CENTRAL ASIA

DAVID DURAND-GUÉDY (ed.):
Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life.
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This collection of eleven papers, with an Introduction by the editor, is based on contributions to a conference held at the University of Tokyo in 2009. The contributions cover a very long chronological range, from several centuries BC (the Xiongnu) to the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries AD (the early Qajars in Persia). For the most part they deal with what is now often called Central Eurasia, or at any rate with rulers whose origins were from there: hence the title – we are looking at Turkish and Mongol rulers, and to the ways in which they related to cities, to the notion of capitals, and to urban civilization generally. This is a subject very well worth exploring. Much of the territory ruled at various times by these "Turko-Mongols", such as China, Transoxania, Persia and Anatolia, was essentially sedentary and city-based, whereas the rulers were people who, for the most part, had traditionally been itinerant and had lived in some form of tent. How did all this work out in practice?

We begin with Peter Golden, the pre-eminent historian of the medieval Turks of Central Asia, on "Courts and court culture in the proto-urban and urban developments among the pre-Chinggisid Turkic peoples". He finds, perhaps not surprisingly considering the lengthy period he is discussing, considerable variety: some of the early peoples seem not to have had cities, let alone capitals, at all, whereas as time goes on, others did relate to cities even if they preferred to live outside them; later still, some rulers actually founded cities and resided in them for at least some of the time. Next comes Minoru Inaba on "Sedentary rulers on the move: the travels of the early Ghaznavid Sultans". Those sultans had a fixed capital at Ghazna, but they also had an empire to build and defend. Hence they moved around a good deal, for purely practical political and military reasons. Yury Karev's paper, "From tents to city: the royal court of the western Qarakhanids between Bukhara and Samarqand", studies a long period – more than two hundred years – on the basis of both literary and archaeological evidence, the latter especially from what was revealed by excavations at the eloquent site of the citadel of Samarqand, now called Afrasiyab, where it was until the Mongol invasion (the Timurid city is some distance away). As the paper's title indicates, it finds that initially the Qarakhanid rulers, while being involved in city building, tended to live outside them until, towards the end of their rule, they became more or less fixed in the Samarqand citadel, and built there accordingly.

The editor considers "The tents of the Saljuqs". The Saljuqs were the first Turkish, originally nomad, dynasty to conquer and rule the whole of Persia, and a good deal else besides. In this they contrast with the Qarakhanids, who ruled only in Transoxania, and the Ghaznavids, who though ethnically Turkish had not arrived in the Islamic lands still organized on a tribal basis. They continued to live in tents, but in elaborate combinations of gardens, pavilions and tents, these being, it is argued, among the symbolic representations of their rule. The "other" Saljuqs, the sultans of the much more long-lived Rum Saljuq dynasty, are the subject of Andrew Peacock's "Court and nomadic life in Saljuq Anatolia". Peacock persuasively argues that to contrast, as has been done, a rather Iranized sultanate,

functioning mostly in sedentary areas, with a periphery occupied by unruly Türkmen tribesmen, is to posit an unreal dichotomy. There was, he contends, no such separation between the sultans and the Türkmen.

We arrive in the Mongol period with Tomoko Masuya's "Seasonal capitals with permanent buildings in the Mongol Empire". This is concerned with "capitals" that were erected in Mongolia, especially Qaraqorum, and Shangdu and Dadu in northern China, from which there is a great deal of archaeological evidence. It is shown that although they contained permanent buildings – sometimes constructed so as to resemble tents – they also included tents, often on a very grand scale. The Mongol rulers' palaces in China were mostly Chinese in design, but the Great Khans continued to move about seasonally, and they had not forgotten their tented origins. Michal Biran's "Rulers and city life in Mongol Central Asia (1220–1370)" discusses what is generally termed the Chaghatai Khanate, about which comparatively little is known (or perhaps knowable; though what there is to know, Professor Biran is the scholar who knows it). Here, cities do appear to have gone into a sharp decline. This was the result of political and military conditions, not least that, for a considerable period, the Chaghatai khans had to cope with the presence on their territory of a rival khanate founded by Qaidu, a member of the deposed family of Chinggis Khan's son and successor Ögödei. This should not, however, be taken to mean that the Chaghatais were inherently hostile to cities, even though they did not live in them. Charles Melville follows, both chronologically and geographically, with an examination of "The itineraries of Shāhrukh b. Timur (1405–47)". Shāhrukh is remembered, among much else, for moving the capital of his father's empire from Samarqand to Herat. That does seem to have been a functioning capital for administrative purposes, but nevertheless the ruler appears to have moved around his empire a great deal, notably on a considerable number of pilgrimages.

Jürgen Paul, in "A landscape of fortresses: Central Anatolia in Astarābādī's *Bazm wa razm*", considers what he sees as the great importance, at that time and place, of the possession of fortresses, which enabled their occupants to dominate the surrounding area and to expect the loyalty of the people of that area. Next comes a study of a very different place, the Egypt of the early Mamluk sultans, in Kurt Franz's "The castle and the country: spatial orientations of Qipchaq Mamluk rule". Here we have a long succession of rulers who had originated in the nomadic steppelands to the north of the Black Sea – what became the lands of the Mongol Golden Horde – but who ruled, from Cairo, a fixed capital, in various ways enforcing their control of the Egyptian countryside. Lastly, Nobuaki Kondo writes about "Between Tehran and Sultāniyya: early Qajars and their itineraries". The author finds that while the Qajar kings, who were of course of Turkish ethnic origin, quite liked staying in tents, they were essentially a sedentary dynasty, ruling from their then new capital of Tehran, and travelling around, for the most part, only when required to do so by the exigencies of military campaigning. Not, perhaps, very surprisingly, the Qajars in that respect emerge as the most "modern" of the ruling families considered in this collection.

This is a most interesting series of papers: not for the first time, Brill's Inner Asian Library has produced a publication of great value, which is consistently thought-provoking. No doubt, as always, there is much still to be done, but there is a good deal here which seems to me to break new ground. And there are some general lessons. The editor draws attention to the argument, still sometimes encountered, that when rulers whose ancestors were nomads spend much of their time as itinerant monarchs, they are harking back to their nomadic origins. As he says, there are many different reasons why royal courts might be itinerant, and itinerancy is by no means limited to dynasties which had such nomadic origins. Perhaps the

most consistent lesson to be drawn from these essays is a rather obvious one: we should beware of the dangers of generalization. Practices varied a great deal, and that was the result of circumstance. If rulers moved about, and at times lived in tents rather than solid buildings, they may well have had good reasons, practical or symbolic, for doing so. It is unlikely that they were worried by the dictum ascribed to the founder of the Aqqoyunlu state, which the editor quotes at the beginning of his Introduction: "Do not become sedentary, for sovereignty resides in those who practice the nomadic Türkmen way of life".

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AGNIESZKA HELMAN-WAŻNY:
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The study of Asian manuscripts and printed books has been hampered by the traditional division between the sciences and the humanities. Scientific analysis of paper, inks, pigments and other materials used in the creation of a book, has rarely been carried out on a large scale, so that the results of analysing a particular object cannot be contextualized across a broad geographical and chronological range of data. In most cases, both the methods and the possible benefits of such analysis have been little understood by humanities scholars, who have used scientists as consultants who may be called on to provide a date for a particular manuscript. The scientists, for their part, rarely have the opportunity to work with a coherent range of manuscript or printed material, and lack the historical training that would allow them to identify such a corpus.

This is not only a problem for Asian books; the disconnect between the sciences and the humanities has also been identified as a problem for the study of European manuscripts. One place where these disciplines interact to a greater extent is in the major museums, libraries and galleries where conservators and curators work together on large book collections, combining scientific and historical expertise. Yet here, widely differing systems of cataloguing and variable standards of recording conservation data mean it is still only rarely possible to obtain a broad overview of a coherent group of data. For an excellent discussion of these problems, see S. Neate and D. Howell, "Conservation issues and research questions: the role of analysis in book and manuscript conservation" in S. Neate et al. (eds), *The Technological Study of Books and Manuscripts as Artefacts* (Oxford, 2011).

Thus Agnieszka Helman-Ważny's new book is groundbreaking, and not only for Tibetan manuscripts. Trained in conservation science, she has combined her work in paper fibre analysis with codicology and palaeography, informed by an understanding of the historical context of the material she works with. The book is the result of collaborative work with curators based in institutions with large collections of Tibetan manuscripts and printed books. It is also informed by recent textual and historical scholarship in the field of Tibetology. The result is a rare integration of the approaches of scientists and humanities scholars, an overview of Tibetan book culture that is based on a solid foundation of data.