The Mongol World

Timothy May, Michael Hope

The Mongol Conquest of Xi Xia

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Chinggis Khan began and ended his campaigns against sedentary states with attacks on the Tangut state of Xia (later known as Xi Xia or Western Xia), first subjugating it in 1209 and ultimately destroying it completely in 1227. The Tanguts, a pastoral nomadic people whom Chinese historical notices describe as descendants of the western Qiang of Han dynasty times, also numbered Tibetans among their ancestors. They were not concerned with bloodlines as the fundamental basis of their identity; indeed, intermarriage was not prohibited by any Tangut law the way it had been among the Jurchens. Linguistic studies tentatively identify Tangut speakers as descendants of various Tibeto-Burmese peoples. The Tangut state of Xia was established in 982 and formally proclaimed as a dynasty in 1038. The Tanguts were deeply influenced by the dominant cultures of their much larger continental Asian neighbours: Turko-Mongolian, Chinese, and Indic-Tibetan. The Tanguts themselves had their own name for their dynastic state, which translated into Chinese meant something like “The Great State of White and High.” Their multi-ethnic state was headed by a Tangut monarch who ruled over a diverse population with Tanguts at the core, followed by Chinese, Tibetans, Uyghurs, Khitans, and other Turko-Mongolian peoples. The Xia was always an economically, ecologically, and culturally diverse state with both nomadic and agricultural populations. Religiously the Xia royal family and court extensively patronized a syncretic brand of Tangut Buddhism that blended elements from Tibetan Tantrayana and Chinese Mahayana traditions.

At its height the Xia state, which territorially encompassed the Ordos, Gansu Corridor, and parts of modern Ningxia, Gansu, northern Shaanxi, eastern Qinghai, northeastern Xinjiang, and southwest Inner Mongolia, had a population of around three million people. It financed itself through taxes on agricultural and animal husbandry production, as well as on trade, both domestic and international. At the height of the Xia’s power, Tanguts and the various other peoples of their state manned a very effectively integrated military, with cavalry, foot soldiers, archers, artillery, and even amphibious troops. Some Tanguts became sedentary agriculturalists during Xia times,
but nomadic Tangut warriors in the northwestern reaches of Xia territory were the most esteemed and honoured segment of Xia’s population. The Tanguts behaved both as the ruling group over the sedentary segment of the Xia state and also as a pastoral nomadic people, maintaining complex relations with other steppe peoples. Indeed, “Tangut-Kereyid contacts, which were quite lively in the latter half of the 12th century, suggest that by the 13th century the Xia state engaged in rather complex and many-sided relations with their steppe neighbors.” The Tanguts gave refuge to a fugitive Kereit prince overthrown by Temüjin’s (Chinggis Khan’s) father in the 1170s. Another Kereit prince in exile among the Tanguts was honoured by them as Jaqa Gambu (more or less “elder state counselor”), and his brother was none other than Toghrl (Ong Khan), Temüjin’s own sworn father. What is more, Temüjin’s family had taken in several of Jaqa Gambu’s daughters in marriage, including Sorqoqtani Beki, the wife of Tolui and the mother of Möngke, Qubilai, and Hülegü. Another of Jaqa Gambu’s daughters, Gürbelchin Ghuua, married the last Tangut king and is thought to have murdered Chinggis Khan in 1227.

THE FIRST CAMPAIGN

In 1205, estimating Xia to be a weaker sedentary state than Jin, Chinggis Khan made the conquest of Xia his first priority, a conquest that would eventually open the way for an attack on China. Since “the Tanguts had a large army and fortified towns which the Mongols did not understand how to attack,” their “initial . . . campaigns against the Tanguts were . . . in the nature of mere raids.” According to Rashid al-Din, Chinggis Khan’s first clashes with the Tangut came in 1205 (which would have been a year before the great quriltai of 1206, when he was actually declared Chinggis Khan), when his forces besieged, captured, and plundered two Tangut cities; raided other areas of the Tangut realm; and drove away their animals, which were presented to Chinggis. By February 1207 the Tanguts were refusing to pay tribute or heed orders, so Chinggis Khan once again set out to do battle with them, this time capturing Tangut territories and returning in triumph. But the actual situation was more complicated and involved than Rashid al-Din’s cursory account of it. In 1205 and 1207, Chinggis Khan launched two small sorties into Xia territory, seemingly only for feeling out Xia defences. In April 1209, however, he advanced with his forces southward from Heishan, a jurisdiction approximately 400 kilometres northeast of the Xia capital at Zhongxingfu (modern Yinchuan), and from there entered the Gansu (Hexi) Corridor. His objective was of course Zhongxingfu, but Xia forces, which consisted of both cavalry and infantry, put up unexpectedly stout resistance and forced the Mongols to retire, although at enormous casualty rates. It was a Pyrrhic victory for the Xia. Chinggis Khan then wanted to wait and lure Xia forces out into the open for another costly battle, but Xia would not fall for this. At this time “the Mongols were still relatively inexperienced in besieging fortified cities,” but by August an impatient Chinggis Khan feigned retreat and put a large number of his men in ambush. This time, for reasons that are not altogether clear, the Xia cooperated nicely by falling completely for the ancient stratagem. Xia forces suffered devastating losses and defeat, and their commander was captured. Then in the fall of 1209 the armies of Chinggis Khan
launched a major campaign against the Xia, entering the Gansu Corridor from the north, defeating all Tangut resistance, approaching the Xia capital city of Zhongxingfu virtually unopposed, and ultimately surrounding it. By the end of October Chinggis Khan, once again growing impatient, ordered the waters of the Huanghe River diverted into the city, with the expected devastating results: by January 1210 the Xia capital was in desperate straits and teetering on the verge of collapse and defeat. But just at this critical juncture, the dikes the Mongols had built to divert the river collapsed (or perhaps had been breached by the Tanguts), and the resultant floodwaters forced the Mongols to lift the siege and retire to higher ground. Nonetheless, the apparently chastised and timorous Tangut ruler Xiangzong (r. 1206–1211; known to the Mongols as Burkhan Khan) opted to submit to the Mongols rather than continuing pointless and futile resistance against them. He came to peace terms and gave one of his daughters to Chinggis Khan to wife, promising to be the right-hand vassal of the Mongols and Chinggis Khan but hastening to add that this would be as a sedentary people living behind walls who could no longer wage war as swift nomadic cavalry. Burkhan Khan’s admission that the Xia in the early thirteenth century could no longer field a potent fighting cavalry force is important. The Xia’s self-identification as a primarily sedentary civilization by this time was based on demographic, ecological, and tactical realities that Burkhan Khan was frankly and realistically accepting and acknowledging.

This was the great khan’s first attack on a sedentary state, and it was a victorious and successful one. He then marched on the Jurchen state of Jin, and the Xia also turned on Jin and attacked it. The Secret History’s account of the Xia’s promise of vassalage to Chinggis Khan and the Mongols was largely in terms of supplying the material needs of Mongol armies on campaign:

But if Činggis Qa’an show favour to us, we the Tang’ut people,

We shall bring forth many camels
Reared in the shelter of the tall feather-grass:
We shall turn them into government property
And we shall give them to you.
We shall weave woollen material and make satin,
And we shall give them to you.
Training falcons to fly loose at game,
We shall gather them
And all the best ones we shall send to you.17

Again according to the Secret History, Chinggis Khan eventually concluded that Burkhan Khan (actually his third successor) had gone back on his word. In 1219, as he was proceeding westward on his campaign against Muhammad of Khwārazm and approaching Zhongxingfu, Chinggis Khan dispatched envoys to the Xia ruler calling on his state to live up to its commitment to him, which he understood to include sending him troops (who would have been infantry or auxiliary forces and not cavalry). Before Burkhan Khan could respond, his minister Asha Gambu, who
had a military background, replied preemptively and cheekily that if Chinggis needed Xia troops to defeat Khwārazm, he did not deserve to be khan!

While riding out [to fight], Chinggis Qahan sent emissaries to Burqan [Burkhan] of the Tangqut [Tangut] people to say: “You said, ‘I wish to be your right hand.’ The Golden Rein [of my authority] has been severed by the Sarta’ul people. I am riding out to settle scores [with the rebels]. Become the right hand [of my army] and ride out.” After [Chinggis Qahan] had sent [this message], before Burqan [Burkhan] could utter a word, Asha-gambu said: “Since [Chinggis Qahan’s] might is impotent, why did he go so far as to become Qan?” He therefore refused to provide extra soldiers. With boastful words, he sent back [the emissaries].

Incensed at the sheer effrontery and hubris of this response, Chinggis Khan neither forgot it nor allowed it to distract him from his more immediate task at hand. There would, Blue Eternal Heaven willing, be another day to reckon with Xia perfidy and inconstancy:

Chinggis Qahan said: “How can I allow Asha-gambu to speak to me in this way?” He also said: “What difficulties would we encounter if I at once sent [soldiers] to make a detour in his direction? But we are intent on [subduing] a different people for the time being. That is enough. If I am protected by Eternal Heaven, when I return, I shall definitely pull firmly on [my] Golden Rein and [settle] this [other matter].”

THE SECOND CAMPAIGN

The Mongols did not completely ignore the Xia between 1209 and 1225. They viewed the Xia mainly as a source of hardy mounted warriors to be called up for service at their pleasure, and they made heavy annual demands for Xia troops. In 1217 the Xia refused the Mongols’ increasingly burdensome demands for military supplies, and in response the Mongols surrounded Zhongxingfu for several months before withdrawing. Between 1221 and 1223 the Mongol general Muqali traversed Xia territory at will with heavy forces en route to his attacks on the Jin capital of Nanjing (modern Kaifeng), all the while demanding more and more Xia troops and treating the Xia population haughtily. In response, later in 1223 the Xia actually allied with the Jin against the Mongols, and this contributed to the Mongols’ growing resolve to call their erstwhile and inconstant ally to account.

In 1225, his campaigns in Central Asia over, Chinggis Khan (now in his sixties) finally returned to the Gansu Corridor and the approaches to the Xia capital at Zhongxingfu. It is certainly true that “The accounts of Chinggis’s last campaign against Hsia [Xia] and of his death are extremely confused and full of conflicting details,” and this makes piecing together the history of the last two years of his life difficult, if not impossible. But at a minimum it seems quite clear that he now had evening the score with Xia and its ruler foremost in mind, the fact that neither Xiangzong (r. 1206–1211) himself nor his immediate successor, Shenzong (the Burkhan Khan mentioned above; r. 1211–1223), were the Xia emperor notwithstanding. Shenzong’s successor, Xianzong (r. 1223–1226), faced the initial brunt of Chinggis Khan’s incursion into the Gansu Corridor until he died, possibly of fright, at the age of forty-five.
in 1226. The last Xia emperor, the feckless Modi (r. 1226–1227), did not fare much better. He was killed in the spring of 1227 when he surrendered himself and the city to the Mongols after a six-month siege on Zhongxingfu.

The order in which Mongol forces captured the cities of the Gansu Corridor in 1226 and 1227 did not correspond with neat movements from west to east but instead proceeded somewhat haphazardly, perhaps according to the Mongols’ estimation of their relative importance and priority. In the summer of 1226, Chinggis Khan went to the Hunchui Mountains to escape the summer heat, and during this time Suzhou and Ganzhou (Xuanhuafu) were taken. So enraged was Chinggis Khan at Suzhou’s rebuff of his attempts to negotiate its peaceful surrender that he had every living being in the city slaughtered, sparing only 106 Tangut families at the special pleas of a Tangut officer in his command. Soon thereafter, when Mongol forces approached Ganzhou, a Tangut officer in Chinggis Khan’s armies named Chaghan (an ethnic Tangut who at the age of fifteen was adopted by Chinggis Khan as his fifth son and thereafter did much to further the Mongol cause under both Chinggis Khan and Ögödei) attempted to persuade his father, who was in charge of Ganzhou’s defences, to surrender by shooting arrows into the city with written surrender summonses wrapped around them. When Chaghan’s father was about to heed the call to surrender, he and his entire family were murdered by Xia diehards in the city. An incensed Chinggis Khan ordered a general massacre when Ganzhou was taken, but Chaghan then interceded on behalf of the city, and in the end only a few of its military commanders were killed. In the fall the Mongols captured Xiliangfu, which surrendered with very minimal resistance, and then they proceeded eastward until they reached some crossings of the Yellow River. By this time the Mongols, freshly returned from their campaigns in Central Asia, had a very strong and capable siege train, and capturing Suzhou and Ganzhou was relatively easy for them.

On 29 November 1226, Chinggis Khan attacked Lingzhou (Xipingfu; known to the Mongols as Dürmegei), which was just southeast of Zhongxingfu and across the Yellow River, well within the political and economic heartland of Xi Xia. On 5 December 1226, Chinggis Khan temporarily left off with the siege of Lingzhou and crossed the Yellow River to engage a large Xi Xia force that had been sent to defend the capital of Zhongxingfu, and he ended up completely routing it. He then returned to and captured Lingzhou later in the month, after which he directed his forces at Yanzhouchuan, a city he captured with a great general slaughter of its inhabitants. He then ordered his troops to exterminate the Tanguts as a people, but very soon afterwards, on 16 December 1226, a conjunction of the five planets was visible in the southwest, a phenomenon which, for a time at least, he supposedly interpreted as a sign against further wanton slaughter and rapine by his forces; thus he rescinded his gruesome decree.

Chinggis Khan’s genocidal decree against the Tanguts might also have extended to the Chinese, H. Desmond Martin speculates. Several of Chinggis Khan’s lieutenants and ministers had been complaining that the Chinese were useless to the Mongol state and should therefore all be exterminated and their territory allowed to revert to natural grasslands for the use of the Mongols and their animals. His Khitan advisor Yelü Chucai (1190–1244), traditionally and consistently lauded in Chinese history as a civilizing and moderating Confucian influence on the Mongol khans Chinggis and Ögödei, successfully remonstrated with the great khan against
this course of action on practical utilitarian grounds (as opposed to humanitarian ones): The Chinese peasantry, he argued, produced massive revenues for the *Yeke Monggol Ulus* from agricultural and commercial taxes and the proceeds from state monopolies on salt, liquor, and iron. Annually the Chinese produced 500,000 taels of silver, 80,000 bolts of silk, and more than 400,000 bushels of millet as revenue, sufficient to supply the Mongols with all of their needs. How therefore could they be said to be useless?31

Meanwhile, during all this time Ögödei and Chaghan had been attacking Nanjing (modern Kaifeng), the Jin capital.32 This was because Chinggis Khan reckoned that after the conquest of Lingzhou, Xia defences were so weakened that he could afford to direct the majority of his forces into Jin territory.33

In mid-January through mid-February 1227, Chinggis Khan left forces besieging Zhongxingfu and personally led forces across the Yellow River in an attack on Jishizhou in the far western reaches of Jin territory. Between mid-February and mid-March, Mongol forces broke into Lintaofu in Jin territory, and between mid-March and mid-April, Xining in the far southern reaches of Xia territory was taken, as was Shazhou. Between mid-April and mid-May Chinggis Khan captured Deshun in Jin territory, approximately 300 kilometres due south of Zhongxingfu. The Mongols besieged the very lightly defended Deshun for twenty days and nights before it was finally captured, and its valiant defenders committed suicide. Meanwhile the Mongol besiegement of the Xia capital at Zhongxingfu continued, but Chinggis Khan seems not to have participated directly in it, opting instead in mid-June to go to the nearby Liupan Mountains to escape the summer heat. Even from here, however, he dispatched Chaghan to Zhongxingfu in an attempt to secure its peaceful surrender, but to no avail. On 11 August 1227 Chinggis Khan began to feel indisposed, and on 18 August 1227 he passed away. The Mongols prevented news of his death from reaching Zhongxingfu, but soon thereafter they succeeded in capturing Zhongxingfu and executing the last Tangut monarch. Some accounts paint a gruesome picture of the aftermath of the city’s fall and the Tangut king’s execution:

Mongol troops sacked the Tangut capital [and], as customary, slaughtered many of its inhabitants and ravaged the Tangut imperial tombs, in revenge for Chinggis’s death or perhaps, as Igor de Rachwiltz [sic: Rachewiltz] speculates, to transform them into guardian spirits accompanying the khan in his afterlife. The reputation of the Xia rulers as powerful Buddhist kings suggested special handling. Killing such a vessel of religious potency, whom the *Secret History* refers to by what were evidently native epithets of Burkhan khan (Buddha king) or Ilukhu Burkhan (victorious Buddha), required proper ritual preparation. Hence, Chinggis Khan (or his surrogates) gave the surrendered Tangut king the nickname Shidurghu, “Upright,” in order to turn the former enemy into a protective spirit (if it was not a derisive commentary on the Tangut ruler’s lack of loyalty, a death sentence rite, in short).34

Other accounts have some Mongol commanders wanting to put Zhongxingfu to the sword after its capture, but as at Ganzhou, Chaghan interceded successfully on behalf of the city’s population in general, although this time pillaging and rape did occur.35
WHOLESALE MONGOLIAN MASSACRES OF TANGUT AND XIA PEOPLE?

The Secret History has Chinggis Khan sending envoys to the last Xia emperor in high dudgeon in 1227 and calling him to account:

In the past, you, Burqan [Burkhan], said, “We, the Tang’ut people, shall be your right wing.” Although told so by you, when I sent you a request for troops, saying that I was going on a campaign because the Sarta’ul people had not agreed to my proposal, you, Burqan [Burkhan], did not keep your promise and did not give me troops, but came out with mocking words. As I was moving in a different direction at the time, I said that I would call you to account later. I set out against the Sarta’ul people and being protected by Eternal Heaven I brought them duly under submission. Now I have come to call Burqan [Burkhan] to account for his words.36

The Secret History then has Modi responding that he had not conveyed the mocking words, and then the Xia minister who did convey them, Asha Gambu, angered and provoked Chinggis Khan once again with arrogant challenges and chest-beating. The great khan, now ill with the effects of advancing age, nonetheless went to war with Asha Gambu and wiped his forces out. When Chinggis Khan finally approached the Xia capital he renamed the Xia emperor Shidurghu (which in this context meant “subdued one” or subjugated one”)37 and then had him put to death by suffocation. Again according to the Secret History, a great holocaust then ensued: “He [Chinggis Khan] then destroyed the mothers and fathers of the Tangquts even to the seed of their seed.”38 But accounts of a complete slaughter of ethnic Tanguts in Zhongxingfu and elsewhere by victorious Mongol armies are problematic and contradictory. According to a chronicle of Song and Yuan history compiled from primary sources in the eighteenth century, there was indeed a general pattern of widespread slaughter in the Xia cities the Mongols captured, with only one or two people out of every hundred escaping death by digging holes or cavities in the city walls and hiding in them; the bones of the vast majority of the people were scattered everywhere.39 Mongol commanders made off with girls and material wealth in the Xia cities they conquered, but after the capture of Lingzhou, Chinggis Khan’s virtuous Khitan advisor Yelü Chucai, this same chronicle would have us believe, took only a few books along with rhubarb and Bactrian camels.40 He then used the rhubarb to treat soldiers in the Mongol armies who had fallen ill, thus saving some ten thousand of them.41 Accounts of wholesale slaughter of the Tangut as a people are, however, contradicted by Rashid al-Din, who describes Chinggis’s incendiary attack on the city and records a great slaughter of Xia military men, but then has Chinggis Khan manifesting his contempt for the devastated and defeated Shidurghu (“Shadurghu”), now powerless because his military had been annihilated, by paying him no further heed and blithely bypassing his capital city altogether:

When he reached the Tangqut [Tangut] territory, he took most of the cities, like Ganzhou, Suzhou, and Hezhou. He besieged the city of Dömägäi and hurled fire into it, and as it was burning, the ruler of that land, Shadurghu by name,
who was called [I]lu[qu Burq]an in the Tangqut language, and the great city that was his residence was called Āriqai in the Tangqut language but Eriqyaya in the Mongol language, came out with five hundred thousand men to do battle with the Mongols. Genghis Khan went out against him in battle. In that region are many na’urs formed from the Qara Mörän (Yellow River), and they were all frozen over. Genghis Khan stood on the ice and ordered the soldiers to cross. Many were killed during the crossing. They say that three dead men were stood on their heads, for it is an established custom among the Mongols to stand one dead man on his head for every hundred thousand killed.42

The basic contours of Rashid al-Din’s account are accepted by the Persian historian Khwandamir (b. 1475), who adds that Chinggis Khan’s last words on his deathbed were these:

Since little is left of my life, my death must be kept secret. No one must cry out. It would be best for all to keep silent. As soon as Shidurqu comes out of the city, spill his blood! And destroy his army so that your rule may be secure.43

At any rate, even if a wholesale slaughter of civilians in the city of Zhongxingfu did take place, the Tangut as a people were nonetheless not wiped out:

Despite this picture of total devastation painted here, many Tangut survived the fall of Hsia and entered Yuan service. As se-mu (Western and Central Asians) they enjoyed a status and privileges superior to those accorded to either the Jurchens or the Khitans, let alone the Chinese. Central China (Hopei and Anhwei) harbored small communities of Tanguts who evidently continued to use their script until the end of the Ming period.44

The Tangut as a people did not disappear, even though what eventually became of them centuries later is still unknown. Tangut communities, language, and civilizational forms survived into mid-Ming times.45

THE DEATH OF CHINGGIS KHAN

The particulars of how Chinggis Khan died are likewise difficult to ascertain because of the several differing accounts of his death given in the Yuanshi, Secret History, Juvaini, Rashid al-Din, Marco Polo, and John of Plano Carpini.46 Perhaps the most fanciful and bizarre account of all is, ironically enough, from a seventeenth-century Mongolian-language chronicle:

After capturing and executing the Tangut king, Chinggis took the king’s wife, the Tangut queen Gürbelčin γuuα (Mongolian for “Lizard-like Beauty”), as a concubine. Not pleased with this novel form of courting, Gürbelčin γuuα made plans to kill her new captor and husband. She placed a small sharp piece of metal into her sexual organ, and after Chinggis Khan imposed himself on her, she mortally wounded him in his sexual organ.47
Another seventeenth-century Mongolian chronicle Erdeni-yin Tobči seems to have this version of the great khan’s death in mind, although it and other contemporaneous Mongolian chronicles hint very cautiously and delicately at its specifics:

In the Erdeni-yin Tobči we find the Tangut King, just prior to his execution, making the following statement to Chinggis Khan: Gürbelčın γuua-yi minu či beye-degen abqu biigesi bükü beye-yi inu sayitur negjijü üjegdeküi, “If thou takest unto thyself the body of my Gürbelčın γuua, inspect her entire body thoroughly and it shall be seen.” . . . The agglutinative suffix -küi is what Poppe labeled the “nomen futuri,” which expresses an action which will take place in the future. The sense of “it shall be seen” in üjegdeküi is, then, unmistakable.48

Subsequent Mongolian historians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dismissed this version as a libel of Chinggis Khan perpetrated by Western Mongols. Its particulars are indeed extremely unlikely, if not outright impossible, but if there is a kernel of truth in the account it might be that the great khan was wounded or assassinated in some way by the Tangut queen. Similar accounts among the Kazakhs have also been discovered by folklorists.49

THE CONQUEST OF XI XIA IN RETROSPECT

The eighteenth-century chronicler Bi Yuan (1730–1797) listed Chinggis Khan’s conquest of Xia as the final and crowning achievement of the great khan’s life.50 He also noted with discernible measures of both admiration and poignance that the Mongols brought 200 years (actually almost 250 years) of Xia history to an end. His strong implication was that over this time Xia had artfully and manfully managed to survive and flourish, at one time or another submitting to or resisting one or more of the three states of Song, Liao, and Jin, all according to Xia’s sophisticated and accurate assessments of the relative power of these states vis-à-vis Xia.51

Among the Mongols of Chinggis Khan’s day, the war with Xia was the most dramatic in their history, and even though it is relatively unknown to Muslim or Western historians, “the conquest of Hsi Hsia [Xi Xia] is better known to the Mongols than any other of Chingis Khan’s exploits.” The Mongols have never forgotten that their great khan died while on campaign against Xia, and today

The Mongols still call many of the cities of Kansu [Gansu] and Ninghsia [Ningxia] by the names under which their ancestors knew them, and speak of the Yellow River as the Khatun Gol (River of the Queen), in memory of the suicide of the Tangut queen Gürbeljin Goa [Gürbelčın γuua], whom they believe to have murdered Chinggis Khan.52

Chinggis Khan died during his campaign against Xia with the clear sense of an unfinished campaign against an even greater prize: the Jurchen state of Jin. Even as he lay dying, he still had conquest on his mind and laid out his tactics for conquering Jin and capturing its capital.53 And with this the great khan breathed his last. His sons and grandsons would continue his project of conquest and go on to build the largest empire the world has ever known.
NOTES

1 Franke and Twitchett 1994, 40; Franke 1994, 281.
2 Dunnell 1996.
3 On the Tanguts and their state of Xia, see Dunnell 1996; Dunnell 1994, 154–158; and Mote 1999, 249–264.
5 Dunnell 1989, 56. On the Kereit state as the foundation of the Chinggisid state, see Munkh-Erdene 2011.
6 On Sorqoqtani Beki, see Broadbridge 2018, passim.
7 Dunnell 1994, 206.
8 Shi 1998, 36.
9 Ratchnevsky 1991, 104.
10 Ratchnevsky 1991, 103.
11 RDT2, 144.
12 Some scholars (for example, Mote 1999, 254) have persisted in referring to the Xia capital as Xingqing or Xingqingfu, but I follow Dunnell’s reasoned exhortation to refer to the Xia capital as Zhongxingfu. On this, see Dunnell 1989.
14 The Secret History garbles the chronology here by incorrectly placing the Mongol campaigns against Xia after those on Jin, whereas they actually took place before them. See SHM, §249; De Rachewiltz 2004, 902–903.
15 Ratchnevsky 1991, 104.
16 YS 1.4; Martin 1950, 113–120; Shi 1998, 36–37.
17 SHM, §249.
18 Actually, it was the predecessor of the Tangut ruler then in power who had made this commitment, but of course Chinggis Khan still considered it binding (Dunnell 1994, 210, n. 119).
20 SHMO, §256.
21 SHMO, §256. Kwanten expresses some doubt about this episode precipitating the second Mongol-Tangut war (Kwanten 1973, 33–34).
22 Mote 1999, 255.
25 Location undetermined.
26 HWC, 256, n. 26; De Rachewiltz 2004, 433.
27 YS 1.23–24; XTJ 163.4450; XXSS 42.41–44, 42.48–51; Martin 1950, 292–294.
28 XTJ 164.4462; YS 1.24; XXSS 42.64; Martin 1950, 294–296.
29 Martin 1950, 296.
30 On Yelü Chucai, see De Rachewiltz 1993.
31 YS 146.3458.
32 YS 1.124.
33 Shi 1998, 47.
34 Dunnell 2010, 88.
35 XTJ 164.4459–60; YS 1.24–25; XXSS 42.75, 77–78; Martin 1950, 297–308; Mote 1999, 256.
36 SHM, §265.
37 De Rachewiltz 2004, 976.
38 SHMO 268.
39 XTJ 164.4462; XXSS 42.65.
40 De Rachewiltz (1993) is generally skeptical of standard Confucian hagiographies of Yelü Chucai and sees him as much more of a Buddhist than a Confucian.

41 XTJ 164.4462–4463; XXSS 42.76.

42 RDT2, 186.

43 Khwandamir 2012, 2.25–26. See also HWC, 180–183 for an account of the great khan’s death that pertains to his succession by Ögödei and says nothing about the Tanguts. The Yuan shi in turn contradicts Khwandamir’s account of Chinggis Khan’s last words on his deathbed. It has the great khan issuing instructions on how to conquer Jin and says nothing of Xia (YS 1.25). See also XTJ 164.4463 for essentially the same account as contained in the YS.

44 Dunnell 1994, 214.

45 Mote 1999, 256–257.

46 On the various historical accounts of the death of Chinggis Khan, see Wright 1997.

47 Wright 1997, 428.


49 Wright 1997, 432.

50 XTJ 164.4463.

51 XTJ 164.4462.

52 Martin 1950, 289.

53 SSJSBM 90.1007 (YS 1.25, XTJ 164.4463). See also Li 1988, 1.129–130.

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De Rachewiltz, Igor et al., eds. (1993) ITSOTK.


HWC, See List of Abbreviations.


XTJ, See List of Abbreviations.

YS, See List of Abbreviations.