



Yuan Empire

13 Silver coin of Möngke Khan (AD 1251–1259) cast in Liupanshan. This coin with the shape of Chinese coinage but in an unusual metal (silver) was issued for tax collection. The Chinese inscription 'Currency of the Great Dynasty' heralds the coming invasion of China by the Mongols.

14 Bronze coin of the value 10 (cash) of Külüg Khan (AD 1307–1311). Külüg Khan tried to create a monetary system based on silver. This coin was worth one fen (0.4g) of silver. The inscription 'Currency of the Great Yuan (Dynasty)' is in Chinese but using Phags-pa script. This script was created by Drogön Chögyal Phagpa (AD 1235–1280) and was inspired by the Tibetan alphabet. It was intended to be the official writing system of the empire used to transcribe Mongol and Chinese as well as Arabic.

15, 16, 17 (not pictured)

18 Bronze coins of the value 1, 3 and 10 (cash) of Toghon Temür Khan (AD 1333–1368).



Tamgha

The tamgha is a combination of lines forming an abstract symbol that was used as an identification and mark of lineage. It is represented on coins and seals. See coins 3, 4, 6, 12 and 13.



Exhibition organised by **Lyce Jankowski** and **Jerome Mairat** with the collaboration of **Marie Favereau** and sponsored by **Joe Lang** for **Stephen Album Rare Coins**.



PAX MONGOLICA

(AD 1210–1350)

COINS OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE

19 January–12 June 2016

Special exhibition, Money Gallery,
Ashmolean Museum

THE MONGOL EMPIRE



A Mongolian yurt

In AD 1206, Temujin was proclaimed ruler of all the tribes living in what is now Mongolia. He took the name of Genghis Khan and started an aggressive policy of expansion.

At its height in 1279 the Mongol Empire stretched from Hungary in the west to Korea in the east, and from Siberia in the north to Tibet and the Iranian plateau in

the south. It covered up to 33 million km² (66 times the size of the UK and 23% of the world) and had a population of 111 million who spoke a bewildering range of different languages.

From 1260 onwards the Empire of the Great Khans was composed of four independent states (*ulus*) ruled by Genghis Khan's descendants:

- the Golden Horde (part of Russia and Kazakhstan)
- the Ilkhanate (from eastern Turkey to Afghanistan)
- the Chaghatay Khanate (central Asia)
- the Yuan Empire (Mongolia, China and Korea)

The Empire then experienced a period of peace, known as the *Pax Mongolica* and attested by Marco Polo in his travel account, *Il Milione*. It was commonly said that "a maiden bearing a nugget of gold on her head could wander safely throughout the realm". The *Pax Mongolica* encouraged trade and facilitated the exchange of technologies and ideologies across Eurasia.

The end of the *Pax Mongolica* was marked by the disintegration of the khanates and the outbreak in Asia of the black plague, commonly called the Black Death.



Contemporary Mongolian banknote with the figure of Genghis Khan



Coins issued before 1260

1 Copper jital of Genghis Khan (AD 1206–1227) from the mint of Badakhshan. On this coin written in Arabic, Genghis Khan chose to cite the name of Al-Nāṣir, caliph of Baghdad (AD 1158–1225).



2 Silver dirham of Töregene Khatun (AD 1242–1246), uncertain mint. This coin was issued after the death of Ögedei Khan in 1241 by his wife Töregene who became regent (khatun). The Mongol forces had already reached Vienna at that time. The depiction of a Mongol warrior is accompanied by the title 'Chief of the great Mongol nation' in Turkish.



Golden Horde

3 Copper coin of Nogay (AD 1270–1299) issued at the mouth of the Danube. Nogay was a great emir of the Golden Horde and a convert to Islam. This coin bears the Greek letters Χ ΝΚ standing for 'Christ Conquers' (Χριστός Νικά).



4 Silver dirham of Möngke Temür Khan (AD 1267–1280) from the mint of Qrim. This coin bears the name of Möngke Temür along with the tamgha of Batu Khan.



5 Silver dirham of Jani Beg Khan (AD 1341–1357) from the mint of Saray. This bilingual coin bears the name of Jani Beg Khan in Uighur script and his title 'the sultan the Just' in Arabic. It was issued at the capital of the Golden Horde, one of the largest cities of the medieval times.



6 Silver dirham of Batu Khan (AD 1227–1256) or Berke khan (AD 1257–1267) in the name of the Great Khan Möngke (AD 1251–1259) from the mint of Bulgar. Before his death, Genghis Khan installed Batu Khan as chief of a subordinate khanate, the Golden Horde. This coin bears the name of Möngke Khan in Arabic. His tamgha (personal symbol) is present on both obverse and reverse.

Pax Mongolica AD 1210–1350

Coins of the Mongol Empire



LINGUISTIC AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Having no monetary tradition of their own, the Mongol khans adapted to local customs. Silver dirhams were struck in the western part of the empire, whereas Chinese-style bronze coins with central holes were cast in the East. Printed paper banknotes copied those of the Chinese Song and Jin dynasties. Mongolian coins bear a variety of scripts, which reflect the great diversity of peoples and languages under their rule. The Mongols did not originally have their own writing. First, in 1209, they adopted the Uyghur script. Then, in 1260, Kubilai Khan commissioned a Tibetan monk to create a new script, called Phags-pa. This was destined to be the official writing system of the empire and was used to transcribe all languages across the empire.

Mongol khans tolerated different religions within their empire. They themselves followed various faiths. Genghis Khan was the embodiment of Heaven according to Mongolian shamanism, but he himself expressed an interest in Taoism. His son Tolui married a nestorian Christian. His grandson Hulagu became a Buddhist and his great grandson Tekuder converted to Islam. The religious pluralism of the period is obvious on coins. The *shahada*, the Islamic creed, appears on the coins of Abaq Khan, who was Buddhist, mixed with the Christian Trinitarian formula.

The Mongols, although nomadic, successfully built an empire, issued coins, and created a script to write their language.



Bilingual silver dirham of Abaq Khan (Uighur and Arabic)

Ilkhanate

7 Copper coin of Hülagü (AD 1256–1265) struck in the mint of al-Jazīra. Hülagü led the siege of Baghdad in 1258 and was the founder of the Ilkhanate. This coin mentions Kubilai Khan as overlord to show that the Ilkhanate is a subordinate to the Great Khans.



8 Copper fals of Hülagü (AD 1256–1265) from the mint of al-Mawsil (Mosul). This coin was overstruck on a coin of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu (AD 1234–1259), governor of Mosul and vassal of Hülagü.



9 Silver dirham of Abaqā (AD 1265–1282) from the mint of Tbilisi, Georgia. The inscription 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God' (in Arabic above a Christian cross) is quoted from the Gospel of Matthew. Although this part of the Empire was mostly Muslim, Abaqā Khan was a Buddhist and his mother, Doquz-khatun, was known to have been a devout and influential Nestorian Christian.



10 Gold dinar of Gaikhatu (AD 1291–1295) from the mint of Shiraz. The inscription is written vertically in Uighur and horizontally in Arabic.



Chaghatay khanate

11 Copper silver-washed tax coin of Alghu bin Baidar Khan (AD 1260–1266) struck in the mint of Bukhara. This coin was issued for collecting taxes from the populace of Bukhara, which was a part of the appanage of Kubilai Khan, emperor of China. The coin is bilingual: the name of the mint of Bukhara appears in Arabic script on the outer rim and in Chinese characters in the center of the coin.



12 Silver dinar of Tarmashirin Khan (AD 1326–1327) struck in the mint of Tirmiz. The tamgha of the Chaghatay Mongols is placed in the centre of the inscription.

