

QAIDU AND THE RISE
OF THE INDEPENDENT
MONGOL STATE IN
CENTRAL ASIA

Michal Biran

CURZON

First Published in 1997
by Curzon Press
15 The Quadrant, Richmond
Surrey, TW9 1BP

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Typeset in Sabon by LaserScript Ltd, Mitcham
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-7007-0631-3

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QAIDU AND THE RISE OF THE INDEPENDENT MONGOL STATE IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Qaidu (1236-1301), one of the great Mongol Khans, is better known as a rebel than as a state builder. Grandson of Chinggis Khan's designated heir, Ögödei, Qaidu became an active player in the Mongol arena only after the house of Ögödei lost its supremacy to the Toluids, descendants of Chinggis's younger son. The coup of the Toluids and their seizing of the Qa'an's throne were accompanied by purges of many of the Ögödeids, who had to give up their army and territories. Against this background Qaidu strove to revive the Ögöeid cause. From the 1270s onward Qaidu succeeded not only in constantly challenging Qubilai Qa'an, but also in establishing a kingdom of the Ögödeids in Central Asia. Qaidu's activities undermined the Qa'an's authority, shifted the balance of power in the Mongol empire and accelerated its dismemberment. Though the house of Ögödei departed from the stage of history after Qaidu's death, the Mongol state that he established in Central Asia, a state independent of the Qa'an's authority, survived him under the rule of the Chaghadaids, his erstwhile rivals, allies, and successors.

In this first comprehensive biography of Qaidu, based on a close reading in Persian, Arabic and Chinese sources, Michal Biran reveals a highly important yet lesser-known chapter of the history of 13th century Central Asia, the Mongol Empire in its stages of disintegration, and the formative stages of the Chaghadaid Khanate, that was in fact Qaidu's legacy.

ISBN 0-7007-0631-3



9 780700 706310

MANOMAR
\$ 131.63



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