference. Nothing, in the little detail provided, indicates anything particularly unusual in Tode-Mongke's ascension, and we can presume that Nogai was simply one of many of the Jochid military commanders who backed Tode-Mongke over Mongke-Temur's children. Vernadsky's claims that Nogai attempted to put his own name forward after Mongke-Temur's death and was instead proclaimed khan of his own “Mangkyt Horde,” or that Nogai was made an official “co-ruler” with Tode-Mongke, can be disregarded.<sup>156</sup> There is no evidence that Nogai had any influence on the outcome of the *quriltai*.

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<sup>154</sup> Al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 154-55, “Были у него (еще) братья по отцу, Туданменгу и Аукаджи. Туданменгу был старший из них. Он отстранил сыновей брата своего от царствования и утвердился сам на царстве после брата своего.”

<sup>155</sup> Michal Biran, “The Chaghadaids and Islam: The Conversion of Tarmashirin Khan (1331-34),” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 no. 4 (2002): 749.

<sup>156</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174-75.



This chapter has examined the first half of Nogai's career and aspects of it used as evidence for his ambitions, from his family background to his role in the Berke-Hulegu war, to his transfer to the edge of Europe, his interference with Byzantium and Bulgaria and finally the election of Tode-Mongke as khan. Claims that Nogai over this period was undermining the Jochid khan and establishing his own kingdom find no source support. Nogai throughout these years followed the khan's orders. His western transfer had nothing to do with his family background or independence; rather it was on the order of Mongke-Temur. The letter from Nogai to Mamluk Sultan Baybars was little more than an introduction and not the beginning of him taking over diplomacy with the Mamluks. His interference in Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire fits cleanly into the role of a *tamma* commander rather than an independent lord. Rashīd al-Dīn, Baybars al-Mansuri and al-Nuwayri, the only authors describing the Mongke-Temur and Tode-Mongke transition, do not have Nogai involved at all. Nogai was an important military commander in the Golden Horde, but he did not exercise an outsized influence. It is only at the end of the 1280s that Nogai's career shifted.

## Chapter 4: 1280-1287

From 1260 through 1280, Nogai was a reliable servant of the khan who did not interfere with the successions in this period (Berke to Mongke-Temur, Mongke-Temur to Tode-Mongke). It is in the 1280s that Nogai took a greater role in the politics of the Golden Horde, leading an attack on Hungary in 1285 and in scholarship often appearing to overshadow Mongke-Temur's successor, his younger brother Tode-Mongke. However, Nogai's proclivity to independence and interference in this period is overstated. He was not the lead figure in the attack on Hungary and Khan Tode-Mongke acted very much as his own man for the first years of his reign. When Tode-Mongke was finally deposed, it was not on the plotting of Nogai but another Jochid prince, Tele-Buqa, and Tele-Buqa's own cohort of princes.

### 4.1. Nogai and Tode-Mongke Khan, ca.1280-1287

Tode-Mongke's succession to Mongke-Temur is often when scholarship marks Nogai's ascendancy. Focusing on Tode-Mongke's devotion to Islam, in contrast to his brother Mongke-Temur, Tode-Mongke is often shown as a weak, mentally ill ruler more interested in religion than government, allowing him to be dominated by Nogai.<sup>157</sup> Ciocîltan calls the period a duumvirate between Nogai and Tode-Mongke.<sup>158</sup> Vernadsky describes the relationship between Nogai and Tode-Mongke similarly, stating the following:

Whatever may have been Nogai's legal status, he actually became more powerful than the official khan of [the Golden Horde] although not powerful enough to eliminate the latter altogether. The result was an unstable duality in government, and while at the times the two khans cooperated with each other, on several occasions they insured contradictory orders which created utter confusion, at least in Russian affairs.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Buell, *Historical Dictionary*, 206; May, *Mongol Empire*, 290; Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 161; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 174.

<sup>158</sup> Ciocîltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 250.

<sup>159</sup> Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 175.

Evidence for this relationship rests on three factors. The first, that Nogai conducted his own independent military campaigns and diplomacy or controlled the Golden Horde's foreign policy. The second, that he interfered in internal Golden Horde matters and the Rus' principalities, competing with and overruling Tode-Mongke, and finally, that Tode-Mongke was powerless as a monarch, unable to control Nogai which ultimately led to Tode-Mongke's removal from the throne in 1287. These matters will be dealt with in turn to demonstrate they do not describe Nogai's relationship with Tode-Mongke, and that Nogai was not a principal driver in Tode-Mongke's removal. While Tode-Mongke was no equal to Mongke-Temur, neither was he a puppet or subordinate to Nogai, who largely concerned himself with his own regional matters.

Nogai's domination of military and diplomatic matters during Tode-Mongke's reign is commonly cited for his growing power in the 1280s. For instance, that he took over the Golden Horde's diplomacy or conducted his own foreign policy, usually with the Mamluks and Byzantium.<sup>160</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, this was certainly not the case during the reign of Mongke-Temur Khan, who continued a steady correspondence with the Mamluks and even after Nogai's arrival to Romania sent his own embassies directly to Constantinople.<sup>161</sup> Tode-Mongke, at least initially, began his reign with his own ambitious diplomatic plans.

The new khan sent at least two embassies to the Mamluk Sultan Qalawun (r.1279-1290).<sup>162</sup> Jackson hypothesizes that Tode-Mongke's much remarked conversion to Islam may have begun as a diplomatic tool. A Mamluk embassy to Mongke-Temur arrived only after his death, finding Tode-Mongke as khan in early 1282. This embassy makes no reference to Tode-

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<sup>160</sup> Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 713; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 228; Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 277; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 172.

<sup>161</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 63. In 1279 Mongke-Temur and Cyril, the Metropolitan of Kiev, sent Theognost, the Bishop of Sarai, as an embassy to Constantinople. The *Nikonian Chronicle* states that "he came for the third time from the Greek land."

<sup>162</sup> Broadbridge, "Careers in Diplomacy among Mamluks and Mongols," 283. Broadbridge dates the two embassies as arriving in Cairo June-July 1282, and August-September 1283.

Mongke as a Muslim. When Tode-Mongke sent an embassy to the Mamluks in 1283, his conversion makes up the letter, telling Sultan Qalawun that he had established sharia law in the Golden Horde, and asked for an Islamic name and standards from the sultan and his puppet caliph.<sup>163</sup> The sudden eagerness to stress his religion, Jackson suggests, came not necessarily from a deep personal conversion, but an attempt to outmaneuver Ahmad Teguder, enthroned as ilkhan only a few months after Tode-Mongke's ascension. Ahmad Teguder was the first Muslim khan of the Ilkhanate, and contacted Tode-Mongke and the Mamluks soon after his enthronement.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps worried that Ahmad Teguder's faith would bring rapprochement between the Ilkhanate and Mamluk Sultanate, Tode-Mongke may have hoped to "out-Muslim" Ahmad Teguder, and appear the more sincere out of the two, and therefore encourage the Mamluks to maintain the alliance.<sup>165</sup> If correct it suggests, at least initially, Tode-Mongke's Islam was in part a tool to maintain the Jochid position, and only later became a more sincere belief.

The Mamluks were not the only front on which Tode-Mongke engaged in dramatic diplomatic moves. Generally, these were moves towards peace with the other Mongol Khanates. Most well known was his release of Nomukhan, the son of Great Khan Khubilai. Having held him prisoner in the Golden Horde since the mid-1270s, after consulting with Nogai and Qonichi of the Blue Horde (and after years of lobbying by Toqta's grandmother, Kelmish Aqa), Tode-Mongke allowed Nomukhan to return to the Yuan Dynasty in 1283.<sup>166</sup> The aim was to foster good relations with Khubilai Khan, who Mongke-Temur had spurned.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Broadbridge, "Careers in Diplomacy among Mamluks and Mongols," 269; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 343; [Tiesenhuisen], *Сборник Материалов, (Biography of Qalawun,)* 68.

<sup>164</sup> Pfeiffer, "Ahmad Teguder's Second Letter," 183-84.

<sup>165</sup> Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 343.

<sup>166</sup> Broadbridge, *Women in the Mongol Empire*, 250; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 432.

<sup>167</sup> Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 63-65; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 183; Kanat Uskenbay, "Left Wing of the Ulus of Jochi in the 13- the Beginning of the 15th Centuries," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authoried Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 205.

Tode-Mongke had some success in his peace endeavours. Ahmad Teguder's letter to Sultan Qalawun in 1283 speaks of an end to the discord between the Golden Horde and Ilkhanate, and indeed, there are no known Jochid attacks on the Ilkhanate during the reign of Tode-Mongke.<sup>168</sup> Tode-Mongke's efforts to better relations between the khanates was not an isolated one, as other khans voiced similar sentiments over the thirteenth century, though no empire-wide peace was reached until 1304.<sup>169</sup> While Nogai is mentioned as taking part in the decision to release Nomukhan, there is no indication that he was the mastermind behind any of these initiatives, his consultation and opinion sought due to his position as *aqa*. It seems Tode-Mongke was the impetus behind the redirection of the post-Mongke-Temur foreign policy, perhaps driven in part by sincere devotion to Islam. Hence, it cannot be said that Nogai controlled the Horde's diplomacy during the reign of Tode-Mongke.

The peace orientated diplomacy with the other Mongol Khanates does not preclude that Tode-Mongke did not believe in the expansion of the Mongol Empire. Tode-Mongke may have believed that if the Mongols stopped fighting each other, they could conquer the world.<sup>170</sup> Military actions towards Europe during Tode-Mongke's reign, most notably the invasion of Hungary in 1285 by Nogai and prince Tele-Buqa, may not be Nogai acting counter to Tode-Mongke's peaceful intentions, but simply a manifestation of directing Mongol energies away from other khanates and towards those who had not submitted. Such sentiments were voiced during the empire-wide peace talks of 1304.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 192; Inur Mirgaleyev, "Relations with the Ilkhans," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 363; Pfeiffer, "Ahmad Tegüder's Second Letter," 184, 189; Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 70. Attacks are recorded in 1279-80, during the reign of Mongke-Temur, and in 1288, during the reign of Tele-Buqa, Tode-Mongke's successor.

<sup>169</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 66; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 233.

<sup>170</sup> The sentiment is expressed by Tode-Mongke's great-uncle Berke in the account of ibn Wasil. Berke is supposed to have lamented, "Mongols are killed by Mongol swords. If we were united, then we would have conquered all of the world!" when surveying the fallen after a battle against the Ilkhanate. See Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 80.

<sup>171</sup> Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 220-21; May, *Mongol Empire*, 210.

With the diplomatic front addressed, the relationship between Tode-Mongke, Nogai and the Rus' principalities can be investigated. Since the conquest of Batu, the Rus' princes depended on the khan for legitimacy. While it was not until the reign of Ozbeg (r.1312-1341) that the Jochid khan was the ultimate arbitrator of Rus' disputes and succession, the tradition of each prince "going to the Horde," to receive a *yarliq* confirming his enthronement was already established.<sup>172</sup> Not only could a *yarliq* be granted, but it could be rescinded on the khan's will. Such was the case for the dispute between two of Alexander Nevskii's sons, Dmitri and Andrei, for the title of Grand Prince of Vladimir. Andrei, angered by his brother, went in 1281 to the khan for military aid to overthrow Dmitri. Convinced of Dmitri's malfeasance, Tode-Mongke provided troops to assist Andrei in ousting Dmitri. Dmitri fled before Andrei and the Mongols and according to the *Nikonian Chronicle*, sought refuge with Nogai, here called khan.<sup>173</sup> In 1284 Dmitri marched on Novgorod "in the company of Tatars," and wreaked much devastation, retaking his position by force. While the secondary literature commonly states that Nogai provided military forces for Dmitri, as well as a *yarliq* to counter Andrei's *yarliq* from Tode-Mongke, this is not explicitly outlined in either the *Nikon Chronicle* or *Chronicle of Novgorod*.<sup>174</sup> Neither chronicle specifies the origin of the Tatars in Dmitri's service for this attack, and while Dmitri retook Novgorod, it is not stated that he was granted a new *yarliq* courtesy of Nogai.<sup>175</sup> The *Nikonian Chronicle* adds that later in 1284:

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<sup>172</sup> Martin, *Crisis of Medieval Russia*, 187, 193; Vásáry, "The Jochid Realm," 78, 80. Prior to Ozbeg, the Mongols generally confirmed princes based on Rurikid tradition.

<sup>173</sup> *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 108-09; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 66-69. From the *Nikon Chronicle*: "The same year Prince Andrei Aleksandrovich was sent a large army from the Khan, under Tura-Temir and Alyn, with many Tatars from the Golden Horde; and with them he marched against his senior brother, Grand Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich, grandson of Iaroslav; and they caused the Christians much harm. But Grand Prince Dmitrii [...] with his druzhina, princes, children and entire court fled to the horde of Khan Nagai, to whom he told everything in order, relating it with tears, and gave him and his nobles many gifts. Khan Nagai listened to him and kept him in honour."

<sup>174</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 194; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 230; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 176-77

<sup>175</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 76, "And so he [Prince Dmitrii] marched with Tatars towards Novgorod and did much harm in their land. The Novgorodians petitioned him, and Grand Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich became their prince."; *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 109-10, "in the winter of the same year, *Knyaz* Dmitri came to Novgorod with his brother Andrei with an armed force, and with Tartars and with the whole of the Low Country, and they did much harm and burned the districts."

[Andrei] brought the khan's son from the Golden Horde against his senior brother, [Dmitri]. While the Tatars were raiding here and there, [Dmitri] gathered large troops, marched against them, and the khan's son escaped to the Horde while Grand Prince [Dmitri] captured the boiars of his brother, Andrei.<sup>176</sup>

Andrei was provided troops under the command of a son of Tode-Mongke, though it is not clear if Dmitri still had Mongol forces on his side.<sup>177</sup> While Dmitri had sheltered with Nogai, on his return in 1283 the *Nikon Chronicle* states that “the same year Grand Prince Dmitrii Aleksandrovich came from the Horde, from the Khan (Nagai) and made peace with his brother, Prince Andrei.”<sup>178</sup> Only late in 1283 do they resume hostilities, when Dmitri assassinates one of Andrei's boyars.<sup>179</sup> Dmitri did not return from Nogai with an army, and the origins of the Tatars in his retinue during his attack on Andrei can not be definitely traced to Nogai. The possibility can not be totally ruled out that Tode-Mongke had briefly switched his support to Dmitri, before returning it to Andrei. Alliances could shift quickly. In 1288, Andrei and Dmitri joined forces with their brother Daniel of Moscow to attack Mikhail Iaroslavich of Tver', for instance.<sup>180</sup>

Another example of Nogai's interference with Rus' is the episode with Ahmat the Basqaq, also recorded in the *Nikonian Chronicle*. In this episode dated to 1284/5, the voracious tax-collector Ahmat antagonized princes in the Kursk principality who complained to the khan. The khan, recorded as Tele-Buqa, took the tax rights away from Ahmat and ordered his settlements destroyed. A frustrated Ahmat, whose father was one of Nogai's emirs, received Nogai's support for a retaliatory attack on the same Rus' princes. The result was several rounds of raids, with one Rus' prince ultimately getting a small force from the khan to kill the other,

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<sup>176</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 76-77.

<sup>177</sup> According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Tode-Mongke had three sons: Or-Mongke, Chechektu, and Tobatai. Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 348; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 109-10.

<sup>178</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 69. “Nagai” is added by the translator, Zenkovsky. The original text seems to refer just to the ‘Khan’ and does not specify Nogai. From the context though, it is likely Nogai.

<sup>179</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 70.

<sup>180</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 79.

whose brother then receiving a force from Tele-Buqa to avenge him.<sup>181</sup> The episode is detailed and often unquestioned as an example of Nogai's interference among the Rus'.<sup>182</sup> However, Halperin has noted its unreliability as a literal event in several aspects, from its internal contradictions and inconsistencies, its confused timeline (the events are recorded as taking place around 1284, but Tele-Buqa was not khan until 1287), to its very provenance. This tale, taking place in a rural area in the far south, is first recorded in a chronicle from Tver' in the northeast in 1305, a chronicle that hardly noted the sack of Kiev in 1240. Yet, the more local *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* gives no mention of Ahmat.<sup>183</sup> Likely written down at great distance (both in time and space) from oral sources well after whatever the original incident was, Halperin suggests that rather than be read as a literal event, it was meant to provide a moral regarding the foolishness of armed resistance against the Mongols, and how the khan was the ultimate dispenser of justice.<sup>184</sup> Therefore this evidence for Nogai's interference among the Rus' during the reign of Tode-Mongke cannot be relied upon.

Attention should also be given to Qonichi, the head of the Blue Horde, who seemingly became more independent during the 1280s. The Golden Horde was divided into a west wing ruled by the line of Batu, and an east wing ruled by the descendants of Batu's older brother, Orda. The naming of these divisions —White Horde and Blue Horde— is inconsistent in the primary sources and does not need to be addressed here, and the exact relationship between the two wings is also unclear.<sup>185</sup> The descendants of Orda were supposed to recognize the

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<sup>181</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 71-76.

<sup>182</sup> Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 230; Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 66.

<sup>183</sup> Halperin, *the Tatar Yoke*, 82-87.

<sup>184</sup> Halperin, *the Tatar Yoke*, 86-87.

<sup>185</sup> The Russian chronicles refer to the east wing as the Blue Horde, while Persian Timurid sources refer to the same wing as the White Horde. As blue is the colour associated with east in Turko-Mongolian custom, the tendency for modern scholarship is to ascribe to Orda and his descendants the rule of the Blue Horde. For two recent studies revisiting the Blue Horde/White Horde matter, see Vladimir Tishin, "Once Again on the Meaning of the Term 'Horde' and the Categories 'Golden Horde,' 'White Horde,' 'Blue Horde,'" *Golden Horde Review* 7 no. 2 (2019): 296-317, and Ilyas Mustakimov, "Once Again to the Question of the Hordes' Color Terms in the Ulus of Jochi (the Boz Horde Term in the Sources of the 16th-19th Centuries)," *Golden Horde Review* no. 2 (2015): 129-49.



overlordship of the Batuids, while retaining autonomy within their own internal matters.<sup>186</sup> It is not until the reign of Qonichi (r.c.1270s-1300), Orda's grandson, that the Blue Horde receives greater attention, with Rashīd al-Dīn and Marco Polo referring to him as an independent monarch answering to no-one. Commonly, it is assumed Tode-Mongke's and his successors' weakness to Nogai brought about the independence of Qonichi.<sup>187</sup> As May wrote, "initially, however, it appears that [Qonichi] continued to defer to the ruler of the [Golden Horde], at least until Noghai's authority became too apparent, making it difficult for the Blue Horde to maintain a pretence of subordination."<sup>188</sup> Yet it is unclear how much control the Batuid khans held over the line of Orda. The fact that the sources portray the 1280s-1300 as a period of Qonichi's increased autonomy may simply be because this is when the Blue Horde receives the greatest source coverage. In the 1240s after the deaths of Ogedai and Chagatai, the last sons of Chinggis Khan, Orda was the senior prince of the lineage and held in great esteem.<sup>189</sup> But even his final years are unrecorded and the period from the 1250s until after Qonichi's ascension in the 1270s is poorly known. As the exact relationship between the Blue Horde khans and the Golden Horde khans cannot be fully defined over these years, it makes it difficult to say Qonichi acted with greater independence than his predecessors. The friendly relations that Qonichi and his son, Bayan, maintained with the Ilkhanate may simply have been a continuation of the relationship begun by Orda and Qonqiran, the first Blue Horde

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<sup>186</sup> István Vásáry, "The Beginnings of Coinage in the Blue Horde," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 62 no. 4 (2009): 371, 374.

<sup>187</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 64-65; *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Aldo Ricci (New York: Routledge, 1931), 384; *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, ed. and trans. Henry Yule, 3rd ed., vol. 2. (London: John Murray, 1903), 479; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 469. "This King Conci is subject to none. Yet it is true that he is of the line of Cinghis Can, that is of the imperial lineage, and is a very near relation of the great Kaan."

<sup>188</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 295.

<sup>189</sup> Uskenbay, "Left Wing," 204. Uskenbay notes that John de Plano Carpini, C. de Bridia and Rashīd al-Dīn all give high status to Orda, who was posthumously known as *Ichen Khan*- lord khan. In the words of Rashīd al-Dīn, "during his father's lifetime and after his death [Orda] was of great importance and influence. Although Jochi Khan's successor was his second son, Batu, in decrees written by Mōngkā Qa'an, Orda's name had precedence. Orda gave his consent to Batu's becoming ruler and seat him on his father's throne. Orda commanded half of Jochi Khan's troops, and Batu commanded the other half." Rashiduddin, *Jami' u' t-tawarikh*, 344.

khans.<sup>190</sup> As Rashīd al-Dīn noted, “from the beginning none of Orda’s offspring who succeeded him ever went before the khans of Batu’s family because they were so far away and ruled their *ulus* in autonomy.”<sup>191</sup> This period of autonomy is coloured by the control the Golden Horde held over the Blue Horde after the military intervention of Toqta and Ozbeg in 1300s, which has been presented as a ‘reassertion’ of Batuid influence, rather than a imposition of a new order.<sup>192</sup> The status of Qonichi may not indicate the weakness of the khans due to Nogai.

## 4.2. Second Invasion of Hungary, 1285

Tode-Mongke began his reign more energetically than commonly portrayed. He apparently pushed out Mongke-Temur’s sons to take the throne himself, undertook a flurry of diplomatic activity realigning the Golden Horde’s standing among the other khanates and the Mamluk Sultanate, and began a new round of interaction with the Rus’ principalities. Most of the activity attributed to Tode-Mongke is dated from the start of his reign (1280-1282) until around 1283-1284, when, as Jackson pointed out, he seems to have converted to Islam. This is the aspect of Tode-Mongke’s reign most noted by the Mamluk chroniclers, who have him obsessed with “shaikhs and fakirs,” renouncing his duties in favour of pursuing a personal Islamic puritanism.<sup>193</sup> There was a reduction in the khan’s authority as he removed himself from government, and according to Baybars al-Mansuri Mongke-Temur Khan’s widow Jijek-Khatun acted as a regent.<sup>194</sup> While Nogai remained prominent in the west, in the Golden Horde the rising prince was Tele-Buqa. A great-grandson of Batu and nephew of Tode-Mongke, Tele-Buqa appears in the mid-1280s leading an attack on Hungary with Nogai.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’ t-tawarikh*, 344-45.

<sup>191</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’ t-tawarikh*, 344.

<sup>192</sup> Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 168; Pochekaev, “First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi,” 233.

<sup>193</sup> [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (Baybars), 105-06, (al-Nuwayri) 155, (ibn Khaldun) 381, (al-Maqrizi) 435. Rashīd al-Dīn makes no mention of Tode-Mongke’s Islam.

<sup>194</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109.

<sup>195</sup> Tele-Buqa was a son of Mongke-Temur and Tode-Mongke’s elder brother, Tartu.

Nogai taking part in military operations against Europe was not unusual. His military role in the Balkans was already noted, and from the late 1270s onwards he provided troops to Rus' princes to raid Lithuania and Poland. The *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* emphasises that Nogai was not the mastermind behind these attacks: his troops were provided in response to Rus' complaints of incursions by the Lithuanians, or because a given prince wanted to take advantage of upheaval in Poland after the death of a Polish Duke.<sup>196</sup> Providing an army for the Rus' was not unusual. Tode-Mongke often provided Mongol armies for Rus' princes, most notably Andrei Aleksandrovich. As the raids produced slaves, loot and disrupted the powers along the Golden Horde's border —states which, in Mongol imperial ideology, were to be conquered at some point— then Nogai's involvement was in line with his role as a *tammachi*. These raids took advantage of weaknesses, rather than earnest attempts at conquest. So it was that the Hungarian Kingdom came to the attention of the Mongols when a Cuman revolt in 1280-1282 resulted in an exodus of these warriors from Hungary to the Golden Horde. Likely, they fled directly into Nogai's domains in the Balkans, informing the Jochids of the weakness of a Hungarian kingdom wrought with strife between its King Ladislaus IV, the church, the nobility, and the Cumans. Having been enticed back to Hungary after the first Mongol invasion, the Cumans were intended as a primary line of defense should the Mongols return.<sup>197</sup> Given these circumstances, it was a prime opportunity for the Mongols to take advantage of

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<sup>196</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 90, 92; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 54, 63, 69. Attacks on Lithuania are recorded for 1275/1277, 1279/1280, 1282 and 1289. The *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* specifies the involvement of Nogai in the 1275/1277 and 1279/1280 attacks and has Poland the target of the 1280 attack. The *Nikonian Chronicle* never names Nogai, and for the 1282 and 1289 raids on Lithuania does not mention the cooperation of Rus' princes.

<sup>197</sup> Długosz, *Annales*, 228; Roman Hautala, "The Confrontation Between the Ulus of Jochi and the Catholic Europe from the Mid-13th to the Mid-14th Centuries," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 368-70; Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 170, 173; Stephen Pow, "Hungary's Castle Defense Strategy in the Aftermath of the Mongol Invasion (1241-1242)," *Fortifications, Defence Systems, Structures and Features in the Past* 13 (2019): 244-45; Tibor Szöcs, "Egy második 'tatárjárás'? A tatár-magyar kapcsolatok a XIII. század második felében [The Second Mongol Invasion? Mongol-Hungarian Relations in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century]," *Belvedere Meridionale* 22 (2010): 19-20. Hungary may have avoided any significant Mongol attacks between 1242 and 1285 by paying a yearly tribute to the Mongols and undertaking a nominal submission.

Hungarian weakness. Claims that Nogai was coming to prop up King Ladislaus, himself of Cuman descent, as a pro-Mongol puppet can be ignored, as none of Nogai's actions suggest such a political consideration affected the campaign or assisted in the Mongol advance.<sup>198</sup> As noted by Hautala, the immediate *casus belli* was likely King Ladislaus pursuing fleeing Cumans into Horde territory in Wallachia.<sup>199</sup>

It is unclear if the impetus for the attack came from Nogai himself. It is often attributed to him in scholarship and in line with his actions in the Balkans.<sup>200</sup> However, the ambitious prince Tele-Buqa may have desired to build his military reputation to make himself a better claimant to the throne and thus ordered Nogai to take part. Tiesenhausen's Russian translation misread the *Bilad al-Kiral*, "possession of the Hungarian King," in Baybars al-Mansuri's *Zubdat al-Fikra* as a reference to Krakow, and thus conflated the 1285 Hungarian campaign with the 1287 Polish campaign by Nogai and Tele-Buqa. As Baybars al-Mansuri describes Tele-Buqa ordering Nogai to take part, then Tele-Buqa may have been delegated command by Tode-Mongke, or Tele-Buqa undermined the khan by organizing the attack himself, as retaliation for Ladislaus' incursion to Horde territory.<sup>201</sup>

It is not the task of this thesis to detail the 1285 attack on Hungary, but it was not a success for the Mongols. Anticipating easily overpowering the Hungarians, Nogai and Tele-

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<sup>198</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 256; Favereau, *the Horde*, 194-95. Favereau wrote that Nogai invaded at the invitation of King Ladislaus; Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 161; György Székely, "Egy elfeledett rettegés: A második Tatárjárás a Magyar történeti hagyományokban és az egyetemes összefüggésekben." ["A Forgotten Dread: The second Tatar Invasion in Hungarian Historical Traditions and Universal Contexts."] *Századok* 122 (1988): 81; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 181. Szócs notes that King Ladislaus provided military aid to Poland when Nogai and Tele-Buqa attacked in 1287, something unlikely if he was in cooperation with the Mongols. See Szócs, "Egy második 'tatárjárás'?" 28-32.

<sup>199</sup> [Roman Hautala] Роман Хаутала, "От ьату до джанибека: военные конфликты укуса джучи с Польшей и венгрией," ["From Batu to Janybek: Military Conflicts of the Ulus of Jochi with Poland and Hungary,"] *Golden Horde Review*, 4 no. 3 (2016): 487.

<sup>200</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 194-95. Favereau wrote "'Töde-Möngke Khan [...] did not appreciate Nogay's appetite for war. Soon enough, other high-ranking Jochids were flocking to Nogay's side. Even the khan's nephew Töle-Buqa took his orders from Nogay, participating in the Hungarian campaign.;" Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 230. Pochekaev wrote that "any military activities the Golden Horde engaged in during [Tode-Mongke's] rule were carried out on the initiative and under the command of Nogai.;" Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 178. Vernadsky wrote that Nogai invited Tele-Buqa to campaign.

<sup>201</sup> [Hautala], "От ьату до джанибека," 491; Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 106.

Buqa entered the kingdom with their own armies. A punitive attack bypassing urban centres, despite advancing as far as Pest they found themselves repulsed in local engagements and withdrew via separate routes in spring 1285. Nogai forced his way through the local resistance in Transylvania and returned to his Balkan territory, whereas Tele-Buqa's route was much more difficult.<sup>202</sup> While crossing the Carpathians, Tele-Buqa's army was caught in a horrific snowstor. In one of the most consistent elements of the source depiction of the invasion, Tele-Buqa's force suffered immense losses, as men and horses were killed from exposure, lost in the mountains, or picked off by local defenders. In the *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, so great were Tele-Buqa's losses that he only "made his way on foot out [of the mountains] with his wife and one mare."<sup>203</sup> Baybars al-Mansuri similarly records Tele-Buqa's army destroyed by harsh winter weather while taking a different route from Nogai.<sup>204</sup> Nogai's losses, meanwhile, must not have been significant, for attacks were recorded on Bulgaria and Thrace later in 1285. The Bulgarian tsar George Terter was forced to recognize the overlordship of the Golden Horde, marrying a daughter to Nogai's eldest son Chaka.<sup>205</sup> This may have amplified for Tele-Buqa his own losses, and both the Rus' and Mamluk accounts assert the botched withdrawal brought about discord between the two, Tele-Buqa blaming his misfortune on Nogai.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 93-94; [Hautala], "От бату до джанибека," 488-90; Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 173; Szöcs, "Egy második 'tatárjárás'?" 20-27. See Székely, "Egy elfeledett rettegés: 69-71 and Szöcs, 20-24, for a useful overview of the various source depictions of the 1285 attack.

<sup>203</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 94.

<sup>204</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 106.

<sup>205</sup> Długosz, *Annales*, 222. Długosz wrote of the Tatars later in 1285 attacking the Emperor of Constantinople and occupying much of his land; Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 382-83; Uzelac, "Tatars and Serbs and the end of the Thirteenth Century," 11. Terter's son, the future Bulgarian Tsar Theodore Svetoslav, is often said to have been sent to Nogai's *ordu* as a hostage as a sign of submission, but Uzelac suggests he was a political refugee seeking shelter with Nogai, rather than a hostage to ensure his father's loyalty. See Uzelac, "The Port of Maurocastro, Emperor Theodore Svetoslav and the Tatar Elite in the Pontic Steppes," *The Historical Review* 65 (2016): 52-53.

<sup>206</sup> *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 94; Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 106.

### 4.3. The overthrow of Tode-Mongke Khan, 1287

While Nogai further strengthened the Horde's position in the Balkans after 1285, Tele-Buqa directed his energies towards his uncle Tode-Mongke Khan. By then, the Mamluk authors assert, Tode-Mongke had forsaken his duties, leaving Jijek-Khatun as regent.<sup>207</sup> In Mamluk accounts, in 1287 Tode-Mongke abdicates for Tele-Buqa and spends the rest of his life a hermit.<sup>208</sup> The account of Rashīd al-Dīn is less glowing and perhaps better reflects the truth. In Rashīd's version, Tele-Buqa, his brother Konchak and two of Mongke-Temur's sons, Alghui and Toghrilcha, declare Tele-Buqa insane and depose him.<sup>209</sup> Evidently Tode-Mongke's rule was found wanting, with either his "insanity" or genuine religious devotion sufficient excuse for the princes to remove him. Sparse mention is made of this coup even in the Islamic sources.

Ötemish Hajji's *Qara-Tawarikh*, written in Khiva in the 1550s, records anecdotes of Tode-Mongke's insanity, with his emirs afraid of him saying meaningless things to ambassadors, to refusing to move until a mountain first moved, and seem to infer he suffered from periodic fits.<sup>210</sup> Despite placing Tode-Mongke in the succession before Mongke-Temur, similar to the Mamluk accounts, Hajji has Tode-Mongke willingly abdicate the throne.<sup>211</sup> Though written over 200 years after the events, it suggests the official version of events, likely encouraged by Tele-Buqa to justify the coup within the Golden Horde and to their allies, was that Tode-Mongke was both mentally ill and willingly surrendered his throne

As noted by Spuler, neither Tode-Mongke or the coup is named in the Rus' sources.<sup>212</sup> Only in Marco Polo's *Description of the World* is a version of the overthrow presented. Marco

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<sup>207</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109.

<sup>208</sup> [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (Baybars) 105-06, (al-Nuwayri) 155, (ibn Khaldun) 381, (al-Maqrizi) 436.

<sup>209</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 741; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 124.

<sup>210</sup> [Ötemish Hajji], *Кара таварих*, 36-39. Despite his insanity, in the *Qara-Tawarikh* Tode-Mongke still leads armies and goes on campaigns, implying episodes of instability rather than a constant infirmity.

<sup>211</sup> [Ötemish Hajji], *Кара таварих*, 39.

<sup>212</sup> Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 63.

Polo inverts the event. There, Tode-Mongke deposes Tele-Buqa with the aid of Nogai. In Yule's 1903 translation, the event is as follows:

You must know there was a Prince of the Tartars of the Ponent called Mongotemur, and from him the sovereignty passed to a young gentleman called Tolobuga. But Totamangu, who was a man of great influence, with the help of another Tartar King called Nogai, slew Tolobuga and got possession of the sovereignty. He reigned not long however, and at his death Toctai, an able and valiant man, was chosen sovereign in the place of Totamangu.<sup>213</sup>

Polo's account, written a little over a decade after the coup from his Genoese prison cell, confused the names of Tode-Mongke and Tele-Buqa. This is not unique in Polo manuscripts. When introducing the Golden Horde, Polo presents an order of the khans which features Batu twice and leaves out Tele-Buqa, and elsewhere gives an incorrect order of the Great Khans.<sup>214</sup>

A key part of Polo's version is that Tele-Buqa's sons went to Khan Toqta to avenge their father, the impetus for war between Nogai and Toqta. However, in several Polo manuscripts, the name of the father of the sons is transposed: after describing how Nogai assisted Tode-Mongke in overthrowing Tele-Buqa, some Polo manuscripts have the sons of Tode-Mongke wanting revenge against Nogai for overthrowing their father.<sup>215</sup> This is the closest a contemporary source comes to having Nogai overthrow Tode-Mongke, and is almost

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<sup>213</sup> Polo/ Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 401; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 483; *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, ed. Thomas Wright, trans. William Marsden (London: Covent Garden, 1854), 469; *The Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)*, trans. Manuel Komroff (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Pub, 1930), 353; Marco Polo/Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 496.

<sup>214</sup> The first version of *The Description of the World* was written c.1300, while Tele-Buqa's coup was in 1287. Polo/ Komroff, *Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)* 350; Polo/ Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 466; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 477; Polo/Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 83, 393; Polo/Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 490. Polo's list of Golden Horde khans lists a "King Sain" as preceding Batu. *Sain Khan* was a common title for Batu, meaning "good khan," though Pelliot suggested Polo may have been referring to Jochi. See Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, vol 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), 824. Polo's list of Great Khans, in the Ricci translation, is "after Chinghis Kaan, Cui Kaan became Lord; the third was Batui Kaan; the fourth, Alton Kaan, the fifth, Mongu Kaan; the sixth, Cublai Kaan." The succession went Chinggis, Ogedai, Guyuk, Mongke, Khubilai, and Khubilai was the fifth Great Khan (though the sixth if one counts Ariq Boke).

<sup>215</sup> Polo/Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 469 note 2; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 41, 484 note 1; Polo/ Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 496-97. The "F" manuscripts switch the names. "F" is perhaps the oldest and best preserved of the Polo manuscripts, written in Franco-Italian, the likely language of the lost original written by Rustichello for Polo. Most translations will 'correct' it to Tele-Buqa's sons to retain the internal continuity. Yule's 1903 edition is one of the few to maintain Tode-Mongke's sons desiring revenge against Nogai. They proclaim to Toqta: "Good my Lord Toctai, I will tell you to the best of my ability why we be come hither. We are the sons of Totamangu, whom Tolobuga and Nogai slew, as thou well knowest. Of Tolobuga we will say no more, since he is dead, but we demand justice against Nogai as the slayer of our Father; and we pray thee as Sovereign Lord to summon him before thee and to do us justice."

certainly explainable through the confusion of Polo, his ghostwriter Rustichello, and the manuscripts many editors' and copyists' trouble, with Mongol names. It must not be taken as evidence for Nogai's involvement in the fall of Tode-Mongke. Yet Polo maintains a key detail. Like Rashīd al-Dīn, the Rus' sources and the Mamluks, Polo agrees that Nogai assisted another prince (Toqta in the Islamic and Rus' sources, Tode-Mongke in Polo's version) in overthrowing Tele-Buqa. During Polo's writing the war between Nogai and Toqta was still ongoing, and certain versions of the *Description of the World* end with Nogai's premature victory over Toqta. For Polo and Rustichello, the vengeful sons of the khan that Nogai helped overthrow was perfect story material to explain the conflict.<sup>216</sup>

This chapter has shown how Nogai did not control or influence Tode-Mongke's actions beyond consultations, such as to release Nomukhan. This was Nogai's responsibility and privilege as the Jochid *aqa*. He was not the master of the Golden Horde in the reign of Tode-Mongke, and not the mastermind of Tode-Mongke's ouster. Despite the switching of names in certain Marco Polo manuscripts, the overthrow of Tode-Mongke in the sources is entirely attributed to Tele-Buqa and his allies. As Tele-Buqa became khan, it can be presumed he was the ringleader. Despite claims of May, Pochekaev and others, there is no indication Nogai organized the scheme and the *tammachi* on the Danube seems to have been uninvolved.<sup>217</sup> As will be demonstrated over the following chapter, Tele-Buqa was ambitious and no puppet for Nogai, which ultimately culminated in their violent falling out.

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<sup>216</sup> For instance, the following translations end with Nogai victorious and forcing Toqta to flee, with no hint to Toqta's final victory. Polo/Komroff, *Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)*, 356; Polo/Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 471; Polo/Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 499. Some manuscripts have a short, hastily written epilogue that Toqta and "Tolobuga's sons," came back, killed Nogai, and avenged Tele-Buqa. Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 489; Polo/Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 408. In all versions, the war between Nogai and Toqta is the conclusion of the *Description of the World*.

<sup>217</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 251; Favereau, *the Horde*, 195; Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 168; Kovács, "The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun," 51; May, *Mongol Empire*, 291; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 231; Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 374.



## Chapter 5: 1287-1300

After the attacks on Hungary and Poland in 1285 and 1287, Nogai's relationship with the new khan, Tele-Buqa, frayed. This culminated in 1291 with Nogai finally taking part in the overthrow of a khan. While Nogai assisted Toqta in overthrowing Tele-Buqa, Nogai was not the instigator of the trouble; the primary sources have his involvement in the overthrow of Tele-Buqa as a *reaction* to Tele-Buqa conspiring against Nogai and Toqta. Only after Tele-Buqa's demise did Nogai reach his greatest pretensions, but even then, his primary concern was his own territories rather than dominating the whole of the Golden Horde. The war he fought with Toqta did not emerge out of a need to replace him, but out of separate, personal tensions between the two men. Finally, the matter of whether Nogai declared himself khan will be addressed, offering a reevaluation of the most cited evidence for Nogai's final independence.

### 5.1. Nogai and Tele-Buqa Khan, 1287-1291.

With the removal of Tode-Mongke, Tele-Buqa and his allies ruled the Golden Horde in a four-way division of power, Tele-Buqa a first amongst equals. Each of Tele-Buqa's allies was, judging from coinage distribution bearing their *tamgha*, given a region of the Golden Horde to oversee on his behalf, with Tele-Buqa personally staying in the Pontic steppes near Crimea.<sup>218</sup> Under Tele-Buqa's direction, the Golden Horde resumed military actions against its neighbours, first Poland in 1287 and the Ilkhanate in 1288. The khan knew his coup gave him a weak claim to legitimacy, and moved against his rivals, such as his cousin Toqta. When Toqta sheltered in the *ordu* of Nogai, then Tele-Buqa directed his energy against him as well. Only then do we finally, unequivocally, see Nogai move against the khan of the Golden Horde.

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<sup>218</sup> P.Ю Рева, [R. Yu. Reva]. "Распределение власти в Улусе Джучи в 686–690 / 1287–1291 гг.," ["The Distribution of Power in the Jochid Ulus in 686-690/1287-1291,"] *НУМИЗМАТИКА ЗОЛОТОЙ ОРДЫ* [*Golden Horde Numismatics*] no. 4 (2014): 136-39. This matter is dealt with again in chapter 5.4.

The most famous military action of Tele-Buqa's short reign was the attack on Poland. From December 1287 until March 1288, Tele-Buqa once again acted in conjunction with Nogai. While Hautala saw Nogai as the impetus behind the attack, the Mamluks and *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* have Tele-Buqa order Nogai to take part.<sup>219</sup> Although Tiesenhausen's translation of Baybars al-Mansuri incorrectly read Krakow in place of the territory of the Hungarian king, al-Mansuri's recording of Tele-Buqa ordering Nogai to take part may reflect Tele-Buqa's power as khan after 1287 to order Nogai. Officially, the campaign was a retaliation for attacks by the Polish Duke Leszek II on Galicia-Volhynia in 1285, though likely Tele-Buqa, having taken the throne by force, hoped a successful military operation would solidify his place as an effective Chinggisid ruler. Poland had suffered major Mongol invasions in 1242 and 1259 yet was still unconquered. Tele-Buqa may have identified Poland therefore as a region where the Mongols would be easily successful, in comparison to the experience he had in Hungary. That Tele-Buqa anticipated an easy victory and did little planning may explain the poor coordination of the Mongol armies in Poland.

That the campaign was hastily and quickly prepared is reflected in its course. Relations between Tele-Buqa and Nogai were still poor due to Tele-Buqa's losses in 1285, and their cooperation in 1287 cannot have come out of any affection, but necessity. Nogai, as the local *tammachi* commander, had the local military forces needed for Tele-Buqa's attack. The fact that their relationship was tense but Nogai still complied supports the fact that Nogai did not assist Tele-Buqa in his ascension and that Nogai was not independent of the Golden Horde, for despite personal feelings between the two men, Nogai was still the khan's subject. The two marched into Poland separately, and despite not suffering major military defeats, they could not cooperate. Tele-Buqa was repulsed at Sandomir and when he moved onto Krakow, he

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<sup>219</sup> Hautala, "Confrontation Between the Ulus of Jochi," 371; [Hautala], "От ьату до джанибека," 491-92; *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 96-96; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов* (Baybars) 106, (al-Nuwayri) 156, (ibn Khaldun) 381.

found Nogai already investing the city. The frustrated Tele-Buqa, feeling denied his victories, withdrew, pillaging Poland and his own subject Galician territories as he went. Nogai failed to take Krakow and returned to the Danube, giving Tele-Buqa a wide berth. So ended the attack on Poland, only deepening their animosity.<sup>220</sup>

The Polish debacle did not end Tele-Buqa's military dreams. After his retreat in 1288 Tele-Buqa attacked the Ilkhanate, undoing the peace maintained by Mongke-Temur and Tode-Mongke. The surest boost for a Jochid khan's legitimacy would have been to seize Azerbaijan from the Ilkhanate. Unfortunately for the new khan, his efforts failed, as did his follow up attack in 1290.<sup>221</sup> Interestingly, Rashīd al-Dīn records that in April 1288, Nogai sent an embassy bearing Buddhist relics to Ilkhan Arghun, a known Buddhist.<sup>222</sup> This embassy occurred before Tele-Buqa's attack on the Ilkhanate, which was either in May or October 1288.<sup>223</sup> Perhaps learning of Tele-Buqa's plans, Nogai pre-emptively sought to remind the Ilkhans of the nearly twenty years of peace since the reign of Mongke-Temur, and hoped to preserve efforts to Chinggisid unity. Yet the fact that the embassy occurred well before Tele-Buqa's attack cannot be ignored. Perhaps in cooperation with Tele-Buqa, Nogai's embassy tried to put the Ilkhan at ease to make him less suspecting of the belligerent new Jochid khan. Certainly, Nogai did not forewarn Arghun. Rashīd al-Dīn indicates Arghun was setting out

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<sup>220</sup> Długosz, *Annales*, 229-30; *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 96-98; Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 106-07 and 156; Hautala, "Confrontation between the Ulus of Jochi," 371; Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 173; Szócs, "Egy második 'tatárjárás'?" 32-34.

<sup>221</sup> Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 370; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356, 563, 569; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 89; Mirgaleyev, "Relations with the Ilkhans," 363; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 231; Spuler, *die Goldene Horde*, 70.

<sup>222</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 563. "On [April 11, 1288] envoys came from Noqai's ulus, and on the banks of the New Canal they presented a *sharil* (relic). Among idolators it is believed that when [the Buddha] was cremated, a translucent bone like a bead from in front of his heart remained unburned. They call it a *sharil* and claim that when anyone who has reached an exalted degree like [the Buddha] is cremated, his *sharil* does not burn. In any case, when they brought it, Arghun Khan went out to meet them, scattered gold over it, and rejoiced. Several days were given over to banqueting and revelry."

<sup>223</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356, 563. Rashīd al-Dīn gives two different dates for the attack. Either two distinct attacks in 1288, or simply an error on one of them. Details differ slightly in the two brief descriptions, but not enough to confidently say these were different attacks.

from his winter quarters in Azerbaijan and had to unexpectedly turn back to meet the oncoming foe.<sup>224</sup> Regardless, Tele-Buqa's army was forced to flee before the Ilkhanid forces.<sup>225</sup>

Nogai's embassy in 1288 has sometimes been used to suggest Nogai had his own ongoing diplomacy with the Ilkhans independent of the Golden Horde khan.<sup>226</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn mentions that during the reign of Abaqa Ilkhan (r.1265-1282), Nogai sent a wife, Chubei, and son, Buri, to the Ilkhanate, asking for a daughter of Abaqa in marriage for Buri. In this account, Abaqa gives an unnamed daughter and hosts Nogai's family in honour.<sup>227</sup> While sometimes taken as evidence of a Nogai-Ilkhanid marriage alliance, Rashīd al-Dīn's own chronicle casts doubt on the story.<sup>228</sup> For Rashīd al-Dīn in another chapter provides a genealogy of Abaqa and his children, recording his two sons and seven daughters as well as their marriages. Abaqa's third daughter Malika is recorded as marrying a son of Nogai, albeit a different Nogai from the Jochid prince. Rather, she marries Toghan Buqa, son of Nogai Yarghuchi (Nogai the Judge) of the Baya'ut tribe, a non-Chinggisid and a member of the Ilkhanate's military elite.<sup>229</sup> Further complicating matters, in a different section of his work Rashīd al-Dīn provides a genealogy of Nogai Yarghuchi, and does not list Toghan Buqa among his sons, though the fact he was related to one of Abaqa's wives is mentioned.<sup>230</sup> This is not the only place where Rashīd al-Dīn gave contrasting family trees, as Kamola noted that Rashīd al-Dīn made four conflicting genealogies for the Chagatayids.<sup>231</sup> It seems Rashīd al-Dīn confused Nogai of the Jochids with Nogai

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<sup>224</sup> Rashiduddin *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356

<sup>225</sup> Rashiduddin *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 356, 563.

<sup>226</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 196, where the *sharil* was Nogai's way to say he was uninvolved with the attack.

<sup>227</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 129; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359. Thackston rendered the name as Büri, while Boyle rendered it as Torai.

<sup>228</sup> As seen, for instance, in Buell, *Historical Dictionary*, 406-07. Favereau noted that (if this marriage did occur) it would have likely taken place after Mongke-Temur's peace with Abaqa and was therefore Nogai embracing the alliance. Favereau, *the Horde*, 192.

<sup>229</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 512

<sup>230</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 89-90. Nogai Yarghuchi was a descendant of a man named Sorghan, who was a loyal servant of Chinggis Khan in his early days. Rashīd al-Dīn in this genealogical section lists Nogai Yarghuchi's sons as Tuq Temür, Alghu, and Esän Buqa, and that "the Bulughan Khatun who was Abaqa Khan's wife, [was the cousin] of Noqai Yarghuchi." Nogai Yarghuchi, descendant of Sorghan, and Nogai descendant of Jochi are clearly identified as different individuals by Rashīd al-Dīn.

<sup>231</sup> See Stefan Kamola, "Untangling the Chaghadaids: why we should and should not trust Rashīd al-Dīn," *CAJ* 62 no. 1 (2019): 69-90.

Yarghuchi. The Mongols practiced a reciprocal type of marriage alliance between two families called a *quda*. In a *quda*, Nogai Yarghuchi would provide relations to marry in Abaqa's family, and in turn Abaqa would provide relations to marry to Nogai Yarghuchi's family.<sup>232</sup> As Nogai Yarghuchi already had marriage ties with Abaqa's family, it is likely that this was the Nogai family that Rashīd intended as marrying Abaqa's daughter. In addition to the commonness of *Nogai* as a name among the Mongols, Rashīd al-Dīn also records Chubei and Buri fleeing to Ghazan Ilkhan after Nogai's death.<sup>233</sup> Their flight to the Ilkhanate may have been confused during the lengthy editing of the *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh* with an earlier journey, and alongside the confusion of the names of the two Nogais, eventually transformed into a marriage in the reign of Abaqa.<sup>234</sup>

## 5.2. Nogai and the overthrow of Tele-Buqa Khan, 1291

Tele-Buqa Khan's inconclusive military operations did not provide his reign the security he sought. By the 1290s, having been unable to prove his legitimacy as a conqueror, Tele-Buqa decided to move against his perceived rivals: his cousin Toqta, a son of Mongke-Temur Khan, and Nogai, the *tammachi* of the west. Tele-Buqa's threat resulted in their alliance and ultimately cost Tele-Buqa his life. Nogai's role in the overthrow of Tele-Buqa was a *reaction* to Tele-Buqa making the first threatening moves, rather than Nogai's own plotting.

The tipping point in Tele-Buqa's reign was the catastrophic failure of his attack on the Ilkhanate in spring 1290, which saw hundreds of his forces killed and captured, including

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<sup>232</sup> Broadbridge, *Women in the Mongol Empire*, 35.

<sup>233</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 618. Nogai was a common Mongolian name. Thackston's translation of Rashīd al-Dīn's alone references six individuals with the name.

<sup>234</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, v-vi, viii. Rashīd al-Dīn began the project during the reign of Ghazan Ilkhan (r.1295-1304) and edited it until copying began in 1314. Over that time dozens of figures worked on the manuscripts (of which only four survive) and numerous revisions were made. Oversights are to be expected in a document as large as the *Jāmi' al-tāwarīkh*. Writing of marriage between a minor princess to the son of the wrong Nogai during the 20-year long reign of Abaqa Ilkhan, perhaps 30-40 years earlier, is an easy mistake to make. Rashīd al-Dīn left the date of the marriage blank in the text, having been unable to identify it.

several Jochid princes.<sup>235</sup> No military operation Tele-Buqa led or ordered since 1285 was successful, and it looked dangerously like he lacked heavenly support for his rule — a rule he only had due to his seizure of the throne.<sup>236</sup> Perhaps in response, rumours spread of Tele-Buqa and his allies lacking Heaven’s backing. An unnerved Tele-Buqa decided to act first, striking against those he considered his greatest threats, a fact agreed upon by Rashīd al-Dīn and the Mamluks. Rashīd al-Dīn records that Tele-Buqa moved first against Toqta, a prominent son of Mongke-Temur Khan singled out as a rival. Learning of Tele-Buqa’s scheme, Toqta fled to Nogai for shelter. Nogai agreed to assist Toqta when the young prince promised loyalty to him.<sup>237</sup> The Mamluk depiction differs in that Nogai was Tele-Buqa’s first target. Learning that Tele-Buqa planned to lure him on pretext of needing his advice and kill him, Nogai began gathering allies in secret, including Toqta, while answering Tele-Buqa’s summons.<sup>238</sup> Both traditions agree that Tele-Buqa was the one who began plotting against Nogai, the result of a long simmering antagonism, and that Nogai did not initiate the conflict.

Both Rashīd al-Dīn and the Mamluks have Nogai contact Tele-Buqa’s mother to convince her son to come to him unharmed with only a small party, as the *aqā* had only peaceful intentions and wished to advise him. Rashīd al-Dīn adds that Nogai feigned illness, appearing to be on death’s door and wished to make final amends. An unsuspecting Tele-Buqa and his allies walked right into the trap, where they were surrounded by Toqta’s men and killed.<sup>239</sup> The Rus’ sources do not note previous successions but for 1291 the *Nikonian Chronicle* and *Chronicle of Novgorod* record “tumult among the Tatars,” and that Nogai and Toqta had “killed

<sup>235</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’t-tawarikh*, 569.

<sup>236</sup> Divine support and favour, manifested in military victories and good governance, was the key underpinning to Mongolian imperial legitimacy, as well the legitimacy of an individual Chinggisid monarch. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 6-11. Rachewiltz suggested that the reason the *Secret History of the Mongols* depicts Chinggis Khan’s death occurring after the completion of 1227 Tangut campaign, was that for him to have died before victory was assured could be interpreted as Heaven rescinding its protection. De Rachewiltz, *Secret History of the Mongols*, Vol. 2, 983. Tele-Buqa’s rule was much less secure than his illustrious ancestor.

<sup>237</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’t-tawarikh*, 357; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 124-25.

<sup>238</sup> Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 107 and 156-57.

<sup>239</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’t-tawarikh*, 357; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 125-26; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (Baybars) 107-08, (al-Nuwayri) 156-7, (ibn Khaldun) 382.

*Tsars* Telebeg and Algui.”<sup>240</sup> Even Marco Polo’s version is reminiscent of the event, with Nogai and another prince (in Polo’s account, Tode-Mongke) working together to kill Tele-Buqa. Evidently this transition stood out in comparison to the previous successions, the violent overthrow of the Khan shocking even local authors and reinforces the fact Nogai was uninvolved previous depositions.

### 5.3. Nogai and Toqta Khan, 1291-1298

With the murder of Tele-Buqa and his allies in 1291, Nogai had finally taken part in the removal of the khan. This last decade of the thirteenth century has been portrayed as Nogai sitting the young Toqta on the throne and overpowering him until the mid-1290s when the frustrated Toqta pushed back. When Nogai sought to replace Toqta, the result was a civil war and Nogai’s death by 1300.<sup>241</sup> Some scholars include the added detail that Nogai declared his independence from Sarai, making himself khan.<sup>242</sup> This depiction shall be challenged. The sources do not clearly state that Toqta was an appointee of Nogai, or that their relationship was clearly Nogai dominating Toqta. Rather, their alliance in 1291 was one of convenience, and in the aftermath, both began to ignore the demands of the other. Toqta believed himself master due to his status as khan, and Nogai desired to maintain his long built-up autonomy on the Danube, and when war came, it was not a result of Nogai seeking to replace Toqta or make himself ruler.

If Nogai was a khanmaker, he needed to depose and appoint khans over the thirteenth century. As demonstrated, Nogai was not involved in the removal of a khan until 1291. The

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<sup>240</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle*, 80, “The same year there was tumult in the Horde between Khan Tokhtai, who fought Tele-Buqa, and [Algui]; and Tokhta overcame them.” The entry is then repeated, with Nogai in place of Toqta; *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 111, “The same year there was a tumult among the Tartars; *Tsar* Nogui killed *Tsars* Telebeg and Algui.” Algui, a son of Mongke-Temur, must have been the senior prince beside Tele-Buqa, as he is the only one of the princes of the junta consistently listed alongside Tele-Buqa.

<sup>241</sup> Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 713; May, *Mongol Empire*, 291-92.

<sup>242</sup> Favereau, *the Horde*, 201; Vásáry, “The Jochid Realm,” 77; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 88, 90-91.

most detailed primary sources on the 1291 coup, from the Ilkhanate and Mamluk Sultanate, do not agree Toqta was Nogai's appointee. Baybars al-Mansuri writes of Nogai "entrusting the kingdom" to Toqta, in some sort of cooperation with Toqta's brothers Burliuk, Saraybuga and Tudan, while Al-Nuwayri had him "elevate [Toqta] to the throne of kings."<sup>243</sup> Both authors then have Nogai return immediately to the Danube. Rashīd al-Dīn's version has Toqta much more forceful. In this account, Nogai returns to his territory after the murder of Tele-Buqa, and Toqta consolidated his own position without Nogai's assistance.<sup>244</sup> Yet when he had earlier fled to Nogai, Toqta promised Nogai some sort of obedience: "My cousins are trying to kill me, and thou art the *aqā*. I will take refuge with thee so that thou mayst preserve me and prevent the hand of their oppression from reaching me. As long as I live I shall be commanded by my *aqā* and shall not contravene thy will."<sup>245</sup> Nogai must not have left before Toqta was secured on the throne in order to ensure the transfer of power. However, this was done out of their mutual agreement, rather than Toqta being selected among the princes by Nogai.

Statements by Rashīd al-Dīn and the Mamluk authors that Nogai returned to his territory soon after the coup are supported by a sudden rush of activity by Nogai in Eastern Europe. In 1291, Nogai brought the banates of Severin and Wallachia under his direct rule.<sup>246</sup> In 1292 he forced George I Terter from the throne and made the boyar Smilets the new Bulgarian tsar.<sup>247</sup> After that, Nogai attacked Serbia in 1293 in retaliation for attacks on the

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<sup>243</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 108. "В 690 году в Северных областях вступил на престол, после Тулабуги, Токта. Когда Ногай вручил ему царство и утвердил его на нем, то он (в то же время) пристроил у него и действовавших заодно с ним братьев его: Бурлюка, Сарайбугу и Тудана, и сказал: 'Эти братья твои будут к услугам твоим, благоволи им'. Потом Ногай вернулся восвояси."; al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 157. "Ногай возвел его на престол царей и устроил дела его государства, поручил ему тех из оставшихся братьев его, которые действовали с ним заодно, и сказал: "Эти братья твои будут к услугам твоим, благоволи им!" In Thackston's translation of Rashīd al-Dīn, the brothers are named as Tödägän, Bürlük, and Sarai Buqa. Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 348. Tudan/Tödägän is the Duden of the Rus' sources, who Toqta sent on campaign against the Rus' in 1293. *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 111; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 81-82. The rest of Toqta's brothers sided with Tele-Buqa and were killed in the coup.

<sup>244</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 357; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 126.

<sup>245</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 357; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 124-25.

<sup>246</sup> Madgearu, "The Mongol Domination," 225.

<sup>247</sup> Pachymeres part 3, IX.26; Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 258; Bruce G. Lippard, "The Mongols and Byzantium, 1243-1341," PhD dissertation, Indiana University, (1983): 209; Uzelac, "Golden Horde and the Balkans," 383-84; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 89.



banates of Kučevo, Braničevo and Vidin, which had submitted to Nogai. Serbian King Milutin avoided Nogai's wrath by pre-emptively submitting to Nogai and sending his son (the future King Stefan Dečanski) to Nogai as a hostage.<sup>248</sup> By 1293, Nogai was the master of the lower Danube east of the Iron Gates. After the submission of Serbia, Nogai may have been the impetus behind other probes into Europe. Over 1292-1293, attacks on Poland and the Hungarian-controlled banate of Mačva are recorded, and Mongol envoys even reached the Bohemian King Vaclav II that year.<sup>249</sup>

Nogai's attention was almost entirely focused on Europe in the early 1290s, in contrast to scholars who have Nogai spending those years dominating Toqta Khan.<sup>250</sup> Toqta in both Rus' sources and Rashīd al-Dīn took major actions with no mention of Nogai's involvement. In 1293 when conflict once again broke out between the Dmitri and Andrei Aleksandrovich, Andrei and a group of Rus' princes went to Toqta for assistance. Toqta sent his brother Tudan with a large army, and with these princes wrought a path of devastation across the principalities, taking 14 cities and forcing Dmitri to flee.<sup>251</sup> No mention is made of Nogai, and there is no indication that Dmitri fled to Nogai as he had in the 1280s. If Dmitri was still "Nogai's candidate," this did affect Tudan's campaign. In spring 1294, Rashīd al-Dīn records that Toqta reached a peace agreement with the Ilkhan Geikhatu (r.1291-1295) ending the war restarted by Tele-Buqa Khan.<sup>252</sup> Nogai is not mentioned as taking part either, though the previous year the

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<sup>248</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 257; Lippard, "Mongols and Byzantium," 209; Uzelac, "Echoes of the Conflict," 513; Uzelac, "Empire within an Empire," 273; Uzelac, "Golden Horde and the Balkans," 383-84; Uzelac, "Tatars and Serbs," 11, 13-14; Vászary, *Cumans and Tatars*, 88-89, 104-05, 107.

<sup>249</sup> [Hautala], "От ьату до джанибека," 494; Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 168, 174.

<sup>250</sup> Ciociltan has Toqta "subject" to Nogai. Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 251; Pochekaev wrote "For several year[s] the new khan demonstrated complete obedience to Nogai's orders, which mostly consisted of eliminating public officials and tribal leaders in the Golden Horde whom [Nogai] regarded as his enemies." Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 231; Saunders, *History of the Mongol Conquests*, 162, during the reign of Toqta, "within and without [the Golden Horde], the great viceroy [Nogai] was treated as the real Khan."

<sup>251</sup> *Nikonian Chronicle* 81-83; *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 111-12. Dmitir died the next year, his power broken. Uzelac cites this campaign as the eradication of Nogai's influence in the Rus' Principalities. See [Uzelac], *Под сенком Пса*, 233.

<sup>252</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 578

Blue Horde Khan Qonichi sent envoys “to express good will and ask for an alliance.”<sup>253</sup> Nogai’s only diplomatic involvement during the first years of Toqta’s reign was only in his local sphere-of-influence in Europe.

This is not to say that Toqta did not act with great respect to Nogai and carried out some of his demands, as per the agreement Rashīd al-Dīn records. In 1293, according to Baybars al-Mansuri, Nogai sent one of his wives, Yaylaq Khatun, to Toqta with a list of over 20 emirs who had sided against them during the 1291 coup. They were to be executed, which Toqta promptly carried out to Nogai’s relief.<sup>254</sup> Baybars records further unspecified murders of “Tatars” undertaken on Nogai’s order through 1294 as well, likely surviving allies of the late Tele-Buqa.<sup>255</sup> These demands went both ways, as Toqta in 1294 asked Nogai to kill Jijek-Khatun, a widow of Mongke-Temur Khan, and some of her supporters.<sup>256</sup> These reprisals, which Toqta had a shared interest in carrying out, seem to be the extent of effective cooperation between them. Ibn Khaldun indicates Nogai grew haughty after commanding the khan to carry out his orders, and both Marco Polo and Rashīd al-Dīn have Nogai spurn Toqta’s embassies.<sup>257</sup> This further supports Nogai not dominating previous khans, for once he had a role of greater influence, he grew overconfident. Rather than a wily statesman deftly handling Toqta, Nogai was more concerned with his personal autonomy, getting rid of enemies and family matters. When Toqta made demands of Nogai in turn, the old commander felt comfortable enough to ignore them. The khanmaker ideas may find their origin in these last years, in the final stage of Nogai’s career when he began to openly defy the khan and act with provocative independence.

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<sup>253</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’t-tawarikh*, 578.

<sup>254</sup> Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 108-09 and 157-58.

<sup>255</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109.

<sup>256</sup> Baybars and ibn Khaldun in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 109 and 383; [Uzelac], *Под сенком Пса*, 232. Ibn Khaldun has Tele-Buqa give the order, but the more contemporary Baybars al-Mansuri places the event to the reign of Toqta. As Baybars identifies Jijek-Khatun as the mother of Alghui, Tele-Buqa’s close ally in the junta, the event seems more likely to have happened in the reign of Toqta.

<sup>257</sup> Ibn Khaldun in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 382; Rashiduddin, *Jami’ u’t-tawarikh*, 357; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 126; Polo/Komroff, *Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)*, 354; Polo/Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 469-70; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 484-85; Polo/Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 402-03; Polo/ Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 497.

Toqta was annoyed by this disrespect, which aggravated other tensions that contributed to their war. Rather than Nogai wishing to remove Toqta to appoint another puppet or himself as khan, or Toqta intentionally seeking to overthrow Nogai, the Islamic sources that provide the only detailed accounts of the outbreak of the war have the origins more familial.<sup>258</sup> The final conflict sprang, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, from a marriage. Toqta's grandfather, Salji'udai Guregen, requested that Nogai's daughter Qiyan marry his son, named Yaylaq. After the marriage, Qiyan converted to Islam, which antagonized her Buddhist husband. Fighting and mistreating his wife, Qiyan contacted to her family complaining of him. Angered, Nogai demanded justice for his daughter and requested that Toqta send Salji'udai to him. Toqta refused to hand over his own grandfather despite two separate embassies from Nogai.<sup>259</sup> In reaction, Nogai sent Chubei, and his sons Chaka, Teke and Buri to convince several of Toqta's commanders in the west to revolt and do violence, with a number welcomed to Nogai's court and one marrying Nogai's daughter. When Toqta demanded Nogai hand over the rebellious commanders, Nogai refused unless Toqta sent over Salji'udai and Yaylaq.<sup>260</sup> In Rashīd al-Dīn's account, this is the cause for war the following year (1298).<sup>261</sup> Baybars al-Mansuri records that Toqta sent a plow, an arrow, and a pile of earth to Nogai as a riddle. Nogai determined the materials were Toqta's declaration of war and sent Toqta's embassy back with the threat: "Tell Toqta that our horses are thirsty and wish to drink from the Don."<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 251; May, *Mongol Empire*, 291, "Toqta [...] came to the throne at a young age and served as the dutiful puppet that Noghai hoped for, allowing Noghai to continue his own agenda. Toqta proved to be much like his father- strong-willed and quite capable. As he grew older, he steadily increased his independence and carefully acquired supporters to challenge Noghai."; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 231-32, "For this reason [Nogai] decided against looking for another candidate for the throne after challenging his former protégé and declared himself a khan, instead appointing his eldest son Juki as co-ruler."

<sup>259</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 358, 376; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 126-27. In Thackston's translation, Toqta's response is especially provocative: "He is like a father to me, a nurturer and an officer. How can I give him into the hands of an enemy?"

<sup>260</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh* 358; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 127; Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 110 and 158.

<sup>261</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 358; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 127.

<sup>262</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 110. "Скажи Токте, что наши кони хотят пить и мы хотим напоить их водой из Дона."

## 5.4. The Reign of Nogai Khan? 1298-1300

By the end of the 1290s, Nogai and Toqta were at war. The origins of the conflict stemmed from the fact that their roles and relationship following the 1291 coup had not been clearly defined. Nogai acted with greater autonomy and forcefulness in the Balkans after 1291, and much like Baiju in the late 1250s in the Azerbaijani pastures, came to feel this region was *his* territory.<sup>263</sup> From their agreement Nogai believed he was owed services from Toqta when he demanded it, and Toqta carried this out on occasion, as when he killed emirs on Nogai's order. But the reciprocity only went so far. Nogai was angered when Toqta refused to hand over Salji'udai, as was Toqta when Nogai ignored his messengers. This is clearly outlined by Rashīd al-Dīn, who has Nogai tell Toqta's envoys:

It is known to all the world what toil and hardship I have endured and how I have exposed myself to the charge of perfidy and bad faith in order to win for [Toqta] the throne [...]. And now Saljidai Küregen has authority over that throne. If my son Toqta wishes the basis of our relationship to be strengthened between us, let him send Saljidai Küregen back to his *yurt*, which is near Khwārazm.<sup>264</sup>

If Nogai had taken part in the removal of earlier khans, the conspiracy against Tele-Buqa would not have been what marked him out as “perfidious.” Not only did Toqta refuse to hand over the man who allowed the abuse of Nogai's daughter, but from Nogai's point of view, Salji'udai had greater influence over Toqta than he. Rather than a clear hierarchy with Nogai as the master, both saw themselves in the position of influence, and both were aggravated when the other did not recognize it. When Nogai encouraged the revolt of certain Jochid commanders in response, it looked like open rebellion, which Toqta could not abide.

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<sup>263</sup> Michael Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanate of Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 96; Sara Nur Yıldıız, “Baiju: The Mongol Conqueror at the Crossfire of Dynastic Struggle,” in *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, Intellectual*, eds. Michal Biran, Jonathan Brack, and Francesca Fiaschetti (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 45, 47. *Tammachi* Baiju controlled the Azerbaijani pastures since Chormaqun's death, and he and his *tamma* saw it as their territory. When Hulegu marched against Baghdad, Baiju's *tamma* was forced into Anatolia to free up pasture for Hulegu's forces, much to Baiju's displeasure. The animosity between them culminated in Baiju's execution.

<sup>264</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 126.

The general course of the conflict is largely agreed upon in the sources. Toqta declared war and mobilized his forces sometime in 1298. Nogai advanced deep into the Golden Horde, and on their first battle on the Don River, the more experienced Nogai forced Toqta to retreat to Sarai.<sup>265</sup> Nogai did not pursue, perhaps worried of overextending himself, and fell back to consolidate or return to his territory.<sup>266</sup> His plans quickly unravelled. His grandson Aqtaji was killed in Crimea while demanding tribute from the local Italian merchants (having been sent to deny their revenues to Toqta), and a furious Nogai sent an army into the peninsula as punishment, sacking Sudaq and other Crimean cities in December 1298.<sup>267</sup> When survivors convinced Nogai to release his captives (perhaps with a mind for future trade relations) his own commanders were outraged, seeing the loss of their booty, and a number revolted against him. Nogai's second son Teke was captured, only rescued once Chaka killed many of the rebels.<sup>268</sup> The rest fled to Toqta with news of Nogai's troubles. After securing peace with Ilkhan Ghazan, Toqta brought his border troops with him in a massive assault on Nogai, pre-empting Nogai's diplomatic effort to incite Ghazan against Toqta.<sup>269</sup> Retreating before Toqta's host, Nogai's final ploys to stall him were foiled. Toqta Khan shattered Nogai's army along the Kugenlyk river in 1299 or early 1300. An injured Nogai was caught by Rus' cavalry in Toqta's service. He told the horsemen to take him to Toqta, but Nogai either died of his wounds, or was killed by them.<sup>270</sup> His sons scattered, his territory annexed by Toqta, so ended the reign of Nogai.

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<sup>265</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 358; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 127; Pachymeres part 3, IX.26; Baybars and al-Nuwayri in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 111 and 159; Polo/Komroff, *Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)*, 356; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 488-89; Polo/Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 471; Polo/Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 497. This first victory is what forms the (premature) final battle of Komroff's, Marden's and Yule's translations of Marco Polo ("the Plain of Nerghi").

<sup>266</sup> Baybars al-Mansuri has Nogai return home immediately after the battle. Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 111.

<sup>267</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 127; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (Baybars) 111-12, (al-Mufaddal) 195, (ibn Khaldun) 383; Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 163, 252; Hautala, "Tatar Massacre," 198-200.

<sup>268</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 127-28.

<sup>269</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 128; Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 112.

<sup>270</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 128-29; [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, (Baybars) 112-13, (al-Nuwayri) 159-60, (al-Mufaddal) 196; Pachymeres,

The question remains if Nogai ever declared his independence, and if Toqta's war was to crush Nogai's fledgling state. Only in the works of Rashīd al-Dīn, the Mamluk authors, Marco Polo and Pachymeres are the origins of the conflict discussed. Polo's version is already dealt with. Pachymeres focuses on Toqta's desire to crush Nogai's autonomy, while Rashīd al-Dīn and Baybars al-Mansuri provide a detailed explanation in the form of tension over power and influence, but where Nogai never declares himself khan.<sup>271</sup> Support for Nogai making himself khan rests on coinage minted in his name bearing his *tamgha* (seal) and apparently the title of khan, and the tendency for some sources to address him by royal titles (i.e. *malik*, *imperator*, *tsar*). The matter of coinage shall be addressed first.

There are coins found from territory associated with Nogai (eastern Romania and Moldova) minted at Saqci with Greek and Arabic inscriptions bearing his name, the name of his son Chaka, and Nogai's distinctive trident-like *tamgha*. As the privilege to mint coinage in one's own name is often seen as a mark of sovereignty, it is convincing evidence when seen in isolation. The coins are used to argue that Nogai took the title of khan around 1296, about a decade after Saqci began minting Golden Horde coins. For many scholars, this coinage is the greatest and most convincing evidence for Nogai's independence from the mid-1280s onwards.<sup>272</sup>

While the issuing of coinage in one's own name can be associated with a declaration of sovereignty, recent studies on late thirteenth-century Golden Horde numismatics reveal a more

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part 3, IX.26; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 87; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 489; Polo/ Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 408.

<sup>271</sup> Pachymeres part 3, IX.26; Uzelac, "Echoes of the Conflict," 509, 517. Uzelac notes the sources on the war, particularly in Europe, were more interested in the outcome rather than the origins.

<sup>272</sup> Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 713; Favereau, *the Horde*, 201; Halperin, "On Recent Studies," 35; Jackson, *Mongols in the West*, 168; Madgearu, *the Asanids*, 259; May, *Mongol Empire*, 290; [Uzelac], "Почти Ногайево власти," 30-31; Uzelac, "Empire within an Empire," 273; Uzelac, "Echoes of the Conflict," 510; [Uzelac], *Под сеньком Иса*, 234-35; Uzelac, "Tatars and Serbs," 11, 15-16; [Spinei], "Господство золотой орды," 405-06; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 89-91. The most cited studies for Nogai's coinage as support for his declaration of the Khanate are Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, "Numismatical contributions to the history of south-eastern Europe at the end of the 13th century," *RRH* 26 (1987): 245-58 and Lăčezar Lazarov, "Sur un type de monnaies en cuivre avec la tamgha de Nogaj," *BHR* 25:4 (1997) 3-11.

complicated picture.<sup>273</sup> Namely, from the reign of Tele-Buqa (1287-1291) onwards, there are multiple figures minting coins without the name and *tamgha* of Tele-Buqa, but their own *tamgha*, the *tamgha* of the late Mongke-Temur Khan, or even multiple *tamgha*. Reva has argued these coins, which vary by geography, indicate the division of the Golden Horde between Tele-Buqa and his junta. The use of Mongke-Temur's *tamgha* in coins minted from Sarai, Ukek and Khwarezm indicate areas ruled over by Mongke-Temur's sons Alghui and Toghrilcha, while Tele-Buqa's *tamgha* is associated with the mints around Crimea, and his brother Konchek along the upper Volga. While Tele-Buqa was the khan, Reva suggests he was a first amongst equals in the junta, as demonstrated by the regional division.<sup>274</sup> Yet the Horde did not break into four independent khanates during the reign of Tele-Buqa. Why then, as coins with Nogai's *tamgha* date from the same period, are they taken as a mark of independence, considering that coins bearing Toqta's name and *tamgha*, or bearing the names of Chaka and Toqta, are found in association with those of the Saqchi mint.<sup>275</sup> Under Toqta, according to Petrov, Toqta's *tamgha* or the *tamgha* of Mongke-Temur was removed from certain regions directly under the khan's control, or where mints were controlled by his agents, areas such as the Horde capital of Sarai, Khwarezm, Majar, Mokshi and Ukek. In this period, certain regions begin minting with the *tamgha* of Toqta which *had not* been minted with them previously: Bulgar, Crimea, Azak and Nogai's supposed capital of Saqci. These, Petrov argues, represented an area "relatively independent economically but still under the khan's power," zones where the right of *sikkah* (the right to mint coins) had been granted to the regional governor/land holder.<sup>276</sup> Petrov notes certain of these Saqci-minted coins bear the *tamgha* of both Nogai's son Chaka and Toqta, of silver *dirhams* in Bulgaria with only the *tamgha* of Toqta, and of coins

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<sup>273</sup> Vásáry, for example, sees the minting of coins in the name of Mubarak-Khoja in 1367-1368 as a sign of the total independence of the Blue Horde from the (then in great turmoil) Golden Horde. Vásáry, "Beginning of Coinage," 383.

<sup>274</sup> [Reva], "Распределение власти," 136-39.

<sup>275</sup> Petrov, "Jochid Money," 622.

<sup>276</sup> Petrov, "Jochid Money," 622-23.

from Akcha Kerman with only Nogai's *tamgha*.<sup>277</sup> Similar coins marked with the *tamgha* of two individuals are found from the unified Mongol Empire, bearing the *tamgha* and names of both Ogedai Khan and his brother Chagatai, or of Ogedai and Batu, yet none would argue for the independence of either.<sup>278</sup> Rather than a declaration of Nogai's independence, they simply indicate where each figure had the right to *sikkah*.

The identification of these coins is also ambiguous. While commonly reported as Nogai beginning to mint his own coins in the 1280s, this reading is debated. According to Vásáry, Oberländer-Tárnoveanu who argued strongly for these coins as tokens of Nogai's formal independence, had to revise his dating, first 1285-1295, then to 1271-1285.<sup>279</sup> Petrov however sees no evidence that Nogai struck coinage at all before the reign of Toqta Khan (1291-1312), while Reva believed the coins dated 1287-1291, only during the period of Tele-Buqa Khan.<sup>280</sup> The ambiguity in dating makes it difficult to reliably attribute these coins to a specific period of Nogai being independent. Even coins which are supposed to read "Nogai Khan" cannot be totally accepted. According to Uzelac, Sjeverova demonstrated that coins identified as bearing Nogai's *tamgha* and the title khan do not actually have Nogai's name, but Toqta's.<sup>281</sup> While some coins may carry only the name and *tamgha* of Nogai and his son Chaka, it seems many bear their names and *tamgha* along with the names of the Golden Horde khans during Nogai's period of "independence," (i.e, late 1280s-1290s). The coins of Nogai reflect shifts in Jochid monetary policy from the reign of Tele-Buqa onwards, rather than indication of Nogai forming a separate kingdom.

The matter of Nogai being called royal or imperial titles is also not reliable evidence for his independence. As Halperin recently noted, due to the lack of internal sources from the

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<sup>277</sup> Petrov, "Jochid Money," 623.

<sup>278</sup> Badarch Nyamaa, *The Coins of Mongol Empire and Clan Tamgha of Khans (XIII-XIV)* (Ulaanbaatar: Admon, 2005), 47; Petrov, "Jochid Money," 618.

<sup>279</sup> Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 90.

<sup>280</sup> Petrov, "Jochid Money," 622; [Reva], "Распределение власти," 141.

<sup>281</sup> [Uzelac], *Под сеньком Пса*, 234-35.



Golden Horde, it is not clear what title or rank Nogai bore, only what he was called by foreign authors.<sup>282</sup> Numerous sources attest that he carried a rank of significance, though not all write of a royal rank. *Beylerbey*, referring to him as a commander-in-chief of khans like Berke, and later *aqqa*, as a senior member of the Jochids respected for advice and settling disputes, are common epithets though neither indicate sovereignty.<sup>283</sup> Both titles reflect roles to which the Jochid khans turned to him for: military service or advice. In Baybars al-Mansuri's account, Nogai tricks Tele-Buqa into letting his guard down by insisting he was providing his experience and comments to the khan.<sup>284</sup> It is these military titles and references to *aqqa* which are predominately associated with Nogai in the Islamic sources. Yet he is referred to with more exalted titles. In certain European sources he is referred to as emperor, such as a letter from the Venetian senate in 1294 to Nogai asking to establish a consular post in his territories, and letters from Franciscans in Crimea in 1287 refer to Nogai as emperor alongside Tele-Buqa.<sup>285</sup> Marco Polo calls Nogai a "King of the Tartars."<sup>286</sup> The Rus' sources consistently refer to Nogai as *tsar*, and it has been remarked that Nogai's power caused the Rus' to be confused as to who was the true master of the Horde.<sup>287</sup> However, these sources generally refer to *all* high ranking Chinggisid princes with these royal titles. The *Chronicle of Novgorod*, *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* and *Nikonian Chronicle* refers to Alghui and Tudan, two sons of Mongke-Temur Khan and brothers of Toqta Khan, as well as minor princes Katiak and Ali-Beg, as *tsar* in

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<sup>282</sup> Halperin, "On Recent Studies," 34-37. Halperin notes that there also exists a differing lineage for Nogai that would suggest he was not a Chinggisid, but in my opinion there is more than enough support for him being a descendant of Chinggis Khan, though the status of his mother or grandmothers make it difficult to determine if Nogai was 'legally legitimate.' That is, if his mother or grandmothers were concubines, as being born to a concubine could exclude him from inheriting an appanage and from taking certain titles.

<sup>283</sup> Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 357; Rashid al-Din, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 124-25; Halperin, "On Recent Studies," 34; Pfeiffer, "Ahmad Teguder's Second Letter," 183, 189; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 230; [Uzelac], "Почещи Ногајеве власти," 21; Uzelac, "An Empire within an Empire?" 272.

<sup>284</sup> Baybars in [Tiesenhausen], *Сборник Материалов*, 107.

<sup>285</sup> Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 157; Kovács, "The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun," 49; [Uzelac], *Под сенком Пса*, 234; Tanase, "Le 'Khan' Nogai," 268.

<sup>286</sup> Polo/Komroff, *Travels of Marco Polo (the Venetian)*, 353; Polo/Marsden, *Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, 469; Polo/Moule, *Description of the World*, 483; Polo/Ricci, *Travels of Marco Polo*, 401; Polo/Yule, *Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 496.

<sup>287</sup> *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 111; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 76; *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 95; May, *Mongol Empire*, 291; Vernadsky, *Mongols and Russia*, 175.

addition to Nogai. Sartaq, son and successor of Batu, is referred to as *tsar* during Batu's lifetime. All use the same title for the recognized khans in each period.<sup>288</sup> Yet, the *Galician-Volynian Chronicle* for instance is careful to not refer to non-Chinggisid commanders like Quremsa and Burundai as *tsar* or *khan*.<sup>289</sup> Seemingly, *tsar* was reserved for Chinggisid princes, and as Nogai was recognized as one, his identification as *tsar* is hardly extraordinary. Rus' informants may have spread imperial titles in more western materials. In greater distance from the territories of the Golden Horde, knowing Nogai was a prominent figure on the Horde's western border with Europe (and knowing few other figures within the Horde other than the khan himself) may have been enough to provide this influential military commander a more exalted title than he ever actually bore.

## 5.5. After Nogai

Nogai's death in 1300 brought an immediate end to the influence of his family. Nogai's eldest son Chaka briefly rallied remnants of the Nogayid forces in the aftermath of the defeat at Kugenlyk after Toqta returned east. Chaka lacked the capabilities of his father and faced resistance from commanders who rebelled for Toqta. The khan sent an army and forced Chaka south of the Danube into Bulgaria, the new center of his resistance.<sup>290</sup> When a younger half-brother Teke and Teke's mother suggested surrendering to Toqta Khan, Chaka had them executed.<sup>291</sup> Chaka's resistance ended when he was captured by his brother-in-law and erstwhile ally, the Bulgarian Tsar Theodore Svetoslav, son of George I Terter. With Toqta's approval, Svetoslav had Chaka executed in 1301. Bulgaria was welcomed as a direct vassal of

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<sup>288</sup> *Chronicle of Novgorod*, 111; *Nikonian Chronicle*, 30, 80, 82; *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 99.

<sup>289</sup> For Quremsa, see *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 68-69, 74-75, and Burundai, *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, 76-80.

<sup>290</sup> Uzelac, "Port of Maurocastro," 53.

<sup>291</sup> Kovács, "The Franciscans and Yaylaq Khatun," 55; Rashiduddin, *Jami' u't-tawarikh*, 359; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, 129; Lippard, "Mongols and Byzantium," 209. The phrasing of Rashīd al-Dīn, and the difficulty in identifying which of Nogai's wives was the mother of which child makes it unclear which of Nogai's wives was killed by Chaka. Kovács believed it to be Yaylaq Khatun, while Lippard thought it Chubei.

the khan, and Toqta annexed most of former territory Nogai had overseen.<sup>292</sup> The Byzantine Emperor Andronikos II sent a daughter in marriage to Toqta, signalling his support for the new order despite the flight of many of Nogai's followers into Byzantium.<sup>293</sup> With the west subdued, Toqta also exerted his authority over the Blue Horde, intervening in a civil war there.<sup>294</sup> By 1304-5, Toqta was taking part in the peace agreement between the other Mongol khanates, formally recognizing the Great Khan, Khubilai's grandson Temur-Oljeitu.<sup>295</sup> This was the first time since 1259 there was a Khan of Khans accepted by all the khanates. For the remainder of his reign Toqta was the undisputed master of the Jochids, recognized both within and outside the Horde. His reign reconsolidated the power of the Jochid khan, for which his successor, his nephew Ozbeg Khan (r.1313-1341), took advantage of for the Golden Horde's golden age.<sup>296</sup>

Over the course of this chapter, Nogai's presence in the Golden Horde from 1287 until his death in 1300 has been re-examined. While often presented as the period of his mastery over the Golden Horde and culminating in his final independence *c.* 1296, I do not find this in the extant primary sources. Instead, Nogai continued in his role as a local *tammachi* commander: one of growing influence and autonomy in his own affairs, to be sure, but an

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<sup>292</sup> Pachymeres, part 3, IX.26; Uzelac, "The Golden Horde and the Balkans," 385. Despite common suggestion, Uzelac does not believe that Chaka ever declared himself Tsar of Bulgaria. Quite rightly, Uzelac emphasizes that from Chaka's point of view, Bulgaria was under his dominion. As a Chinggisid prince, and son of the man who had dominated the region over the previous decades, it was a demotion in status to assume the title of Bulgarian tsar.

<sup>293</sup> Lippard, "Mongols and Byzantium," 209; Scott Jessee, and Anatoly Isaenko, "The Military Effectiveness of Alan Mercenaries in Byzantium, 1301-1306," in *Journal of Medieval Military History: Volume XI*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers, Kelly DeVries and John France (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 110. Following Nogai's defeat, some 16,000 Alans fled to Byzantium as mercenaries; Rustam Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks: 1204-1461* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 232-33. One of Nogai's followers, Koca-bashi, was even appointed by Andronikos as ruler of Nicomedia, and had prominent roles in the Empire until his escape from prison and flight to the Golden Horde in 1306. See Shukurov, 232-33.

<sup>294</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 296; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 233; Uskenbay, "Left Wing," 207.

<sup>295</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 64; Ciociltan, *Mongols and the Black Sea Trade*, 169; Hsiao Ch'i-Ching, "Mid-Yüan Politics," in *the Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6. *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 503-04; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 233-34.

<sup>296</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 296-97; Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 78; Pochekaev, "Golden Age," 239-45; Vásáry, "the Jochid Realm," 80.

influence that stems from his status as the Jochid *aqqa*, long career and military role rather than specific machinations on his part. Only in the removal of Tele-Buqa and his princely allies in 1291 is Nogai finally given a role in removing a khan, and a central one at that. But Nogai only took part after Tele-Buqa made the first move against him, or when Toqta went to Nogai for assistance. Assisting Toqta to the throne is the closest Nogai came to khanmaker within the Golden Horde, and afterwards immediately returned to his territory, asking Toqta only to carry out reprisals against allies of Tele-Buqa who could challenge the new order. After Toqta was on the throne, Nogai had greater confidence, and this is perhaps reflected in his expansion in Europe in the early 1290s. Feeling he was owed by Toqta for his aid, Toqta's refusal to hand over the father of the man abusing Nogai's daughter shocked and frustrated Nogai. Toqta could not surrender his own grandfather, and the poorly defined agreement they had in 1291 resulted in both attempting to force the other to step back, which neither was willing to do. Ultimately it resulted in an armed collision, but even after their first battle Nogai did not pursue the fleeing Toqta. The most detailed sources on the outbreak of war between Toqta and Nogai simply do not describe him as claiming his independence. The closest is the depiction from Pachymeres, where Toqta appears frustrated with the elderly Nogai's autonomy on the Danube, but there is no challenge for the throne itself. Nor is the coinage of Nogai a reliable indicator of independence, for *tamgha* of Toqta are found in association with those of Nogai and his son Chaka. Nogai was the primary representative of the Golden Horde on the edge of Europe in this period and did not undermine the Jochid khans. He largely followed their directives, and beyond that concerned himself with his own territory, an integral part of the Horde at the periphery of the khan's control, but still under that control.

## Conclusion

The increased power of the Jochid khan following Nogai's death has helped justify in the scholarship the idea that Nogai reduced the khans to secondary figures. For the first half of the fourteenth century, from Toqta, then Ozbeg and his son Janibeg Khan (r.1342-1357), the power of the Jochid Khan was unquestionable. Yet in the political anarchy following 1360 — the combined political crisis with the extinction of the descendants of Batu resulting in multiple claimants to the throne, the onset of the Black Death, an extended drought from 1320 onwards, and unravelling of continental trade routes with the collapse of the Ilkhanate, Yuan Dynasty and Chagatai Khanate— the power of the Jochid khan evaporated and new power centres emerged to rival Sarai.<sup>297</sup> So rose Mamai as a true khanmaker from the 1360s until 1381, and after a doomed attempt at unification by Toqtamish, the invasion by Tamerlane in 1395 brought the final khanmaker of the Golden Horde, Edigu.

As discussed in chapter 1.4., this has encouraged a narrative where the Golden Horde went through a cyclical period of strong khans followed by kingmakers. To make Nogai fit into the mold of a khanmaker epitomized by Mamai and Edigu, this has required forcing every act of his life into this image. As I have argued, this dynamic does not reflect Nogai's recorded actions. At no point did Nogai reduce the reigning khan to a figurehead, as Mamai and Edigu did, and Nogai never controlled the actual workings of state. Instead, Nogai was a prominent figure in the west of the Golden Horde, brought into other affairs due to his military strength,

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<sup>297</sup> Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 222-23; May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 79; May, *the Mongol Empire*, 302-03; Uli Schamiloglu, "Climate Change in Central Eurasia and the Golden Horde," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 668; Uli Schamiloglu, "The Impact of the Black Death on the Golden Horde: Politics, Economy, Society, Civilisation," in *The Golden Horde in World History: A Multi-Authored Monograph*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Sh. Marjani Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences: Kazan, 2017), 677-80; Vásáry, "the Jochid Realm," 80-81. Between 1359-1380, there were over 25 claimants for the Jochid throne, though the exact number is uncertain. Some reigns were very brief: from November 1360 until October 1361, silver coins minted in Sarai bear the names of six different khans.

status as elder of the Jochids and location near military targets in Europe. Even at the height of his power during the reign of Toqta, Nogai could not compare in strength to the khan in Sarai. His effort to expand eastwards in their civil war quickly resulted in Nogai overextending himself, allowing Toqta to bring his greater resources to bear and crush Nogai. As Veselovskij argued, Nogai's legitimacy and power rested on the backing provided to him by the Jochid khan, and his status as a commander within the Golden Horde.<sup>298</sup>

The scholarship examined in chapter 1 has routinely depicted Nogai as a khanmaker seeking independence, but this is not what is presented in the primary source material shared in chapter 2 and expanded upon in the following chapters. Chapter 3 showed that Nogai was a chief commander under Berke and continued to act in a prominent military role under Berke's successor Mongke-Temur. Nogai's movement to Wallachia was not an effort to establish a new kingdom outside of the khan's authority but was ordered by Mongke-Temur Khan. I believe his position there was of a *tammachi*, a border commander tasked with exacting tribute and protecting the khanate's borders. In chapter 4 Nogai's role under Khan Tode-Mongke was examined. Though often shown as the beginning of Nogai's domination of the khan, with Tode-Mongke reduced to a puppet under Nogai's thumb, I demonstrated that Tode-Mongke exercised more authority and energy than often portrayed. The common claim that Nogai took over the Golden Horde's diplomacy was refuted, as Nogai never overtook the Golden Horde khan in embassies to the Mamluk Sultanate, even during the "ineffective" reign of Tode-Mongke. Claims of Tode-Mongke's feebleness rely on rumours spread by Tele-Buqa to justify his coup and picked up by the sixteenth century work of Ötemish Hajji, reflecting folktales rather than literal events. When Tode-Mongke was pushed from the throne, it was not by Nogai, but by Tele-Buqa and a group of Jochid princes. In chapter 5, relations soured between Nogai and Tele-Buqa due to losses Tele-Buqa suffered in Hungary and Poland in the 1280s, and it

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<sup>298</sup> [Veselovskij], *Хань изъ темниковъ золотой орды*, 39.

seems to have been Tele-Buqa, not Nogai, who conspired against the other first. Nogai did not take part in the appointment or removal of khans except for the 1291 coup against Tele-Buqa, in which Nogai was not the instigator of the conflict and may have only acted after the intercession of Toqta, another Jochid prince whom Tele-Buqa threatened. Due to his assistance, Nogai felt he was owed some loyalty on the part of Toqta Khan and was therefore frustrated when Toqta refused to hand over the men mistreating Nogai's daughter. Notably, Rashīd al-Dīn recorded that Nogai felt these men had more influence over Toqta than he did. Encouraging revolts along the western border to get Toqta to hand over Nogai's foes, neither individual conceded, ultimately leading to war. Winning the first engagement, Nogai did not pursue the fleeing Toqta or march on Sarai. Never seeking to rule the Jochid *ulus*, Nogai at most tried to assert authority in Crimea, which resulted in the death of his grandson and antagonizing his generals, leading to a revolt among his own men. Toqta used the opportunity to return and finally destroy Nogai.

If Nogai had dramatic ambitions over the Jochid *ulus*, then it is surprising that whenever presented an opportunity to exert it, he avoided it. Despite being based on the lower Danube from c.1270 until 1300, it was not until the mid-1290s that Nogai's power extended even to Crimea, after he first defeated Toqta in battle. Nogai's primary interest was his own territories. These were territories provided by the Jochid khan, and Nogai, in reflection of this, almost always acted in cooperation with them. When Tele-Buqa became khan in 1287 and ordered Nogai to take part in campaigning against Poland with him, despite their already damaged relationship Nogai duly complied.

When his career is examined independent of the khanmaker, Nogai shares little in common with Mamai or Edigu, appearing more as a powerful regional commander sometimes reluctantly brought into wider political events. Since much of the late thirteenth century Golden Horde's politics has been understood through the perception of a power-dynamic of Nogai and

his appointments, this thesis is a first step in reevaluation. Only Nogai's career and some myths associated with it, and when relevant individual khans, have been revisited here. It remains to be seen how other aspects of the Golden Horde can be reinterpreted without Nogai's khanmaker presence. Of particular focus should be the reigns of Tode-Mongke and Tele-Buqa, who have suffered greatly from Nogai's posthumous promotion. Often shown as puppets of Nogai, as I have briefly demonstrated, both khans were not mere subjects to the whims of Nogai.

Beyond this, this thesis hopes to emphasize the importance of revisiting primary sources and assumption on the Mongol Empire. As so much of the primary source material and scholarship is in dozens of languages, too many for any individual to learn and dispersed around the world, it has long left scholars reliant on only what they could access. This includes extensive but outdated works like D'Ohsson, Howorth, Grousset, or Vernadsky's 1953 monograph *the Mongols and Russia*, which remains commonly cited in secondary literature. Vernadsky's work has been referred to repeatedly over this thesis, as it seems to be the source of many myths and unbased claims now common in scholarship and online discussion of the Mongol interaction with the Rus'. Claims in these works are repeatedly cited, exaggerated, and distorted over time, removing them evermore from the primary sources. Nogai as an all-powerful khanmaker became an almost unquestioned assumption disconnected from the sources and difficult to abandon. Some like Uzelac have noted Nogai was no khanmaker, while others like Pochekaev and May forced the primary sources to align with the khanmaker tradition.<sup>299</sup> Now though, there is far greater access to primary sources and scholarship from around the world, including in translation. It is easier than ever to review long held assumptions on the Chinggisid empire, and which figures like Nogai have had roles so thoroughly misconstructed.

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<sup>299</sup> May, *Mongol Empire*, 291; Pochekaev, "First Rulers of the Ulus of Jochi," 231; Uzelac, "An Empire within an Empire?" 272.



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# Glossary

**Altan urag:** Mongolian, “golden lineage.” Descent from Chinggis Khan.

**Aqa:** Mongolian, “elder brother.” Respectful term of address for older men, and title for most senior men in a given lineage. The *aqa* would be consulted for advice on various matters.

**Beylerbey:** Turkic, “bey of beys.” High ranking military commander. Thirteenth century sources from Ilkhanate and Mamluk sultanate use it in reference to a supreme commander just below the Khan on campaign.

**Chagatayid:** descent from Chagatai (d.1242) second son of Chinggis Khan. Rulers of the Chagatai Khanate were descended from him.

**Jochid:** descent from Jochi, (d.1225/1227) eldest son of Chinggis Khan. Rulers of the Golden Horde, Blue Horde and Nogai were descended from him.

**Ogedeid:** descent from Ogedai (r.1229-1241), third son and successor of Chinggis Khan. Rulers of the Ogedeid *ulus* descended from him.

**Ordu:** Mongolian, referring to a court, encampment or army command of a given figure. Origin of the English word *horde*.

**Qarachu:** Mongolian, “black bone.” Indicating a ‘commoner,’ in the sense of an elite figure not descended from Chinggi Khan.

**Quriltai:** Mongolian assembly to decide major issues or elect a new khan.

**Ulus:** Mongolian, referring to a nation, people or state. It seems the Mongols would have referred to each Khanate as the “*ulus* of the current ruler.” I.e, from 1291-1312 the Golden Horde was the *ulus* of Toqta.

**Tamgha:** Mongolian, seal or sign representing a Khan. Khans each had their own unique seal, but in some cases bore the seal of their father.

**Tamma:** Mongolian, armies stationed in steppe on edge of sedentary societies, generally tasked with defense of borders, destabilizing, and conquering neighbouring states. Usually made up of non-Mongolian, usually locally raised troops both nomadic and non-nomadic. Commanded by Mongolian or other inner Asian generals (a *tammachi*).

**Tammachi:** commander of a *tamma* force.

**Toluid:** descent from Tolui (d.1233) fourth son of Chinggis Khan. The rulers of the Yuan Dynasty and Ilkhanate were descended from him.

**Yarliq:** a decree from the Khan. Rus’ princes were granted *yarliqs* that allowed them to ascend their respective thrones.

# Appendices

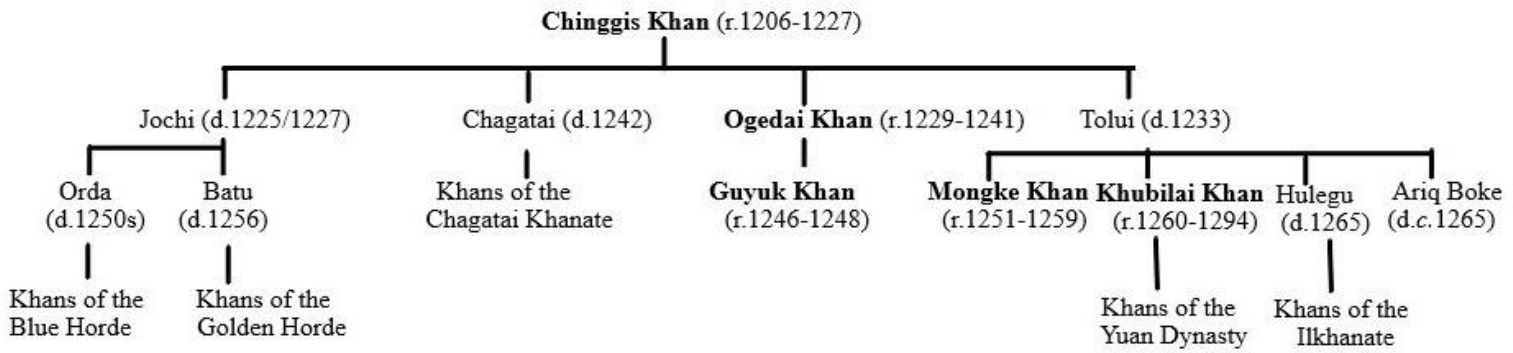
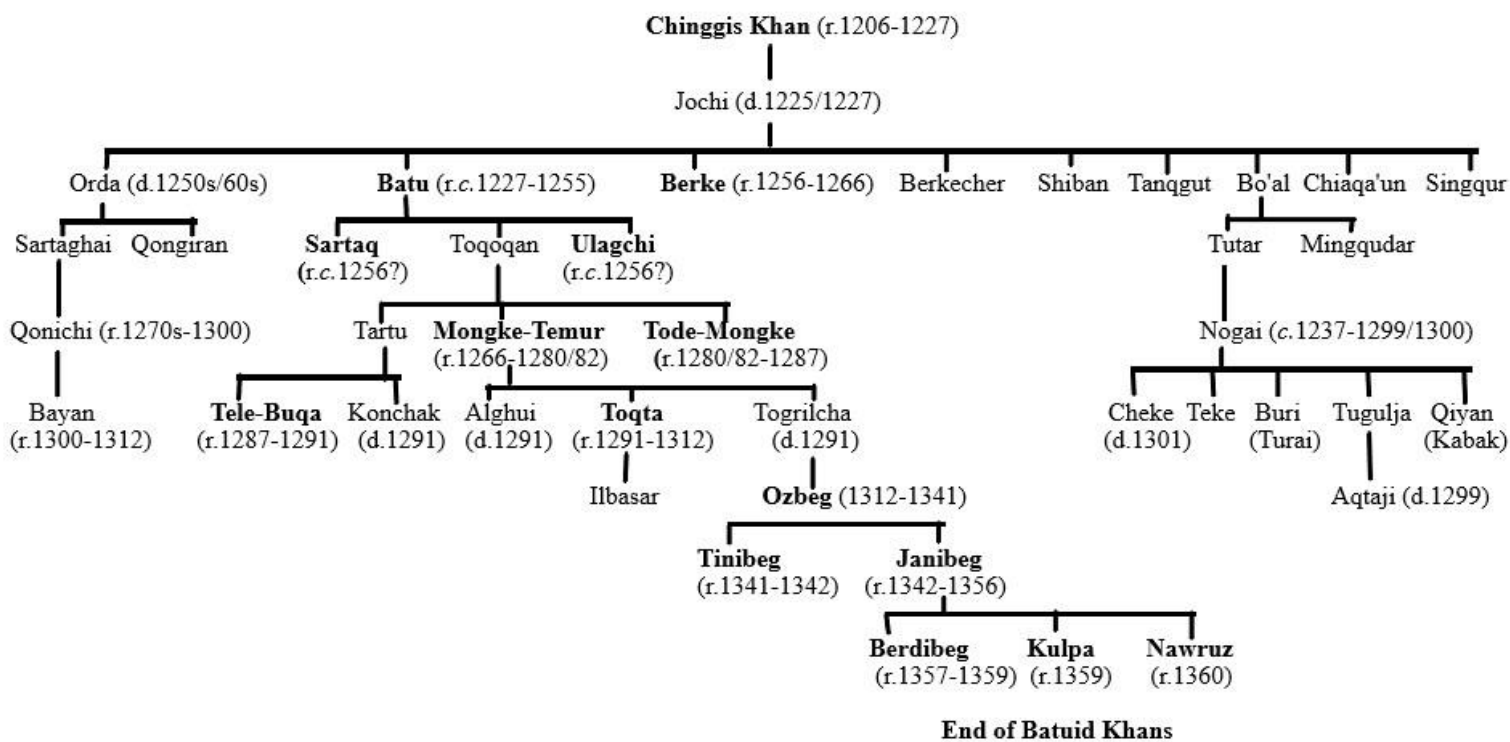


Figure 1: Chinggisid family tree



*Figure 2: Jochid family tree  
Adapted genealogy from Rashiduddin, Jami' u' t-tawarikh, 351-352.*

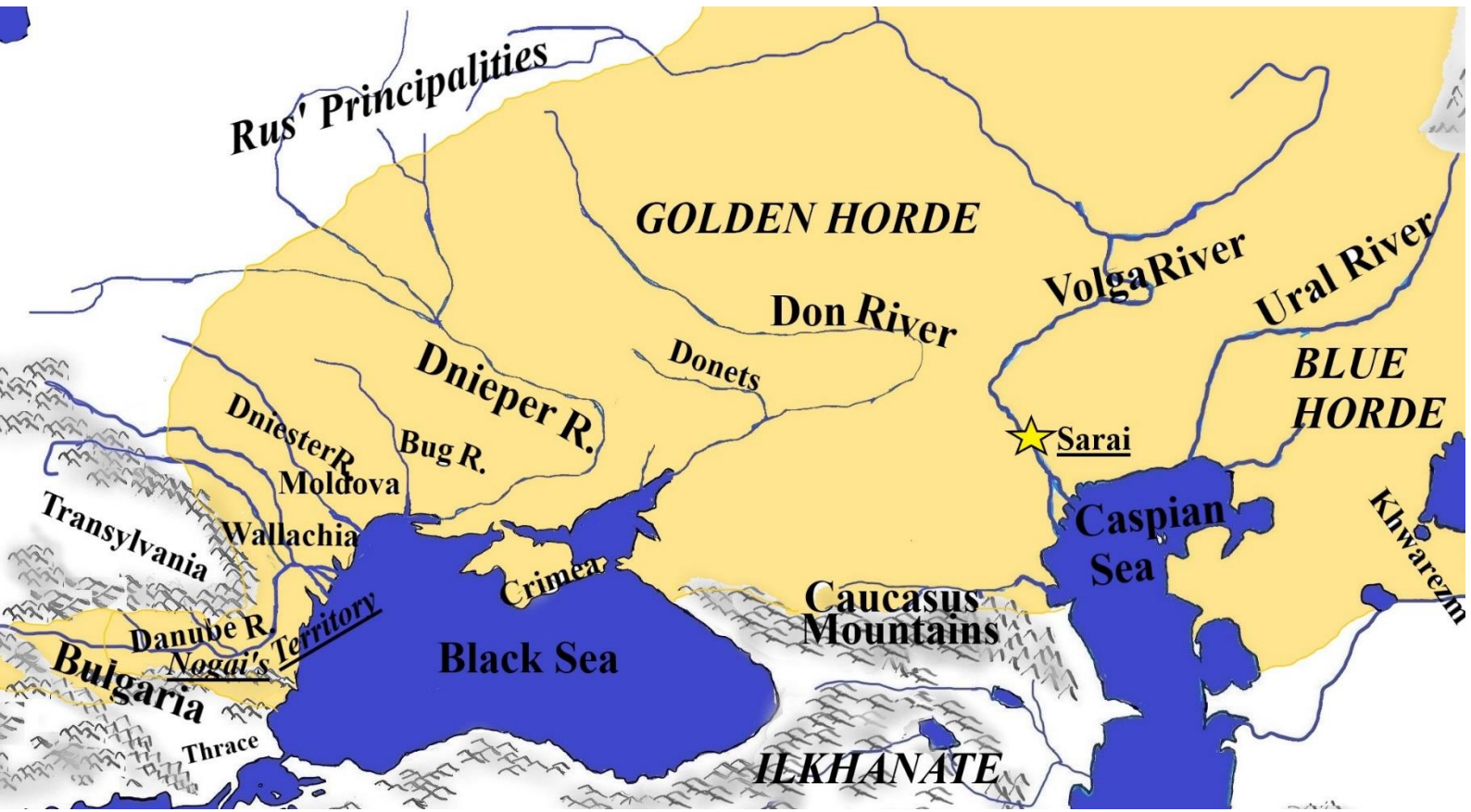


Figure 3: Map of the Golden Horde, c. 1290s