CHAPTER 3

Jochi and the Early Western Campaigns

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Ever since Peter Jackson’s seminal article of 1978, it has been recognized that conflict over who owned the West was perhaps the single most important factor in the break-up of the Mongol empire.¹ The descendants of Jochi, Chinggis Khan’s eldest son, claimed dominance in the western region, one which the establishment of Hülegü as the Il-Khan in the West negated. Even before Hülegü’s creation of a new khanate, the Jochid family had felt their rights as first among equals in the West had been under pressure, as Peter Jackson has demonstrated.

Like many other conflicts in the Mongol empire, this conflict too was fought in the field of historiography. The West was the leading edge of the Mongol conquests and the Jochid family claimed to have been given that leading edge as their patrimony by Chinggis Khan (Juvaini/Boyle, 42). The other families could thus challenge that claim by arguing that the grant of the West carried with it the duty to continue the expansion of the empire by force. If the Jochid family had been remiss in that duty to fight in the West, then their claim to the associated privileges was weakened. As a result, the role of Jochi in the early history of the empire was subject to a systematic challenge. The standard accounts of the rise of Chinggis Khan, whether the Secret History of the Mongols or the Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan² post-dated this re-writing of history and enshrined the resulting criticism of Jochi’s supposed inability in the standard historical accounts. Enough has been left, however, particularly in biographical sources, to enable Jochi’s real role to be more accurately reconstructed.

¹ It is a pleasure to present this work in appreciation of the scholarship of Professor Morris Rossabi, whose works have touched ably on nearly every aspect of the Mongol empire.
² This work is now lost, but its text may be more or less completely established by comparison of 1) Rashid al-Dīn’s “History of Chinggis Khan,” which was translated from its Mongolian version, and 2) the text of the “Campaigns of Chinggis Khan” (Shengwu qinzheng lu) and the first chapter of the Basic Annals of the Yuan shi, which were taken more or less verbatim from its Chinese translation. For the correspondences for the sections relevant to this paper between the “Campaigns of Chinggis Khan” and the Rashid al-Din’s history, see the Appendix.
The “Standard Narrative” on Jochi’s Campaigns

What I will call the “standard narrative” of Jochi’s role is found in three works written in the reigns of Möngke and Qubilai Qa’an: the Secret History of the Mongols, the Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan, and Juwaynī’s History of the World Conqueror. Although these works differ sharply in style, coverage, and many points of detail, they share a number of emphases and partisan assertions, marking them all as historiography of the 1251 Toluid revolution. Together, these works in Mongolian, Chinese, and Persian languages set the basic lines of Mongolian imperial historiography in the Toluid realms of Yuan China and Ilkhanate. According to these works, Jochi conducted the following major campaigns: (1) together with his younger brothers Chaghadai and Ögedei he campaigned on the right wing in North China, first against the cities in what is now the Höhhot-Datong area and then along the Taihang Mountains in Hebei and up into Shanxi province (VR §39.2, 39.8); (2) on his own, Jochi subdued the forest peoples in what is now central and southern Siberia (SHM §239; VR §48); (3) during the great campaign against Khorazm, Jochi took several cities along the Syr Darya (VR §51.2; Juvaini/Boyle, 86–91); and finally (4) he participated in the siege of Ürgench, albeit under the command of his younger brother Ögedei (SHM §258; VR §51.2–51.3). In another version, Jochi only dispatched soldiers to the siege of Ürgench (Juvaini/Boyle, 124). After this final campaign, Jochi returned to his homeland and hunted, implicitly leaving the conquest of the Qipchaqs to generals like Sübe’edei (SHM §262; VR §51.3; Juvaini/Boyle, 90, 139–40).

This “standard narrative” had important implications for the legitimate extent of Jochi’s rule. The implications are explicitly spelled out in the case of the Siberian campaign: having conquered the Forest Peoples there all on his own, they were to be his sole patrimony (SHM §239). The same would be true by implication of the Syr Darya cities, Jand, Yangikent, and Barchin. On the other

3 I have explained my reasons for dating this work to the era of Möngke Qa’an in Atwood, 2007a and 2007b. I do not see that the arguments in de Rachewiltz, 2008 actually address the points I have made or in any way demonstrate an Ögedeid political Sitz im Leben for the work.

4 I study this work and establish its text in my forthcoming critical edition of the “Campaigns of Chinggis Khan” (Shengwu qinzheng lu). To anticipate the conclusions that will be presented here, this work was compiled bilingually, but with Mongolian as the primary language. Research for it was begun under Wang E 王鶚 in 1261–1268, but it was mostly written under the direction of Qorghosun and Yelü Zhu 耶律鑄 in 1273–78. The Chinese version was presented to the court in 1287 and lightly edited before receiving final form in 1303. The Veritable Records of Chinggis Khan and Ögedei were again lightly edited and combined to form the “Campaigns of Chinggis Khan” during the reign of Ayurbarwada Buyantu Qa’an in 1317–1320.