

# Khanum

**Khanum**, **Khanom** or **Khanoum**, Arabic: هَانِم (Uzbek: Xonim, Azerbaijani: *Xanım*, Turkish: *Hanım*, Persian: خانم, Hindi: खानुम, Urdu: خانم, Albanian: *Hanëm*, Bengali: খানম, খানম, Sylheti: খানম) is a female royal and aristocratic title derived through an originally Central Asian title, and was later used in the Middle East and South Asia. It is the feminine equivalent of the title *Khan* for a sovereign or military ruler, widely used by medieval nomadic Mongol tribes living north and northwest of modern-day China.<sup>[1]</sup> "Khan" is also seen as a title in the Xianbei confederation<sup>[2]</sup> for their chief between 283 and 289.<sup>[3]</sup> The Rourans were the first people who used the titles Khagan and Khan for their emperors, replacing the Chanyu of the Xiongnu, whom Grousset and others assume to be Turkic.<sup>[4]</sup>

In Turkish, it is spelled *Hanım*. The title of *Hanımefendi* is a combination of the words Khanum (tr*Hanım*) and efendi.

In South Asia, particularly in Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkwa, Sindh, Baluchistan and North India, *Khanum* has been adapted for use as an honorific for Muslim women of high social status.

## See also

- Begum
- Hanım
- Khatun

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# Khan (title)

**Khan**<sup>[b]</sup> (/kɑːn/) is a title of unknown origin for a ruler or military leader. It first appears among the Göktürks as a variant of khagan (sovereign, emperor)<sup>[c]</sup> and implied a subordinate ruler. In the Seljuk Empire it was the highest noble title, ranking above malik (king) and emir. In the Mongol Empire it signified the ruler of a horde (*ulus*), while the ruler of all the Mongols was the khagan or great khan. The title subsequently declined in importance. In Safavid Persia it was the title of a provincial governor, and in Mughal India it was a high noble rank restricted to courtiers. After the downfall of the Mughals it was used promiscuously and became a surname.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Contents

### Etymology

### History

### Khanate rulers and dynasties

Ruling Khans

Compound and derived princely titles

### Other khans

Noble and honorary titles

Other uses

### Khan-related terms

### See also

### Notes

### References

Citations

Sources

## Etymology

The origin of the term is disputed and unknown; possibly a loanword from the Ruanruan language<sup>[3][4]</sup> According to Vovin (2007, 2010) the term comes from *qayan* (meaning emperor or supreme ruler) and was later used in several languages, especially in Turkic and Mongolic.

Turkic and Para-Mongolic origin has been suggested by a number of scholars including Ramstedt, Shiratori, Sinor and Doerfer, and was reportedly first used by the Xianbei.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

According to Vovin, the word *\*qa-qan* "great-qan" (\*qa- for "great" or "supreme") is of non-Altaic origin, but instead linked to Yeniseian \*qε> "big" or "great". The origin of *qan* itself is harder according to Vovin. He says that the origin for the word *qan* is not found in any reconstructed proto-language and was used widely by Turkic, Mongolic, Chinese and Korean people with variations from *kan*, *qan*, *han* and *hwan*.A relation exists possibly to the Yñiseian words *\*qij* or *\*qaj* meaning "ruler".<sup>[4]</sup>

It maybe impossible to prove the ultimate origin of the title, but Vovin says: "Thus, it seems to be quite likely that the ultimate source of both *qayan* and *qan* can be traced back to Xiong-nu and Yñiseian".<sup>[4]</sup>

## History

"Khan" is first encountered as a title in the Xianbei confederation<sup>[7]</sup> for their chief between 283 and 289.<sup>[8]</sup> The Rourans may have been the first people who used the titles *khagan* and *khan* for their emperors.<sup>[9]</sup> However, Russian linguist Alexander Vovin (2007)<sup>[4]</sup> believes that the term *qayan* originated among the Yeniseian-speaking Xiongnu people, and then diffused across language families. Subsequently, the Göktürks adopted the title and brought it to the rest of Asia. In the middle of the sixth century the Iranians knew of a "Kagan – King of the Türks".<sup>[7]</sup>

Various Mongolic and Turkic peoples from Central Asia gave the title new prominence after period of the Mongol Empire (1206–1368) in the Old World and later brought the title "khan" into Northern Asia, where locals later adopted it. Khagan is rendered as *Khan of Khans*. It was the title of Chinese Emperor Emperor Taizong of Tang (*Heavenly Khagan*, reigned 626 to 649)<sup>[10]</sup> and Genghis Khan's successors selected to rule the Mongol Empire starting from 1229. Genghis Khan himself was referred as *qa'an* (khagan) only posthumously<sup>[11]</sup>. For instance Möngke Khan (reigned 1251-1259) and Ogedei Khan (reigned 1229-1241) would be "Khagans" but not Chagatai Khan, who was not proclaimed ruler of the Mongol Empire by the kurultai.

## Khanate rulers and dynasties

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### Ruling Khans

Originally khans headed only relatively minor tribal entities, generally in or near the vast Mongolian and North Chinese steppe, the scene of an almost endless procession of nomadic people riding out into the history of the neighbouring sedentary regions. Some managed to establish principalities of some importance for a while, as their military might repeatedly proved a serious threat to such empires as China and kingdoms in Central Asia.

One of the earliest notable examples of such principalities in Europe was Danube Bulgaria (presumably also Old Great Bulgaria), ruled by a *khan* or a *kan* at least from the 7th to the 9th century. It should be noted that the title "khan" is not attested directly in inscriptions and texts referring to Bulgar rulers – the only similar title found so far, *Kanasubigi*, has been found solely in the inscriptions of three consecutive Bulgarian rulers, namely Krum, Omurtag and Malamir (a grandfather, son and grandson). Starting from the compound, non-ruler titles that were attested among Bulgarian noble class such as *kavkhan* (vicekhan), *tarkhan*, and *boritarkhan*, scholars derive the title *khan* or *kan* for the early Bulgarian leader – if there was a vicekhan (*kavkhan*) there was probably a "full" *khan*, too. Compare also the rendition of the name of early Bulgarian ruler Pagan as Καμπάγανος (*Kampaganos*), likely resulting from a misinterpretation of "Kan Pagan", in Patriarch Nicephorus's so-called Breviarium<sup>[12]</sup> In general, however, the inscriptions as well as other sources designate the supreme ruler of Danube Bulgaria with titles that exist in the language in which they are written – *archontes*, meaning 'commander or magistrate' in Greek, and *knyaze*, meaning "duke" or "prince" in Slavic. Among the best known Bulgar khans were: Khan Kubrat, founder of Great Bulgaria; Khan Asparukh, founder of Danubian Bulgaria (today's Bulgaria); Khan Tervel, who defeated the Arab invaders in 718 Siege of Constantinople (718), thus stopped the Arab invasion in Southeast Europe; Khan Krum, "the Terrible". "Khan" was the official title of the ruler until 864 AD, when Kniaz Boris I (known also as Tsar Boris I) adopted the Eastern Orthodox faith.

The title Khan rose to unprecedented prominence with the Mongol Temüjin's creation of the Mongol empire, the largest contiguous land empire in history, which he ruled as Genghis Khan. Before 1229 the title was used to designate leaders of important tribes as well as tribal confederations (the Mongol Empire considered the largest one), and rulers of non-Mongol countries.<sup>[11]</sup> Shortly before the death of the Genghis Khan, his sons became khans in different dominions (ulus) and the title apparently became unsuitable for the supreme ruler of the empire, needing a more exalted one. Being under Uighur cultural influence, Mongols adopted ancient Turkish title of khagan starting with Ögedei Khan in 1229.<sup>[11]</sup>



Eurasia on the eve of the Mongol invasions, c. AD 1200.

Ming Dynasty Chinese Emperors also used the term Xan to denote brave warriors and rulers. The title Khan was used to designate the greatest rulers of the Jurchens, who, later when known as the Manchus, founded the Manchu Qing dynasty.

Once more, there would be numerous khanates in the steppe in and around Central Asia, often more of a people than a territorial state, e.g.:

- of the Kazakhs (founded 1465; since 1601 divided into three geographical Jüz or Hordes, each under abey; in 1718 split into three different khanates; eliminated by the Russian Empire by 1847)
- in present Uzbekistan, the main khanate, named after its capital Bukhara, was founded in 1500 and restyled emirate in 1753 (after three Persian governors since 1747); the Ferghana (valley's) khanate broke away from it by 1694 and became known as the Khanate of Kokand after its capital Kokand from its establishment in 1732; the khanate of Khwarezm, dating from c.1500, became the Khanate of Khiva in 1804 but fell soon under Russian protectorate; Karakalpakstan had its own rulers (khans?) since c. 1600.

While most Afghan principalities were styled emirate, there was a khanate of ethnic Uzbeks Badakhshan since 1697.

Khan was also the title of the rulers of various break-away states and principalities later in Persia, e.g. 1747–1808 Khanate of Ardabil (in northwestern Iran east of Sarab and west of the southwest corner of the Caspian Sea), 1747–1813 Khanate of Khoy (northwestern Iran, north of Lake Urmia, between Tabriz and Lake Van), 1747–1829 Khanate of Maku (in extreme northwestern Iran, northwest of Khoy, and 60 miles south of Yerevan, Armenia), 1747–1790s Khanate of Sarab (northwestern Iran east of Tabriz), 1747 – c.1800 Khanate of Tabriz (capital of Iranian Azerbaijan).

There were various small khanates in and near Transcaucasia and Ciscaucasia established by the Safavids, or their successive Afsharid and Qajar dynasties outside their territories of Persia proper. For example, in present Armenia and nearby territories to the left and right, there was the khanate of Erivan (sole incumbent 1807–1827 Hosein Quli Khan Qajar). Diverse khanates existed in Dagestan (now part of Russia), Azerbaijan, including Baku (present capital), Ganja, Jawad, Quba (Kuba), Salyan, Shakki (Sheki, ruler style *Bashchi* since 1743) and Shirvan=Shamakha (1748–1786 temporarily split into Khoja Shamakha and Yeni Shamakha), Talysh (1747–1814); Nakhichevan and (Nagorno) Karabakh.

As hinted above, the title Khan was also common in some of the polities of the various – generally Islamic – peoples in the territories of the Mongol Golden Horde and its successor states, which, like the Mongols in general, were commonly called Ta(r)tars<sup>[d]</sup> by Europeans and Russians, and were all eventually subdued by Muscovia which became the Russian Empire. The most important of these states were:

- Khanate of Kazan (the Mongol term khan became active since Genghizide dynasty was settled in Kazan Duchy in 1430s).
- Sibir Khanate (giving its name to Siberia as the first significant conquest during Russia's great eastern expansion across the Ural range)
- Astrakhan Khanate
- Crimean Khanate

Further east, in Xinjiang (East Turkestan) flank:

- Khanate of Kashgaria founded in 1514; 17th century divided into several minor khanates without importance, real power going to the so-called Khawaja, Arabic Islamic religious leaders; title changed to Amir Khan in 1873, annexed by China in 1877.

## Compound and derived princely titles

The higher, rather imperial title Khaqan ("*Khan of Khans*") applies to probably the most famous rulers known as *Khan*: the Mongol imperial dynasty of Genghis Khan (his name was Temüjin, *Genghis Khan* a never fully understood unique title), and his successors, especially grandson Kublai Khan: the former founded the Mongol Empire and the latter founded the Yuan Dynasty in China. The ruling descendants of the main branch of Genghis Khan's dynasty are referred to as the Great Khans.

The title *Khan of Khans* was among numerous titles used by the Sultans of the Ottoman empire as well as the rulers of the Golden Horde and its descendant states. The title *Khan* was also used in the Seljuk Turk dynasties of the near-east to designate a head of multiple tribes, clans or nations, who was below an Atabeg in rank. Jurchen and Manchu rulers also used the title *Khan* (*Han* in

Manchu); for example, Nurhaci was called Genggiyen Han. Rulers of the Göktürks, Avars and Khazars used the higher title Kaghan, as rulers of distinct nations.



Navaanneren, Minister of the Interior, who along with the 23rd Tushiyetu Khan Dorjsurenkhoroljav (1908-1937) was the last Khan in Mongolia. He was executed during the great purges of 1937.

- **Gur Khan**, meaning supreme or universal Khan, was the ruler of the Khitan Kara-Kitai, and has occasionally been used by the Mongols as well
- **Ilkhan**, both a generic term for a 'provincial Khan' and traditional royal style for one of the four khanates in Genghis's succession, based in Persia. See the main article for more details.
- **Khan-i-Khanan** (Persian: خان خانان, "Lord of Lords") was a title given to the commander-in-chief of the army of the Mughals, an example being Abdul Rahim Khan-I-Khana of the great Mughal emperor, Akbar's (and later his son Jahangir's) army
- **Khan Sahib Shri Babi** was the complex title of the ruler of the South Asia princely state of Bantva-Manavadar (state founded 1760; September 1947 acceded to Pakistan, but 15 February 1948 forced to rescind accession to Pakistan, to accede to India after Khan Sahib's arrest).
- In southern Korean states, the word *Han* or *Gan*, meaning "leader", could be origin of word *khan* according to turkic history textbook. *Geoseogan* or *Geoseulhan*, the title of Hyeokgeose of Silla means "leader of leaders" and "king" in language of Jinhan confederacy. He was leader of saro state, one of the chiefdom of in Jinhan confederacy in 37 BC. After Silla, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea totally united them under a now hereditary king, titled *Maripgan*, meaning the 'head of kings' (e.g. King Naemul Maripgan).
- **Khatun**, or **Khatan** (Persian: خاتون) – a title of European Sogdian origin<sup>[13][14][15]</sup> – is roughly equal to a King's queen in Mongolic and Turkic languages, as by this title a ruling Khan's Queen-consort (wife) is designated with similar respect after their proclamation as Khan and Khatun. Also used in Hazari (instead of Khanum). Famous Khatuns include:

- Töregene Khatun
- Habba Khatun
- **Khanum** (Turkish: *Hanım*; Azerbaijani: *Xanım*; Persian: خانم) is another female derivation of Khan, notably in Turkic languages, for a Khan's Queen-consort, or in some traditions extended as a courtesy title (a bit like Lady for women not married to a Lord, which is the situation modern Turkish) to the wives of holders of various other (lower) titles; in Afghanistan, for example, it ended up as the common term for 'Miss', any unmarried woman. In the modern Kazakh language, **Khatun** is a derogatory term for women, while **Khanum** has a respectful meaning.
- **Khan Bahadur (title)** - a compound of khan (leader) and Bahadur (Brave) - was a formal title of respect and honour which was conferred exclusively on Muslim subjects of the British Indian Empire.<sup>[1]</sup> It was a title one degree higher than the title of Khan Sahib.



Mongol Empire's largest extent outlined in red; the Timurid Empire is shaded

- The compound **Galin Khanum** – literally, "lady bride" – was the title accorded to the principal noble wife of a Qajar
- **Khanzada** (Urdu: خانزادہ) is a title conferred to princes of the dynasties of certain princely states of India.
  - Sardargarh-Bantva (*Muslim Babi dynasty fifth class state in Kathiawar, Gujarat*) in front of the personal name, Shri in between; the ruler replaces Khanzada by khan.
- **Khaqan** or **Khakhan** (Old Turkic: 𐰆𐰇𐰏, *kayan*)<sup>[16]</sup> (Urdu: خاقان) is used as a title in Pakistan.
- **Khandan** ('Khan holder') means 'Family' in (Urdu: خاندان).
- **Kanasubigi** or *Kana subigi*, as it is written in Bulgarian Greek inscriptions, was a title of the Bulgars. Among the proposed translations for the phrase *kanasubigi* as a whole are *lord of the army*, from the reconstructed Turkic phrase *\*sü begi*, paralleling the attested Old Turkic *sü başı*,<sup>[17]</sup> and, more recently, "(ruler) from God", from the Indo-European *\*su-* and *baga-*, i.e. *\*su-baga* (an equivalent of the Greek phrase ὁ ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀρχων, *ho ek Theou archon*, which is common in Bulgar inscriptions)



- **Kavhan**<sup>[18]</sup> or Kaukhan was one of the most important officials in the First Bulgarian Empire. According to the generally accepted opinion, he was the second most important person in the state after the Bulgarian ruler. However, Khan was also believed a Great Khan but no evidences about him are founded.
- **Beg Khan** (a concatenation of Baig and Khan) is a title used by some Mughals and Mongols.

## Other khans

### Noble and honorary titles

In imperial Persia, Khan (female form *Khanum* in Persia) was the title of a nobleman, higher than Beg (or bey) and usually used after the given name. At the Qajar court, precedence for those not belonging to the dynasty was mainly structured in eight classes, each being granted an honorary rank title, the fourth of which was Khan, or in this context synonymously Amir, granted to commanders of armed forces, provincial tribal leaders; in descending order. In neighboring Ottoman Turkey and subsequently the Republic of Turkey, the term *Khanum* was and is still written as Hanım in Turkish/Ottoman Turkish language. The Ottoman title of Hanımefendi (lit translated; *lady of the master*), is also a derivative of this.

The titles Khan and Khan Bahadur (from the Altaic root *baghatur*), related to the Turkic *batyr* or *batur* and Mongolian *baatar* ("brave, hero"); were also bestowed in feudal India by the Mughals, who although Muslims were of Turkic origin upon Muslims and sometimes Hindus, and later by the British Raj, as an honor akin to the ranks of nobility, often for loyalty to the crown. Khan Sahib was another title of honour.

In the major South Asian Muslim state of Hyderabad, Khan was the lowest of the aristocratic titles bestowed by the ruling Nizam upon Muslim retainers, ranking under *Khan Bahadur*, Nawab (homonymous with a high Muslim ruler's title), Jang, Daula, Mulk, Umara, Jah. The equivalent for the courts Hindu retainers was Rai. In Swat, a Pakistani Frontier State, it was the title of the secular elite, who together with the Mullahs (Muslim clerics), proceeded to elect a new Amir-i-Shariyat in 1914. It seems unclear whether the series of titles known from the Bengal sultanate are merely honorific or perhaps relate to a military hierarchy



*Two Khans in Turkoman Tribal Costume, One of 274 Vintage Photographs.* Brooklyn Museum

### Other uses

**Khan** is a surname as well as an honorific title. Some of the Hindu Brahmins worked for the great Mughal Emperor Akbar (AD 1556) who honored them as a Khan. Because of this they used the last name Khan, but they were still Hindu Brahmins.

Like many titles, the meaning of the term has also extended southwards, such as in Afghanistan,<sup>[19]</sup> Pakistan, and Central Asian nations, where it has become a common surname.

Khan and its female forms occur in many personal names, generally without any nobiliary of political relevance, although it remains a common part of noble names as well. Notably in South Asia it has become a part of many South Asian Muslim names,<sup>[19]</sup> especially when Pashtun (also known as Pathan) descent is claimed; it is now the most common Muslim family name in South Asia. It is also used by many Muslim Rajputs<sup>[20]</sup> of India and Pakistan who were awarded this surname by Turkic Mughals for their bravery.<sup>[21]</sup> Similarly it was awarded to Pashtuns by Turkic and Mongol kings. Also the name is claimed to be related to the Hebrew name Cohen or Kohen.

During the Russian Civil War following the Bolshevik takeover of 1917, White general Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, who, admittedly was trying to reconstitute the empire of Genghis Khan, was often styled as "Ungern Khan" between 1919 and his death in 1921.

In popular culture, Khan (Khan Noonien Singh) is a villain in the Star Trek universe, typically used as a plot counterweight to Captain James Tiberius Kirk. While not a ruler or nobleman, 'Khan' does have several followers who are, like himself, genetically engineered super soldiers.

## Khan-related terms

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- Khanzadeh (Tatar: *Xanzadā*) – a prince, khan's son
- Khanbikeh (Tatar: *Xanbikā*) – a queen, khan's wife
- Khanbalig (or Dadu) – Yuan capital which later developed into modern Beijing.
- Ilkhan (title)
- Khatun - female equivalent of Khan

## See also

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- Turco-Mongol
- List of Mongol rulers
- Aga Khan
- Azmatkhan
- Jirga
- Khagan
- Chanyu
- Archon
- King
- Beg
- Beg Khan
- Elteber
- Tsar
- Kaiser
- Crimean Khanate
- Khong Tayiji

## Notes

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- bg:Хан Аспарух (пояснение)
- Mongolian: ᠬᠠᠨ ᠭᠠᠨ *khan/qan*; Turkish: *han*; Azerbaijani: *xan*; Ottoman: *han*; Old Turkic: 𐰽𐰺𐰍 *kaγan*; Chinese: 可汗 *kèhán*; Goguryeo: 皆 *key*; buyeo: 加 *ka*; Silla: 干 *kan*; Gaya: 旱 *kan*; Baekje: 瑕 *ke*; Manchu: ᡤᡠᡨᡠᡵᡠᡳ; Persian: خان; Punjabi: ਖਾਨ; Hindi-Urdu: ख़ान (Devanagari), خان (Nastaleeq); Balochi: خان; Bulgarian: хан, *khan*,<sup>[a]</sup> Chuvash: хун, *hun*; Bengali: খান or খাঁন)
- Khagan itself was borrowed by the Türks from the unclassified Ruanruan language<sup>[1]</sup>
- The spelling with 'r' is due to a confusion with tartaros, the classical Greek hell. Genghis Khan's conquering, ransacking Mongol hordes terrorized Islam and Christianity without precedent, as if the apocalypse had started.

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