

## Introduction

Nomads were one of the most important sources of military manpower over a very long period of time in large parts of Eurasia. This volume offers a number of studies all focused on a much smaller if still vast region, and a much shorter if still very long period of time – Iran and some neighbouring regions from c. 1000 to c. 1870 CE. The region in question is mostly a mixed agro-pastoral zone, the Turko-Iranian world, including Transoxiana, Iran proper, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Anatolia and those regions in the Fertile Crescent where Turkmens were an important factor alongside Arab Bedouin. Other regions such as the Turko-Mongol world of the Great Eurasian Steppe on the one hand and the Arabian Peninsula together with Egypt and the Arab-Berber world of North Africa on the other are not explicitly addressed in the contributions to this volume and would most probably present a different picture. The period under consideration covers some of the centuries during which the military power of nomads was at its highest, including the Saljūq, the Mongol and the Timurid empires. It begins with the rise of Turkic dynasties in the Iranian world, dynasties of free-born nobles from the steppe (as distinct from Turkic dynasties with a background in military slavery), and ends at a time when modern settled states and empires, through their use of firearms and standing armies, no longer needed the nomads to make war.

Military manpower has been one of the most important assets in power struggles, and those who were able to call on a good supply of fighters had access to an essential resource. The question of who really had control over which types of military manpower is therefore central for historical analysis. The contributions to this volume support the thesis that control over military manpower was not a state monopoly, and that, besides the state (or rather the imperial or supreme ruler), more than one group can be identified that controlled more or less important reserves of military manpower. These contributions are therefore studies in power relationships between a supreme ruler and lesser figures, regional power-holders, nomad leaders (whom we may or may not choose to call tribal chiefs), and others. In many cases, the supreme ruler cannot simply count on these leaders to come at his bidding, but military support is negotiated and, as is the rule in negotiations, all participants had their own agenda.

Imperial armies are thus composites resulting from negotiations. Beatrice Manz describes the sedentary components of imperial armies led by rulers who otherwise

commanded nomads; from the Saljūq to the Timurid periods, there are many examples of local lords controlling important groups of nomad warriors whom they brought to the imperial army. Kurt Franz starts from an investigation of the Ilkhanid–Mamlūk conflict over Syria. He traces the way the Mamlūks depended on Bedouin allies and officially co-opted their leaders, which ultimately ended in failure: the Bedouin started to exploit the triangular pattern of relations by changing sides several times. This development is then framed within a long-term perspective on Bedouin–state encounter during the whole of the Islamic period; it is argued that the involvement of the steppe in the territorial conflict of enemy states constituted a basic type of spatial encounter, which the Bedouin of the period ably and successfully exploited by means of their swing policy.

David Durand-Guédy focuses on the Saljūqs and their Turkmen followers. He shows that Turkmen groups played a much larger role than has been assumed in earlier scholarship: the fact that the Turkmen leaders followed their own agenda becomes clear from the fact that they supported ‘rebels’, most of them Saljūq princes. Turkmen support was essential because they were the single most important source of military manpower apart from the imperial army with its core of military slaves, and the Turkmen leaders certainly knew how important a resource they controlled. In Jürgen Paul’s contribution, the relative weight of both sides in the balance, the imperial (or would-be imperial) ruler and the nomad leaders, seems more equal, and marital alliances appear to be an important instrument for the Khwārazmian dynasty to enlist the support of Qipchāq groups; this alone shows that the Qipchāq leaders were not simply taking orders.

Michele Bernardini focuses on a crucial episode in later mediaeval Near Eastern history, the battle of Ankara, and he makes clear how many different partners Timur was able to draw into his army: nothing succeeds like success, and thus, it was not only the regional rulers (begs) who had lost their beyliks to the Ottomans shortly before that were jumping on the Timurid bandwagon, but also other leaders who were otherwise still independent. Giorgio Rota turns to the Safavid period and shows that the Safavid Shahs had to cope with Qızılbaş peculiarities, in this case manifest in their particular ideology, a blend of martial ethics and extreme Shi’ite beliefs.

Irene Schneider concentrates on a moment in the early history of the Qājār dynasty, itself of Turkmen origin, and its relationship to their erstwhile Yamūt Turkmen allies; this was the moment when the Qājār alliance with the Yamūt was abandoned and the Qājārs chose to fight the Yamūt instead. The Saljūqs, as Durand-Guédy points out in his contribution, never treated their Turkmen allies this way. Schneider does not address the question of how and when the military might of the nomads declined, although this development was probably well under way in Iran by the beginning of the nineteenth century and was perhaps one of the reasons why the early Qājārs could dispense so completely with their Turkmen allies. This process is the subject of Wolfgang Holzwarth’s article, which follows the political and military position of the Uzbek warriors in the Khanate/Emirate of Bu-

khara from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. It appears that first Chinggisid, then Manghit rulers had to negotiate military support, and that, from the start, Uzbek tribal leaders and their fighters were not easily recruited for undertakings in which they themselves had no interest.

What held these alliances together? This is another question addressed by many contributions in this volume. Reuven Amitai puts the question in Khaldūnian terms: Does it make sense to look for anything like Ibn Khaldūn's *‘aṣabiyya*, ‘group solidarity’, *esprit de corps*, in the Turko-Iranian world? The discussion about the Ilkhanids, the Chinggisid rulers of Iran, ends on a hesitatingly negative note. Amitai does, however, point out that the ‘Heavenly Mandate’ that the Mongol leaders assumed for themselves, the heavenly ordained conquest of the world, may have played a role. People who accepted this mandate and therefore submitted to Chinggisid rule did so by entering the *īl*, the Mongol-Chinggisid Empire. Manz and Bernardini in turn address something that approaches the *īl* in the Timurid context (the term appears not infrequently in the Timurid chronicles, but often in the plural): alliances formed under Timur’s iron rule also were called *īl*, with deliberate reference to Chinggisid practice. While the original concept of *el* denoted a state of peace among allies, it later came to mean ‘tribal group’.

In Schneider’s contribution, the concept of *īl* appears in the form of *īliyyat*, ‘*īl*-ness, tribal solidarity’, which seems to have been a term to denote the early Qājār allied forces, i.e. all those who accepted Qājār claims to rule and took part in the conquest of Iran under Qājār banners. At some point, as stated above, the Yamūt Turkmen ceased to be seen as part of this alliance. In late Chinggisid and early Manghit Bukhara, the Turkic term *īlī* still signified ‘submission to the ruler’, although *īl* does not refer to the ruler’s realm, but to a ‘(nomadic) tribal group’. As can be gathered from Holzwarth’s paper, the fading Chinggisid charisma was no longer sufficient to create an effective bond between rulers and Uzbek leaders, and the non-Chinggisid Manghits, no matter what they tried, were never able to rebuild anything resembling Chinggisid charisma. With regard to the Middle East in the Mamlūk period, Franz makes it clear that Bedouin auxiliary services were not so much motivated by solidarity with rulers; what rather drove them was the interest of sheikhly lineages (sing. *āl*) in benefiting from such service to become a privileged social stratum of leaders and, not least, landed gentry.

Besides a charismatic ruler – or the inherited charisma present in his descendants – as the common denominator for vast imperial alliances that included both nomad and sedentary leaders, religion was also a factor that could hold together such alliances. This is the backdrop for Rota’s paper, which shows how difficult it had become, after less than a century of Safavid rule, to mobilise the Qızılbaş Turkmen groups. The link between the Safavid Shahs and these Turkmens had at first been an extremist form of Shiism, but over time, the Shahs could less easily count on their status as unquestioned religious leaders for recruiting Qızılbaş manpower. Moreover, a chivalric warrior ideology made itself felt more and more distinctly, so that the Qızılbaş contingents were clearly making their own deci-

sions, on the battlefield and elsewhere. In other cases, particularly in the pre-Mongol period, the situation is not so clear. Durand-Guédy does not discuss what held the Saljūq–Turkmen alliance together apart from the often quoted warning by Nizām al-Mulk that the Saljūqs should treat the Turkmens well because of their merits and their own Turkmen origins; even if we can see that Saljūq rulers treated the Turkmen leaders with respect, there is no apparent basis for any kind of *‘aṣabiyya* or *īliyyat* in the Saljūq context. It is very clear that there is no such feeling in the case of the Qipchāq allies of the Khwārazmshāhs: here, the genealogical status of the Khwārazmshāhs may have been an advantage, for their founding father had been a military slave.

The Saljūqs, as well as the Chinggisid dynasties (including the Chinggisids ruling over the Uzbeks in Central Asia) and the Safavids in Iran, had established their rule through conquest, and the conquering armies had consisted largely of nomad troops. As stated above, the Safavids and the Chinggisids transmitted a form of hereditary charisma (which is less evident in the Saljūqs). This charisma faded over time, and so the relationship with the descendants of the first-generation nomad leaders who had been part of a conquering army was re-negotiated time and again. The nomads whom we see in the contributions of Durand-Guédy, Rota and Holzwarth were formally subjects of the ruling dynasty of the time, but it is open to question what that meant to them.

In the settings analysed by Bernardini, Paul and Schneider, conquest is just beginning or still going on, and where a charismatic leader is at the head of the conquering army, he is still very much alive. In the case of Timur described by Bernardini, military manpower did come from nomads subject to the conqueror, but the focus is on the allies who had not been under Timur’s rule before. Schneider, as stated above, focuses on the moment of breach when one partner in the initial alliance for conquest is excluded. In the Khwārazmian case, the alliance is just beginning to form, and the Qipchāq cannot be said to have been Khwārazmian subjects at this juncture. It is clear that it is much easier to rally support for a winning cause. This observation is also behind Amitai’s article and its question as to whether the rise and fall of such dynasties can be explained in terms of the theory put forward by Ibn Khaldūn. Meanwhile, as Franz points out, the Arab Middle East is significantly different from the Turko-Iranian world in that Bedouin nomads, despite their continued military prowess, at no time acted like conquerors.

How efficient were nomad allies from the point of view of the imperial lord or partner? Stories of nomads defecting on the battlefield are a recurrent feature in many chronicles. Changing sides was frequently negotiated before battle was joined, and the ensuing action often decided the day. Indeed, the fickleness of nomad fighters serving in imperial armies must have been proverbial, so one may ask why imperial leaders took the trouble to recruit them in the first place. But here again, qualifications must be made: efficiency depends primarily on the purpose, and it is evident that, under a charismatic leader, nomad armies were efficient enough for conquest. It is in the later stages that differences of interest come to the

fore. In the cases studied by Durand-Guédy, Rota and Holzwarth, warfare was more often than not a matter of internal strife, and it is in these settings that nomad (as well as urban) leaders pursued their own interests most prominently. Nomad fighters were not reliable allies for would-be conquerors, but since oftentimes no other military manpower was available on any significant scale, and since it was the only kind of military manpower such pretenders could afford, the nomads keep re-appearing.

How was nomadic military power represented visually? Charles Melville's article is about visual and textual representations of warfare rather than about political and social ways of assembling an army. His subject is the perception of nomadic military groups and their action and how they evolved over time. He bases his study on a small number of works written or illustrated between c. 1300 and c. 1600, and comes to the conclusion that no simple dichotomy of 'military' against 'civilian' or 'Turk' against 'Tajik' can be inferred. Illustrations followed their own traditions; only rarely did they serve to really 'illustrate' the text in its depiction of events. But nevertheless, the pictorial codes and their traditions did not evolve apart from society: Melville shows that the increasingly aestheticised compositions relate to the gradual demilitarisation of Safavid society and court culture in the latter part of the tenth/sixteenth century. In the miniatures illustrating Holzwarth's article, a Mughal and two Iranian painters depict Uzbek horsemen facing the increasingly strong fire-power of their enemies.

The contributions in this volume arise from conferences organised by the Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 'Differenz und Integration' (the collaborative research centre 'Difference and Intergration'), on the interaction of nomad and sedentary groups in the arid zones of the Old World,<sup>1</sup> which was active at the universities of Halle (Saale) and Leipzig from 2001 to 2012. The military superiority of nomads over settled people was one of its major research topics, including the end of this superiority in the modern period.

Several conferences were held to discuss this subject. The first, from which Schneider's contribution comes, took place in Halle, 29–30 April 2002, and explored the manifold conjunctions between nomadic military power and statehood.<sup>2</sup>

The second relevant conference was held in Vienna, 5–6 December 2005. It was organised by Giorgio Rota and Bert Fragner of the Institut für Iranistik, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, and funded by that institution together with the SFB. It was entitled "Nomads vs. Standing Armies in the Iranian World, 1000–1800." Some of papers in the present volume are based on presentations given at that conference, some others of which have been published elsewhere. The conference was devoted to the question of how the military functioned in empires and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nomadsed.de>.

<sup>2</sup> *Militär und Staatlichkeit*, edited by Irene Schneider, Mitteilungen des SFB 'Differenz und Integration' 5, Halle, 2003 (also available at <http://www.nomadsed.de/en/publications/bulletin-of-the-centre/index.html#c1074>).

states going back to nomad conquest, and what the role of nomads was in that context.

The third event took place in Halle, 21–23 February 2008, and was organised by the SFB (and indeed by the editors of this volume); it was called “Availing of Nomadic Military Power – Strategems and Pitfalls: Iran and Adjacent Areas in the Islamic Period.” The Fritz Thyssen Stiftung (Cologne) made a substantial contribution to the funding of the conference, as did the Institut für Iranistik, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.<sup>3</sup> Most of the articles in the present volume arise from papers given at that meeting.

Nomad military manpower, empires and nomads at war, the intricate relationship between nomadic and other sources of military manpower remained an important subject for many SFB researchers after these conferences, and the present volume therefore represents not the final, but an intermediate stage in the SFB’s research on the topic.

Another conference was held in Tokyo in cooperation with the Institute of Oriental Culture of Tokyo University and with additional sponsorship from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science and the University of Tokyo, on 12–13 September 2009. It explored the question of whether nomad conquerors really tended to take on the cultural habitus of the settled empires and their populations relatively soon after the conquest, with very mixed results: in general, this process must be seen as drawn-out and contradictory. The ‘test case’ was the relationship between nomad rulers and city life, based on the apparently simple, but in fact intriguing, question of the base from which the nomad rulers ruled.<sup>4</sup>

A symposium to conclude the SFB’s activities was held at Hamburg on 17–19 November 2011 under the general heading “From Nomadic Empires to Neoliberal Conquest.” For the present volume, the historical part of the conference is relevant; under the heading “Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires,” it highlighted primarily Turko-Iranian contexts. Again, the military superiority of nomads was one of the key issues, and some of the contributions addressed the question of the nomads’ internal organisation. Were they tribally organised? The answer in most of the relevant contributions is a qualified ‘no’. It is generally accepted that the great armies of conquest were not tribal, and it seems that in more normal times fighting units were not automatically tribal either, but seem to have been formed on the basis of personal loyalty to a leader rather than to a tribe.<sup>5</sup>

It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge the contribution of all those who have made this volume possible. First of all, we would like to thank the authors of the articles

<sup>3</sup> See the online conference report in *H-Soz-u-Kult* of the same year (<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=2193>).

<sup>4</sup> *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life*, edited by David Durand-Guédy, Brill’s Inner Asian Library 31, Leiden, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Nomad Aristocrats in a World of Empires*, edited by Jürgen Paul, *Nomaden und Sesshafte* 17, Wiesbaden, 2013).

for their patience and forbearance, and we are glad that this volume, long overdue, can now appear. Next, thanks go to the organisers of the various conferences: to Irene Schneider and Jürgen Paul for the first in 2002, to Giorgio Rota and Bert Fragner for the 2005 Vienna meeting and for the legendary Viennese hospitality, and to the Institut für Iranistik for its always flexible cooperation. We are grateful to Ulrike Albert and Florian Saalfeld for their assistance in the editorial work and to Charles G. Whitmer and Carol Rowe for their meticulous copy-editing. And last but not least, thanks are due to Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, whose generous support made eleven years of intense research on nomad–sedentary relations possible – and also provided the funding for the conferences and the printing of the present volume. Thanks are also due to Fritz Thyssen Stiftung for funding the 2008 meeting and also the publication of this book.

We very much hope that the results presented here will be received as another contribution by the SFB and its friends and partners throughout the world to one of the most intriguing questions in the pre-modern history of the Iranian world and adjacent areas.

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