

A stylized illustration of a Mongolian archer, likely a woman, riding a brown horse. She is wearing traditional blue and yellow clothing with a red headband and a red sash. She is holding a bow and arrow, and a quiver of arrows is visible on her back. The background shows a landscape with green hills and a blue sky with soft clouds. The text 'SORGHAGHTANI' is written in large, white, serif capital letters across the bottom of the image.

SORGHAGHTANI

Sorghaghtani Beki

1190-1252

Women in ancient Mongolia were more free and powerful than in other, patriarchal societies. Elite women such as queens and princesses often played an important part in ruling the Mongol Empire. Had it not been for them, we maybe would not have heard of the Mongol Empire at all.

Undoubtedly the most prominent of them was Empress Sorghaghtani (c. 1190-1252). Sorghaghtani was the wife of Chinggis Khan's youngest son and heir Tolui. After the death of her husband, Sorghaghtani gained enormous power. She became an influential advisor of Tolui's successor and brother Ugudei. Sorghaghtani recognized the value of education for governing the far-flung state and supported the establishment of schools and libraries throughout the Mongol Empire. She made sure that each of her sons, who all became heirs to Chinggis Khan's throne, learned a foreign language. Sorghaghtani, a Nestorian Christian, is best remembered for her tolerance towards all religions and beliefs. The famous religious tolerance of the Mongol Empire was her and her sons' legacy. Sorghaghtani grew the cultural and commercial ties of the Mongol Empire with the world, and paved the way for an era of prosperity.

Sorghaghtani is a great example of the beneficial power that women wielded over the history of the Mongol Empire.

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Married to Tolui, Chinggis Khan's youngest son, Empress Sorghaghtani bore four sons and a daughter.

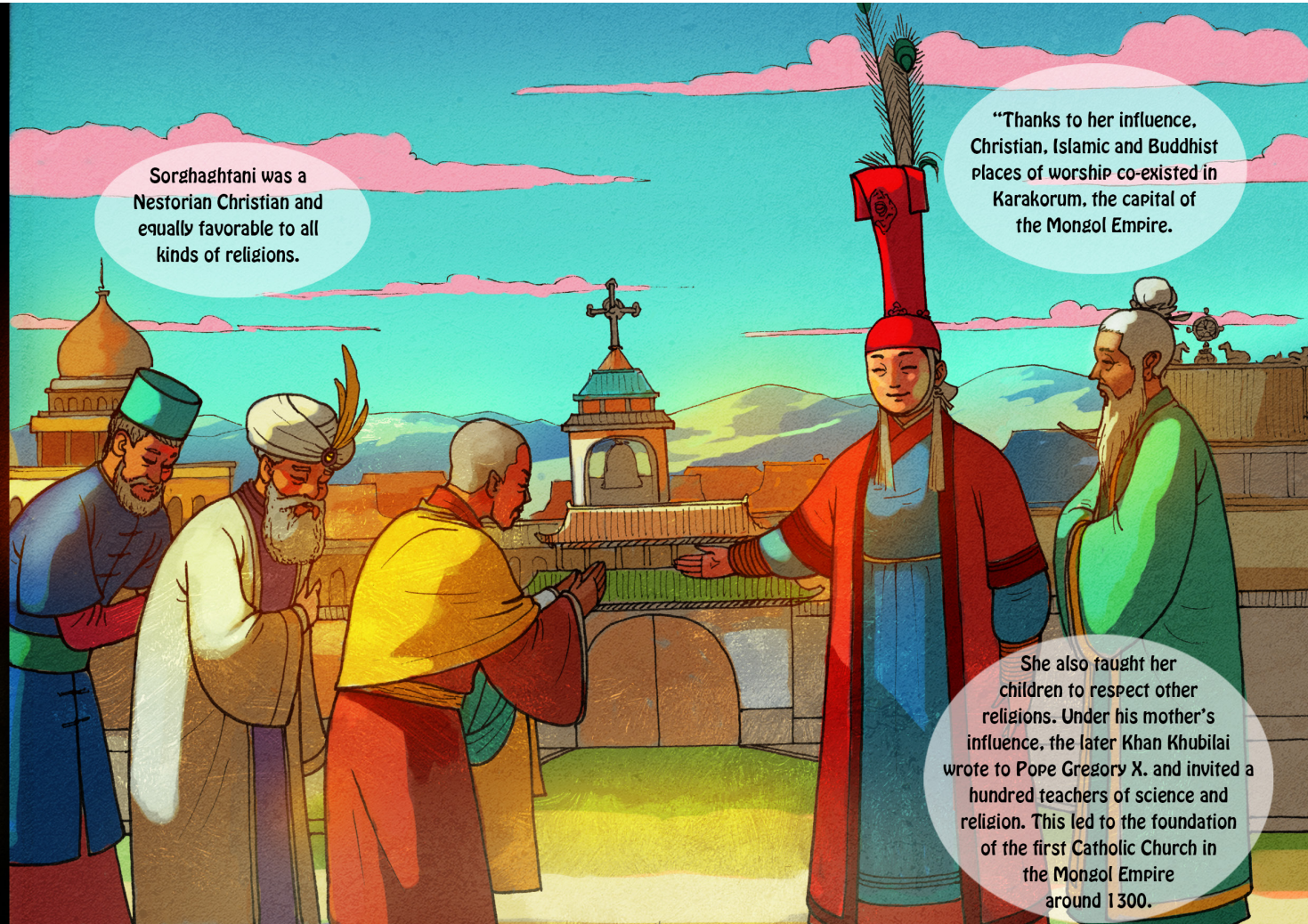
When her husband died, his brother and successor Ugudei Khan wanted her to marry his son Guyuk. But she refused. She wanted to care for her orphaned children. Declining a Khan's demand required courage that would only be found in the bravest person.

Her sons Khubilai, Munkh, Arigbukh and Huleg later became Khans of their own.



Sorghaghtani invited scholars to teach her children how to rule the state. She established a library at Khar Aurug, the birthplace of Chinggis Khan. There she collected precious and rare books.


Sorghaghtani also wrote and published books on her own that taught a variety of practical wisdoms. She made sure that her children, future rulers of the Empire, enjoyed a good education and learned foreign languages.



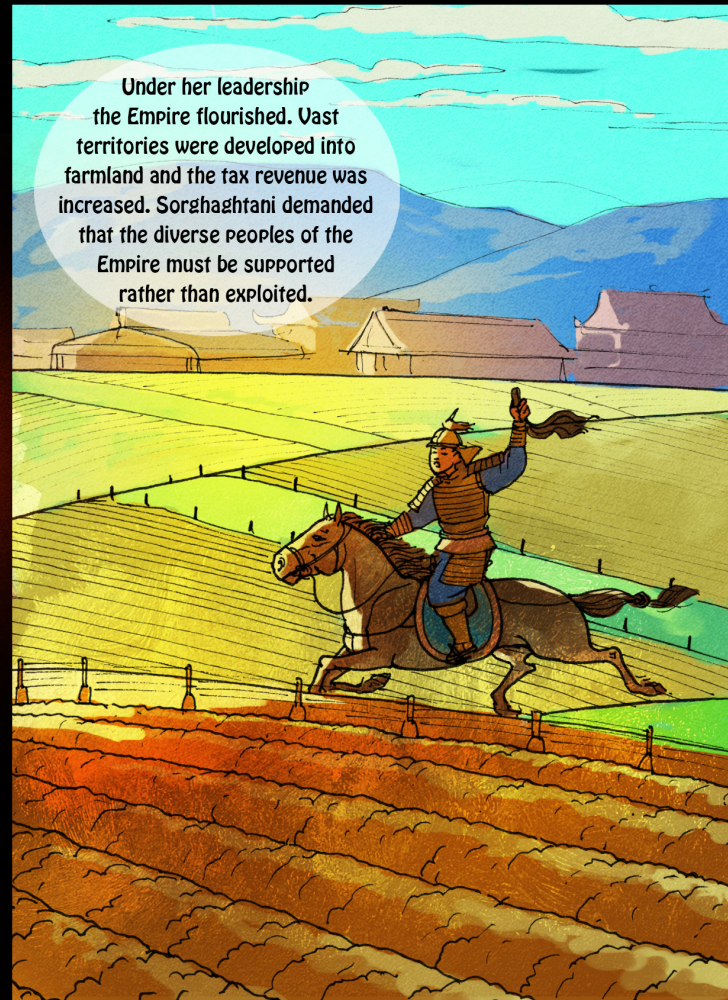
Sorghaghtani was a Nestorian Christian and equally favorable to all kinds of religions.

"Thanks to her influence, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist places of worship co-existed in Karakorum, the capital of the Mongol Empire.


She also taught her children to respect other religions. Under his mother's influence, the later Khan Khubilai wrote to Pope Gregory X. and invited a hundred teachers of science and religion. This led to the foundation of the first Catholic Church in the Mongol Empire around 1300.



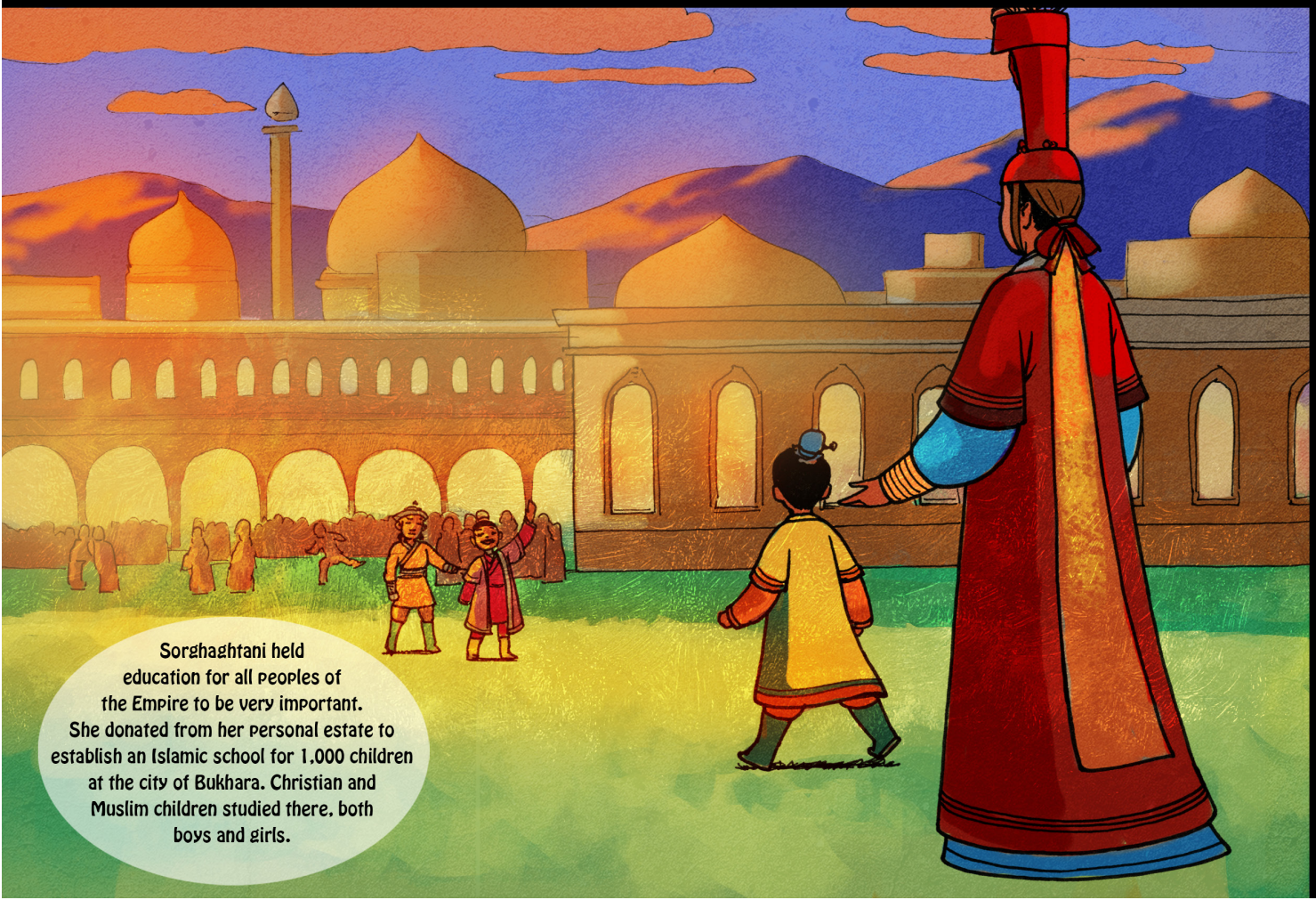
Sorghaghtani was a great policy maker. Her husband's successor Ugudei Khan put her in charge of Tolui's estate and the Mongol Empire's administration.




Under her leadership the Empire flourished. Vast territories were developed into farmland and the tax revenue was increased. Sorghaghtani demanded that the diverse peoples of the Empire must be supported rather than exploited.



Ugudei Khan held Sorghaghtani in high regard and consulted her on important matters of the state. He never came to a decision without seeking her advice.

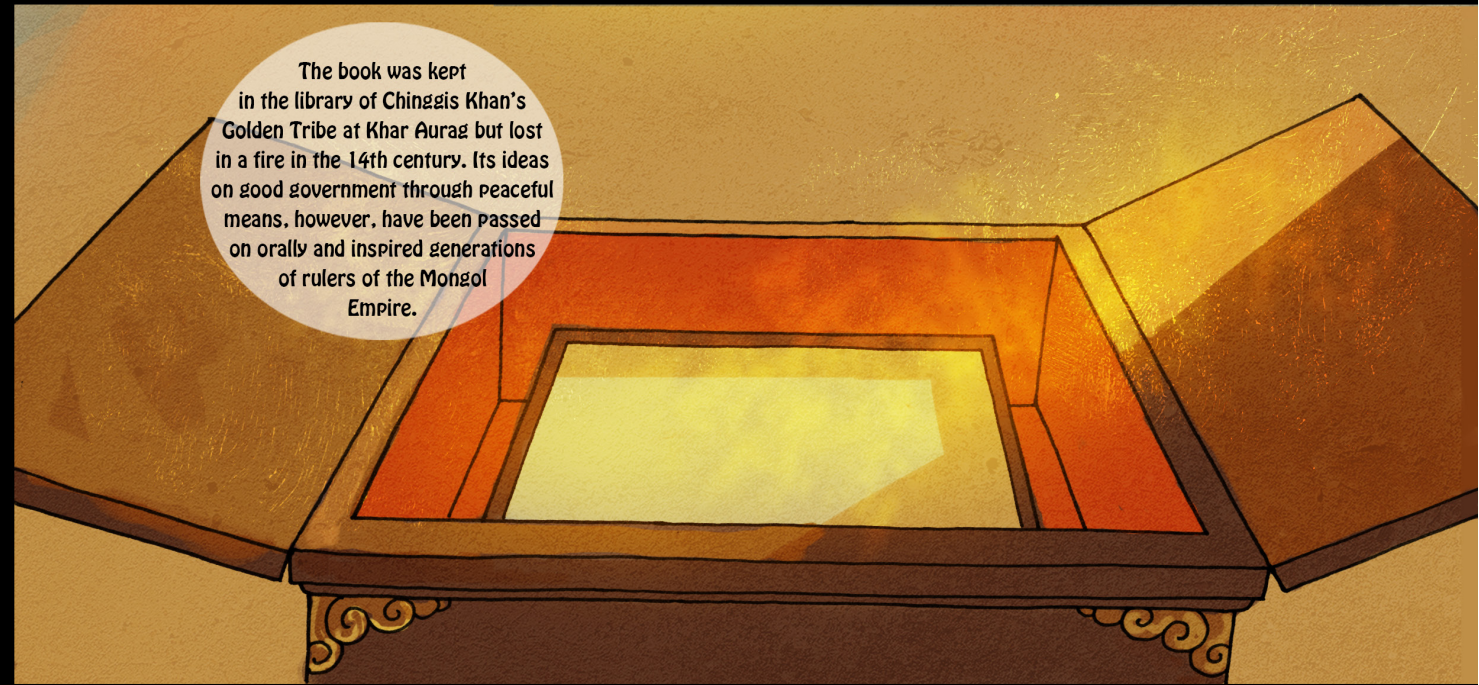


Sorghaghtani held education for all peoples of the Empire to be very important. She donated from her personal estate to establish an Islamic school for 1,000 children at the city of Bukhara. Christian and Muslim children studied there, both boys and girls.




Together with the most wise and powerful men of her time, Sorghaghtani wrote a book of great wisdom on the policy of the state. Unfortunately, the book was lost shortly thereafter."

In 1251, at the time of her son Munkh's accession to the Khan's throne, she compiled the essence of the lost book from her memory and called it The Golden Melody. She read it aloud during the coronation ceremony.



The book was kept in the library of Chinggis Khan's Golden Tribe at Khar Aurag but lost in a fire in the 14th century. Its ideas on good government through peaceful means, however, have been passed on orally and inspired generations of rulers of the Mongol Empire.



It is said, that when Sorghaghtani passed away she was buried at the Burhan Khaldun Mountain where only the Great Khans were allowed to rest in peace. Sorghaghtani was respected as equal to the male Khans of her time.