

## Nomads and Regional Armies in the Middle East

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In almost all discussions of Middle Eastern history, the sedentary population is associated primarily with civilian life and nomads with military activity. The mounted nomads were famous for their military skills, and their armies retained a speed and maneuverability which sometimes allowed them to defeat far larger armies. The advantages of using nomad soldiers are obvious and it seems natural that rulers from settled dynasties should seek out nomad cavalry to constitute the standing army, and recruit additional nomads as auxiliary troops. From the later 'Abbāsīd period the standing armies of major states were made up primarily of either nomads or military slaves of nomad origin. When dynasties from the Eurasian steppe came to dominate political life in the middle period, the pattern was intensified.

The assumption of nomad military superiority among both medieval and modern historians has led them to overlook the reverse phenomenon: the conscription of settled troops by rulers from the steppe who were already leading large nomad armies. The use of slave soldiers and some Daylamite infantry by the Saljūqs and other nomad dynasties has been explained as a way of acquiring disciplined troops while diminishing the power of tribal commanders. Another explanation for the conscription of settled troops, notably by the Mongols, is the need for experts in siegecraft. The nomad use of settled soldiers however went well beyond such specialized troops; they also used infantry regiments and regional armies recruited from settled populations. The Khwārazmshāhs, famous for their nomad cavalry, incorporated soldiers from Khurāsān and Ghūr and came to depend quite heavily on them.<sup>1</sup> When the Mongols arrived in the Middle East their army already included foot soldiers and they immediately added more. Tamerlane likewise conscripted Khurāsāni troops at the beginning of his conquests and made use of provincial armies from his Iranian possessions in all major campaigns. Thus it appears that the practice of using mixed armies made up of infantry and cavalry, with soldiers from both settled and nomad societies, was widespread. While nomads did indeed make excellent soldiers, they were rarely the whole of the army.

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, "Fall," 231; Juwaynī, *World-Conqueror*, 124–25, 318.

The question of who made up the armies of the Middle East is central to a larger issue: the relationship between government and society. Emphasis on the separate and sometimes foreign origin of standing armies and auxiliary troops has created the image of a militarily inactive settled population whose political influence was limited to the politics of city and bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup> Government and society have been seen as largely separate, meeting primarily in the major cities where urban notables regulated much of civilian life, while military representatives of the government provided security. Hodgson characterized this as the *a'yān-amīr* system, while Hourani discussed it as the politics of urban notables.<sup>3</sup> I do not believe that this construction is wrong, but I do suggest that it is incomplete. It is time to look beyond the cities and the civilian activities of their inhabitants. We need to investigate the extent to which the population of cities, and also of small towns, villages, and mountains, entered into the armies and politics of broader regions and the central state.

The subject I am addressing here is a very large one; I cannot research it completely, nor can I discuss it within the confines of one article. What I propose to do therefore is to limit my investigation to Iran and to center it on one particular army: that of the Mongols during their first conquest of Iran. There are several factors which make this a good time and place to examine. First of all, the Mongol army is often discussed as one of the greatest of nomad armies, showing the full advantages of speed and maneuverability. Secondly, this is a period for which we have exceptionally good sources. The conquest and the years preceding it are described in a number of independently written histories, each documenting a different player in the drama. The historian Juwaynī, who wrote about 658/1260, was in the employ of the Mongols. The *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* of Jūzjānī was written for the Delhi Sultans, while the point of view of the Khwārazmshāhs is presented in Nasawī's biography of Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazmshāh, entitled *Sīrat al-sultān Jalāl al-Dīn*, which was written in the 640s/1240s. Finally we have a fourteenth-century work, the *Tārīkh-nāma-yi Harāt*, written by Sayfī Harawī, containing reports passed down in his region.

The Mongol army was renowned for its discipline, skill and effectiveness, and its leaders theoretically could recruit from the whole of the adult male population; the Mongols have been described as a nation at arms. It seems surprising therefore that it should be precisely the Mongols who stand out for creating a system of regional armies conscripted from the sedentary population. Throughout their vast dominions the Mongols organized censuses dividing their new territories and subjects into *tūmens*: regions which supposedly could furnish 10,000 fighting men.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of unanswered questions related to this army. We need to know why the Mongols were so prompt in creating settled armies and whom the

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Kennedy, *Armies of the Caliphs*, 195–98; Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 139–41, 278.

<sup>3</sup> Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 2:64–69; Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*, 130–46.

<sup>4</sup> Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 116–43, 161–63.

armies consisted of. Although the census and the principle of nearly universal conscription were certainly new, many of the soldiers the Mongols recruited probably were not new to military life. Another question is how and why the Mongols used local troops from the beginning of their campaign in Transoxiana in 616/1219. Finally, I want to turn to political questions and examine the issue from the perspective of local powers who interacted with the Mongols, analyzing the factors which led to alliance or opposition. The conquest provides a rare opportunity to analyze both the usefulness of settled soldiers in a nomad army and the motivations of the Iranians who chose to join it.

I must make it clear that the findings I present are the result of research that is far from complete. Outside the period of the Timurids, and to a lesser extent the Mongols, my information comes from secondary works or sources in translation. Moreover I have dealt only with Iran, and primarily with eastern Iran. We cannot assume that other regions were the same. My conclusions must therefore be tentative – what I am offering here is not so much a finished analysis as a call for further research. I cannot provide a full description of the role that soldiers of settled origin played within nomad armies, nor can I show that all nomad dynasties used settled soldiers in significant numbers. I hope however to make it clear that military activity was common among settled populations – at least in Iran – and that it affected political processes within the large regional states.

### Military Manpower in Iran

Over the last years there has been increased interest in the military manpower of the pre-modern Middle East and the involvement of urban population in city defense. Building on the article by Claude Cahen on urban autonomy in the Levant, several scholars – a number of them represented in this book – have shown that urban Iranians were active in city defense and in the decision about whether or not to accept the rule of a particular outside power.<sup>5</sup> In her recent book, Deborah Tor has treated the issue in relation to the *‘ayyārūn* phenomenon, examining urban populations active in the defense of their vision of Islam on the borders and fighting against perceived internal threats.<sup>6</sup> Looking outside the cities, Jürgen Paul has shown that in early Islamic Iran villagers as well as city populations sometimes had military potential, and might be recruited as volunteers for defense or under a religious banner; some but not all of such troops had connections to *‘ayyār* traditions. Large-scale conscription was important under the Sāmānids, when the earlier Iranian landowning class (*dihqāns*) still held power, but is thought to have declined

<sup>5</sup> Cahen, *Mouvements populaires*. On recent scholarship see for example the articles by Jürgen Paul, “The Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur,” Deborah Tor “Privatized Jihad,” and David Durand-Guédy, “Iranians at War,” all in *Iranian Studies* 38, and Manz, “Nomad and Settled,” 425–57.

<sup>6</sup> Tor, *Violent Order*.

thereafter.<sup>7</sup> In this article I want to carry the investigation further in both time and space to consider the possibility that many rural populations and local landholders remained active in the military without religious legitimation, and not only occasionally or peripherally.

My own research has made it clear that regional military manpower was important in the late Mongol period. Under the Timurids armies made up of Iranian soldiers, including both cavalry and footmen, were a significant part of military forces in both regional and distant campaigns. The local rulers conquered by Tamerlane were required to provide troops and to participate in major campaigns; these men and their successors later became part of the provincial armies under princely governors. Such forces did not make up the whole of provincial armies. In addition there were Turco-Mongolian armies, and troops conscripted from both mountain and agricultural regions who served under officials appointed by the ruler and under Iranian commanders serving the Timurids directly. The succession struggles frequent among the Timurids give useful insights into the personnel of local and provincial armies, showing that leadership at the lower level included both city dwellers and members of landed families holding military office, whose power base lay outside the city.<sup>8</sup> We can thus state with confidence that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the landed classes were still active militarily and that participation in the army was a possible path for advancement.

In my earlier writings, I suggested that Timurid regional armies were probably the remnant of the regional armies created by the Ilkhans.<sup>9</sup> I am no longer satisfied with that explanation, since it is clear that landed military classes leading their own soldiers already existed when the Mongols arrived. The history of the first Mongol conquest in 616–620/1219–23 demonstrates the active political and military participation of local Iranian forces, fighting for and against the Mongols. Thus regional Iranian military forces, local rulers and a landed military class are neither something that disappears after the Sāmānid period nor a phenomenon that comes into being in the Mongol period – they are rather a constant throughout Iran’s medieval history.

Unfortunately it is difficult to find detailed information about Iranian military manpower. There are several reasons for this problem. The first is that of literary and historical convention. Both medieval histories and other genres almost invariably emphasize the difference between nomad and settled populations, and write about each in set stereotypes. The military was associated with slaves and nomad populations, and cavalry was given pride of place. Thus even when Iranian commanders were active and important, their activities are usually downplayed and the focus kept on the standing armies made up of slave or nomad soldiers.<sup>10</sup> The greatest problem is the silence of our sources, which are focused almost exclusively on

<sup>7</sup> Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler*.

<sup>8</sup> Manz, “Military Manpower;” ead., *Power, Politics and Religion*, 123–26.

<sup>9</sup> Ead., *Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, 96–100.

<sup>10</sup> Durand-Guédy, “Iranians at War,” 588–90.

the affairs of the court and the cities; within the cities, their interest lies in the activities of civilian notables. It is important to recognize the extent of our ignorance about the countryside and indeed about many of the cities of Iran. Even a major city like Qum almost disappears from the records of political history for long periods, during which much of its history is irretrievable.<sup>11</sup> While we know of the governors established by ruling dynasties in provincial capitals and key cities such as Rayy, Isfahan, Shiraz and Herat, it is often impossible to know how far beyond such cities state control extended and how constantly the government was represented within the cities of the second tier. When we move outside the major cities we find ourselves east of Eden – in that mysterious wilderness into which Cain was banished, and where he found a wife who could not have existed according to the master narrative. The geographers visited these areas and so did tax collectors; we know that many of the urban elite depended on regional land holdings for their income. Nonetheless, in most regions all that remains for us is incidental information or a cursory description of cities, routes and agricultural land. Neither dynastic nor most local histories offer significant information on rural populations.

In the absence of sufficient information, we are left to guess at the role smaller cities and rural populations played in history. Whether we intend to or not, we base our understanding of the relationship between government and society on our assumptions about what existed beyond the small sections of society our sources describe. We need therefore to look carefully at how we imagine the regions and populations left out of the picture. What do we consider ‘the norm’?

Our image of the wider society has inevitably been formed by the works we read, and thus by a small segment of literate society which promoted a set view. It is worth trying to get beyond this. There are several adjustments we should make in order to broaden our perspective and to understand the amount of military manpower that may have been available. First of all it is crucial to remember that the name of a city applied also to the surrounding countryside; thus the troops of Isfahan or Nīshāpūr probably included conscripts from the surrounding oasis. When rivalries between cities are described, they may be regional as well as urban.<sup>12</sup>

A greater adjustment lies in the definition of ‘central’ and ‘marginal’ populations. The nomads and mountain populations recruited for military use are often characterized as marginal; these people are thus considered exceptional – different from the majority. But were they exceptions? It is important to remember what a small proportion of the territory in the Middle East supports intensive irrigated agriculture. The villagers of major agricultural districts and the nomads of the steppe lie at two ends of a spectrum of lifestyles developed to wrest a living from a famously difficult terrain. Irrigated fields give way to steppe, mountain and desert, inhabited by populations considered ‘peripheral’ – the mountain peoples who

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<sup>11</sup> Drechsler, *Geschichte der Stadt Qom*, 208, 213–38.

<sup>12</sup> Durand-Guédy, “Iranians at War,” 595; Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 123–24; Paul, “Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur,” 581–82.

combined marginal agriculture with forest occupations, transhumant populations combining agriculture with seasonal movement, and of course the nomads themselves. These lifestyles were not totally separate; the Kurds, Lurs and others combined agriculture and nomadism within one society, producing grain, livestock and soldiers – both cavalry and footmen – for their neighbors. Such peoples inhabited a large proportion of Iran's territory, and surrounded most of the major cities. The populations famous for contributing soldiers were thus neither small nor totally separate – if they were marginal, we must assume a very large margin.

The last adjustment I want to suggest is that we recognize the importance of local power holders – the rulers who struggled with their neighbors, their relatives and larger dynasties to maintain power over realms of varying size and wealth. Beneath such dynasties were many subordinate commanders with sufficient independent power sometimes to challenge their rulers. Such men, constantly at war, depended on armies made up of local populations, and only rarely are these armies described as nomadic or tribal. While some local dynasties were important enough to be described in historical works, most are mentioned only in passing, as obstacles or aids to the central ruler. Individually, no such dynasty could challenge a large regional power, but collectively they represented a significant force. If we gather information about such people, we can discover how many small dynasties were scattered throughout the region, how much land they controlled, and how politically active they were. It is by using such little pieces of information that we can attempt to form a more accurate picture of the political and military map of medieval Iran.

### Regional Elites and Military Manpower in Iran Before the Mongol Conquest

During the two centuries before the Mongol conquest, Iran – particularly its eastern regions – was frequently contested among several dynasties. Such a situation offered both opportunity and danger to smaller regional powers and they are thus mentioned more frequently than usual in the histories of the period. I will survey several regions of Iran to illustrate what kinds of personnel were militarily active and might have been available to conscript into Mongol armies. Starting from the eastern Caspian region, I will move to the east, then south, and west to Fārs and Luristān. Much of the information I include here is quite well known; I am not trying to unearth new material but to put together the regional pieces to show the picture they present in the aggregate.

Māzandarān or Ṭabaristān, stretching along the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea, supported independent dynasties through much of Islamic history. Although parts of the region were protected by forest and separated from the areas to the south by the Alburz Mountains, in the east it was closely involved with neighboring regions. From the eighth to the fourteenth centuries the Bāwandid dynasty, claiming ancient Iranian descent, controlled a sizeable territory sometimes extend-

ing to Dāmaghān and Simnān. Bāwandid armies seem to have been made up of peasants, many fighting under powerful landowning families subordinate to the dynasty.<sup>13</sup> The Bāwandids could not withstand major powers like the Būyids, Saljūqs and Khwārazmshāhs and they held their territories as vassals during periods of centralized control in Iran. Their military activity was almost constant, since various members of the ruling family battled for control, skirmished with other Caspian dynasties, served within the armies of outside powers and in times of strength fought to expand their territories.<sup>14</sup> Even in times of relative weakness, the Bāwandids were sometimes able to defeat Saljūq armies sent against them.<sup>15</sup> In the late Saljūq period a new branch of the dynasty, bearing the titles *ispāhbād* and *malik* of Māzandarān, expanded into Gurgān and Qūmis. Its leaders were closely involved with the later Saljūqs and the Khwārazmshāhs, providing troops to competing factions and pulling in Saljūqs troops to aid in their own internal struggles.<sup>16</sup>

East of Māzandarān lay the northwestern section of Khurāsān, known for its cities and its armies. Sources show that both armed men and commanders were active in the Sāmānid, Ghaznavid and Saljūq periods, providing infantry and some cavalry.<sup>17</sup> In the Ghaznavid army heavy infantry from Marw, Balkh and Sarakhs are mentioned along with troops from Sīstān and Ghazna.<sup>18</sup> The men of Khurāsānian cities and their dependencies also took part in local struggles. An attack on Nīshāpūr in 425/1034 was led by men from Ṭūs helped by people from other towns, in particular those of Abīward. The forces of Ṭūs and Abīward are reported as 300 horses and five to six thousand armed footmen; the forces arrayed against them by one of the Ghaznavid commanders are given as 2,000 infantry and a few hundred horsemen.<sup>19</sup> Other towns mentioned in relation to local armed struggles are Sabzawār, Isfarāʾīn, Juwayn and Bayhaq; the last town had a leading family known as the Sālāriyān, descended from an earlier headman (*raʾīs*). The title suggests a military position.<sup>20</sup> While Nīshāpūr is famous for its decision not to resist the Saljūq army on its arrival in 429/1038, it was not without military forces at the time. One of the people who orchestrated the city's submission was a certain Abū l-Qāsim, referred to as the *sālār* of Būzjān, who had taken control of three or four thousand armed men of the region; this man was later put in charge of the city by Ṭoghril Beg.<sup>21</sup> As Jürgen Paul has shown, we need no longer accept the labels of bandits or riffraff often attached to the fighting men of Khurāsān. These were men

<sup>13</sup> Madelung, "Āl-e Bāvand," *EIr*; Rabino, "Dynasties," 397–99.

<sup>14</sup> Rabino, "Dynasties," 410, 418–37.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 422, 425.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 422–32; Madelung, "Āl-e Bāvand," *EIr*.

<sup>17</sup> Paul, "Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur," 579.

<sup>18</sup> Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 114.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–70; Paul, "Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur," 579–80.

<sup>20</sup> Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 170–71.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 254–57; Bowen, "Notes," 105–7.

who, if not fully professional soldiers, were nonetheless armed and experienced in fighting and were used by both local leaders and outside commanders.<sup>22</sup>

The Sālār-i Būzjān who emerged as a commander in Nīshāpūr was apparently associated with Qūhistān, a region which produced military families and troops over several centuries. Like Khurāsān, Qūhistān contained large pastures which might support cavalry.<sup>23</sup> On the eve of the Mongol invasion we find Qūhistān as the base of a fast-growing power, that of Abū Bakr b. ‘Alī (Khwāja Rażī) Zūzanī, based in Zūzan, a major town of the Khwāf region. Khwāja Rażī began as a follower of the earlier lord of Zūzan, with whom he entered into the service of the Khwārazmshāh Tekesh (567–596/1172–1200). With reinforcements from the Khwārazmshāh, the two men set out to conquer the southern regions for the Khwārazmshāh and themselves. Fighting alongside them we find a commander from eastern Māzandarān, Nuṣrat al-Dīn of Kabūd Jāma, whom I will discuss in a later section.<sup>24</sup> Upon the death of his lord, Khwāja Rażī took over and during the course of several years took much of Kirmān, wrested the region of Kīj in Makrān from its ruler, and brought the princes of Hurmuz into submission. At his death his kingdom fell to his son and Zūzan for some time remained the center of a local power. While Khwāja Rażī owed some of his power to the forces of the Khwārazmshāh, he had his own army of local soldiers.<sup>25</sup> During the Mongol and Timurid period we again find landed families with independent military followings in this area.<sup>26</sup>

East of Qūhistān lay Herat, and beyond that the mountainous region of Ghūr. In addition to agriculture and herding, Ghūr was known for its production of metal armor and weapons, which the dynasty had to offer as tribute first to the Ghaznavids and then to the Saljūqs. Some Ghūrīds served the Ghaznavids as siege engineers.<sup>27</sup> In the late twelfth century the Shansabānid dynasty of Ghūr took advantage of the decline of Saljūq power to create a vast, if short-lived, realm which stretched from Gurgān to Ghazna. The inhabitants of Ghūr were hardy mountain peasants with a martial tradition who provided a strong infantry as well as some heavy cavalry. When they began to expand their power the Shansabānid rulers added additional troops from Khurāsān, both Turk and Tajik, as well as from the Khalaj Turks who provided light cavalry. Later the Ghūrīd rulers also employed Turkic slave soldiers, but these were not the majority of their army.<sup>28</sup>

The mountains of Ghūr were dotted with fortresses held by various members of the large and contentious dynasty and by other powerful Ghūrīd families with their own ambitions. From the end of the twelfth century the dynasty contended

<sup>22</sup> Paul, "Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur," 578–82.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal, *Configuration de la terre*, 432, 437–38; Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam, 102.

<sup>24</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Jughbrāfiyā*, 3:45; Adle, "Contrée redécouverte," 25–26.

<sup>25</sup> Adle, "Contrée redécouverte." For reference to the military, see p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 95–97.

<sup>27</sup> Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 121; id., "Ghurids," *EIr*.

<sup>28</sup> Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, 11–18, 61.



with the Khwārazmians to the north, and a number of Ghūrid commanders went back and forth in allegiance between the Khwārazmshāh and their own ruler.<sup>29</sup> When the Khwārazmshāh defeated the Ghūrids and took over their territories, numerous emirs entered the Khwārazmian army where they were quickly incorporated in positions of power.<sup>30</sup>

Sīstān was ruled by its own kings, sometimes as vassals of larger powers, but always at least semi-independent and in possession of sufficient troops to keep order and to participate in outside campaigns. From 465/1073 through the early Mongol period it was held by the Naṣrid dynasty, under the sway of first of Saljūq rulers, then Ghūrids, then the Khwārazmshāh. The Naṣrid rulers faced challenges both within their family and from other local families, and seem to have governed as the first among equals. As vassals the Sīstānis had to furnish contingents to their suzerains, often for quite distant campaigns. In 568/1172-3 their troops campaigned for the Ghūrids against the Khwārazmian Sulṭān Shāh in Ṭāliqān and Marw, a year later they furnished troops for a disastrous campaign against the Khwārazmshāh Tekesh, and in 597/1200-1 their troops were in the Ghūrid army attempting to prevent the new Khwārazmshāh Muḥammad from encroaching into Khurāsān. A few years later, in 604/1207-8, we find Sīstānī troops helping the Khwārazmshāh to besiege Herat. Finally in 615/1218-9 they furnished troops to the Khwārazmian army to guard against the Mongol onslaught.<sup>31</sup>

To the south of Sīstān, we have seen that Kīj in Makrān was an independent realm under a local ruler until subdued by the superior forces of Khwāja Razī of Zūzan. Hurmuz, a key point in the lucrative trade routes of the Gulf, was from 493/1100 under its own dynasty, though not powerful enough to maintain complete independence and often a vassal of the rulers of either Kirmān or Fārs. While Hurmuz depended on trade and on its ships for much of its wealth and power, its rulers also fought on land, and at some times at least, the army held sufficient power to influence the choice of ruler.<sup>32</sup>

Hurmuz bordered on the province of Fārs, at that time held by the Salghurid Atabegs of Turkmen origin. We have some information about the manpower of the region from the *Fāršnāma* of Ibn Balkhī, written at the beginning of the twelfth century. Unlike most geographers, Ibn Balkhī shows an interest in the nature of the inhabitants of the regions he describes, including their level of martial activity. The towns and regions characterized as possessing armed populations (*salāḥwar*) fall into two groups, one west of Shiraz, from Khisht to Tīr Mardān, and another southeast of the city, stretching from Sarwistān to Kurān in Īrāhistān, and including Juwaym Abū Aḥmad further to the east. Where their territory lay along trade routes these populations are usually also characterized as thieves. In general it appears that these were areas which practiced agriculture, sometimes along with

<sup>29</sup> Jackson, "Fall," Siddiqui, "Shansabani Dynasty."

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, "Fall," 231-32.

<sup>31</sup> Bosworth, *History of the Saffarids*, 387-404.

<sup>32</sup> Aubin, "Princes d'Ormuz," 80-89.

herding and forest occupations, but often in adverse conditions.<sup>33</sup> In one case we know that men were conscripted into larger armies; this happened in Īrāhistān, which was usually protected by its extreme climate but was conquered by the Daylamite ‘Aḏud al-Dawla, who is reported to have conscripted 10,000 soldiers from the region into his army.<sup>34</sup>

In the eastern section of Fārs lay the region of Dārābgird, dominated by a tribe known as the Ismā‘īlīs, which was part of a group of Iranian tribes – some nomadic, and a few apparently settled – called the Shabānkāra’ī. This appears to have been a loose coalition of tribes of varied occupation and provenance drawn from a population practicing forest occupations, herding and day labor. They began their rise to power in the Būyid period, when they developed armies and dominated an arc southeast of Shiraz, with centers at Kāzarūn, Būshkānāt, Jūr/Fīrūzābād, Jahram and Īj.<sup>35</sup> By the early sixth/twelfth century, when Ibn Balkhī described them, they had lost several of their strongholds, but still constituted a significant part of the military manpower of Fārs.<sup>36</sup> In the beginning of the thirteenth century the Ismā‘īlīs centered in the region of Dārābgird were the only section of the Shabānkāra’ī still important. At that time they controlled the eastern regions of Fārs under a hereditary dynasty, and had sufficient strength to take northern Kirmān twice, though not to hold on to it.<sup>37</sup>

Northwest of Fārs lay Luristān, a mountainous region most of which was inhabited by nomads and transhumants. Over the course of the twelfth century, two local dynasties rose to power here, in Lur-i Kūchik to the northwest and Lur-i Buzurg to the east. The rulers of Lur-i Buzurg began in the service of the Salghurid rulers of Fārs, campaigning for them against other nomadic peoples, and the rulers of both Lur-i Buzurg and Lur-i Kūchik later became vassals of the Mongols and served in their armies.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that while the rulers of Lur seem to have come from nomad stock and continued to migrate with their followers, their armies were not exclusively cavalry. According to Juwaynī, when the Khwārazmshāh faced the Mongol onslaught in 616/1219, the ruler of Lur-i Buzurg suggested taking refuge in his regions and raising 100,000 foot soldiers from Luristān, Fārs and Shūlistān to protect the Khwārazmians.<sup>39</sup> Though the number is presumably exaggerated, the Atabeg was offering to raise a large number of soldiers, and they were specified as infantry. Later, in the service of the Mongols, we find one of the Atabegs commanding an army of 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 foot soldiers.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, 168, 186, 188, 192–96.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 188–89.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 164–67; Aubin, *Émirs mongols et vizirs persans*, 69–71.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, 236–39.

<sup>37</sup> Aubin, *Émirs mongols et vizirs persans*, 71–72; Büchner and Bosworth, “Shabānkāra,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>; Bosworth and Jackson, “Shabānkāra’ī,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Minorsky, “Lur-i Buzurg,” and “Lur-i Kūchik,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Juwaynī, *World-Conqueror*, 383–84.

<sup>40</sup> This was Yūsuf Shāh, going to the aid of Aḥmad Tegüder Yūsuf. Minorsky, “Lur-i Buzurg,” and “Lur-i Kūchik,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

Thus throughout much or all of Iran, soldiers were conscripted to fight under their own leaders and occasionally under others. In the regions represented we find a variety of terrain and probable population, from occupants of cities and their surrounding oases to mountain dwellers and occasionally nomads. The rulers of many regional polities depended for part of their power on the forces provided by semi-independent commanders holding parts of their realm. When not fighting together for outside powers, they were quite likely to be fighting each other for preeminence. Thus their armies must have been at war for part of almost every year. Their soldiers, along with the populations of the major cities with their dependencies, formed a large pool of available manpower.

### Nomad Rulers and Settled Armies in the Mongol Conquest

The Mongol army began to acquire new soldiers from the moment of its arrival on the border of Transoxiana. The seizure of young men to use as cannon fodder is well known, but the active role that Iranian manpower came to play within the Mongol military is much less often discussed. If we read the sources with attention we can see a rapid change in the use of Iranian troops, who began as expendable bodies but soon began to fight alongside the Mongols, sometimes as a significant portion of the army.

It should not surprise us that the Mongols incorporated settled Iranian troops, since they were already using large numbers of Chinese and Central Asian soldiers. During their campaigns in northern China from 1211–15, the Mongols had welcomed and rewarded defectors from the Jin.<sup>41</sup> When he headed against the Khwārazmshāh, Chinggis Khan took with him the bulk of his army, leaving his commander Muqali to continue the conquest of northern China with an army of 23,000 Mongol soldiers and 77,000 auxiliaries – Chinese, Jurchen and Khitan. The western army also contained a number of sedentary troops; there was a large corps of Chinese siege engineers and a significant number of Central Asian troops – well over ten thousand, both infantry and cavalry – under their own rulers.<sup>42</sup> These troops and their commanders played a significant role in the conquest.<sup>43</sup>

As the Mongols attacked the Oxus region, they gathered levies (*ḥashar*, *ḥashrī*) first from the countryside surrounding the cities they were aiming at and, as cities capitulated, from the young men of the towns.<sup>44</sup> From the beginning the army was divided into several sections and, when cities resisted for more than a few days, the senior commanders often left a portion of the army to continue the siege, while they continued on with the rest of the troops. As cities capitulated they had to provide levies which were sent to aid in the conquest of further territory. There

<sup>41</sup> Allsen, "Rise of the Mongolian Empire," 357–58.

<sup>42</sup> Id., "Yüan Dynasty," 265–66; Juwaynī, *World-Conqueror*, 82; Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāširī*, 1004.

<sup>43</sup> Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaḳāt-i Nāširī*, 1023–24, 1054.

<sup>44</sup> Juwaynī, *World-Conqueror*, 83–84, 91–92, 101–2; Nasawī, *Sīra*, 92.