
Marriage, Family and Politics:

The Ilkhanid-Oirat Connection

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Abstract

The Chinggisids clearly favoured specific in-law clans through policies of repeated marriage over generations. This paper charts the fortunes of one such clan, the Oirats, who first joined the Chinggisids when Chinggis Khan and Börte's daughter Chechiyegen wedded an Oirat prince. Thereafter Chechiyegen's own daughters married back to the Toluid, Jochid and Chagatayid families. This paper follows those Oirats who intermarried with the Ilkhanids, beginning with Chechiyegen's daughter Güyüik and ending with the Toluid-Oirat Ilkhan, Abū Saʿīd (r. 1317-1335).

It is important to remember that Chinggis Khan and his chief wife Börte actually had nine children, not just their four famous sons. These were Qojin (a daughter, and the eldest), Jochi, Chagatai and Ögedei (three sons), Chechiyegen, Alaqa and Tümelün (three more daughters), Tolui (the youngest son) and Al Altan (the youngest daughter).¹ Most scholars can rattle off the names of the four boys, whose central roles in the expansion, governance and political life of the Empire are well-known. But fewer people can name the five girls and their corresponding contributions to Mongol history, even though their marriages expanded the empire peacefully into realms just outside the Mongolian heartland in the early 1200s.² Thereafter Börte's daughters helped govern territories, contributed to military campaigns, and enjoyed status, wealth and influence.³

This paper begins with one of these daughters, Chechiyegen, who married into the Oirats, then turns to the history of Chechiyegen's descendants, who wedded within the house of Tolui in Iran, the Ilkhanids, for many generations. Because Chechiyegen was Börte and Chinggis Khan's daughter, the Oirat family among Hülegü's people enjoyed an excellent position and brilliant prospects. But an unfortunate series of adult Oirat deaths,

¹ See *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, translated and annotated by W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA, 1998), page numbers in parentheses. Birth orders for the sons and daughters appear separately but clearly (pp. 146-147). Rashīd al-Dīn also mentions that Qojin was the oldest overall (347), that Alaqa was younger than Ögedei but older than Tolui (71), and that Tümelün was also older than Tolui (86), which allows us to construct an overall birth order.

² These were Uighur territory (Al Altan married the *idu-qut* Barchuk); Önggüt territory (Alaqa married several Önggüt princes) and Oirat territory (through Chechiyegen). Meanwhile, Qojin married Chinggis Khan's Ikires follower, Butu, while Tümelün married one of Börte's Qongrat nephews. See Broadbridge, *Imperial Women*, Chapter 4, forthcoming.

³ See Broadbridge, *Imperial Women*, Chapter 5, forthcoming

few Toluid-Oirat births in the later years of the Ilkhanate, and the serious challenges posed by rival in-law families like the Qongrats and the Kereyits combined to compromise what had begun as the glorious history of a people.

Marriage patterns

The Mongols and their in-laws (*quda*) favoured certain marriage patterns that conferred social, political and economic benefits on everyone involved. In particular, steppe tradition liked a wife to marry a few of her children to the offspring of her brothers.⁴ Although by modern definitions these marriages were consanguineous, and although the Mongols themselves opposed consanguinity and adhered strictly to a pattern of exogamous marriages, their definitions of exogamy concerned only the male line, not the female.⁵ Thus a man could not marry his children to those of his own brother because the fathers were in the same family, but he could marry them to the children of his sister because in this case the fathers (the man, his brother-in-law) were not. As a result, when a man wedded one of Börte's daughters, he knew that his children could later marry back into the Chinggisid family, especially the girls.⁶ That is, one or more daughters of an in-law man and his Chinggisid wife would wed princely cousins (their mother's brother's sons). For the record, although consanguinity has been linked to slightly higher infant and child mortality rates and increased genetic flaws, scholars caution against overemphasizing the biological risks while ignoring the social benefits such marriages provided.⁷ Consanguinity over generations may have contributed to the poor health of the Ilkhanid ruling family beginning in the 1280s, but it was by no means the only cause.⁸

Meanwhile, the benefits of intermarriage were significant. If the opportunity arose, for example, one or more of a woman's brothers might serve as military commanders for her Chinggisid husband. These brothers could then sire their own daughters and sons (with any wife), to whom their sister could wed the royal children she bore the prince. We already know that the Chinggisids frequently married their children to members of their own entourages; the tradition of exchange marriages confirms a preference for the wife's family within that entourage.⁹ The next generation then produced daughters to be wives, mothers and managers of property, and sons to carry on family military traditions. These offspring

⁴This was exchange marriage, which came in two forms: first when "in exchange for" his wife a man married a daughter to his wife's brother's son, and second when he married a son to his wife's niece at the same time. See Nobuhiro Uno, "Exchange-Marriage in the Royal Families of Nomadic States", in *The Early Mongols: Language, Culture and History. Studies in honor of Igor de Rachewiltz on the occasion of his 80th birthday*, (eds.) Volker Rybatzki et al (Indiana University, 2009), pp. 176, 179–180. Zhao prefers "one-way" and "two-way" marriages. George Zhao, *Marriage as Political Strategy and Cultural Expression* (New York, 2008), pp. 24–25.

⁵Zhao, *Marriage*, pp. 5–21; Sechin Jagchid and Paul Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society* (Boulder, 1979), p. 92.

⁶See examples in Tables 1–7. Also see Zhao, *Marriage*, p. 16.

⁷A. H. Bittles et al, "Consanguinity, Human Evolution, and Complex Diseases," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol. 107, Supplement 1: Evolution in Health and Medicine (Jan. 26, 2010), pp. 1779–1786; Emily Lyons et al, "Consanguinity and susceptibility to infectious diseases in humans," *Biol. Lett.* (2009) no. 5, pp. 574–576.

⁸Other causes included dietary changes and alcoholism. John Masson Smith, "Dietary Decadence and Dynastic Decline in the Mongol Empire," *Journal of Asian History* 34 (2001), pp. 35–52.

⁹For marriages between the Chinggisids and their entourages see Charles Meville, "The *Keshig* in Iran: The Survival of the Royal Mongol Household", in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) Linda Komaroff (Leiden, 2006), pp. 149–150.

would continue to intermarry through the female line when possible, which created an in-law family over generations. Not surprisingly, a chief ambition for these wives of Chinggisid princes was to place a son on the throne, which could benefit both families. But this was a real challenge: the Oirat in-laws had only three such opportunities in seventy-odd years of marriage with the Toluid Ilkhanids.

Chechiyegen

Chechiyegen was probably Börte and Temüjin's fifth child, and may have been born in 1187 or 1188.¹⁰ Like all her sisters, Chechiyegen provided Temüjin and Börte with the womanly capital necessary to forge strong political alliances with likely men. Her well-chosen strategic marriage in 1207 into the Oirats gave her father control not only of the Oirat people themselves, but, through them, of their fellow Forest Peoples to the Mongols' northwest.¹¹ The weddings formed a constellation: Chechiyegen married one son of the Oirat leader, her niece (Jochi's daughter Qolui), wedded the other, and her brother Tolui married an Oirat princess.¹²

After marriage Chechiyegen surely assumed a managerial role over flocks and people in her husband's territories, since this was the work nomadic women performed.¹³ She also bore seven children: Buqa Temür, Börtö'ä, and Bars Buqa (three sons), and Güyüik, Orqina, Elchiqmish and Köchü (four daughters).¹⁴ Chechiyegen's husband had an additional daughter, Öljei, from another woman.¹⁵ Chechiyegen and her husband then married all of their girls right back into the Chinggisid house, probably in the 1220s and 1230s. Thus the

¹⁰If Chinggis Khan was born in 1167 (Paul Ratchnevsky, *The Life and Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Oxford, 1992), p. 18), and married at 15 to a 16-year-old Börte in 1182, and if we hypothesize dates from Ögedei, whose birth year (1186) is the only one known, and from the assumption that Tolui was at least 10 when he married Sorqaqtani of the Kerayits in 1203, we can extrapolate the births of their children thus: Qojin (1182; Börte was 16 or 17), Jochi (1183; Börte was 17), Chagatai (1184 or 1185; Börte was 18–19), Ögedei (1186, the only verifiable date; Börte was 20); Chechiyegen (1187 or 1188, Börte was 21 or 21); Alaqa (1189?, Börte was 23), Tümelün (1190 or 1191?, Börte was 24 or 25), Tolui (1192 or 1193?, Börte was 26 or 27) and Al Altun, the youngest (1194 or 1195?, Börte was 28 or 29). Broadbridge, *Imperial Women*, Chapter 2, forthcoming; Paul Pelliot, *Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan: Cheng wou ts-in-tcheng lou*, translated and edited by Paul Pelliot and Louis Hambis (Leiden, 1951), p. 266 for Ögedei's birth year (the red edition).

¹¹*The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian epic chronicle of the thirteenth century*, edited and translated by Igor de Rachewiltz (Leiden and Boston, 2006), p. 239. Atā-Malik Juvaynī, *The History of the World Conqueror*, translated by J. A. Boyle (Cambridge, MA, 1958), p. 38; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 55. For Mongol-Oirat cooperation see Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan*, 102, 116–118.

¹²The sons were Inalchi and Törolchi; the Oirat daughter was Oghul Qaimish, not to be confused with Güyüik Khan's (r. 1246–48) wife of the same name. The *Secret History* suggests that Chechiyegen married Inalchi, but Rashīd al-Dīn and the *Yüan Shih* suggest she wedded Törolchi. *Secret History*, 239; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 55, 147, 472, 476; also *Yüan Shih* 109, 2762, according to de Rachewiltz, "Commentary on the *Secret History*, 854–855"; also see Paul Pelliot, *Notes critiques d'histoire kalmouke* (Paris, 1960), I:61–62 n. 59; Zhao, *Marriage*, pp. 130–131, 138–139.

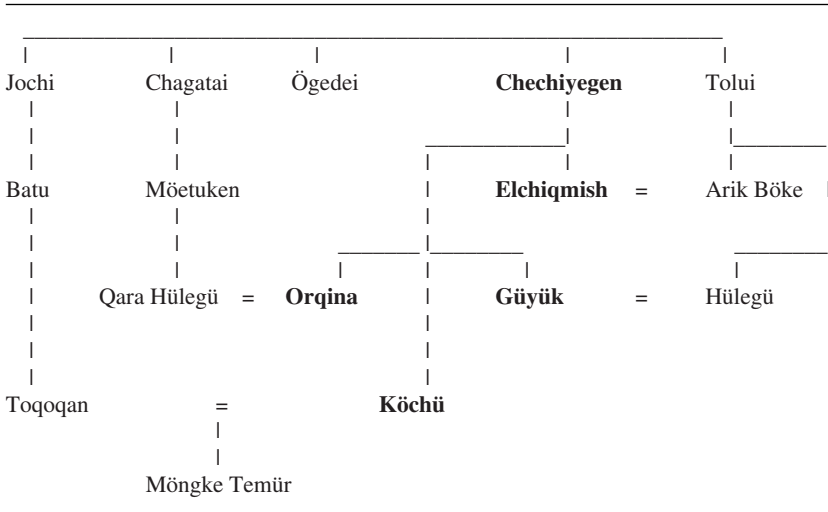
¹³Broadbridge, *Imperial Women*, Chapter 1, forthcoming.

¹⁴Rashīd al-Dīn first claims that Chechiyegen had two daughters, Elchiqmish and Orqina, then corrects this to four. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 55–56, 352 (for Köchü, albeit calling her Buqa Temür's daughter (sic), not sister) and 472 (for Güyüik); Rashīd al-Dīn / Boyle, *Successors*, 109–110 (for Köchü); also Zhao, *Marriage*, p. 130. The name Güyüik is surprising here, given its association with the far better known (male) Grand Khan Güyüik (r. 1246–48), her first cousin. No other female Güyüks have yet surfaced; it is also likely that her confusing name, her early death in Mongolia and that of her son, and the far greater fame of her successor, Dokuz, combined to doom her to relative obscurity despite her status as Hülegü's first chief wife. The name of her sister, Köchü, also appears only once for that princess and cannot be verified elsewhere.

¹⁵See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472.

Table 1. **Chechiyegen's four daughters and their husbands**All women are in **bold**

*All family trees are partial, since a full representation would require three dimensions, not two



Oirats were connected first to the Toluids when Elchiqmish married Arik Böke and Güyük married Hülegü; then to the Chagatayids when Orqina married Qara Hülegü; and finally to the Jochids when Köchü married Batu's son Toqoqan and produced his heir, Mönöke Temür (r. 1267–80).¹⁶ (See Table 1.) All four women became chief wives. But none of Chechiyegen's daughters married Ogodeyids, which raises questions about Chechiyegen's relationship to that house. But certainly, after the Ogodeyids were ousted and the Toluid prince Mönöke came to power in 1251, Chechiyegen was the only one of Börte's daughters strong enough to send Oirat warriors to join the army that Mönöke asked his brother Hülegü to lead to Iran in 1253.¹⁷ Chechiyegen's daughter Güyük, Hülegü's chief wife, began the story of Oirat fortunes in southwestern Asia.

The greater lady and the first prince: Güyük Khatun and Jumghur

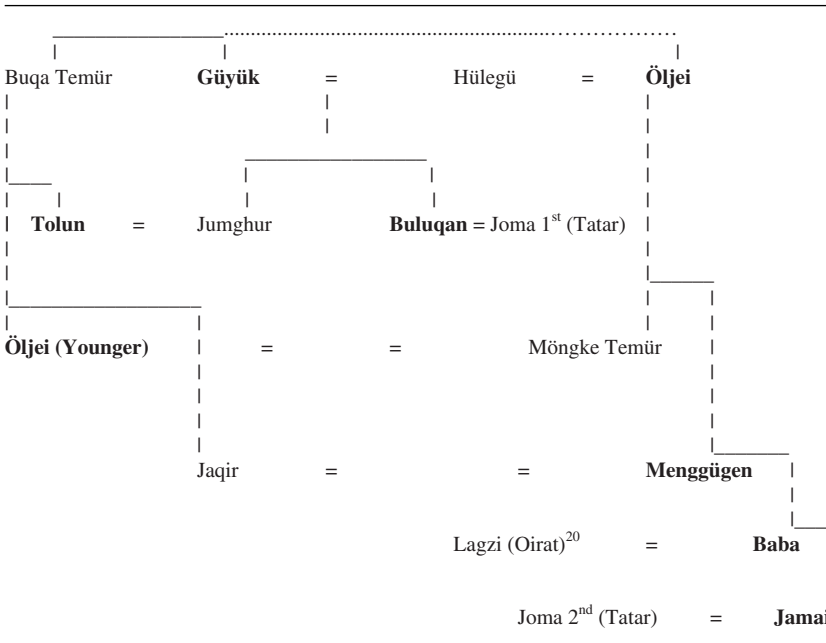
Not only did Chechiyegen's status as Hülegü's aunt and a Chinggisid make Güyük into a chief wife, but Güyük's position was further supported by Hülegü's wedding to her half-sister Öljei.¹⁸ As chief wife, Güyük managed the largest and best-appointed camp, and enjoyed wealth of her own, as well as control of some of her husband's flocks. It was usual for some of her husband's lesser wives or concubines to live in her camp: in fact, Hülegü's five wives,

¹⁶Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 55–56, 352, 460, 472; Rashīd al-Dīn / Boyle, *Successors*, 109–110.

¹⁷Juvayni / Boyle, *World-Conqueror*, 608; Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Fanaj, the son of Aaron, the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, translated by E. A. W. Budge (London, 1932), 419 and Bar Hebraeus / Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, (ed.) Fr. Anton Ṣalāḥānī, (Beirut, 1958 edition), 460.

¹⁸Güyük's son Jumghur had four children by his death in the mid-1260s, implying he was born no later than the mid-1240s. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 473, 519.

Table 2. **Güyük, Hülegü, Öljei and Buqa Temür**
 All women are in **bold**
 Tiny dotted line represents half-siblings



nine named, and various other concubines clustered together in only two or three camps, rather than each woman having her own establishment.¹⁹

Güyük also did her duty by producing two children with Hülegü. One was his son Jumghur, who became the first Toluid-Oirat prince. Although Jumghur was not Hülegü’s oldest boy, he outranked the actual eldest son, Abagha, whose mother was a Suldus wife living in Güyük’s camp.²¹ Güyük later married Jumghur back into her own family by wedding him, consanguinously, to her niece Tolun, the daughter of her brother Buqa Temür.²² Güyük’s other child was a daughter, Buluqan Aqa, who married a Tatar prince.²³ (See Table 2.)

¹⁹The wives were Güyük, Öljei, Qutui, Dokuz and Yesünjin; the concubines were Boraqchin, Noqachin, Arighan and Yeshichin (from Qutui’s camp); Ajuja, El Egechi, Dokuz’s niece Tukitani and two unnamed others from Dokuz’s camp; and Irqan and Mengligech, whose camps are unknown. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 65 and 515 (just Tuqitani), 471–472, 474–476 (for the rest); Anonymous, *Mu’izz al-Ansāb*, British Library OR467, fol. 61. For the ordos and the preference for a few ordos controlled by the seniormost wives, with lesser wives and concubines living in them, see Bruno de Nicola, “Ruling from tents: some remarks on women’s ordos in Ilkhanid Iran,” in *Ferdowsi, the Mongols and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from early Islam to Qajar Persia*, (ed) Robert Hillenbrand, A. C. S. Peacock and Firuza Abdullaeva (London, 2013), p. 128.

²⁰He was the son of Arghun Agha, an Oirat commander and scribe to Hülegü, but not a descendant of Chechiyegen. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 476.

²¹This was Yesünjin. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472.

²²Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 473.

²³This was Joma, son of a Tatar prince, Jochi, who married a daughter of Chinggis Khan’s brother Temüge. Jochi went to Iran with Hülegü, where his sister Nuqdan married Abagha and bore Geikhatu. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 49, 476.

Further strengthening the Oirat in-law family, Güyük's brother Buqa Temür came to work for Hülegü in 1253 as a commander for the Oirat troops.²⁴

The presence of so many Oirats with the Ilkhanids thus allowed the creation of an Oirat in-law family, complete with sons and daughters to marry available royals. By wedding Jumghur to Buqa Temür's daughter, Güyük began what became the senior line of Oirat in-laws in the Ilkhanate, composed of descendants born from marriages between her own royal offspring (or, later, her half-sister Öljei's) and those of their brother. (See Table 2.) The junior line began when Hülegü married a daughter, Tödögech (from a concubine), to an Oirat man, Tankiz, who was not Chechiyegen's descendant, but whose son and grandson later also married Tödögech, allowing her to produce several Toluid-Oirat children.²⁵ (See Table 6.)

But Güyük never fully capitalised on her status, children and considerable family support because she died in Mongolia and did not go to Iran.²⁶ This marked the first major setback to Oirat fortunes among the Ilkhanids. As Hülegü's chief wife and mother of a son, Güyük had been the senior member of the Oirat in-law family, but her death allowed other wives to step into the breach. The first of these was a Qongrat wife from Börte's people, Qutui.²⁷ Qutui herself gave birth to two of Hülegü's sons, Tekshin and Tegüder, while concubines answerable to her produced an additional six, meaning that a full eight of Hülegü's fourteen sons (although none of his seven daughters), came from her establishment.²⁸ In addition, Hülegü gave the great camp, in which Jumghur resided, to Qutui after Güyük's death. Further weakening Oirat family chances, Hülegü decided to leave Jumghur in Mongolia. If Güyük was even alive then, was she able to lobby for the inclusion of her son on the Iran campaign? We do not know.

But Qutui and the Qongrats were not the only rivals to the Oirats. Another contender appeared in the elderly Kereit princess Dokuz, whom Möngke gave to Hülegü as a wife and advisor in about 1253.²⁹ Dokuz's position as Tolui's widow (and Sorqaqtani's cousin), and the fact that this was a second marriage through the levirate, not a first marriage, elevated

²⁴For the troops, initially led by Buqa Temür, see Juvayni, *World-Conqueror*, 608; Bar Hebraeus / Budge, *Chronography*, 419 and Bar Hebraeus / Şalaḥānī, *Mukhtaşar*, 460. For Buqa Temür's participation in the campaign against Baghdad in 1257–58, see Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 483, 487, 493, 495, 499. son and grandson as commanders see Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 56–57. Note also John Masson Smith, "High Living and Heartbreak on the Road to Baghdad," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, (ed.) Linda Komaroff (Leiden, 2006), pp. 123, 128.

²⁵Tödögech's mother was in Dokuz's ordo. For Tödögech's several marriages and children see Table 6. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 476, 561.

²⁶Her death date is unknown: Rashīd al-Dīn claims she died in Mongolia and Hülegü gave Qutui her camp, implying that Hülegü was still there. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472. But Bar Hebraeus states that Hülegü left Güyük, the "Great Queen," and Jumghur (alive) in Mongolia when he departed, implying that her death was after 1253. Or did Bar Hebraeus confuse Güyük with Qutui as the "Great Queen"? Bar Hebraeus / Budge, *Chronography*, 419; Bar Hebraeus / Şalaḥānī, *Mukhtaşar*, 460.

²⁷Her parentage is unclear: a confusing reference suggests she was a daughter of Börte's fourth daughter Tümelün, who had married Börte's nephew. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472, 515.

²⁸The sons of concubines were: Yoshmut and Tubshi, whose mother, Noqachin, was Chinese [Cathayan]; Taraghai, whose mother, Boraqchin, was of unknown clan; Ajai, whose mother Arighan was the daughter of the Oirat son-in-law Tankiz; Yesüder, son of Yeshichin, a Kürlü'üt, and Taghai Temür, whose mother's name and clan are lost. All lived in Qutui's ordo. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472–476. See note 31 for inhabitants of Dokuz's ordo.

²⁹See Charles Melville, "Dokuz (Doquz) Kātün," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, (ed.) Ehsan Yarshater (Costa Mesa, 1996), 7, pp. 475–476.

her over all other wives.³⁰ The Kereit thus became new rivals to the Oirats and the Qongrats in marriage politics. Dokuz's camp eventually grew to match the establishment that was first Güyük's and then Qutui's, although all of Hülegü's children in Dokuz's camp—a daughter and three sons—came from concubines since Dokuz herself was well past childbearing age.³¹ Furthermore, Dokuz traveled to Iran with Hülegü, while Qutui did not.³² Nevertheless, Qutui did eventually move to Iran in the 1260s with the great camp under her care. But on the way disaster struck the Oirat family when Jumghur died of illness on the road.³³ This marked the second major Oirat family loss after Güyük, and the first death of a Toluid-Oirat prince and contender for the Ilkhanid throne.

The lesser lady: Öljei Khatun

As a result of Dokuz's seniority, the deaths of Güyük and Jumghur, and Qutui's takeover of the Oirat camp and dominance in sons, Güyük's half-sister Öljei had to maintain the Oirat family in what may have been a third wifely camp. Öljei rose as best she could to the challenge, helped by the fact that she and Dokuz were the only wives to go to Iran.³⁴ Öljei was further supported by the presence of her half-brother Buqa Temür with his family and troops. In 1256 Öljei produced a son, Mōngke Temür, who became the second Toluid-Oirat prince after Jumghur, and a new candidate for succession in the Ilkhanate. Öljei also gave birth to three daughters, whom she used to consolidate Oirat family fortunes: one married a son of Buqa Temür, another a lesser Oirat man in Hülegü's entourage, and the third the Tatar widower of Güyük's deceased daughter Buluqan.³⁵ (See Table 2.) However, although like her co-wives Öljei probably supplied Hülegü with concubines, none seem to have produced children, so Öljei's only human capital was her own offspring, especially since Güyük's children remained in Qutui's camp.

But Öljei made the most of her position: she and Dokuz are both described as chief wives, which suggests that Öljei enjoyed high status even though she did not quite measure up to Dokuz's tremendous position.³⁶ At the sack of Baghdad in February 1258, Hülegü favoured Öljei by giving her the last son of the famous Abbasid house.³⁷ After Hülegü's death, his son and heir Abagha (r. 1265–82) honoured Öljei by remarrying her through the levirate.³⁸ Thereafter he demonstrated his esteem for her wisdom by assigning her to work with the commander Samaghar to tutor his half-brother, Öljei's 10-year-old son Mōngke Temür, as a governor in the Caucasus region, where Abagha had stationed him in opposition to the

³⁰Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 471.

³¹Dokuz married Tolui in 1203, and Hülegü 50 years later in 1253. She never bore children. As for the children of her camp: One was Hülegü's daughter, Tödögech, mother of the junior Oirat line (see note 25 and Table 6). Three were sons: Qonqurtai, son of a Chinese [Cathayan] concubine, Ajuja; and Hulachu and Shiba'uchi, whose mother, El Egechi, was a Qongrat. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 474, 475–476. See note 28 for inhabitants of Qutui's ordo.

³²Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472, 479. Also Masson Smith, "High Living", pp. 131–133.

³³Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 473, 519. Also Masson Smith, "High Living", pp. 131–133.

³⁴Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 479.

³⁵See Table 2 and note 23 above for Joma. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 476.

³⁶Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 479.

³⁷Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 499.

³⁸Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 515.

Jochids.³⁹ At other times Öljei was able to intervene with Abagha in political matters, and was sometimes honoured with grants of territory.⁴⁰

The second prince: Möngke Temür

But Öljei's greatest asset, and the clearest hope for Oirat family achievement, was the prince Möngke Temür. She therefore took appropriate pains to prepare her son for success, not only through her work with him in the Caucasus, but also by marrying him to her half-niece and namesake, Öljei (the Younger), a daughter of Buqa Temür.⁴¹ As Möngke Temür's chief wife, Öljei the Younger produced a daughter, Ara Qutluğ, who married back into the Oirat in-law family, while her co-wives and concubines gave birth to five other children, some of whom made strategic alliances outside the Oirats.⁴² (See Table 3.)

Möngke Temür's chance then came in October 1281 when he was 26 and Abagha chose him to lead the vanguard in an army headed for Mamluk Syria. Möngke Temür's maternal cousins, Buqa Temür's son Jaqir and his son Taraqai (husbands of Möngke Temür's sister Menggügen and daughter Ara Qutluğ, respectively) also went to command the Oirat troops.⁴³ Reports on the prince's role in this campaign vary: some claim he was so young that his commanders made the real decisions, while others describe him as the mastermind of the endeavor.⁴⁴ We do know that Möngke Temür was injured while fighting in the Mongol centre at the Battle of Homs on 29 October 1281 with Mamluk forces.⁴⁵ The Ilkhanid armies lost and withdrew from Syria, and Möngke Temür himself retired to his mother's lands in Northern Iraq to recover, and rage over his defeat.⁴⁶

Shortly thereafter in April 1282, Abagha died unexpectedly after a night of heavy drinking.⁴⁷ Now came the moment of Oirat opportunity. At a quriltai called to discuss succession, Öljei seized her chance and proposed Möngke Temür as Ilkhan, despite his recent humiliation in Syria.⁴⁸ But even while the deliberations were underway, Öljei received the horrifying news that Möngke Temür had suddenly died of unclear causes.⁴⁹ This devastated Oirat chances in an instant.

³⁹This was in 1265–66. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 519.

⁴⁰She once intervened on behalf of the Juvaynī brothers. See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 542–543; also Boyle's introduction to *World-Conqueror*, xxii–xxv, although he identifies Öljei only as "Abagha's favourite wife" on xxiv. In 1277 Abagha gave Öljei Diyarbakr and the Jazira. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 541.

⁴¹Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 475, 476 (on Buqa Temür, in the entry on Öljei's daughter Menggügen).

⁴²Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 475.

⁴³Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 56–57, 476.

⁴⁴Rashīd al-Dīn states that Möngke Temür was a child, and two senior commanders made campaign decisions; then contradictorily quotes a commander claiming that Abagha chose Möngke Temür to succeed him as Ilkhan. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 544, 558. Boyle noted that Rashīd al-Dīn sometimes described adult princes as children to diminish their importance. Juvayni / Boyle, *World-Conqueror*, 180–181, and note 7. By contrast, Mamluk sources state that Möngke Temür actually convinced Abagha to send him on the campaign; Amitai finds this problematic. Reuven Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilhānīd War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 189.

⁴⁵For the battle in excellent detail see Amitai, *War*, pp. 187–201; also in brief, Boyle, "Il-Khans", p. 363.

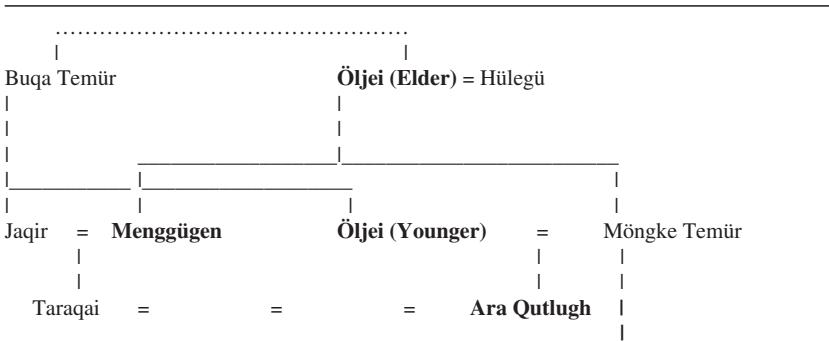
⁴⁶Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:248; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 545.

⁴⁷Boyle, "Il-Khans", p. 364.

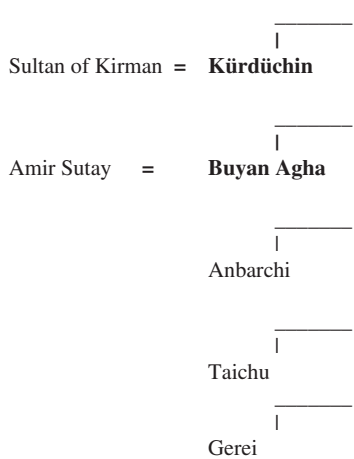
⁴⁸Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 548.

⁴⁹Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 548. Causes of death ranged from epilepsy to poison. For poison see Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:248; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Ta'rikh al-Hijrah*, (ed.) Donald S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 213; Hetoum, *A Lytell Chronicle*, (ed.) Glenn Burger (Toronto, 1988), 48; Bar Hebraeus / Budge,

Table 3. **Möngke Temür to Taraqai**
 All women are in **bold**
 Tiny dotted line represents half-siblings



The children below were born of wives or concubines other than Öljei the Younger



The lean years

Oirat fortunes waned after the loss of their second prince, especially during the reign of Abagha’s half-brother, Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1282–84), the sole surviving son of Hülegü’s Qongrat widow, Qutui. Tegüder’s reign marked a pinnacle in Qongrat family influence: four of his six wives were Qongrats, including the chief wife, Töküz, and Armini, the second wife and mother of five children (see Table 4).⁵⁰ This Qongrat family monopoly worked against the Oirats, whose presence among Tegüder’s wives was maintained only by

Chronography, 465–66 and Bar Hebraeus / Fr. Şalahānī, *Mukhtaşar*, 505. For epilepsy see Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-zamān* (Hyderabad, 1961), 4:177. Ibn al-Furāt, Muḥammad, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt* or *Tārīkh al-duwal wa al-mulūk*, (ed.) Costantine K. Zurayk (Beirut, [1936–42]), 7:234–235, notes both possibilities.

⁵⁰The other Qongrat wives were Tödeğü and Tödai. The other wives were Baytekin the daughter of Ḥusayn, possibly a Jalayirid; and the Oirat, El Qutlugh. See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 515, 547, and 38 for Baytekin’s father.

Table 4. **Ahmad Tegüder and his Qongrat women folk**
All women are in **bold**

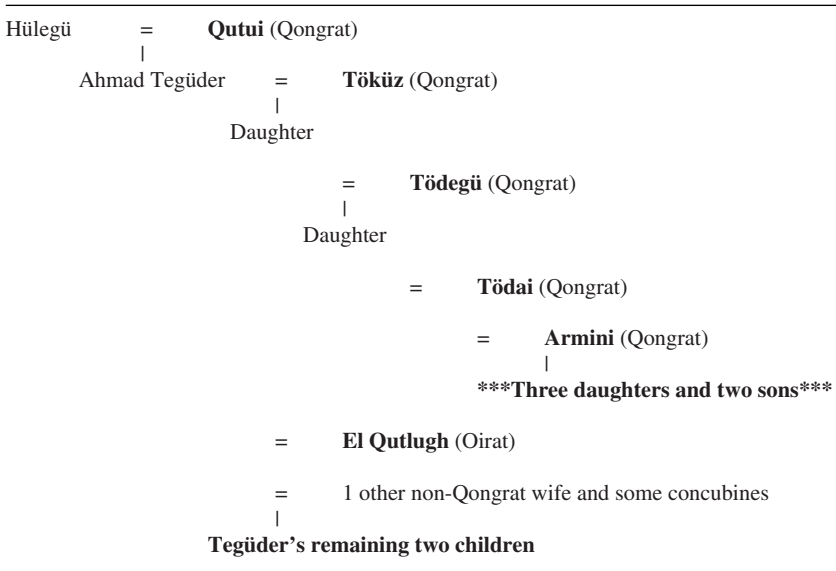
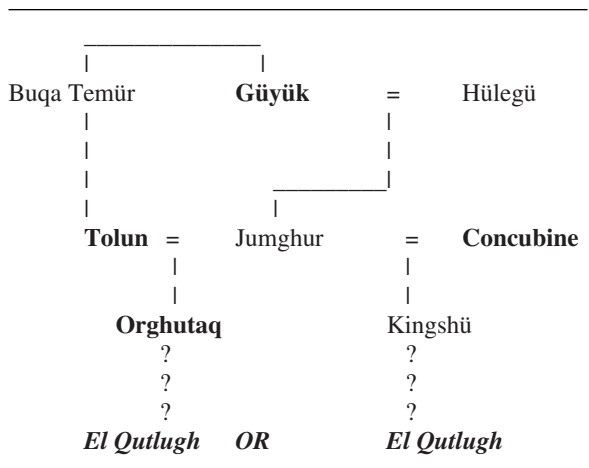


Table 5. **El Qutlugh (the lineage is not wholly clear)**
All women are in **bold**

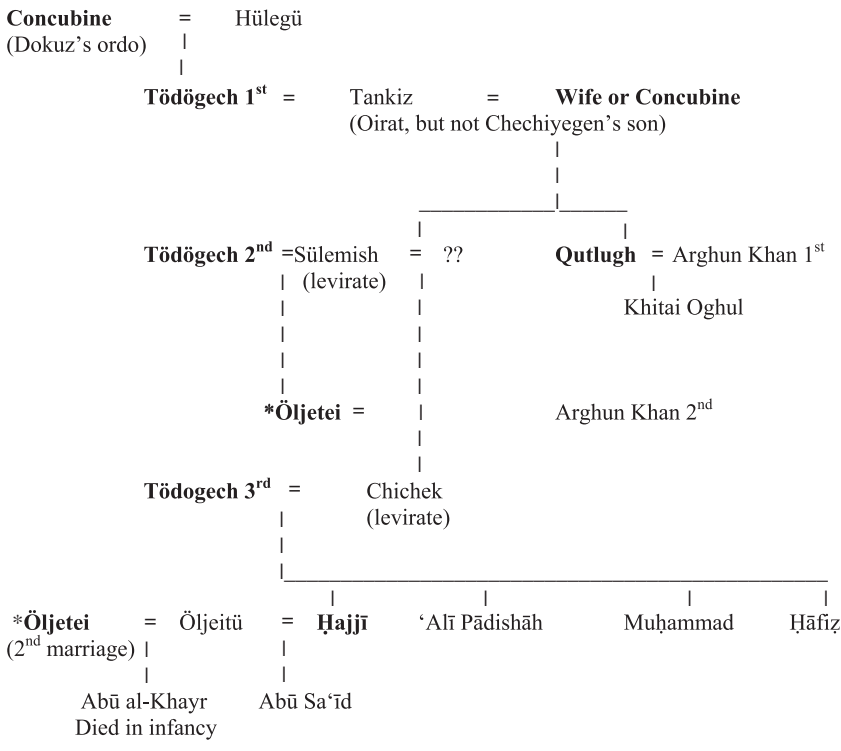


El Qutlugh, a great-granddaughter of Güyük Khatun, who bore no children with him.⁵¹ (See Table 5.) It is possible that El Qutlugh marks the beginning of the period when royal wives produced very few offspring (with the occasional exception like Armini). This could

⁵¹She had a daughter, Toghchaq, from an earlier relationship. The source is unclear, calling El Qutlugh a daughter both of Jumghur's daughter Orghutaq, and son Kingshü. See Table 5. Rashid al-Din / Thackston, *Compendium*, 473; 547, 575.

Table 6. **Tödögech and the junior line**⁵² All women in **bold**

*Note that Öljetei appears twice, once married to Arghun, once to Öljeitü
 There is some disagreement about Öljetei’s parentage: Rashīd al-Dīn claims she was Sülemish’s daughter (as represented here), but Qāshānī presents her as Hājji’s full sister (and therefore Chichek’s daughter) instead.⁵³



have been a result of male and female alcoholism, as well as generations of consanguinity, among other, as yet unknown, reasons.⁵⁴

But despite the Qongrat wifely numbers and Armini’s unusual fertility, Tegüder was soon ousted by Abagha’s son Arghun (r. 1284–1291) and a coalition of commanders and widows.⁵⁵ Tegüder’s fall also disempowered his Qongrat womenfolk, of whom Arghun married only the youngest and least influential.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Arghun’s two highest-

⁵²This table is modified from the excellent work of Charles Melville, “The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of Ilkhante, 1327–37: A Decade of discord in Iran”, *Papers on Inner Asia*, No.30 (Bloomington, 1999), 17.

⁵³Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 561; Qāshānī, *Uljaytū*, 7–8.

⁵⁴Masson Smith, “Decline”, pp. 35–52; also see note 7 above on consanguinity.

⁵⁵Boyle, “Il-Khans”, pp. 364–368.

⁵⁶This was Tödai, Abagha’s concubine and then Tegüder’s wife. See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 515, 547, 562, 591. In 1286 Arghun married another Qongrat, Bulughan (the younger), not to be confused with the Baya’ut wife Bulughan (the elder). See Charles Melville, “Bologan (Bülügān) Kātūn,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, (ed.) Ehsan Yarshater (London and New York, 1990), 4:338–339; also Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 515, 561, 566.

ranking wives were Oirat women, and Öljei actively supported his reign.⁵⁷ The Oirat family thus seemed poised to make a comeback.⁵⁸ Arghun's chief wife, Qutluğ, hailed from the junior line of Oirats, and bore Arghun's son Khitai Oghul, the third Toluid-Oirat prince.⁵⁹ (See Table 6.) But he was her only child, and Qutluğ died in 1288, followed by the prince in 1298.⁶⁰ Arghun's second Oirat wife, Qutluğ's niece Öljetei, was so young that he never touched her, and without children her influence was negligible.⁶¹ As a result the Oirat wives failed to compete despite their strong position; their family was then unexpectedly sidelined by Arghun's third wife, the Kereyit Örüğ Khatun, a niece of Dokuz, who crushed all wifely competition by producing five children, among them the future ruler Öljeitü.⁶² Worse still for Oirat family fortunes, when Arghun himself died in 1291, Tegüder's Oirat widow El Qutluğ was accused of murdering him with witchcraft, and executed in January 1291.⁶³ This was an especially low moment for Chechiyegen's descendants. Güyük, her daughter Buluqan, great-granddaughter El Qutluğ and the two princes, Jumghur and Mōngke Temür, were dead, as was Qutluğ from the junior line. Buqa Temür and the great patron Öljei had disappeared from the historical sources. Who was left to lead the family?

The flight to Syria

Then Oirat fortunes sank lower. Rule next passed to Arghun's half-brother Geikhatu (r. 1291–95), who married no Oirat women at all.⁶⁴ In time Geikhatu's control of the Ilkhanate was threatened by his cousin Baidu, a grandson of Hülegü.⁶⁵ Among his supporters were the Oirat troops who had fought with Mōngke Temür in Syria in 1281, led by Taraqai, a grandson of Buqa Temür and husband of Mōngke Temür's daughter Ara Qutluğ.⁶⁶ (See Table 3.) But Baidu was defeated and executed by Arghun's son Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), after which Taraqai found himself a traitor.⁶⁷ Ghazan's Toluid-Oirat wife Gūnjishkab (a descendant of Jumghur) did nothing to help Taraqai, who fought his way out of the Ilkhanate with 10,000–18,000 of his troops and their families, and fled to Mamluk Syria.⁶⁸ His timing seemed ideal:

⁵⁷ Öljei refused to harbour a rebel against Arghun in 1288–89. See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 570, 571.

⁵⁸ Arghun's mother, Qaitmish, was a concubine from the Önggüts, into whose ruling family Börte's daughter Alaqa had married. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 71, 516, 561.

⁵⁹ She was a daughter of the Oirat Tankiz, but perhaps not of Tödögech. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 561.

⁶⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 561, 567, 641.

⁶¹ See Table 6. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 561.

⁶² Örüğ was the daughter of Dokuz's brother Saricha, and sister of the commander Irinjin. She had two sons, Yesü Temür (who died in infancy), and Öljeitü, and three daughters: Öljetei (not the same as Arghun's Oirat wife of this name), Öljei Temür and Qutluğ Temür. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 561–562.

⁶³ Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 575.

⁶⁴ He had six wives: two Jalayirids (Ā'ishah and Dondi); two Qongrats (Eltüzmiş and Bulughan), the Kereyit Örüğ, and Pādīshāh, the daughter of the ruler of Kirman. See Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 579–580.

⁶⁵ Baidu was the son of Hülegü's son Taraghai. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 474; see also note 28.

⁶⁶ Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 56–57.

⁶⁷ Boyle, "Il-Khans", pp. 372–379.

⁶⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 473, although Gūnjishkāb is not listed among Ghazan's wives. See also Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7. For her see Charles Melville, "Decline" pp. 14–15 and note 30.

an Oirat mamluk named Kitbugha had taken over in December 1294, and welcomed the refugees warmly.⁶⁹ But Kitbugha was ousted in 1296, and many of the Oirat leaders were executed after a failed coup in winter 1299–1300.⁷⁰ Thereafter the remaining Oirat people slowly assimilated into Mamluk military society through marriage and disappeared from historical view.⁷¹

The last prince: Abū Saʿīd

But back in the Ilkhanate the Oirat family made one last comeback. Although Ghazan's brother and heir Öljeitü (r. 1304–16) was the son of the Kereyit Örüġ, only one of his twelve wives, Qutluġh Shah, was a Kereyit, and her only daughter died as a child.⁷² Qutluġh Shah also must have been overshadowed by the four Oirat wives, including the chief wife, Ghazan's widow Günjishkab, who bore no children.⁷³ A second Toluid–Oirat wife was Büchigen, a granddaughter of Öljei from the senior Oirat line, who produced a daughter, Dulandī.⁷⁴ The third and fourth Oirat wives were either half- or full sisters, Ḥajjī and Öljetei, from the junior Oirat line.⁷⁵ (See Tables 6 and 7.) Each sister bore a son, but only one, Ḥajjī's son Abū Saʿīd, lived to adulthood. Five other boys born to Öljeitü's wives died as children, which raises some questions about the effects of generations of consanguinity.⁷⁶

Öljeitü himself died in December 1316, and the 12-year-old Abū Saʿīd became the only Toluid–Oirat prince to ascend the throne in 1317, 36 years after Möngke Temür's death. But Abū Saʿīd's reign was coopted by his powerful commanders, ministers and mother. These

⁶⁹Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, (ed.) Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 8, pp. 361–362; Baybars al-Mansūrī, *Zubdah*, 309–310 and *Kitāb al-tuhfah al-mulūkiyah fī al-dawlah al-turkiyah*, (ed.) ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ṣālīh Ḥamdān (Cairo, 1987), p. 146; al-Nuwayrī, Ḥmad, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, (ed.) Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1992), 31, pp. 296–299; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, (ed.) Muḥammad al-Khurāsānī (Al-Najaf, 1969), p. 344; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:203–204; Abū al-Fidāʾ, *The Memoirs of a Syrian Prince: Abū'l-Fidāʾ, Sultan of Hamah (672–732/1273–1331)*, translated and edited by P. M. Holt (Wiesbaden, 1983), 26; Author Z, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlükensultane in den Jahren 690–740 der Jigra nach Arabischen Handschriften*, (ed.) K. V. Zetterstéen (Leiden, 1919), pp. 38–39; Bar Hebraeus / Budge, *Chronography*, 508. See also P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London and New York, 1986), p. 108; Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (Carbondale, 1986), pp. 91, 94.

⁷⁰Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 9:15; Baybars al-Mansūrī, *Zubdah*, 330 and *Tuhfah*, 156; Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:383; Author Z, *Beitrage*, 58; Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, p. 100.

⁷¹Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:299.

⁷²Qutluġh Shah was the daughter of Örüġ's brother Irinjin, and received Dokuz's ordo in 1304. Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 472, 660; Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 43. For a Kereyit–Toluid family tree see Charles Melville, “Abū Saʿīd and the Revolt of the Amirs in 1319,” in *L'Iran face à la domination Mongole*, (ed.) Denise Aigle (Tehran, 1997), p. 117.

⁷³Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 473; Abū Bakr al-Qutbī al-Ahrī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uwāys (History of Shaikh Uwāys): An Important Source for the History of Adharbaijan in the Fourteenth Century*, translated by J. B. van Loon (The Hague, 1954), p. 153 / tr. 55; Davud Banākātī, *Tārīkh-i Banākātī or Rawḍ al-albāb fī tawārīkh al-akābir wa al-anṣāb*, (ed.) Jaʿfar Shiʿār (Tehran, 1969), 473. See the helpful table in Melville, “Decline,” p. 15, although he omits Ḥajjī, Abū Saʿīd's mother.

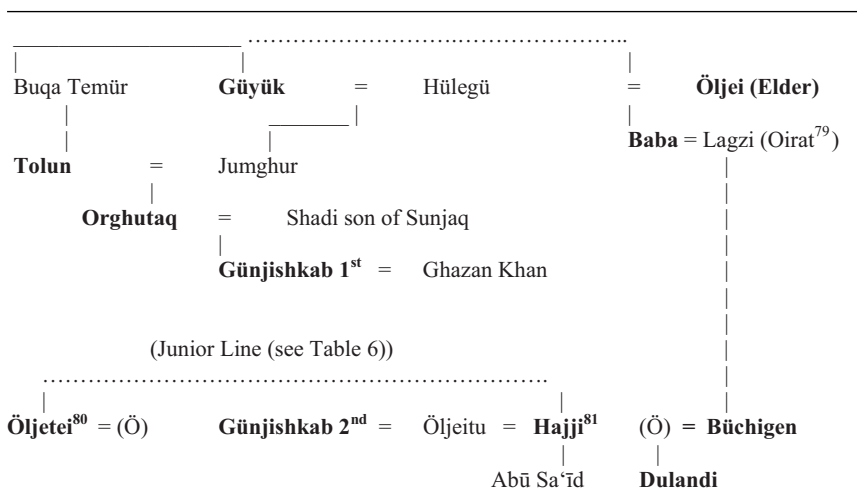
⁷⁴Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7, 43; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 476 for Lagzi, her Oirat father.

⁷⁵There is some disagreement about Öljetei's parentage: Rashīd al-Dīn claims she was Sülemish's daughter (as represented in the table), but Qāshānī presents her as Ḥajjī's full sister (and therefore Chickek's daughter) instead. See Table 7; also notes 24, 28; also Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7–8; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 476, 561.

⁷⁶Öljetei's son was Abū al-Khayr. Öljeitü Khan's third son, Sulaymān Shāh, from a wife named ʿĀdilshāh, died as a child. The Qongrat Eltüzimish bore three boys who died in infancy, and a girl, Sātī Beg, who married the Sulduz commander Choban. Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7–8, 89; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 515, 580, 658; Qazvīnī, *Gūzīdeh*, 615.

Table 7. **Günjishkab and Öljeitü Khan's other three Oirat wives**⁷⁸All women are in **bold**

Tiny dotted line represents half-siblings; (Ö) represents Öljeitü in the penultimate line



complex political struggles have been admirably dealt with by others;⁷⁷ suffice to say that Abū Saʿīd's death in 1335 ended Oirat family fortunes in the Ilkhanate, although they had already been on the wane.

Conclusion

The Oirats living in the Ilkhanate had started in an excellent position, since Chechiyegen's status as a Chinggisid princess made Gүйük into Hügügü's chief wife, and allowed Buqa Temür's appointment to the Iran campaign with the Oirat soldiers. The intermarriage of Gүйük's children with those of her brother Buqa Temür, assisted by the contributions of children from the half-sister, Öljei, laid a strong foundation for future generations of Oirat in-laws and Toluid–Oirat royals, while the junior line of Oirats, descending from Hügügü's daughter Tödogech and her Oirat husbands, provided additional cousins to support the senior line.

But despite their advantages, the Oirat royal wives placed almost no sons on the throne. Only Hajji managed it with Abū Saʿīd, but this was hardly a brilliant Oirat success since his realm was rife with problems. Rather, such vicissitudes as unexpected adult death and declining survival rates among the increasingly fewer children who were born joined with the challenges posed by rival in-law families like the Qongrats and the

⁷⁷See the meticulous work of Melville in “1319,” entire and “Decline,” entire.

⁷⁸This table is modified from the excellent work of Charles Melville in *Decline*, 15 on Günjishkab.

⁷⁹The Oirat son of the commander Arghun Agha, a scribe for Hügügü. See Qāshānī, *Uljaytu*, 7, 43; Rashīd al-Dīn / Thackston, *Compendium*, 57, 476 for Lagzi, her father.

⁸⁰She was from the Oirat junior line; see Table 5.

⁸¹She was from the Oirat junior line; see Table 5.

Kereyits to show an unexpectedly inglorious history among Chechiyegen's descendants.
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