

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



The Mongols, the Turks and the Muslim Polity

Author(s): Bernard Lewis

Source: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 18 (1968), pp. 49-68

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Royal Historical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3678955>

Accessed: 11-08-2016 03:52 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press, Royal Historical Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

THE MONGOLS, THE TURKS AND THE MUSLIM POLITY

By Professor Bernard Lewis, Ph.D., F.B.A., F.R.Hist.S.

READ II MARCH 1967

TEN years ago a well-known Swiss writer on Middle Eastern affairs published an article on patriotism and nationalism among the Arabs. Discussing the attitude of nationalists to the past, and their tendency to substitute fanciful constructions for serious history, he quotes 'a high Syrian government official' as saying, 'in deadly earnest': 'If the Mongols had not burnt the libraries of Baghdad in the 13th century, we Arabs would have had so much science, that we would long since have invented the atomic bomb. The plundering of Baghdad put us back by centuries.'¹

This is of course an extreme, even a grotesque formulation, but the thesis which it embodies is not confined to, and was not invented by, romantic nationalist historians. Deriving ultimately from the testimony of contemporary sufferers, it was developed by European orientalists, who saw in the Mongol invasions the final catastrophe which overwhelmed and ended the great Muslim civilization of the Middle Ages. As the barbarians had destroyed the Roman Empire, it was thought, so the Mongols destroyed the Caliphate—except that the destruction was more terrible and more permanent, and the new masters, unlike the Germanic barbarians in Europe, could neither learn from others, nor themselves create anything new. This judgment of the Mongols, sometimes extended to include the Turkish invaders who had preceded them out of the steppe, was generally accepted among European scholars, and was gratefully, if sometimes surreptitiously, borrowed by romantic and apologetic historians in Middle

¹ Arnold Hottinger, 'Patriotismus und Nationalismus bei den Arabern', *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 12 May 1957. On modern Muslim views of the Mongol invasions see further W. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), pp. 32 ff., 164 ff.; G. E. von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: the Search for Cultural Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), pp. 44 ff., 185, 213, 255-6.

Eastern countries as an explanation both of the ending of their golden age, and of their recent backwardness. It was expressed with characteristic force by the famous English orientalist Edward Granville Browne, who saw in the Mongol invasion 'a catastrophe which . . . changed the face of the world, set in motion forces which are still effective, and inflicted more suffering on the human race than any other event in the world's history of which records are preserved to us.'¹

To Browne, writing in Cambridge in the early years of this century, it may well have seemed that the Mongol conquest was a calamity of unparalleled magnitude, and that a civilization so stricken could never fully recover. But for the less innocent historians of a less tranquil age, the horrors of the past assumed a milder aspect. The great Russian orientalist V. V. Bartold, writing in Moscow in 1917, was able to achieve a more tolerant view of Mongol destructiveness, and a more robust assessment of the recuperative powers of their victims. 'It would be a mistake, however, to consider that cultural life could only continue in these localities which had escaped the inroads of the Mongol troops. It is true that a cultured land had been conquered by a wild people still believing in the efficacy of human sacrifice. When a town was taken, except for the artisans who were needed by the conquerors, the inhabitants were sometimes subjected to total massacre. People, who had survived these horrible experiences, naturally thought that the country will [sic] not arise again for another thousand years. Influenced by the opinion of writers contemporary to that epoch, European scholars have believed that the Mongols dealt a heavier and more devastating blow to the cultural life of Asia and Eastern Europe than, for example, was dealt to the cultural life of Southern Europe by the Great Migration of Peoples. In reality, the results of the Mongol invasion were less annihilating than is supposed. . . . Besides a not numerous military contingent the Mongol Khans brought with them their cultured councillors [sic] who helped them to establish their rule and to

¹ E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia from Firdawsi to Sa'di* (London, 1906), pp. 426-27; cf. *idem.*, *A History of Persian Literature under Tartar Domination* (Cambridge, 1920), pp. 14-15. Like most other Western writers, Browne bases his account of the Mongols largely on Baron C. d'Ohsson's *Histoire des Mongols*, 1st ed. 1824, 2nd considerably amplified ed., The Hague and Amsterdam, 1834-35.

apply to the new country that harmonious and well-constructed governmental and military organization which had been elaborated at the time of Chenghiz Khan himself.¹

Since then, a more intimate experience of catastrophe on the one hand, and a deeper knowledge of Islamic history on the other, have confirmed some—though not all—of Bartold's insights. In our own time we have seen, in the heart of Europe, rulers and armies compared with whom the Mongol Khans and the Tatar hordes appear almost as angels of mercy—and we have seen the swift recovery of the lands they ravaged. Not all scholars would now fully accept Bartold's views on the benevolent and progressive character of Mongol rule. They were well received in Mongol, Tatar and Turkish circles; others however have suggested some revisions, and among Russian scholars in particular there has in recent years been a sharp reaction against them, and against what is called the 'racialist-nationalist idealization of the Turco-Tatar nomads' by pan-Turkist writers. Professor I. P. Petrushevsky has formally declared that Bartold's evaluation of the consequences of the Mongol invasions for the economic development of Iran and neighbouring countries 'cannot be accepted by Soviet historiography'.² But even Professor Petrushevsky

¹ V. V. Bartold, *Mussulman Culture*, translated from the Russian by Shahid Suhrawardy (Calcutta, 1934), pp. 110–12; cf. the very much better Turkish translation edited by M. Fuad Köprülü, *İslam medeniyeti tarihi*, 2nd ed. (Ankara, 1963), p. 62. Bartold's views on the Mongol invasions and their effects are developed in many of his writings. In attempting a more positive assessment of the Mongols, he was to some extent anticipated by Sir Henry Howarth (*History of the Mongols*, London, 1876–88) and, still more, by Léon Cahun (*Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie*, Paris, 1896). These works were, however, written without reference to oriental sources, and are of no scholarly significance. Cahun's book, written with some skill and much enthusiasm, became a source of inspiration for Turkish and pan-Turkish nationalist theories.

² I. P. Petrushevsky, *Zemledelie i agrarniye otnosheniya v Irane xiii-xiv vekov* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1960), p. 36; Persian translation by Karīm Kashāvarz, *Kashāvarzī va munāsabāt-i arzī dar Irān 'ahd-i Moghūl*, i (Tehran, 1344 solar), p. 48. This statement is obviously prescriptive, not descriptive, and, like other such decisions recorded on behalf of Soviet historiography, may not be determined exclusively by the findings of historians and the evidence of the sources. A clue may be found in hostile allusions, without citation of authors or titles, to 'pan-Turkists', i.e. those who ascribe a common identity and purpose to the Turkic peoples inside and outside the U.S.S.R. Bartold is declared innocent of complicity in such villainy. His

affirms that the processes of development, interrupted by the catastrophe of the 13th century, were resumed and completed in the 14th, and concedes that Bartold had some reason to react against the one-sided presentation of the Mongols as destructive savages. Most scholars would now agree that the harmful effects of the Mongol conquests were not as great, as lasting, or even as extensive, as was once thought.

The reconsideration of the impact of the Mongols on the Islamic world has been concerned with three periods, before, during and after their irruption, and with three questions; what did they destroy, what did they achieve, and what did they leave behind them? The traditional answer to the first of these questions is that they destroyed the Caliphate, and with it the great Arabic-Islamic civilization that had flourished under its aegis. 'Islam', says a contemporary Syrian historian, 'has never suffered a greater and more decisive disaster than this',¹ and other historians, of that and later ages, have shared this opinion. The destruction of the Caliphate, still, even in its decay, the legal centre of Islam and the symbol of its unity, and the establishment of a heathen domination in the Islamic heartlands, were indeed a bitter blow to Muslims, and it is not surprising that their anguish has echoed through the centuries. But the real significance of this act of destruction has been much exaggerated. The golden age of classical Islamic civilization had long since ended, and the Mongols conquered a society that was far advanced in decay. The Caliphs had lost most of their effective power, and by abolishing the Baghdad Caliphate the Mongols did little more than lay the ghost of something that was already dead. Even some modern nationalist historians, their perceptions sharpened by more recent reverses, have begun to appreciate this. 'Some of us still believe', says Professor Constantine Zurayk, 'that the attacks of the Turks and the Mongols are what destroyed the Abbasid Caliphate and Arab

errors are attributed to his lack of Marxist discipline, not to sinister pan-Turkist motives. Cf. Professor Petrushevsky's introduction to the new edition of Bartold's collected works (*Sochineniya*, i (Moscow, 1963), especially pp. 32-3).

¹ Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, MS. Paris, Arabe 1703, fol. 126 b, cit. D. Ayalon, 'Studies on the transfer of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate from Baghdād to Cairo', *Arabica*, vii (1960), p. 59.

power in general. But . . . the fact is that the Arabs had been defeated internally before the Mongols defeated them. . . .¹

In another respect, too, the effects of the Mongol conquests have been exaggerated—in the extent and consequences of the material damage done by them. Certainly, the damage was great. The immediate blows of the Mongols, though no doubt trivial by modern standards, were terrible and overwhelming. Even the Persian historian Juvaynī, a servant and admirer of the Khans who sees in them the instruments of God's purpose, tells how they destroyed whole cities and massacred or deported their inhabitants. Their ravages were not confined to the cities; in many areas the extirpation of the military aristocracy, the death or flight of the peasantry, left vast lands untenanted, uncultivated and unclaimed, often permanently abandoned to nomadic herdsmen. Recent studies have shown that the damage done by the Mongols to the economy of Persia was not limited to the actual destruction during the campaigns of conquest. The ill effects of depopulation and the neglect of irrigation works were aggravated by harsh and extortionate policies, which degraded and impoverished the peasants, and set back the development of agriculture and of the rising feudal society of the immediately preceding period.²

Yet these effects, however terrible, were limited both in extent and duration. Egypt, which by this time had become and has ever since remained the chief centre of Arab Islam, was never conquered by the Mongols, and was thus only indirectly affected by their coming. Syria suffered only raids, and after the defeat of the Mongols by the Mamluk army of Egypt at 'Ayn Jālūt in Palestine in 1260, was incorporated in the Egyptian Sultanate and protected by Mamluk power from Mongol attack. Arab Africa was never invaded; Turkish Anatolia was long dominated by the Mongol state in Persia, but suffered little direct interference, and survived to cradle the last and greatest of the Islamic Empires—

¹ Constantine K. Zurayk, *The Meaning of the Disaster*, trans. R. B. Winder (Beirut, 1956), p. 48; cit. G. E. von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam*, p. 255.

² See Ann K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (London, 1953), p. 77 ff., Petrushevsky, *op. cit.*, and, on the Mongol Empire in general, J. J. Saunders, 'Le nomade comme bâtisseur d'empire: conquête arabe et conquête mongole', *Diogenes*, no. 52 (1965), pp. 85–109, where other recent literature is cited.

that of the Ottomans. Persia, indeed, was hard hit—but even here by no means the whole country was affected. In South Persia, the local dynasties submitted voluntarily to the Mongols, and their cities, not looted by the invaders, continued to flourish. Even in those parts of Persia which were actually overrun and devastated, there was some recovery, and before long some Persian cities were again centres of industry, trade and culture.

Only in one country did the Mongol conquest leave permanent injuries—in Iraq, once the metropolitan province of the Caliphate. Here, as elsewhere, the immediate effect of the invasion was the breakdown of civil government; in Iraq this also meant the decline of the elaborate irrigation work on which the prosperity, even the life of the country depended. But whereas in Persia there was a partial recovery once the new regime was firmly in control, in Iraq there was hardly any.¹ The Mongol Il-Khans of S. W. Asia, like the Seljuks before them, made Persia, not Iraq, the centre of their power; Tabriz, their residence, grew into a great and wealthy city. Even before the Mongol conquests, Iraq had lost much of her importance; the coming of the Mongols, the destruction of the Caliphate, and the emergence of new centres, finally ended it. The Mongols conquered Persia and Iraq, but failed to conquer Syria and Egypt; these, under the Mamluk Sultans, formed the base of the most important Muslim military power of the day, and the most dangerous adversary of the Il-Khans. Iraq now became an outlying frontier-province, abandoned to the destructive inroads of the Bedouin, who moved into the breaches made by the Mongols and, unlike them, did not pass on, but stayed. The valley of the Tigris and Euphrates was cut off from the Mediterranean lands by the Mongol-Mamluk conflict; it was overshadowed by the rise of the new Persian centre to which it was subordinated, and outflanked by the flourishing Turkish states in Anatolia, now under Mongol suzerainty. Iraq could no longer serve as a channel for east-west trade, which now passed through two other, competing routes—the Mongol northern route, through Anatolia and Persia, and the Mamluk southern route, through Egypt and the Red Sea. Bereft of the

¹ Even in Iraq, however, the extent of the economic damage done by the Mongols has been exaggerated. See the important study by Dr Ja'far H. Khesbak, 'Aḥwāl al-'Irāq al-iqtisādiyya fī 'ahd al-Ilkhāniyīn al-Mughūl', *Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb* (Baghdad), (1961), pp. 1-56.

Caliphate and ruled by a Mongol governor, Baghdad could no longer be the centre and the rallying point of Islam. This role passed to Cairo and later to Constantinople, leaving the fallen city of the Caliphs to centuries of stagnation and neglect.

The dethronement of Iraq and the partial devastation of Persia are the significant exceptions in the general picture of gradual recovery and renewed activity in the Muslim Middle East. Clearly, such a revival could not have been accomplished under the heel of destructive and unteachable savages, such as the Mongols of the conventional image. The opposite extreme is expressed, in a lyrical passage, by the Polish Altaist Wladyslaw Kotwicz,

Dans leur empire, [he says] les Mongols firent régner l'ordre et le droit, organisèrent une administration uniforme, entreprirent l'œuvre de reconstruction des pays en ruines, de relèvement de l'industrie et du commerce, développèrent des rapports culturels avec les territoires les plus reculés de l'ancien monde.

Leur autorité énergique fit effectivement régner, sur la plus grande surface de cet ancien monde, une vraie *Pax mongolica*.¹

Even allowing for the natural affection of a Mongolist for the Mongols, and for the revisions imposed by more recent research, there is a considerable element of truth in this picture. Once the conquests, with their attendant horrors, were completed, the Mongols were quick to appreciate the advantages of peace and order, and the *pax mongolica* became a reality in their vast dominions.

Some beneficial effects of Mongol rule in Persia are discernible almost immediately. Once firmly established, the Khans brought a measure of security and stability. In contrast to barbarian Europe, there was no permanent reversion from a money economy to barter, from an urban to a rural way of life. The merchants raised their heads again, and the Il-Khans, for their own good reasons, gave them every encouragement. Their interest was more than that of the greedy savage who has learnt to tend instead of killing his dairy cattle—though even to learn that, in so short a time, would have been no small achievement. The

¹ Wladyslaw Kotwicz, 'Les Mongols, promoteurs de l'idée de paix universelle au début du xiii^e siècle', *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* (Cracow), xvi (1950), p. 429.

Il-Khans gave active help to what they regarded as useful sciences, such as medicine, astronomy and mathematics; after their conversion to Islam at the end of the 13th century, they extended their patronage to Islamic learning, and by the 14th century Muslim Khans were raising magnificent edifices for Islamic worship and scholarship. In one respect the Mongol conquests actually brought some advantage to the lands of Islam—through the broadening of Muslim horizons. The Mongol world was not limited to the familiar Muslim lands of the Middle East and Central Asia. It included southern Russia and, most important of all, the Far East, with which Muslim Western Asia was now united for the first time in a single imperial system. In this way Persia was opened to Chinese influence, notably in art and technology. The Mongols also exposed the Muslims to other contacts, as Europeans seized the opportunity offered by their presence to explore the land and sea routes through Persia to China and India. The benefits of these journeys, it may be noted in passing, are more apparent in Europe than in the Middle East. A good example of the wide outlook and interests of the Mongol era in Persia is the *Jāmi' al-tavārikh*, the Assembly of Histories, by the Persian historian Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318). Rashīd al-Dīn was a Jewish convert to Islam, a physician, scholar and minister, who was entrusted by the Il-Khans with the task of preparing a universal history. He assembled a team of collaborators and informants, including two Chinese scholars, a Buddhist hermit from Kashmir, a Mongol specialist on tribal tradition, and a Frankish monk, as well as a number of Persian scholars, and with their help composed a vast history of the world, from Ireland to China. In thus attempting a universal history, going beyond the confines of their own civilization and its accepted precursors, Rashīd-al-Dīn and his colleagues anticipated European historical scholarship by half a millennium.

The Mongols, then, though they ravaged some of the lands of Islam and abolished the Baghdad Caliphate, did not destroy Islamic civilization, which was far advanced in the decline before they came and which, in new forms, rose again after their coming. But their advent marked the turning-point in a process of change which, in the course of time, transformed the whole pattern of society and government in the Middle East. The Mongols were relatively few in number; their direct rule in the Middle East was

limited to the northern tier, and to a brief period. They bequeathed neither a language nor a religion to the lands they conquered, and whether their dominion was 'historically progressive' or 'historically reactionary', as Russian scholars of successive generations have argued, its effects in either direction were exhausted within a century. Yet the historical instincts of those who, from contemporaries onwards, saw in the Mongol conquests the end of one era and the beginning of another, were fundamentally sound; their error was the common one of telescoping a long and complex evolution into a single dramatic event. The great change in medieval Islam cannot be understood only in terms of the brief episode of Mongol conquest and domination; it must be seen against a broader background, involving a longer period than the reign of the Khans, and the movement of more numerous peoples than the Mongol tribesmen of Jenghiz and his heirs.

Professor Zurayk, it will be recalled, links the Turks with the Mongols as the invaders of the collapsing Arab Caliphate. The association is not new. 'It is a remarkable thing', says a 13th century Damascene chronicler, discussing the defeat of the Mongols by the Mamluks at 'Ayn Jālūt, 'that the Tatars were defeated and destroyed by men of their own kind, who were Turks.'¹ Rashīd al-Dīn also links the two together. The Assembly of Histories begins, as one would expect, with 'the present masters of the world'. Volume I is in two parts, the first dealing with the steppe peoples in general, the second with Jenghiz Khan and his successors. The first, concerned with the divisions, genealogies and legends of the tribes of the steppe, includes Turks as well as Mongols, and in time became a source-book for Turkish heroic and historiographic myths. Even a Turkish tribal origin-myth, as Professor Hatto has remarked, is 'fused with a wishful travesty of the saga of the more dazzling Mongols . . . at the poetic level of myth and folk-tale.'²

The Turks and the Mongols were ethnically, culturally and linguistically distinct; yet they had much in common. Both came

¹ Abu Shāma, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa'l-sābi*, ed. Muḥammad al-Kawtharī, Cairo, 1947, p. 208.

² A. T. Hatto, 'Ḥamāsa iv', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, revised ed., iii, 116. The whole problem of Turkish-Mongol relationships is discussed in an important article by Professor Ibrahim Kafesoğlu, 'Türk tarihinde Moğollar ve Cengiz meselesi', *Tarih Dergisi*, v (1953), pp. 105-36.

into the Middle East from the steppe-lands of Central and N. E. Asia, where they shared a common way of life and were subject to similar influences. These affinities brought the Mongols closer to the Turks than to any of the other peoples they had conquered. Jenghiz Khan himself made use of Uygur Turkish advisers, and ordered the adoption of the Uygur script for the Mongol language. The Mongols, few in number, leaned heavily on Turkish support in both war and government. In time, the Mongols in the Islamic lands were merged into the mass of their Muslim subjects, and even lost their language, adopting various forms of Turkish in its place. The very name Tatar, once that of a section of the Mongols, has for a long time been applied to the Turkish-speaking Muslim inhabitants of the territories that were once ruled by the Mongol Khans of the Golden Horde.

The great migrations of the steppe peoples into the Middle East began in the 10th century, when the Turkish tribes of Central Asia crossed the Jaxartes and began their march of conquest westwards. They ended in the period after the death of Timur or Tamerlane, the last of the great Turkish world-conquerors, in 1405. Even then, the trickle of Central Asian tribes continued for a while, until it was stopped by the double barrier of Safavid and Ottoman power on the plateaux of Iran and Anatolia.

In the establishment of Turkish power and the spread of Turkish customs over the lands of Islam, two periods are particularly significant. One was that of the Seljuk Great Sultans, who ruled for about a century from the conquest of Baghdad in 1055 to the death of Sultan Sanjar in 1157. The other was that of the Mongol conquests of the 13th century and the period of Mongol supremacy and influence that followed them.

The Seljuks had entered Islam as condottieri, and had served various Muslim rulers, including the Ghaznavids, before they carved out an independent state of their own. They were devout and earnest Muslims, and, as a great Russian historian has remarked, 'it is quite natural that the first Saljuqids . . . were better Muslims than [the Ghaznavids] Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd, just as Saint Vladimir was a better Christian than the Byzantine Emperors.'¹ They were also free Turks, with their roots in Central

¹ W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion* (London, 1928), p. 305.

Asia, and with memories both of the older Turkish kingdoms and of the tribal traditions of the Oghuz. We can point to many Turkish elements among the titles, ranks and emblems of the Seljuk Sultanate; we can also see the first phases of a profound transformation of Islamic state and society, part of which must surely be attributed to the incursion of the steppe peoples.

The transformation is completed with the second and greater of the steppe Empires—that of the Mongols. Their rule, though of brief duration, was of great significance, for it was at this time that the main characteristics of the post-Mongol phase of Islamic government were formed. The first Mongol rulers of Persia were pagans—the first to rule over an important Islamic territory since the beginnings of Islam. Their system of government was avowedly non-Islamic—based on the so-called *Yasa* of Jenghiz Khan. This seems to have been a codification of Mongol rules and customs; it was held to be binding on the Khans themselves as well as on their subjects, both Mongols and others. Even after the conversion of the Il-Khans of Persia to Islam, the Mongol code remained effective, and Mongol practices were only gradually and partially modified under the influence of Muslim administrative and legal traditions.

The Mongol influence was of course strongest in those areas where the rule of the Mongol Khans persisted—in Central Asia, in Persia and in the territories of the Golden Horde in Russia. It was, however, by no means limited to these areas. The Syro-Egyptian Empire of the Mamluks, though it escaped Mongol conquest, was profoundly influenced by the Mongol example and by the Mongol deserters and refugees who migrated to Egypt. During the 13th and 14th centuries the Mongols enjoyed the immense prestige of victory and conquest; they were in consequence imitated in warfare, even in dress—as Europe was imitated in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Mamluk emir of 13th-century Egypt wore his Tatar coat and hat in much the same way and for much the same reasons as his modern equivalents wear fitted tunics and peaked caps. Both are alien to Islam—but both were the symbols of real power.

Far stronger than in Egypt was the Mongol influence in Turkish Anatolia. After conquering Persia, the Mongol horsemen had swept on to Mesopotamia and Anatolia, where they had dealt the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm a blow from which it never recovered.

After dragging out an attenuated existence for some fifty years, it finally disappeared at the beginning of the 14th century. Most of eastern and central Anatolia became subject to the Il-Khans of Persia and was ruled either by Mongol governors or by Turkish vassals. Even after the decline of Il-Khan power had permitted the development of local autonomies, the administrative and financial system which the Il-Khans had impressed on the country continued to function. It was still working under the Anatolian princes and survived to exercise a formative influence on the institutions of the Ottoman state.

After the death of the Il-Khan Abū Sa'īd in 1336, the Mongol dominions in the Middle East broke up, and a number of smaller states, ruled by Mongol or Turkish dynasties, appeared in Persia, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Those of Persia were of short duration. Farther east, Timur had succeeded in making himself ruler of the Mongol successor state in Central Asia. In 1380, already master of Transoxania, he invaded Persia and in the next seven years overran the whole of it. He twice defeated the Khan of the Golden Horde, raided India, annexed Iraq and then overran Syria and exacted homage from the Mamluk Sultan. In 1394 and 1400 he invaded Anatolia, and in 1402 inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ottomans at the battle of Ankara, capturing the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid. He died in 1405 while preparing an invasion of China.

Timur was a Turk and a Muslim—but he was proud to relate himself to the Mongol Imperial house by marrying a princess of the line of Jenghiz Khan. He led mixed Mongol and Turkish armies, in which the former were the dominant element but the latter the great majority. His career has been variously represented as a reaction of Islam against the Shamanism of the Mongol Khans and as the last convulsion of the Altaic invasion. Unlike the Khans of the earlier conquests Timur was, or claimed to be, a pious Muslim, and amid the enormous destruction he wrought he was careful to show deference to the places and personnel of the Islamic faith. But his system of government was still in the Mongol tradition, and despite the noticeable Islamizing tendency, his codes of law are true to the spirit of the *Yasa* of Jenghiz Khan. With his death, the great movement of the steppe peoples that had begun in the 10th century seems to have come to an end—though the infiltration of tribes continued and, what was more

important, the penetration of nomads already in the Middle East into the structure of urban life and civilization.

Of the great changes that can be discerned in Islamic government and society during and after the invasions of the steppe peoples, how much can be attributed to the influence of the invaders? The question is by no means easy to answer. The Turks, after their conversion to Islam, had surrendered themselves to their new religion almost completely. Partly because of the simple intensity of the faith as they encountered it on the frontiers of Islam and heathendom, partly perhaps because their conversion to Islam at once involved them in Holy War against their own unconverted kinsmen beyond the borders, the Muslim Turks sank their national identity in Islam as the Arabs and Persians had never done.

Yet something of the Turkish past survived. The Turkish language, brought from Central Asia by the first migrants and invaders, lived on and emerged triumphant in a new Muslim dress. Turkish rulers, even in lands of old Islamic traditions, used titles and symbols of authority that go back to pre-Islamic Turkish antiquity. Even in the Ottoman Empire, the symbols of the bow and the arrow and the horsetail remained to commemorate the mounted archers from the steppe that had first crossed the rivers from Central Asia into the lands of Islam; the Altaic titles of Khan and Beg were used or conferred by a sovereign whose roots of power led back to the Mongol Khans as well as to the Sultans of Islam.

The persistence of these old Turkish titles and emblems, long after the Islamization of the Turks, symbolizes the survival, at a deeper level, of habits, practices, and beliefs inherited from an earlier age. The identification and evaluation of these survivals is however a task of no small difficulty. The evolution of Islamic and Persian notions and practices of government is well documented and has been fairly well studied. Those of the Turks, however, are still little known and have formed the subject of some dubious theorizing.

The attempt has been made by some historians to explain the whole structure of Ottoman administration in the Imperial age by reference to the nomadic herdsmen who invaded Anatolia in the 11th century—rather as at one time a school of historians in the West tried to trace the British parliamentary system to the alleged

practices of primitive Germanic tribes. In avoiding fanciful and exaggerated hypotheses on steppe origins, we should not however fall into the opposite error of underrating them. Both the Turkish and the Mongol dynasties that ruled over Islam during the formative period between the 11th and 14th centuries were of steppe origin, and even when they had been long assimilated in the cities and river valleys of the Middle East, new waves of nomadic invaders from the steppe were still breaking into the lands of Islam and seeping into the apparatus of government. When the Mongol victories had brought a new aristocracy and a new law from the steppe, the Turks rediscovered their pride in their ancestors and their ancestral way of life, and sought more self-consciously after the emblems and prerogatives of a specifically Turkish sovereignty.

The cultural and political baggage of the steppe peoples when they entered the world of Islam was not limited to their own native inheritance. They had for long been in contact with other sedentary civilizations—for example, with the ancient, little-known but highly important Iranian cultures of Central Asia, the influence of which can be traced through pre-historic Iranian borrowings in the Turkic languages. Easier to observe, and more relevant to our present inquiry, is the influence of China—clearly visible on both the pre-Islamic Turks and the Mongols. It is from Chinese sources that we first hear of the Turks, as a tributary people among the barbarians beyond the N.W. frontier of the Chinese Empire. The earliest Turkish records—the 8th-century Orkhon inscriptions—reveal profound Chinese influence, and in a sense express a kind of Turkish national revolt after a long period of subjugation to China.

Several of the later Turkish tribes and peoples which entered the Islamic world were still strongly affected by Chinese civilization. Still more so were the Mongols and their kin. The first important group of these to become known to the Muslims were the Kara Khitay, who appeared on the North Eastern frontiers of the Empire of the Great Seljuks. Of Mongol or Tunguz stock, they had conquered Northern China in the 10th century and founded a Chinese dynasty. The name Cathay commemorates their period of rule. In the early 12th century they were driven out of China by another related people, and began to move westwards. Towards the middle of the 12th century they conquered

Transoxania from the Karakhanids and set up a vast Empire stretching from the Oxus to the Yenissei and the border of China. The Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, trying in vain to stem their advance, suffered a humiliating defeat at the battle of the Katvan steppe in 1141.

This little-known engagement must rank among the decisive battles of Asian history. In Persia, it accelerated the decline of Seljuk power and the break-up of the Seljuk Great Sultanate into a number of small states. In Central Asia it confirmed the domination, over what was now old Muslim territory, of a dynasty of far eastern origin, with Chinese Imperial experience. Their language of government, we are told, was Chinese, and they introduced many elements of the Chinese administrative and fiscal system.

With the great Mongol conquests, Muslim South West Asia passed under the control of a people of East Asian origin, dominated since the childhood of their race by the vast majesty of China. Jenghiz Khan himself leaned heavily on Chinese precedent and advice; in his first expedition in 1219 across the Jaxartes into the lands of Islam, he was accompanied by his Chinese counsellor, Ye-lu Ch'u ts'ai, a high Chinese official and, incidentally a descendant of the former Kara Khitay ruling house. By the time when Jenghiz Khan's grandson, Hülegü Khan, advanced across the Oxus, on a new campaign of westward conquest, the Mongols had conquered China itself—and the subjugated lands of Islam were incorporated in an Empire that had its capital in Peking.

Far to the west, the Khan of the Golden Horde in South Russia and the Il-Khan in Persia were autonomous territorial rulers, but they were subject to the supreme authority of the Great Khan, the head of their family and overlord of their Empire. In time, the Khanates of the West became independent and Islamic—but by that time the oriental civilization of the united Mongol Empire had profoundly affected them.

In the period following the destruction of the Caliphate, a fundamental division becomes apparent in the Middle East, between two great cultural zones. In the north was the zone of Perso-Turkish civilization with its centre in the plateau of Iran, extending westwards into Anatolia and beyond into the lands conquered by the Ottomans in Europe, eastwards into Central Asia and the new Muslim Empire of India. In these countries

Arabic survived only as the language of religion and the religious sciences; culturally it was supplanted by Persian and Turkish, which became the media of a new form of Islamic civilization. To the south lay the countries where Arabic was spoken—the derelict province of Iraq, and the new centre in Egypt, with its Syrian and Arabian dependencies, and its African hinterland. Here, behind the defences of a Mamluk Byzantium, the older Arabic culture survived, and entered on its long-drawn-out Silver Age. Persian was not known and, except in art and rather more in architecture, the new cultural developments in the north had little effect.

Politically, however, the Turk and the Mongol were everywhere dominant. Mongol or Turkish dynasties ruled all the countries from the Mediterranean to Central Asia and India, and even the Syro-Egyptian Empire of the Mamluks was governed and defended by a ruling class of imported slaves of Turkish speech, mainly from the Kipchak country north of the Black Sea.

In the 14th century the greatest of Arab historians, the Tunisian Ibn Khaldūn, observed the almost universal supremacy of the Turks, and saw in their coming a proof of God's continuing concern for the welfare of Islam and the Muslims. At a time when the Muslim Caliphate had become weak and degenerate, incapable of resisting its enemies, God in His wisdom and benevolence had brought new rulers and defenders, from among the great and numerous tribes of the Turks, to revive the dying breath of Islam and restore the unity of the Muslims. By the providential dispensation of the Mamluk system, he affirms, they were constantly reinforced by new importations from the steppe, who embraced Islam with enthusiasm, yet retained their nomadic virtues unspoilt by the corrupting influences of civilization.¹

In this interpretation of events, Ibn Khaldūn is applying his own well-known version of the myth of the noble savage. His praise of the steppe peoples as the saviours of Muslim power is however by no means without foundation. The military prowess of the Turks and Mongols has never been questioned; their

¹ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, v (Cairo, 1867), p. 371. Professor Ayalon was the first to draw attention to this very important passage: 'The wafidiyya in the Mamluk kingdom', *Islamic Culture* (1951), p. 90; cf. *idem* in *Jewish Observer*, 23 November, 1956, p. 19.

political contribution to the recovery, stability, and, for a while, expansion of the Muslim world deserves more attention.

It is perhaps in the forms and functioning of government that the great transformation wrought by the invaders from the steppe can most clearly be seen. In the Mongol kingdom of the Il-Khans, and in the states which followed it in Persia and Anatolia, new patterns appear that differ sharply from those of the old Caliphate. The extent of the change may be measured against those countries which knew Turkish but not Mongol rule—as Egypt and India, and those that knew neither—as Morocco.

The first and most striking feature of the new era is the reinforcement of political power. The states of the post-Mongol era are stronger, more stable, and more enduring than those of the past—and the states of the plateaux of Anatolia and Iran are stronger than those of the countries less directly affected by Turco-Mongol rule. In the six centuries before the Mongol invasions, few states in Islam had lasted for much more than three or four generations. The patriarchal Caliphate had perished within forty years of the Hijra; the kingdom of the Umayyads had lasted for less than a century; even the Abbasid Caliphs, though they reigned in name for five centuries, wielded effective power for little more than the first of them, and were thereafter forced to yield it to an unending series of dynasties, some of them great and powerful, but all of them ephemeral in the form, the extension and the duration of their dominion. Even in the periods of their greatness the authority they wielded, though vast, was fragile. Institutions, regimes, realms—all were shifting and impermanent, liable to sudden and total upheaval.

In the Turco-Mongol age all this is changed. In Egypt, the Mamluks, recruited for the most part from the Khanate of the Golden Horde and deeply influenced by the statecraft of their Mongol neighbours, established a state and a government that lasted for two and a half centuries—certainly the most stable and powerful regime that Egypt had known since the Muslim conquest. In Persia, lying on the main high road of invasion, things were more difficult—but even there the heirs of Timur and the various dynasties that followed them succeeded in maintaining the stability and continuity of government—out of which, in time, the territorially and administratively coherent modern kingdom of Persia emerged. And in Anatolia, these same traditions of

government helped to maintain the various Turkish principalities and the Ottoman state which eventually swallowed them all.

An important contribution of the steppe peoples to this stability was a workable principle of dynastic succession. The juristic doctrine of Islam was that the headship of the state was elective. In fact the elective principle remained purely theoretical, and Islam was ruled by a succession of dynasties, ranging from those of the Caliphs themselves to the petty hereditary autonomies of the provincial governors. But the elective principle remained strong enough to prevent the establishment of any regular and accepted rule of succession. With the Caliphate, the fiction of election was maintained on each accession, and beyond the general principle that the Caliph should be chosen among the members of the reigning family, there was no restriction of choice. In the secular dynasties which held the real power, authority was personal and military—and rarely survived the grandson of the founder. Besides Islamic influences, Persian influences were also powerful—but they came from the late, degenerate phase of the Sasanid Empire of Persia, just before its collapse under the shock of Arab invasion. The example it offered was of a personal absolutism, unrestrained—and therefore unsupported—by any entrenched rights or interests; depending on fear rather than on loyalty. In the classical manuals of statecraft the possibility of loyalty—by family, faith or estate—seems to be discounted altogether, and kingship is based unashamedly on punishment and reward.

The Turks introduced a new conception. Already in the Orkhon inscriptions we find the notion clearly expressed of a family singled out by God to rule over the Turks, and, more vaguely, other peoples and lands beyond them. The same idea reappears in an Islamic form in the correspondence of the Great Seljuks, with their claim to an inherited and divinely sanctioned imperial sovereignty, and again, in a pagan form, in the chancery protocol of the Mongol Khans. For the Persians, the sovereign was the sole autocrat; for the Turks and Mongols, sovereignty was a family possession, and the whole family of the Khan or Sultan had a right to share in it. In the kingdoms of the Karakhanids and Seljuks we see the principle at work, whereby the brothers and cousins of the sovereign are admitted to a share of sovereignty. Under the Mongols, the whole vast Empire won by

the conquests was divided up into family appanages, each of which was given to a son or grandson of Jenghiz Khan. We see it again among the Anatolian principalities, and perhaps also in the Seljuk and early Ottoman practice of appointing the sons of the Sultan to provincial governorships, in which they held miniature courts.¹

In this system of family supremacy, leadership belonged to the eldest member of the family, rather than to the son of the previous leader. This principle of succession by seniority remained in force in the Ottoman Empire to the very end. Though probably less satisfactory than the rule of primogeniture, it was an immense improvement on the anarchy of the past. In critical periods it also assured the loyalty of the ruling family to their chief, and of the people to their ruling family.

A ruling family, held together and sustained by strong ties of tribal loyalty; a divine grant of authority, so sacrosanct that defaulting members of the family were put to death by strangling with a bow-string, to avoid the sacrilege of shedding their blood—these were no small advantages in setting up a regime that was secure and accepted. But to make it permanent, in lands of ancient culture and jaded loyalty, more was needed.

It was found. In the Turkish kingdoms there was a clarity and cohesion in the institutional structure of state and society that is in marked contrast with the looseness and vagueness of classical Islamic times. The power of the state rests on and is exercised through well-established and well-organized institutions and social orders—army, bureaucracy, judiciary and men of religion, with well-defined powers and functions, with regular recruitment and hierarchic promotion. The emergence of these new features has been variously attributed—to the steadiness and sobriety of the new ruling groups, to changes in the system of land tenure, to the transformation of Islamic belief and attitudes

¹ Osman Turan, 'The idea of world domination among the medieval Turks', *Studia Islamica*, iv (1955), pp. 80–81; Ann K. S. Lambton, 'Quis custodiet custodes: some reflections on the Persian theory of government', *ibid.*, vi (1956), p. 130. Cf. Fuad Köprülü, 'Les institutions juridiques turques au moyen-âge', *Belleter*, ii/5–6 (1938), 41–76; *idem*, 'Bizans müesseselerinin Osmanlı müesseselerine te'siri hakkında bâzi mülâhazalar', in *Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası*, i (1931), 165–313; Italian translation, *Alcune osservazioni intorno all' influenza delle istituzioni bizantine sulle istituzioni ottomane* (Rome, 1953).

through the new orthodoxy, to the influence of Chinese—and Byzantine—Imperial administration, to the introduction and acceptance of fire-arms. All no doubt played their part—though the determining of their relative importance is very much a matter of argument. What is clear is that in these states, and notably in the Ottoman Empire, land ownership and taxation, justice and religion, government and war are better organized and better correlated than ever before in Islam, and give to the Turkish rulers an assurance, a competence and above all a permanence that are new to the Islamic world.

With the consolidation of the Turkish states came an important change in the nature of the realms over which they ruled. Their territories were wider, their frontiers more permanent. The constant rise and fall of petty principalities—regional or personal, military or tribal, forming and reforming in ever different shapes—had come to an end. After the Mongol invasions, three great states, based on Egypt, Persia and Turkey, with more or less stable frontiers, divided the Middle East between them. With the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517 their number was reduced to two—two great dynastic monarchies, which confronted one another from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf, as the Sasanid and Byzantine Empires had done a thousand years earlier. One of them, Persia, has survived to our own day; the disappearance of the other has left many uncertainties that are not yet resolved.¹

School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

¹ My thanks are due to Professor Ann K. S. Lambton for reading and commenting on this paper, and to Mr G. R. Hawting for drawing my attention to a serious omission.