

Berdibek, 12th khan of the Qipchaq Khanate (1357–1359), son of Khan Janibek. Different versions of how Berdibek became khan exist in the sources. According to one account in Ibn Khaldun, Janibek had left Berdibek in charge of Tabriz after conquering Azerbaijan. On the way back from Tabriz, Janibek became ill and died. Berdibek then became khan. This account finds corroboration in the Rogozhskii (Tver') Chronicle. The "Anonym of Iskander" says Berdibek ordered his father's murder. Some Rus' chronicles add that Berdibek had his agent Tovlubii kill twelve of his brothers. The Nikon Chronicle expanded on this version to say that Tovlubii was a prince, and teacher of Berdibek, and that he instructed Berdibek to kill not only his twelve brothers but also his father. That Berdibek killed his twelve brothers seems unlikely (why those twelve, for whom in any case, we have no other evidence, and not the two others who eventually succeeded him?). The chroniclers' reference to "Tovlubii" may be to the emir Tughlu Bey, who Natanzi declared, in yet another version of Janibek's demise, was one of the conspirators responsible for killing Janibek (although without Berdibek's knowledge or complicity).

In any case, upon Berdibek's succession, all the Rus' princes traveled to Sarai to have their *iarlyki* (patents) renewed. One of the few extant *iarlyki* of the Qipchaq Khanate is from Berdibek to Metropolitan Aleksei in 1357 and affirms the freedom of the Church from taxes and tributes as well as declaring the Church's property protected from expropriation or damage.

The emir Mamai married Berdibek's daughter, which made him a royal brother-in-law and no doubt served to enhance his influence in political matters within the khanate as well as his rise to power. A palace coup by Berdibek's younger brother Qulpa led to Berdibek's death in 1359. Qulpa, in turn, was overthrown the next year by the remaining brother Nevruz, thus, ushering in a period of 20 years of turmoil in the Qipchaq Khanate. Berdibek's reign has been generally perceived as the beginning of this time of troubles due to accusations of the way he became khan and was deposed.

Further reading: A. N. Nasonov, *Mongoly i Rus' (istoriia tatarskoi politiki na Rusi)* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1940); Bertold Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Russland 1223–1502* (Wiesbaden, 1965); V. G. Tiesenhausen, ed. and trans., *Sbornik materialov otnosiashchikhsia k istorii Zolotoi Ordy*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1884), vol. 2 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1941); George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia* (New Haven, CT, 1953).