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). 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 Mongolia. 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 year.

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

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. 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 Hülegü. 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 Mamlūk 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 culture.

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 fight.

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 empire. Even his own younger brother the ini Ariq Böke refused to recognise the authority of Qubilai aqa and revolted against him.

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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.
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 aqa had priority regarding the throne. The words aqa 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 cooperate. 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 Mamluks against the Ilkhanate is considered.

The purpose here is not to discuss the dissolution process of the Mongolian Empire, since this has been already done by David Morgan and Peter Jackson 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 internal. 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 mechanism


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 Ahmad. After his conversion to Islam, the acceptance of the Islamic sharīʿa as a state regime and his intention to end the conflict with the Mamlūks caused dissatisfaction among the elites of the Ilkhanate. Tegüder’s religious conversion was predicated on the separation of the Great Khanate, both culturally and politically. His successor, Arghun (1284–91), explained this situation in the yarlighs which he sent to the neighbouring countries after he ascended to the throne, as follows: ‘Ahmad turned aside from the laws of our fathers, and trod the path of Islam’.

Someone else who was uncomfortable because of the divergence from Mongolian unity and the laws of Chinggis (yasa) was Buqa Noyan, one of the amirs. 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 (tamghachi) 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 Ahmad Tegüder was taking control. Even though Buqa was

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16 For two opposing views about Ahmad 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.


18 E. A. Wallis Budge, The Chronography of Gregory Abû’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 position.

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.’

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 urūq, 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 Arghun.

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 fiina would arise within the Ilkhanate. In addition to that, contrary to some other elder noyan, it is apparent

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22 Rashīd al-Dīn, Žami’ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1145.
23 For example, in contrast with Buqa, Hindū Noyan cared about Aḥmad Tegüder’s becoming an aqa 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 aqa, 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, Žami’ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1132. Similarly, Tikna explained his thoughts regarding who should become the ruler as follows: ‘Hülejü 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, Žami’ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1145
that Buqa did not care about the criterion that the person ascending to the throne must be an aqa. 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 Rabīʿ al-Ākhar 683/10 July 1284 in Kharrraqān, 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, Khurāsān. Buqa intimidated the other noyans by threatening them and thus persuaded Arghun to become an ilkhan and literally gave the ilkhan title away.

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 1284, 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’ 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 Shaʿbān 683/16 October 1284.

26 Rashīd al-Dīn, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1148.
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 or Chīnksānk 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 Chīnsāng) who was sent to the Ilkhanate court. 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’an. This privilege certainly made Buqa untouchable by the ilkhan.

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29 Rashīd al-Dīn, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1161.
30 From the record ‘az khaḍrat (ilkhan) mulaqqa-bi chīnsānk 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 Shūrāzī, Waṣṣāf al-Haḍrat, Tajziyat al-amsār wa Tajziyat al-‘asār, Tehrān 1338, p. 229. Kartlis Tskhovreba here this title is being mentioned as Čingizid and Čingishan. A History of Georgia, Kartlis Tskhovreba, ed. Commission for the Study of Georgian Historical Sources, Tbilisi 2014, p. 376, p. 378.
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 āhākin rā na-dārand’). 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 Khan. 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.’

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’. 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 formula. 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

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33 Waṣṣāf, *Taḏziyat al-ʾansār*, 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 Abūl Faraj*, p. 560.


Buqa directly by Ilkhan Arghun\textsuperscript{38}. 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’\textsuperscript{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 Buqa\textsuperscript{40}. 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’\textsuperscript{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,  

\textsuperscript{38} Waṣṣāf, \textit{Tajziyat al-amsār}, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{40} Rashīd al-Dīn, \textit{Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh}, p. 1166.
\textsuperscript{41} Rashīd al-Dīn, \textit{Jāmiʿ 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 Tabrīz with yarlighs and paīzās, 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 Ahmad 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, Amir ‘Alī Tamghachi, Ḫusām 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, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1167.
43 Rashīd al-Dīn, Jāmiʿ 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, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1168. Buqa sent a detailed list (möchalga) 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, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, p. 1169.
officers within the Ilkhanid state also supported Buqa. Arghun thought that Buqa also had supporters in dependent states: he suspected that the king of Georgia, Dimitri (1270–89), supported Buqa. That was because when Ahmad Tegüder ascended to the throne Dimitri had made a congratulatory visit, during which he married off his daughter Rosudan to Buqa’s son. Shem’un, who was an important figure with his multiple roles as priest, physician and jurist, was also accused of supporting Buqa. 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 him.

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 tribe. 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.

He witnessed the conflict between Ahmad 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 aqa by eliminating his uncle and aqa Ahmad Tegüder. Thus, even though the Iranian lands were taken out of the hands of Muslim Ahmad 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

individuals mentioned earlier, everybody who was known to support Buqa was executed after trial\textsuperscript{54}.

One of the two survivors was Bayan Bitikchi, who was pardoned because he told the truth during the \textit{yarghu}. The other one was the previously mentioned Qadan \textit{Ilchi}. In Rashīd al-Dīn’s words, Qadan was saved because ‘he was Qa’an’s ambassador’\textsuperscript{55}. Why was Qadan, who acted together with Buqa, spared while Buqa \textit{Ch’eng-Hsiang}, who could only be judged by Qubilai Khan, executed without a \textit{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, \textit{khanate}, in the name \textit{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 \textit{quasi numquam accidit}. This can help explain why Bolad \textit{Ch’eng-Hsiang} was not involved in the attempted coup: he remained in the background in order to

\textsuperscript{54} Rashīd al-Dīn, \textit{Jāmiʿ 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.

\textsuperscript{55} Rashīd al-Dīn, \textit{Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh}, p. 1171. Rashīd al-Dīn recorded this information as follows: ‘Qadan chūn \textit{ilchi}-yi Qa’an būd khalāṣ yāft wa Bayan Bitikchi chūn sukhanhā ba-rāstī taqrīr kard ham khalāṣ 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.
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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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