

= Mongol conquest of the Qara Khitai =

The Mongol Empire conquered the Qara Khitai in the years 1216 ? 1218 AD . Prior to the invasion , war with the Khwarazmian dynasty and the usurpation of power by the Naiman prince Kuchlug had weakened the Qara Khitai . When Kuchlug besieged Almaliq , a city belonging to the Karlucs , vassals of the Mongol Empire , Genghis Khan dispatched a force under command of Jebe to pursue Kuchlug . After his force of 30 @,@ 000 was defeated by Jebe at the Khitan capital Balasagun , Kuchlug faced rebellions over his unpopular rule , forcing him to flee to modern Afghanistan , where he was captured by hunters in 1218 . The hunters turned Kuchlug over to the Mongols , who beheaded him . Upon defeating the Qara Khitai , the Mongols now had a direct border with the Khwarazmian Empire , which they would soon invade in 1219 .

= = Background = =

After Genghis Khan defeated the Naimans in 1204 , Naiman prince Kuchlug fled his homeland to take refuge among the Qara Khitai . The Gurkhan Yelü Zhilugu welcomed Kuchlug into his empire , and Kuchlug became an advisor and military commander , eventually marrying one of the daughters of Zhilugu . However , during a war with the bordering Khawarzmian dynasty , Kuchlug initiated a coup d'état against Zhilegu . After Kuchlug took power , he allowed Zhilegu to rule the Qara Khitai in name only . When the Gurkhan died in 1213 , Kuchlug took direct control of the khanate . Originally a Nestorian , once among the Khitai Kuchlug converted to Buddhism and began persecuting the Muslim majority , forcing them to convert to either Buddhism or Christianity , a move which alienated Kuchlug from most of the population . When Kuchlug besieged the Karluk city of Almaliq , the Karlucs , vassals of the Mongol Empire , requested aid from Genghis Khan .

= = Invasion = =

In 1216 , after requesting Muhammad II of Khwarazm not to aid Kuchlug , Genghis Khan dispatched general Jebe with two tumens (20 @,@ 000 soldiers) to deal with the Qara Khitai threat , while sending Subutai with another two tumens on a simultaneous campaign against the Merkits . The two armies traveled alongside each other through the Altai and Tarbagatai Mountains until arriving at Almaliq . At that point , Subutai turned southwest , destroying the Merkits and protecting Jebe 's flank against any sudden attacks from Khwarazm . Jebe relieved Almaliq , then moved south of Lake Balkash into the lands of the Qara Khitai , where he besieged the capital of Balasagun . There , Jebe defeated an army of 30 @,@ 000 troops and Kuchlug fled to Kashgar . Taking advantage of the unrest fomenting under Kuchlug 's rule , Jebe gained support from the Muslim populace by announcing that Kuchlug 's policy of religious persecution had ended . When Jebe 's army arrived at Kashgar in 1217 , the populace revolted and turned on Kuchlug , forcing him to flee for his life . Jebe pursued Kuchlug across the Pamir Mountains into Badakhshan in modern Afghanistan . According to Ata @-@ Malik Juvayni , a group of hunters caught Kuchlug and handed him over to the Mongols , who promptly beheaded him .

= = Aftermath = =

With the death of Kuchlug , the Mongol Empire secured control over the Qara Khitai . Another segment of the Qara Khitai , from a dynasty founded by Buraq Hajib , survived in Kirman as vassals of the Mongols , but ceased to exist as an entity during the reign of the Mongol Ilkhanid ruler Öljaitü . The Mongols now had a firm outpost in Central Asia directly bordering the Khwarazm Empire . Relations with the Khwarazms would quickly break down , leading to the Mongol invasion of that territory .