

BUQA CHĪNGSĀNG:
PROTAGONIST OF QUBILAI KHAN'S UNSUCCESSFUL COUP
ATTEMPT AGAINST THE HÜLEGÜID DYNASTY

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It is generally accepted that the dissolution of the Mongol Empire began in 1259, following the death of Möngke the Great Khan (1251–59)¹. Fierce conflicts were to arise between the khan candidates for the empty throne of the Great Khanate. Qubilai (1260–94), the brother of Möngke in China, was declared Great Khan on 5 May 1260 in the emergency *qurultai* assembled in K'ai-p'ing, which is quite far from Qara-Qorum, the principal capital of Mongolia². This event started the conflicts within the Mongolian Khanate.

The first person to object to the election of the Great Khan was his younger brother Ariq Böke (1259–64), another son of Qubilai's mother Sorqoqtani Beki. Being Möngke's brother, just as Qubilai was, he saw himself as the real owner of the Great Khanate, since he was the ruler of Qara-Qorum, the main capital of the Mongol Khanate. Shortly after Qubilai was declared Khan, Ariq Böke was also declared Great Khan in June of the same year³.

Now something unprecedented happened: there were two competing Great Khans present in the Mongol Empire, and both received support from different parts of the family of the empire. The four Mongol khanates, which should theoretically have owed obedience to the Great Khan, began to act completely in their own interests: the Khan of the Golden Horde, Barka (1257–66) supported Böke.

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¹ For further information on the dissolution of the Mongol Empire, see D. Morgan, "The Decline and Fall of the Mongol Empire", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XIX/4 (2009), pp. 427-437. P. Jackson, "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 22 (1978), pp. 186-244. T. May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, London 2012, pp. 59-80.

² M. Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times*, Berkeley 1988, pp. 51-53.

³ Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, p. 53. Jackson, "Dissolution", p. 229.

This was because Ilkhan Hülegü (1256–65) – who was Barka’s enemy on account of his different religious beliefs, and, besides, as Barka asserted, was occupying Barka’s rightful lands in Caucasia – supported Qubilai.⁴ Alghu Khan (1260–66) of the Chaghataid Khanate, on the other hand, supported Ariq Böke, at least in the beginning. Additionally, the *noyans* from Qara-Qorum who had served Möngke Khan also naturally supported Ariq Böke.

Qubilai Khan’s sole supporter in the empire family was Iran’s ruler Hülegü⁵. The reason for this behaviour was his desire not to lose his only ally, the Great Khanate, since he was in conflict with the Chaghatai Khanate in the east, the Golden Horde Khanate in the north and the Egyptian Mamlük in the west. Even though further reasons for Hülegü’s support can be adduced, Rossabi incorporates Hulegu’s and Qubilai’s familiarity with the established culture⁶.

Who would become the Great Khan was always a potential source of conflict between the families descended from Chinggis Khan’s (1206–27) four older sons Jochi, Ögedei (1229–41), Chaghatai (1226–42) and Tolui (1227–29). The conflict between Qubilai and Ariq Böke shows that the struggle had actually started in the Great Khanate. The same conflicts also emerged in the other subsidiary khanates. The Ariq Böke–Qubilai conflict ended with the surrender of Ariq Böke to Qubilai Khan in 1264 after he gave up the fight⁷.

Qubilai founded the Great Mongol Khanate in China after the surrender of his younger brother Ariq Böke. Still, if the Ilkhanids are disregarded, he was unable to establish his authority over the other Mongol khanates. Qubilai’s rule, in contrast with the Chinggis Khan, Ögedei, Güyük (1246–8), and Möngke periods, was not accepted in the other parts of the empire⁸. Even his own younger brother the *ini*⁹ Ariq Böke refused to recognise the authority of Qubilai *aqqa* and revolted against him.

⁴ The Golden Horde and Hülegüid dynasties forces fought in Caucasia in the years 1262–63, 1265, 1288 and 1290, see T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Cambridge 2001, p. 35.

⁵ Jackson, “Dissolution”, p. 188; Morgan, “Decline”, p. 429; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, p. 54.

⁶ Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, p. 47.

⁷ Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, pp.60-62; Jackson, “Dissolution”, p. 230.

⁸ Morgan, “Decline”, p. 429.

⁹ Even though the Mongolian law on successions dictates that the real owner of the father’s inheritance is the youngest son, the older brother was always superior if rulership was the subject; thus, the *aqqa* had priority regarding the throne. The words *aqqa* and *ini* which are encountered in the sources have the meaning ‘senior relative’ and ‘young relative’ rather than ‘older brother’ and ‘younger brother’, see Jackson, “Dissolution”, pp. 193-195.

The other important revolt against Qubilai, after the foundation of the Great Khanate, came from Qaidu. Qaidu, Ögedei's grandchild, attacked the lands of Qubilai in Mongolia and Uyghur in the years 1268, 1275, 1286 and 1290. Qubilai Khan, who was fighting against him, did not live long enough to witness Qaidu's submission. The uprising by Qaidu and his territorial expansion caused fear and – even if only temporarily – after the 1280s brought together the Qubilai Khanate, the east wing of the Golden Horde, and the Ilkhanids; and forced them to cooperate¹⁰. These cousins who ceased hostilities and became allies due to their mutual interests even cooperated with enemies who were not from their own heritage in order to fight against each other. This situation can be clearly observed if the alliance of the Golden Horde with the Egyptian Mamlūks against the Ilkhanate is considered¹¹.

The purpose here is not to discuss the dissolution process of the Mongolian Empire, since this has been already done by David Morgan¹² and Peter Jackson¹³ in a neat and scholarly manner. The purpose here is to present the historical background to the attempted coup orchestrated by Qubilai Khan against the Ilkhanid dynasty.

As Morgan accurately emphasises, the main reasons causing the dissolution of the Mongolian Empire were not external, but internal¹⁴. The production–consumption habits of each Mongolian khanate, and thus the type of income obtained and military organisation, began to diverge to such an extent that a centralised administration became impossible. Additionally, the strength of the central power was always inversely proportional to the territorial size of the empire in the specific administration mechanism of the Medieval Age. It is clear that the dissolution, which was preparing the way for the collapse of the empire, was inevitable if the deterioration of the Turkish-Mongolian succession mechanism¹⁵

¹⁰ Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, p. 35. M. Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia*, Surrey 1997, pp. 37-67.

¹¹ R. Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281*, Cambridge 2004, p. 78. Ch. J. Halperin, "The Kipchak Connection: The Ilkhans, the Mamluks and Ayn Jalut", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, LXIII/2 (2000), pp. 229-245, p. 241. Morgan, "Decline", p. 430.

¹² D. Morgan, "The Decline and Fall of the Mongol Empire", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XIX/4 (2009), pp. 427-437.

¹³ P. Jackson, "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 22 (1978), pp. 186-244.

¹⁴ Morgan, "Decline", p. 431.

¹⁵ Jackson, "Dissolution", p. 193.

and the independent-idiosyncratic politics of each Mongolian khanate are added into the equation.

If we look at the Iranian Mongols who are the focus of this study, we can observe that signs of a breakaway from the authority of the Great Khanate were also beginning to emerge with the Ilkhanids. Tegüder (1282–84), the brother and successor of Ilkhan Abaqa (1265–82), converted to Islam and changed his name to Aḥmad. After his conversion to Islam, the acceptance of the Islamic *sharīʿa* as a state regime and his intention to end the conflict with the Mamlūks¹⁶ caused dissatisfaction among the elites of the Ilkhanate. Tegüder's religious conversion was predicated on the separation of the Great Khanate, both culturally and politically¹⁷. His successor, Arghun (1284–91), explained this situation in the *yarlıghs* which he sent to the neighbouring countries after he ascended to the throne, as follows: 'Aḥmad turned aside from the laws of our fathers, and trod the path of Islām'¹⁸.

Someone else who was uncomfortable because of the divergence from Mongolian unity and the laws of Chinggis (*yasa*) was Buqa *Noyan*, one of the *amīrs*. Buqa, member of a minor branch of the Jalair clan, and his brother Aruq, entered the service of Ilkhan Abaqa and rose through the ranks. Buqa was put in charge of tax collection (*tamghachū*) and thus became rich. Buqa continued to be important even after the death of Ilkhan Abaqa, and he argued that *shahzāda* Arghun should become Ilkhan while Aḥmad Tegüder was taking control. Even though Buqa was

¹⁶ For two opposing views about Aḥmad Tegüder's plans regarding the relationship with the Mamlūks, whether he was inclined to a peace or a war, see A. Allouche, "Teguder's Ultimatum to Qalawun", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXII/4 (November 1990), pp. 437-446. J. Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam among the Mongol elite during the early Ilkhanate", *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff, Leiden 2006, pp. 369-389.

¹⁷ Important studies regarding Aḥmad Tegüder's conversion to Islam: R. Amitai, "The Conversion of Tegüder Ahmad to Islam", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, XXV (2001), pp. 15-43. R. Amitai, "Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XLII/1 (1999), pp. 27-46. J. Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam among the Mongol elite during the early Ilkhanate", *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff, Leiden 2006, pp. 369-389. Ch. Melville, "Pādishāh-i Islām: The Conversion of Sultān Mahmūd Ghāzān Khān", *Pembroke Papers*, I (1990), pp. 159-177. C. Kanat, "İlhanlı Hükümdarı Teküdar'ın Müslümanlığı Kabulü ve Bunun Memlûk Devleti'ndeki Yankıları", *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12, (2002), pp. 233-247. A. Allouche, "Teguder's Ultimatum to Qalawun", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXII/4 (1990), pp. 437-446. M. Uyar, "İlhanlı Hükümdarlarının Islām'a Girmesinde Rol Alan Türk Süfleri: İlhan Tegüder ve Gazan Han Devirleri", *Belleten*, LXXVI/275 (2012), pp. 7-30.

¹⁸ E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician, Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus; Being the First Part of His Political History of the World*, London 1932, p. 556.

against Tegüder, he was encouraged by Tegüder's mother, Qutui Khatun, and was able to preserve his position¹⁹.

According to the Arabic source, since *shahzāda* Arghun knew how loyal Buqa was to the law and dynasty of Chinggis Khan, he incited him against Aḥmad Tegüder with these words: 'My uncle Aḥmad *agha* has become a Muslim and changed the *yasa* of Jankiz Khan, and corresponded with the Muslims in order to make peace with them. If his period [of rule] is long, only a few of the Mongols will remain ... He wants to destroy the family of *Halāwūn* (Hülegü) and the *al-Qān al-Kābīr* (Great Khan Qubilai), and all the Mongols.'²⁰ According to Rashīd al-Dīn, while Buqa was supporting Arghun, he based himself on the previous decisions made by the Great Khanate regarding the Ilkhanate throne. In Buqa's words, Qubilai, the last chain in Chinggis Khan's *uruq*, did not declare Tegüder as the ilkhan after Hülegü, but Abaqa instead. Thus, following the death of Ilkhan Abaqa, the successor to the throne should not be Aḥmad Tegüder, but Abaqa's son Arghun²¹.

Apparently, *Amīr* Buqa was abiding by an important criterion in preferring Arghun to Aḥmad Tegüder. This criterion was that the intended ilkhan must be bound to legitimate sources like the Great Khanate and the Mongol *yasa* and his *ilkhan* title must be approved by the Great Khanate. By converting to Islam, Aḥmad Tegüder had shown signs of deviating from this bond. Thus, even if he had assumed the throne, it can be said with high probability that Tegüder's rule would not have been approved by the Great Khanate and *fitna* would arise within the Ilkhanate²². In addition to that, contrary to some other elder *noyan*²³, it is apparent

¹⁹ Ch. Pratt Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, New York 2004, pp. 53-54; B. Spuler, "Būqā", *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1989), IV, p. 551. J. A. Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Il-Khāns" *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Cambridge 1968, pp. 303-421, p. 366.

²⁰ Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kānz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarman, Qāhira 1971, VIII, p. 264. R. Amitai, "The Conversion of Tegüder Ilkhan to Islam", *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam*, XXV (2001), pp. 15-43, p. 37.

²¹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl al-Allāh Hamadānī, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh-i Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl al-Allāh Hamadānī*, ed. Muḥammad Rūshan-Muṣṭafā Mūsawī, Tehrān 1373, II, p. 1145.

²² Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1145.

²³ For example, in contrast with Buqa, Hindū Noyan cared about Aḥmad Tegüder's becoming an *aga* and advised Arghun, who was requesting support from him against his uncle, as follows: 'Although the situation is as the *shahzāda* says, Aḥmad is the *aga*, and if he has become khan in that land, you thank God, are commander and *pādshāh* in this region. Listen to the words of this old man, and don't quarrel with him.', see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1132. Similarly, Tikna explained his thoughts regarding who should become the ruler as follows: 'Hülegü is Hülegü Khan's son. Grandchildren have no right for [rulership] where sons are present.' On the other hand, Aruq and Qurmushi said: 'Jushkab is older, [rulership] befits him.' Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1145

that Buqa did not care about the criterion that the person ascending to the throne must be an *aqā*: Buqa did not prefer Aḥmad *agha/aqa*, who separated from the Great Khanate, for the throne, but Arghun, who was an *ini*.

The power struggle between Aḥmad Tegüder and Prince Arghun ended in favour of the latter thanks to Buqa's devoted efforts. As a matter of fact, after dethroning Tegüder, Buqa's wish and determination to maintain the loyalty of the Ilkhanate to the Great Khanate exceeded Arghun's desire to remain loyal. Arghun organised a *kangach* on 24 Rabī' al-Ākhar 683/10 July 1284 in Kharraqān, including the great *amīrs* Buqa, Aruq, Tikna, Tangiz Gürqan and Qurmushi. After seeing the dispute in this consultation meeting between the *amīrs* about who would become the ruler, Arghun took fright, abandoned his claim to the throne and wanted to return to his old area of dominance, Khurāsān²⁴. Buqa intimidated the other *noyans* by threatening them and thus persuaded Arghun to become an ilkhan and literally gave the *ilkhan* title away²⁵.

Following the capture of Aḥmad Tegüder and his execution in accordance with a decision of the *yarghu* on 26 Jamādhī al-awwal 683/10 August 1284²⁶, Arghun ascended to the throne of the Ilkhanate on the next day. After the necessary distribution of tasks, he gave Buqa 'the viziership of the territories, all great and small authorisations'²⁷ and supposedly rewarded him. I say 'supposedly' because, in giving Buqa great powers, it was not Arghun's intention to make him a co-ruler, but to pacify him and cause him to be overshadowed by another great vizier. This great vizier was Shams al-Dīn Juwainī, who escaped to Iṣfahān during the struggle for the throne between Tegüder and Arghun. Arghun had forgiven him, called him back, and taken him again into the service of the Ilkhanate.

Buqa did not want to share power with Ṣāḥib Shams al-Dīn, who was clearly a superior vizier. Buqa realised that, as long as Ṣāḥib Shams al-Dīn was alive, he would never be able to reach the rank he thought he deserved. Thus, by accusing Shams al-Dīn Juwainī in several ways, he disposed of him on 4 Sha'bān 683/16 October 1284²⁸.

²⁴ 'marā ba-guzārīd, pādshāhī na-mī khāham wa ba-hamīn Khurāsān ke padaram ba-man arzānī dāshta, rāḍiam.', Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1146.

²⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1145-1146.

²⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1148.

²⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1154-1156.

²⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1159-1160.

On 27 Dhū al-Ḥijja 684/23 February 1286, something happened which made Buqa powerful as never before, and virtually untouchable: the *Amīr* Ordu Kia, who had been sent to China as an envoy in order to inform Qubilai Khan about the change to who sat on the throne of the Ilkhanate, was received by Arghun. One of the official documents he brought with him was for Arghun; he presented the *yarligh* which approved him as Ilkhan. Even more important were the titles and privileges which he brought for Buqa.

Qubilai Khan had sent the title of *ch'eng-hsiang* (chancellor) to Buqa, which is mentioned as *Chīngsāng*²⁹ or *Chīnksānk*³⁰ in Persian sources. *Ch'eng-hsiang* was the highest rank after the emperor in the Yuan Empire and he was honoured with this rank by Qubilai Khan. According to T. Allsen, only one more *ch'eng-hsiang* besides Buqa was present in the empire at that time: this person was *ch'eng-hsiang* Bolad (Rashīd al-Dīn's Pūlād *Chīngsāng*) who was sent to the Ilkhanate court³¹. This rank given to Buqa made him directly an officer of the Yuan Empire and the Qa'an. Buqa became more than Ilkhan Arghun's vizier: he was Qubilai Khan's chancellor. Arghun could only ascend to the Ilkhanate throne legally if he approved the new title bestowed on Buqa by Qubilai Khan: this is because Buqa's *ch'eng-hsiang* title seemed to be sent as the precondition for Arghun's *ilkhan* title.

The *ch'eng-hsiang* title was strengthened with other authorisations and privileges bestowed on Buqa. The first one of these powers was that Buqa could not be judged unless he committed nine major crimes. Even if Buqa exceeded this limit, he could only be judged by the Qa'an³². This privilege certainly made Buqa untouchable by the *ilkhan*.

²⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1161.

³⁰ From the record 'az khādrat (*ilkhan*) mulaqqab-i *chīnksānk* mawsūm shud', it can be inferred that Waṣṣāf did not have knowledge regarding the nature of this title and by whom it was bestowed, see 'Abd al-Allāh Ibn Faḍl al-Allāh Sharaf al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Waṣṣāf al-Hādrat, *Tajziyat al-amṣār wa Tajziyat al-a'sār*, Tehrān 1338, p. 229. *Kartlis Tskhovreba* here this title is being mentioned as *Chingizid* and *Chingishan*. *A History of Georgia, Kartlis Tskhovreba*, ed. Commission for the Study of Georgian Historical Sources, Tbilisi 2014, p. 376, p. 378.

³¹ T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, p. 28. T. Allsen, "Biography of a Cultural Broker: Bolad Ch'eng-Hsiang in Chin and Iran", *The Court of the Ilkhans, 1290-1340*, ed. J. Raby and T. Fitzherbert, London 1994, pp. 7-22, p. 10.

³² Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 229. Examples of the pardoning of major crimes for up to nine times are recorded in: *The Secret History of the Mongols, passages* 203, 205, 211, 214 and 219, refer to. *The Secret History of the Mongols*, ed. U. Onon, London-New York 2001, pp. 192, 195, 203, 207, 208.

The second privilege granted to him was that no one in any part of the country was obliged to obey any orders contained in the *yarlighs* which did not have Buqa's *al-tamgha* (red seal) ('*bī al-tamgha-i ū aḥkām-i yarligh rā masmū' na-dārand*')³³. This power and privilege brought all administrative power under the initiative and control of Buqa. The third privilege made Buqa completely independent with regard to the administration of the country: even if the ilkhan's *yarligh* was not present, everybody had to obey Buqa's written decrees, as ordered by Qubilai Khan³⁴. Thus, Buqa became independent of the ilkhan, whereas the ilkhan was under Buqa's control and dependent on him. Bar Hebraeus describes Buqa's status, which he achieved through these privileges, as follows: 'He became so high and mighty in the kingdom that even the princes and princesses, and the sons-in-law and the daughters-in-law, and the captains of the armies of the Mongols, used to come and submit to him, and stand at his gate and beg stipends from him.'³⁵

The last and most important authorisation was the handover to Buqa by Qubilai Khan of 'the authority in the area beginning at the Oxus and stretching as far as the Egyptian border'³⁶. We are familiar with the formula '*az āb-i Āmūyya tā ḥudūd-i Miṣr*', which defines the borders of this authority: when Möngke Khan sent his brother Hülegü to Iran, he defined Hülegü's area of authority with the same formula³⁷. This description, which defines Buqa's privileges, foreshadowed the most important administrative changes yet to come within the Ilkhanate. It seems that Qubilai was also following developments within the Ilkhanate and trying to take precautions against the decentralisation problem.

It is clear that these powers, which were given to this *noyan* by the Qa'an, relegated Ilkhan Arghun to second place compared to Buqa. Thus, Rashīd al-Dīn, who mentioned the title of *chīngsāng* with which Buqa was honoured by the Qa'an, did not mention the other privileges which were also bestowed on him. In contrast, Waṣṣāf wrote that the aforementioned titles and privileges were bestowed on

³³ Waṣṣāf, *Tājziyat al-amṣār*, p. 229; In the same way, Bar Hebraeus says: 'And all the administrative offices of the kingdom were committed to him, and the kings and the governors who ruled in all the countries which were under the dominion of the House of *Maghogh* were not accepted (i.e. acknowledged) without his *Pukdana* and the red sign (manual) of Boka.' Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj*, p. 560.

³⁴ Waṣṣāf, *Tājziyat al-amṣār*, p. 229.

³⁵ Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj*, p. 560.

³⁶ '...*bi-ḥukm-i yarligh az āb-i Āmūyya tā ḥudūd-i Miṣr ki qarīb-i hezār farsang bāshad dar qabḍa-i ḥukūmat-i ū āwarda...*', Waṣṣāf, *Tājziyat al-amṣār*, p. 229.

³⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, p. 976.

Buqa directly by Ilkhan Arghun³⁸. Perhaps Waṣṣāf recognised that these privileges and powers were a challenge to the authority of the ilkhan and thus preferred to present their granting as a generous act on the part of the ilkhan. Qazwīnī also says in the same way as Waṣṣāf that Buqa was given absolute one-man rule by Arghun, but, unlike Waṣṣāf, he makes a point of saying that '*pādshāh* was nothing more than a name'³⁹.

The changes to the status quo, due to Buqa's authority exceeding even Ilkhan Arghun's, also annoyed the other members of the military aristocracy. Taghachar, Qonchukbal, Doladai Idachi, Sulṭān Idachi, Toghan, Jushi and Ordu Kia were irritated by his meteoric rise. This clique informed Ilkhan Arghun whenever possible about Buqa's enrichment, 'arrogance' and constantly disparaged him. As to Arghun, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, since he was 'appreciative' he did not speak out against Buqa⁴⁰. In fact, Arghun was waiting for an opportunity to eliminate Buqa and Buqa's brother Aruq. Rashīd al-Dīn – who intentionally did not mention the authorisations and privileges given to Buqa by Qubilai Khan – explained Buqa's independent actions as 'arrogance' while interpreting the powerless and silent attitude of Arghun towards him as 'appreciative'.

Buqa's brother Aruq kept hold of the income from Baghdād and Diyār-i Bakr. Aruq, who was aware of his older brother's dominance, began to act independently of the authority of the ilkhan and the other princes. He executed Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *inju* of *Shahzāda* Gaikhatu, without the authorisation of the Ilkhan Arghun and the Prince Gaikhatu. Aruq was not sending the taxes coming from Baghdād to the treasury and did not flatter Arghun's envoys. Aruq, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, was not 'living like an *amīr*, but living nearly like *sulṭāns* in Baghdād'⁴¹. The first blow to Buqa's rising power was the removal of Aruq from his duties in Baghdād and his replacement by Ordu Kia, *Malik* Sharaf al-Dīn and Sa'd al-Dawla. Now Buqa's immunity was compromised and word spread that he wished for an administration without an ilkhan. Ṣadr al-Dīn Zanjānī, who was in conflict with Buqa for control of the income in the Fārs area, told *Amīr* Taghachar the following: 'Buqa has created a *pādshāhī* for himself. For he does whatever he wants without the emperor's order (*farmān*) or consultation (*kangach*) with the *amīrs*,

³⁸ Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 229.

³⁹ '...dast-i ū dar mulk muṭlaq gardānīd, chunānke bar pādshāh nāmī bīsh nabūd...'. Ḥamd al-Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *Tārīh-i Guzīda*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusain Nawā'ī, Tahrān 1364, p. 595.

⁴⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1166.

⁴¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1166-1167.

he disburses the tax monies however he wishes, and Arghun Khan is considered less a *pādshāh* than Buqa is. Things have gone so far that when envoys go to Tabriz with *yarlighs* and *paizas*, unless Buqa's red seal (*al-tamgha*) is on them, they are not given any consideration whatsoever by *Amīr* 'Alī the governor and return empty-handed.⁴²

Ilkhan Arghun saw that the military aristocracy was distancing itself from Buqa and was gathering around himself, and he then took all income-generating lands from Buqa and gave them to Taghachar⁴³. This process isolated Buqa from the court. Great Khan Qubilai's attempt at placing two *ch'eng-hsiang* in the administration in order to unite the ilkhan administration, which had been showing signs of separation from the central administration since the time of Aḥmad Tegüder, produced no results. The formation of a clique opposed to Buqa and his brother Aruq helped Ilkhan Arghun to cut off the monetary incomes of the brothers, which at least distanced them from financial management. Since Qubilai Khan's diplomatic push using soft power was of no use, there was only one choice⁴⁴. Buqa had no other choice than a military coup d'état under these unfavourable conditions. Buqa intended to take back the powers and privileges granted to him by Qubilai Khan, or, more precisely, to take back control of the Iranian administration by force. He immediately contacted those supporting him. Rashīd al-Dīn points out that the list of people supporting Buqa was long and mentions some of them⁴⁵. Qurmishi (Hindū *Noyan*'s son), Ujan, Zangī (Naya *Noyan*'s son), *Amīr-i hazār* Maiju, Ghazan Bahadur, *Amīr-i chahār-hazār* Ishak Tuqli, Tuqluq, Bayan Bitikchi, Mikritai (Alghu Bitikchi's son), Chirik Bitikchi, Amīr 'Alī Tamghachi, Ḥusām al-Dīn Qazwīnī, 'Imād al-Dīn Munajjim and Tushkina, are the names associated with Buqa during this period⁴⁶. These were mostly Jalair from within the Ilkhanid administration, leading members of the military aristocracy or local Iranian individuals in the supreme administrative establishment. The Christian

⁴² Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1167.

⁴³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1167; Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 231.

⁴⁴ This was not the first attempted coup of this type for Qubilai: Qubilai Khan made Böri's son Abishqa head of Chaghatai *Ulus* and attempted to overthrow Orqina Khatun; but this attempt failed, see Jackson, "Dissolution", p. 229.

⁴⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1168. Buqa sent a detailed list (*mūchalga*) of those who were supporting him to Prince Jushkab. The Prince began to fear for his own life when he saw the sheer number of powerful individuals, see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1169.

⁴⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1168, 1171; Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, p. 233; Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj*, p. 563; *Step'annos Orbelean's History of the State of Sisakan*, trans. Robert Bedrosian, (published on Internet, New Jersey 2012, p. 219.

officers within the Ilkhanid state also supported Buqa⁴⁷. Arghun thought that Buqa also had supporters in dependent states: he suspected that the king of Georgia, Dimitri (1270–89), supported Buqa⁴⁸. That was because when Aḥmad Tegüder ascended to the throne Dimitri had made a congratulatory visit, during which he married off his daughter Rosudan to Buqa's son⁴⁹. Shem'un, who was an important figure with his multiple roles as priest, physician and jurist, was also accused of supporting Buqa⁵⁰. Buqa entered into contact with Prince Jushkab, Ilkhan Arghun's cousin. The *shahzāda* recognised Buqa's intentions and what would lie in store for the Hülegüid Dynasty, and did not form an alliance with him⁵¹.

Apart from these, a major name who acted together with Buqa was Qubilai Khan's *ilchi* (envoy) Qadan. Rashīd al-Dīn reports that this man, who was sent to the Ilkhanate as an envoy, was the brother of Ariq Böke's concubine (*qumai*) Iragui and a member of the Burulas tribe⁵². It is not known exactly when he came to the Ilkhanate as an envoy. Nevertheless, at least it is recorded that he was presented at the Ilkhanate court before the arrival of Ordu Kia and Bolad *Ch'eng-Hsiang*⁵³. He witnessed the conflict between Aḥmad Tegüder and Arghun and must have been sure of Buqa's loyalty to the Great Khanate during this period. On the other hand, Arghun made it clear that he wouldn't be sharing his authority in the Ilkhanate with another *aqā* by eliminating his uncle and *aqā* Aḥmad Tegüder. Thus, even though the Iranian lands were taken out of the hands of Muslim Aḥmad Tegüder, there was no guarantee that Arghun would obey Qubilai. The Iranian territories could only be a permanent part of the Mongolian Khanate if they were under the administration of a loyal Mongolian general like Buqa.

Buqa's military coup attempt prevented by Jushkab's timely warning of Ilkhan Arghun. Buqa was captured and decapitated in mid-January 1289 without the need for a *yarghu* to sit. His head was stuffed with hay and hung under the Chaghan (White) Bridge in order to show that coup attempts against the Ilkhanid dynasty would fail, even if they were strongly supported. His brother Aruq was also executed on 29 Muḥarram 688/22 February 1289. Except for two of the

⁴⁷ Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia*, p. 197.

⁴⁸ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, pp. 378-379; *Step'annos Orbelean's History*, p. 219.

⁴⁹ *Kartlis Tskhovreba*, p. 374.

⁵⁰ Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj*, p. 563; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1171.

⁵¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1168-1169.

⁵² Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 940.

⁵³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1141.

individuals mentioned earlier; everybody who was known to support Buqa was executed after trial⁵⁴.

One of the two survivors was Bayan Bitikchi, who was pardoned because he told the truth during the *yarghu*. The other one was the previously mentioned Qadan *Ilchi*. In Rashīd al-Dīn's words, Qadan was saved because 'he was Qa'an's ambassador'⁵⁵. Why was Qadan, who acted together with Buqa, spared while Buqa *Ch'eng-Hsiang*, who could only be judged by Qubilai Khan, executed without a *yarghu*?

There is no need to point out that killing an envoy is a major insult to the ruler who sent the envoy. Apart from this, the fact that Arghun spared Qubilai Khan's envoy gives us an insight into his intentions regarding the relationship between the Ilkhanate and the Great Khanate. While Ilkhan Arghun was fighting against the khanates of his cousins and the Egyptian Mamlūks, he would not have wanted to disturb his good – at least apparently – relationship with the Great Khanate. That was also true for Qubilai Khan. Qubilai attempted a coup and failed. In return, Arghun proved that he was not weak in the face of attempted coups and displayed his unshakeable power. Qubilai literally wanted to delete the second word, *khanate*, in the name *Il-khanate*, and to establish an absolutely dependent Iranian administration under Buqa, but did not succeed in doing so. Ilkhan Arghun, who was exposed to this attempted coup, countered this attempt by executing Qubilai Khan's highest-ranking officer in an exemplary way. Since both sides showed off their powers, relations could resume as they were in the past. Using this event as a reason for conflict would have been detrimental to both sides. This failed coup attempt, instigated by Buqa and backed by Qubilai, was a *quasi numquam accidit*. This can help explain why Bolad *Ch'eng-Hsiang* was not involved in the attempted coup: he remained in the background in order to

⁵⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1170-1171. The execution of this powerful emir was reflected in almost all of the Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Assyrian and Georgian literature sources.

⁵⁵ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, p. 1171. Rashīd al-Dīn recorded this information as follows: 'Qadan chūn *ilchi*-yi Qa'an būd khalāš yāft wa Bayan Bitikchi chūn sukhānhā ba-rāsū taqrīr kard ham khalāš yāft.'. If it is considered that Rashīd al-Dīn'in was a historian who was acquainted with the details of Persian rhetoric, a second meaning can be inferred from this sentence. Even if speculative, this meaning is as follows: 'Qadan was spared because he was Qa'an's envoy, but unlike Bayan Bitikchi he did not tell the truth. Bayan Bitikchi on the other hand was saved because he told this truth that Qadan was hiding.' So, was Qubilai Khan's role in this coup the truth that Qadan was hiding? This question cannot be definitively answered, because, in my opinion, Rashīd al-Dīn's intended this ambiguousness in the first place.

await the outcome. His neutral behaviour was an insurance for the resumption of relations. Rashīd al-Dīn's behaviour of not openly mentioning Qubilai Khan's role in this attempted coup must have been the result of the Ilkanid policy in favour of the resumption of old positive relations.

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