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"Is this city yours or mine?" Political Sovereignty and Eurasian Urban Centers in the Ninth through Twelfth Centuries

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Many scholars have emphasized the importance of Inner Asia to furthering our understanding of cross-cultural phenomena and their role in the preservation and transmission of historical experience.[1] The relevant research has been carried out almost exclusively by scholars trained as sinologists, who have privileged economic exchange and imperial formations.[2] As one moves away from the Chinese sphere of influence, however, the notion of Eurasia as an integrated unit of analysis becomes more problematic.[3] In what follows, I attempt to bridge the western and eastern edges of the great steppe by highlighting a specific aspect of Inner Asian political culture: the phenomenon of shared sovereignty between military-based ruling dynasties and their urban constituencies, with a focus on the principalities of Rus' and the oases of Transoxiana, from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.[4] Specifically, I propose that the dual

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[1] On "Inner" and "Outer" Eurasia, see David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). For convenience, I use "Eurasia" and "Inner Asia" interchangeably.

[2] For example, Nicola DiCosmo, "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History," *Journal of World History* 10, 1 (1999): 1–40; Michal Biran, "The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire," *Medieval Encounters* 10, 1–3 (2004): 339–61. Non-Sinologists tend to take a broader approach: Christian, *History of Russia*; and Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[3] This is primarily because the movement of people and goods across the continent has traditionally been from east to west, and historians tend to follow their sources. A notable exception is Peter Golden's work on pre-Mongol Eurasia and the Khazar Empire, some of which is cited later in this paper.

[4] "Political culture" is an "activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement and enforce the competing claims they make upon another and upon the whole.… [It is] the set of discourses or symbolic practices by which these claims are made"; K. M. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4–5.

administrative government structure that developed in the two regions was an autochthonic, Eurasian state-formation, distinct from the city-state and imperial models, and effected by what Joseph Fletcher defined as "horizontal continuities."[5]

At first there seems to be little to compare. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the cities of Transoxiana, or Mawarannahr, as the region was known to the Arabs, underwent rapid change and became a cultural melting pot where, according to Tha'ālibī, the best minds of the time gathered.[6] The physician Ibn Sina, his contemporary, claimed to have "mastered what was useful … and discovered the status of each man in his science" in the Bukharan library.[7] According to a rumor, though, the famous physician burned the library down so that no one benefited from the knowledge it contained.[8] Samarqand, Merv, and Balkh—which after the ninth century served as capitals for the region's ruling dynasties—were also known for their intellectual life and flourishing commerce. Muslim by faith, Persian in culture, and cosmopolitan-merchant in daily affairs, the cities of Transoxiana prompted some of the most eminent scientists, philosophers, and poets of the Muslim *oicumene* to, if not settle there, then at least visit.[9]

While Ibn Sina was mastering or perhaps burning the treasures of the Bukharan library, a set of cities emerged at the opposite, westernmost edge of the Eurasian steppe. Known to the Vikings as Gardariki, "the land of the cities," and to the Arabs as the region bordering the "Land of Darkness," where the tribes of Gog and Magog await judgment day, these polities called themselves Rus', or "Rus' Land" (*russkaia zemlia*).[10] These developing ninth- and tenth-century East Slavic settlements, built of wood and inhabited by warlike and mostly pagan Slavic and Finno-Ugric tribes, seem to render little basis for comparison with the cities of Transoxiana.[11] Against this

[5] J. Fletcher, "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800," in Joseph Fletcher and Beatrice Manz, eds., *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995): x.

[6] V. V. Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1963), 54.

[7] Ibn Sina, *Autobiography*, William E. Gohlman, ed. and trans. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1974), 37.

[8] Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I, 54.

[9] V. V. Bartold's, *Turkestan—Down to Mongol Invasion* (London: Luzac, 1977) remains the best overview of the region. A more recent and brief introduction is M. Fedorov's "Farghana under the Samanids," *Iran* 42 (2004): 119–29. See also Boris Kochnev, *Numizmaticheskaia istoriia Karakhanidskogo Kaganata (991–1209)* (Moscow: Sofia, 2006).

[10] The Rus' chroniclers moved the Gog and Magog further to the north, but the legend itself most likely entered Russian chronicles via Muslim channels. A. Iu. Karpov, "Zaklepannye cheloveky" v letopisnoi stat'e 1096 g," *Ocherki Feodal'noi Rossii* 3 (1999): 3–24. Also of interest: Emeri van Donzel and Andrea Achmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[11] Russian libraries could not compete with those of Bukhara; see L. V. Stoliarova and S. M. Kashtanov, *Kniga v Drevnei Rusi (XI–XVI vv)* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2010). However, literacy spread quickly in daily use; see Roman K. Kovalev, "Zvenyhorod in

impression, I will propose that strong parallels can in fact be drawn between them.

These parallels are not based on direct borrowings or interactions between the two regions, or at least not the sort attested to in available written sources.[12] Although Muslim geographers and merchants knew of Rus', to them the Slavs seemed at most a curiosity.[13] Russians, for their part, did not venture east very far during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Baihaqi, following al-Mas'ūdī, places Rus' pirates on the southern shore of the Caspian in the eleventh century, but the incident on which this was based did not reflect a pattern.[14] Indirect contacts via trade with the Volga Bulgars were frequent and perhaps regular after the eighth century, since Gardariki constituted an important point on the northern branch of the Silk Road, which was revived around this time. The earliest known *documented* references to interactions between the regions date to the sixteenth century.[15]

Geographically, too, the regions were very different. Following David Christian's division of the Eurasian landmass into "inner" and "outer" Eurasia, sedentary and agrarian Mawarannahr has always been associated with the latter, and the forest-steppe belt of Rus', colonized by Slavic migrants around AD 500, with the former.[16] Unlike Transoxanian oases, which were dependent on irrigation agriculture confined to specific areas, Gardariki competed for space, contending with the endless forest and river systems that made sustained agriculture there a challenge. Centuries passed before nature was subdued and yielded arable land. A chronicle entry from as late as 1176

Galicia: An Archaeological Survey, Eleventh-Mid-Thirteenth Centuries," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 24, 2 (1999): 7–36; Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[12] Numismatic data leaves little doubt that contacts between Rus' and Samarqand, Balkh, and Bukhara existed as early as the tenth century. According to Thomas S. Noonan and Roman K. Kovalev, more than 75 percent of all silver deposited in eastern Europe during the tenth century was struck by the Samanid rulers of Transoxiana and was intended for the northern trade. Roman K. Kovalev, "Dirham Mint Output of Samanid Samarqand and Its Connection to the Beginnings of Trade with Northern Europe," *Histoire & Mesure* 17, 3/4 (2002): 197–216.

[13] See the travels of Ibn Fadlan; Abu Hamid al-Gharnati, *Puteshestvie Abu Khamida al-Gharnati v vostochnuiu i tsentral'nuiu Evropu, 1131–1153* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971); and Ibrahim ibn Yakub (al-Tartushi), *Relatio de itinere slavico*, T. Kowalski, ed., trans., and commentary, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1946), 72–74. One must keep in mind the genealogy of Muslim and particularly Arab ethnographic literature, in which "ethnological typification and ethnographic description served different purposes"; see Aziz al-Azmeh, "Barbarians in Arab Eyes," *Past and Present* 134 (1992): 3–18.

[14] Abu-l-Fazl Baihaqi, *Istoriia Masuda*, A. K. Arends, Russian trans., 2d ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), 568, 868.

[15] Christian, *History of Russia*, 291. For the sixteenth century, see E. Delmar Morgan and C. H. Coote, eds., *Early Voyages to Russia and Persia by Anthony Jenkinson and other Englishmen, with Some Account of the First Intercourse of the English with Russia and Central Asia by Way of the Caspian Sea* (New York: B. Franklin, 1967).

[16] Christian, *History of Russia*, 281, 327.

mentions two armies, from Moscow and Vladimir, that perished in the woods while marching against one another.[17] But once the forest began to give way to more settlements, the expansion of Rus' into its hinterlands proceeded steadily.

Finally, the two areas are marked by significant political differences. From its inception, the "Rus' Land" was synonymous with the Riurikid clan, a point to which I will return.[18] Urban centers of Central Asia, by contrast, had as a rule been loosely governed by pastoralist dynasties focused on generating revenue rather than on local politics.[19] This pattern is especially evident after the mid-eighth century, when Transoxiana became the center of intricate political rivalries and underwent a series of dynastic changes. While it has been suggested that Gardariki belonged to the Islamic cultural universe, by the ninth century Orthodox Christianity and Byzantine influences held sway over Rus'.[20] This was quite different from the distinct "Perso-Islamic" cultural milieu of Mawarannahr.

And yet, despite their ethnic, cultural, and confessional differences, both regions developed remarkably similar political cultures of dual administration, characterized by an uneasy *modus vivendi* between the civil administrative and military branches of their governments. I will examine the two regions together to argue that these similarities exemplify a "horizontal continuity" in Eurasia, defined by Joseph Fletcher as an economic, social, or cultural phenomenon experienced by two or more societies—between which there need be no communication—which is effected by the same ultimate source.[21]

The "source" of the roughly contemporaneous revival of Central Asian cities and the emergence of Gardariki is relatively easy to identify. By the middle of the eighth century, the northern branches of the Silk Road were, after a two-century depression, once again active, now under the auspices of the Khazar Kaghanate. As a result, Mawarannahr became commercially linked to the coastal cities of the Black Sea, while the cities of Mesopotamia established trade connections with the Baltic and Northern Europe. The

[17] *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei* [henceforth *PSRL*], (Lavrent'evskaia letopis'), vol. 1, pt. 2 (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1927), 375.

[18] Charles J. Halperin, "The Concept of the Russian Land from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries," *Russian History* 2, 1 (1975): 29–38; and "National Identity in Premodern Rus," *Russian History* 37, 3 (2010): 275–94.

[19] This general description is from Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. 51–62. For a case study, see E. Esin, "Tarkhan Nīzak or Tarkhan Tirek? An Enquiry Concerning the Prince of Badhghīs, who in A.H. 91/A.D. 709–710 Opposed the 'Omayyad Conquest of Central Asia," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, 3 (1977): 323–32.

[20] L. Beliaev and A. Chernetsov, "The Eastern Contribution to Medieval Russian Culture," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 97–124, here 100.

[21] A "horizontal" continuity must be distinguished from "parallel" continuity, which denotes a survival of institutions through time, such as taxation, or imperial title. J. Fletcher, "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500–1800," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9, 1 (1985): 37–58, here 38.

waterways of Rus' thereby acquired great importance, and increasing commerce facilitated the development of cities that served as trading posts and manufacturing centers.[22] Much like their predecessors the Gök Türk, the Khazars provided security in the steppe, enabling exchanges between the eastern and western parts of Eurasia. In other words, booming commerce created a vast geographical space accessible to every participating community, even if the space itself was the subject of political and religious tensions.[23]

The more difficult question is whether this "historical continuity" was indeed the cause of similarities in the socio-political structures that developed in Gardariki and in Mawarannahr. But before I discuss parallels and continuities, I must explain what I mean by "dual administration," since the term is often utilized differently by scholars of different regions and periods.[24] The term's ambiguity as well as the relative ease with which it has been used to describe government structures in polities from China to Russia derives from the fact that divisions between military and civil administration existed, at one time or another, in most of the Inner Asian polities. The term should not be applied indiscriminately, of course, and the fraught line between "the men of the sword" and "the men of the pen" was often blurred and varied

[22] I will not join the debate on whether Rus' owes its existence to trade. Such an assumption implies that the emergence of Gardariki was an event rather than a process. Although the first Slavic raids into Byzantine territories and migration into the Balkans in the 580s may be linked to the reopening of the northern Silk Road by the Gök Türk, I would consider the eighth-century revival of the route a catalyst that sped up the transition of early Slavic and Finno-Ugric communities into commercial urban centers. See Christian, *History of Russia*, 281. For Slavic movements, see I. Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[23] I am paraphrasing André Raymond, "Economy of the Traditional City," in Salma K. Jayyusi, general ed., Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, special eds., *The City in the Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 750. For an analysis of cultural dialogue across the Eurasian landmass, see Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010).

[24] In medieval Russian studies, "dual administration" has been generally evoked in the context of the Mongol influences debate. See Donald Ostrowski, "The Mongol Origins of Muscovite Political Institutions," *Slavic Review* 49 (1990): 525–42; and *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and a critique by Charles J. Halperin, "Letter to the Editors," *Kritika* 1, 4 (2000): 83. For an overview of "dual administration" in the Türk and Khazar empires, see Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1992). In Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies the concept has been considered at length by Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974). For China, see Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 93–131; and E. Endicott-West, "Imperial Government in Yuan Times." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46: 2 (1986): 523–49. For Iran, see Denise Aigle, "Iran under Mongol Domination: The Effectiveness and Failings of a Dual Administrative System," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 57 (2006–2007): 65–78. For Central Asia and Eastern Iran, see Beatrice Manz, "Nomad and Settled in the Timurid Military," in Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, eds., *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 425–57; and Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 41, 128.

considerably across space and time. In very general terms, dual administration denotes separation of political power between the often "alien" ruling dynasties—that is, dynasties of pastoralist, nomadic background—and their local, or sedentary civil servants who handled the administrative and fiscal affairs of the state. The "dual administration" paradigm is far from uniform, and it is subject to specific historical circumstances that can introduce new elements to the pattern, but it is useful nonetheless as a model for understanding socio-political developments in Eurasia. In this paper I am concerned with what I see to be one variant of the phenomenon, which is found in the urban settings of both Transoxiana and Rus': the involvement of city dwellers in political and military affairs *before* the Mongol invasion, an event often used as a convenient marker for the emergence of "Eurasian" political institutions in sedentary states such as, for example, Russia and Iran.

In Mawarannahr, this pattern appears to have been already in place by the second century BCE, when Chang Ch'ien described it as a region of autonomous commercial urban centers without a ruler.[25] The otherwise fundamental changes wrought by the Arab conquest in the eighth century CE did not alter the existing social order. Baghdad-appointed regional governors—*amīrs*, the title carried by most of the region's subsequent rulers—were confronted with the local understanding of sovereignty, which, despite their attempts to renegotiate the terms, continued to prevail. The *amīrs*' sphere of influence was limited to military affairs and taxation, while urban administration remained in the hands of the local landowning and merchant families—the *a'yān*, or "notables."[26]

Little is known about the internal composition of Central Asian cities during this period, but sources mention a demarcated social hierarchy, an urban militia, and a sense of solidarity with the adjacent countryside.[27] The

[25] Ssu-Ma Ch'ien, *The Records*, 2: 269, in Christian, *History of Russia*, 211. Also see Frank Lee Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria: The Formation of a Greek Frontier in Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[26] Obviously, a diachronic analysis of the government is not feasible here. In his *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und transoxanien in vormongolischer zeit* (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner, Stuttgart, 1996), Jürgen Paul concluded there was significant overlap between the functions performed by the *a'yān* and the state bureaucracy, especially in assessing and collecting taxes. Paul argues that the reach of the government never truly extended beyond the *Diwan* and relied on local "notables" to serve as intermediaries. While this reinforces my own contention about the role of the *a'yān*, the study does not frame the region's administration within the *amīr- a'yān* paradigm, and privileges the "indirect rule" thesis. It would follow that in Transoxiana the state had no "monopoly of the legitimate use of violence." I would suggest that we are instead simply dealing with a different model of "state," which cannot and should not be juxtaposed to Max Weber's. It must also be said that the final judgment is necessarily clouded by the lack of sources, a problem that Paul acknowledged.

[27] Attilio Petruccioli, "Bukhara and Samarkand," in Salma K. Jayyusi, general ed., Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, special eds., *The City in the Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 491–524. Also, Heinz Gaube, "Iranian Cities," in *idem*, 159–80. Said Amir Arjomand discusses Samanid sources, but these, as is so often the case, are concerned

chief of police, overseers of religious endowments and water management (*mīrāb)*, and the judges all came from the local *a'yān* families, who often held these posts on a hereditary basis.[28] A thirteenth-century *waqfiyya* from Bukhara, and inscriptions preserved on gravestones, the "*qairaqs*" (قیراق), confirm the hereditary nature of certain posts and shed light on the social ranks and backgrounds of the Transoxanian urban dwellers.[29] The "notables" commanded military detachments of slave-soldiers to defend the cities, and Al-Azdi mentions a craftsmen-led urban militia of Bukhara fighting a Mamluk army in 914.[30]

That said, the privileged status of the *a'yān* should not be seen to belie the potential for coherence of the broader populace; when necessary, the entire population, including in the countryside, decided matters of defense and joined forces.[31] Narshakhi reports that "people returned to their villages" after defending Bukhara against Husayn b. Ṭāhir in 874.[32] "Sogdians" and "Bukharans" fought against Samarkand and negotiated with Turkic tribes for assistance against the Arabs.[33] And right up to the Mongol invasion Bukharan local authorities retained the right to revoke the *khutba* (a Friday communal sermon that mentions the name of the ruler).[34] A strong sense of local autonomy is also evident from refusals to adopt caliphal currency; responding to a

with the rulers rather than the ruled; "Evolution of Persianate Polity and Its Transition to India," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2, 2 (2009): 115–36.

[28] For water management, see Paul, *Herrscher*, 41–66.

[29] L. N. Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie Pamiatniki Samarkanda XI–XIV vv.* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1992), esp. 94–95, and inscriptions 49, 52, 112, and 114 on pages 151, 153, 207, and 209, respectively. The *waqf* document was published by O. D. Chekhovich, *Bukharskii Vakf XIII v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), esp. 24. For civil administration, see Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I, 294; Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 136–41; and Richard W. Bulliet's *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); and his "Local Politics in Eastern Iran under the Ghaznavids and Seljuks," *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978): 35–56.

[30] Arjomand, "Evolution," 128–29. The "sheikhs" of Samarqand are also reported to have mounted three hundred *ghulams* for the city's defense in 1004 (Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I, 331). The question of military slavery is interesting, since the institution, thought by many to have originated in Central Asia, played a key role in the regional history and in Islamic history generally. But it did not develop in Gardariki. For an overview of current scholarship, see Rueven Amitai, "Military Slavery in the Islamic World: 1000 Years of a Social-Military Institution," a lecture delivered at the University of Trier, Germany, 27 June 2007, available at: http://www.medievalists.net/2009/10/15/military-slavery-in-the-islamic-world-1000-years-of-a-social-military-institution/. I thank Charles Halperin for drawing my attention to the issue.

[31] The city-countryside connection was also reinforced by the fact that many urban "notables" owned land in the nearby villages. According to the aforementioned *waqfiyya*, the *sadr* of Bukhara bought a village in the suburbs and built another small settlement right next to it. The land adjacent to his possessions also belonged to a city resident, a certain Sheikh Hasan Kashebaf, manufacturer of straw mats and sacks for wheat transport; Chekhovich et al., *Bukharskii Vakf XIII*, 18, 21–22.

[32] Scott C. Levi and Ron Sela, *Islamic Central Asia: An Anthology of Sources* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 25.

[33] Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I, 247, 249.

[34] Ibid., 440.

demand of the people of Bukhara, governor Ghitrīf b. ʻAtā (792–93) allowed the minting of local coins to be used for transactions within the city,[35] and Maqdisi and Ibn Hawqal mention similar developments in Khorezm and Samarkand.[36] The preference for local currencies over silver dirhams is significant, because coinage, like the *khutba*, was an official marker of political sovereignty in Islam.

While Baghdad's religious authority was eventually recognized, the caliph's involvement in local politics remained nominal at best.[37] Even at the early stages of the conquest, when the Caliphate was at the height of its strength, the people of Samarkand successfully petitioned Caliph ʻAbd al-Mālik to remove a governor they disliked.[38] As internal strife weakened the Caliphate, the *amīrs* of Transoxiana, although invested by the Commander of the Faithful, became de facto rulers in the region, and the urban constituency often decided the outcomes of incessant intra- and inter-dynastic warfare that ensued.

An excellent illustration of this pattern is the Samanid dynasty, which ruled Mawarannahr during the late ninth and tenth centuries. In 874, the dissatisfied population of Bukhara invited Nasr b. Aḥmad, a member of the Samanid family, to replace Husayn b. Tahir, a representative of the reigning Tahirid dynasty. When Nasr's brother Ismāʼīl challenged his rule, Transoxanian cities sided with Nasr and refused to provision Ismāʼīl's army on the grounds that his bid for power was illegitimate.[39] Although Ismāʼīl won the struggle, his rule was not accepted in Samarqand, whose population threw its support behind the rival branches of the Samanid family.[40] It would seem that their sentiment was shared by the people of Bukhara, where Ismāʼīl's son and successor Aḥmad was killed by his discontented subjects in 914.[41]

[35] Ibid., 264–65. On the Ghitrīfi coins, see E. A. Davidovich and A. H. Dani, "Coinage and the Monetary System," in M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth, eds., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia* (Delhi: Molital Banarsidass, 1999), 391–420.

[36] Bulliet, "Local Politics," 41, 42–44, for Maqdisi; Ibn Hawqal, *The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal* (*Ketab-i Masalek ve Mu'alek*) (London: Printed at the Oriental Press by Wilson & Co., for T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies, 1800). Local currency was also used in the city of Yarkand; see Tekin Şınası, "A Qarakhanid Document of AD 1121 (AH 515) from Yarkand," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979–1980): 872. This reference is particularly valuable here because it supports my thesis about a shared "Eurasian" or Silk Road urban culture, since Yarkand is in Eastern Turkistan.

[37] Changes certainly did occur. Jean Aubin observed some time ago that in the city of Bayhaq, for example, ancient noble families were replaced by a new urban ruling oligarchy, which had emerged from the rural landed nobility, in the tenth–eleventh centuries (cited in Pourshariati, "Local Historiography in Early Medieval Iran and the *Tārīkh-ī Bayhaq*," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000): 133–64, here 156. Another transformation occurred in the meaning of the term *dihqan*, which in the pre-Islamic times denoted high-ranking notables but after Muslim conquest was applied to urban artisans and/or free peasants; Golden, *Central Asia*, 70–71.

[38] Levy and Sela, *Islamic Central Asia*, 13.

[39] Bartold, *Sochineniia*, vol. I, 282.

[40] Ibid., 300.

[41] Ibid., 300.

Aḥmad's son, Nasr II b. Aḥmad, also had difficulties managing what contemporary court historians described as the "rebellious elements." In 930, while he was suppressing a rebellion in Nishapur, Bukharans freed three of his brothers who were imprisoned in the city citadel, and after negotiating terms, installed them as the joint rulers of the city. Nasr was able to return, but in 943 he was accused of heresy and deposed by his son, Nūḥ. It would appear that Nūḥ won the population over, since Bukharans stood by his side when his uncle, Ibrahim b. Aḥmad, took the city for himself. In 947, the people ousted Ibrahim b. Ahmad and invited Nūḥ back. Fully aware of the centrifugal tendencies wrought by succession practices, Nūḥ tried to secure his family's standing by exacting from the army and the urban populations of Mawarannahr an oath of allegiance to his five sons, who according to his will would succeed one another. Predictably, the plan failed: after Nūḥ's eldest son 'Abd al-Mālik died in 961, power was transferred to his son Nasr, but Nasr ruled for just one day before his uncle Mansūr took over. The reign of Mansūr's own son, Abul-Qasim Nūḥ, was characterized by a never-ending struggle for power between the dynasty's various branches. The last Samanid ruler of Mawarannahr, Muntasir, was killed in 1005, and it comes as little surprise that the Samanids' political successors, the Karakhanids, were invited in by the region's urban populations.[42]

Native Persian Samanids, along with the Tahirids they replaced, were a rare exception among the dynasties that ruled Mawarannahr throughout its history, and most of the preceding, and all of the region's later rulers reveled in their connection to the steppe. From a comparative perspective, their Persian background seems to have been the only distinct feature of their rule. Much like Qarakhanids and Seljuks, Qara-Qitai and Chinggisids, the Samanids did not try to alter the political order; they left administration in the hands of the urban bureaucracy and restricted themselves to military affairs, the dispensation of justice, and taxation.[43] Furthermore, as Nūḥ's failed effort to regulate succession in 947 indicates, Samanids tried to follow the principal of lateral succession whereby the right to rule is inherited by brothers rather than by sons, and political sovereignty was viewed as a collective prerogative of the entire clan. The Samanid political repertoire would therefore have been a

[42] Ibid., 318.

[43] Historians credit the Samanids with creating a "new type of polity," seen "as the evolution of a distinct type of political organization in a period of dialogue and confluence of civilizations [Persianate and Islamic]" (Arjomand, "Evolution," 115). I wonder, though, if the cultural boom was in fact a consequence of political fragmentation, as was the case with the later Timurid "renaissance"; see Maria E. Subtelny, "Socioeconomic Bases of Cultural Patronage under the Later Timurids," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1988): 479–505. The Samanids may have defined themselves as a "wall against the steppe," but their policies brought an age of ever-increasing Turkic presence in the region, as recently noted by S. Stride, B. Rondelli, and S. Mantellini, "Canals vs. Horses: Political Power in the Oasis of Samarkand," *World Archaeology* 41, 1 (2009): 73–87.

tough sell at the Sassanid court from which these Transoxanian rulers claimed descent, based as it was on the notion of monotheistic kinship. That repertoire would, however, have been readily understood by the nomadic Turks, who had practiced lateral succession for centuries.

Historians often attribute the rise and fall of nomadic polities in Eurasia to the succession struggles that were an inevitable outcome of collective sovereignty, and to the inability of the Turks to understand sedentary institutions, which compelled them to rely on local administrative specialists.[44] Adherence by Persian Samanids to what seems a Turkic pattern of government therefore raises the question of whether the *amīr-a'yān* dichotomy in Transoxiana was generated by the city notables and their understanding of sovereignty, rather than shaped by the ethnicity and lifestyle of the rulers. The Turks, and later the Mongols, initially lacked the skills needed to create integrated states, but it was the Ottomans and the Moghuls who built two of the greatest empires the world has known.[45]

Further, though the "Persianate" Samanid model of government may have been transplanted to the Delhi Sultanate, Indian cities never developed the institutions characteristic of their Central Asian neighbors.[46] Similarly, the pattern of dual administration practiced by "conquest" dynasties in China did not result in the disintegration of the Chinese empire or the emergence of commercial cities.[47] The *amīr-a'yān* symbiosis appears to have developed in urban settings and in places that, in one way or another, participated in the Silk Road trade.

From the Tarim basin to eastern Iran, urban notables exercised great political power.[48] As Beatrice Manz has observed, popular urban support often determined the outcome of dynastic struggles, and it was the possession of

[44] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, 54. The issue also looms large in Chinese, Persian, and Central Asian studies. See Anatoly Khazanov's *Nomads and the Outside World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), for a general overview; and Nicola DiCosmo, ed., *Warfare in Inner Asian History* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Charles Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupān and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); and Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, among others.

[45] On "nomadic" state and post-Mongol Transoxiana, see Jürgen Paul, "The State and the Military—a Nomadic Perspective," Mitteilungen des SFB 586, "Differenz und Integration," at http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~diffint/index.php.

[46] Arjomand, "Evolution," 115, 130, 134. Also, Marc Gaborieau, "Indian Cities," in Salma K. Jayyusi, general ed., Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, special eds., *The City in the Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 181–204.

[47] Jacques Gernet, "Marchands et Artisans dans les villes de l'epoque des Song," in *l'Art de la Chine des Song* (Paris: Musée des Arts de l'Asie, 1956); and "Note sur les villes chinoises au moment de l'apogée islamique," in Albert Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City: A Colloquium* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1970), 77–87. But see R. Hartwell, "Markets, Technology and the Structure of Enterprise in the Development of the Eleventh-Century Chinese Iron and Steel Industry," *Journal of Economic History* 26, 1 (1966): 29–58.

[48] Nicola DiCosmo, "Ancient City-States of the Tarim Basin," in Mogens Herman Hansen, ed., *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 2000), 393–407; Bulliet, "Local Politics."

cities that defined the power of rulers.[49] We may never know how the rulers felt about sharing authority with their urban subjects, but the frustration for *amīrs'* that could result is betrayed by Seljuk Sultan Sanjar's outburst against the people of Nishapur: "Is this city yours or mine? If it's mine, get out! If it's yours, get ready to fight me for it." Their attempts at state-building were repeatedly thwarted by urban constituents.[50] The failure of Transoxanian rulers to consolidate their authority cannot, then, be attributed simply to a lack of political acumen. While Samanids claimed descent from Sassanids, Turkic Ghaznavids and Seljuks styled themselves as defenders of the faith, yet these strategies of legitimation, while effective elsewhere, did not produce the desired outcomes in Central Asia.[51]

As Jürgen Paul warned, "The much-debated question of 'urban autonomy' is not a fit subject of comparison as long as we have no real understanding of how a town interrelated with the central government, the surrounding countryside and so on, and above all, how it functioned *intra muros*, how social action and activity was organized."[52] In this respect, the case of Gardariki is highly informative, because there, too, the Viking Riurikid dynasty adopted steppe institutions and practices in order to maintain control over a conglomeration of urban commercial centers. In fact, early East Slavic history—as far as the term is related to the existence of written language—commences with a well-known episode in which the people of Novgorod invited a Varangian (Viking) band of warriors to rule their land, "Our land is vast and rich," they said, "but there is no order in it. Come and rule [over us]."[53] Whether the chronicle reflects an actual event or an early-twelfth-century anachronistic projection by the Riurikids themselves is debated to this day.

What is important in the present context is the contractual nature of the account that was preserved by the pro-Riurikid chronicler.[54] To rule was not a privilege but rather a set of responsibilities. In Novgorod, these translated into maintaining order, loyalty to the city, and military success. In 1137, the Novgorodians expelled the prince Vsevolod Ol'govich, accusing him of not watching over the poor (*smerdy*), of (secretly) seeking the "seat" (rule) of Pereiaslavl', and of having lost a battle by issuing confusing

[49] Manz, "Nomad and Settled," 447.

[50] Sanjar regretted his outburst later and was relieved to hear that his wise Persian vezir did not communicate the message to the Nishapurians; Bulliet, "Local Politics," 48.

[51] The strategy worked in Mamluk Egypt. See Ann F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[52] Jürgen Paul, "The Histories of Herat," *Iranian Studies* 33, 1/2 (2000): 93–115, here 104, fn. 52. He answers some of these questions in *Herrscher*.

[53] *PSRL*, vol. 3, (Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis' mladshego Izvoda) (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), 106.

[54] For an introduction to the chronicles, see P. P. Tolochko, *Russkie letopisi i letopistsy X–XIII vv.* (St. Petersburg: Slavianskaia Biblioteka, 2003).

commands.[55] The sources are not always as detailed as they are for that case, and usually the reasons for expulsion of particular princes are difficult to discern even in Novgorod, where, some argue, the chronicles were not commissioned by the members of the dynasty and thus may have been more candid.[56] Yet even the annals written at the behest of the Riurikids are full of examples of "the people's" role in choosing or rejecting prospective rulers.

In 1146, townsfolk of Kiev expelled and later killed Igor Ol'govich because he reneged on his promise to fire two unpopular officials (*tiuns*). This was despite some local support for his position and attempts by another Riurikid from the rival branch of the clan to calm people down. His murder seems particularly violent when we consider that Igor had some time before renounced his political claims and become a monk.[57] That the people acted on their own accord is indicated by the fact that Igor's brother Svyatoslav did not seek retribution on Izyaslav Mstislavich, who had usurped the Kievan seat a few months earlier. An even more striking incident occurred in Halych (Galicia) in 1210, when three princes—Roman, Vladimir, and Svyatoslav—were hanged for the murder of five hundred city *boyars*.[58]

Halych also provides us with an example of urban elders interfering in a ruler's personal life, when the prince Yaroslav Osmomysl's behavior breached social norms as his subjects understood them. In 1172, the prince left his wife for a common woman and fathered by her an illegitimate son, Oleg, whom he designated as his heir at the expense of Volodimerko, his son born in legal marriage. Not only did the Halych folk force Yaroslav to return to his wife, but they also poisoned Oleg and installed Volodimerko as a ruler of the city.

Less violent examples of princes' acquiescence to demands made by the urban populations of Rus' are so numerous that this appears, along with intradynastic warfare and ecclesiastic affairs, to have been a central aspect of Rus' political culture. Nonetheless, the majority of cases suggest that a community

[55] Yet Vsevolod's shortcomings did not stop the Novgorodians from inviting his son, Vladimir; *PSRL*, vol. 3, (Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis') (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), 24.

[56] In 1132, the Novgorodians expelled Vsevolod, but the chronicle does not specify why, nor does it mention when and how he was able to return, since five years later the city forced him to leave again (*PSRL*, vol. 3, p. 22).

[57] For Igor's murder, see Martin Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1146–1246* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47. Also, I. Ia. Froianov, *Kievskaia Rus': Ocherki sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo leningradskogo Universiteta, 1980), 175–76.

[58] In 1210, the *boyars* of Halych expelled Daniil Romanovich. With Daniil out of the picture, three Riurikid brothers—Roman, Vladimir, and Svyatoslav Igorevichi—occupied Halych and purged five hundred of Daniil's supporters and their families. Shortly thereafter, the people invited Daniil back, who enlisted the help of Kievan urban militia and reclaimed Halych. Roman, Vladimir, and Svyatoslav recruited Turkic Cumans and plundered the countryside and Halych itself, where Daniil and city *boyars* were preparing for a battle. Daniil and Halychians won and captured the three brothers and expelled them to Hungary. The Halychians, however, eager to avenge the deaths of their comrades, intercepted the Igorevichi and brought them back to the city where they were hanged. See Dimnik, *Dynasty*, 263.

would remain loyal so long as the princes guaranteed its independence and security. When Riurikids kept true to their end of the bargain, the "people" demonstrated remarkable integrity. The population of Putivl', for example, refused to surrender to a rival princely faction, declaring, "We kissed the Holy Cross to our prince and cannot violate our oath. But you are breaking your oaths to your brothers and placing your hope in your military might.… Princes, consider your own conduct! We, however, will not violate the oaths we've made … for as long as we live."[59]

The abundance of episodes related to the ruler-"people" dichotomy stands in contrast to the generally uneven distribution of data preserved in the chronicles. The chroniclers, usually influenced by the Byzantine notion of kingship, rarely recorded events that were not directly linked to members of the ruling dynasty or that occurred outside of their city.[60] That the episodes of cities' humiliating expulsions of princes and their "invitations" to them have been preserved, including in the Muscovite compilations, suggests that shared sovereignty between the Riurikids and their urban subjects was the norm rather than the exception.[61] The cities of Kievan Rus' are described as coherent political units, with powerful militias and a marked social hierarchy,[62] and the chronicles mention urban military detachments participating in raids and dynastic warfare. We also hear about mayors (*posadniki*), revenue collectors (*dvoriane*), and other officials who played important roles in city affairs.

The mechanism through which the urban populace articulated its decisions has often been referred to as the *veche*—an old-Russian noun that in the chronicles appears interchangeably with "people," "elders," and toponymic nouns to denote public gatherings.[63] Given the semantic instability and the nature of the sources, it is impossible to determine whether these popular assemblies—which decided on matters of defense and submission, the appointment of officials, and the regulation of trade—formed the *veche*, or instead constituted an informal structure in which decision-making, while a shared prerogative of the prince and his subjects, was done on a case-by-case basis. The issue remains unresolved and its discussion "would necessarily immerse

[59] Quoted in ibid., 33.

[60] Froianov, *Kievskaia Rus'*, 155.

[61] Edward L. Keenan proposed that Muscovite references to the urban independence are just nostalgic projections, which had no place in Moscow itself; see his "ВЕЧЕ." *Russian History* 34, 1–4 (2007): 83–99. It is nevertheless important that the Muscovite sources do not dispute or gloss over the issue.

[62] Although the precise nature of titles and ranks mentioned in the sources remains obscure and is debated, no one seems to deny the existence of a hierarchy as such. See Froianov, *Kievskaia Rus'*, 216–43. Also, Lawrence N. Langer, "The Posadnichestvo of Pskov: Some Aspects of Urban Administration in Medieval Russia," *Slavic Review* 43, 1 (1984): 46–62.

[63] The best analysis of the *veche* to date is T. L. Vilkul, *Liudi i kniaz' v drevnerusskikh letopisiakh sereditny XI–XIII vv* (Moscow: Kvadriga, 2008), though the present study challenges Vilkul's conclusions.

us in the murky waters of historiography and the paradigms of democracy and oligarchy."[64] What is important, and what the sources suggest, is that the princes served a primarily military function, insuring internal security and external protection. After all, the cities' hinterlands, and expansionist ambitions directed against Finno-Ugric, Turkic, and Bulgarian neighbors, required a military expertise that the dynasty could and did deliver.

The relative autonomy of Russian cities is also implied by tenth-century treaties concluded with Byzantium. Although demands were delivered by the "princes," the Rus' stipulated an annual payment for Kiev, Chernigov, and Pereiaslavl', among other cities, as well as provisions for Rus' merchants staying in Constantinople.[65] In this bargaining process the princes appear to have acted not as initiators of negotiations but rather as agents on behalf of urban polities. Final ratification of the treaties occurred only when Byzantine ambassadors traveled to Kiev to get "the people's" approval. We cannot know whether ratification actually took place because we lack corroborative Byzantine evidence, but that Kievan chroniclers chose to present it in this manner illuminates the local understanding of Rus' political culture.

The prominent position of the cities has led one group of historians to interpret East Slavic history as an age of city-states, during which the princes were mere executors of popular will. The incessant intra-dynastic warfare the chronicles describe, they argue, displayed the tensions between the older, established cities and their suburbs, which recruited Riurikids in their search for autonomy and independence.[66] This depiction obscures the process through which political sovereignty was negotiated in pre-Mongol Russia. We cannot read an absence of authority into the fact that the Riurikids focused on exaction of tribute rather than on creation of a bureaucratic polity, or the lack of any

[64] Langer, "Posadnichestvo of Pskov," 58. For an outline of the debate, see Froianov, *Kievskaia Rus'*, 150–55; Iu. V. Krivosheev, *Rus' i Mongoly. Issledovanie po istorii severo-vostochnoi Rusi XII–XIV vv* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo St. Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2003), 4–84, 334–402. Both works argue that the *veche* was a pan-Rus'ian phenomenon, a remnant of tribal composition of Slavic society, all-inclusive, and performed a function parallel to that of the princes. While it would appear that popular assemblies were indeed present throughout Rus', the validity of the tribal theory has been challenged by S. N. Kisterev, "Zamechaniia k otsenke "plemennoi" teorii vozniknoveniia drevnerusskikh gorodov," *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii* 3 (1999): 247–56. That the term *veche* is commonly found in reference to the northern cities of Novgorod, Pskov, and Vyatka (which, incidentally, are better documented), has led some to deny the existence of the *veche* in the cities of Rus', and to suggest that since Novgorod and Pskov were involved in trade with the Hanseatic League, the institution of *veche* was a development parallel to the west European and Italian city-republics. But as Lawrence N. Langer demonstrated in his analysis of Pskov and Novgorod, the complexity of urban administration in these cities does not allow for the positioning of medieval Russian commercial centers among the examples of western *communitas*; "Posadnichestvo of Pskov," 60.

[65] For a discussion of both the treaties in English and problems associated with chronicle's data, see John H. Lind, "The Russo-Byzantine Treaties and the Early Urban Structure of Rus'," *Slavonic and East European Review* 62, 3 (1984): 362–70.

[66] Krivosheev, *Rus' i Mongoly*, 68–69, 35–42.

sustained colonization program that characterized their reign during the period I consider here. Nor do these imply that the Riurikids simply took it upon themselves to defend and rule Russian cities because the position was vacant; that could have been achieved with variable degrees of success by anyone who could provide brute military strength. Instead, as the chronicles suggest, the clan offered them a legitimizing purpose—the "Rus' Land" was wherever a Riurikid ruled.[67]

In an environment of flickering loyalties and shifting political boundaries, one constant remained: the "people" sought out and recognized the Riurikids as the only legitimate rulers. In Kiev and Novgorod, the population negotiated with princes on a term basis, but Suzdal', Kursk, Polotsk, Chernigov, and others pledged their allegiance to a particular branch of the clan. When Suzdalians realized that Yurii Dolgorukii's ambitions lay in Kiev, they expelled him, but, loyal to the Monomashichi branch, they replaced Yurii with his son Andrei.[68] Similarly, Kurchanians refused to open the city gates to princes from the Ol'govichi branch due to a standing agreement with the Monomashichi.[69] When Halych was attacked by Izyaslav of Kiev in 1153, the *boiare* told their prince, Volodimerko, to hide while they organized the defense; the city having a Riurikid line of its own enhanced its standing vis-à-vis other urban centers.[70] Similarly, when intra-dynastic conflicts left Kiev without a ruler, the people freed Vseslav Briachislavich of Polotsk (who had been imprisoned by his Riurikid relatives) and offered him the city if he promised to defend it against the nomads.[71] Even in Novgorod, one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities in Rus' "it was intolerable for the [people] to be without a

[67] The chronicles concentrate on the Riurikids, but fragmentary references to local Slavic and Scandinavian rulers of Rus' cities imply strong initial opposition to the clan, which developed a number of legitimation techniques in response. The earliest known Rus' chronicle, entitled *The Tale of Bygone Years*, mentions Rogvolod of Polotsk, whose daughter Rogneda was forcefully taken by Vladimir the Great. One of the sons born of this union was Yaroslav the Wise, the celebrated ruler of Kievan Rus. Rogvolod, as his name suggests, was a non-Riurikid prince of Scandinavian origin, a status recognized by Vladimir. See F. Butler, *Enlightener of Rus': The Image of Vladimir Sviatoslavovich across the Centuries* (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2002). In the ninth century Riurikid Oleg treacherously murdered Askol'd and Dir, the Varangian rulers of Kiev. There are also references to Slavic tribal leaders, such as Mal and Khodata. Even later legends, such as that recounting the foundation of Moscow, convey difficulties faced by the Riurikids. A seventeenth-century account reports that prince Yurii Dolgorukii murdered a certain Kuchka, who owned the site of future Moscow, and married his son Andrei to Kuchka's daughter. A certain "Kuchkovich" ("son of Kuchka") was among those accused of assassinating Andrei. M. N. Tikhomirov, *Drevnerusskie goroda*, 2d ed. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1956), 408.

[68] *PSRL* (Lavrent'evskaia letopis'), vol. 1, pt. 2 (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1927), 348.

[69] Dimnik, *Dynasty*, 48.

[70] "You are the only prince we have. Go [hide] within the city and we will go [out] to fight Izyaslav. If we manage to stay alive, we will come back to you [and prepare for the siege]. *PSRL*, XXV (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2004), l, 70, p. 58.

[71] Cited in Tolochko, *Russkie letopisi*, 40.

prince."[72] These examples point to a close connection between the dynasty and the region it ruled, and also to well-formulated notions of sovereignty as something shared between the military and commercial specialists. In a manner similar to Transoxiana, this resulted in a symbiotic relationship of princes—the *veche* mode of government.

Although the titles and functions of certain city officials are known, the "software" of medieval Russian urban society remains elusive.[73] Novgorodian birch bark documents reveal that residents of one city communicated with their relatives, associates, and debtors from other parts of Gardariki, but whether this signals existence of inter-urban networks is difficult to determine.[74] In addition, the lion's share of evidence comes from archaeological rather than written sources. For instance, we know from *Pravda Russkaia* that peasants and slaves constituted a sizable proportion of the Rus' population. But we can only assume that, as in Transoxiana, landowners and merchants (not mutually exclusive categories) were the elements that made up the *veche*.[75] While the social fabric of East Slavic and Transoxanian cities needs further study, the issue at hand is not who constituted the *veche*, or the ranks of the *a'yān* and how their decisions were communicated, but rather why such displays of popular opinion were possible at all. Why did the rulers of the two regions more often than not acquiesce to such an arrangement?

In this respect, it is instructive that Viking Riurikids adopted Turkic nomadic customs and practices. The princes of Rus' fought and often lived on horseback, referred to themselves as *kaghans*, adopted the trident as the clan's *tamga*, and understood the "Rus' Land" as an indivisible domain of the entire family governed by lateral succession.[76] On one hand, as Cherie Woodworth wrote, the system was an adaptation to high mortality rates,

[72] "*Novgorodtsi ne sterpiache bezo kniazia sideti*," quoted in Vilkul, *Liudi i kniaz'*, 170.

[73] I have borrowed Masashi Haneda's term; Masashi Haneda and Toru Miura, eds., *Islamic Urban Studies: Historical Review and Perspectives* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 267.

[74] For writing, see Simon Franklin, "Literacy and Documentation in Early Medieval Russia," *Speculum* 60, 1 (1985): 1–38. Archaeological data suggests the existence of extensive documentation related to wealth management, indicating the high level of socio-political development of the Rus' cities. See Roman Kovalev and Thomas Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about Debts in Kievan Rus?" *Russian History* 27, 2 (2000): 119–54; and Kovalev, "Zvenyhorod."

[75] We should keep in mind the composite nature of this source. See S. N. Kisterev, "Spornye voprosy Russkogo denezhnogo obrashcheniia," *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii* (1997): 197–220.

[76] On lateral succession, see Peter B. Golden, "Nomads in the Sedentary World: The Case of Pre-Chinggisid Rus' and Georgia," in Anatoly M. Khazanov and Andre Wink, eds., *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, IIAS Asian Studies Series, 2001), 29, 37–43; Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980–1584* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 22, 26–27, 29. For *tamga* and Riurikid signs, see Alexander Fetisov, "The Riurikid Sign from the B3 Church at Basarabi-Murfatlar," *Apulum: Arheologie. Istorie. Etnografie* 44, 1 (2007): 299–314; B. A. Rybakov, "Znaki sobstvennosti v kniazheskom khoziaistve kievskoi Rusi X–XII vekov," *Sovetskaia Arkheologiia* 6 (1940): 227–57; N. A. Soboleva, *Ocherki istorii Rossiiskoi simvoliki: Ot tamgi do simvolov gosudarstvennogo suveriniteta* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2006).

"widespread violence and frequent death among a warrior class" who spent most of their life in the saddle.[77] On the other, the princes also had to adapt to the expectations of their constituencies—urban peoples—that they would provide the protection and security essential to conducting trade. This protection was not restricted to military affairs but extended to the spiritual realm as well, since the dynasty, also in line with Eurasian nomadic practices, promoted itself as a "chosen" clan linked to the "Rus' Land." Cryptic references to sacral rites performed by the princes, the ancestral cult, and the sanctity of Riurikid blood suggest a well-calculated "technology of domination" designed to legitimate Riurikid presence in Gardariki. The "Rus' Land" could be guarded exclusively by the members of the clan and was thus synonymous with the ruling family.[78]

This association held true so long as cities were the primary source of wealth and required the military expertise of the princes to sustain them. The decline of commerce and increase in agrarian production, which were accompanied by gradual but systematic expansion into the hinterlands, resulted in the emergence of a new bureaucratic polity based on monotheistic kingship rather than rooted in the sanctity of the ruling clan.[79] Paradoxically, the Riurikids did not survive this transition, which ushered in the imperial stage of Russian history. Succession by primogeniture introduced by the Muscovite branch of the clan, along with the notion of sacred kingship, ended the dynasty that had survived the violent practice of lateral succession for five hundred years.[80]

In other words, once trade ceased to be the *raison d'être* of the "Rus' Land," the potential for violence in the region was reduced and the government no longer had to be militarized.[81] As Edward Keenan pointed out, urban

[77] Cherie Woodworth, "The Birth of the Captive Autocracy: Moscow, 1432," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009): 49–69, here 55.

[78] Nestor, the author of the first Rus' chronicle, begins his composition with two questions: "What is the origin of Rus' Land and who was its first ruler?" As P. P. Tolochko noted, the organic relationship between the land and the ruler (*kniaz'*) is self-evident; see his *Russkie letopisi*, 58.

[79] Compare the following two references: In 1146, when Izyaslav Mstislavich of Kiev attacked the base of the Ol'govichi, the chronicler lamented the loss of one thousand stallions, three thousand horses, five hundred measures of mead, eighty measures of wine and a number of silver bowls—hardly the inventory of an agrarian-based polity. See *PSRL* II, p. 334. In 1487, Polish-Lithuanian ambassador to the Grand Prince of Moscow, Ivan III, complained that the prince's men plundered the estates of several [Riurikid] princes who pledged their loyalty to the Polish king, Kazimir. In the latter case, wealth is measured in peas, grain, hemp, rye, wheat, and oats. See *Sbornik Imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva*, vol. 35, no. 1 (*Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii moskovskago gosudarstva s Pol'sko-litovskim gosudarstvom*, vol. 1 (1487–1533) (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoe russkoe istoricheskoe obshchestvo, 1892), 1–12.

[80] Woodworth, "Birth of Captive Autocracy," 55.

[81] That this transition coincided with the decline of international trade enabled by the Pax Mongolica is significant and needs further study. This is not to say that agriculture was not practiced in Gardariki, or that tenth- and twelfth-century cities were the same, but rather to highlight the need for

violence was conspicuously absent during the "Time of Troubles," a period of interregnum and civil war that resulted in the legitimation of the Romanov dynasty in the early decades of the seventeenth century.[82] In the cities of Transoxiana the transition to an agrarian economy was limited since the steppe and the desert were natural barriers of expansion, and so the potential for violence remained high, reinforcing the system of dual administration.[83] Though the ruling dynasties tried to convert arable land into a commodity via religious patronage, the proximity of the steppe and internal rivalries prevented the emergence of lasting political formations.[84] The case of Gardariki thus helps to illuminate some aspects of the *amīr-a'yān* political structure, and brings us back to the question of "continuities" in Eurasia.

Historians of both regions have written about the peculiar system of government in medieval Central Asia and Rus', yet none has attempted an integrative history.[85] In Russian studies, interpretations of the *veche* have ranged from

revising the older views regarding the medieval East Slavic economy. See B. D. Grekov, *Kievskaia Rus'* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1944); and *Krest'iane na Rusi: s drevneishikh vremen do XVII veka* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1952–1954).

[82] Keenan, "ВЕЧЕ," 95.

[83] I do not mean to downplay the role of agriculture in Transoxiana, but rather to emphasize that both commerce and agriculture were important, and that they could, and did, facilitate different patterns or alliances of political interests. Available evidence points to a sustained and expansive use of land. In addition to the wheat, barley, and grape cultivation mentioned in the *waqfiyya* published by O. Chekhovich, vineyards, planted lands, fields, gardens, and so forth are recorded in the villages around Samarqand in the eleventh-century *waqfiyya* from Samarqand. Mohamed Khadr and Claude Cahen, "Deux Actes de Waqf d'un Qarahānide d'Asie Centrale," *Journal Asiatique* CCLV (1967): 305–34, here 332. Yet it is curious that, unlike the later Bukharan document in which the lands adjacent to the *sadr*'s possessions are also referred to as *waqf*, the much earlier and more relevant one from Samarqand does not label lands in that way. Instead, it simply lists the names of the neighbors. Still another *waqfiyya*, also from Samarqand, in which the land within the city proper was reserved for the support of a hospital, three out of four adjacent properties are defined as *waqf* (ibid., 322). This suggests that during the period under discussion the city, with its stores, markets, workshops, and the like, was the locus of economic activity. After all, the throne of the "Lord of Bukhara" was camel-shaped, referring to the importance of the caravan trade (Golden, *Central Asia*, 53). Overall, though, without additional and specific data, it is hard to evaluate agriculture's role in Transoxiana's economy before the Mongol invasion.

[84] Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition.* These attempts may in fact, go back to the Samanid era. According to Narshakhi, Ismail endowed all lands (*ziya'at*) and estates (*'akārāt*) in the village of Shargh as a *waqf* for support of the fortress he built in Bukhara near the Samarqand gates (in Chekhovich et al., *Bukharskii Vakf XIII*, 88).

[85] An important exception was I. P. Petrushevskii, who as early as the 1940s drew parallels between medieval Iranian cities and Russian Novgorod and Pskov, but then abandoned the idea because it was believed at the time that Novgorod and Pskov were "democratic" exceptions within Gardariki. For an English summary of Petrushevskii's article, see Haneda and Miura, eds., *Islamic Urban Studies*, 286. Tikhomirov also mentioned that medieval Kievan cities had more in common with the commercial centers of Central Asia than with those in the West, but he did not, to my knowledge, develop this idea (*Drevnerusskie goroda,* 242). Finally, Maria E. Subtelny compared Timurid princes to the medieval Russian *izgoi*, a term used for the Riurikids who, following the lateral succession system, were forever "expelled" from the pool of the potential candidates to rule. See her *Timurids in Transition*, 42.

the mere recognition of the phenomenon to assertions that medieval Russia consisted of autonomous, democratic city-republics governed by an all-inclusive popular assembly. Analogies with ancient Greek *poleis* and the Maya towns of Central America have been proposed,[86] and though those are too distant in time and space to be analytically very useful, the proposals are scholarly acknowledgement that medieval East Slavic history needs to be situated within a broader, comparative theoretical framework.[87] But too often this undertaking has excluded the Rus' eastern connections, and the *veche* remains at the center of debate—some scholars insist that it never existed, while another group sees it as an indigenous outgrowth of the tribal past, and as a principal governing institution of feudal pre-Muscovite society.

Just as historians of the Middle East attribute political decentralization and civil unrest in Transoxiana to the succession disputes between members of Turkic ruling dynasties, scholars of medieval Russia explain the decline of Kievan Rus' and the "appanage" period that followed as due to the Riurikids' inability to compromise and consolidate power. The rise of Moscow is seen as less a transition to a new phase than a reunification of the "Rus' Land." This implies that the period between the fall of Kievan Rus' and the rise of Moscow was a static one, marked by the failure of the princes to transform the ideal of a united Kievan state into reality. The problem is that such an ideal did not exist in trade-oriented Gardariki, and it was aspired to, not by Kievan rulers, but rather the later Muscovite ones. Since the princes constantly rotated between cities, no branch of the dynasty could claim Kiev on a hereditary basis. Riurikids were rarely able to form durable bonds with local populations, whose devotion, as we have seen, was to the entire family or one of its branches rather than to individual members. Moreover, during the time being discussed here, the princes derived their wealth from raids, taxation, trade, and perhaps money-lending, rather than from landed property that would tie them to a territorial base.[88]

[86] Froianov, *Kievskaia Rus'*, 218–19, 222–23, 230, 232. The *veche* has also been compared to the Germanic t(h)ings and linked to the largely undocumented tribal past, but this similarity remains unexplained, especially when we consider that in Gardariki these assemblies were specifically urban phenomena (see Keenan, "ВЕЧЕ," 98).

[87] For differences between ancient Greece and Gardariki, see the corresponding essays in Mogens Herman Hansen, ed., *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 2000).

[88] Riurikid assets are often described as *tovar*—goods for sale. See for example, *PSRL*, vol. 25 (Moskovskii letopisnyi svod kontsa XV veka), entries for years 1127/6635, 1140/6648, and 1159/6667. We know little about princes' involvement in commerce, but the accusation of money-lending thrown at Vladimir Monomakh by Kievan Metropolitan Nikifor is revealing. See Tikhomirov, *Drevnerusskie goroda*, 105. For landed property, see Paul Bushkovitch, "Towns and Castles in Kievan Rus': Boiar Residence and Landownership in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Russian History* 7, 3 (1980): 251–64; Valerie Kivelson, "Merciful Father, Impersonal State: Russian Autocracy in Comparative Perspective," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 635–64, here 646.

Even when the tenth-century reforms promulgated by Yaroslav the Wise permanently linked several branches of the clan to specific territories, the drama of princely rotation and dynastic rivalries continued to unfold, and the concept of "land" was now minimized in relation to the localized communities. The ever-smaller patrimonies ruled by the Riurikids were in fact understood as viable and sustainable entities for as long as a member of the clan ruled it. To interpret their existence as incessant competition for the "Rus' Land" is to miss the point. The "Rus' Land," however one chooses to define it, had never been united in the modern sense of the word, and a one-man reign was the exception rather than a rule.[89]

In the field of the Middle Eastern studies, by contrast, the dual administration in pre-Mongol Transoxiana has attracted little attention.[90] Despite the region's rise to global significance in the ninth and tenth centuries, most specialists concentrate on the better-documented later period, when Samarqand briefly became the capital of Timur's empire (1369–1405).[91] In part, this is a result of the imposition of state-borders onto the once coherent cultural unit, and the consequent division of its past into separate "national" histories. Also, since a substantial part of the region fell under Soviet control, important studies on Transoxanian cities appeared in Russian, a language that the field did not usually require knowledge of. Another obstacle has been sources; much of what is known about the area comes from later compilations produced at the Mongol and Timurid courts, which, though they often rely on earlier writings, tend to privilege dynastic histories over social and economic phenomena.[92]

[89] Lateral succession certainly reinforced the importance of lineage and dynasty, but it did not render the Riurikids impervious to change. The princes responded to the internal and external challenges with a number of experiments in ideology. Yet modification of the *tamga* and currency, radical alliances with Rome, intermarriages with foreign ruling families, and even outright usurpation did not result in long-lasting changes, and dual administration appears to have been the only viable form of government during this stage of East Slavic history. The reign of Yaroslav the Wise, traditionally referred to as the "golden age" of Kievan Rus', came as a result of a brutal fratricide; the attempt to consolidate power in the northeast by Andrei Bogoliubskii ended in his assassination; and so on.

[90] An exception is V. V. Bartold, Richard W. Bulliet, and Claude Cahen, *Mouvements Populaires et Autonomisme Urbain dans L'asie Musulmane du Moyen Âge* (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

[91] Hisao Komatsu, "Central Asia," in Masashi Haneda and Toru Miura, eds., *Islamic Urban Studies: Historical Review and Perspectives* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 281–328.

[92] Regarding transmission of historical knowledge among the Ilkhanid, Timurid, and Safawid historians, also instructive are John E. Wood, "The Rise of Timūrid Historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, 2 (1987): 81–108; and David Ayalon, "The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān: A Reexamination," *Studia Islamica*, 33 (1971): 97–140; 34 (1971): 151–80; 36 (1972): 113–58; and 38 (1973): 107–56. Richard Bulliet's use of biographical dictionaries of Nishapur proved very effective, but so far no such sources from Mawera'n-Nahr have surfaced, with the exception of the incomplete *al-Nasafī's al-qand fī ḏikr-i 'ulamā'-i Samarqand* (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Mīrāṣ-i Maktūb, 1999); and a more recent Uzbek edition (Tashkent: Ŭzbekiston Millij Ėnciklopedijasi Davlat Ilmij Našriёti, 2001). This does not, of course, mean that these did not exist. Shahab Ahmed examined al-Faryabi's bibliography and was able to reconstruct the intellectual and geographical borders of Transoxianian intellectuals, in "Mapping the World of a Scholar in

Most importantly, since Islamic civilization is often conceived as urban, to examine the cities of Mawarannahr separately has seemed unnecessary.[93] Instead, studies of local politics in Transoxiana and neighboring oases of what is today eastern Iran and parts of Afghanistan have considered the roles of the urban notables within the "Islamic" conceptual framework.

Several Soviet historians have pointed out that during certain periods Central Asian cities were self-governing, but the majority of scholars have continued to subscribe to the view that in Transoxiana political sovereignty has always been synonymous with the ruling dynasty.[94] They argue that Islamic cities, of which those of Mawarannahr are but examples, could not have developed a socio-political organization that would enable autonomy or any resistance to external military pressures, because they lacked internal solidarity.[95] Since Islamic society is cosmopolitan and generally promotes social mobility, various social groups residing in the cities are seen as having been connected to elements in other cities rather than to some internal organization. While this "social networks" paradigm has been challenged, studies of the cities within the Muslim *oicumene* continue to be informed by the perception that local power was undermined by a "double pull" toward both internal plurality and external solidarity.[96]

Sixth/Twelfth Century Bukhāra: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, 1 (2000): 24–43. With the exception of the three *waqf* documents mentioned, sources on land tenure and religious endowments that provide a vivid picture of everyday life in Central Asia are not available until about the sixteenth century. See P. P. Ivanov, *Khoziaistvo Dzhuibarskikh sheikhov* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1954).

[93] For "urban" aspects of Islam, see Johan Elverskog, *Islam and Buddhism on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). Two important works that sketch the main lines of the debate on the Islamic city are: *The City in the Islamic World*, Salma K. Jayyusi, general ed., Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, special eds., vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008); and M. E. Bonine, E. Ehlers, T. Krafft, and G. Stöber, eds., *The Middle Eastern City and Islamic Urbanism: An Annotated Bibliography of Western Literature* (Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, 1994).

[94] See O. D. Chekhovich, "Gorodskoe samoupravlenie v Srednei Azii feodal'nogo perioda," in *Tovarno-denezhnye otnosheniia na Blizhnem i Srednem Vostoke v epokhu srednevekov'ia.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); O. G. Bol'shakov, *Srednevekovyi gorod Blizhnego Vostoka, VII–seredina XIII v.: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie otnosheniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984).

[95] Albert Hourani, "Recent Research," in A. Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City: A Colloquium* (Oxford: Cassirer, 1970), 13–15. Some major architectural and structural differences between the "Iranian" (that is Eastern Iranian and Central Asian) and Mediterranean cities are emphasized by Attilio Petruccioli, Lisa Golombek, and Heinz Gaube, in *City in the Islamic World*, vol. 2.

[96] Sato Tsugitaka, ed., *Islamic Urbanism in Human History: Political Power and Social Networks* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1997), particularly the essays by Toru Miura, James A. Reilly, and Diane Singerman. Also see the critique of the "Muslim" city by André Raymond, "The Spatial Organization of the City," in Salma K. Jayyusi, general ed., Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, special eds., *The City in the Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 47–70.

Militarization of the government and emergence of the *amīr-a'yān* dichotomy has therefore been attributed to the displacement of "traditional" agrarian societies that in the merchant-oriented Islamic culture fell under Muslim control. Since neither mercantile nor agrarian power could dominate, nomadic military specialists served as mediators, limiting the destructive tendencies inherent in the impasse between the two.[97] Because most of the *amīrs* were Turks who entered the *dar al-Islam* as slaves, or as a result of the steppe "domino-effect," the military-civil split acquired ethnic connotations.

Marshall Hodgson, the architect of the *amīr-a'yān* paradigm, concluded that Turkic dynasts, who were often recent converts to Islam, could not complete the transition to a sedentary lifestyle. The basis of their power rested on tribal affiliation and precluded the emergence of a political force capable of transcending the sense of tribal solidarity. The nomadic governments were therefore rooted in the charisma of the *amīrs* rather than in enduring political ideals. As the state became increasingly decentralized, and as more land was granted away to support the military, the local population began to convert their land-holdings into *waqf*—an Islamic charitable endowment—to avoid their confiscation or destruction. Consequently, religious authorities and notables, whose wealth was now tied to these endowments, found their positions independent but complementary to those of the *amīrs*, and they were thus willing to sanction the system as a whole, further undermining efforts of the central government.[98]

Hodgson's paradigm is an ideal type devised to explain events that occurred after the breakdown of the caliphal imperial structure. The emergence of the military-civil dichotomy, he argued, was the unintended result of the Seljuk sultans' attempts to restore the Caliphate in the eleventh century, and therefore an Islamic development.[99] As we have seen, though, the system of dual administration existed in Mawarannahr long before the Seljuks, and was neither Turkic, as exemplified by the Samanids, nor Islamic, if the case of East Slavic Gardariki is considered. And, as Hodgson admitted, the *amīr-a'yān* paradigm is valid only for Central Asia and the Iranian highlands, since dual administration did not develop in Egypt, the Fertile Crescent, or Iran proper.[100]

[97] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 65–66.

[98] It is unclear if the pattern of converting one's possessions into *waqf* was a widespread practice outside the Seljuq domains. An absence of written evidence from Transoxiana prevents an unconditional extension of the paradigm to Central Asia. But, since it is precisely there that the *amīr-a'yān* system emerged in the first place, one must ask if other forces were in play.

[99] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 45–52. See also Ann Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* (Albany: Bibliothca Persica, 1988), 223–25.

[100] According to Hodgson, this was due to cultural differences between the Persian and Semitic populations of the two regions (*Venture of Islam*, 70). Although he warned against the tendency to view the accomplishments of Islamic culture through a lens of "Persian" genius, the notion of Turkic inferiority continues to inform historical research. See Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge*

I propose that the absence of the *amīr-a'yān* pattern in Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as the development of monotheistic kingships in medieval Poland and Hungary but not Kievan Rus', had less to do with the ethnic composition of the populations than with the factor that these regions relied on agriculture rather than commerce as a major source of subsistence.[101] However, *mutatis mutandis*, Hodgson's paradigm may be extended to include Gardariki, and in fact it echoes the explanation given by Russian historians who see the competition between older and newly emerged cities as one of the defining characteristics of the medieval Russian political landscape.

Might it be the case that the "new wealth" generated by booming commerce in the Kievan cities was competing with well-established landholding families residing in the older cities, and thus reached a stalemate that could only be resolved by the militarization of the government? The answer is complicated by the fact that in both historiographical traditions—Russian and Middle Eastern—dual administration is understood as an aberration, a temporary phase that led to the restoration of the "ideal" state.[102] This search for integrated political structures, and the attribution of imperial ambitions to rulers who understood sovereignty in very different terms, are not new. While Chang Ch'ien looked for a "great ruler" in Transoxiana, Ibn Khaldun calculated that the life of a town was equal in duration to that of its ruling dynasty.[103]

in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and the review by Devin DeWeese in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, 3 (2008): 806.

[101] Z. Dalewski, "*Vivat princeps in eternum!* Sacrality of Ducal power in Poland in the Earlier Middle Ages," in 'Azīz 'Azmah and Jànos M. Bak, eds., *Monotheistic Kingship: The Medieval Variants* (Budapest: Central European University, 2004), 215–31; E. Nemerkényi, "The Religions Ruler in the Institutions of St. Stephen of Hungary," in ibid., 231–49. The importation of Magdeburg laws to Poland must be kept in mind, of course, but this development took place during the fourteenth century. It also must be noted that violent popular outbursts were not limited to Rus' and Transoxiana. The participation of city mobs in politics is a well-known phenomenon in world history, particularly during times of famine, epidemics, and the like. Just as grain crises of the first half of the tenth century led to crowd movements and looting in Baghdad, the disillusioned population of Constantinople forced emperor Andronikos Comnenus out of the city and replaced him with Isaac Angelos in 1185. But these examples, cited here for their geographical proximity to the regions under consideration, were not part of a pattern and are not representative of a coherent and organized force strong enough to rival rulers and influence their decisions on a regular basis. Or, as R. Bulliet put it, "…the legal status of the city is not a point of departure as it is in the study of medieval European towns. The city was not subject to the ruler's law nor the ruler to the city's; both were subject to God's law. What is a point of departure is the question of who was empowered to apply God's law" (*Patricians of Nishapur*, 62).

[102] The irrigation systems of Transoxiana have been cited as evidence of state structures. But recent research has confirmed that the digging of the canals had little to do with the ruling dynasties. See Stride, Rondelli, and Mantellini, "Canals vs. Horses." Jürgen Paul came to a similar conclusion by demonstrating that with the rare exception of "imperial" dams, the government did not control or even maintain irrigation systems (*Herrscher*, 64).

[103] "Then, when the town has been built and is all finished, as the builder saw fit and as the climatic and geographical conditions required, the life of the dynasty is the life of the town. If the

Similarly, Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus took the absence of princes among the Slavs to be a sign of their barbarism: "Princes, as they say," he wrote, "these nations had none, but only 'zupans,' elders, as is the rule on the other Slavonic regions."[104] It is hardly surprising that the political imaginations of ancient and medieval observers, and even of modern historians, have been informed by empires, which dominated the world's political landscape for several millennia. I propose that a viable alternative existed in medieval Eurasia, and that it is possible to speak of Central Asian and Kievan Rus' cities and the dual administrative structure of governments as an autochthonic, Eurasian development that emerged as a result of "horizontal continuities" facilitated by the trade along the Silk Roads.

In this respect, it is important to note that "local" historians, the Rus' and Persian chroniclers, had developed understandings of the past that were diametrically opposed to that of their imperial observers and, in turn, remarkably similar to one another. Perhaps the absence of general histories in the two regions during this period, not unlike the absence of great rulers, had little to do with either a "parochial" outlook of the chroniclers or their "monumental patriotism," but instead displayed a perception of history generated by a sense of space rather than chronology and particular subject.[105]

Historians of medieval Iran have long been attentive to the distinction between "local history" as a genre and as a "focus of concern," and similar arguments are appearing in writings of Russian medievalists.[106] The remarkable continuity in local history writing in Iran cannot be written off as a consequence of the Caliphate's disintegration, if only because this type of literature did not emerge in other areas affected by the decentralization of government.

dynasty is of short duration, life in the town will stop at the end of the dynasty. Its civilization will recede, and the town will fall into ruins." *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Franz Rosenthal, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), vol. 2, 235–36.

[104] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, J. Moravscik, ed., R.J.H. Jenkins, trans., Dumbarton Oaks Texts, vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), 124–25. Similarly, Scandinavian sources do not mention kings or princes of Rus', with the exceptions of Vladimir and Yaroslav, and refer instead to "Gardariki," meaning "the land of the cities." The principal urban centers are Holmgard, Kænugard, Palteskia, Moramar, Rostofa, and Surdalar—standing for Novgorod, Kiev, Polotsk, Murom, Rostov, and Suzdal', respectively. Lind, "Russo-Byzantine Treaties," 366–67.

[105] Franz Rosenthal, for example, wrote, "The Iranian east possessed a flourishing secular, local historiography … [which is] an impressive monument to Iranian patriotism"; quoted in P. Pourshariati, "Local Historiography," 138.

[106] Andrew Humphrey, cited in Charles Melville, "Persian Local Histories: Views from the Wings," *Iranian Studies* 33, 1–2 (2000): 7–14, here 12. Charles Halperin addressed the issue indirectly in his discussion of the "land" and its meanings in medieval Rus' chronicles. See his, "The Concept of the Russian Land from Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries," *Russian History* 2, 1 (1975): 29–38; and "Novgorod and the "Novgorodian Land," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 40, 3 (1999): 345–64; and his more recent, "National Identity in Premodern Rus."

Furthermore, it would appear that local histories dominated literary output in general, and in any event they pre-date the Caliphs' demise.[107]

A very similar phenomenon can be observed in Rus', where local chronicles made up a disproportionate share of literary production. Each city recorded foundation legends if they were known, as well as the building and destruction of churches, specificities of topography, the piety of particular individuals and princes, prices of food and other commodities, and so forth. In other words, the city, as a well-defined space, was the *fons et origo* of historical inquiry. It would follow that the people residing in a city were related to one another by their common place of residence rather than by common ancestry. But does this mean that there were particular societal forces at work that were responsible for the production of local histories? And what factors framed the geographical and intellectual borders of the chronicles' regionalism?[108] Might horizontal continuities in Eurasia also have generated a particular historiographical genre? At present these questions must remain open, but perhaps part of their answer has already been proposed by Charles Melville, who suggested that numerous histories produced in eastern Iran during the Middle Ages were meant to celebrate individual cities and their success in order to create an identity that could survive the endless cycle of warlords.[109]

Be that as it may, the hypothesis certainly calls for further inquiries into the history of Eurasian urban culture. Additional clues for understanding sovereignty in the western steppe may be found in the cities of the Golden Horde, which like Gardariki sprang up "like bubbles in yeast," had populations organized in what appeared to Ibn Batutta as the *futuwwa*, and whose armed detachments participated in raids conducted by the Khan's army. At the same time, discussion of the cities of the Tarim Basin may help us assess the degree of continuity in urban administration in the east.[110]

[107] Pourshariati, "Local Historiography," 138.

[108] Shahab Ahmed addressed these questions in relation to Transoxiana; see his "Mapping the World."

[109] Charles Melville, "Persian Local Histories," 12–13. Another influential theory was developed by Roy Mottahedeh in relation to the *shu'ūbīya* debate. He proposed that one should distinguish between a group of people linked together by their place of residence (*sha'b*) and those claiming common ancestry (*qabīlah*). It would then follow that the former developed in the 'Ajam, or among the non-Arabs, and the latter specifically among the Arabs. In some ways, this argument may be extended to the western edge of the Eurasian steppe and used to distinguish between the genealogical claims of the Riurikids and the urban population that expressed its identity in territorial terms. On the other hand, the distinction also echoes earlier "ethnic" divisions with all their derivatives between "Persian" and "Semitic" cultural heritages. For a good summary of Mottahedeh's thesis, see P. Pourshariati, "Local Historiography," 139–40. For the full argument, see Mottahedeh's "The Shu'ubiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, 2 (1976): 161–82.

[110] G. A. Fedorov-Davydov, *The Silk Road and the Cities of the Golden Horde* (Berkeley: Zinat Press. 2001), 37. For introductory remarks on the Golden Horde's conflicting historiographies, see U. Schamiloglu's "The Golden Horde," *The Turks* 2 (2002): 819–34.

Finally, a brief but necessary element of this "urban" puzzle is the notion of the medieval Western European city-states and the distinction to be made, if any, between these and their Eurasian counterparts. While this question must be addressed through a number of theoretical and methodological approaches, I want to conclude with a few preliminary remarks on the subject, and by calling attention to significant qualitative differences between the European city-states and Eurasian urban polities.

Among the most important of these differences is that Eurasian cities do not appear to have been independent from imperial rule—only with the emergence of the so-called "nomadic" empires, which promoted and depended on trade, did an urban renaissance occur across the continent. In Western Europe an opposite process may be discerned. The ninth-century annual fairs of Bruges and Ghent, and later the thirteenth-century regional markets of Brie and Champagne, emerged at moments marked by the absence of imperial rule. As Janet Abu-Lughod has demonstrated, cities tended to lose their significance as soon as they fell under royal jurisdiction.[111] The Italian republics of Venice and Genoa, on the other hand, developed into fully independent states, and ostensibly present us with another parallel. But we must keep in mind that the potential for violence in medieval Europe was miniscule when compared to Eurasia, and had never reached a level requiring militarization of the government.[112] Moreover, in the European case the propensity toward violence in general was mitigated by the legacy of the Roman Empire, Christianity, Latin language, and law, constituting a uniformity that did not exist in Eurasia during the period I have considered here. Lastly, no European polity before the Age of Discoveries ever tried to regulate world trade, while every steppe empire aspired to, even if only the Mongol one briefly succeeded.

The cities are but one example of Eurasian "horizontal continuities" that require additional study, but they will provide historians with a starting point for further research and discussion.

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[111] Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 58–59, 70, 79–81.

[112] For an excellent overview of the Italian "city-states," see Faruk Tabak, *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550–1870: A Geohistorical Approach* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

Abstract: Numerous scholars have emphasized the "centrality" of Inner Asia to furthering our understanding of global, or cross-cultural phenomena, and the role of such phenomena in the preservation, modification, and transmission of historical experience. Yet the research has almost exclusively been carried out by specialists in Chinese civilization, and as one moves further away from the Chinese sphere of influence the notion of Eurasia as an integrated socio-political unit of historical analysis becomes more problematic. Here I attempt to bridge the western and eastern edges of the great steppe by focusing on a specific aspect of Inner Asian political culture—the phenomenon of shared sovereignty between military-based ruling dynasties and their urban constituencies—in the principalities of Rus' and the oases of Transoxiana, between the ninth and twelfth centuries. I propose that the dual administrative structure that developed in the two regions was an autochthonic, Eurasian state-formation, distinct from the city-state and imperial models, which emerged as a result of what Joseph Fletcher identified as "horizontal continuities."