CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THE MONGOLS IN SOUTH ASIA

Michael Hope

The Mongol conquest of Central Eurasia had a transformative effect upon the political, social, and economic history of South Asia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Beginning in 1219, Chinggis Khan’s invasion of the Khwarazmshah Empire set in motion a wave of migrations out of Mawarannahr, Khurasan, and Persian Iraq, which saw the increased dissemination of Turkic, Persian, and Islamic culture in Kashmir, Sind, and the Gangetic Plains. Moreover, the ongoing threat posed by Mongols based in the Helmand River Basin and Ghazna played no small part in a much larger shift of Muslim political power in South Asia from Lahore to Delhi. As a safe haven for refugees and a bulwark against further Mongol expansion, Delhi became one of the great metropolises of the Middle Ages, attracting scholars, merchants, spiritualists, as well as a large Mongol diaspora community. These migrants played a critical role in shaping the political history of South Asia, whilst also serving as a bridge between South and Central Asia, proving once and for all that the effects of the Pax-Mongolica stretched well-outside the borders of the Mongol Empire and its successor states.

INITIAL ENCOUNTERS

The Mongols were first drawn to South Asia during their incursions into Khurasan (1220–1221), which formed part of a larger assault on the Khwarazmshah Empire. Earlier Mongol attacks on Mawarannahr and Khwarazm pushed a number of the Khwarazmshah’s supporters to Ghazna, where they regrouped under the leadership of Jalal al-Din Mangubirni, Sultan Muhammad’s son. This rump of the Khwarazmshah army put up a strong, though ultimately futile, resistance, before being defeated on the Sind River. Jalal al-Din managed to extricate himself from the battle and escaped into Hindustan with a small group of survivors, where he hoped to rebuild his power. Chinggis Khan became aware of his plans and dispatched two of his commanders, Dörbei Doqshin and Bala Noyan, to weed out the renegade prince. Jalal al-Din lacked the strength to resist his Mongol pursuers and fled towards Delhi, but finding no support in that direction, he exited South Asia via Makran into Iran. Having failed to come to grips with their quarry, Dörbei and Bala took the opportunity to raid Sind. They began by sacking the fort of Nandana.
in the Salt Range, before moving on to besiege Multan. The siege lasted for several days and the Persian scholar-bureaucrat, 'Ala al-Din 'Ata Malik Juwayni noted that the Mongol mangonels had battered down much of the city’s walls before Dörbei decided to withdraw across the Sind River due to the oppressively hot weather. Dörbei’s brief, though highly destructive, campaign was the first of many Mongol attacks into the region over the course of the next century and a half.

A second and far more serious assault was launched by Chinggis Khan’s heir, Ögödei (r. 1229–1241), who ordered his brothers to contribute soldiers for a tamma (garrison) army in Khurasan, which would begin operations to subjugate Hindustan. The tamma army was initially commanded by Dayir Noyan, who arrived in Khurasan in 1230. In 1241, he led a campaign against Lahore, then the largest and most important city in Sind. The campaign was aided by the growing instability at Delhi, where the heirs of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1206–1234) fought amongst themselves for the throne and were incapable of mounting an effective resistance. Thus, Dayir’s army seized Lahore, along with much of the Sind River valley, with little difficulty. Around the same time as the attack on Lahore, Dayir also sent a separate detachment under the leadership of Huqutu Noyan (also Oqotur) against Kashmir. There are scant details about this second campaign, but it is clear that the Mongol army seized Srinagar and appointed a daruqachi (overseer) there before returning to Khurasan. The gains made by Dayir in Sind and Kashmir proved temporary, however, as the Kashmiri ruler, Ramadeva (r. 1235–1252), and Sultan Mu’izz al-Din Bahram of Delhi (r. 1240–1243) restored control over these territories once Dayir and Huqutu had withdrawn to their base on the Helmand River. Nevertheless, this demonstration of force did bring the submission of other regional warlords. Hasan Qarluq and Yughrush Khalji, the rulers of Binban and the Kuh-i Jud, both came to profess their loyalty to the qa’an shortly after Dayir’s attack on Lahore. Both men remained loyal to the Mongols until the rule of Nasir al-Din Mahmoud (r. 1249–1266), when the Delhi Sultanate moved to secure its north-western border.

A more determined effort to conquer Sind and Kashmir was launched during the rule of Möngke Qa’an (r. 1251–1259), who dispatched Sali Noyan to assume control of Dayir’s troops. Möngke had been encouraged in this policy by renewed instability within the Delhi Sultanate, which had caused one of Iltutmish’s sons, Jalal al-Din Mas’ud, and two leading commanders, Kushlu Khan Balban and Qutlugh Khan, to seek asylum in the Mongol court. Jalal al-Din set out for Mongolia in 1248 and was warmly received by the Mongol emperor, who provided him with a jarliq appointing him as the new ruler of Hindustan. Möngke ordered Sali to support Jalal al-Din and he dutifully obeyed, seizing control of Multan and Uch in 1257. His attack coincided with the arrival of Möngke’s brother, Hülégü, who had been appointed to advance Mongol claims to Iran and Iraq, whilst also overseeing Sali’s progress. The tamma commander quickly sent his new master a glut of captives from the newly conquered territories by way of tribute. Yet Sali refused to advance further into northern India, again contenting himself with the conquest of Sind, which was entrusted to Jalal al-Din Mas’ud and his allies.

Sali also led a campaign against Kashmir, where he seized Srinagar and massacred all the adult males before enslaving the women and children. It is, however, unclear to what extent this invasion resulted in Mongol control of Kashmir. Rashid al-Din, a servant of the Mongols in Iran, claimed that the Kashmiri king, Laksmanadeva
(r. 1273–1286), sought a jarliq from Möngke and Hülegü to assume the throne, which suggests the Mongols had successfully subjugated the region.7 But both rulers had long since died, and neither the Tarikh-i Kashmir nor the native chronicle of Jonaraja confirm his story. Indeed, with the exception of a few superficial reports of Sali’s campaign sprinkled throughout the Persian sources, there is virtually no evidence that the Mongols maintained any presence in Srinagar. Even Laksmanadeva’s appeal to Möngke, assuming it ever took place, was more likely a strategy to leverage support against his overweening nobility, who had left Laksmanadeva ruling a severely truncated realm. The limited literary evidence therefore points to the Kashmiri monarchy accepting their nominal subordination to the qa’an, whilst retaining autonomous control over their dominion.8

Whether Sali had plans to advance Mongol control further into South Asia is also unclear. His mission seems to have corresponded closely with the earlier campaigns of Dayir Noyan, which suggests that he was only charged with capturing Sind. Yet even his gains on that front were squandered when Jalal al-Din Mas’ud was reconciled with his nephew, Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud, in 1258.9 Despite a further raid into Sind during the same year, Mongol expansion was halted when Hülegü opened up communication with Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud and his chamberlain, Ulugh Khan Balban, around 1260. It is unclear who initiated this contact, as the chronicles of Delhi appear to have been embarrassed by their masters’ willingness to engage with the supposed enemies of Islam. Neither they nor the histories emanating from the Ilkhanate give any information about the content of the messages exchanged between Hülegü and Nasir al-Din. Yet the clandestine negotiations were clearly significant since Hülegü soon ordered Sali Noyan to avoid transgressing the lands of the Delhi Sultanate under threat of severe punishment.10 These brief diplomatic exchanges fell shortly after the death of Möngke in 1259, when the division of the Mongol Empire in civil war made it necessary for Chinggisid princes like Hülegü to seek alliances with neighbouring rulers. Indeed, Juzjani also observed visitors from the territory of Hülegü’s chief rival, Berke Khan of the Jochid Ulus, at roughly the same time.11 The ongoing conflict between the Chinggisid princes temporarily saved Delhi from further Mongol attacks until 1268. Nasir al-Din and Ulugh Khan Balban used this period of peace to consolidate their control of Sind, permanently withdrawing the region from Mongol control.

POST-DISSOLUTION ENCOUNTERS

The chaos that followed the death of Möngke also put an end to Sali Noyan’s leadership of the tamma army. Conflict amongst the Chinggisid princes divided the Mongol territory in Central Eurasia between Hülegü, who held Iran and Khurasan to the south-west of the Amu River, and the descendants of Chinggis Khan’s second son, Chaghadai, who held Mawarannahr and East Turkistan in the east. The tamma army of Sali found itself on the frontier between these two rival khanates and in 1261, Alghu, the new ruler of the Chaghadaids, sent his own agent, Sadai Elchi, to arrest Sali and assume control of the army.12 From that point onwards, with only brief exceptions, the tamma army remained independent of the Hülegüids and drew the majority of its commanders from among the Chaghadaid princes. This tamma
division, subsequently known as the ‘Qaraunas’ (also Negüderis), were the most persistent threat to the Delhi Sultanate over the following century.  

From their bases in Ghazna and Teginabad, the Qaraunas led almost annual raids against Hindustan throughout the rule of Ghiyath al-Din Balban (formerly Ulugh Khan, r. 1266–1287). There is little information about many of these raids in the sources emanating from Delhi, which either took them to be too embarrassing or too commonplace to be worth mentioning in any detail. Most of the attacks targeted the urban settlements of Sind, where the Mongols’ primary objective was to obtain slaves for sale in Khurasan. Such raids had begun as early as the rule of Ögödei, when numerous captives had been sent to Iran and Mawarannahr from Lahore and Multan. The attacks only increased under Sali Noyan and in 1258 when Ulugh Khan Balban intercepted a Mongol force near the Sind River, he found that they were transporting many thousands of captives for sale in the slave markets of Khurasan. 

Ibn Battuta reported that this practice was still common in the fourteenth century, when the newly Islamized Mongols indiscriminately raided Muslim settlements for slaves, which they pretended were Hindus in order to sell them in Herat. The raids reached a peak after the death of Balban’s cousin, Shir Khan (d. 1268), the governor of Multan and Lahore. Balban sought to stem the flow of Mongol attacks by sending his son, Muhammad Khan, to organize the protection of the Sind River Valley, whilst another son, Bughra Khan, supported him from fortresses built further south at Samana and Sunnam. Balban also recruited a new army to permanently guard the northern marches and help the princes in their task. Yet even these measures failed to stem the problem completely, and Balban was famously said to have avoided any large-scale campaigns against the Hindu raiś for fear of being outflanked by the Mongols. 

The accession of Du’a Khan (r. 1282–1307) to the throne of the Chaghadaids and his detente with Qaidu Khan in East Turkistan stabilized the Mongol polity in Central Eurasia and allowed the Qaraunas to increase the ferocity of their attacks. A Mongol assault against Multan, Deopalpur, and Lahore in 684/1285 claimed the life of Prince Muhammad, who was posthumously known by the title of ‘Khan-i Shabid’ (the Martyred Prince) in the court histories of Delhi. The frequency and severity of attacks grew even greater at the end of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, when the ineffective rule of Mu’izz al-Din Kayqubad (r. 1287–1290) and a coup led by Jalal al-Din Firuz Khalji (r. 1290–1296) left the sultanate vulnerable. The Mongols invaded in 1287, 1292, 1297–1298, 1299–1300, 1303, 1305, and 1306, with at least three of these attacks targeting Delhi. The campaign of the Chaghadaid prince, Qutlugh Khwaja, at the head of a Qaraunas army reputedly numbering 200,000 people was one of the more serious attacks. In 1299 his forces advanced virtually uninhibited from the Sind River to the outskirts of Delhi, where he was met by Sultan ‘Ala al-Din (r. 1296–1316) in the plain of Kili. The battle was begun by Zafar Khan, who commanded the right wing of ‘Ala al-Din’s army. He chased the Mongols from the field in a heroic charge that earned him gushing praise from sources written in Delhi, but his bravery came at a heavy cost. It appears Qutlugh Khwaja led his army in a tactical retreat, commonly employed by Mongol armies. Withdrawing from the battlefield, he lured Zafar Khan into an ambush and annihilated his army before returning to Kili to confront ‘Ala al-Din a second time. The two armies faced one another briefly before the Mongols withdrew from the
field of battle and returned to Khurasan. Qutlugh Khwaja died upon his arrival in Ghazna, but one of his commanders, Amir Taraghai, led a further attack on Delhi in 703/1303. This time, ‘Ala al-Din’s armies were absent in a separate campaign against the fortress of Chittor, and the sultan could do nothing but watch as Delhi was enveloped in a siege for nearly two months. The city was on the verge of capitulation when Taraghai returned to Khurasan without any clear justification.19

Further Mongol attacks in 1305 and 1306 spurred ‘Ala al-Din to embark on a dramatic campaign of military reform. The Sultan ordered the recruitment of large numbers of soldiers to man the frontiers, whilst simultaneously refurbishing the defences of the major urban centres of the Sind River. The size of the new army necessitated even more dramatic agricultural, commercial, and financial reforms that strengthened the power of the sultan and increased his revenues. At first, these measures did not stem the Mongol attacks, but they did allow the sultan’s soldiers to contain them to Sind and prevent the Mongols from threatening Delhi. ‘Ala al-Din was also helped by the death of Du’a in 1307, which destabilized the Chaghadaids in Central Eurasia.20 It was not until 1327 that another large-scale Mongol invasion, this time led by Tarmashirin Khan (r. 1327–1334), reached Delhi. There is, however, very little information on this attack; most of the contemporary sources simply note Tarmashirin’s defeat. The one exception is the Mughal historian, Firishta, who claimed that Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq (r. 1325–1351) had been unable to match Tarmashirin’s army and had paid the Mongol leader a ransom totalling ‘almost the price of the kingdom’ to obtain his withdrawal.21 Whether Tarmashirin was indeed defeated or whether he departed Delhi with a large payment, the Mongols caused widespread damage before passing through Gujarat and Sind, looting and killing on their way back to the Sind River.

Tarmashirin’s attack was the last time that the Mongols threatened Delhi. Tarmashirin’s death in 1334 saw the Chaghadaids permanently divided into eastern and western factions, whilst an unceasing series of dynastic disputes weakened their rulers and strengthened the hand of provincial warlords. We therefore only read of small incursions after 1334 targeted at plundering and kidnapping, such as the attack made against Deopalpur in 1357–1358.22 During this period, the Mongol commanders in Khurasan and Mawarannahr appear to have enjoyed relatively cordial relations with the rulers of Delhi. The change in circumstances was such that in 1351 Qazaghan, the commander of the Qaraunas, provided 5,000 soldiers to assist Sultan Muhammad b. Tughluq to put down a revolt in Thatta near the Arabian Sea.23 Ziya’ Barani also reported that a large number of Mongol commanders travelled to Delhi to receive gifts and stipends from Sultan Muhammad, before returning to their patrimonies.24 These gifts were most likely intended to win alliances with the Mongols in Mawarannahr ahead of a projected campaign to capture Khurasan and to garner support against internal rebellions. But this period of relative tranquillity only lasted as long as the former Chaghadaid territories remained divided. When Amir Timur unified Mawarannahr and Iran under his control he led a devastating raid, successfully capturing and sacking Delhi in 1398 before returning to Central Eurasia.

Mongol attacks on Kashmir also decreased in the first half of the fourteenth century, though the region still saw intermittent raids by Mongol commanders based in Central Eurasia. Easily the most devastating raid on Kashmir during this period
was led by a Mongol known as ‘Dulucha’ (also Zulaji) during the rule of Suhadeva (r. 1301–1320). Little is known about Dulucha outside of Kashmir, and it is difficult to identify him with any of the Chaghadaid or Qaraunas commanders of the fourteenth century. What is certain is that his assault on Kashmir was bloodier than those of Huqutu and Sali. He either massacred or enslaved a large portion of the population before burning the food and crops that his army had not already consumed. The destruction was such that the anonymous Baharistan-i Shahi claimed that later generations of Kashmiris would refer to uncultivated wasteland by saying ‘here Dulucha cultivated turf.’ His attack was followed by another incursion around 1326, which may have been orchestrated to coincide with Tarmashirin’s march on Delhi, though Peter Jackson has suggested that this invasion may in fact have been conducted by the army of Delhi as part of Muhammad b. Tughluq’s ill-fated ‘Qarachil’ campaign. Once again, discrepancies between the Kashmiri and Persian sources make it hard to positively identify this army as coming from either the Mongol-ruled territories or from Delhi. In any case, the Kashmiri queen, Kota Rani, managed to rally the nobles and defend the countryside from the invaders before negotiating a truce, which saw the foreign army withdraw. No further Mongol invasions were recorded by the Kashmiri sources during the fourteenth century, though connections between Srinagar and the former Mongol territories remained intact as religious leaders, merchants, and immigrants from across Iran and Mawarannahr continued to travel back and forth from Kashmir, contributing to the Islamization of the court at Srinigar and the spread of Persian as the new court language.

SLAVES AND SERVANTS

Not all Mongols fought against the Delhi Sultanate. A great many of them entered the sultans’ service, either as slaves or as freemen, though it is not always easy to trace their careers once they moved south of the Sind River. The Mongols’ prominence can be attributed to the fact that throughout the fourteenth century, Delhi acquired most of its elite soldiers from Central Eurasia. The Delhi Sultanate was founded by the ostensibly Turkic slave soldiers (mamluks) employed by Mu’izz al-Din Muhammad Ghuri (d. 1206) and once manumitted, they replenished their ranks by purchasing more slaves from Central Eurasia. The ‘Turks’ (referring to all nomads from the Eurasian steppe) were popularly regarded as the best warriors of the Islamic world and, according to the history of Fakhr al-Din Mubarakshah Marvuri, were the most faithful defenders of the faith once they had been converted. These Turkic military elite made up a ruling minority that proudly distinguished itself from the native Hindu agrarian population and disdained the idea that any other group should be allowed to hold power. The fall of Central Eurasia to the Chinggisids in the first half of the thirteenth century, however, necessitated interaction between the Delhi sultans and the Mongols if they wanted to increase their stock of Turkic slave soldiers.

The slave trade with Delhi was controlled by a chain of merchants operating across political boundaries. Those with access to the slaves of Central Eurasia were known as the ‘khwajas’ (i.e. masters) in the Delhi chronicles. They operated with the permission of the Mongol rulers of Mawarannahr and Khwarazm, who granted
them gereges (diplomas of entitlement) to travel and deal throughout the Mongol Empire. \(^3\) Once sold in Mawarannahr, the slaves were acquired by merchants operating out of Multan, Lahore, and Uch, who transported them to Sind or onwards to Delhi, where the wealth of the sultanate was concentrated. This was the fate of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1210–1236), of the Ölberli Qipchaqs, who was initially brought to Bukhara before being moved on to Ghazna and then Delhi, where he was sold. \(^3\) Such were the connections between the traders of Sind and Mawarannahr that when the Mongols assaulted Lahore in 1241, the local governor, Qaraqush, claimed that the residents refused to resist the invaders. The historian Juzjani explained that the merchants had close ties to the Mongols and therefore did not mind being absorbed into their empire. \(^3\)

Yet commerce was only one source of slaves. A far more reliable avenue for a Mongol slave to enter the Delhi Sultanate was as a captive. Virtually all of the Mongol armies that invaded the Sultanate between 1239 and 1357 were accompanied by their families. \(^3\) Their presence meant that whenever a Mongol army was defeated in India, a large number of Mongol women and children came into the sultan’s possession. For instance, in 1305, when Sultan ʿAla al-Din’s armies successfully put down an invasion by Aybeg Khan in the Siwalik Mountains, some 3,000 Mongols fell captive to his army. \(^3\) These prisoners were sent to Delhi, where the men were trampled by elephants and the women and children were sold into slavery. Similarly, when a Mongol army raided Gujarāt around 1303, the local governor, Alp Khan, is said to have captured 18,000 women and children. \(^3\) These captives supplemented the stock of slaves available to South Asian buyers and helped replenish the number of Central Eurasians serving at the sultan’s court.

Many of these enslaved Mongols joined the ranks of the sultan’s armies and attained high posts at the court in Delhi. The most famous of these slaves was the future sultan, Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq (r. 1320–1324), whom the traveller Ibn Battuta described as being a member of the Qaraunas. \(^3\) The information provided by Ibn Battuta on Tughluq’s origins is not directly confirmed or refuted by any other contemporary source, although the Mughal chronicler, Firishta, who travelled to Tughluq’s former patrimony of Deopalpur to inquire about his early life, claimed that no one knew anything about him, save for a story that his father was a Turkic slave belonging to Ulugh Khan Balban. \(^3\) Nevertheless, Ibn Battuta’s account rings true when we look at the background of the other senior commanders charged with protecting the northern marches at the end of the thirteenth century. A great many of these commanders were of Mongol origin. Tughluq’s most avid supporter, Bahram Ayba, the governor of Uch, was described by Firishta as ‘a Mongol chief of some note in that quarter,’ whilst ‘Karri’ (Girey?) another of Tughluq’s commanders who helped him capture Delhi, is described by the historian ʿIsami as ‘a Mughal.’ \(^3\) Even some of Tughluq’s enemies in Sind were of Mongol extraction. The governor of Multan, who refused to join Tughluq’s march on Delhi in 1320, shared his name with a Mongol commander who had attacked Uch in 643/1245 – ‘Mughaltai.’ \(^3\) Though the trend of renaming slaves makes it possible that Mughaltai was not his real name, the ethnonym suggests that he was indeed of Mongol origin. It is therefore not difficult to see why Ibn Battuta would have believed Tughluq to be a Mongol; nearly all the senior military commanders of Sind in the 1320s were of the same origin.
The Mongolian slaves are, however, often overshadowed in the sources by the free Mongols, who voluntarily entered the service of the sultans at Delhi. These Mongols either submitted to the sultan in the expectation of material rewards or as a result of political upheavals in the Mongol Empire. In most cases, they arrived with their own armies, which operated as an auxiliary force supplementing the mamluk army of the sultan. The terms of their submission may have varied, but the one unconditional requirement of all incoming Mongol vassals was that they convert to Islam. Shared religious faith was a means of providing the often-diverse slave soldiers of Delhi with a sense of corporate identity, which distinguished them from the largely Hindu agricultural population. Accepting this state ideology was, therefore, a necessary precursor to joining the sultan’s court and it was something that most of the Mongol recruits, and even some of those captured during war, were only too willing to accept. The Delhi chroniclers, beginning with Ziya’ Barani, referred to these Mongols as ‘New Muslims,’ a classification which may have been intended to cast doubt upon the depth and sincerity of their newfound faith. Yet by the end of the thirteenth century, many Mongols across Central Eurasia had already converted to Islam, making it easier for them to integrate into their new home.

The free Mongols were most prominent during the regular convulsions that followed upon the accession of a new ruler in Delhi. In these unstable times, the Mongols provided the sultan with support to counter-balance other factions at court. Some of the most enthusiastic recruitment of Mongol auxiliaries came during the rule of Ulugh Khan Balban (r. 1266–1287), who worked to oust or demote the Shamsi mamluks who had defined the political landscape of north India until that point. The Mongols presented Balban with an external source of political strength to offset the power of ‘the forty’ most senior commanders in the empire, albeit that the sources remain largely silent on their activities and it is only during the rule of his delinquent grandson, Kayqubad (1286–1290), that their true power came into focus. A similarly welcoming policy was adopted by Jalal al-Din Firuz Khalji (r. 1290–1296) when he seized the throne in 1290. As a commander from the northern frontier, Firuz was regarded as an outsider by the Delhi establishment and his power was challenged by the traditional Turkic military leadership. The Mongols provided Firuz with reinforcements to stabilize his position. Indeed, sources written in the Ilkhanate report that Firuz was accused of making alliances with Mongol leaders in Mawarannahr and Khurasan prior to coming to the throne. These stories might not be far-fetched, as his father, Yughursh, is known to have served as a Mongol vassal in Binban. The most prominent Mongol at Firuz’s court was a Chinggisid prince by the name of Alughu Khan (also Ulghu Khan), who enjoyed such intimacy with the sultan that he referred to Firuz as ‘father’ and was purged along with Firuz’s children during ’Ala al-Din’s coup. Alughu was not alone. The numbers of Mongols entering Delhi during Firuz’s reign were so high that they were given their own quarter of Delhi to settle in, known as ‘Mughalpur’ (also mahala-yi changizi).

Yet the most aggressive recruiter of Mongols was surely Muhammad b. Tughluq (r. 1325–1351). Like Balban, Muhammad had pushed for a number of radical reforms, including the relocation of the political capital of the empire from Delhi to Dawlatabad (Deogir) and the introduction of a new copper token currency, most likely modelled upon the monetary reforms of Qubilai Qa’an and Gaykhatu Khan. The failure of these reforms combined with severe climatic changes, the spread
of disease, widespread droughts, and famines caused a succession of rebellions throughout Muhammad’s long reign. The sultan sought to offset opposition to his rule by encouraging new alliances with the Mongols and other emigres from Iran and Mawarannahr. Despite Tarmashirin’s invasion in 1327, Ibn Battuta claimed that a number of religious and political officials in Mawarannahr enjoyed cordial relations with Muhammad, and he also entered diplomatic correspondence with Bahadur Khan of the Ilkhanate, presenting what Ibn Battuta describes as the most lavish gift he had ever witnessed to the Ilkhan’s uncle, Hajji Ke‘ün, who remained in Delhi until 1341. These friendly relations opened up exchanges of people and goods between South Asia and the Mongol successor states, which Muhammad used to bring fresh soldiers into India. He did so by providing lavish rewards in the form of offices, salaries, and property to those who travelled to his court. His generosity was not limited to the Mongols but was also extended to Persian and Turkic spiritual leaders, bureaucrats, artists, and traders. Nevertheless, a large number of Mongols entered Hindustan during the last two decades of his rule, most prominent among them being Amir Nawruz Güregen, the son-in-law of Tarmashirin, who was appointed as the ‘chief of the Mongols’ in India. Nawruz was reputed to have come to Delhi, along with 40,000 Chaghadaid soldiers, after Tarmashirin was deposed by his nephew, Buzan, in 1334. Following his arrival, Nawruz provided critical support to help Muhammad suppress rebellions in the Deccan and Gujarat before participating in the Sultan’s final campaign into Thatta in 1351. The target of the Thatta campaign was a renegade slave, most likely of Mongol extraction, against whom Muhammad mobilized not only Nawruz’s Mongol soldiers but also a Qaraunas force led by Altun Bahadur. Few other campaigns provide clearer confirmation of how prominent the Mongols had become in the military and political establishment of the Delhi Sultanate by the fourteenth century.

The rising fortunes of Mongol commanders and slaves quickly earned them enemies at court. One of the earliest antagonists of the Mongols in Delhi was the vizier, Nizam al-Din, who served Sultan Mu‘izz al-Din Kayqubad (r. 1287–1290). Nizam al-Din made it his mission to stabilize government by undermining the power of the Turco-Mongolian military elites and, in so doing, robbed the Mongols of much of their influence. The Mongols responded by plotting to assassinate Nizam al-Din, but their plans were discovered, and Kayqubad ordered a purge of their leaders. Even Turks and Persians who were known to have intermarried and associated with the Mongols suffered imprisonment, exile, and execution. This purge did not end the presence of the Mongols at Kayqubad’s court, but it did diminish the strength of the Mongols in relation to other groups, most notably the faction orbiting around Jalal al-Din Firuz Khalji. When Kayqubad eventually became incapacitated as a result of excessive drink, the Khalji faction was best placed to seize power with only minor resistance from the Turco-Mongolian courtiers in Delhi.

A group of Mongol commanders would again push for power during the rule of Ala al-Din (r. 1296–1316). The new sultan had decided to weaken the Turco-Mongolian military aristocracy by depriving them of their iqta’s and stipends and imposing higher taxes, using the revenue to build a new army. The policy reputedly caused a number of Mongols to become destitute, and they were seen wandering the streets of Delhi in a pathetic state. Their breaking point came in 1297, when the sultan sent an army against Gujarat under the command of his cousin, Ulugh Khan.
Following the capture of the cities of Nahrwala and Kanbhaya (Cambay), Ulugh Khan aggressively demanded the \textit{khums} (1/5 tax) from the loot taken by the sultan’s soldiers. He is said to have despoiled the tents of his own army, ransacking their belongings in search of this revenue when a group of Mongols, led by a commander named Muhammadshah, rose up against him. They assaulted Ulugh Khan’s tent, but finding it empty fled to Ranthambhor, where they took refuge with the \textit{rai} of the city, Hammiradeva.\(^5\) Muhammadshah and his allies held out in Ranthambhor and even repulsed an attack on the city in 1299. Those Mongols who did not take part in the rebellion at Gujarat were also sick of 'Ala al-Din’s rule, and a plot was allegedly hatched to overthrow him. Once again, the plot was betrayed to the sultan, who ordered the massacre of all Mongols throughout the empire. Ziya’ Barani claims that as many as 20,000–30,000 Mongols were killed as a result of 'Ala al-Din’s order.\(^5\) If these figures are to be believed, they give us some sense of the high number of Mongols residing in the sultanate at the end of the thirteenth century.

In spite of 'Ala al-Din’s attack, a large number of Mongols still remained in the Delhi Sultanate. These Mongols were even able to lend their weight to a second coup attempt, this time planned by 'Ala al-Din’s nephew, Akkat Khan. The unnamed Mongols fell upon 'Ala al-Din when he temporarily moved away from his army to hunt, whilst on march against Ranthambhor. Firing a volley of arrows, they knocked him from his horse and injured his hand before leaving him for dead. Akkat Khan then proceeded to the sultan’s camp and called for the \textit{khutba} and coins to be made in his name before 'Ala al-Din arrived to prove that he was still alive.\(^5\) Once again, those involved in the conspiracy were brutally put to death.

We should not, however, assume that the Mongols formed a single homogenous faction. Whilst 'Ala al-Din was busy suppressing the rebellious elements in Gujarat, Delhi, and Ranthambhor, he also appointed Tughluq to Deopalpur to guard against invasion from the north and recruited other Mongol slaves to join his army. Even Muhammad b. Tughluq, who encouraged a huge migration of Mongol soldiers into northern India, is known to have faced several uprisings led by Mongols. At an unknown date (possibly 1335 or 1342) he suffered a rebellion by ‘Malik Hülejü’ at Lahore, and Firishta claims that Mongols and ‘foreign officers’ also contributed a significant number of soldiers to the uprising of Isma’il Mukh in the Deccan in 1345.\(^5\) Just as Barani was concerned about the influx of ‘New Muslims’ into India during the rule of Balban, so too Firishta was worried about the power of the Mongol ‘\textit{amiran-i jadid}’ (new commanders) that threatened the power of Muhammad b. Firuz (r. 1390–1394).\(^5\) Muhammad Bihamadkhani confirmed that the sultan was indeed at odds with his father’s ‘foreign troops,’ who fought vigorously to keep him out of Delhi before he in turn expelled them from the city.\(^5\) These examples suggest that the Mongols were never a unified political faction working for a shared interest. Rather, the status of individual Mongols at the Delhi court could improve through alliances and covenants with all manner of people in the sultanate.

\textbf{CULTURAL EXCHANGE}

The limited source material on the court culture of Delhi during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries makes it difficult to get a clear picture of how the Mongols might have altered everyday life in the sultanate. The growing population of
Persian-speaking scholars, bureaucrats, and religious officials, who often arrived alongside the Mongols, produced the vast majority of written sources in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and have therefore garnered the most attention from modern historians. Nevertheless, the high volume of Mongols entering Hindustan during the same period caught the attention of these writers, who described their imprint on the court at Delhi.

As was the case throughout much of the Islamic world, writers in Delhi were torn between stereotypical depictions of the Mongols as savage barbarians on the one hand and the high culture espoused by the Mongol courts of Tabriz, Daidu, and Sarai on the other. The fourteenth-century Sufi chronicler ʿIsami was probably voicing the opinion of many in Delhi when he described the Mongols as possessing ‘a hideous look; their features were repulsive and their language rude and impolite. Their countenance, their hair and their nature were repugnant and their sweat smelt foul.’58

His views were echoed by Juzjani, ʿAfif, and Amir Khusraw, who had relocated to India as a result of the Mongol conquests and therefore had a poor impression of his northern neighbours. Barani recorded the public execution of Mongol captives in Delhi with relish and Juzjani repeated prognostications that the Mongols were the harbingers of the apocalypse.59 The same authors described the Delhi Sultanate as an island of Islamic civilization between the pagan Mongols in the north and the heathen Hindus in the south. They regarded war with the Mongols as one of the sultan’s primary duties. To this end, Amir Khusraw observed that the ‘walls of Delhi have been built with Mongol blood,’ a statement which was intended to be taken literally as he described how ʿAla al-Din had used the blood and severed heads of Mongol captives to finish work on the fortifications at Delhi and Siri.60 The conversion of the Mongols in Iran and Mawarannahr to Islam did very little to reverse these views. The Mongols were perceived to be a barbaric and above all pagan people who needed to be combated.

Yet the views of the Persian-speaking bureaucracy were not always in harmony with those of the military leadership of the Delhi Sultanate, which held a grudging admiration for the Chinggisid venture. In their conception, the Mongols were simultaneously rivals and objects of emulation. Moreover, the Mongols provided a framework for the sultans of Delhi to understand political power across Eurasia and even within their own dominion. Hence, when Muhammad b. Tughluq undertook the construction of a mausoleum for Sultan Qutb al-Din Mubarakshah (r. 1316–1320), he made sure that the cupola would exceed that of the Ilkhan Ghazan by 20 cubits, thereby making a bold statement about the sultanate’s status in relation to the Mongol imperium.61 Similarly, historians and poets writing in Delhi regularly cited the Mongols alongside the Shahnamah as allegories for political power. When the poet ʿAmid wanted to eulogize Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud, he drew on familiar Mongol tropes, writing ‘in the face of thy decree, what is the Khaqan and what is Hülegü?’62 In the same way, when ʿAla al-Din Khalji was accused of entertaining plans to conquer the world and create his own religion, Barani invoked the example of Chinggis Khan and the conversion of the Mongols to Islam as a means of tempering his ambitions.63

Some of the sultans appear to have tried to link themselves directly to the Chinggisid dispensation. Jalal al-Din Firuz Khalji was perhaps the most aggressive in his attempts to derive political legitimacy from his connections to the Mongols,
no doubt as a means to overcome criticism of his humble origins. Not only did he grant Mongols high office, he also married his daughter to the Chinggisid prince, Alugha, a move which rendered his male grandchildren giikegens – the designation for imperial sons-in-law. That Jalal al-Din took this royal connection seriously is indicated by the fact that one of his grandsons was named Mengu Khan (Möngke Qa’an) after the great khan of the Mongol Empire. This connection may have given rise to stories attributed to Nizam al-Din Ahmad and Shihab al-Din Hakim Kirmani, which claimed that the Khaljis were in fact Mongols. It was asserted that the Khaljis were descended of Khalij Noyan, a son-in-law (giikegen) of Chinggis Khan. Khalij and his wife constantly bickered and, fearing for his life, Khalij fled to the mountains of Ghur. The progeny of Khalij Noyan then travelled to Delhi, where they resided until Jalal al-Din became their leader. It is no great stretch to assume that Jalal al-Din and his descendants were responsible for promulgating the story linking them to the Chinggisids in the same manner that Iltutmish and Balban liked to claim that they were descended from khans of the Ölberli Qipchaqs.

Respect for the Mongols was far from universal, but there are signs that the number of Mongols residing at the Delhi court and the increasingly positive view of the Chinggisids held by many of the sultans may have had some impact upon the court culture of the Delhi Sultanate. This change was evidenced in the language employed by the Persian chronicles, which incorporated Mongol words into their lexicon, hinting at a much broader social and cultural shift. For example, Barani used the Mongol word ‘nerge’ to describe the large hunting circles comprised of many thousands of soldiers, often used to train Mongol armies. The qa’ans were avid hunters and allocated huge resources to the sport wherever they went. Sultan Balban was particularly enamoured with such large-scale hunts, which were again justified through reference to familiar Mongol precedents. Barani claimed that Hülegü Khan was aware of Balban’s love of the nerge and remarked that ‘the king does not waste his time in hunting but in fact he is safeguarding the empire.’ Similarly, Amir Khusraw adopted the Mongol term ‘bulghaq’ to refer to acts of rebellion and sedition, whilst also using the Mongol word ‘tümen’ to describe units of 10,000 soldiers. Yet a far deeper accommodation with Mongol culture may be suggested by the title ‘qamizi,’ given to the Mongol commander Muhammadshah at the court of ʿAla al-Din. The title appears to be derived from the Mongol word ‘kumiz,’ referring to fermented mare’s milk. If so, the Mongols in South Asia, like their compatriots at the Mamluk Sultanate, were responsible for introducing the popular drink to Hindustan, and its procurement constituted one of Muhammadshah’s chief offices.

Clearly, the arrival of such large numbers of Mongols in Delhi was the catalyst for a broad cultural exchange in which aspects of Mongol imperial culture were transmitted to South Asia.

Such exchanges would have only been encouraged further by the maritime and overland trade networks that linked the Delhi Sultanate to the Mongol Empire and saw an influx of people, goods, and ideas from the territories subject to Mongol rule. Many of these connections pre-dated the rise of the Mongol Empire, but their temporary consolidation as part of a single imperium undoubtedly enhanced their scope. In most instances, these exchanges were of such a mundane nature that they almost escaped the chroniclers’ notice. Muhammad b. Tughluq, for example, was reputed to have favoured the import of fruit from Khurasan and Mawarannahr, whilst...
contemporary merchants based in Fars made enormous profits dealing in horses with the Delhi Sultanate. Both Mongol and Chinese merchants were recorded trading in textiles, slaves, and herbal medicines, all the while adding to the Indian conception of the Mongols as brokers and patrons of commerce. Such was the Mongol trade in cotton based largely out of East Turkistan that Amir Khusraw saw fit to refer to the Mongols as ‘cotton-wearers.’ Meanwhile, the trade in aromatics originating out of East Asia was at such a volume that the poet ‘Amid saw fit to compare ‘the aromatic odour’ of Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud’s good character to ‘the wrinkled mouth of the musk bag of Tatar.’ The Mongol Empire was known for its wealth and power, and the sultans of Delhi sought to increase their prestige by trading with them, as demonstrated by the jubilant report of the gifts sent to Muhammad b. Tughluq by the Yuan emperor, Toghon Temür, which included 100 slaves, 500 pieces of velvet cloth, 5 maunds of musk, 5 bejewelled robes, 5 embroidered quivers, and 5 swords. Whether Ibn Battuta faithfully recorded the purpose of this mission and his own visit to China is highly debatable, but the idea that the Mongol emperor of China would seek to contact the Sultan of Delhi certainly affirmed in Ibn Battuta’s mind that the latter had become one of the most powerful rulers in the world.

Changes to the material culture and patterns of consumption in Delhi, like attitudes to Mongol influence more generally, produced curiosity and consternation in equal measure. Mongol soldiers, Khurasani scholars, and the merchants working alongside them were free agents, who initially operated outside the factional groupings of the sultanate, allowing them to advance quickly through social, economic, and political hierarchies. The wealth and power they acquired made them exemplars of the new cosmopolitanism of the Mongol age, while also targets of resentment and jealousy. Hence, the luxury items they chose to spend their wealth on, many imported from the Mongol Empire, also came under attack. Sirhindi, for example, reported with a clear note of envy how émigrés from Ilkhan-ruled Khurasan used grants from Sultan Muhammad b. Tughluq to purchase slaves, paper, and books in Delhi. Barani likewise mentioned the popularity of gold trimming (zar-baft) and foreign ‘Tabrizi’ and ‘Chini’ garments among the New Muslims. The same ostentation was noted by Firishta in his characterization of Balban’s Tatar guard, which ‘appeared in glittering armour, mounted on the finest steeds of Persia and Arabia, with silver bits, and housings of rich embroidery.’ These were imported luxuries outside the reach of many in Delhi society. Barani therefore gleefully recalled how Sultan ‘Ala al-Din clamped down on these goods from the Mongol Empire. Foreign cloth and clothing were subject to additional taxes along with horses, while ‘Chinese drinking cups inlaid with gold’ were to be broken, just as the beverages drunk from them were poured into the street. Yet these periodic crackdowns were clearly limited to the luxury items associated with Mongol flamboyance, which fuelled the resentment of scribes and secretaries. Trade in more innocuous items, such as agricultural produce from Khurasan and sheep from Turkistan, the likes of which were described by Ibn Battuta during his visit to India, does not appear to have been significantly curtailed.

CONCLUSION

The Mongol conquest was an integral factor in shaping the constitution of the early sultanate of Delhi. From its early inception, the Muslim state of Hindustan...
posited itself as the last bastion of Islamic civilization not to have been destroyed by the Mongols. As the guardians of Islam, it almost became a necessary criterion for princes aspiring to the throne of Delhi to claim some past victory against the Mongols. Yet this propaganda masked a far more profound interaction between Delhi and Central Eurasia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Delhi built up a large Mongolian diaspora community, made up of slaves, princes, traders, and soldiers of fortune, who sought to share in the protection and prosperity of the sultanate. The Mongols in South Asia not only had a heavy hand in shaping the political fortunes of the sultanate of Delhi and the kingdom of Kashmir, but also in maintaining the well-established contacts that have linked the Gangetic Plains, the Sind River Valley, and the Himalayas to Central Eurasia for thousands of years.

NOTES
1 Jackson 1990, 9; Jackson 2003, 34; HWC, I, 112.
5 Kumar 2007, 280; Jackson 2003, 111.
6 RDRM, I, 88.
9 Jackson 2003, 74; Kumar 2007, 280.
11 TNR, II, 1288; Jackson 2003, 114.
15 Ibn Battuta 1987, 391.
17 Jackson 1986, 18.
21 Prasad 1936, 96–99; Husain 1938, 100–107; Jackson 1975, 120–128; Firishta 1908, 413.
22 Sirhindi 1932, 132; Firishta 1908, 451.
25 The Kashmiri chronicler Jonaraja simply described him as being ‘the great king of Karmmasena.’ Jonaraja 1879, 16.
27 Hasan 2005, 41; Jackson 1975, 139.
28 Marrvrudi 1927, 36; Jackson 2003, 64.
29 Srivastava 1950, 260.
31 TNR, I, 599.
32 TNR, II, 1132.
33 Jackson 2003, 236.
34 Firishta 1908, 363.
37 Firishta 1908, 401.
38 Firishta 1908, 397; ‘Isami 1967, II, 586.
39 Firishta has ‘Mughal-Tegin.’ Sirhindi first mentions Mughaltai during the reign of Jalal al-Din Firuz. Firishta 1908, 397; Sirhindi 1932, 60–61; Dihlawi 1933, 57.
40 Kumar 2007, 316.
41 Wink 1997, II, 211; Kumar 2007, 315.
42 Jackson 2003, 83; Srivastava 1950, 201.
45 Lal 1980, 38; Wink 1997, II, 211.
46 Prasad 1936, 102; Husain 1938, 133.
47 Ibn Battuta 1987, 385 & 457; Prasad 1936, 118; Jackson 1975, 130.
48 Ibn Battuta 1987, 382. Ibn Battuta also claims that Tarmashirin’s son, Bashay Oghul, and his sister were among those to seek refuge at Delhi before moving on to the Injuid court of Shiraz. These claims seem highly dubious and are unsupported by contemporary sources in the Ilkhanate or the Delhi Sultanate.
49 Hussain 1938, 211.
50 Jackson 2003, 53; Wink 1997, II, 211.
51 Lal 1980, 295; Barani 2015, 205.
52 Lal 1980, 87; Athar 2006, 26; Srivastava 1950, 221.
53 Barani 2015, 205.
54 Barani 2015, 166. Bada’uni records the prince’s name as Sulaymanshah Rukn Khan. Bada’uni 1898, I, 338.
55 Firishta 1908, 429 & 440; Jackson 1975, 152; Husain 1938, 161.
57 Bihamadhkhani 1962, 32.
59 Barani 2015, 195; TNR, II, 935.
60 Dihlawi 1931, 18.
61 Ibn Battuta 2003, 196.
62 Bada’uni 1898, I, 145.
63 Barani 2015, 162.
64 Barani 2015, 168.
65 Bada’uni 1898, I, 230; Firishta 1908, 286.
66 Barani 2015, 165 & 246; Jackson 2003, 240.
67 Barani 2015, 35.
68 Dihlawi 1933, 104; Jackson 2003, 90.
71 Dihlawi 1931, 32.
72 Bada’uni 1898, I, 161.
73 Ibn Battuta 2003, 201; Jackson 2017, 40.
74 Sirhindi 1932, 110.
75 Firishta 1908, 252.
76 Barani 2015, 190.
77 Barani 2015, 173.
— The Mongols in South Asia —

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BS, See List of Abbreviations.
HWC, See List of Abbreviations.


Prasad, Ishwari. (1936) *A History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*. New Delhi: The Indian Press.


RDRM, See List of Abbreviations.


TNR, See List of Abbreviations.
