



## History Of Borte Khatun: Symbol Of Loyalty, Politics And Patience

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**Abstract.** This article examines the life of Genghis Khan's wife, Borte Khatun, her political influence, and historical role. She is known for her involvement in Mongol traditions, marriage ceremony, kidnapping by the Merkits, and subsequent rescue. Borte was Genghis Khan's loyal advisor and most trusted wife, actively participating in imperial politics. She also played a major role in prioritizing Genghis Khan's children. Borte remains in history not only as a devoted wife but also as an important political figure in maintaining the stability of the Mongol Empire.

**Keywords:** Borte Khatun, Genghis Khan, Merkit invasion, Mongol Empire, Political advisor, Jochi, Avarga, Temujin

Bo'рте (also spelled Borte), born around 1160, was the daughter of Dey-Sechen and his wife Chotan from the Olkhonud tribe of the Khongirad confederation—nomadic people of the Mongolian steppe. Although historical descriptions of her are scarce, some sources refer to her as “a girl with a bright face and fire in her eyes.” Bo'рте is often romantically portrayed as a graceful figure: “clothed in white silk, with golden coins braided into her hair, carrying a white lamb, and riding a white horse.” The women of the Olkhonud tribe were renowned for their beauty, and this tribe maintained friendly relations with the Kiyat tribe, to which Temujin (later Genghis Khan) belonged.

When Temujin was nine and Bo'рте was eleven, his father, Yesugei Bahadur, arranged their betrothal. In keeping with Mongol tradition, after the engagement, Temujin was left to live with the bride's family for a time so that he could become acquainted with Bo'рте and her people.

According to some chronicles, when Yesugei departed after leaving his son with Bo'рте's family, he said to them, “My son is afraid of dogs; please watch over him.” Tragically, while returning home, Yesugei stopped with his family near a Tatar encampment and was poisoned. He died three days later, forcing Temujin to return home before the marriage could be completed.

Approximately seven years later, in 1178, Temujin made his way down the Keluren River to find Bo'рте. When Dey-Sechen saw that Temujin had returned for Bo'рте, he was pleased but cautious, saying, “I will ask my daughter if she still wishes to marry you—seven years have passed, and other tribes have sought her hand.” Bo'рте, however, chose Temujin, and they were married when she was around seventeen. As husband and wife, they began a life together, with Bo'рте and her mother moving into Temujin's family camp on the banks of the Senggur River, with her father's blessing.

Their union marked a significant event in Temujin's rise. Bo'рте's dowry included a robe made of fine black sable fur, a valuable gift at the time.



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However, soon after their marriage, tragedy struck. The Merkits, rivals of Temujin's family, raided their camp. While many fled on horseback, Bo'рте was unable to escape due to a lack of a horse and was captured. She and her maidservant were taken as spoils of war and given to Merkit warriors.

The abduction of Bo'рте was likely an act of revenge. Years earlier, Yesugei had kidnapped Hoelun, the mother of Temujin, from the Merkit tribe even though she had been promised to another man. The Merkits never forgot this insult, and their attack on Bo'рте was a retaliatory response.

Eight months after Bo'рте's abduction, Temujin, with the help of his allies Wang Khan and Jamukha, succeeded in rescuing her from the Merkit tribe. Many historians consider this event to be one of the most pivotal turning points in Temujin's life, a key moment that set him on the path to becoming a unifier and eventually a conqueror.

When Temujin arrived to rescue her, he quietly rode up to her on horseback. Bo'рте, who was pregnant at the time, chose not to disclose her condition. During her captivity, she had conceived a child—Jochi, whose name means “unexpected guest.” Despite uncertainty over his paternity, Genghis Khan accepted Jochi as his own son, and actively discouraged others from questioning the boy's legitimacy.

Bo'рте and Genghis Khan went on to have four sons—Jochi, Chagatai, O'gedei, and Tolui, and five daughters—Khwajin Beki, Checheygen, Alagai, Temulun, and Altani. These children and their descendants would go on to become the bloodline that expanded and ruled the Mongol Empire, forming its core dynasties.

Temujin's authority was widely respected among the Mongol tribes, and he was officially proclaimed “Genghis Khan” near the Onon River. Historical sources suggest that Bo'рте wielded considerable influence over her husband's political decisions. One notable incident involved Otchigin, Genghis Khan's younger brother. Otchigin once entered their ger while Bo'рте and Genghis Khan were resting, asking for assistance in a campaign against the Qonggirat tribe. Bo'рте rose and reminded Genghis Khan of the tribe's past cruelties. As a result, Genghis Khan sent reinforcements to aid his brother.

While Genghis Khan took several wives over the course of his reign, Bo'рте remained his senior consort and closest advisor. During his military campaigns, he brought his other wives along, but left Bo'рте behind to assist his younger brother Temuge in governing the Mongol heartland. Much of the Kho'rlen River region, once held by the Tatars, was granted to Bo'рте as her personal domain.

Bo'рте's influence extended far beyond the domestic sphere. Legends and chronicles highlight her political wisdom and strategic counsel. She was fiercely protective of her own children's interests, particularly in matters of succession and inheritance.

Though Genghis Khan had other children by his secondary wives, Bo'рте ensured that her sons maintained primary status within the empire. For example, in 1224, all major inheritances were divided exclusively among her four sons. These sons would go on to establish powerful khanates of their own across Asia.

Genghis Khan initially chose Jochi as his heir, but due to lingering doubts among tribal leaders about Jochi's legitimacy, he was ultimately compelled to reconsider the succession.

Borte was Genghis Khan's beloved wife, as when she married him, Genghis Khan was not yet the ruler of a powerful state or the commander of a large army. Borte played a significant role in his



success. She established a strong and sincere relationship with Genghis Khan, and they always trusted each other. She supported his political strategies and constantly offered him wise advice, which is why Genghis Khan always listened to her.

Borte was a loyal and faithful wife, and Genghis Khan treated her with great respect. Little is known about the later part of her life. Most information about Queen Borte Khatun comes from historical records and Mongol legends. Borte is recognized as a strong and intelligent woman of her era. She not only preserved Mongol traditions and beliefs but also placed great importance on strengthening family and tribal ties.

According to American historian Jack Weatherford, who relied on Mongol oral traditions, “she spent the rest of her life in the imperial capital of Avarga.” After Genghis Khan’s death in 1227, Borte did not live much longer—she passed away in Avarga in the year 1230, just three years later.

Borte is remembered in history not only as a loving mother and devoted wife but also as a powerful political figure in the great empire, a woman capable of making wise and important decisions.

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