

SORQOQTANI BEKI (1190 - 1252)

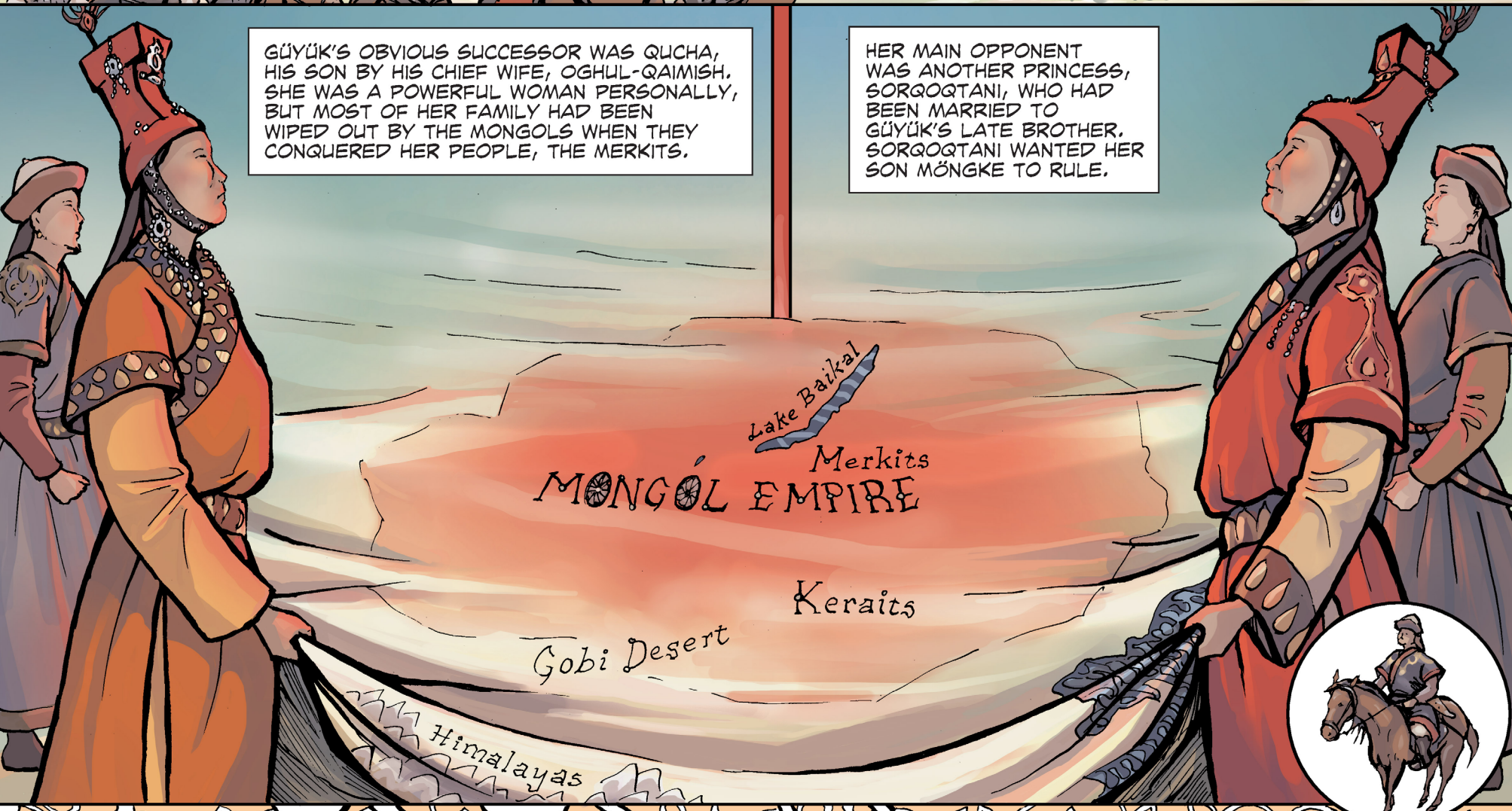
WAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL FORCES IN SHAPING THE MONGOL EMPIRE. SHE USED A NETWORK OF SISTER-PRINCESSES AND NEPHEWS TO WIN THE EMPIRE FOR HER SON MÖNGKE, BUT IN THE PROCESS, BEGAN ITS DIVISION.



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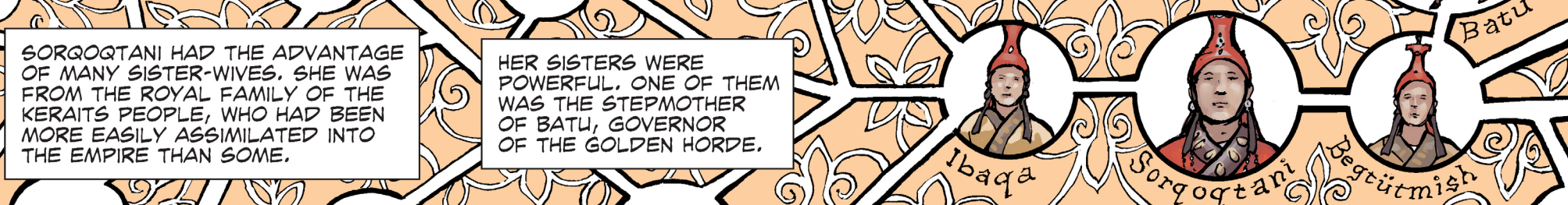


IN 1248, GÜYÜK KHAN, GRANDSON OF CHINGGIS KHAN AND THE THIRD GREAT KHAN, DIED. AT THIS TIME, THE MONGOL EMPIRE HAD SEVERAL PROVINCES, INCLUDING THE GOLDEN HORDE AND THE CHAGATAI KHANATE. ALL THE PROVINCES WERE STILL RULED BY THE GREAT KHAN UNTIL ABOUT 1259.



GÜYÜK'S OBVIOUS SUCCESSOR WAS QUCHA, HIS SON BY HIS CHIEF WIFE, OGHUL-QAIMISH. SHE WAS A POWERFUL WOMAN PERSONALLY, BUT MOST OF HER FAMILY HAD BEEN WIPED OUT BY THE MONGOLS WHEN THEY CONQUERED HER PEOPLE, THE MERKITS.

HER MAIN OPPONENT WAS ANOTHER PRINCESS, SORQOQTANI, WHO HAD BEEN MARRIED TO GÜYÜK'S LATE BROTHER. SORQOQTANI WANTED HER SON MÖNGKE TO RULE.



SORQOQTANI HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF MANY SISTER-WIVES. SHE WAS FROM THE ROYAL FAMILY OF THE KERAITS PEOPLE, WHO HAD BEEN MORE EASILY ASSIMILATED INTO THE EMPIRE THAN SOME.

HER SISTERS WERE POWERFUL. ONE OF THEM WAS THE STEPMOTHER OF BATU, GOVERNOR OF THE GOLDEN HORDE.



EACH SIDE ANGLED FOR POWER. BUT SORQOQTANI HAD THE ADVANTAGE BECAUSE OF HER RELATIVES. SHE MADE AN ALLIANCE WITH BATU, AGREEING TO SPLIT THE EMPIRE. HE WOULD RULE THE WEST AND HER SON MÖNGKE WOULD BECOME GREAT KHAN AND RULE THE EAST.

WITH THE HELP OF HER SISTERS AND THEIR CHILDREN, SORQOQTANI WON THE BATTLE AND HER SON AND NEPHEW CAME TO POWER, BUT THEIR DIVISION BEGAN THE SPLIT THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAVE THE EMPIRE IN FOUR PIECES.