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## AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL SOURCES OF MONGOL HISTORY

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### ABSTRACT:

*The credibility of research in history depends on the credibility of sources referred to in the process and the way they are interpreted. Accordingly, it is imperative, firstly, to select the right sources, and secondly, to thoroughly analyze and question them. The situation, in many instances, gets aggravated when researchers find contradicting information from various sources. Such a situation necessitates paying due attention to the contexts in which these works were written, the potential influences that the authors may have faced, and the way in which such works were transmitted. This paper is an attempt to make a contribution in this direction in relation to a few key primary and secondary sources of Mongol history that can extremely vital in reconstructing their times, their mindset, their empire and the horrific invasions they are known for. We have presented a brief overview of 15 important classical historical sources that shed light on the Mongol history and their conquests. Though most of the major events appear to be mentioned in these works, however, while reviewing these works, difference can be noticed in terms of authors' opinions and support (or lack thereof) for those events and underlying decisions from various players appearing in the picture. We also see a tint of political influence in these works. Some of the works are known to have mistakes in terms of certain specific information about the events and persons involved. Historical sources selected for this study were either written as the relevant events were unfolding, or written within a few*

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*centuries after the events took place. In these sources, we also notice that some of the authors were the direct eyewitnesses of the incidents whereas others relied on second or third-hand information. Accordingly, it becomes important for researchers to understand these factors in order to correctly reference from these works and contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject in a meaningful and healthy way.*

**KEYWORDS:** Mongol, Baghdad, Islamic Civilization, History

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In the seventh century after Hijrah, turmoil after turmoil hit the Muslim Ummah. In these times, which can unarguably be considered as one of the most catastrophic times in the Muslim history, the fitnah of Mongols pillaged the golden age of Muslim civilization. These events completely changed the direction of history. Had this episode of oppression, cruelty and inhumanity not been recorded in the history, it would have been very hard for the coming generations to believe. Rising from the steppes of Mongolia, the Mongols shook the world with their military might and cunning mentality. The Islamic caliphate weakened by the internal differences, lack of governance skills and fitnahs such as assassins, could not bear this blow and one area after the other fell in the hands of the Mongols. Wherever they went, Mongols left and the undeniable trail of destruction and bloodshed. If we combine all the atrocities and war crimes of today's age and compare them to the time of the Mongols, we will be left with no doubt that it is not a match to the bloodshed, destruction and terrorism our Ummah faced at the hands of the Mongols. In the Islamic centers of excellence and knowledge, they made pyramids with the heads of scholars and destroyed tons and tons of books. Al-Juvaini records that there were 50,000 Mongol soldiers who were each given 24 Muslims to execute. After this mass killing, they marched upon the Islamic caliphate. When they reached Bukhara, they gathered all Muslims in mosques and butchered them. When they reached Samarkand, they drove all Muslims out of the cities and killed every single one of them. This resulted in the destruction of a golden age in the history and made an unprecedented impact on our religious, political, economic, scientific and cultural progress.

What happened over these years of trouble is truly amazing. Despite these genocides, Muslim Ummah did not finish. We rose up from the ashes again, leaving behind no doubts that the end of oppression and tyranny is always a defeat and humiliation. Pages of history from east to west testify

this important principle. Mongols who killed millions of innocent Muslims ultimately ended up either joining the ranks of those that they were brutally killing and accepting Islam or getting broken up from within as well as because of the wars they inflicted on others themselves.

It is extremely important to uncover the facts generally concealed from our new generation and to invite them to ponder upon the reasons for all of this destruction and what happened in the following years. There were a number of heroes who made their sincere efforts to save the ummah from these afflictions and unite them. However, as with most of the politically motivated historical accounts of that time, we see a contradiction between various reports and different portrayal of personalities. Those future researchers who could not maintain an unbiased stance picked up the views that seemed to align well with their motives. However, it was the unbiased and authentic researchers that brought to our knowledge the historical facts that we deserve to know. This paper presents a broad overview of some of the sources of Mongol history with their timeline.

#### **SOURCES OF MONGOL HISTORY:**

During a recent study in which we explored the Mongol history, we observed how human beings have tried to deny themselves of many important historical facts by forging and changing them the way they wanted. Some important observations about the books on Mongol history are as follows:

- Though there is a common thread between many events, there are a large number of facts which are inconsistent between known sources of Mongol history
- Based on their affiliation, medieval historians have hidden or forged some facts which contradict some of the facts stated in their own books
- Some contemporary historians have successfully challenged such forging and tried to clean off the dust from the true picture. On the other hand, some of the present day writers have added to the dust by presenting half picture or a picture that is created by utilizing controversial and weaker sources of history.
- Some history books (or a reasonable portion within them) are based on ‘memories of events’ or ‘stories’ that authors heard from others,

which makes them more susceptible to errors irrespective of how much we praise the memory of those who wrote these to prove our point.

- Similarly, we see a bias in journalism of the time and the impact of political powers governing what was required to be written and what was deemed worthy of brushing under the carpet. This puts unbiased researchers in a position of great difficulty to segregate underlying facts and realities.

One of the reasons for contradictions between various sources of history was the lack of a proper system of news communication. This led to exaggeration on many accounts. Andrew Pettegree, a researcher on European Medieval ages and the writer of the book “The Invention of News”<sup>1</sup> says about system of new reporting (which was essentially a source of recording history) as follows:

“Essentially, we relied on travelers to tell us what was happening in the wider world and then, as now, we had to trust the messenger if we were going to believe their stories. “

Therefore, according to him, there were no means to differentiate the truth from fabrication. It is, therefore, essential to refer to only most trusted historians and most trusted books of history to understand correct details about events of that time.

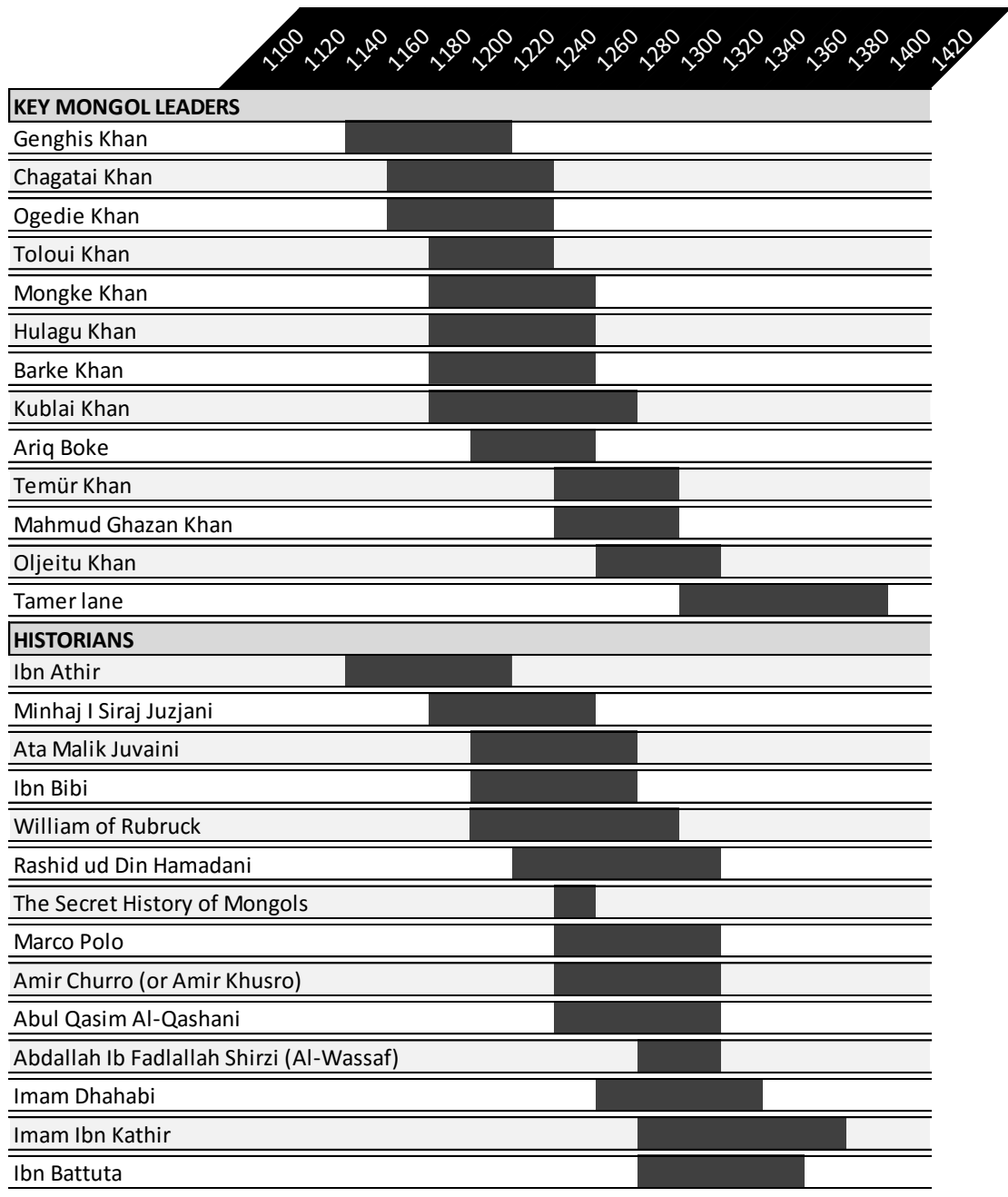
We will now present my brief analysis on some key sources for Mongol history and discuss their historical significance in accordance with chronology presented in table 1.

### ***1. Al-Kamil Fi Tareekh by Ibn Athir:***

Abul Hasan Ibn al-Athir (1160-1233), was an influential Arab historian who remained directly involved with many key events in Islamic history. He was for a time with Saladin’s army in Syria and later lived in Aleppo (Syria) and Damascus. Ibn Al-Athir and his family made huge contributions to Hadith and other Islamic literature. His elder brother, Majid ud Din (1149-1210) was a scholar of note who made a collection of the Hadith and Sunnah of Beloved Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and a dictionary of obscure terms in Hadith collections.

**Table 1: Timeline of Mongol Historians and Key Rulers**

**TIMELINE - KEY MONGOL RULERS AND HISTORIANS**



His youngest brother, Diya Al Din (1163–1239), was also a noted author and literary critic who worked for Saladin and became vizier to Saladin's son, al-Malik al-Afdal.

The content structure of his book *Al-Kamil Fi Tareekh* has the following notable features:

- The first part of the book or the 'Muqaddimah' section contains the principles and concepts of history that Ibn al-Athir followed in this book
- The second part is the narrative section. This book, like many other medieval books of history, starts with the lives of Prophets and goes on to cover the events of history covering many important events.
- Ibn Al Athir has covered crusades in details is considered to be a key source of information for that time. He also touches upon Seljuqs.
- For some years, he refrained himself from writing about the Mongol invasion because of severe pain he felt about those events as reflected in the words he has used to describe his feelings. He considers this period to be the most crucial time in Muslim history.
- Ibn Al-Athir has also written a history of the atabegs (former Seljuq army officers who founded dynasties) of Mosul called *al-Bahir*, which was drawn from his own experience and from that of his father, who held office under the Zangids<sup>1</sup> of Mosul. Among his other works were compilations of biographical and genealogical material of earlier authors.
- This history does not cover the events that took over Abbasid Caliphate and other areas after initial Mongol invasions as Ibn-Athir died in 1233.

Fahimi Kamaruzaman, Jamaluddin, and Faathin Mohd Fadzil (2015) analyzed the *Muqaddimah* section of this book and presented following findings from their research:

<sup>1</sup> The Zengid (or Zangid) dynasty was a Muslim dynasty of Oghuz Turk origin, which ruled parts of Syria and northern Iraq on behalf of the Seljuk Empire. The dynasty was founded by Imad ad-Din Zengi (or Zangi), who became the Seljuk Atabeg (governor) of Mosul in 1127.

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Results found that there were three forms of philosophy of history of Ibn al-Athir. First, tazkirah (reminder) is a reminder for mankind of historical events that happened. Second, sahih (authentic) is a selection technique of factual historical content. Third, tamm (completeness or perfection) as a process of scrutiny and observation before a narration is chosen and written. These three indirectly underlie the whole historiography of al-Kamil and form Ibn al-Athir's ideas of philosophy of history in al-Kamil fi al-tarikh. (p.28)

The sources of this book, which also include Tareekh Al-Tabari (Fahimi Kamaruzaman et al., 2015; ul-Hasan, 2005), is heavily critiqued for containing a large number of inauthentic narrations and events that are believed to be fabricated by munifqueen or the enemies of Islam (Gulam, 2011). Al-Tabari left the analysis of accounts mentioned in his book to readers to judge if they were fine or not. However, Ibn Al-Athir, did question those events in some instances e.g. his explanation about some of the Persian superstitions making their way into various of books of history (ul-Hasan, 2005).

It is important to note that not all the content from Al-Kamil Fi Tareekh, like Tareekh Al-Tabari, is free from errors. Musharraf (2015b) has presented details about various narrations in this book which are from weak and untrustworthy narrators. Accordingly, one should be cautious about such narrations, especially those concerning sahabah.

## **2. *Tabaqat-e-Naseeri:***

Tabaqat-i Nasiri was written by Minhaj al Siraj Juzjani (1193-1265), a thirteenth-century Persian historian (Delgado, 2008). It is named after Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud (Choudhary, 2014) who was the son of Sultan Iltutmish (Bosworth, 2010). Juzjani worked in the courts of Persian and Indian princes and Sultans and enjoyed high ranks in the courts of Nasiruddin Qubacha, Sultan Iltutmish, Razia Sultana and Sultan Nasir ud Din Mahmud. This provided him with right resources to compile this book. He was also appointed as the head of the Firuzi Madrassa in Uchch, Qazi of Gwalior and the head of Madrassa-i Nasiri in Delhi owing to his jurisprudential potential and scholarly abilities.

This work (Tabaqat-e-Naseeri) comprises of 23 volumes (Siddiqi, 2010), written in plain and straightforward style in a 'tabaqat' (literally 'layers') style of writing referring to various periods in the history. This style of



writing was pioneered by Juzjani and became a renowned method among later historians. Though the book talks about a number of various topics (such as history of prophets, pre-Islamic Arabia, ancient kings of Persia, formation of Muslim state by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and its expansion, Ummayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates etc.) but the main body of the text deals with the Persian dynasties. The final section of the book, *Tabaqah* 23, deals with "the disasters befalling Islam and the irruption of the infidels, may God cause them to perish," i.e., the Mongols, up to the time of the Il-Khanid Hülegü and the Golden Horde Khan Berke (Bosworth, 2010).

Choudhary (2014) explained:

This work which was completed in 1259-60 is especially revered for being an important source of information about the Delhi Sultanate and the Mongols. The author himself was witness to the Mongol conquest of Central Asia in the 1220s. While he was fortunate enough to survive the Mongol onslaught, he was forced to flee his homeland of Ghur, in central Afghanistan, never to return again. In 1226, he sought refuge in India and found patronage under the Delhi Sultanate. It was here that Juzjani wrote the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. This work comprises twenty three sections, comprising interesting details of historical events relating to the Saljuqs, the Khorezmshahs, the conquering Mongols, the Afghan Ghurids and their Shamshi slave-king successors, Juzjani's patrons in north India. (p.1)

Bosworth (2010) explains his coverage of Mongol history as follows:

For the Mongol invasions, which were of course for him very contemporary history, Jowzjāni got direct information from persons who had been eyewitnesses to events in Transoxiana and Khorasan when the Mongols arrived, such as the Sayyed-e Ajall Bahā'-al-Din Rāzi; a secretary of the Khwarazmshahs, Tāj-al-Din 'Emād-al-Molk; the merchant K̄vāja Aḥmad Vaḳṣi; the qāzi Waḥid-al-Din Fušanji; the Ghurid Malek Tāj-al-Din Ḥasan; K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din Balki; Sayyed Ašraf-al-Din b. Jalāl-al-Din of Samarqand; and others

The last *tabaqah*, which deals with Mongols, was being written simultaneously as the events were unfolding leaving little if no dependence on memory (unlike numerous other historical collection of his time). Choudhary (2014) explained: “the last *tabaqah* of the work entitled the ‘History of Islam and the Mongol Eruption’ is considered by modern scholars invaluable for its treatments of the rise of Mongol power and the dissolution of the Mongol Empire in 1259 after the death of Emperor Monge Khan.”

In the last *tabaqah*, Juzjani first discusses the rise of the Mongols under the leadership of Genghis Khan and their conquests in central Asia. He then explains the horrific stories of the fall of Persia and does not refrain from challenging and criticizing the approach and policies of Alaaddin Khwarismshah, the Muslim ruler of Persia at the time of invasion. He then moves on and explains subsequent attacks. “The account furnished by him of the sack of Baghdad and the destruction of the Caliphate by Hulegu in 1258 is not only corroborated by fourteenth-century Arab historians, but a comparative study suggests that the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* had become a source of information even in Arab lands” (Choudhary, 2014). Ogedei, the eldest son of Changez Khan and his immediate successor, has received praises from Juzjani for allowing the Muslim rulers to retain their states by pledging an alliance to him, rebuilding the cities ruined by wars and allowing Muslims to marry Mongol women. During Ogedei’s time, Muslims received relatively less tyranny. But soon after him, the aggression started again and the war was waged against the Khilafah. Juzjani dedicates a separate section to Burke Khan, the first Mongol prince to accept Islam, which resulted in the dissolution of the Mongols. Choudhary (2014) explained about this event that “this is an important event for him as in that he sees the triumph of Islam and the dissolution of Changez Khan’s empire. Berke Khan’s strict adherence to the sharia and his concerns for the safety and welfare of the Muslims is highly emphasized”. Though Juzjani praised Berke and Ogedei, his mention of Chagatai Khan as “Chagatai the Accursed” shows the extent of his displeasure disdain with him and Mongols in general.

Juzjani has cited the sources of his information as well and showed concerns where he doubted the authenticity of those sources. “These *tabaqas* are based on standard literary sources, information collected from the merchants who travelled to different countries in connection with their trade, immigrants in India, as well as the compiler’s personal observations made in Ghur, Khurasan and India. In fact the wealth of detail, contained

in the last tabaqa add great importance to the work” (Siddiqi, 2010, p. 93). Juzjani used a method of triangulation for the information presented in this book. Choudhary (2014) explained: “He mentions the Khwarazm Shahi dignitaries who supplied information to him which includes ministers, scholars, Mongol soldiers, merchants etc. This information also seems to have been verified for incorporation in the Tabaqat, because a comparison with other sources serve both as corroboration and a corrective”.

Being affiliated with the Turkish rulers, he is criticized for explaining certain things from their perspective and not challenging them on various matters (Bosworth, 2010). Another criticism relates to repetitive, and sometimes contradictory, mention of same events in various tabaqat.

The selection and organization of the historical material combined with an original and straightforward style, rendered it a work of absorbing interest for all times.

An addition to this book was made by Zia al-Din Barni who added the details about the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and titled it as ‘Tareekh e Firz Shahi’.

### **3. *"The History of the World Conqueror"***

The History of The World Conqueror (Persian: تاریخ جهانگشای " Tarikh-i Jahangushay-i ") was written by Ata-Malik Juvayni (1226–1283)<sup>2</sup>. This historical account was written in Persian language and describes the Mongol history its contemporaries.

Juvaini, like his father and brother, served the Mongols and acquired high ranks among them (Young, 1959). This provided him with an opportunity to travel widely within the kingdom and acquire useful knowledge which he later used in compilation of his historical account. In 1252-53 when he had an extended time at his disposal while being posted at Karakoram, he was persuaded by some acquaintances to compile this work. His relationship with Mongols is evident from the praise he remembers them within this book which he wrote while serving them. Shortly after completing this book (after the fall of Alamut fort of Assassins) and the fall of Baghdad, he was given the governorship of Baghdad (Young, 1959). He held that

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<sup>2</sup> Ata-Malik Juvaini should not be confused with ‘Imam al-Haramayn Dhia’ ul-Din Abd al-Malik ibn Yusuf al-Juwayni al-Shafi’i’ who is famous for his work on fiqh and his book Al-Waraqat is taught as primer on the subject in many madaris.

position for 20 years. However, his book does not cover that period and is of no value to researchers interested in details of period after the fall of Alamut.

There are a few important points to reflect about this book:

- Al-Juvaini is often found guilty of exaggeration in the favor of Mongols and presents events with a dramatic touch (e.g. depiction of size of Mongol army as 700,000 whereas other accounts consider it to be between 105,000 and 130,000)
- Many of the events he described in his book were not observed by him directly as he was born an year before the death of Genghis Khan (i.e. after the time when the Persia had already fell and many other key events had already happened). His main source in compiling this work was stories that he heard from other people, mainly Mongols who he was an ally of and acquired the favors from.
- When the Mongols invaded Muslim caliphate in the middle-east, Juvaini was with them. He witnessed the fall of Alamut fort of Assassins while being in the company of Hulagu Khan. He was one of the members of the army that invaded Baghdad and pillaged the Muslim caliphate of the Abbasids (Melville, 1999). The next year, he was bestowed with the appointment as governor of Baghdad, Lower Mesopotamia, and Khuzistan. His account of that period is a firsthand account with his renowned ‘exaggeration’ oriented approach to writing.

#### **4. *Al-Awamir al-Ala`iyya fil umoor al-Ala`iyya:***

Ibn Bibi is the author of this Persian book which encompasses the period between 1192 and 1280 (Duda, 2012). It is a highly political concentrating mainly on Seljuqs of Rum and their interactions with Mongols.

Yildiz (2006) pointed out that this work by Ibn Bibi was compiled in response to rebellions in 1277-78 which further engraved the problems that Mongols were facing in strengthening their rule over Anatolia. Ibn Bibi was a close friend of Juvaini. This work was most probably an attempt by Juvaini, who was among the Mongol ruling elite at that time to appease Anatolia and strengthen the rule of Ilkhanate. Ibn Bibi is accordingly seen arguing for a Seljuq sultanate under the Mongol

domination and acceptance of authority of administration by Juvaini (Yildiz, 2006).

**5. *The journey of William of Rubruck to the eastern parts of the world, 1253-55:***

After the humiliating defeat of Christian armies by the Ayyubid ruler Turan Shah (in the 7<sup>th</sup> crusade on Egypt) sent the shock-waves in France where the false news were spread the crusader army led by Louis IX (later known as St. Louis) had comprehensively defeated the Muslims. To surprise of those who were pre-empting such outcomes, Louis was captured as war prisoner along with 12000 others.

He was later expelled from Egypt on payment to the Muslim army for his release. In an attempt to form an alliance with Mongols against the Muslims, Louis sent William of Rubruck as an emissary to the Mongols in order to strike a deal with them.

WILLIAM OF RUBRUCK, a Flemish Franciscan missionary was sent for this purpose. It was his travels between 1253-1255 that informed the reports he submitted to the King Louis IX. This report is the only available source for information about his travels to the lands conquered by Mongols including Crimea, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Asia Minor (Jackson, 2012).

Jackson indicated that his aims also included preaching the Christian faith and meeting Mongol princes who were sympathetic towards his faith. When William of Rubruck delivered the letter from King Louis IX demanding support from the Mongols against Muslims, Mongke (who was contacted by other Mongol leaders that William contacted) sent a letter asking for King Louis to submit to his rule (Jackson, 2012). He accordingly went back toward Palestine and then to France.

**6. *Jami al-Tawarikh by Rashid-al-Din Hamadani (also known as 'Compendium of Chronicles'):***

Rashid ud Din Hamadani was born in Hamadan (currently a province in Iran) into a Jewish family<sup>3</sup> in 1247 (Jackson, 2012). Hamadan at that time

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<sup>3</sup> Jews have lived in Iran for a long time [estimates go back from 600 BC or 720BC to all the way upto 3000BC] and references to their experiences can be found in third section of Hebrew Bible under the 'Book of Esther' (also known as 'Megillah'). Other books that provide references to them include Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.

was a center of a vibrant Jewish community and had a Jewish higher education college which Rashid could have attended (Jackson, 2012). His father and grandfather had an opportunity to serve in the courts of Hulagu Khan. Based on this relationship, Rashid also got a high-rank advisory position in the Ilkhanid court (Jackson, 2012).

Rashid ud din converted to Islam at the age of 30 (around 1271). It was the time when he joined Abaqa Khan's court as physician. However, during the subsequent times of civil unrest, he went into a state of obscurity.

He, later on, joined the court of Ghazan Khan, a Mongol ruler of Ilkhan who converted to Islam as he took the power<sup>4</sup>. However, some writers have raised concerns regarding possible political nature of his conversion. After acquiring the throne, he led an unsuccessful campaign against the Egyptian Mamluks. In 1298, Ghazan appointed Rashid to write a historical account. The brief account that Rashid prepared during this time was expanded during the rule of Uljeytu (who was Ghazan's brother and his successor, also a convert to Islam).

This work is believed to be the first global history which not only focused on Mongols but also provided important details about Chinese, Franks and

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Presently as well, Iran is home to the biggest population of Jews in middle-east after Israel and Turkey and the Jewish population in the country is growing (Sengupta, 2016). The vast majority of Jews of Persian origin now live in Israel (known as *Parsims*) and United States. A smaller percentage is also found in Canada.

Though we 'hear' the anti-Israel slogans from Iran nowadays, the relationship historically has been very strong. It is highlighted that Israel's Mosad helped establish Iran's secret police Savak in 1979 (Sengupta, 2016). Israel also sold the weapons of worth \$75 million to Iran during its war with Iraq. Tel Aviv and Tehran run direct flights to each other during the war period and Iran supplied them with their fueling needs. This relationship got broken in 1979 after the 'Islamic revolution'.

<sup>4</sup> Mahmud Ghazan (1271–1304) was the seventh ruler of the Mongol Empire's Ilkhanate division in modern-day Iran from 1295 to 1304. He was the son of Arghun and Quthluq Khatun, continuing a long line of rulers who were direct descendants of Genghis Khan. Considered the most prominent of the Ilkhans, he is best known for making a political conversion to Islam in 1295 when he took the throne, marking a turning point for the dominant religion of Mongols in West Asia (Iran, Iraq, Anatolia and Trans-Caucassia). However, it is believed by some historians that he still privately practiced Mongolian Shamism. (Refer to "Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire, P199). He also deceived Ibn Taymiyyah through his declaration of faith but disrespected Allah's commands.

Indians starting from Adam A.S and going all the way up to the time of Rashid ud Din. It is considered to be a document of great significance in the Islamic intellectual tradition. It is believed that this illustrated book was not a sole effort from Rashid ud Din but a combined contribution made by various scholars under Rashid's leadership. It is highlighted by researchers that this arrangement could possibly be similar to the one employed by Chin and Liao in compiling their history of China in which they assembled a committee of historians in an empire-wide project. Rashid ud Din is known to have prepared this book by utilizing 300 artists from throughout the Mongol empire and even from outside it (Carey, 2016). It is highlighted by historians that Rashid ud Din set up a large precinct in a university campus in Tabriz.

Jackson (2012) explained that Rashid ud Din borrowed historical details from earlier sources. For example, his explanation of Europe is sourced from 'Chronicle of the Popes and the Emperors' which was written by Martin of Opava (d. 1278). Mongol history was orally transmitted to Rashid ud Din (and his team members) by a Mongol ambassador to Ilkhanate. He also borrowed heavily from Al-Juvaini's 'History of the world conqueror' (S. Z. Jackson, 2012), especially for the sections following the death of Genghis Khan. For India, he relied on narrations from a Kashmiri Buddhist ("Rashid al-Din | Persian statesman," 2016).

Several others, such as Abu'l Qasim al-Kashani, claimed to have written the universal history. Rashid-al-Din Hamadani was, of course, a very busy man, with his public life, and employed 300 assistants to handle the materials assembled and to write the first draft: Abu'l Qasim may have been one of them.

Some researchers have raised questions about the objectivity of this study and influence Rashid ud Din could have for his attachments with the Ilkhanate. While reviewing the book, it becomes clear that Rashid ud Din did question Mongol policies and short-comings during their rule on Persia "but he is SELDOM overtly judgmental, offering little by way of personal opinion and even less of the moralizing tone that was a conspicuous aspect of the work of earlier historians such as Jovayni" (Melville, 2012).

Rashid ud Din did plan the transmission and preservation of this book and order 2 copies to be made each year. The copies were to be distributed to various places within the empire. Persian and Arabic languages were used in this reproduction process. He also introduced this book in the curriculum of madrasahs that he has founded or patroned. However, after his execution

(due to charges of incorrect medical prescription to the Khan which is believed to have become a cause of his death) the process discontinued.

The book also contains illustrations where it reportedly label certain characters as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Jackson, 2012). Accordingly, many Muslim scholars have objected to such illustrations as we believe that there is nothing like Muhammad (PBUH) and no illustration can capture his magnificence and elevated stature.

### **7. *The Secret History of Mongols***

This work was written shortly after Genghis Khan's death, possibly a couple of decades after (Rachewiltz, 2004), and is considered to be the only source from the Mongols themselves. The writer of this book is not known (Marzluf, 2013) but it is believed that it was someone very close to Genghis Khan who could see all that was happening there (Hammond, 2016; Robertson, 2012). The original writing of this book was in the vertical Uighur script (Rachewiltz, 2004). The extant surviving copies of this book's Chinese translation, titled 'Yüan pi-shih' are available from the archives of Ming government.

Hammond (2016) explained that the book focuses more on the earlier parts of his life and almost skips over the last quests in the last 20 years without much interest. Most of the contents are focused around Mongolian region except a couple of chapters. Another key feature of the book is that it does not present Genghis Khan as a flawless person of 'god' (as considered by some) but as a human who had his own fears [e.g. his fear of dogs etc.] (Hammond, 2016; Robertson, 2012).

The book remained in hibernation, un-noticed from people in and outside Mongolia until a couple of centuries ago. This essentially meant that the study of the Mongolian history was not possible due to lack of original records on the subject. Robertson (2012) explained that all copies of this book got disappeared from the Mongolia for unknown reasons. Some researchers believe that it could be because of the new script that was introduced by Kublai Khan in 1269. By 15<sup>th</sup> century, the surviving copies of this text were the Chinese translations that were used by scholars to teach Mongolian language without realizing the importance of work that they were utilizing. Because of this, the book did not make its way into the mainstream research for centuries unless its abridged version was discovered and made available by a Russian monk in 1866 in Russian language (Robertson, 2012). After this, another edition was discovered



which was believed to be earlier than the one brought to notice by the Russian Monk. This edition was in the original Mongolian language. Even after these discoveries, the book could not make its way back to Mongolia until 1917. It is now examined by a number of researchers and historians.

The use of this book in reconstructing the historical events is not recommended by many researchers as it is believed to contain elements of folklore, drama and poetry (Marzluf, 2013), sometimes at the expense of factual information and consistency. It is also noted by Marzluf that there is a high possibility of transcription errors while rendering the sound of Mongolian syllables by using Chinese characters. Because of this, It is considered to be at a primitive level in its status as a historical source and not considered a very reliable source for research in history.

#### **8. *Travels of Marco Polo:***

This travelogue from 13<sup>th</sup> century is an account of stories narrated by Marco Polo based on his 24 years of travel (Andrews, 2013) through Asia and Persia beginning from 1271 when he visited China. During this time, he also served in the court of Mongol ruler Kublai Khan (Genghis Khan's grandson who ruled the empire from 1260 to 1294) and obtained some direct insights from that period (Polo, 1852). He is also known to have worked as a tax collector and messenger for Kublai (Andrews, 2013).

The travelogue was written in prison when Marco Polo and Rustichello da Pisa (a French romance writer) when they were imprisoned together<sup>5</sup>. Marco dictated his travel stories to Rustichello who turned them into a book (written in French language) called *Livre des Merveilles du Monde* which is known in English as *The Book of the Marvels of the World*.

There are a few factors that need to be considered while using this book:

- The book is a secondary / tertiary source (written based on stories heard from Marco Polo)
- An authoritative version of this book does not exist and current versions significantly differ with some being claimed to be 50% longer than the others (Bergreen, 2007)

<sup>5</sup> Marco Polo led a Venetian galley in a war with Genoa in 1298 (3 years after his return from the travels) and got captured. Rustichello da Pisa was also a war captive and Marco's cellmate.

- The book was written after Persia, Abbasid Caliphates, Georgia, and many other areas had already fell and accordingly the description of these events is secondary or tertiary in nature
- Writing of this book started 7 years after Marco Polo left China to come back to Venice in 1291.
- There are occurrences where Polo misunderstood certain things (e.g. certain animals) and presented them (or Rustichello added that flavor to his narration) in a mythical and mystic manner (Andrews, 2013)

It is therefore not recommended to accept everything written in this book on face value. There are mixed views among the researchers about the authenticity of this book considering its disputed nature (Maraini, 2016) and some contemporary researchers have rejected this book (Andrews, 2013). Andrew explained:

Polo and his ghostwriter, Rustichello, were prone to exaggeration and flights of fancy. For instance, the famous traveler often fictitiously inserted himself into battle scenes and court intrigues. While most modern historians still believe the bulk of his book to be factual, others have dismissed it as an outright fabrication. (Andrews, 2013)

Maraini (2016) pointed out:

As a result of Polo's reticence concerning personal matters and the controversies surrounding the text, Polo's reputation has suffered dramatic ups and downs. For some scholars, novelists, filmmakers, and dramatists, he was a brilliant young courtier, a man of prodigious memory, a most conscientious observer, and a successful official at the cosmopolitan court of the Mongol rulers. For others, he was a braggart, a drifter ready to believe the gossip of ports and bazaars, a man with little culture, scant imagination, and a total lack of humour. Still, others argue that he never went to China at all, noting that he failed, among other things, to mention the Great Wall of China, the use of tea, and the ideographic script of the Far East and that contemporary Chinese records show no trace of Polo.

Exaggeration in the book is very evident and has been pointed out by many researchers including the British historian David Morgan.

It is mentioned that when Kublai met Marco's father and uncle on their previous visit to his court, he inquired them about the pope and church in Rome and requested to bring over oil of the lamp in Jerusalem (Polo & Yule, 1920). He is also explained to have request 100 missionaries acquainted with seven key arts (which included grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy). Marco's father and uncle fulfilled Kublai's request for bring the oil from the lamp in Jerusalem in their next visit. It was the visit in which Marco accompanied them.

Some contemporary researchers believe that he faithfully recorded what Polo heard and saw but unfortunately what he heard was mostly fabricated.

The book has four distinct sections:

- Section 1 provides a description of lands that Marco visited in middle-east, Persia, and Asia.
- Section 2 is about China and what Marco witnessed or heard in the court of Kublai Khan
- Section 3 sheds light on coastal regions of Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and the east coast of Africa.
- Section 4 provides a description about certain Mongol wars.

#### **9. *Khaza'in ul Futuh of Amir Khusro***

Amir Khusro (1253–1325), though not a historian, provided significant insights about the encounters between the Mongol invaders and Muslim states in India. During his service to the Sultans in India, he was captured by Mongols and imprisoned (Kalra, 2010; Schimmel, 2011). He accordingly provides some firsthand information about his experiences. Most of his poetic collection (which describes the historical events that were unfolding in his time) was written during the reign of Allaudin Khilji who was successful in repelling the Mongol attacks toward India at the time when no other state could stop their march. This poetry shows the victories of Muslims against Mongols as well as the Hindu states, and the flag of Islam flying high (Kalra, 2010).

#### **10. *Tarikh-i Oljeitu***

This book was written by Abu'l Qasim Abdullah ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al-Qashani. He completed this work in the year 1318-19. This book contains a number of inaccuracies in terms of dates of events and names. However, its simple style of writing makes it a good resource to be used in conjunction with other historical sources (Kalra, 2010). The book describes humiliating defeat of Mongols at the hands of Indian Muslims.

**11. *Tarikh I Wassaf:***

This book was written by Abdallah ibn Faḍlallah Sharaf al-Din Shīrāzī (1299-1323) who was an Ilkhanate historian in 14<sup>th</sup> century. His historical account *Tajziyat al-amṣār wa-tazjiyat al-a'ṣār* is considered to be continuation of Al-Juvaini's work which goes up till 1257. It includes the history of the Mongols in Persia and its neighboring countries in the period of about 1250-1328 including Mongol campaigns in India, Alauddin's encounters with Indian states and other events surrounding Ilkhans (Kalra, 2010). Melville (1999) has cast doubts on the authenticity of this book and mentioned it as a 'notorious concoction'.

The book remained largely inaccessible to English-speaking audience due to issues with translation and publishing (Wentker, 2012).

**12. *Tarikh al-Islam al-Kabir by Imam Dhahbi:***

Imam Dhahabi (1274-1348) was a great faqih and Imam of his time. Among his many famous works is his *Tarikh al-Islam al-Kabir*. In this book, events are covered based on their chronological order. This also includes the catastrophes that Mongols brought with them for the Muslim world and Khilafah. The organization of this book enables readers to understand what else was happening at that time and what impact the destruction in Persia and middle-east had on other parts of Muslim world.

**13. *Tareekh Ibn Kathir:***

Ismail ibn Kathir (1300 to 1373) was a highly prominent Sunni scholar of the Shafi'i school who was born during the Mamluk rule of Syria. He is believed to be one of most authentic exegesist of the holy Quran (Domínguez-Castro, Vaquero, Marín, Gallego, & García-Herrera, 2012) and his tafsir has been translated into a number of languages. He was also an eminent jurisprudence and a renowned historian. His classical work, *Al-Bidayah wa'an-Nihayah* (The Beginning and the End), also known as

Tarikh ibn Kathir is one of the most comprehensive and notable sources on Islamic history.

Ibn Kathir's time corresponds with Kublai Khan's rule and in his history book, he has adequately covered the Mongols in his time and the times before him and has discussed numerous key events. (Musharraf, 2015a) has explained variation in his emphasis on various geographical areas which necessitate complementing the reading of this book of history with other authentic sources.

#### ***14. Travels of Ibn Batuta:***

Ibn Batuta (1304-1368) was a Moroccan traveler who went on his journey of 'dar-us-salam' (Islamic states) between 1325 and 1354 ("Ibn Battuta | Muslim Heritage," 2014) covering 75,000 miles (Bartel, 2012). He dictated the stories from his travel to a scholar upon the insistence of Sultan of Morocco. His accounts cover relevant details about Persia, Iraq, Ilkhanate and other important areas.

#### ***15. Contemporary Researches:***

List of contemporary researchers on Mongol Empire and their invasions is huge. However, one of the most systematic and organized researches done by David Morgan needs a special mention. He summed up his findings in his book "The Mongols" (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). In the first chapter of his book, "Morgan explains the problems confronting the historian in trying to reconstruct the Mongol Empire. For example, there is the issue of language. Sources are available in at least ten languages. As a result, can anyone really master all these languages sufficiently to understand the Mongols? As he demonstrates throughout the book, Morgan systematically and logically shows what can be done. Historians can rely on secondary sources for their synthesis or have a specialist write to his expertise and rely on other experts for other areas. Morgan opts for the latter approach of synthesizing most of the literature on the Mongols, and does a masterful job." (Rao, 2008)

#### **Conclusion:**

In this article, we have seen that that a number of historical accounts for Mongol sources exist providing various perspectives and events from that time. These are written by historians and authors from diverse background and religio-political affiliations. This presents researchers exploring the

Mongol history with an excellent opportunity to dive into these resources and reconstruct the past for our future generations so that they can reflect, ponder and learn from this. Those times were undoubtedly the toughest of times for the Muslim ummah when we were attacked from all sides, backed up by the hypocrites from within. However, as our belief is that ‘after every difficulty, there is ease’, we did see the ease come through and the Muslim ummah survived such unprecedented genocide. We are still spread on all corners of the globe. It is extremely vital for us to learn from our past and craft a future in accordance with what our beloved messenger brought to us – the book and hikmah. Our future is bright and each one of us has a role to play in its construction – a positive role with a belief in our abilities and the unexplored treasures within our souls.

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