The Near East, here defined as the Jazira (the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates and north of Baghdad), Syria, and Anatolia, encountered the Mongols early, albeit briefly, as part of the Khwarazmian War. Yet the Mongols were not finished with the Near East. Their intrusion into the region came as a result of tying up loose ends after Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah moved his ephemeral kingdom westward. According to Juwayni, Ögödei dispatched Chormaqan to deal with the unrest in Persia, and his victory over Jalal al-Din, as well as the effortless conquest of Iran, ‘Iraq ‘Ajami, Azerbaijan, the Mughan Steppe, and Arran, was aided by Jalal al-Din’s behavior. Although he was a fearless leader and a great warrior, he never consolidated his position but continually attempted to expand his empire instead of preparing for the next Mongol onslaught. Perhaps of equally great importance is that Jalal al-Din’s defeat dispersed his army. Many of his warriors submitted to the Mongols, but others fled to Rum and Syria, where they served as mercenaries and, when not employed, created chaos within these already turbulent regions. Thus, the destruction of Jalal al-Din served as the catalyst for the Mongols’ entry into affairs of the Near East.

JAZIRA AND IRAQ

According to The Secret History of the Mongols, Baghdad was the original target of Chormaqan’s campaign, yet he does not appear to have made it his focus. Instead, he stabilized Mongol control of Azerbaijan and conquered Transcaucasia. In accordance with the Tsunami Strategy, he created a buffer zone by attacking the Jazira and even raided into Rum.

During the siege of Ganja (1234–35), the Mongols captured the cities of Daquqa and Irbil, although the citadel of Irbil withstood the assault. They eventually withdrew after receiving tribute, yet wherever they went, the Mongols left a wake of devastation. From there, the Mongols apparently headed south and overran the northern areas of ‘Iraq al-Arabi but avoided Baghdad. Naturally, Baghdad went on the defensive and sent an army against the Mongols, defeating them near Takrit at Jibal Hamrin.
Then in 1238, the Mongols attacked the frontier of Baghdad, but the Abbasid army defeated this incursion. Later in the same year, the Mongols attacked again. At Khanikin, they defeated the Abbasid army, but their intention was simply to plunder the region, including Irbil. After sating their avarice, they departed without attempting an attack on Baghdad. This may have been the encounter which Dhahabi credits to an amir named Baklak, who intercepted a tümen of Mongols. In the initial attack, Baklak broke the Mongol ranks, but he was killed during the action. His death, and those of several amirs, caused the Baghdad army to flee, although the Mongols did not follow.

The last action against the Caliphate and the Jazira during Chormaqan’s command occurred at Mayyafarīqīn. In 1240–41, an envoy from the Mongols delivered a message to Malik al-Muzaffar Ghazi (r. 1220–47) from Ögödei. This message read, “The representative of the Lord of the sky, who walks, the King of the East and the West, who orders the princes of all the countries to enter in submission of the Khan of Khans, Ögödei, the surface of the earth.” Malik al-Muzaffar was to raze the walls of his strongholds, but he did not comply, and Chormaqan did not follow up on the threat. Indeed, Mayyafarīqīn did not fall until the arrival of Hülegü. While Chormaqan did not conquer much of the Near East, his conquest of Transcaucasia brought the Christian Armenian and Georgian princes, who provided troops for future operations in the Near East, particularly against the Caliphate and the Seljuks of Rum, over to the Mongols. Moreover, the Mongol Empire now bordered the Jazira, as well as the Ayyubids of Syria and the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum.

Meanwhile, the Mongols kept the Caliphate off balance as their forces attacked the region but without any apparent intent of conquest. Indeed, they often retreated north upon the approach of the Abbasid army, rather than engaging in combat. In the context of the Tsunami Strategy, the Mongols maintained pressure on the outlying areas but without ever committing themselves to conquest. The rulers of these border regions, on the other hand, had to maintain a constant vigil. While in some instances this may have increased their ability to defend their regions, they also witnessed first-hand the mobility of the Mongols, who often sacked a city and departed before an army could come to the aid of the beleaguered city.

In 1240 or 1241, the tamma stationed in Azerbaijan underwent a change in command. Perhaps paralyzed by a stroke, Chormaqan became incapacitated on one side of his body. His wife Altan Khatun and his lieutenant Baiju assumed command. Gradually, Baiju became the true commander as Altan Khatun faded into the background, perhaps due to her husband’s death or simply because Baiju received confirmation of his position. Despite the shift in command, the Mongols did not cease their operations. Prior to 1240, the Mongols expressed little interest in the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. Yet after Chormaqan’s death in 1240, the Mongols stationed in Transcaucasia renewed their expansion. It is notable that Baiju’s tenure as tammachi was one of the few instances in which Mongol armies conquered and occupied territory during a period in which a qa’an did not reign.

During the reign of Sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad (1219–37), hostilities between the Seljuks and the Mongols did not arise beyond a few raids. After Kayqubad’s death, Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw (1237–45) came to the throne and assumed an
aggressive stance, with the Seljuks carrying out their own military campaigns close to Mongol territory at Amid in 1240–41. In 1242, a Mongol force accompanied by contingents of Georgian and Armenian troops invaded Rum. Their forces raided up to the fortress of Zarid, thus engaging the Mongols and Seljuks in war. Baiju then attacked the town of sacking it after a siege of two months.

The Seljuk Sultan, Ghiyath al-Din, assembled his army, including a sizeable force of mercenaries of Byzantine and Frankish origin, in 1243. The Seljuks met the Mongols at Köse Dagh, located between Karin and Erzinjan. The Mongols defeated the Seljuks as their Georgian auxiliaries routed the Seljuk right wing, but the Mongols were unable to immediately capitalize on the victory as night fell and the armies retired to their camps. Concerned that some of his amirs would join the Mongols, Ghiyath al-Din fled to Ankara. His army then dispersed as well. Thus on the next day, the Mongols discovered a deserted camp. Believing it to be a trap, the Mongols proceeded cautiously. Once their scouts confirmed the Seljuks’ flight, the Mongols advanced and conquered the rest of the Sultanate. Sacking Sivas and razing much of the city’s walls, they then seized Kayseri, Konya and Ankara. Mongol forces also sacked Erzinjan after it refused to pay tribute. With the conquest of his realm, Sultan Ghiyath al-Din submitted and agreed to pay tribute in gold, horses, cattle, sheep and slaves amounting to 400,000 dinars in value. The Seljuks also agreed to the installation of a *daruqachi* in Rum.

In addition to subjugating the Seljuk Sultanate, the Mongols affected other powers in Anatolia. William of Rubruck noted that Trebizond was subject to the Mongols. Although the Mongols initially attacked Trebizond in 1240, setting fire to the citadel, they did not conquer it. It probably submitted in 1243 or afterwards. Envoys from Trebizond are not mentioned at Güyük’s coronation, at least by name, but this is not unusual. As Trebizond was small and isolated, it is rarely mentioned in Latin, Arab or Persian sources. The Byzantine kingdom of Nicaea, likewise, feared invasions by Turkmen as well as Mongols, so John Vatatzes III met with Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw’s envoys and made a treaty prior to Köse Dagh. He may have even been present at Köse Dagh, hoping that the Seljuks would remain a buffer with the Mongols. Additionally, the Mongol invasion of Rum halted Nicaea’s preparations to attack Constantinople. After Köse Dagh, John Vatatzes III strengthened his frontier fortifications against a possible Mongol attack or an attack by Turkmen, no longer restrained by Seljuk authority.

Bruce Lippard argues that the Mongol conquests disrupted the stability and concord between the Seljuks and Byzantines. Between the influx of Turkmen and Khwarazm soldiers fleeing the Mongols, who often only nominally accepted the rule of the Seljuks, and the appearance of Jalal al-Din, the Seljuks devoted much of their energy to quelling rebellions and the ephemeral kingdom created by Jalal al-Din. After the death of Jalal al-Din, the Seljuks attempted to take advantage of the power vacuum in the Diyar Bakr region, rather than show concern for the Mongol forces. Then in 1243, the defeat at Köse Dagh undermined Seljuk authority and their ability to control the Turkmen. For the Mongols, Anatolia had less strategic importance than Mughan, so they paid less attention to controlling it, primarily using the Sultanate for additional pasture and tribute payments.

Baiju did not confine his activities to Rum, however. After the defeat of the Seljuks, the Frankish states in the Levant began to contact the Mongols. Matthew
Paris recorded that in 1244 the Mongols sent a letter to Antioch demanding its surrender. The conditions for submission included that the walls of the castles be razed, all of the revenues of the principality be collected in gold and silver, and finally, three thousand virgins be sent as tribute.²⁵ Prince Bohemund V (r. 1233–51) refused. His audacity at refusing Mongol overtures escaped reprisal, as apparently Yasa’ur (fl. 1240–50), the Mongol commander active in the area, lacked sufficient men and horses at the time. Many of the horses died in Syria due to the heat. Still, prior to his demands at Antioch, Yasa’ur’s forces, which were part of Baiju’s tamma, pillaged a considerable amount of territory, including Mayyafarqin, Amid, Mardin, Edessa (modern Şanlıurfa) and Harran. A similar attack on Aleppo failed due to the extreme heat and dryness of ground, which affected the horses. The Mongols raided Malatya and collected tribute before attempting to coerce Antioch into submission.²⁶ Although Antioch and Aleppo escaped Mongol attack, several of the other cities accepted the presence of daruqachis, perhaps in an effort to avoid further raids.²⁷

With the ascension of Güyük as qa’an, he dispatched Eljigidei to replace Baiju as the tammachin in the Middle East. Eljigidei assumed command around 1248, after envoys from King Louis IX of France reached Baiju’s camp. Eljigidei was interested in obtaining an alliance with the Christians and sent Mongol envoys to King Louis while he was on Cyprus. When King Louis’ envoys reached the capital of the Mongols, Andrew of Longjumeau discovered that the political climate had changed with Güyük’s death in 1248. The regent and widow of Güyük, Oghul-Qaimish (fl. 1246–49), chose to interpret Andrew’s mission as one of submission rather than alliance. King Louis’ biographer, Jean de Joinville, recorded the king’s reaction: “Et sachez que le roi se repentit fort d’y avoir envoyé.”²⁸ This ended the attempts at an alliance for the time being. Eljigidei was also removed before he could attempt any other negotiations. In 1251 he was arrested in the purge of Ögödeids that followed the Toluid Revolution.²⁹

The Seljuks, or rather Turkmen nomads, although ostensibly vassals, still RAIDED nearby territories, including the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. In an effort to escape from the pressure of the Turks, Cilicia submitted to the Mongols in 1244. The king of Cilicia, Hethum I (r. 1226–70), recognized the wisdom of voluntary submission to the Mongols before they overran Cilicia. In return for his voluntary submission, the Mongols restored some of his territories and fortresses that had been lost to the Seljuks. On his part, Hethum became one of the Mongols’ most dependable vassals. In 1247, Hethum sent his brother, the Constable Smbat (fl. 1250–76), to Güyük in Qaraqorum. In 1250, Smbat returned bearing an accord that confirmed Hethum on his throne. Prince Bohemund VI of Antioch (r. 1251–75), who was also Hethum’s son-in-law, submitted to the Mongols at this time, along with a number of Muslim princes from Syria and the Jazira.³⁰

Despite the lack of grand conquests, Mongol activities in Syria and Cilicia during this period accomplished much. Their victory at Köse Dagh laid the foundation not only for the acquisition of Rum, but also for the submission of Cilicia, which facilitated Antioch’s submission as well, only a few years after Bohemund’s father had rejected Mongol demands. Additionally, the raids in northern Syria and the Jazira demonstrated the reach of the Mongols. Their military activities only probed into Northern Syria as the limited forces of Baiju’s tamma maintained control of
Rum and Transcaucasia. Yet the *tamma* did engage in other raids, but to the south and southeast of Baiju’s camp.

Prior to attacking the Seljuks, the Mongols probed the Jazira and threatened the Abbasid Caliphate. During 1241–42, Baiju advanced against Baghdad. At Irbil, he laid siege and successfully captured the city, although the citadel continued its resistance. An army sent by Caliph al-Mustansir-bi’llah (r. 1226–42) broke the siege, with the Mongols departing before their arrival. As a future safeguard, the Caliph ordered all citizens to learn archery and repaired the moat and walls. The Caliph also had catapults built for the defense of Baghdad.31

These precautions, however, did not deter the Mongols from venturing into the region, as Baiju led another attack on Irbil. The arrival of a Caliphal army, however, once again prevented a prolonged siege. Abandoning Irbil, Baiju then raided Daquqa, midway between Irbil and Baghdad. Here, another Caliphal force allegedly engaged the Mongols at Jibal al-Hamrin, the westernmost of the Zagros Mountains, and defeated them.32

Caliph Mustansir proved to be an ardent foe of the Mongols. Thus, it is not surprising that after his death on 2 December 1242, the Mongols increased their efforts against the Abbasid Caliphate. In 1245, Mongols attacked the Abbasid Caliphate, intending to march on Baghdad. Abbasid forces, however, intercepted them once again at Daquqa and defeated them.33

Despite the Caliph’s success at fending off Mongol raids, prior to Güyük the status of the Abbasids remained unclear. According to John Plano de Carpini, the armies under the *tammachin* Chormaqan and Baiju forced the Caliph to pay tribute:

> The same army attacked the territory of the Caliph of Baghdad, which it also subdued. Every day they pay them as tribute four hundred besants, in addition to brocades and other gifts. Every year the Tartars send envoys telling the Caliph to come to them, and every year he sends magnificent presents with the tribute, begging them to release him from this obligation. The Emperor accepts the presents, nevertheless he sends for him to come.34

His account does not mention Güyük’s threatening letter to the Caliph, although he simply may not have been aware of it. Nor does he mention that the Abbasids had thwarted earlier Mongol raids in the region. Baghdad may have simply decided that it was better to send tribute than continually defend against Mongol attacks.

During the reign of Güyük (1246–48), it appeared that Baghdad might ultimately be conquered. The new *qa’an* sent a threatening letter to the Caliph Mustasim (r. 1242–58) demanding his submission after he refused to send the proper tribute. Undoubtedly, this letter was in the same tone as the letter that was sent to Pope Innocent IV.35

Yet Güyük’s threats did not materialize into new conquests in the Near East. Two factors played into this. The first was that Eljigidei replaced Baiju as the *tammachi* in the region. As such, he also assumed responsibility for governing Georgia, Rum, Syria, Diyar Bakr and Cilicia.36 His appointment, however, appears to have been politically motivated rather than due to Baiju’s performance, as Güyük sent Eljigidei to prevent the Jochids from bolstering their claims in the Transcaucasia region.37 This did not necessarily preclude Eljigidei from carrying out conquests. Indeed, Güyük,
like his father before him, ordered armies to march against those who had not yet submitted. For the Middle East,

he dispatched Eljigitei (sic) and a large army. And he commanded that from every prince two men out of every ten should join Eljigitei, that all the men in that region should mount horse with him, that two out of every ten Taziks should go along and that they should begin by attacking the Heretics. And that he himself should follow after.38

Güyük never did. Indeed, it appears that Eljigidei never assembled his army as Güyük commanded, either. The specific command to gather two out of every ten “Taziks” indicates he should gather troops from the Mongols’ Iranian vassals. There is no indication that this occurred. Furthermore, Eljigidei made no hostile moves against any foe in the Middle East. Thus, the Near East had a respite, as with Güyük’s death in 1248, military campaigns did not resume.

Eljigidei remained as the regional tammachi. The regency of Oghul Qaimish (1248–50) marked one of the few stages in the Mongol Empire in which their armies appeared at a complete standstill, including in the Near East. In spite of their skirmishes with Baghdad during the period of Baiju’s command and his army’s successes in Northern Syria and Rum, these were not used as a building block for further conquests. Despite the rhetoric of the sources that claim Abbasid victories and frequent Mongol retreats, these Mongol forays seem more like probes than campaigns of conquest. They served the purpose of testing Abbasid defenses and responses, while also terrorizing the populations of the Jazira, often inducing them to pay tribute rather than risk attack.

HÜLEGÜ AND THE NEAR EAST

With the Toluid Revolution, the Mongols were once again on the march. Möngke Qa’an dispatched his younger brother Hülegü to subdue those rulers who had failed to offer their submission at his coronation: the Isma’ilis, the Abbasid Caliphate and the Ayyubids of Syria. Hülegü’s efforts in the Middle East differed from previous Mongol operations in the region. The primary catalyst for this change was manpower. Whereas the Mongols had been limited by simply using the Mughan tamma for their operations in the region, Hülegü, a Chinggisid prince, crossed the Amu Darya with an imperial army of conquest that dwarfed existing Mongol forces in the region and allowed him the option of simply overwhelming his opponents with numbers, if traditional tactics and strategy failed. As discussed by Beatrice Forbes Manz in Chapter 11, the Mongols eradicated the Isma’ilis in 1256 and then the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258. The rapid fall of both, but most particularly the Abbasid Caliphate, sent shockwaves across the region. Yet the acquisition of new territory was not the only change that occurred.

The Seljuk Sultanate of Rum’s status as a client state of the Mongol Empire also changed with the arrival of Hülegü in the Middle East. Accompanied by a large army and as the new overlord of the southwestern portion of the Mongol Empire, Hülegü positioned himself in the traditional headquarters of the tammachi, the Mughan Steppe. Thus, with Hülegü’s arrival, Baiju, restored as the tammachi, had
little choice but to seek pasture elsewhere. The most logical location, based on its pasture, was Rum. As Rum was now a part of the Mongol Empire, he requested winter pastures from Sultan 'Izz al-Din in August 1256. 'Izz al-Din, however, viewed the arrival of Hulegu as a diminishment of Baiju's power and influence and rendered little assistance. Baiju quickly corrected this impression by defeating the Seljuks in battle at Aqsaray.

After the battle of Aqsaray (14 October 1256), Baiju remained in Rum, pasturing the herds of his armies. He also spent four months at the Byzantine frontiers. He camped at either Paphlagonia or near Ilgin, 50 kilometers west of Aksehir. Besütei, Baiju's uncle, advanced deep into Turkmen territory to Denizli in November 1256. Despite his diminished power, 'Izz al-Din still challenged the Mongols. According to Bar Hebraeus, 'Izz al-Din attempted to assemble a new army and find allies against Baiju. Again, Baiju's response was swift and decisive. Baiju's forces spread out in April 1257 into Galatia and Cappadocia, wreaking destruction upon 'Izz al-Din's domains. Furthermore, Baiju gave the captured forts to Rukn al-Din, 'Izz al-Din's younger brother and rival. At Malatya, whose ruler was allied to 'Izz al-Din, Baiju forced the city to swear fealty to Rukn al-Din as well. Thus, Rukn al-Din gained control of a significant portion of the eastern Seljuk territories. Baiju then left Rum to join Hulegu against Baghdad.

After the sack of Baghdad, Hulegu retired to Azerbaijan and received his vassals, including the Seljuks. As a ramification of 'Izz al-Din's disrespect for the Mongol military, Hulegu divided Rum between the two brothers, with Rukn al-Din receiving the territory from Kayseri to Armenia to be ruled from his capital at Sivas. Meanwhile, 'Izz al-Din received Aqsaray to the coast and ruled from Konya, thus settling Anatolian affairs for the time being.

After the Mongols sent detachments to quell a rebellion in Georgia, the invasion of Syria began. Before entering Syria, the Mongols along with contingents from Cilicia and Antioch marched on Harran, Akhlat and Edessa, which submitted with little resistance. The Mongols also dealt with a recalcitrant vassal in Mayyafariqin in 1258–59. Previously Malik al-Kamil Muhammad, Mayyafariqin's ruler, had killed a Mongol envoy and driven out the daruqachin in his region, possibly in retaliation for Mongol raids in 1252–53 or from fear that Hulegu suspected him of plotting rebellion. With the fall of Baghdad, al-Kamil attempted an alliance with Damascus, but it faltered. Soon a Mongol force commanded by Yoshmut arrived to besiege the city, which was starved into submission.

Meanwhile, the Ayyubid governor of Aleppo, al-Mu’azzam Turanshah, rejected terms of surrender. The siege commenced on 19 January 1260. After six days of concentrated fire by twenty mangonels, the Mongols broke through at the Bab al-Iraq sector. Then the city was turned over to the soldiers for five days of pillaging, and the Mongols razed the walls of the city. A month after the initial slaughter, the citadel surrendered. Bar Hebraeus wrote: “And there took place in Aleppo a slaughter like unto that of Baghdad only more terrible.”

Hulegu then crossed the Euphrates River to return to the Mughan Steppe, as Syria lacked the resources to support his main army, although he left a tümen commanded by Ket Buqa. Hulegu's route took him to Mardin after the lord of the city failed to appear when summoned. The city surrendered after a siege.
Meanwhile the army in Syria, commanded by Ket Buqa, targeted Damascus, which was ruled by the Ayyubid al-Nasir Yusuf (r. 1236–60). He had been in correspondence with the Mongols since 1250 and even nominally submitted to them before Hülegü arrived in the Middle East. He sent his son in 1258 to negotiate with the Mongols, but as Hülegü approached his territory, it was clear that they would not settle for anything less than complete submission from Syria. Until this point, the Mongols had been pleased with tribute.51

The Mongols triumphantly advanced throughout Syria after the fall of Aleppo. One by one, the greater cities of Syria submitted. The slaughter at Baghdad and Aleppo convinced them of the futility of resisting. Most of the original rulers remained in place with Mongol officials present. The Ayyubid princes were reduced to client status.52 When the news of Aleppo’s destruction reached al-Nasir at Damascus at the end of January 1260, the prince was stunned. Although al-Nasir had gathered a sizeable force, his advisors recommended that he retreat to Gaza and join forces with the Mamluks of Egypt.53 He agreed and took only token measures for the defense of Damascus.

Al-Nasir left his wazir, al-Zayn al-Hafizi, in charge of the city, and he promptly surrendered it when the Mongols approached.54 In March 1260, Ket Buqa entered Damascus accompanied by King Hethum, Prince Bohemund VI of Antioch and the Ayyubid prince al-Sa’id of Banyas. Three Persian daruqachin accompanied Ket Buqa, but al-Zayn al-Hafizi stayed as an advisor.55 Almost immediately after setting up the new administration, the Mongol troops rode out into the countryside to reduce the other local towns and strongpoints. Ket Buqa also sent a contingent in pursuit of al-Nasir. This contingent caught al-Nasir’s rear guard outside Nablus, where they annihilated the Ayyubid forces. Al-Nasir surrendered to the Mongols.

While the Mongols subdued the region, the Damascenes revolted in a vain effort at independence. Ket Buqa returned immediately and laid siege to the citadel. He ordered his siege weapons to fire without interruption upon the fortress. Once the Mongols breached the walls, the rebellion was quickly squashed.56

With the defeat of the Ayyubids at Nablus, the Mongols took control of the city and established de facto control over Palestine, with the exception of the thin strip of territory along the coast controlled by the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Kingdom was too weak to take advantage of the Ayyubids’ misfortunes. The Mongols also controlled most of the area around Mount Lebanon, including the Biqa’ Valley, which served as Ket Buqa’s headquarters as it provided the pasture his troops needed.

The Mongols meanwhile created a rudimentary administration to control their newly acquired territories. While Ket Buqa stationed himself in the Biqa’ Valley, Baidar Noyan occupied Gaza, positioning himself between the Kingdom of Jerusalem and Egypt. The prince of Homs, Malik al-Ashraf Musa, who had petitioned Hülegü after al-Nasir Yusuf dispossessed him of territory, served as the viceroy of Syria on the Mongols’ behalf, although Maqrizi referred to Ket Buqa and Baidar as the governors of Aleppo and Damascus, respectively.57 Considering where their armies were stationed, neither Baidar nor Ket Buqa should be considered governors. As both were positioned on the western frontiers of the Mongol Syrian holdings, they were probably tammachin. From his base in the Biqa’ Valley, Ket Buqa could defend against the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which stretched to Beirut, and impose his will over the
northern territories. Baidar, meanwhile, could do the same to the southern borders of Jerusalem and also guard against the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt. The power and influence of Ashraf are questionable, and he may have been simply a vassal, but he may have also served as a daruqachi or perhaps a jarqachi. The Mongols did place daruqachin in cities, as demonstrated in Damascus.

Ket Buqa personally received al-Nasir’s surrender at the siege of ‘Ajlun. The terms of surrender were generous, guaranteeing al-Nasir’s safety, although the Mongol general did use the prince’s presence to capture a few remaining fortresses, including ‘Ajlun. Al-Nasir was then sent with his brother al-Zahir to Hulegu in Tabriz. When al-Nasir was presented to Hulegu, the Mongol prince promised to restore Syria to him after Egypt was conquered. He also awarded the Syrian prince with a generous stipend. The day that Hulegu restored al-Nasir to Damascus, accompanied by three hundred horsemen, was also when the battle of ‘Ayn Jalut was fought.

In 1257, the Mongols also sent envoys to the Franks in Palestine requesting that they submit. On the surface it seemed that it was in the best interest of the Franks to join the Mongols. They would reap benefits from such an alliance. Even though they would pay tribute, they would still possess their lands, which would have undoubtedly increased.

The opportunity to submit to the Mongols ended rather quickly, however, as Julian of Sidon raided the Biqa’ Valley and ambushed a patrol of Mongols. One of the Mongols who was killed happened to be a nephew of Ket Buqa. In retaliation, Ket Buqa attacked Sidon, sacking the town. Ket Buqa burned much of the city and destroyed part of the walls; only the sea castle escaped damage. Later in the year, John II (r. 1254–64) of Beirut and a contingent of Templars raided into Galilee. The Mongols destroyed this force and captured John, whom they ransomed.

The countermeasures taken against Julian of Sidon demonstrated the power of the Mongols. The Franks could not hope to resist a concentrated Mongol attack without the arrival of a crusading army from Europe.

After the failed raids, the Mongols gave the Franks good reason to be concerned about their presence. The Mongols had shown that they were perfectly willing to protect their conquests, no matter how unstable they were at the time. In the absence of any central authority in Palestine, they were the de facto rulers. The Mongols could meet any threat the crusaders launched, as demonstrated during the Frankish incursions. Meanwhile the Franks lacked the means to do the same to the Mongols. Besides retaliatory actions, Ket Buqa did initiate two operations in Palestine. The first was at Safad, which was Frankish. Secondly, he stationed troops at Gaza, to keep an eye on Egypt and to prevent the Mamluks from entering Palestine. He also razed many of the Muslim fortresses to the ground. The objectives of the Mongols in Palestine were manifold: 1) spreading panic among the Franks; 2) providing pillaging opportunities for the Mongol troops; 3) serving as a vanguard for Hulegu’s army; 4) collecting intelligence about the Franks; 5) and finally, keeping the Franks on the defensive and unable to threaten Mongol patrols.

Although the Franks intruded into Mongol-controlled territory, of greater concern was the nascent Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt. When the envoys from the Mongols demanded Egypt submit or face destruction, Sultan Qutuz responded by executing them – a clear declaration of war. Qutuz chose his time perfectly and struck after Hulegu had withdrawn to Azerbaijan with the majority of the army. Meanwhile,
Map 13.1 The Mongol Empire 1250–1260
Source: Created by Mapping Specialists, Ltd.
Ket Buqa had to secure Syria with a little more than a tümen. This was sufficient to ensure order through the function of the tamma, providing that no other destabilizing factors entered the country. Qutuz had other plans.

The Mamluk invasion of Syria began at Gaza, where the Mamluks defeated Baidar’s force. Afterward, Qutuz successfully negotiated with the Franks of Acre to obtain safe passage through their territory. The coming struggle for control over Syria took place at ‘Ayn Jalut in the Jezreel Valley on 3 September 1260. This well-analyzed battle ended with a Mamluk victory over the Mongols, effectively ending the Mongols’ control of Syria, although they made several attempts to recover it.

Immediately after ‘Ayn Jalut, the Mongols attempted to reestablish their supremacy in Syria. In December 1260, a large force of Mongols entered the region near Aleppo. The Aleppan amirs were not willing to face the Mongols alone and thus retreated south. The Mongols pursued the Aleppan army to Hims, where the army of Aleppo joined the armies of Hama and Hims. Battle was joined on 11 December 1260, with the Muslims emerging victorious even though the Mongols numbered around six thousand, while the Syrian army reportedly numbered less than fifteen hundred. This battle was extremely significant, as local forces, not the elite Mamluks of Egypt, had defeated a larger Mongol army. Reuven Amitai-Preiss suggests that this would not have been possible without the earlier victory at ‘Ayn Jalut, as it is doubtful if the Syrian amirs would have dared to face the Mongols without the previous victory discrediting Mongol invincibility.

CONCLUSION

The campaigns in the Middle East during the reign of Möngke marked a substantial divergence in the operational strategies of the Mongols. Whereas they had previously operated on a broad and far-ranging front, the armies under Hülegü’s command adopted a different strategy: overwhelming force. Against their main targets, the Assassins (the Nizari Isma‘ili Shi‘i sect), the Caliphate and Ayyubid Syria, the Mongols attacked their enemies one at a time and with overwhelming superiority. In Rum and the Jazira, the Mongols encountered some rebellions, which they quelled handily.

During the conquest of Syria, the main force destroyed a politically and militarily important target, Aleppo, decimating it before any attempt at relief could be made. Most of the remaining cities decided that resistance was futile and submission was preferable to destruction. The only thing which the Syrian campaign lacked was a field battle. Traditionally the Mongols first defeated any armies in the field, leaving forces behind to lay siege to cities. The field army of the enemy was attacked until destroyed. Once it was defeated, the Mongols could then reduce the main fortresses at their leisure without fear of relief armies or their lines of communication being cut. As the field army battle never happened in Syria, the conquest was made easier.

The death of Möngke and the subsequent civil wars altered the course of the history of the Mongol Empire. It is uncertain what the Mongols’ intentions towards the Latin states or Egypt were; however, considering their other operations to eliminate those who had not submitted, it is likely that Hülegü would have invaded the “rebellious” Mamluk Sultanate, had circumstances been different.
NOTES

1 SHM §260.
3 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 233; KFT, 501; Bar Hebraeus, 402.
4 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 232.
5 Bar Hebraeus, 404.
6 Bar Hebraeus, 404.
7 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 236; Al-Hadid 1963, 81.
8 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 242.
9 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 233; Al-Hadid 1963, 81; Bar Hebraeus, 405; al-Nuwayri 1975, 348.
11 Bar Hebraeus, 406.
12 Grigor 1949, 307; Brosset 1849, 518.
13 Grigor 1949, 309; Bar Hebraeus, 407–409; TN, 313; TNR, 162.
14 Ibn Bibi 1975, 205; Grigor 1949, 309.
15 Bar Hebraeus, 407–409; Al-Dhahabi 1979, 243; TN, 313; TNR, 162–163; Grigor 1949, 309.
18 Grigor 1949, 309.
19 Rubruc 1929, 167; TMM, 91; Rubruck 1990, 65.
21 Lippard 1983, 176.
22 Fine 1987, 134.
23 Lippard 1983, 177.
26 Bar Hebraeus, 409; RDK, 577; RDT, 398.
27 TNR, 1265.
28 Joinville 1960, 236.
29 Juwayni 1937, 50; HWC, 583.
31 RDK, 575–576; RDT, 397.
33 Bar Hebraeus, 410; Al-Dhahabi 1979, 250.
34 TMM, 32; Plano Carpini 1929, 75–76.
35 Bar Hebraeus, 411; RDK, 570; RDT, 394.
36 Bar Hebraeus, 411; Juwayni 1912, 212; HWC, 257; RDK, 570; RDT, 394.
37 Umari, 15–16.
38 HWC, 256; Juwayni 1912, 212; TNR, 1150–1151; RDK, 570; RDT, 394.
40 Bar Hebraeus, 424–425.
42 Lippard 1983, 23.
43 Bar Hebraeus, 426; al-Dhahabi 1979, 264.
44 Bar Hebraeus, 434–435.
46 Bar Hebraeus, 435; Maqrizi 1845, 88; RDK, 719; RDT, 502.
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47 Nuwayri 1975, 383; Bar Hebraeus, 434; al-Dhahabi 1979, 261, 264; Grigor 1949, 335; TNR, 1266–1268; RDK, 725–726; RDT, 507–508.


49 Bar Hebraeus, 436.

50 Bar Hebraeus, 437; RDK, 724–726; RDT, 507–508.

51 Al-Dhahabi 1979, 265, 267.

52 Maqrizi 1845, 96; Humphreys 1977, 351.

53 Maqrizi 1956, 421–422; Maqrizi 1845, 92, 94.

54 Maqrizi 1956, 424; Maqrizi 1845, 97; Abu Shamah 1947, 203–204.


56 Abu Shamah 1947, 204; Maqrizi 1956, 424; Maqrizi 1845, 99.

57 Maqrizi 1845, 99–100; Jackson 2017, 131.

58 Baybars al Mansuri 1993, 11.


60 Hayton 1906, 174; Marshall 1992, 128.

61 Runciman 1962, 573.

62 Amitai-Preiss 1987, 239.


64 RDK, 721–723; RDT, 504–505; Maqrizi 1956, 427–428; Maqrizi 1845, 101–102.

65 RDK, 722; RDT, 504–505; Maqrizi 1956, 430; Maqrizi 1845, 104.


67 Amitai-Preiss 1990, 2.

68 Amitai-Preiss 1990, 3.

69 Amitai-Preiss 1990, 4.

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Bar Hebraeus, See List of Abbreviations.


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TMM, See List of Abbreviations.
TN, See List of Abbreviations.
TNR, See List of Abbreviations.
Umari, See List of Abbreviations.