

## **DOCUMENTS AND PRIMARY SOURCES**

### **THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO ~ CHAPTER # 44 - THE TARTARS**

The circumstances under which these Tartars first began to exercise dominion shall now be related. They dwelt in the northern countries of Jorza and Bargu, but without fixed habitations, that is, without towns or fortified places; where there were extensive plains, good pasture, large rivers, and plenty of water. They had no sovereign of their own, and were tributary to a powerful prince, who ( as I have been informed ) was named in their language, Un-khan, by some thought to have the same signification as Prester John in ours. To him these Tartars paid yearly the tenth part of the increase of their cattle.

In time the tribe multiplied so exceedingly that Un-khan, that is to say, Prester John, becoming apprehensive of their strength, conceived the plan of separating them into different bodies, who should take up their abode in distinct tracts of country. With this view also, whenever the occasion presented itself, such as a rebellion in any of the provinces subject to him, he drafted three or four hundred of these people, to be employed on the service of quelling it, and thus their power was gradually diminished. He likewise dispatched them on other expeditions, and sent among them some of his principal officers to see that his intentions were carried into effect.

At length the Tartars, becoming sensible of the slavery to which he tried to reduce them, resolved to maintain a strict union amongst themselves, and seeing that he planned nothing short of their final ruin, they adopted the measure of leaving the places they then inhabited, and proceeded north across a wide desert, until they felt assured that the distance afforded them security, when they refused any longer to pay to Un-khan the accustomed tribute.

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