TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS:
DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

MU'IZZ AL-ANSĀB AND SPURIOUS ChINGIZIDS

In Oriental studies, like in all other branches of science, there are many traps into which a scholar can fall. One of these traps are the established opinions of the former and present scholarly authorities. The second volume of “A Collection of Materials Relating to the History of the Golden Horde” [1] published by the famous Russian orientalist W. G. Tisenhausen contains translations of long passages from Mu'izz al-ansāb (“The Book in Praise of Genealogies”) — one of the most important sources on the genealogical history of the Chingizid and the Timurid families in the 13th—15th centuries. When I compared the translations with the text of the original, now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, I discovered that the published translations of the abstracts contained most serious mistakes distorting the genealogical history of the Chingizids, as well as the whole picture of internal dynamic and political relations in the Chingizid ulūsēs.

It would have been proper to consider the problem of the spurious Chingizids, the supposed male descendants of Chingiz Khan who never really existed, much earlier. They came into being by mistake, when in 1941 the second volume of the “Collection of Materials Relating to the History of the Golden Horde” was published, containing the translation of the early 15th century Islamic work Mu'izz al-ansāb. The Persian original of Mu'izz al-ansāb, however, of which no copies were to be found in the former Soviet Union, became available to the author of this article only recently. Spurious Chingizids were discovered by pure chance, when I compared the translations published in the above mentioned “Collection of Materials” with corresponding passages in the original Persian text of Mu'izz al-ansāb. The total number of these spurious Chingizids is really striking. Not to tease the reader any more I shall turn now straight to the subject of my article, going back not only to the 15th century, the time when Mu'izz al-ansāb was written, but two centuries earlier, to the time of the foundation of the Empire of Chingiz Khan.

The conquests of Chingiz Khan (d. 1227) and his immediate successors resulted in the creation of Eke Mongol Ulus (The Great Mongol State) spreading from the Yellow Sea in the east to the Danube and Euphrates in the west. It was natural that the Empire which consolidated so many different peoples, tribes and states of the Far East, Middle East and Eastern Europe could not continue for a long time. Already by the 1260s the Mongol Empire became split into four ulūs-states ruled by khāns — the descendants of Chingiz Khan. These independent and rivaling states were:

1. The Golden Horde, to which belonged the Great Steppe (Dasht-i Qipchaq of the Muslim sources), from the River Irtysh in the east to the Danube in the west. This state was ruled by the descendants of Juchi (d. 1227), the elder son of Chingiz Khan.

2. The Chaghatay state, which included Mawarannahr, Semireche, East Turkestan (Kashgharia). It took its name from Chaghatay (d. 1242) the second son of Chingiz Khan.

3. The Hūlagūid state created in Iran by Hūlagū Khan (d. 1265), the son of Tuluy, the fourth son of Chingiz Khan. Hūlagū and his descendants bore also the title of ilkhān, therefore in scholarly works the Mongol rulers of Iran are often called the Ilkhanids.

4. The state in Mongolia and China, with its capital first in Kaiping, then in Beijing. It was ruled by another line of the descendants of Tuluy (d. 1233), namely the descendants of the Great Khan Qubilai (d. 1294), brother of īlkhan Hūlagū. This state got the official Chinese name — the Yuan Empire.

Each of these four states had its own destiny. The descendants of Tuluy who ruled in China (the Yüan Empire) were assimilated by the Chinese. The Jüchids, Chaghatayids and Hūlagūids became converts to Islam, the creed of their subjects. The descendants of Tuluy remained in power in Mongolia proper till the 17th century, in China, however, they ruled only till 1368, when the Ming dynasty came into power. The last īlkhan Abū Sa'id died in 1335, the Hūlagūid state in Iran disintegrated between 1336 and 1353. The Chaghatayid dynasty ceased to exist in East Turkestan at the end of the 17th century. The Jüchids, however, continued to rule in Dasht-i Qipchaq and in the neighbouring regions for a very long time — till the middle of the 19th century.

The works of Muslim authors of the first decades of the 14th century used the Turkic word īğlān or īğlān — literally meaning “son”, “child” — to define the members of the Jüchid, Chaghatayid or Hūlagūid dynasties. The term “prince” was used as a title, i.e. male descendant of the “Golden Family” of Chingiz Khan, and in this meaning the word īṣğlān (īṣğlān) comes only after proper names. From the 1330s—1340s the Arabic word sulṭān becomes the title