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## IN SEARCH OF THE HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE TALAS QURULTAI OF 1269

*This article offers the authors' perspective on the reconstruction of the location of the Talas Qurultai (or Congress) held in 1269. A peaceful solution to the conflict between the descendants of Genghis Khan was proposed during this Mongol Empire assembly in the Talas Valley. This important event determined a new political order in Eurasia, expressed in the emergence of new state alliances: the Uluses of Jochi, Chagatai, Ögedei, Kublai, and Hülegü. Scholars P. N. Petrov and A. M. Kamyshev suggested that the Yangi Taraz mint was located near the Pokrovskoe II archaeological site (the modern settlement of Chon Kapka, Kyrgyzstan) based on the numismatic finds from the Talas Valley. The location of the Chagataid town of Yangi Taraz of the 13th-14th centuries, associated with the name of Kaidu Khan, the leader of the Talas Quriltai, is thus determined to be in the area close to the mint. This information made it possible to formulate a hypothesis about the location of the Talas Quriltai as being in the area close to the settlement of Pokrovskoe II. The article also describes the origin and significance of quriltai in the history of the Mongol Empire. The reasons for the organization of the Talas Quriltai and its significance in the history of the peoples of Central Asia are discussed in this work. The symbolic atmosphere of the Talas Quriltai is conveyed through interpretation of significant events such as the number of days, the exchange of cult objects, and oath-taking by the khans. The authors' map offering "A Reconstruction of the Routes of the Khans to the Talas Quriltai of 1269" is presented according to modern-day natural features and geographical locations of inner Eurasia.*

**Key words:** Talas Quriltai, Talas Congress, Kaidu Khan, Ulus of Jochi, Yangi Taraz

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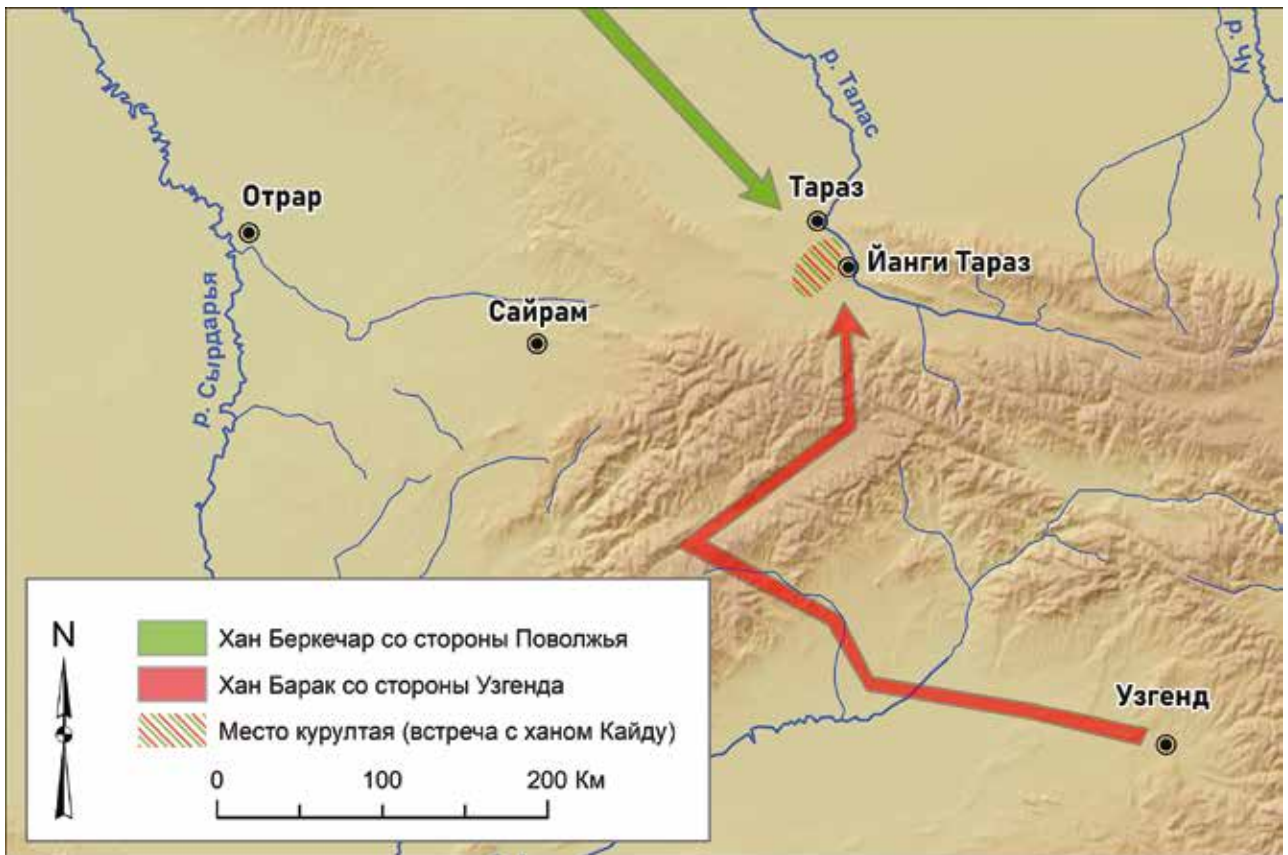
*"There was an agreement and an oath that next time we would not oppose each other and would not invent tricks and intrigues. We ate gold so that he ruled his property, and we ours"*

*From the speech of Kaidu, the grandson of Ögedei Khan.  
Quoted by Rashid ad-din, Persian encyclopedic scholar  
(1247-1318)  
(Rashid al-Din 1946, 83)*

**H**ISTORICALLY, the geographical toponym for Talas became a generic and appellative name for the Talas Qurultai of 1269, the last all-Mongolian congress, at which peace was concluded among the Chingizids on behalf of the houses of Jochi, Chagatai, and Ögedei. As a result, from a legal standpoint, the borders of Jochi, Chagatai, and Ögedei's possessions were established and two new Tuluid uluses were recognized: the Ulus

of Kublai and the Ulus of Hülegü. On the banks of the Talas River, the reality of the collapse of the Mongol Empire was secured by a contractual oath among representatives of the Chingizids and all apparent contradictions regarding the supreme power in the empire were resolved (Mirgaleev 2019, 47, 49).

This article proposes to reconstruct the territory of the all-Mongolian congress by designating it as "the historical landscape of the resolution of the military conflict." Beginning in 1251, the pre-Qurultai events in the territory of the Mongolian Empire were in the context of internecine feuds and the situation was characterized by intra-dynasty struggles, which led to the natural collapse of the empire (Jackson 2017, 71; Bartold 1963, 573). A peaceful resolution to the conflict was proposed during the meeting of the golden clan of the Borjigin – the descendants of Chingghis Khan – in the "spacious and rich grass" of the Talas valley.



Ил. 1. Реконструкция маршрутов следования ханов на Таласский курултай 1269 года.  
Автор: М. А. Антонов

### Forerunners of the Talas Qurultai

#### *Khan Ariq Böke*

The beginning of internecine military conflict was laid shortly after the death of the fourth supreme Khan, Möngke, in August of 1259 (Atwood 2004, 362-365). In May 1260, Kublai, the brother of the deceased Khan, fearing the actions of his other brother Ariq Böke, convened a Qurultai in the city of Kaiping (Shangdu, northern China), where he was proclaimed the Supreme Khan of the Empire (Rossabi 2009, 93). This qurultai took place outside the original nomadic camps of the Golden clan (Jackson 2017, 71), and not all representatives of the clan of Chinggis Khan were present. So, his opponents, in June 1260 in Mongolia, convened another qurultai, at which Ariq Böke was proclaimed the Supreme Khan (Bartold 1963, 573; Dalai 1983, 34-35). The struggle between the two khans ended in 1264 with the defeat of Ariq Böke (Barthold 1963, 575; Dalai 1983, 37). For his trial, Kublai wanted to convene a qurultai, but it did not take place since in 1266, Ariq Böke died (Rossabi 2009, 108).

#### *Khans Kaidu (Haidu) and Baraq.*

After the defeat of Ariq Böke, Kublai's main opponent was Kaidu (Haidu), the grandson of Ögedei (Biran 1997, 197; Atwood 2004, 444-445). However, before Kublai, Kaidu would have to defeat his opponent in the Chagatai ulus, Baraq. Initially, success was on the side of Baraq, but the troops of the Golden Horde, led by Berkechar, the uncle of Khan Möngke Temür, arrived to help Kaidu. The Jochid army numbered 50,000 soldiers. This united army defeated Baraq, but, apparently, to prevent the devastation of the main towns of Maverannahr, Kaidu decided to negotiate and sent his ambassador to Baraq. In the spring of 1269, the parties gathered in the "meadows of Talas and Kenjak and, after a week of feasts, on the eighth day, held a council" (Rashid al-Din 1946, 70-71).

### The Term "Qurultai" in the Mongol Empire

This term, apparently, was first mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols* and rendered "yeke qurilta" (Rachewiltz 1972, 174: 12009) (in

modern Mongolian, “their khural dai” or literally as “the Great Qurultai”). Rashid al-Din refers to it in Persian as “*Qurultai-i buzurg*” (Rashid al-Din 1952, 44). The emergence of the qurultai as a congress of the nobility is associated with the unification of the Turko-Mongolian tribes at the turn of the 12th to 13th centuries (Atwood 2004, 462). The first Mongol Qurultai was convened in 1206 at the headwaters of the Onon River in which Temüjin, was proclaimed “Chingghis Khan.” The creation of the Great Mongol State was also announced there (Rashid al-Din 1952, 150; May 2018, 39, cited from Ohsson 1834). In a letter from the third Ilkhan of Iran, Ahmad Töğöldör (1282-1284) (Jackson 2014, 661-662), to the Egyptian sultan Sayf ad-Din Qalaun, the well-known definition of a qurultai is given: “We have convened a qurultai, that is, a meeting in which the views of all brothers, children, important emirs, military leaders, and captured officers were presented” (Krymsky 1896, 109; *History and Historiography*, 2006, 167-202). “The election of Khan Guyuk (1246-1248 approx.), according to the Franciscan, John de Plano Carpini, calls it a “solemn meeting.” The 13th century Armenian historian, Vardan, mentions the Mongolian word *khurultai* and explains its meaning also as a “solemn meeting.” Chinese authors called it the “great assembly.” In *The Secret History of the Mongols* it is first referred to as a “Great Family Council” (para. 154). By 1240, the *History* refers to it as the “Great Seim-Khuril” (para. 282).” (Yurchenko 2012, 25-28; Rashid al-Din 1952, 38, note 6; Tucker 2006, 337). The “solemn meeting” was usually timed to coincide with a specific astral point of the year based on the seasonal and calendar holidays of the Mongols, which gave the event a special, sacred significance (Yurchenko 2012, 14-15, 20). When “... the first days of spring came, all the princes and emirs headed from [all] sides and edges to the old yurt and the great headquarters.... The entire population mentioned above was occupied for three days with pleasures, gatherings, and entertainments. Then they started talking about the affairs of the state and about the reign” (Rashid al-Din 1960, 18-19). This qurultai referenced by al-Din ended with the election of the great khan Ögedei to the throne (Yurchenko 2012, 21).

A qurultai of the Mongol nobility in the sense of a “clan congress” or “council of all kinfolk and service aristocracy” (Vladimirtsov 1934, 99, 100) was convened for various reasons of a political and social nature (Biran 1997, 29, 134 note 37; Sultanov 2001, 40, 66; Seleznev 2013, 9-15).

A qurultai was not only for the election of khans, but its social essence also consisted in *collective discussion (authors' emphasis)* of pressing issues and decision-making, which served as a fundamental socio-political element in the Mongolian state.

### Reasons for Convening the Talas Qurultai.

The sequence of events for this “conference holiday” in Talas was significant in the context of the negotiations of the ruling princes (Bartold 1963, 578-582; Karayev 1995, 22). Some researchers believe that the convocation of any qurultai was always associated with the act of electing a new khan, and, therefore, the purpose of the Talas Qurultai was to proclaim Kaidu as khan. This error is reflected in the study of Michal Biran (Biran 1997, 28-29). Academician V.V. Bartold writes about this: “... our sources say nothing about the proclamation of Haidu [Kaidu] as the head of the clan, about the rite of ascension performed on him over the “white felt,” that is, the proclamation of a khan” (Bartold 1963, 583). This same fact, based on a written source, was stated by the Kyrgyz historian, O. K. Karayev (Karayev 1995, 25). According to the historian Jamal al-Karshi, Kaidu ibn Kistay [Khashin] was proclaimed khan in September 1271 (Jamal al-Karshi al-Mulhakat bi-s-surah 2005, 124).

What were the true reasons for the convocation of the Talas Qurultai is unknown. Perhaps, there were two issues to consider that generated the inherent tensions of the political system that Chingghis Khan left as a legacy to his family (Jackson 2017, 71). The first question is related to the needs of the pastoralist society to establish the territorial delineation of pasturelands. The second – based on the Turko-Mongolian way of inheriting power – involved the confusion around the law on primogeniture, which the Mongols did not practice.

These reasons of a political and economic nature demanded a solution. The truce turned out to be the main condition for maintaining relations between the heirs of Chingghis Khan: “... we will ask for peace ...”, said Kaidu to his supporters (Rashid al-Din 1946, 70). Apparently, due to the fateful nature of this qurultai involving relations between the Chingizids, there is no consensus among historians as to the location of where it was held. According to the Persian historian Vassaf, the qurultai took place not on the banks of the Talas, but in the Katvan steppe near Samarkand, the Dasht-i Katvan. Scholar Timothy May refers to the Talas event as the “Katwan World” (May 2017, 265). The Persian historian Rashid al-Din wrote that the qurultai took place on the Talas plain, which is true, since “... Kaidu, as victor, had to convene a qurultai in his domain ...” (Bartold 1963, 582).

For seven days the princes feasted; on the eighth day decisions were made “in accordance with the spirit of Yasa and the steppe traditions” (Barthold 1963, 583). The princes exchanged clothes and cups with each other, “drank an oath” and swore allegiance and “justly summer and winter pastures” were divided

(Rashid al-Din 1946, 70). Territory was designated – a yurt for each ruling house, the main rules of conduct were drawn up “... to live in the mountains and steppes, not to approach towns, not to let their herds out on arable land, not to take anything from the inhabitants except taxes ...” (Bartold 1963, 583).

The main protagonists of the “tribal congress” were Ögedei ds Kaidu and Kypchak, Juchid Berkechar, Chagataid Baraq (Rashid al-Din 1946: P. 70), and each side received their own benefit (Bartold 1963, 582-583).

### The Symbolism of the Pictorial Events of the Qurultai

In 1269, the Talas Valley witnessed the last all-Mongol qurultai in the history of Chingghis Khan's Empire. The first “tribal meeting” took place on the banks of the Onon River in which Temüjin became Chingghis Khan; and 63 years later, the final meeting of the descendants of the Great Khan took place on the banks of the Talas River. This latter event, signals a farewell to the union of the state created by the fortitude and military talent of Chingghis Khan. Perhaps that is why there is a degree of special symbolism in this last “great family council.”

The traditional time is spring, when the Mongols prayed and sacrificed to the territory's spirits and their ancestors (Atwood 2004, 462). *For seven days the princes feasted; on the eighth day decisions were made “in accordance with the spirit of Yasa and the steppe traditions”* (Bartold 1963, 583). The celebration, which lasted seven days, could include sacrificial libations and cultic rituals, alien to the Islamic mentality, and, perhaps, therefore, symbolically designated by Rashid al-Din as a “feast.” The clear presence of the number *seven* in the recorded report of the qurultai indicates a pronounced ritualistic context of the Congress. It is known that the qurultai was associated with the rituals of the astral seasons and usually lasted three or four days (Yurchenko 2012, 14-15). During this last qurultai, the number *seven* is clearly indicated, which is a sacred number in world cultures, including the Turko-Mongolian culture. The *seven* stars of the Big Dipper are represented among the Mongol peoples as the *seven* gods of Tengri. The number *seven* expresses ideas concerning mythological space. The symbolism of the number *seven* reflects the system of kinship of the nomads referred to as “Seven Grandfathers” (*Jety-ata* in Kazakh and Kyrgyz); with another meaning being “Seven Ancestors” reflected in the eternally revered ancestral number of generations among the nomads. Relatives up to the seventh generation were considered close and were collectively responsible for each other (Galimzyanov 2015, [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Жети\\_ата](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Жети_ата))

The next symbolic act during the qurultai involved the exchange of gifts. “... The princes exchanged clothes and cups with each other ...” (Rashid al-Din 1946, 70). In traditional culture, the exchange of gifts belongs to one of the most important behavioral archetypes (biological memories), whose social and magical essence is expressed in eliminating alienation, neutralizing hostility, and furthering openness in relationships while ensuring a stable connection between people through a visible object. “The exchange of gifts is, first of all, an essential, energetic exchange” (Surganova 2009, 4). In the tradition of nomadic peoples, the exchange of gifts was a stable element of relations that promoted cooperation, friendship, and coexistence (Yurchenko 2012, 110) between individuals and groups. “People in archaic and traditional culture were more interested in the magical side of the gift as a guarantee of trust and good intentions, rather than just the economic aspect of the gift, contained in its material value” (Surganova 2009, 184).

The exchange of clothes and cups at the Talas Qurultai between representatives of the Chingizids from different houses was a sign of reconciliation and joint decision-making. Clothing as a personal covering of the body and a fabric (which, according to the figurative expression of the Kazakh proverb “*Oramal tone bolmaidy - zhol bolady*” [“A gift in the form of a scarf will not become a fur coat, but will become a road”]) symbolized an exchange gift which was a “part of oneself.” This conveyed the attitude of friendliness between the wearers of the clothing (Surganova 2009, 183).

The exchange of cups (in this case, bowls) demonstrates the purity of the drink without malicious intent to poison. Among the Turkic and Mongolian peoples, a vessel with fermented drink, usually mare's milk, was used during sacrificial ceremonies. Among the medieval Mongols, libation with wine was also known. A sacrifice to the ancestral spirits in the form of a libation with a fermented drink could well have occurred during this seven days of the so-called feast. Its obligatory stage was a collective meal with a “circular bowl” ritual, which was of a social and magical nature, uniting all partakers into one whole, energetic principle. A mutual treat among the Mongols consisted in the indispensable drinking from a common bowl which was passed in a circle and replenished as the drink was consumed (Yermolenko 2004, 61–63).

It is possible that this action referred to by Rashid al-Din as “the exchange of cups” was a symbolic ritual of the “circular bowl” known among the Turks and Mongols. It possibly arose as a means of assuring the ritual meal participants that there were no nefarious motives of poisoning, but later, it became a custom

that signified the most important element of the qurultai – the taking of an oath.

They “... drank the oath” and swore allegiance, “justly summer and winter pastures” were divided, the territory was designated - yurts (?) to each ruling house, the main rules of conduct were drawn up “... to live in the mountains and steppes, not to approach towns, not to let their herds out on arable land, not to take from the inhabitants anything but taxes ...” (Barthold 1963, 583). “According to their ritual and custom, they ate gold and agreed that henceforth they would settle in the mountains and steppes and would not wander around the towns” (Rashid al-Din 1946, 71).

The allegorical expression “they ate gold” (in Arabic, *zarkhurdand* - authors’ note) has an important symbolic meaning and means they *swore on gold*. In Persian sources from the Mongolian period, the ritual appears under the figurative expression “to eat gold” (Yurchenko 2012, 83). A guarantee of security at the Mongolian court was an oath given on gold. It is believed that the oath of drinking water into which gold was dipped three times was established by Chingghis Khan. Most likely, this custom was introduced into Mongolian diplomatic practice via the Cumans, which was a traditional practice of this Turkic tribe. “The oath on gold firmly entered imperial usage, but since it was an alien element, the authority of Chingghis Khan, a figure completely mythologized by that time, was needed to legalize it” (Yurchenko 2012, 81-82). The ritual code of the “oath on gold” was understood by all “citizens” of the Mongol Empire. They believed in the power and significance of the oath to fulfill the obligations of the treaty (Yurchenko 2012, 85). Thus, the Talas Qurultai ended with the adoption of an oath which solved problems related to the distribution of power and the distribution of the khan’s territories.

### **The Significance and Political Outcome of the Talas Qurultai.**

In modern historiography, viewpoints vary concerning the results of the Talas Qurultai. According to some historians, the Qurultai of 1269 consolidated the collapse of the Mongol Empire and laid the foundation for the new independent states (Mirgaleev 2019, 47-49). According to others, the Talas Qurultai pursued the goal not to divide, but rather, to preserve the empire (Pochekaev 2017, 35).

Under the rule of the Eternal Heaven, the traditional Tengrian motto of Chingghis Khan, new states appeared on the world map in the global sense of the word and were as follows:

1. The Ulus of Jochi (which later historians

referred to as the “Golden Horde”) extended from the Altai to the Danube. In fact, this involved two separate uluses: Batu’s ulus in the west and Orda’s ulus in the east.

2. The Ulus of Chagatai, located in what is commonly known as Central Asia.

3. The Ulus of Ögedei (historically, it is also known as the “state of Kaidu,” located in eastern Turkestan and Central Asia).

4. The Ulus of Kublai (often referred to as the “Yuan Dynasty” or “Yuan Empire” in the Chinese manner) located in China and Mongolia.

5. The Ulus of Hülegü (often referred to as the Ilkhanate) located in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Anatolia (Mirgaleev 2019, 49).

### **The Location of the Talas Qurultai**

Talas and its districts belonged to Kaidu. His possessions stretched from these locations toward the east and included Zhetysu and beyond to the Tarbagatai mountains. The possessions of his rival Baraq lay to the south, whose headquarters was in Uzgend in the Fergana Valley (see Appendix 1). It is unlikely that Baraq came alone. He was undoubtedly accompanied by some kind of detachment. Where exactly the Jochid, Berkechar, came from is difficult to say, but certainly from the Volga region (Fig. 1). His army consisted of 50,000 soldiers and even if some part of it returned to the Golden Horde, it is likely that enough warriors remained to rule out any unforeseen circumstances. It is necessary to add that detachments from the Kaidu along with Kypchak or Cuman warriors were certainly a part of this army. It can be assumed that the number of participants in the qurultai was impressive, numbering several thousand.

The Chingizids’ military detachments and the personnel who served them for eight days occupied a large portion of the Talas steppe which certainly included water sources and pastures for horses. According to Mongolian traditions, herds of milking mares were specially allocated to provide the numerous participants and guests of the qurultais with provisions (Yurchenko 2012, 41-42). Obviously, the Talas Qurultai took place not in an oasis, but on the steppe along the banks of the Talas River, as Rashid al-Din states, in the “meadows of Talas and Kenjak” (Rashid al-Din 1946, 70).

Simultaneously, it is most likely that the economic and craft workshops of the city were involved during the qurultai providing its participants with provisions, pottery, and other utensils. The Talas Valley was one of the inner regions of the Chagatai ulus. The Mongols took captive artisans to this location who satisfied the economic and cultural needs of the nomads (Petrov,

Kamyshev 2019, 277). During the Mongolian era, two cities known as Taraz existed in the Talas River valley: Ulug (Greater) and Yangi (New) Talas. Which was the sought after Taraz, under the possession of Kaidu Khan?

The modern political boundaries in this region do not reflect the boundaries of that period and Kaidu's ulus occupied a vast geographical area encompassing southern and southeastern Kazakhstan along with northern and northwestern parts of Kyrgyzstan, with its central nomad camps apparently located in the valley of the Talas River.

P. N. Petrov and A. M. Kamyshev have attempted to pinpoint the location of the city of Taraz during the Mongolian period based on the available numismatic materials. They expressed an opinion that during the Mongolian era the ancient city of Taraz (on the site of the modern city in Kazakhstan) had fallen into decay, and the existing coinage from the Mongolian period belongs to the city of Yangi Taraz which was located in the Talas Valley of Kyrgyzstan (Petrov, Kamyshev 2019, 266-282). It was the accumulated concentration of coins that indicated the primary mint site along with the presence of coins from the Chagatai ulus. They found that the largest concentration of Chagataid coin finds was on the right (southern) bank of the Talas River extending approximately 1.5 x 4 km along the riverbank.

According to these scholars, during the period of Mongol rule, the Yangi Taraz mint was located in the area of the Pokrovskoe II archaeological site (the Chon Kapka settlement), in modern Kyrgyzstan. After the Mongol conquest, Yangi Taraz was "restored" at approximately the end of the 1230s or the beginning of the 1240s. "Copper and silver coins with the name of the Taraz and the Yangi Taraz mint of the 13th and 14th centuries were struck specifically in Yangi Taraz ... (Petrov, Kamyshev 2019, 276). William of Rubruk, passing through Taraz in 1253, wrote that in the Chu-Talas interfluvial handicraft industries (such as the mining industry) had developed and was a location where some captive Europeans worked in the 1230s. Most likely, he was referring to "New" or Yangi Taraz (Petrov, Kamyshev 2019, 277).

Based on the numismatic research, Petrov and Kamyshev have made several preliminary conclusions, while they left the prerogative in deciding the exact location of the city of Yangi Taraz up to archaeological research:

- The Yangi Taraz mint was located in the area of the ruins of the site designated Pokrovsky II and might possibly be located not in Yangi Taraz itself, but nearby in a minor settlement while the minting of the coins was credited to the toponym of the larger town or region.

- The Mongolian city of Yangi Taraz of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14th centuries was located in the Talas Valley, on the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan.

- The study of the coinage from the Chagatai ulus in the context of the medieval narrative sources contributed to their determination of the existence of two cities, taking into account their epithets of Ulug (Greater) Taraz and Yangi (New) Taraz.

- The "capital" of the Taraz in the Chagatai ulus was most likely Yangi Taraz, and not Ulug Taraz, which could not claim to be a capital city. The definition of Yangi, or New, emphasized the characteristic of new construction of the town (Petrov, Kamyshev 2019, 277-279).

Apparently, Yangi Taraz is the very Taraz in which "Kaidu ibn Kistay ibn Kaan al-Kabir Uktay ibn Chingghis Khan became the khan ... of the country, who sat [on the throne] at the end of Muharram 670 [September 1271] in Taraz" (Jamal al -Karshi al-Mulhakat bi-s-surah 2005, 124). The Mongolian Khan needed money both in ingots and minted coins to fulfill his distributional and ruling functions (Petrov, Kamyshev 2019: P.278). The mint and the town of Yangi Taraz, were, most likely, in close vicinity to one other.

In search for the location of the Talas Qurultai of 1269, these coins played the role of "navigator." The proposed hypothesis includes the search for the site of the Talas Qurultai region starting from the modern archaeological site of Pokrovskoe II (the Chon Kapka settlement in modern Kyrgyzstan) moving westward further along the Talas valley to modern Taraz in Kazakhstan. An interdisciplinary study of the area with the definition of the main indicators of the historical topography such as military camp sites, water resources, road communications, sacred natural objects, the size of the area, etc., will help establish the true location of the last general assembly of the khans of the Mongol Empire where the inviolability of the borders was determined by an oath given from each of the Chingizids. The main symbolic ideological directive of Chingghis Khan's empire was observed: "By the power of God, all the lands, from those where the sun rises and ending with those where it sets, were granted to us" (from the letter of the Great Khan Guyuk to the Pope of Rome from 1246) (quoted by John de Plano Carpini by Klyashtorny, Sultanov 2009, 195).

*Appendix 1. Explanation to the map "A Reconstruction of the Routes of the Khans to the Talas Qurultai in 1269" (Fig. 1).*

Taking into account modern natural objects and geographical locations, it is possible to trace Baraq's

route. If his military detachment led by him left of Uzgend, then, most likely, they moved west along the left bank of the Karadarya River and crossed the Naryn River. Then they bypassed the Chatkal ridge from the southwestern side or crossed it through the Chapchima pass. From there, along the river Baraq moved to the northeast, crossed the Talas Alatau through the Kara-Buura pass. However, to the west there were two more nearby passes, the Korum-Ter and east of Kurama-Ter. In this reconstruction, the Kara-Buura pass was chosen since a modern road passes at this location. Perhaps this convenient pass was popular also in the Middle Ages. Then, Baraq and his detachment moved north towards Yangi Taraz (the modern settlement of Chon Kapka, Kyrgyzstan). The routes of the remaining Chingizids – the participants of the qurultai – are conditionally presented on the map in the direction of their main meeting point in the Talas Valley.

*Dedication to Ye.A. Smagulov:* Yerbolat Akizhanovich Smagulov was one of those rare archaeologists who at first glance understood the model arrangement of an archaeological site in special terms. It seemed that he saw through the ground, so he perfectly felt the outlines of buildings hidden

under the cultural layer. Then, during archaeological excavations, he drew with amazing accuracy in space the walls of citadels, residential areas of settlements, and the shapes of ritual sanctuaries. His aesthetic gift in understanding an ancient artifact revealed the exquisite beauty of medieval pottery items of southern Kazakhstan. A man who was not indifferent to the fate of ancient Turkestan in the context of a modern construction boom; he defended the historical genius of this truly sacred place in Central Asia. The pain for the future of Turkestan passed through his heart...

*Sacred Turkestan is the native land,  
I came to you and fall on your stones (Hikmet 16,  
Khoja Ahmed Yassawi)\**

*I express my gratitude to A.G. Yurchenko for  
providing me advice when I was writing this article.*

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and Strategies of the Symbolic Capital of the Steppe of  
Eurasia."*

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