NOMADEN UND SESSHAFTE

Sonderforschungsbereich Differenz und Integration
Wechselwirkungen zwischen nomadischen und sesshaften Lebensformen
in Zivilisationen der Alten Welt

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Contents

Sanjar and Atsız: Independence, Lordship, and Literature

Jürgen Paul

The Seljuq Great Sultan Sanjar (r. as subordinate regional ruler in Khurāsān 1097–1117, and as Great Sultan from 1117–8 till his death in 1157) was one of the towering figures in the pre-Mongol history of Iran. The mere duration of his reign very much impressed his contemporaries, as well as later historians. In terms of territory, his empire was impressive, too: he himself claimed to rule over the entire eastern and much of the central Islamic lands, from Kashghar to Anatolia and the borders of Egypt, and from the Aral Sea to the Indus, and also Iraq (including Baghdad), and the holy cities of the Ḥijāz. This claim was at least formally accepted: the Friday prayer was held in his name (not always, but most of the time) in most of these regions.[1]

In hindsight, for those who knew what was to come (and therefore for many of the authors of our sources), his reign appeared as the last orderly and comparatively peaceful period of the Seljuq era, either in Khurāsān or in all of the Iranian or rather Turko-Iranian world, depending on when the source was written. (People who still had hopes that the Seljuq sultanate would recover and eventually endure – it definitely fell in 1194 – had a less drastic view.) The final disastrous events that put an end to effective Seljuq rule in Khurāsān – Sanjar's defeat at the hands of the Ghuzz in 1153 and his captivity, and the long years of plunder, destruction and disruption that followed – were a stark contrast to the decades of wellbeing that Khurāsān had enjoyed under Sanjar. No Seljuqid sultan ruled in Khurāsān after him; indeed, no imperial power at all was in place in that province for decades. For the later authors, the Mongol invasion (beginning in 1217) was only two steps away; for them, the Khwārazmian years (Khwārazmian imperial rule may be said to have begun with the coronation of Tekesh on the summer pastures of Rādkān-i Ṭūs in July, 1189) were only a short interlude, and Khwārazmian rule was in any case not nearly as solidly established as Sanjar's. Even in the twenty years or so of Khwārazmian empire, the Khwārazmshāhs did not have undisputed control even of such core provinces as Khurāsān.

The authors of our sources, both Sanjar's contemporaries and later writers, sought to explain why Seljuqid rule in the east ended the way it did. And for modern researchers, too, the question is far from being resolved. One frequently quoted factor is the craving for "independence", and the breaking away of the most important vassals. One of those was the Khwārazmshāh.

Atsız the Khwārazmshāh (1128–1156) also was a dominant figure. He has been credited with laying the foundations of the Khwārazmian empire, which, as just mentioned, was at

1 David Durand-Guédy, Stefan Heidemann and Deborah Tor read earlier versions of this contribution and I would like to thank them for valuable comments. All remaining inaccuracies and mistakes are my own.

least partly and temporarily to fill the void left by the demise of the Seljuqids. His relationship to Sanjar has fascinated authors from the start. In a way, he is the paradigmatic "rebellious vassal". His rule in Khwārazm has been divided into two stages: in the first he was obedient, and in the second he consistently strove for independence. The break occurred in 1135 (or a little later), and the first "open rebellion" that pitched Atsız against Sanjar was in 1138, the year in which Sanjar first led his troops into Khwārazm against Atsız. From then on, through one of the most turbulent periods in the Muslim history of the eastern Iranian world, the two protagonists, through battles, negotiations, treaties and more battles, fought over rights and duties, influence and territories, status and subservience.

In this essay, I want to present the story of Sanjar and Atsız again, from a new perspective, focusing on the attraction Atsız had for the nomads living around Khwārazm. Earlier scholarship and the "independence paradigm" that in large part informs it, is discussed as well. My thesis is that "independence" was not an issue. Instead, I argue that Atsız attracted nomad leaders, and that this was a cornerstone of his politics; he expanded his territory mostly by securing the allegiance of nomads. This article is therefore also a contribution to the study of the interrelation between nomad leaders and rulers. Atsız can be presented as a "lord of nomads" not only because nomads were essential as Khwārazmian military manpower, but also because he had to adapt to nomad ways and accommodate them in and around Khwārazm. Nomad military manpower was important everywhere, and the Seljuqs were no exception.[2]

Later, I shall discuss the narrative in Juwainī's *Jahān-gushā* and its way of presenting questions of lordship and vassalage. Methodologically, I shall largely separate Juwainī's version from the other sources, for obvious reasons: Juwainī is a rather late source and is the only major source written after the Mongol invasion. Juwainī also had his own agenda in writing his "History of the World-Conqueror": he had to show that the Mongol invasion was necessary and legitimate. This meant that he was ambiguous in his view of the Khwārazmshāh dynasty: on the one hand, they represented Islam *vis-à-vis* the non-Muslim Mongols, but on the other, in order to show the legitimacy of Mongol rule, he had somehow to de-legitimize the Khwārazmshāhs, particularly Muḥammad b. Tekesh, but also earlier representatives of the dynasty.[3] Another aim on his agenda is to show the importance of "Iranian" bureaucrats as having saved, and continuing to save, what was left of Islamic-Iranian culture and statecraft. Thus the fine web of inter-textual connections between the sources, in which the *Jahān-gushā* has a prominent place, is revealed (as far as possible). The Juwainī family was one of the most famous families bridging the pre-Mongol and the Mongol periods as state administrators, but they were not the only ones.[4]

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2 Franz and Holzwarth 2013. For the Seljuqs in particular, see Durand-Guédy 2011a.

3 It might be added that Chinggis Khan was the grandfather of Hülegü, the ruler for whom Juwainī worked, and who had defeated Atsız's great-grandson, Muḥammad b. Tekesh the Khwārazmshāh; and that Juwainī's forebears had worked for Sanjar, not for the Khwārazmians. It is impossible that such things were forgotten or did not count in a family as conscious of their traditions as the Juwainīs were.

4 Aubin 1995. The purpose behind the assembling of the *inshā'* collection called the *Aḥkām-i salāṭīn-i māḍī*, one of the most important sources for this article, was also to demonstrate the continuity of Islamic-Iranian statecraft before and after the Mongol invasion; see Paul 1995.

Moreover, Juwainī presents a continuous narrative on the Khwārazmshāhs, which the pre-Mongol authors did not do (and could not have done), and this enables him to use literary devices that could not be employed in the isolated reports in the other sources. And last but not least, Juwainī's narrative – by virtue of the fact that it is a continuous narrative – has had a disproportionate influence on modern scholarship. Although a complete source-critical discussion – which of course would have to include all the sources used – is out of the question in this study, it is evident that Juwainī diverges from the other sources often enough to give his "World-Conqueror" a special status.

This does not mean that the pre-Mongol sources do not have their own agendas: they do,[5] and some of the sources used in this study – especially the *inshā'*-texts – contain much propaganda; this has to be kept in mind. Nevertheless, they are closer to their subjects in time – some of them are contemporary – and they offer a variety of perspectives. I therefore believe that the reconstruction of the relationship between Atsız and Sanjar should proceed from this mixture of sources (narrative, "documentary" [*inshā'*], numismatic) and that the pre-Mongol and post-Mongol sources cannot be treated in the same way as each other.

Sanjar's Empire

But before I come to the story of Sanjar and Atsız, a few remarks on Sanjar's empire are in order. Sanjar's empire was not homogeneous.[6] It included various zones in which his rule was exercised in different ways. First, there was a zone in which Sanjar and his divan ruled directly: the core regions of Khurāsān, or at least Marw. As is well known, Sanjar refused to give Marw as an *iqṭā'* to one of the Ghuzz emirs who held him captive, arguing that it was the capital and could not be given away to anyone.[7] And indeed, no appointment deeds for governors, *iqṭā'*-holders and the like are extant for central Khurāsān; all we have documented for Marw and its environs are appointments to offices in the divan.

Then there were regions where "governors" ruled.[8] These included provinces such as Balkh, central Iran (Raiy), Gurgān, and on principle also Khwārazm. Khwārazm had a special status, however, as will be seen presently. Appointment deeds are extant for some of these provinces, but not for Khwārazm. Sometimes, a member of the ruling dynasty was

5 For example, Bundārī has been analysed by David Durand-Guédy (2005); and there are some remarks on Nīshāpūrī and Rāwandī in Meisami 1999, 229–234 and 237–256.

6 The view of Sanjar's empire as largely homogeneous – at least in the eastern Iranian part – is implicit in Lambton's discussion of the *'Atabat al-kataba* (Lambton 1957). Her view is expanded by Horst (1964), whose initial assumption seems to have been that there was a unified empire with several levels of administration; the centre, the provinces, the districts. Horst does not discuss other types of internal hierarchy. Turkish authors of the 1950s, however, have clearly seen differences, mostly between direct and indirect rule (Köymen 1954, e. g. 313ff.; Kafesoğlu 1967). The "Turkish" view is also represented in the map in Köymen (1992; *hors texte* at the end of the book). Soviet scholarship as represented by Buniyatov (1999) does not discuss such differences, even though Buniyatov in many places directly depends on Köymen and/or Kafesoğlu.

7 Ibn al-Athīr 11:175. – Around Iṣfahān as well, the Seljuq Great Sultans did not give *iqṭā'āt*, see Durand-Guédy 2010, 118.

8 Lambton has pointed out that the terms for such provincial rulers were far from clear. Sometimes they are called *muqṭa'*, but *shiḥna* and *wālī* are also on record (Lambton 1957). This has been confirmed by Durand-Guédy (2010, 210).

appointed (Mas'ūd in Gurgān)[9], sometimes high-ranking military leaders, usually men with a background in military slavery (Inanch in Raiy; the Qumāj emirs in Balkh).[10] They all needed an appointment deed, and they ruled in Sanjar's name as his deputies, at least in theory. These areas were evidently part of Sanjar's empire; the governors there were pillars of Sanjar's military might, and they were required to have some kind of presence at Sanjar's court. (It is less clear what their financial obligations were.) In this essay, I shall use the terms "provincial rulers" and "provincial governors" interchangeably.

Further away still, there were "subject kings", scions of earlier dynasties, some of whom were much more ancient than the Seljuqs, such as the Transoxanian Qarakhanids on the Turkish side of Sanjar's empire. On the Iranian side, one might cite the Bāwandids of Ṭabaristān and Māzandarān, one of the oldest dynasties still in place in the twelfth century; its origins are lost in the mist of pre-Islamic history.[11] The Ghaznavid ruler and the ruler of Sīstān also were "subject kings", and Sanjar was proud of having been the first Seljuqid to subdue the scion of the celebrated Maḥmūd of Ghazna. Later, the ruler of what was to become the Ghūrid empire also had to submit. These kings sometimes participated in Sanjar's campaigns. Sanjar also intervened in succession problems in these vassal kingdoms, e. g. in the Qarakhanid domains; the ruler of Sīstān and the Ghaznavid ruler were both exceptionally long-lived and so no succession took place during Sanjar's tenure as Seljuq overlord.[12] Last but not least, there were the other Seljuq states, in western Iran and Iraq, in Anatolia, and in Kirmān; in these regions, Sanjar was overlord because he was the head of the Seljuqid family. He intervened repeatedly in western Iran to put his candidate on the throne or to make clear his prerogatives as overlord.

As mentioned above, Khwārazm had a special status and the rulers there continued to use the ancient title Khwārazmshāh.[13] No such titles are reported for the other provincial rulers. This family also had a background in military slavery, but had achieved a kind of hereditary status; Atsız was a third-generation ruler in Khwārazm and so had not been born a slave.[14] No other family of provincial governors had such a record when Atsız became

9 Juwainī, *'Atabat* no. 4, 16–21; name of the appointee p. 18. Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad ruled over the western Seljuq lands from 529/1134 until his death in 547/1152, but was present in the west some years before he ascended the throne. Sanjar defeated him in western Iran in 526/1132.

10 Juwainī, *'Atabat* no. 11 and 30 for Balkh; no. 29 for Raiy. No. 13 for Raiy was issued by Sulaimān b. Muḥammad for his cognatic relative Yūsuf b. Atsız the Khwārazmshāh and therefore is a special case. No. 7 is an appointment to governship of Gurgān, which evidently stems from a period when Mas'ūd had left eastern Iran.

11 Madelung 1984.

12 Bahrāmshāh b. Mas'ūd reigned in Ghazna from 1117 to 1157; Tāj al-Dīn Naṣr b. Khalaf reigned in Sīstān from 1106 to 1164.

13 All pre-Mongol dynasties in Khwārazm were called Khwārazmshāh, regardless of whether they were dependent dynasties.

14 There are no reports about who manumitted whom of the Khwārazmian rulers. Anūshtegin, the founder of the dynasty, had been a slave, but it is not certain that this applied to his son Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad (1097–1127). Manumission of slave generals is not frequently reported, and manumission may have been a problem only when it was omitted. On manumission in the context of military slavery, see Tor (2011).

Khwārazmshāh[15] but the Khwārazmshāhs still needed appointment deeds; Atsız was appointed by Sanjar, and his son Il Arslan b. Atsız also received his appointment deed just some weeks before Sanjar died.

Perspectives

The story of Sanjar and Atsız has been told a number of times, starting with Bartol'd at the very beginning of the twentieth century; the last detailed version is Biran's in the early twenty-first.[16] The available source material has not grown significantly since Bartol'd's day, at least not as far as the written sources are concerned.[17] There still is no study of Khwārazmian coinage that is even remotely adequate, and so numismatic evidence can only sparsely be used in this essay, even though it is clear that it must be taken into account on a much more systematic basis.[18] Chinese sources, which are so important for the history of the Qarakhiṭai, seem to provide no substantial addition to the Islamic ones on the history of the Khwārazmshāhs.[19]

Bartol'd tells the story in his chapter on "The Qarakhiṭai and the Khwārazmshāhs",[20] and starts with a characterization of Atsız as a ruler: "He was the real founder of the Khwārazmshāh dynasty and its might. With rare determination and with rare skill, not shunning any methods, he and his successors [Il Arslan b. Atsız, 1156–72, Tekesh b. Il Arslan, 1172–1200, Muḥammad b. Tekesh, 1200–1221] strove to attain their goal– the foundation of a strong independent state".[21] Bartol'd puts the story into a context – the Qarakhiṭai advance into the steppe and oasis regions of Turkistan. The story line, however, follows a single theme, the confrontation between the two rulers, and it has a final end, Khwārazmian independence, which, however, would be achieved only much later. The story is therefore a sequence of advances towards that final end, and the setbacks that Atsız also experienced. The means Atsız employed, which included perjury, attempts at murder, and so forth, served one purpose only, to bring that final goal closer. Concluding this section, Bartol'd repeats the initial characterization, and adds: "Adding Jand and Manqıshlaq to his

15 It is not clear when the Qumāj emirs started to regard Balkh as their hereditary right. Their claim is clearly accepted in Juwainī, *Atabat* No. 30 p. 73–80 (appointment of the grandson or great-grandson probably in 1153).

16 Bartol'd 1963; Biran 2005.

17 Bartol'd had all the chronicles and the Khurāsānian and Khwārazmian *inshā'* collections that we have today, including the St Petersburg manuscript C-816, which is the only written source not yet available in print; all the other sources that Bartol'd published in his anthology (Bartol'd 1900) have been edited since then. I cite C-816 as *Aḥkām-i salāṭīn-i māḍī*. The manuscript was used by Köymen and Buniyatov, as well as by Horst. The collection itself is anonymous, but it is probable that it was made on the basis of Juwainī family archives (and "published" materials such as the collections made by Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ) some time in the later thirteenth or early fourteenth century. See Paul 1995.

18 Album 1998, 87; Richter-Bernburg 1976. Richter-Bernburg has by far the best summary of what is known about Khwārazmian coins and inscriptions.

19 Biran 2005.

20 Bartol'd 1963, 386–396. References are to the Russian version throughout. Translations from the Russian are my own.

21 Bartol'd 1963, 387.

realm, he brought the neighbouring nomads under Khwārazm's control, and swelling the ranks of his military by Turkish mercenary detachments, he laid the foundations of a strong and for all practical purposes independent state".[22]

It is essential to be clear on two points; 1) Atsız worked for Khwārazmian "independence", and 2) he had a long-term strategy to achieve that goal. The plot of the story, then, is one of a struggle for "independence", and of the dissolution of an empire as a result of action taken by men who would no longer tolerate imperial domination.

This perspective has informed all research since Bartol'd. It is perhaps not surprising that Bosworth echoes it in his contribution to the *Cambridge History of Iran*, when he states that Atsız "reigned as a nominal vassal of the Saljuqs till his death", first in his father's footsteps, but later

> the course of events was to show that Atsız had his own ambitions to make Khwārazm as autonomous as possible, and although he had many reverses he pursued this goal with determination, feeling his way between the two neighbouring powers of the Saljuqs and the Qarakhitai, and laying the foundation for the fully independent policy of his successors.[23]

Buniyatov also works along the same lines, with more or less direct references to Bartol'd plus references to Turkish authors who are no less important a source for him. During the first ten years (1128–1138), he writes, "Atsız faithfully served his overlord [...] and did not think about going to war against him, or about resisting him." Nevertheless, during that period he was already also pursuing his own goal too, although under cover; after those ten years, the time had come and he thought that he had become strong enough to "make good his independence from the sultan".[24] Buniyatov is thus the most outspoken representative of the "independence paradigm". He presents a very detailed narrative throughout, and translates from sources quite extensively.

Turkish historians who have written on the Seljuqs and the Khwārazmshāhs since the 1950s have, generally speaking, followed Bartol'd's approach, but have complemented the picture with some important points.[25] Köymen also thinks that Atsız pursued long-term goals, but he discerns a three-step strategy: first, Atsız wanted to gain the same status as the "subject kings"; the next step would have been formal independence (that is, the formal separation of Khwārazm from the Seljuq empire); and the last step would have been to take over the Seljuq heritage in its entirety.[26] The main causes of conflict in the earlier stages were that Atsız simply arrogated to himself rights that only a "subject king" had, and by doing so provoked Sanjar's first military campaign.[27]

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22 Bartol'd 1963, 395.

23 Bosworth 1968, 143.

24 Buniyatov 1999, 15. Authors writing in Russian, Buniyatov as well as Bartol'd, use *syuzeren* for the overlord.

25 Köprülü 1950 is more or less completely based on Bartol'd.

26 Köymen 1954, 314. The Turkish terms are *tâbi* for a vassal, and *metbû* for his lord, from Arabic "one who follows" and "one who is followed", i. e. one who leads.

27 Köymen 1954, 313. There is a clearly anachronistic tendency here to treat the actors and states as if they were twentieth-century leaders and nation states. Nevertheless, the difference is quite interesting. – Buniyatov uses Köymen extensively, but does not follow him on this point, without saying why.

Kafesoğlu divides Atsız's rule into two periods rather than three: before and after 1135. In addition, Kafesoğlu stresses the steppe context of Khwārazmian politics, which does not emerge so clearly with any of the other authors. However, he seems to give much less weight to the Khwārazmian's plans to gain independence and his single-minded determination to attain that goal. Instead, he presents a version of the story that differs from the others' in two significant ways: first, he has another focus (besides "independence" and vassalage), namely which of the two, Sanjar or Atsız, could win over the nomads – and which nomads – as followers, in the face of Qarakhiṭai pressure; and, second, he highlights some personal aspects, in particular the (wanton) killing of Atlıgh b. Atsız in Sanjar's first Khwārazmian campaign in 1138. The narrative is thus sometimes driven by personal motives, such as the wish to avenge perceived wrongs.[28]

Biran tells essentially the same story as Bartol'd and Bosworth, but her context is different because of her focus on the Qarakhiṭai empire, and the conflict between Sanjar and Atsız is consequently relegated to the background.[29]

For another perspective on the narrative, the context or rather contexts in which the two protagonists, particularly Atsız, were acting should be taken into account. Atsız had to keep in mind a number of factors, not only Sanjar and the imperial court and army and its commanders, Atsız's peers and rivals – this was important, but there were other things. By the 1130s, as Bartol'd had already noted, the Qarakhiṭai had become a presence in the steppe, and what was going on there was of utmost significance for Khwārazm; the importance of the points made by Kafesoğlu can hardly be overestimated. Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad had had to fight for his throne against Ṭughriltegin, the son of Ekinji b. Qochqar;[30] Ekinji had been Khwārazmshāh under Barkyāruq. Ekinji was a Qun, and the Qun had come west in the context of the great east-west migration of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.[31] This migration in turn is the context of the Qarakhiṭai advance into Turkistan.

The regional powers had also to be kept in mind. There were the Qarakhanids, with their centres at Bukhara and Samarqand (there were other Qarakhanids, but further away in the east and south-east), and then the Bāwandids in Ṭabaristān und Māzandarān, and also the western Seljuqs. In the far west, there was the caliph, who was, of course, no immediate military player in eastern Iran, but interfered all the same because he was an important source of legitimacy and was formally the head of the Islamic community. It was in this period, it should be remembered, that the caliphs regained political and military clout, and their influence in western and central Iran, where they were major players and arbiters in intra-Seljuq conflicts, made itself felt quite clearly.

28 Kafesoğlu 1956, 44–60. For the nationalist Turkist agenda in Kafesoğlu (and for an assessment of Turkish historiography of the Seljuqid period in general) see Strohmeier 1984 and Leiser 1988. In Kafesoğlu (1967, 377) we find a slightly different and very much abridged story: Atsız had independence in mind all along, even before his open "rebellion"; Sanjar defeated him three times, and pardoned him three times, because he wanted the valiant Khwārazmshāh to keep the steppe peoples under control.

29 Biran 2005, 42–44, 49.

30 Ibn al-Athīr 10:268.

31 Golden 1992, 211.

There were basically two areas into which Khwārazm could expand. One was the lower Syr Darya basin east of Khwārazm, and the other the Turkmen regions west and south-west of the Khwārazmian oasis, that is, the Manqıshlaq peninsula and the region south of it, the Balkhan mountains, Dihistān and Gurgān. It will be seen that Atsız expanded into both areas, and that control over nomad groups – their migration routes, and their military potential – was probably one of the relevant factors in this.

If migration patterns in the twelfth century were anything like those known from other periods,[32] the Aral Sea and lower Syr Darya region would have been winter pasture for groups whose summer grazing grounds lay far to the north, whereas migration routes in the south-west, in particular Gurgān and the Balkhan mountains, tended to be much shorter. Thus, from the nomad perspective, Khwārazm would extend far to the north, up to the forest regions, and to the south, down to the Köpet Dagh mountain range, the steppes of Gurgān and beyond, and west as far as the Caspian littoral. "Khwārazm" as a catchment area for nomads was thus much larger than the oasis itself or the areas immediately under the political and military control of those who had power there. It must have been a central concern for anyone who ruled in the oasis to get along with the nomads, and if at all possible, to exert some measure of control over them. Moreover, Khwārazmian politics must have been directed towards nomads and their movements much more than Khurāsānian politics were (although Khurāsānian politics also had to take nomads into account during this period). A ruler in Khwārazm must have seen clearly the advantages of attracting nomad leaders, especially those who nomadized in areas vital to Khwārazmian trade: the routes to Khurāsān, and also the routes to the forest regions. Furthermore, Khwārazmian military strength also depended in no small measure on the ability of Khwārazmian rulers to win over nomad leaders.[33] The "nomad perspective" – that is, the central importance of "nomad politics", at least for one of the protagonists, Atsız – has been stressed by only one author so far, İbrahim Kafesoğlu, who has a "Turkist" agenda in mind.[34]

Nomads were not a central subject for the authors of our sources. They are a muted presence, a force in the background, which, however, has an enormous influence on the course of events. It is therefore necessary to pay particular attention to every glimpse we get of

32 The Oğuz groups that Ibn Faḍlān met in their winter quarters in 922 on his way north from Khwārazm were probably migrating between Manqıshlaq and places further north (Ibn Faḍlān 1939, § 20). It is no coincidence that Khwārazm was part of the ulus Jochi after the Mongol conquest and thus linked to Siberia and the lower Volga region. The Shibanid ruler, Abū l-Khair Khan, was also active in this area in the fifteenth century (see Akhmedov 1965). The "Middle Horde" Kazakhs had some of the longest known migration routes of any nomads worldwide, and they too were located in this area. Khwārazm has had this migration link to the north, ultimately to the forest regions of Siberia and Eastern Europe, for much of its history. It would be a mistake to stress the southern links of Khwārazm, that is, those leading to Khurāsān, Gurgān and other Iranian provinces at the expense of the northern ties. The problem is that the sources do not tell us much about what was going on in the steppes. For a detailed study of Oğuz presence in that region, see Golden 1972. Qıpchaq and Kimek may have shared winter pasture with Oğuz groups in an area close enough to Khwārazm to come within the purview of rulers in the oasis (Golden 1991, Agajanov 1998).

33 I have discussed Khwārazmian "nomad politics" in Paul 2007–8 and Paul 2013a.

34 Strohmeier 1984, Leiser 1988.

this mostly obscure force, and sometimes the actions of the more visible characters (such as Sanjar and especially Atsız) become much more explicable if we keep the nomads in mind.

Sanjar and Atsız – the Story in the Pre-Mongol Sources

The narrative starts with Atsız's father, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad. He is described as an ideal vassal, particularly in Juwainī's version. Ibn al-Athīr merely states that Atsız had led his father's troops when Quṭb al-Dīn was still alive, and either then or at the beginning of his own reign had conquered Jand (in the lower Syr Darya region) and Manqıshlaq. When Quṭb al-Dīn died, Sanjar appointed Atsız, drew him close, took him into action in his wars, and promoted him.[35] The fact that both father and son held strong positions at Sanjar's court is confirmed by poems the court poet Mu'izzī wrote for them.[36]

Atsız joined Sanjar on various campaigns. He participated in the campaign against the Samarqandī Qarakhanid in 524/1130; he commanded the left wing of Sanjar's army in the battle at Dāy Marj[37] against Mas'ūd in 526/1132; he probably held a similar command in the war against the Ghaznavid in 529–30/1135–6. It is altogether probable that he brought with him his own troops, who would have included nomad warriors from the steppes surrounding Khwārazm, as will be shown below.

The duties of vassals and provincial governors or rulers, as well as "subject kings" included supporting the lord in his wars. By serving in this way – which also implied a physical presence, not only during campaigns, but on other occasions too – a "subject king" or provincial governor earned "rights", which his lord had to respect by elevating his position or increasing his holdings, and later, when the vassal died, by appointing one of his sons to succeed him. The dynamics of "service" (*khidma*), of "rights" earned by the vassal and respected by the lord, and of "benefits" and their "increase" which the lord bestowed on his vassals, are a major subject in the story of Sanjar and Atsız. These dynamics are related to the social relations that Roy Mottahedeh has described for the Būyid era (roughly, from the mid-tenth to the mid-eleventh century CE) in western Iran and 'Irāq.[38]

At some point, either in 1135–6 or a little later, a split occurred between Sanjar and Atsız. (The story of how this came to pass will be analysed in the second part of this essay; it is related in Juwainī only.) Sanjar went on campaign against Khwārazm in autumn 1138.[39] Explaining the reason for the campaign, Ibn al-Athīr says that Sanjar learnt that Atsız was "planning to confront him and to leave his *khidma*; this had become evident to many of his emirs and companions, and therefore Sanjar was obliged to go to war against him and to

35 Ibn al-Athīr 10:269. Note that Juwainī's versions in the *Jahān-gushā* are omitted throughout in this reconstruction of the story (with only some very minor exceptions).

36 Köprülü 1950, 266; Mu'izzī 284–286 in praise of Muḥammad; the poem gives Muḥammad all the ruler's virtues, above all valour; in praise of Atsız, 305–307, describing him as a beautiful youth with all the other excellent qualities of a young man.

37 For the location of Dāy Marj, see Durand-Guédy 2011b, 250–251.

38 Mottahedeh 1980/2001.

39 See the account of Sanjar's first Khwārazmian campaign in Ibn al-Athīr 11:67ff. Ḥusainī and Bundārī report only the second campaign. Nīshāpūrī does not refer to Sanjar going on any Khwārazmian campaign. Contemporaries in western Iran evidently tended to disregard events so far east.

take Khwārazm from him."[40] The source does not say why Atsız would have wanted to "leave Sanjar's *khidma*", or what that would have meant in practice.

'Aufī gives a short statement as well. In contextualizing the poem in which Atsız responded to a declaration of war by Sanjar (see below), he says that this poem originated when

> they were harassing Atsız at Sanjar's court, and that fearing for his life, Atsız started showing signs of rebellion and withdrew from the *khidmat* at court and settled in Khwārazm. At that point, Sanjar had an order written to instil fear in Atsız, and in the letter, he said that if Atsız would not present himself at court and step on the carpet of *khidmat* and was slow in resuming his place before the throne, Sanjar would direct the reins of the warhorse of his *daulat* [towards Khwārazm] and apply the rules of severity to him.[41]

This indicates that the main reason for the hostilities was that Atsız had reason to fear for his life and consequently left the court, and made it clear that he would not return. The war began after Atsız had explicitly stated that he would not resume *khidmat*.

The verses are a "fragment" (*qiṭ'a*), transmitted in Rāwandī as well as in 'Aufī's anthology. In Rāwandī, the verse is quoted in the context of Atsız's raids into Khurāsān and his "revolt" after Qaṭwān, whereas 'Aufī, as we have seen, puts it into the context of the first confrontation. Rāwandī reports that Sanjar sent an arrow to Atsız, and Atsız answered with the following verses, which Rāwandī tells us were famous: "The king's warhorse may be swift as the wind * but my horse's hooves are not lame, either.* You come here, [or] I go there * the world is not narrow for him who rules over it".[42] Sending an arrow could be a message by which a vassal is called to military action on behalf of his lord (as we shall see, this is just what Atsız had neglected to do at Qaṭwān if he was called, which is probably the reason why Rāwandī puts the verses into a post-Qaṭwān context), but here it evidently is a declaration of war, and Sanjar is given the choice of the battlefield, either "here" in Khwārazm or "there" in Khurāsān. The coexistence of two states, Khwārazmian and Seljuqid, is not an option;

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40 Ibn al-Athīr 11:67. *yuḥaddithu nafsuhu bil-imtinā' 'alaihi wa tark al-khidma lahu wa anna hadhā l-amr qad ẓahara 'alā kathīr min aṣḥābihi wa-umarā'ihi fa-aujaba dhalika qaṣdahu wa akhdh Khwārazm minhu.*

41 'Aufī 37. *dar ān waqt ki dar ḥaḍrat-i sulṭān-i sa'īd* [...] *ū-rā takhlīṭ kardand wa ū az khauf-i jān aṭhar-i 'iṣyān ẓāhir kard wa az khidmat-i dargāh taqā'ud namūd wa dar Khwārazm bi-nishast sulṭān-i sa'īd Sanjar farmān dād tā ba-nazdik-i ū mithālī niwīsand wa ū-rā takhwīf kunand wa dar ithnā-yi ān farmūda būd ki agar dar āmadan ba-ḥaḍrat wa ḥuḍūr-i bisāṭ-i khidmat wa īstādan dar mawqif-i wuqūf tawaqquf namāyad 'inān-i yakrān-i daulat bar ān simt ma'ṭūf risānīm wa rasm-i siyāsat dar bāb-i ū ba-iqāmat risānīm.*

42 Rāwandī 174, 'Aufī 37, and attributed to Atsız himself; translated in Buniyatov (1999, 24). *agar bād-pāy-ast rakhsh-i malik * kumait-i ma-rā pāy ham lang nīst * tū īnjā ba-yāyī man ānjā rawam * khudā-yi jahān-rā jahān tang nīst.*– Buniyatov connects this verse to a later stage in the confrontation, after Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign in 1142–3, but this is not supported by the narrative in Rāwandī or by 'Aufī. Moreover, Buniyatov does not seem to have understood the verse as a declaration of war since he continues: "In September 1145, Atsız led his horse precisely 'there', that is, where he had wanted to go for a long time: again, he prepared to conquer Jand and other regions along the Syr-Darya." This is clearly out of context, and the misreading is probably due to the "independence paradigm", which informs Buniyatov's narrative more than any other author's. 'Aufī has a slightly different version for the first two verses and adds a third: "The king is the ruler of the world; to flee from such a ruler is not a shame" (*malik shahriyār ast wa shāh-i jahān * gurīz az chunīn pādishā nang nīst*). The entry in 'Aufī confirms the context: the verses are linked to the situation when Atsız first "rebelled", and he is shown not avoiding the confrontation, but challenging Sanjar for the sultanate.

there is only one ruler in the world, and the ruler of the world can do battle anywhere. Addressing Sanjar as *malik* moreover, is an insult: he was not a *malik*, but the sultan, overlord of many *mulūk*.

Another poem, also transmitted by 'Aufī, may also belong in this context. It is proof of the determination Atsız showed in his conflict with Sanjar, and even if it is perhaps overstretching the evidence, it maybe also shows that Atsız needed to state that he was doing no wrong: "I can do no wrong because I am pure good; I spend profusely because I am the ocean and the mine. Thanks to God that my enemy today is a weak old man, and I am young."[43]

Atsız withdrew into the fortress of Hazārasp on the southern fringes of Khwārazm. In a battle fought on 16 November 1138, Sanjar's troops won; they took Atlıgh, one of Atsız's sons, prisoner, and Sanjar had him killed immediately. The young man's body was hacked into two parts, and the head later cut off and sent to the Qarakhanid ruler of Samarqand (perhaps as a warning?).[44] There is one independent confirmation of the son's fate, in Ibn Isfandiyār.[45] The defeated Khwārazmian troops were invited to join Sanjar, and so he stayed on the battlefield for some days. Most of the warriors accepted the invitation and went over to him. The text puts considerable emphasis on this process, and so it is perhaps worth to quote this passage at some length. It says that Sanjar wanted to stay for

> all those who had fled and had been defeated and had scattered far and wide as far as the city [Urganch?], over distances up to 30 or 40 *farsakh* [more than 200 kilometres], to come to the *khidmat* [the presence of the sultan, but also a form of paying homage[46]] if they asked for an *amān* [free conduct; guarantee for life and property] and permit to do so; all of them were pardoned and given the *amān* [as is Our habit], and gifts and benefits and tokens of Our grace were distributed to them.[47]

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43 'Aufī 37. *z ān bad na-kunam ki khair-i maḥḍ-am * z ān badhl kunam ki baḥr ū kān-am * shukr īzad-rā ki khaṣm-am imrūz * pīrī st ḍa'īf wa man jawān-am.* Sanjar was not so much older than Atsız, 12–13 years.

44 There is a shorter version in Ibn al-Athīr 11:67 (without the name of the son); the detailed version is only found in the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm* and – thence? – in Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 4.

45 Ibn Isfandiyār 2:86. Sanjar wanted to have a son of Shāh Ghāzī, the ruler of Ṭabaristān, at his court as a guest or hostage, and Shāh Ghāzī sent his son Girdbāzū, an extremely good-looking youth. But the young man was stabbed to death by a Bāṭinī, for which Shāh Ghāzi was never able to forgive Sanjar; he called him *mulḥid*, "Bāṭinī" or "unbeliever", ever after. The author also refers to Atsız, who also lost a son in his dealings with Sanjar, but was able to submit to the sultan after Sanjar had slain the young man at Hazārasp. This is an argument against the narrative strand that makes personal revenge for the death of Atlıgh the main motive for Atsız' behaviour.

46 *Khidma*, Persian *khidmat* is – amongst other things – a formal ceremony in which a man accepts subordinate status with regard to a superior who from then on (whether for the first time, or again, after a "rebellion") is his lord, and is accepted in that status. The ceremony regularly involves dismounting and kissing the ground (or the carpet, or the lord's foot or stirrup or hand, or another item previously agreed by the parties; sometimes stepping on the carpet is enough) while the lord is seated, usually on a throne, but sometimes on horseback; there are sometimes additional gestures, such as "standing in service" before the throne, "binding of the girdle", the giving and receiving of gifts (or other "benefits", including *iqṭā'āt*), or the swearing of an oath. No detailed study has been made of this ceremony. For *khidma* in general, see Jurado 1994.

47 *tā jumla-yi gurīkhtagān wa hazīmat-raftagān ki dar ān ḥudūd tā ba-shahr dar misāfat-i sī-chihil farsang parākanda būd ba-istīmān* [Bartol'd: bā shumār] *wa istīdhān pīsh-i khidmat āmadand hama-rā 'afw wa amān*

What made this *fatḥ* a *fatḥ-i buzurg*, an important victory, was thus the scene on the battlefield after the battle: numbers of nomad leaders doing obeisance (*khidmat*) to the sultan.

Sanjar then took the rest of the province, including the capital, and deposed Atsız; in Atsız's stead, he appointed one of his nephews, Sulaimān b. Muḥammad, who must therefore have accompanied his uncle on this campaign. Atsız left the region, apparently for Gurgān, but came back as soon as Sanjar had withdrawn back to Khurāsān.[48] Atsız then had no difficulty in ejecting Sulaimān.

The reasons Sanjar gave for this campaign are laid down in the "Victory in Khwārazm" missive that has already been quoted already.[49] Sanjar calls Atsız the "unfortunate madman",[50] the "son of the Khwārazmshāh"; that is, he does not give him his usual title. Atsız has committed many errors, but they all come down to "ingratitude": Sanjar had given him "ways of ruling freely in Khwārazm", but that had tempted Atsız to rebellion and, in particular, to usurp power in the frontier regions of Jand and Manqıshlaq. His other misdemeanors are probably related to this: he imprisoned a number of Sanjar's men (*wukalā'*, lit. "deputies") who had all come on particular business, had their property seized,[51] and even killed one of them; he blocked the routes to and from Khurāsān; he delivered the dues in instalments; he robbed the Muslims of their harvests and their merchandise. And so Sanjar had to go to war, and it was not difficult to mobilize the troops: everyone wanted to participate because of the ingratitude – *kufrān-i ni'mat* – of which, as all could see, Atsız was guilty. The war itself is briefly mentioned, and also the killing of Atlıgh, and in a significant turn, the author of the text mentions that quite a number of the many thousands of "Khwārazmian" warriors slain before the walls of Hazārasp were non-Muslim Turks.

Briefly, what Sanjar had his bureaucrats write here is that Atsız behaved like a nomad captain and not like a Seljuqid provincial governor, and that he had encroached on funda-

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chunānki mu'tād az makārim-i akhlāq-i jahāndārī arzānī dāshta āmad wa karāmāt wa nawākht wa tashrīfāt risānīda shud; *Aḥkām* 145a, Bartol'd 1900, 46. I emend Bartol'd's reading to *ba-istīmān* even though the last letter in the word (which is without diacritics) resembles a *rā'* much more than a *nūn*; there is clearly another letter (of the *bā'* - *tā'* group) between the *sīn-shīn* and the *mīm* (one letter, not two as there would be in *istīmān*). *Istīmān* "asking for an *amān*" and *istīdhān* "asking for permission" (to come to the *khidmat*) are terms not infrequently used in the context of concluding (new) relations of vassalage, particularly after a "rebellion". *Tashrīfāt* is sometimes used for the kind of benefit most frequently known as *iqṭā'* and may also mean the formal allocation of pasture, but it also could refer to unspecified "gifts".

48 Sanjar returned to Marw in February 1139.

49 "Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm", *Aḥkām* 143b-145b; Bartol'd 1900, 44–47; see Buniyatov 1999, 16; Kafesoğlu 1956, 47–48; Köymen 1954, 314–316.

50 *mudbir-i dīwāna*. I follow Köymen's correction of Bartol'd, who read *mudīr*. In the manuscript, there is no dot on the letter Köymen reads as *bā'*. (Köymen gives a long ī, though, reading *mudbīr*). *Idbār* is an antonym of *iqbāl*, "good luck", and also "fortune which is necessary for and makes it possible to be a king". A *mudbir* is also someone who has turned his back, a reading that will play a role in explaining a story in Juwainī (see below). The concept is also in Niẓām al-Mulk: in the first exposition of the general course of history, when describing the disasters that befall mankind in certain periods, he adds "[M]ay God not deal us such a fate" *khudāy* [...] *chunīn mudbarī dūr dārād*, text p. 6, translation p. 9. The term can therefore be used to cover all kinds of misfortune.

51 *har yakī ba-sar-i shughlī wa muhimmī būdand*; they may have been involved in tax collection or trade or the administration of crown lands. Köprülü thinks that Atsız "declared his independence" at this moment, and that his action against Sanjar's emissaries was a consequence of that (Köprülü 1950, 267).

mental prerogatives of the sultan. He is mad because he has left the Seljuqid fold; he has arrogated powers to which he was not entitled.[52] Some time earlier, Sanjar had claimed for himself the victories Atsız won over the nomads at Jand and on the Manqıshlaq peninsula.[53] In a letter written to the caliphal court dated 527 (beg. July 6, 1133), he cited these campaigns as proof that he was much more active than the caliph (or anyone else in the west) in fighting unbelievers. Incidentally, this gives a relatively precise date for the (first) Jand campaign, because the text says that it had taken place some months earlier, and thus probably in winter 1132–3.[54] Jand would be re-conquered at least once.

Taken together, all of this evidence indicates that the conflict that pitted Sanjar against Atsız in the second half of the 1130s most probably had two causes: one was the dynamics of *khidmat* in Sanjar's retinue, where Atsız had evidently made powerful enemies. The other is linked to the question of whether the nomads around Jand and Manqıshlaq owed allegiance to Atsız or to Sanjar. Nomad allegiance is, by the way, one of the possible questions behind the conflict between Sanjar, the Ghuzz and the Qumāj lords of Balkh in 1152–3 (see below). In the case of Atsız, the nomads had evidently preferred to have Atsız as their lord (at least for the time being), but the opposite was true of the Ghuzz, who, according to one report, argued that they were "personal subjects of the sultan and not under anybody else's control".[55] In both cases, the nomad leaders thus played an active part; they themselves decided in whose orbit they would place themselves. The fact that their decision was not accepted and led to violent conflicts is another matter. In this respect, Sanjar's empire emerges as a kind of framework in which, among other groups and individuals, nomad leaders and regional lords held a considerable measure of autonomy as long as they acted according to a given set of rules (and did not challenge the sultan openly).

Atsız had gained a reputation and a substantial following in the steppe and perhaps this was something which Sanjar or his ministers could not tolerate. It is possible that this changed over time, such that Sanjar was happy to have Atsız active in the steppe regions around Khwārazm at least until 1132–3, but became concerned about his growing prestige

52 The standard formula is "to leave the *ṭā'at*" (obedience). I do not completely agree with Köymen, who thinks that these accusations are specific and that they mean that Atsız coveted the status of "subject king"; nor do I agree with Buniyatov, either, who thinks – along similar lines – that the main point was that a provincial governor had no right to go to war without asking his lord and sultan beforehand; there are too many examples to the contrary. The text says that "Atsız made a habit of spilling the blood of the Muslims and ghāzīs without Our permission" (*bī rukhṣat wa ijāzat-i mā khūn-i musalmānān wa ghāziyān rīkhtan 'ādat āwarda ast*). Buniyatov here gives a summary rather than a translation (Buniyatov 1999, 16; *Aḫkām* 144a).

53 It is evident that these regions were indeed considered to be under central control from the appointment deed for a *shiḥna* of Turkmens (Juwainī, *'Atabat al-kataba*, 84–85, translated and analysed in Durand-Guédy 2011a, 24 [translation 50–51; Persian text 55–56]). It would therefore make sense to date this text to before 1138.

54 *Aḫkām* 110b; date 105b. Bosworth (1968, 144) has 1133 for the Jand campaign. Since Atsız was in western Iran together with Sanjar in 1132, he must have returned to Khwārazm fast enough for a winter campaign on the lower Syr Darya; nomads could probably be fought there only during the winter months when they were on their winter grazing grounds.

55 *mā bandagān-i khāṣṣ-i sulṭān-īm dar ḥukm-i kasī na-bashīm* (Nīshāpūrī 62). There are other reports that make it probable that, before the final confrontation, it had been the Qumāj emirs who had given them pasture (Ibn al-Athīr 11:179).

and power there during the years that followed and hoped to make the nomads change allegiance (again) by defeating and humiliating Atsız.

To return to the events in Khwārazm, and to take up another context in which these events can be viewed, we shall turn for a while to Sulaimān b. Muḥammad. This is not the place to retrace the complete biography of this very intriguing prince; here, just a few remarks about his relationship to Khwārazm and the Khwārazmian dynasty are appropriate. It is not clear when Sulaimān married a woman from the Khwārazmian dynasty. The report in Ibn al-Athīr sets the marriage at a vague moment in the course of a narrative set in 551/1156–7, and patently misplaces it: Sulaimān is said to have gone to Khwārazm in the Ghuzz period, and there to have married a niece of Atsız, the daughter of his brother Aqsīs.[56] This is impossible because Sulaimān came to Khurāsān shortly before the Ghuzz crisis, from his prison in Azerbaijan (541–547/1147–1152),[57] after a period in Hamadān (where he briefly occupied the western Seljuq throne, for 27 days in all).[58] His itineraries from then on can be quite well reconstructed, and he did not get to Khwārazm at that time.[59] In Bundārī, Sulaimān comes back to Khurāsān after having suffered defeat in the west in the company of his wife and two of her brothers, Yūsuf and Yınaltegin.[60] The only point when Sulaimān is known to have been in Khwārazm is thus the short period of his rule there in 1138–9. This does not mean, of course, that the marriage must have been concluded at that precise time, but we can be sure that the Khwārazmian lady was with him in the west, probably also when he was in prison. Another moment when conditions were more favourable for such a marriage was early in 1141, when Atsız swore allegiance to Sanjar (see below).

In either case, what might have been the purpose behind the alliance? Sulaimān had been at Raiy before he came to Khwārazm with Sanjar in 1138. Rāzī coins bearing his name are extant from 525–30/1130–1 to 1135–6.[61] He was *malik* there, and the official governor was the slave general Gauhar al-Khādim, who, however, stayed on in Sanjar's retinue and had his *iqṭāʿ* at Raiy administered by a deputy, one of his military slaves called ʿAbbās. Gauhar is not called Sulaimān's *atabek*, probably because Sulaimān was no longer a minor.[62] Gauhar was killed (by a Bāṭinī) in 1139, and ʿAbbās took over; this is the moment when Sulaimān left Khwārazm, and in all probability ultimately went back to Raiy: there is no information as to whether ʿAbbās had joined him on the Khwārazm campaign.

ʿAbbās intervened in the struggles in the western Seljuq sultanate after 1141, when (as a result of his defeat at Qaṭwān) Sanjar handed Raiy over to his nephew Masʿūd, who then ruled in the west; ʿAbbās had a Seljuqid prince in his retinue, and this prince was Sulaimān

56 Ibn al-Athīr 11:206.
57 Schwarz 1992, 58.
58 Nīshāpūrī 93.
59 Schwarz 1992, 58–61.
60 Bundārī 232.
61 Miles 1938; Schwarz 1992. Miles does not identify the "Sulaimān" on the coins with the Seljuqid prince Sulaimān b. Muḥammad, but Schwarz does make this suggestion. I do not see any reason why this Sulaimān should not be Sulaimān b. Muḥammad. The coins mention – after the caliph – Sanjar as Great Sultan, then Masʿūd, and then Sulaimān.
62 His father, sultan Muḥammad Ṭapar, had died in 511/1118.

b. Muḥammad. The coalition around ʿAbbās failed, though, and Sulaimān was imprisoned, as stated above. This also suggests a long-standing link between ʿAbbās and Sulaimān.

A link between Sulaimān and the Khwārazmian dynasty is also established by the company in which Sulaimān came back east in 1152: not only his wife, but also, as stated above, two of her brothers, Yūsuf and Yınaltegin, accompanied him. Yūsuf had been active in the west earlier, and I suggest dating the appointment deed giving him control over Raiy to the moment when ʿAbbās and Sulaimān left for ʿIrāq in 1141.[63] This document can be assumed to have been issued by Sulaimān because the author claims that he inherited the city and province from his father, and that he had shortly before been confirmed in its possession by Sanjar and Masʿūd.

For the time being, however, it is impossible to say what plans lay behind this marriage alliance, on either the Seljuqid or the Khwārazmian side. It is inconceivable that such a marriage alliance could have been concluded without the consent of the heads of the families involved. One possibility comes immediately to mind: the marriage alliance may have been linked to the situation in the west. After Ṭughril's untimely death in 1134, Sanjar had no representative there, and more than that, Ṭughril had been Sanjar's heir apparent. After 1134, Sanjar did not have a proclaimed heir. Could it be that, looking around for a replacement for Ṭughril, he decided to try Sulaimān? This question can only be decided after a complete reassessment of the entire period and, in particular, of the activities of the Khwārazmian princes in the west, and that is clearly beyond the scope of this article.

After Atsız resumed the throne in Khwārazm, did he continue as Sanjar's vassal? We have no record of a procedure in which he may have asked to be reinstated or pardoned, and no document is extant setting out Sanjar's revocation of his decision to depose Atsız and have him reappointed. It would be rash to use this argument from silence. But events do not indicate that Atsız was a vassal, either. The next we know of his actions is a raid against Bukhara, shortly after his return to Khwārazm, in 534/1139–40; he destroyed the citadel, which was left in ruins for the next two years.[64] Raiding Bukhara also was "nomad" business: another raid on Bukhara is reported for 1144 and blamed on the Ghuzz. Between the two raids, the Qarakhiṭai sent a governor there after their victory over Sanjar at Qaṭwān in 1141; this man, incidentally, was a relative of the Khwārazmshāh.[65]

The dating of another action Atsız may have undertaken in this period, still further to the south-west, is uncertain: he intervened in an internal struggle in the family of the local rulers of the Kabūdjāma.[66] Buniyatov dates this to 1139, while Madelung opts for 1142 (after Qaṭwān and in the context of the campaigns Atsız was conducting at that time in

63 Juwainī, *ʿAtabat* no. 13 p. 42ff. See above note 10.

64 Narshakhi 23.

65 Narshakhi 23; Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī 50. The man was called Atmategin (there are variations of the name). His being a member of the Khwārazmian dynasty does not necessarily mean that he went to Bukhara on behalf of the acting Khwārazmshāh Atsız. Unfortunately, Bukharan coinage for this period is inconclusive. No coins are on record at all for the 520s, the 530s and up to 541/1146–7, when Kochnev reports a dirham naming Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad the Qarakhanid and Sanjar (as overlord) (Kochnev 1997, 261 no. 1026); see also Kochnev 2006, 224.

66 Kabūdjāma (today Ḥājjilar) is the easternmost district of the province of Gurgān; it was the seat of an ancient family of local lords (see Ibn Isfandiyār 1:152).

Khurāsān).[67] It is impossible to come to a decision here, but the contexts are comparable: Atsız made inroads into the Khurāsānian side of the Qaraqum desert.

During these years, Atsız seems to have looked primarily to the south and south-west, to the Turkmen regions south of Manqıshlaq, towards Bukhara and Gurgān – not (yet) with a view to conquest, but rather, we may surmise, as a result of his dealings with the nomads who lived there, winning their allegiance (or re-winning it in the case of those who had come to Sanjar after Hazārasp and had not gone back over to Atsız when he drove Sulaimān out of Khwārazm). He must by then have built a formidable reputation among the Turkmens, and also among other groups – Ghuzz, Qarluqs, Qıpchaqs and so forth, Muslim and non-Muslim alike – and it is altogether possible that they kept flocking to him, for some purpose of their own.

It is doubtful, as we have seen, whether Atsız considered himself to be a Seljuq vassal during this period. If not, that changed in May 1141, just a few months before Sanjar's disastrous defeat at the hands of the Qarakhiṭai at Qaṭwān in September that year. The events leading to this battle need not be retraced here.[68] In all the sources narrating these events, the conflict has to do with nomad unrest in the steppe, and it must thus have been in a situation of extreme tension that Atsız swore an oath of fealty to Sanjar. The document – a draft or perhaps an idealized version, not necessarily the text of the oath as it was made to Sanjar – is extant and has been translated (into Russian and Turkish).[69]

This example of an oath of fealty set down in writing is not unique. There is a written oath in Baghdādī's collection,[70] and another specimen is transmitted in the *inshā'* collection known as the *Mukhtārāt min al-rasā'il*; this is an oath of fealty between the Atabek Muḥammad b. Ildeniz and Amīrāan b. Ildoghdi b Qushṭughān. The form of these documents is very much the same.[71] Another text in the *Mukhtārāt* gives the formal outline of such documents, which, in this collection, are called *'ahd-nāma*. The model text is written in the first person singular. God is invoked as witness in very solemn words. In the model text, the contents of the compact are very simple: the man who takes the oath promises never to depart from friendly ways of treating his partner, not to think of evil initiatives and not to tolerate such deeds; and in everything to be a friend of his friends and an enemy of his enemies. At the end of the document, the man who takes the oath invokes the punishment in this life and the hereafter that he is ready to undergo should he break his oath.[72] The written oath of fealty may therefore be considered a type of document which was not so rare,

67 Ibn Isfandiyār 2:79; Buniyatov 1999, 16–17; Madelung 1984.

68 Biran 2005, 41–44.

69 *Saugand-nāma*; *Aḥkām* 124b-125b, translation: Buniyatov 1999, 17–18; Köymen 1954, 322–323. Printed text: Bartol'd 1900, 40–42. The "written oath" *saugand-nāma* is in fact appended to an address of submission which Atsız reportedly sent to Sanjar. This address makes use of the vocabulary of subservience in more or less standardised forms. Bartol'd says that the oath was written in the "usual terms" *v obychnykh vyrazheniiakh*, and he quotes another example from the early Ghaznavid period (Bartol'd 1963, 389).

70 Baghdādī 138–144, sworn for Tekesh by an unnamed regional lord, very elaborate, but in its essential features like the samples from the *Mukhtārāt*.

71 *Mukhtārāt*, no. 100 p. 206–211.

72 *Mukhtārāt*, no. 101 p. 211. *ki man hargiz az dūstī rūy nagardānam wa bad-i ū nasigālam wa nayandīsham wa riḍā nadiham wa rawā nadāram wa dūst-i ū-rā dūst bāsham wa dushman-rā dushman.*

and perhaps in some of the many cases where the sources simply state that such-and-such a compact was sworn, the oath was set down in writing.

The oath that Atsız swore in May 1141 is called a *nadhr*, a vow, and thus the partner is not another living man, but God.[73] As for the contents, it included, first, an oath, that he would be faithful to Sanjar as long as he lives, and stay within his *ṭā'at wa bandagī*, literally "obedience and servitude", a frequent formula for a well-defined set of ceremonial obligations that included not only saying the Friday sermon and striking coins in the name of the overlord, but also certain forms of presence at his court, ceremonial submission and so forth. Next, he swore not to help any of Sanjar's enemies, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, Turk or Tajik, man or woman,[74] and to be a friend to Sanjar's friends and an enemy to his enemies. Moreover, if any of Sanjar's enemies approached Atsız, he swore he would not participate in any conspiracy or compact against Sanjar, but report such attempts. Towards the end, Atsız swore to support Sanjar as far as possible in fighting any enemies, and not to make any excuses not to do so if the need should arise. Before enumerating the (fearful) punishments that he stated he would merit if he broke his oath, he again swore that obeying Sanjar was a personal religious duty for him (*farḍ-i 'ain),* and stated once more that he had taken this oath before God and the Prophet; and finally, the document is again called a *nadhr*.

It is difficult not to think that this document responded to a need felt by both parties to unite in face of growing tension in the steppes, or at least to come to some kind of agreement so that they would be free to face any potential threat. Both Atsız and Sanjar may have perceived such threats as being linked not directly to the Qarakhiṭai but to the nomad groups pressing west and south-west because of the Qarakhiṭai advance. Clearly the steppe regions were unstable, and one of the narratives of how things came to pass before Qaṭwān is about the Qarluqs and their search for (new) pasture.[75]

However that may be, in the document, Atsız without doubt contracted an obligation to support Sanjar militarily against his enemies. However, no Khwārazmian troops were present at Qaṭwān and we do not know whether they had been summoned. We do not know, either, where Atsız was in late summer 1141; as events were to show, he was probably in Khwārazm, mobilizing his own troops and his allies in order to be prepared for quite a number of possibilities. It was probably this conspicuous absence of Khwārazmian warriors, together with what Atsız did after Qaṭwān, that made the rumours that Atsız himself had invited the Qarakhiṭai seem plausible. It is not easy to decide whether he did; the argument that Khwārazm was also subject to Qarakhiṭai pillage at some point is a strong one, but Ibn al-Athīr's report that Atsız still wanted revenge for his son, invited the Qarakhiṭai and concluded a marriage alliance with them should not be dismissed out of hand.[76] Even if he

73 For the form of the *nadhr*, see Mottahedeh 1980/2001, 62–66, 68.

74 This is an enumeration meant to denote "everybody", but one could speculate as to whether the "non-Muslims" in fact designated the Qarakhiṭai.

75 See Biran 2005, 42–43.

76 Bosworth 1968, 144; Köymen 1954, 336; discussion and references in Bartol'd 1963, 390 with note 7. The event is reported only in Juwainī *Jahān-gushā* 88 and in later sources depending on him (Ibn al-Athīr 11:85–86). Biran's conclusions are very similar: she also thinks that "it is quite possible" that Atsız "contacted the Qara Khitai" (Biran 2005, 42).

did not have a real agreement with the Qarakhiṭai emperor Yelü Dashi, the Gurkhan, he may have decided to sit and wait to see who would win. This may have been a widespread attitude among the nomads in and around Khwārazm in the months leading up to Qaṭwān, and it was a reasonable enough one for all those who were not immediately threatened by the Qarakhiṭai.

Qaṭwān was a disaster for Sanjar. He lost many warriors; his wife and some of his most important generals were taken prisoner, and had to be ransomed at high cost; and since this was the first battle he had ever lost, his prestige of course also suffered. Just how much of a disaster Qaṭwān was has been recently debated.[77] For the present context, this is not the issue; it is clear that Qaṭwān was not only a disaster for Sanjar, but an opportunity for Atsız as well. "Opportunity" is *furṣa* in Arabic, and it is a central term; an opportunity is something that even an only moderately ambitious man cannot afford to let pass without losing face. Atsız had profited from a *furṣa* when he came back to Khwārazm in 1139,[78] and what he did was to try to make use of the *furṣa* that now presented itself.[79]

A mere couple of weeks after the defeat, in October 1141, Atsız was in Sarakhs, and shortly after that in Marw.[80] If one considers that news of the defeat must have travelled to Khwārazm, and that it must have taken some time for the Khwārazmian army to cross the Qaraqum desert, it is clear that the army must have been waiting fully mobilized in Khwārazm, to rush forth immediately – to Khurāsān in this case, but could it have been to another region in the alternative case of a Seljuqid victory? There is no way of knowing.

In Marw, Atsız sat on Sanjar's throne and behaved like a sultan, giving orders, signing documents with his *ṭughrā* and so forth, and he took away the treasure chests;[81] after a while, he must have returned to Khwārazm and taken the treasures with him. What is remarkable is that he did not, apparently, distribute the treasures he had taken in Marw – at least, there is no report of this, and he was able to restore them two years or so later, when Sanjar again marched on Khwārazm. "Turkish" ideals of governance would have obliged him to distribute the treasures as booty,[82] and if the report about the treasures and their final restoration is correct, that would mean that he intended to use the treasures in another, more "Iranian" way. Or did he anticipate that he would have to give them back? The sources say that he saved his life by restoring them with their seals untouched.[83]

It is a moot point when the Qarakhiṭai action against Khwārazm took place (if it took place at all; it is only reported in Juwainī). Bartol'd has argued that it could not have been

77 Tor 2010.

78 Ibn al-Athīr 11:67.

79 Bundārī 280; Ḥusainī 95.

80 Ibn al-Athīr 11:87.

81 Ḥusainī 93; Bundārī 256.

82 Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib 114, verse 2275. It is beyond the scope of this article to decide what was "Turkish" in the behaviour of either Atsız or Sanjar.

83 Bundārī 281. *wa-radda Khwārazmshāh 'alā Sanjar ṣanādīq jawāhirihi allatī akhadhahā min al-khizāna bi-Marw bi-khatamihā wa-ḥaqqaqa salāmata nafsihi bi-ḥaqq salmihā*; "the Khwārazmshāh returned to Sanjar the treasure chests he had taken from the treasure-house in Marw, with their seals untouched, and he earned the safety of his person by their integrity." This could be a literary device showing that Atsız, even if he was challenging Sanjar in the most extreme ways, was careful not to burn all his bridges. See also Ḥusainī 95.

immediately after Qaṭwān because this would have hindered Atsız from raiding Khurāsān; and he therefore thinks that the following year would be a possible date, before Atsız went back to Khurāsān.[84] The point is not without importance because, as Köymen states, this would mean that Atsız went on his second raid into Khurāsān as a Qarakhiṭai vassal.[85] For Juwainī also remarks that, after the Qarakhiṭai action in Khwārazm, Atsız had accepted payment of an annual tribute of 30.000 dinars; Jūzjānī also insists that the Khwārazmshāh paid tribute to the Qarakhiṭai from that time.[86] It is perhaps best to leave the question open, but it seems likely that Atsız accepted Qarakhiṭai overlordship from a moment not very long after Qaṭwān, and until his death – if he had not done so already at some point before the battle.[87]

At any rate, sitting on the throne and taking away the treasure is tantamount to claiming the sultanate and the Seljuqid imperial heritage, and this was indeed the claim Atsız made in that period.

The following year, Atsız again set off on a raid against Khurāsān, concentrating his efforts this time on Nīshāpūr. There was no resistance from Sanjar or any of his emirs, and Atsız seems to have been able to proceed into Khurāsān without any problem. Before taking Nīshāpūr, Atsız proclaimed the end of the Seljuqid dynasty, and that he and his house had now taken over. The text of the proclamation, again, is extant in the collection of *inshā'* documents where the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm* and the *Saugand-nāma* are also transmitted.[88] In this proclamation, Atsız declared that as long as Sanjar had kept his promises, he had been successful and the banner of his fortune had flown high; but now, since he had exchanged good faith for fickleness, and above all since he neglected to respect the old rights to which Atsız was entitled, and since he no longer knew his friends, his good fortune had deserted him.[89] Atsız then announced that he was about to reach Nīshāpūr and ordered that the Friday sermon, the coinage and the official robes of honour all be in his name.

The Friday prayer in Nīshāpūr was indeed held in the name of the Khwārazmshāh Atsız from 29 May until 24 July; on 31 July 1142, it was again held for Sanjar.

This move was accompanied in literature by poems written by the court poet Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ. One of the poems is dated in the source (Juwainī) to the conquest of Marw in autumn 1141, and it is on the same lines as the proclamation at Nīshāpūr: "Prince Atsız has ascended the throne of the realm * the [fortune of the] dynasty of Seljuq and his descendants is over".[90] There may be doubt as to the literary quality of the verse, but not about its intentions: what Atsız had in mind at this point was not "independence" (if that meant separation from the Seljuq empire and subsequently some form of coexistence with it), but supplanting the Seljuqs altogether, probably not just in Khurāsān, but in the entire Seljuqid

84 Bartol'd 1963, 390.

85 Köymen 1954, 338–339.

86 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 2:88; Jūzjānī 357; see also Biran 2005, 44 and Biran 2001.

87 Biran 2005, 49.

88 *Aḫkām* 142b-143b; Bartol'd 1900, 43–44; translation Buniyatov 1999, 21–22; translation Köymen 1954, 339–341.

89 *mā-rā bar dar zad wa ḥuqūq-i qadīm [-i mā] wa aslāf-i mā ba-bād bar dād*; also in Buniyatov 1999, 23, and in Köymen 1954, 343.

90 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 5. *malik Atsız ba-takht-i mulk bar āmad * daulat-i Saljūq wa āl-i ū ba-sar āmad.*

domains. This was achieved only decades later, when Tekesh again claimed the Seljuqid heritage in summer 1189, as Juwainī knew very well. This verse takes up the earlier ones quoted in Rāwandī and 'Aufī.

Even if the verses, the one attributed to Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ and the one quoted in 'Aufī were not sent at this point or were not sent at all, they prove that Atsız, in the eyes of his contemporaries as well as of later authors, and probably also in his own eyes, now saw a *furṣa* to claim the sultanate.

The raids into the region of Baihaq that Ibn Funduq reports for this year (537/1141–2) are attributed to Yınaltegin b. Khwārazmshāh, and it is not altogether clear whether or not they were coordinated with Atsız; Yınaltegin belongs in the context of the "western" Khwārazmian princes, who are often mentioned in the sources together with Sulaimān b. Muḥammad, and did not necessarily act in accordance with plans made at the Khwārazmian court.[91]

The arguments Atsız adduced in his "proclamation at Nīshāpūr" are taken up again in a letter that he had Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ write to the Caliph al-Muqtafī after Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign. In this letter, Atsız insisted on the importance of Khwārazm and its rulers for the security of Khurāsān; his father had, over long years, fought the infidels so that people could sleep quietly in Khwārazm and Khurāsān, and he, Atsız, had followed in his father's footsteps. In battles from Jand and Samarqand to 'Irāq, he had fought for Sanjar. Due to the efforts of the Khwārazmshāhs from the time of Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Seljuqs, and in particular Sanjar, had been able to dominate the world, and indeed they no longer had any serious enemy. But Sanjar was not a faithful lord: he had oppressed his subjects, he had killed innocent people, he had sent Ismā'īlī murderers against Atsız, as he had against the caliphs al-Mustarshid and al-Rāshid.[92] His evil ways had led to his catastrophic defeat at Qaṭwān, where Sanjar had besmirched his name by ignobly fleeing from the battlefield even before battle was joined in earnest. As a consequence, there was no longer anybody to protect him, his throne was shaky – that is what is in store for oppressors. Moreover, he had not drawn the necessary conclusions; he had not repented, he had not mended his evil ways and held back his retainers, but on the contrary, he had continued to do mischief: he had gone to war against Atsız, and invaded Khwārazm. Therefore, "misfortune is his commander", and here Waṭwāṭ uses the same term, *idbār*, as was used for Atsız in the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm* (from Sanjar's first Khwārazmian campaign), written probably by Badī' Atabek al-Juwainī.[93] This assessment of Sanjar culminates in a verse: "Even worse than unbelievers is he who flees from them * and attacks true believers and goes to war against them."[94]

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91 Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh* 283. Another raid into Baihaq took place in the Ghuzz years; Yınaltegin then stayed in the region from the beginning of Shawwal 548, until mid-Ṣafar 549 (20 December 1153 – late April 1154), that is, he used Baihaq as winter quarters. The source describes what Yınaltegin did in very similar terms both times: destroying, plundering, and burning trees, in particular such trees as had survived from the time of Zoroaster (Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh* 271). Bartol'd's statement that he stayed in the region until autumn 1154 is perhaps based on another version of the text (Bartol'd 1963, 393).

92 For the killing of these two caliphs, see Tor 2009; she comes to the conclusion that Sanjar was more than involved in the murders.

93 *al-idbār qā'iduhu*, Waṭwāṭ, *Rasā'il*, 8. See above note 50.

94 Waṭwāṭ, *Rasā'il* 8. *wa-sharrun min al-kuffāri man farra minhum * wa-karra 'alā ahli l-hudā li-yuḥāribā.*

There is talk of Atsız being in danger at Sanjar's court in other sources too (see above in 'Aufī and below in Juwainī), but no other source speaks of Ismā'īlī killers being sent after Atsız. Interestingly, there is one report about a member of the Khwārazmian dynasty falling victim to Ismā'īlī daggers: 'Ain al-Daula Khwārazmshāh was reportedly killed by Ismā'īlī *fidā'īs* in Ǧumādā I 543 (began 24 December 1139), in Sanjar's camp in Khwārazm.[95] Now Sanjar at that point was no longer in Khwārazm, but he had been there one year earlier. On the other hand, the presence of 'Ain al-Daula in Sanjar's army is nowhere referred to. But the report in Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh may still be taken as indicative: Sanjar was not above sending Ismā'īlī killers or tolerating their action, and Khwārazmian princes could have been among the possible victims.

Taken together, in the first year or so after Qaṭwān, Atsız did not work for Khwārazmian "independence", but he challenged Sanjar by claiming the sultanate for himself. He did so by sitting on the throne in Marw, by carrying away Sanjar's treasures (although he did not take the last step of distributing them), by sending the verses quoted above (if they were indeed ever sent), and by having the Friday sermon read in his name at Nīshāpūr and so forth. He announced that from now on, he would be striving to supplant Sanjar and take his heritage; Sanjar was by then in his mid-fifties, and he had no heir.

As soon as Sanjar had put some troops together again, ransomed his wife and his most important emirs, and come back to Marw, he clearly had to meet the challenge. After re-establishing his rule in Khurāsān and having the Friday prayer read in his name again in Nīshāpūr, he started his second Khwārazmian campaign. The campaign is reported under 538/1143–4 in Ibn al-Athīr but, as we shall see presently, there is evidence for placing it one year earlier, in 1142–3. According to one account, there was no battle as such this time, just some fighting around Hazārasp and/or Urganch, the capital, where Atsız had withdrawn. In all, the campaign ended in a kind of peace agreement. The restoration of the treasure chests was part of the agreement and, as mentioned above, the fact that Atsız was able to restore them with their seals intact saved his life. Another reason to spare the life of the Khwārazmian may have been fear of the Qarakhiṭai.[96] The return of the Khwārazmshāh into the imperial fold, the *ṭā'a*, was ritualized in a ceremony that took place on both banks of the Amu Darya and, indeed, across it. Bundārī and Ḥusainī, the sources that report it, say that Atsız came to a certain place (which both sides apparently had agreed upon before) and dismounted where he could be seen, kissed the ground and, by the same token, accepted the obligations of vassalage.[97] Sanjar had stayed on the other bank of the river, and after the ceremony, he returned to Khurāsān.

Ibn al-Athīr's version differs in some essential points. He says that the Khurāsānīs were on the point of taking the city (Urganch, probably), but that they finally failed to do so because of their continuous infighting (perhaps a literary device to prepare the reader for the final disaster in the Ghuzz wars), and thus, Sanjar wanted to return; but

95 Rashīd al-Dīn 97. As we have seen, some Khwārazmian princes were active in the west. What their position in the family was is hard to tell, and sometimes they seem to have been on bad terms with Atsız.

96 Biran 2005, 49.

97 Bundārī 281. *nazala bi-ḥaithu yurā wa-qabbala l-arḍ wa-taqabbala l-farḍ*, and see Ḥusainī 95–96.

> he could not do that without a treaty being concluded between him and Atsız, and they agreed that the Khwārazmshāh would send messengers, give tribute and perform a ceremony of *ṭā'a* and *khidma*, and that thus, Atsız would return to his previous state of obedience.[98]

This meant that Atsız would again accept the terms of the oath he had sworn in May 1141. If this is correct, he would have been the vassal of two lords at the same time: the Qarakhiṭai to whom he sent tribute, and Sanjar to whom he now renewed his allegiance.

There are two important differences between the reports. The first is that Sanjar does not get beyond a stalemate in Ibn al-Athīr, while the other reports say that he was able to take the place by force, so the balance of power is different. The second is in the details of the ceremony in which Atsız declares himself to have returned to vassal status, and thus to have dropped his claims to the sultanate and to have accepted the obligations of a vassal, both material and ceremonial. There is no information about material obligations in Bundārī and Ḥusainī, and the ceremony is described in much more detail in these two (closely related) texts; in Ibn al-Athīr, it is just hinted at.

Juwainī's version is not so detailed, either. He simply states that, at some point, Atsız asked for pardon, sent gifts to some of the important emirs (indicating that he wanted them to act as intermediaries), and some kind of agreement was reached; there is no description of a ceremony, and the terms of the agreement are not given. The military outcome of the campaign is not discussed, either.[99]

The "*khidma* across the river" is possibly a set piece. There is at least one more instance of such a ceremony, involving Sanjar and the Qarakhanid ruler, Muḥammad Khan (1102–29). The most detailed version is in Ibn al-Athīr. In the course of a punitive expedition that Sanjar led into Transoxiana, the Qarakhanid saw that he could not resist, and wanted to end hostilities by submitting. He therefore contacted a leading figure in Sanjar's camp. The negotiations resulted in Sanjar's promising to forgive, but with the stipulation that Muḥammad Khan would have to come and step on his carpet. Muḥammad Khan was afraid to accept (he did not trust that he would be allowed to leave, and was uncertain about what Sanjar might do to him), and offered instead to do *khidma* across the river. Sanjar at first refused, but then accepted; Sanjar thus rode to the Khurāsānian bank of the Amu Darya while Muḥammad came forward to the Transoxanian side, dismounted and kissed the ground. After that, both rulers withdrew.[100]

The "*khidma* across the river" ceremony took place across a considerable distance; the Amu Darya is so wide that a person would be hardly be discernable (if at all) to someone on the other side. The distance between the two actors may be seen as symbolic of the distance that had grown – and was accepted – between the lord and the vassal. Moreover, a report in

98 Ibn al-Athīr 11:96. *wa-lam yumkinhu min ghairi qā'idatin tastaqirru bainahumā fa-ttafaqa anna Khwārazmshāh arsala rusulan yabdhalu l-māl wa l-ṭā'a wa l-khidma wa-ya'ūdu ilā mā kāna 'alaihi min al-inqiyād.*

99 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 7–8. See below for the place of this report in Juwainī's narrative.

100 Ibn al-Athīr 10:497–8, s. a. 507/1113–4. A shorter version is found in Ibn Isfandiyar 2:39–40; there, Sanjar is seated on a throne that was erected for the occasion, rather than on horseback.

which Atsız is said to have been allowed to do *khidma* from a distance tells us that, in the view of the authors, he had by then gained a status (at least) on par with the "subject kings".

But things were probably different from what is suggested in these reports. Atsız did not behave as a faithful vassal after Sanjar had returned to Khurāsān. In 1143, the Qarakhiṭai Gurkhan Yelü Dashi had died. Perhaps this was a *furṣa* for some – at least Biran thinks that in 1144, the Ghuzz took advantage of the khan's death to raid Bukhara where the Qarakhiṭai had a governor.[101] It is not impossible that Atsız had a hand in this, since he had done practically the same thing some years earlier. This is conjecture – but there are hints at a Ghuzz alliance with Khwārazm, which will be quoted below.

That things were different is also suggested by a contrasting report on Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign, preserved (with all the literary features belonging to the genre) in the letter that Atsız had Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ write to the Caliph al-Muqtafī. The collection of letters written in Arabic which Waṭwāṭ made, and in particular the highly relevant first two texts addressed to the caliph, has been mentioned in earlier scholarship only in passing.[102] In the version set out here, Sanjar did not win the war. He came to Hazārasp at the end of October 1142 (note that the Friday sermon was again in Sanjar's name at Nīshāpūr on 31 July 1142), but was unable to take the town. He then proceeded to Urganch, but did not reach the capital, because he was undecided on what action to take. He chose to take a circuitous route without any fixed destination and finally appeared before Urganch in early April 1143, with his army completely exhausted. Throughout these winter months, Khwārazmian detachments had constantly harassed the Khurāsānians. There was finally a battle at Urganch (for which, as Atsız makes a point of stating, he had a *fatwā* from the leading Khwārazmian scholars), and Sanjar's troops were soundly beaten and driven away. Their retreat turned into disorderly flight after a siege at Āskand, a fortress in the southernmost part of Khwārazm, which the Khurāsānīs had to surrender after 50 days.[103]

101 See above note 65. Biran 2005, 49. Her assumption that Sanjar also tried to take advantage of the situation, and that his expedition to Khwārazm was timed accordingly, presupposes a late dating of the Khwārazmian campaign, and also seems to underrate the reasons Sanjar had for that campaign.

102 Kafesoğlu consulted a manuscript, Nuru Osmaniye 4294, but used the text only to show that Atsız was able to gain immediate recognition by the caliph (Kafesoğlu 1956, 56 with note 110). Buniyatov had the printed edition, but misdated the letter to 1141. (It is hard to understand how, because the dates of the second Khwārazm campaign are clearly quoted and the context – post-Qaṭwān – is clear beyond doubt.) Buniyatov uses the letter to underline that Atsız was sure that his efforts towards "independence" would not meet with any serious obstacles from Sanjar. The summary he provides is ridden with mistakes and inaccuracies (Buniyatov 1999, 18–19).

103 Waṭwāṭ, *Rasā'il* 9–13. The name of the fortress is confirmed in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Dīwān*, where it is mentioned once alongside other important fortresses such as Hazārasp (Waṭwāṭ, *Dīwān* 581). The relevant verses seem to refer to a victory gained at Hazārasp and Āskand, but it is not specified over whom. The poet addresses a "wise man": "Have you not seen the blows of the king's sword in the steppes of Samarqand and Jand? Come here, and with expert eyes look at these high fortresses which tell you the story of the prisoners: Hazārasp, Sarīgul and Āskand. And while the clouds are weeping this way, you should laugh like the rose in the garden of victory." *nadīdī magar zakhm-i tīgh-i malik * ba-dasht-i Samarqand wa ṣaḥrā-yi Jand? * yakī bar gudhar, pas ba-chashm-i khirad * nigah kun badīn qal'ahā-yi buland * ki qiṣṣa-yi bandiyān gūyad-at * Hazārasf wa Shārīgul wa Āskand * hamī tā ba-garīd badīn sān saḥāb * tū chūn gul ba-bustān-i nuṣrat ba-khand.* As so often, we do not know exactly when the poem was written, but the context could be the outcome of the second Khwārazmian campaign.

The letter ends with a petition to the caliph: Atsız asks for a formal appointment over Khwārazm (the larger province, but no detailed description of the area) in order to dishearten those who envied the Khwārazmshāh. Apparently, something of the sort was granted; at least robes of honour were provided, because Atsız, in another letter to al-Muqtafī, announces that these robes have arrived and that he has shown them with pride to all his retainers – and the text mentions "sedentary and nomad" explicitly.[104]

This is a very different picture; even if one does not want to follow the Khwārazmian version entirely, it counterbalances the "Khurāsānian" version and must be seriously considered. Of course, the Khwārazmian version does not mention that Atsız had attacked Khurāsān the previous year. The treasure chests are likewise passed over in silence. But on the other hand, no victory is accredited to Sanjar in the other sources. It is possible that Sanjar's second Khwārazm campaign did actually end in the more or less disorderly retreat of the Khurāsānians. It probably took Sanjar more than two or three years to recover after Qaṭwān and, in any case, even if the campaign was not as complete a failure as the Khwārazmian version indicates, it cannot have helped his recovery.

Another very important pointer in this direction is that Atsız's behaviour afterwards was not that of a vassal. The numismatic evidence at least partly confirms the Khwārazmian version of Sanjar's second campaign into Khwārazm. Atsız now struck coins with the name of the western sultan Mas'ūd instead of Sanjar's; such coins are extant with dates from 538–540/1143–4 – 1145–6.[105] It therefore seems that Atsız did not in fact return to vassal status, or at least that he did not acknowledge Sanjar as his overlord. Perhaps he was a Qarakhiṭai vassal, as we find in Juwainī (but even then, he must have remained formally within the legal conventions of Islamic rulership – the Qarakhiṭai did not interfere, and Atsız acknowledged the caliph on all his coins). Perhaps he had reached some form of agreement with Mas'ūd,

104 Waṭwāṭ, *Rasā'il* 13, letter no. 2, p. 15. *ḥāḍir wa-bād*[in].

105 Bartol'd refers to such a coin, a dinar from 538/1143–4 (Bartol'd 1963, 391 note 2; see also Richter-Bernburg 1976, 186–187). It is astonishing that none of the other authors refers to Bartol'd's remark. Gold coins of this type are held in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, and were described by Markov in the late nineteenth century. My thanks go to the Head of the Section of Ancient and Oriental Numismatics at the Hermitage, Dr Konstantin Kravtsov, for checking the coins again for me. Buniyatov does write that Atsız struck gold coins beginning with the caliphal appointment (mentioned in Waṭwāṭ's letter), which Buniyatov misdates to 1141, but he does not refer to any specific examples (Buniyatov 1999, 19). Khodzhaniyazov refers to three such coins; a date, 54-, can partly be read on one of them, and Khodzhaniyazov thinks that this can be only 540 or 541/1145–7, because in 542/1148, according to Khodzhaniyazov, Atsız submitted to Sanjar again. (This, however, refers to Juwainī's report about the third campaign in the *Jahān-gushā* and must be regarded with caution.) As a motive for the issue of this coinage, Khodzhaniyazov assumes that Atsız wanted to secure Mas'ūd's backing in his struggle against Sanjar and to consolidate the "independence" of his state; since no support was forthcoming from the West, he gave up on this (Khodzhaniyazov 1971, 91–92). It is interesting that Il Arslan b. Atsız had a letter written to the caliph in which he lends support to Mas'ūd; the letter very much stresses the position of the caliph as overlord (*Aḫkām* 76a–77b). In another letter, however, written to Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Malikshāh (r. 1153–1160), he seems to recognize the new sultan as his overlord. He announces the sending of a representative who is to renew the "compact of *khidmat*" (*'ahd-i khidmat*), and then to act as the Khwārazmshāh's on-going ambassador (*Aḫkām* 78a-79a). Even after the end of the Seljuq sultanate in the east, the Khwārazmshāh therefore thought it prudent to send such letters, and recognition of "western" sultans was by no means excluded (even if that is not reflected in the coinage).

but this is not even hinted at in the sources. If we had the full correspondence between him and the caliph – we have only the letters that Atsız allegedly wrote, not the replies – this probably would provide the answer. Perhaps Atsız understood his agreement with the caliph (if he had reached one) to imply acceptance of Mas'ūd as a pro-forma Seljuq overlord. The *khidma* ceremony across the river was possibly no more than a device to save face on Sanjar's part, and everybody must have known, just as they did when Sulaimān was installed instead of Atsız in 1138–9, that no practical consequences, and particularly no military consequences, were to be expected if the sultan was not obeyed. In 1142–3, the Qarakhiṭai alliance may still have been important, even if no Qarakhiṭai intervention in the conflict between Atsız and Sanjar is recorded, either on this occasion or later. Of course, the Qarakhiṭai alliance is not mentioned in the Khwārazmian letters to the caliph.[106]

Why, then, did Atsız cease to strike such coins after three years? There are examples of Khwārazmian gold coinage with Sanjar as overlord again later, e. g. from 544/1149–50.[107] Had Sanjar made it clear at long last that he was not prepared to tolerate such behaviour any longer? Or was there a link to the conflicts in the west? Sanjar and Mas'ūd had met in Raiy in 543/1148–9, and Mas'ūd had recognized Sanjar again as his overlord – was it time for Atsız to follow suit?[108] Or was all this the result of Sanjar's third campaign into Khwārazm, which is described only in Juwainī (and therefore analysed later)? The outcome of that campaign as Juwainī has it was, however, not such that it would make Atsız submit, and the most plausible explanation is therefore that Atsız dropped Mas'ūd and referred to Sanjar on his gold coins again because Mas'ūd had submitted to Sanjar at Raiy.

Or perhaps Atsız simply had to acknowledge that Sanjar had succeeded in reestablishing his rule in Khurāsān in the years after Qaṭwān, even if he never regained his former might, so that it seemed wiser to keep a lower profile, particularly after Mas'ūd had come to the conclusion, after long conflicts with various coalitions of emirs, that it would be best once more to emphasize Sanjar's position as overlord. Sanjar had even gained some authority in Transoxiana again, if only in Bukhara; in 541/1145–6 coins bearing his name were issued there.[109] Kochnev thinks that this means that the Qarakhanid ruler in whose name these coins were minted, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad, was a vassal of Sanjar as well as of the

106 This is not reflected in Khwārazmian titulature, either (Richter-Bernburg 1976, 187).

107 Busse Peus Nachfolger auction 386, April 26, 2006, lot no. 1149. My thanks go to Stefan Heidemann for making this piece available to me and for helping with reading the inscription.

108 Richter-Bernburg summarizes: From 538 to 543, relations between Sanjar and his rebellious vassal Atsız were very bad indeed (Richter-Bernburg 1976, 186–187). Richter-Bernburg does not have any information about post-543/1148–9 Khwārazmian coinage in the name of Atsız. The date of the meeting between Sanjar and Mas'ūd is problematic; it is reported differently in the narrative sources, and may also have taken place in 544/1149–50. For a discussion, see Durand-Guédy (2011b, 220 and 247).

109 Kochnev 1997, 261 no. 1026. The coin – a Bukharan coin with Sanjar's name from 1148 (probably 543) – which Biran refers to quoting another publication of this author (Biran 2005, 49 note 7) is not in the list in Kochnev 1997. Samarqandī coins minted in the name of *al-Khāqān al-'ādil Gūrkhān* start in 547, and there is even an undated piece with the names of both Sanjar and the Gurkhan (Kochnev 1997, 262 no. 1037; see also Kochnev 2006, 223).

Qarakhiṭai, a situation which is also assumed with regard to Atsız.[110] The rest of Transoxiana, and in particular Samarqand, was definitely lost to Seljuqid rule.

However that may be, Atsız, too, had to recover lost ground. In October 1145, he set out to re-conquer Jand. A *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Jand* found in a collection of official correspondence made by Waṭwāṭ and also in the *Aḥkām-i salāṭīn-i māḍī*[111] states that some unfortunate trouble-makers had profited from the fact that Atsız had been busy elsewhere (no explicit reference is made to the raids in Khurāsān or Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign), and that someone who had the impudence to call himself *khān* left the place quickly as soon as Atsız appeared together with the Khwārazmian troops. In a report in Juwainī dated to Muḥarram 547/April 1152, Atsız is seen conquering Jand again, and his adversary there was a Qarakhanid, Kamāl al-Dīn b. Arslan Khan Maḥmūd, who apparently ruled there on behalf of or with the approval of the Qarakhiṭai.[112] Since Juwainī does not mention the 1145 campaign and nobody else notes a campaign in 1152, it is altogether possible that we have only one re-conquest of Jand instead of two (see below), and that the unfortunate would-be khan in the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Jand* is the equally unfortunate Kamāl al-Dīn. It would be hard to explain when and why and to whom Atsız lost Jand again after 1145; the military situation did not change fundamentally between 1145 and 1152. It is probably best to assume that some Qıpchaq groups had established or re-established themselves there after Qaṭwān, either in the course of the Qarakhiṭai advance, or profiting from the Khwārazmian's absence in Khurāsān in 1141–2. Khwārazmian relationships with Qıpchaq groups were very important, but not always friendly, and even Tekesh had some problems keeping them under control – the conflicts took place precisely in the lower Syr Darya region.[113]

Only in Juwainī do we have more campaigns and more information about the struggle between Atsız and Sanjar until Sanjar's defeat at the hands of the Ghuzz, his captivity and so forth. These will be analysed later.

During the Ghuzz years, Atsız did not try openly to profit from this *furṣa*; he did not intervene militarily, either to free Sanjar or to occupy Khurāsānian territory; but neither did he challenge Sanjar, and he did not put himself forward as a candidate for the sultanate; maybe he was not even behind the election of Sulaimān b. Muḥammad as Sanjar's deputy or replacement.[114] The numerous letters he wrote to the most noted "subject kings" are rhetori-

110 Kochnev 2006, 224.

111 Waṭwāṭ 71; *Aḥkām* 126b–128a; Bartol'd 1900, 41–2; translation Buniyatov 1999, 24–26, based on Thābitī 1346 with some variations. (I have not seen Thābitī's collection.)

112 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 10–11. Things may be more complicated. There are several poems in praise of Kamāl al-Dīn in Waṭwāṭ's *Dīwān*, one at least of which likens Jand to the gardens of Paradise because of that ruler's justice (Waṭwāṭ, *Dīwān* 134), so Kamāl al-Dīn must have ruled there at some point with the consent of the Khwārazmshāh.

113 Bartol'd 1963, 406–7.

114 Schwarz 1992, 60–62. Sulaimān was declared sultan on 16 Jumādā II 548 (11 September 1153) and stayed in Khurāsān until Ṣafar 549 (began 17 April 1154). He left the throne – and Khurāsān – without taking the trouble to name his successor; this was not the first time that he simply deserted, nor was it the last. In a very interesting letter in Waṭwāṭ's collection, again addressed to the Caliph al-Muqtafī, Atsız seems to suggest another Seljuqid as a candidate for the position of Seljuqid overlord at around this time, Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. Malikshāh (who reigned in the west from 1153 to 1160) (Waṭwāṭ, *Rasā'il*, no. 5 p.

cally perfect, but they never announce any particular action;[115] Atsız seems to have waited for the drama to produce its own solution. Some of his letters were written from the region of Nasā, and Atsız had a camp in Khabūshān/Ustuwāna – so he was not altogether idle; neither Nasā nor Khabūshān had been part of the Khwārazmian domains before, and thus Atsız now had a bridgehead on the southern side of the Qaraqum, if he had not obtained one earlier, when taking Kabūdjāma in either 1139 or 1142. This was an important step, and Atsız had clearly profited from the situation.

Expansion into this area meant winning over emirs and other leading men. A document in the *Aḥkām* collection refers to Atsız appointing as governor in Nasā an unnamed emir who had joined Atsız, together with his fully equipped troops. The document is undated, but it was probably written in the years when Sanjar was in Ghuzz captivity.[116]

One intriguing document, though, may shed some light on Khwārazmian politics in the years preceding the Ghuzz wars. This is the letter Atsız allegedly wrote to the Ghuzz leader, Ṭūṭī Beg.[117] The letter first gives an outline of the friendly relations between Khwārazm and the Ghuzz, then describes why Sanjar stayed with the Ghuzz, and finally admonishes Ṭūṭī Beg to seek the Khwārazmshāh's and the other "subject kings'" mediation and to ask for pardon. The most interesting part in our context is thus the first. Atsız says whenever any of the subordinates of the addressee or any other Ghuzz groups had had difficulties in Khurāsān or Māwarānnahr, and had come to Khwārazm, relying on the gracious and charitable attitude Atsız had always demonstrated towards them, Atsız had done what he could to accommodate them, had provided food and pasture and given gifts.[118] Khwārazm and the Ghuzz, or more particularly Atsız and Ṭūṭī Beg, must therefore have shared some common history, and one is reminded of the Ghuzz who raided Bukhara in 1144. But even if we do not assume some Khwārazmian connivance with the raiding Ghuzz at that stage, the letter speaks of earlier friendly relationships with the Ghuzz (or at least the group under Ṭūṭī Beg's leadership), and also states the ways in which Atsız made himself attractive to the Ghuzz and to nomads in general: he welcomed them and gave them gifts and pasture; he honoured the nomad leaders and probably integrated them into his military; he provided a haven for nomads who had run into trouble in the neighbouring states, Seljuq Khurāsān and Qarakhanid Transoxiana.

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22). This would support Schwarz in his assumption that Atsız did not back Sulaimān as a candidate for the Seljuq throne.

115 Samples in Baghdādī, Waṭwāṭ and *Aḥkām*, too numerous to be quoted.

116 *Aḥkām* 57a-b; in Horst 1964, 119–120 document I-13.

117 *Aḥkām* 55a-57a; Bartol'd 1900, 28–29; translation Buniyatov 1999, 34–35, with a reference to a manuscript of Waṭwāṭ's *Arā'is*; thus, this document (like so many other documents from the Khwārazmian chancery transmitted in *Aḥkām*) was probably written by Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ. Bartol'd calls this piece "one of the best examples for the style of Oriental diplomats", apparently because the letter does not address the question of Sanjar's captivity directly and seeks to present Sanjar as master of his decisions in any situation (Bartol'd 1963, 394).

118 *Aḥkām* 55b. *har waqt ki ṭā'ifa-rā az muttaṣilān-i jānib-i maḥrūs wa dīgar ṭabaqāt-i ḥasham-i Ghuzz* [...] *dar aṭrāf-i Khurāsān wa Mā warā l-nahr dil-tangī uftāda ast wa īshān ba-ḥukm-i i'timādī ki bar murā'āt wa shafaqat-i īn jānib dāshta and ba-khiṭṭa-yi Khwārazm āmada and īn jānib na ba-andāza-yi kathrat-i 'adad wa kifāf-i īshān balki ba-andāza-yi imkān dar 'arṣa-yi wilāyat taqṣīrī na-rafta ast wa ānchi dar wus' būda ast az khalā'iq-i in'ām wa daqā'iq-i ikrām az quwwat ba-fi'l āwarda shuda ast.*

In a letter in Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ's collection, which can be dated by its contents to October-November 1156, he excuses Il Arslan b. Atsız for not coming to Khurāsān to fight the Ghuzz after Sanjar had returned to Marw in October 1156. (Another letter written to the same person and in the same situation refers to messengers who had come to Khwārazm and left again after a short stay in Dhū l-Qa'da. The year is not given, but it must be 551/December 1156.[119]) Sanjarī emirs had apparently called upon him; the letter is addressed to a "regional lord", *ṣāḥib-ṭarafī*. The justification for Il Arslan b. Atsız not coming is that, in Khwārazm in winter, there is always a danger of unbelievers raiding the oasis, particularly since the death of the *malik* (Atsız d. on July 30, 1156). This had made the unbelievers more daring, and the danger was very real. In addition, efforts had to be made to keep Jand and Manqıshlaq under control and, at the time of writing, the troops had not yet returned from a campaign in Sāq.[120] Finally, Rashīd al-Dīn expresses the hope that in the spring, Khwārazmian troops might come to Khurāsān and help fight the Ghuzz.[121] Nothing of the sort happened, however; Khwārazmian troops did not intervene in Khurāsān during the last months of Sanjar's life.

It is not necessary to see a pretext here: as stated above, Khwārazmian rulers always had to take note of movements in the steppe, and it was vital to maintain control of the winter pasture grounds around the Aral Sea, on the lower Syr Darya and the Manqıshlaq peninsula. Moreover, it is altogether plausible that the new Khwārazmshāh was not yet established firmly enough to consider campaigns in Khurāsān. I therefore prefer to read this letter as a statement, applicable not only to this situation, but in general, that Khwārazmian politics gave top priority to maintaining the stability of the region around the oasis and the Khwārazmian ruler's position and prestige among the nomads.

According to explicit statements in the sources, Atsız died on 30 July 1156,[122] and Sanjar freed himself from Ghuzz captivity in October of that year.[123] One of the things he managed to do before his death on 9 May 1157 was to write a deed appointing Il Arslan b. Atsız as the Khwārazmshāh.[124] There is a problem with the dates: in a number of letters, it is clear that Atsız was still alive when Sanjar obtained his freedom, and Ḥusainī mixes up Sanjar's liberation and his arrival in Marw, dating both to Ramaḍān 551 (began 18 October 1156). It seems clear, however, that Sanjar stayed in Tirmidh for a while before he went to Marw, and so we must put his liberation some months earlier.

In the letters Atsız allegedly wrote to Sanjar after his escape, he congratulated the sultan and then said that the subjects had become so used to Sanjar's rule that they had forgotten to thank God for its benefits, and that was why they had experienced so much misfortune. The sultan's captivity therefore served the purpose of making his subjects more apprecia-

119 Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā*, 129.

120 No place of this name is known to me; Sighnāq on the Syr Darya was one of the most frequently mentioned targets for Khwārazmian campaigns against Qıpchaq groups. To my knowledge, no such campaign is referred to elsewhere.

121 Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā* 127–128.

122 Date in Juwainī only, Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 13.

123 Date in Ḥusainī only, Ḥusainī 124.

124 Date in Juwainī only, Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 14.

tive of their duties.[125] The next letter is more submissive: Sanjar is given his habitual titles, including "God's Shadow on Earth" and representative of the Prophet, and the text states that everyone will now return to the true path of servitude. The third letter styles the sender as "this slave", and at the end of the text, he says that he had "always hoped that he would be able to do a *khidmat* and show deeds of servitude by which he would be able to ask for pardon for what had happened before".[126] This letter also mentions a messenger Sanjar had sent who had arrived at Atsız's camp in Rabīʿ I (the year is not given, but it must be 551; Rabīʿ I of that year began on 24 May 1156). Sanjar thus must have obtained his freedom from Ghuzz captivity towards March 1156.[127]

The last note is therefore one of reconciliation. The statement is repeated, nearly *verbatim*, in a letter Il Arslan sent, after his father's death, to the regional ruler of Sīstān.[128] It is not evident, however, that Atsız had really "repented" and was ready to ask Sanjar's pardon – he had done nothing to help the sultan, and he had clearly profited from the situation in Khurāsān.

Conclusions from the Pre-Mongol Sources

Atsız thus never worked for Khwārazmian "independence" in the sense that he aimed at establishing Khwārazm as a state distinct from and coexisting with the Seljuq empire. There was a period of a year or more, immediately after Qaṭwān, when he claimed the Seljuqid heritage in its entirety. Before Qaṭwān, he was mostly working to enhance his standing in the steppe and to increase his prestige among the Turkish nomads there, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. We have no explicit statement as to what kind of troops he led in Sanjar's battles in western Iran, in Transoxiana and the Ghazna campaign, but since he had a nomad-looking following when Sanjar went to war against him in 1138, it is reasonable to assume that this was essentially the kind of military manpower he had all along. If anything, the nomad component in the Khwārazmian forces became more important over the years.

The initial conflict between Sanjar and Atsız, which led to the sultan's first Khwārazmian campaign, is described in the sources as having had its foundation in the question of who was to have the allegiance of the nomads, particularly in Manqıshlaq and Jand (but probably also in the Turkmen regions in general, Balkhan-kūh, Dihistān and into Gurgān). Khwārazmian expansion in this period basically meant attracting local lords and nomad and other emirs; nomad leaders, in particular, made their own choices. Trying to make good use of nomad movements in the steppe had been an essential feature of Khwārazmian politics in earlier periods, too, and Atsız was apparently was very good at this. We do not know where

125 *Aḥkām* 45b; Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā* 6–7.

126 The last two letters in *Aḥkām* 46b and 47b; the quotation: *ki khidmatī kunad wa atharī dar ʿubūdiyyat ẓāhir gardānad ki badān ʿudhrhā-yi sābiq khwāsta shawad.* See also Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā* 8–11.

127 Kafesoğlu (1956, 69) and Köymen (1954, 454) have April 1156; this is based on Bartol'd (1900, 27–28; *Aḥkām* 50b corresponding to Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā* 18), where it is stated that in Ṣafar 551 (began 26 March 1156), Atsız learned that Sanjar had been liberated and was now in Tirmidh. The narrative in Juwainī and other authors also assumes that Sanjar came free when Atsız was still alive.

128 *Aḥkām* 75b, not in Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā*.

his mother came from; he is called *karīm al-ṭarafain* "of noble descent on both sides" in a book dedicated to him, which may mean that his mother was a Seljuqid princess, as Richter-Bernburg surmises, but there is also the possibility that she was a noble Qıpchaq lady. Qıpchaq marriage alliances were the rule in later generations of the Khwārazmian dynasty.[129]

Sanjar's first Khwārazmian campaign in 1138–1139 clearly brought him a military victory, but he did not succeed in retaining the nomadic allegiances that he received on the battlefield, and so the result was far from an unqualified success politically. Sulaimān b. Muḥammad certainly did not have the stamina to cope with the Qıpchaqs, Ghuzz and Turkmens who nomadized around Khwārazm. Sanjar's second campaign, which probably took place in 1142–1143, resulted in a much less brilliant outcome for the Seljuqid. Even if it was perhaps not an outright defeat, it produced at best a kind of stalemate, and Sanjar barely managed to save face. The third campaign, of 1148–1149, is only reported in Juwainī and will be discussed below.

Apart from the period when Atsız claimed the sultanate, he switched allegiances more than once. He swore an oath of allegiance to Sanjar; he must have submitted to the Qarakhiṭai Gurkhan; and for (at least) three years, he had coins minted in the name of the western sultan Mas'ūd, but that was in the context of his alliance with the Caliph al-Muqtafī; he continued largely to ignore Sanjar as his overlord for several more years, perhaps until 543/1148–9. He eventually came back to Sanjar, but kept his distance. He may have been simultaneously subject to both Sanjar and the Qarakhiṭai Gurkhan. His attitude regarding overlords was dictated by opportunity, not unlike that of the nomad leaders whom he attracted: they, too, made their decisions depending on which alliance would best serve their interests.

If Atsız wanted to continue as ruler in Khwārazm, he probably had to expand his territory in order to remain attractive to nomad leaders, so he himself had to adapt his strategies to suit nomad preferences, and up to a point he was a nomad lord simply because he was a lord of nomads.

Atsız tried to expand into two areas: the lower Syr Darya region and the steppe regions down to the Caspian littoral, including Gurgān. It was the latter, to the south-west, that later became paramount. Expanding into the south-west meant, among other things, gaining a bridgehead on the southern side of the Qaraqum. There, expansion was most possible in the interstitial region between Seljuqid (core) Khurāsān and the Bāwandid domains in Māzandarān; thus, Kabūdjāma (and later Nasā) were favoured targets. Expanding into both regions came quite naturally – the more attractive Atsız was to the leaders of the nomads and other emirs who lived and ruled there, the more he expanded.

The mechanics of vassalage are only referred to in one document, the *Saugand-nāma*, which Atsız swore in 1141, and in the "*khidma* across the river" ceremony reported in some sources at the end of Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign. On both occasions, Atsız accepted or confirmed his vassal status and submitted to Sanjar as his lord, but there were no practical consequences in either case; it is not stated that Atsız resumed giving tribute or paying taxes to the sultanate, and it is clear that he never again supported Sanjar militarily. Neither Atsız nor Khwārazmian troops in general were present at Qaṭwān.

129 Richter-Bernburg 1976, 184.

Later, and also during the Ghuzz years, Atsız was careful not to appear as a rebel. He styled himself as the leader of the anti-Ghuzz coalition and he offered his services as mediator, but he was also careful not to enter into a full-blown conflict with the Ghuzz, with whom he apparently had had friendly relations before. Again, as before Qaṭwān, he may have been waiting for the end of the drama before committing himself to either side.

Atsız also was a Qarakhiṭai vassal. It is not possible to ascertain whether he had come to some form of agreement with them before Qaṭwān, but after Qaṭwān the Qarakhiṭai could not have left him out, and so he was indeed "feeling his way between the two neighbouring powers of the Saljuqs and the Qarakhitai".[130]

All along, he responded to opportunities; if one takes away the "independence" paradigm, there is no sign of his single-minded determination in the sources. Characterizing Atsız as a determined man, following far-sighted plans, began with Bartol'd, and this view is in fact due to the determination with which researchers have read his craving for "independence" into the source narratives.

Characteristics of the Khwārazmshāh Dynasty

Some medieval authors comment upon the Khwārazmian dynasty as a whole. Rāwandī is known to have detested the Khwārazmians, whom he consistently describes as robbers. In his days, the Khwārazmshāhs had become an imperial power, and they threatened the remaining Seljuq states in the west. But there is more: "ingratitude for benefit", *kufrān-i ni'mat*, which was thought to lead sooner or later to a man's or a dynasty's downfall, was hereditary among them; Atsız had rebelled against Sanjar, and so would his descendants, and also the sultans of Rāwandī's time (Tekesh, and later Muḥammad).[131]

Jūzjānī does not comment on the character of Khwārazmian rule so much, but he has an interesting story about Sanjar and Atsız that is not found in any other source. Once, during a feast, Sanjar had given kingdoms to three men: Khwārazm to Atsız, Azerbaijan and Arrān to Ildeniz, and Fārs to Sunqur. Next morning, the viziers came to the sultan and told him about this, but Sanjar could not remember what he had done. Having been told the men's names and the kingdoms he had distributed, he said: two of them are my slaves, and one is my *chākar*.[132] A *chākar* is a retainer, bound to his lord in absolute loyalty, much as one would think of a slave, but, at least in this case, not legally a slave. The man whom Sanjar called his *chākar* was undoubtedly Atsız, who appears designated by the same term elsewhere in the same source;[133] the other two were slaves in the technical sense.[134] And Sanjar added: "Since there is no son to whom I might pass on the empire, it is better that my slaves inherit." The interesting point is that this author differentiates between the slave generals and the provincial ruler, to whom he assigns a kind of intermediate status.

130 Bosworth 1968, 143.
131 Rāwandī 370.
132 Jūzjānī 317.
133 Jūzjānī 304.
134 E. g., Jūzjānī 16. For the term *chākar*, see de la Vaissière 2007.

Juwainī's "World-Conqueror"

In this part, the focus is not on the reconstruction of events or political relationships, but on the reconstruction of a narrative – the Sanjar-Atsız narrative in Juwainī, which has served most researchers as the canvas on which they have drawn their own version. As I have argued above, I do not think that Juwainī can be dealt with on the same basis as the other sources. The following is therefore an attempt to assess Juwainī as a source. My thesis is that Juwainī can only cautiously be used as a source for events and political relationships, but that he is an extremely valuable source for understanding the link between lord and vassal.

As stated above, Juwainī presents a continuous narrative about Atsız; the story is organized around his conflict with Sanjar, and thus around questions of vassalage and lordship. But it is more than that. To a degree, Juwainī's text concentrates on the literary side of the conflict; it is a story not only of kings and wars, but also of literati and verses. Accounts of military action alternate with reports about literary competition: a battle of pens follows a battle of swords, and both battles are so intimately intertwined that it is hard to separate the two levels. In this section, therefore, an effort will be made to retrace the literary devices Juwainī uses, and to identify the earlier texts he refers to. This can only be achieved to a very limited extent, but the results show that Juwainī did take up literary threads where he found that appropriate, and that his whole narrative has been through a process of intense literary crafting. On the whole, it appears that Juwainī followed a given agenda that responded to the needs of his time, and that his narrative is therefore not only intended to be a factual report (in places, it is doubtful whether it is intended as such at all). It is a piece of ethical-rhetorical historiography, underlining the well-known truths of Iranian statecraft, which had not lost their validity – quite the contrary – as a result of of the Mongol conquest.[135] An ethical-rhetorical perspective is not unique to Juwainī; it is a main aspect of pre-modern Persian historiography in general, and the stories can be fashioned accordingly.

This explains why Juwainī relates so many stories not found in the pre-Mongol sources and for which no source can therefore be identified, even if sometimes it is possible to retrace the process of literary formulation.

Earning Rights: The Story of the Dangerous Hunt

Juwainī starts by contrasting Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad with Atsız. Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad was a model vassal, and this was clear from the way he "served": for as long as he ruled, a period of 30 years, he came to Sanjar's court every other year and on the other years sent his son, Atsız. He (therefore) was able to rule undisturbed. It is this version that is most frequently quoted.[136] The ideal vassal, as we note, comes to court regularly; if he is unable to come, he should send his son – the crown prince or the eldest son, if possible. The long and undisturbed reign that Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad reportedly enjoyed was a direct consequence of this good service.

135 See Meisami 1999 for the concept of ethical-rhetorical historiography.

136 In Bartol'd, Buniyatov, Köymen, Kafesoğlu. The more matter-of-fact report in Ibn al-Athīr has gained less prominence.

The next statement is about Atsız: "He had done much in sultan Sanjar's service and had many rights to his name."[137] This line is like a heading, and one expects the author to adduce examples of these services and of the rights Atsız earned. And indeed, such an example follows. How did Atsız earn such rights, and what did they imply?

The first – and in fact, the only – story is of how Atsız saved Sanjar's life, and it is to be found in this source alone. It is narrated in the context of one of the campaigns against the Qarakhanid. The sultan went hunting and some slaves and retainers accompanied him, men who were still new in the *khidmat*. Hunting is a dangerous moment for a sultan; there are many examples of kings and viziers being killed while hunting, so the setting is chosen with care from the beginning. The retainers now (all of a sudden?) decided that they would kill the sultan. And then the scene changes; it is now set in the royal camp. Atsız had not joined the hunting expedition as he normally would have as an emir in *khidmat*. In his tent, he suddenly awoke from his afternoon nap, mounted his horse immediately, and rode as fast as he could to reach the sultan. The next scene is set in the hunting ground again: Atsız found the sultan encircled by these evil people; he drove them away with heavy blows. The next scene, still at the hunting ground, is between Atsız and Sanjar: Sanjar asked how Atsız knew about the situation. Atsız replied that he had dreamt that the sultan had run into danger, and hastened to rescue him.

The first duty of a vassal is therefore to protect his lord's life. Moreover, a faithful (or a model) vassal does not neglect the slightest sign that might indicate that something is threatening his lord's life. Another reading might take the sleep from which Atsız awoke for the "sleep of neglect" (*khwāb-i ghaflat*), and Atsız then is an ideal vassal because he is able to control the natural tendency to neglect one's duties and does not succumb to the "sleep of neglect".

This story is almost certainly a "legend", that is, a story told to convey a certain message which is more important than the historicity of the narrative – in this case, a message about how an ideal vassal might earn "rights" and about the duties of a vassal in general. Because the story is a legend, many modern researchers have omitted it from their narrative of events. It is not in Bartol'd, Bosworth or Köymen; but it is in Buniyatov,[138] who does not comment on it, and in Kafesoğlu, who calls it a "figment of the imagination".[139] The scholars who cite the story adduce it together with a passage in Ibn al-Athīr, a report about some Qarluqs who, incited by the Samarqandī ruler Arslan Khan, tried to kill Sanjar while he was hunting.[140] The incident is dated to Sanjar's 524/1130 Transoxanian campaign, and this story may well have been the model for Juwainī's narrative.

However, Atsız does not appear in this report in Ibn al-Athīr, and if it is indeed the model for Juwainī, there must be a reason why the latter chose to introduce him: it may be because, by saving Sanjar's life, Atsız earned many "rights". The story may also anticipate the

137 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 4. *ū-rā dar khidmat-i sulṭān Sanjar futūḥ-i bisyār būd wa ḥuqūq-i khidmat thābit dāsht.* This line is full of technical terms, and in particular it stresses the "rights" one earns while "serving" faithfully.

138 Buniyatov 1999, 14.

139 Kafesoğlu 1956, 45–46, *hayâl mahsulü*.

140 Ibn al-Athīr 11:83.

later one in which Atsız, who has become a "rebel", hires murderers to kill his lord Sanjar (see below); thus, Atsız himself wiped out all the "rights" he had earned when he saved Sanjar's life so valiantly. Saving Sanjar's life and seeking to take his life – these are the beginning and the end of the trajectory, from loyal vassal to felonious rebel, that Juwainī makes Atsız run through.

Moreover, there is another report, very similar in many respects, but with the culprit-victim roles exchanged: when Sanjar still was a young man, the Qarakhanid ruler Qadir Khan wanted to profit from the situation, and invaded Khurāsān. But he was imprudent enough to go hunting with only a small retinue when the opposing armies were already close to each other. Sanjar learnt of it from some *dahāqīn*,[141] saw the *furṣa*, sent a detachment and succeeded in taking the khan prisoner.[142]

Thus, there are three versions of a story about a royal hunt that turns out to be dangerous for the hunting king; the actors always include Sanjar and two versions include a Qarakhanid; the scene is set somewhere between the two realms, and Sanjar is the winner in every case. Atsız appears only in Juwainī, the latest source; Juwainī also leaves out the Qarakhanid, whom he replaces with Sanjar's own retainers. Juwainī's version is surely a literarily upgraded form that he used to drive home his point about Atsız and the "rights" he had won in his sultan's service, only to forfeit them later as a rebel.

On the other hand, Juwainī does not mention the military services Atsız rendered in all the pre-Mongol sources, apart from the Ghazna campaign, which serves him as a background for and introduction to the "separation" scene. The "rights" Atsız had are therefore very personal, and Sanjar's obligation to promote Atsız is highly personal too. Atsız accedes to a rank that places him above his peers, the slave generals. This is the explicit consequence of the preceding story: because of the "rights" Atsız had won, his position grew stronger by the day.[143] The circle of competition for more "fostering" and "benefit" by the sultan had reached another level.[144] Unsurprisingly, this provoked the envy of the other men, the generals, especially all the slave generals who were close enough to the throne to compete with Atsız.

Turning Rebel – Turning One's Back on the Lord. The *mudbir* Motif

Now we turn to the story that Juwainī, and again he alone, tells of how Atsız became rebellious. The scene is set at Balkh, after the Ghazna campaign of 1135. Atsız felt that things had changed, that his peers envied him, as he had observed during the campaign, and he was afraid of the sultan – his rivals could have succeeded in winning the sultan over. He therefore asked the sultan for permission to leave, to return to Khwārazm. Permission was granted, and Atsız left. In the next scene, we see the sultan and the emirs. Sanjar comments on what he sees: "Here We see the back of a person whose face We shall not see again." The emirs

141 *Dahāqīn*, sg. *dihqān*, rural nobles, gentry. See Paul 2013b.

142 Ḥusainī 90, Bundārī 262; Bundārī has the khan killed immediately after.

143 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 4, *ba-wasīlat-i ān ḥaqq kār-i ū bālā girift*; *'ināyat wa tarbiyat-i sulṭān dar ḥaqq-i ū bīshtar*.

144 See Mottahedeh 1980/2001 for the mechanics of this competition.

are bewildered: "If Your Majesty knows that, why then have You granted Atsız permission to leave?" Sanjar's final line merits being quoted in full: "This man's rights in Our service are numerous; not to grant his request would run counter to the method of Our grace and magnificence, and therefore that was out of the question."[145]

Atsız thus turned his back on Sanjar – remember that he was in fact called a *mudbir*, "one who turned his back and [therefore] is unfortunate" in the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm* (which without doubt was penned by Juwainī's ancestor Badī' Atabek).[146] He did so because he had reason to fear that Sanjar would no longer be able or willing to continue preferring him over his peers, due to the envy of the other emirs.[147]

This begs the question of who was the "unfortunate" one, the one who had exchanged his *iqbāl* (fortune) for *idbār* (misfortune). It was Badī' Atabek who first called Atsız a *mudbir*. Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ took up the theme, and in the "Khwārazmian" report on Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign, he refers to Sanjar's misfortune, *idbār*. And now, again, a writer from the Juwainī family connects Atsız to *idbār*. The Khwārazmian and the Khurāsānian bureaucrats, court poets and literati discussed, via their texts in prose as well as verse, which of the two rulers was endowed with fortune. The author of the *Jahān-gushā* may have had two reasons to style Atsız as bereft of *iqbāl* and stricken with *idbār*: his ancestors had served Sanjar, and the Khwārazmians had ultimately had the misfortune to be vanquished by Chinggis Khan, Hülegü's grandfather, whom Juwainī himself served; the Chinggisids without doubt were carriers of *iqbāl*.

There is a real dilemma behind the narrative, however: Atsız, in Juwainī's account, had been so successful as a vassal that he could not continue in that position. This dilemma is built into the system of "service" *khidma*, "rights" resulting from *khidma*, and the ensuing competition for "benefit" among the "servants", the highest emirs in this case, because the resources at the sultan's disposal to grant all these "rights" are of necessity limited. And needless to say, Sanjar's prophetic words, spoken when he saw Atsız disappear, are meant to make way for the next events in the story. But they also shed some light on the dilemma in which the sultan found himself: he had to choose between two evils, letting Atsız go (and thus provoking what was to follow – rebellion), or abandoning his ideals of royal behaviour. Letting Atsız go meant in a sense allowing him to leave the *khidmat*, because being present at court, participating in the lord's wars, was one of the most important duties of a vassal. It is quite clear that this is not a case of only a temporary leave of absence, such as would have been the case if Atsız had been called home by pressing affairs. Thus, Sanjar himself loosens the tie between Atsız and himself, and he does so because of the "rights" Atsız had; refusing to honour the vassal's rights not only is contrary to ideal royal conduct, but also in a very practical sense unsettles the relationship. And so Sanjar himself is not the most fortunate ruler; there is a sense of his *iqbāl* deserting him, slowly but surely.

In the short note 'Aufī presents as a context for the poem(s) he quotes about Atsız and the beginnings of his "rebellion", he also refers to the dynamics of courtly competition:

145 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 5. *ḥuqūq-i khidmat-i ū dar dhimmat-i mā bisyār ast īdhā-yi ū dar madhhab-i karam wa marḥamat-i mā mamnū' wa maḥẓūr ast.*

146 See above note 50.

147 For envy among emirs, particularly slave generals, see Tor 2011.

what prompted Atsız to want to leave the *khidmat* was that he felt he had reason to fear for his life. 'Aufī does not state why Atsız felt that way, but fear that he might fall from favour would be plausible enough, and an explanation of this kind may have originated early on. Khwārazmian versions likewise refer to murderers Sanjar is accused of having sent against Atsız.[148] Therefore, one of the reasons for the breakdown between Sanjar and Atsız was that the dynamics of *khidmat*, "benefit for service", had become out of balance, so that both Sanjar and Atsız probably felt that they had now earned "ingratitude", for "service" or for "benefit", respectively.

First Campaign

The next report in Juwainī, then, shows Atsız as a rebel. This is natural because he has turned his back on his lord the sultan, and thus conjured up misfortune. No more reasons need to be given. "He started behaving like an opponent and a rebel", and the estrangement between the two men grew. This, too, looks like a heading, and the stories that follow illustrate it.

The report is about Sanjar's first Khwārazmian campaign; it is more detailed than the reports in the pre-Mongol sources, notably Ibn al-Athīr, but does not contradict them. The relative harmony of the sources can be explained by the outcome of the campaign – a clear victory for Sanjar – which means that the Khurāsānian authors have no problems here; the fact that there is no Khwārazmian version of this campaign is also quite telling. Another factor is that one of the main sources for this campaign in the present article is the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Khwārazm* written in Sanjar's chancery, almost certainly by Badī' Atabek al-Juwainī. All the sources therefore agree that Atsız was no longer a faithful vassal.

The next stage, the *Saugand-nāma* which, like all the other correspondence in the collections that have come down to us, was certainly known to Juwainī, is not mentioned in the *Jahān-gushā*, and therefore, if one follows Juwainī only, Atsız was a rebel all along, both before and after Qaṭwān. Qaṭwān is mentioned only briefly as a background for Atsız's campaign in Khurāsān (Juwainī, too, calls this a *furṣat*). Juwainī is very brief here, apparently because he supposes that his readers and listeners know about it: "this story is well known"[149] – he then concentrates on the literary reflections on the fight between Atsız and Sanjar.

In this literary commentary on the event, the first piece is an anecdote about Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ and the Khurāsānī poet and philosopher Ḥasan-i Qaṭṭān.[150] The latter had his library in Marw robbed during the Khwārazmian raid, and it was in fact Rashīd al-Dīn who took the books, not the Khwārazmian soldiery. The literary piece then is a – rather conventional – apologetic Arabic letter by Rashīd al-Dīn, who claims that he took the books in order to deposit them in a place where "the Muslims" could profit from them, not only the (miserly) Qaṭṭān.[151] Nevertheless, Waṭwāṭ does not appear in a particularly heroic role here,

148 See above note 41, 'Aufī 37, Waṭwāṭ *Rasā'il* 8.

149 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 5, *īn ḥikāyat mashhūr ast*.

150 Since, in the eyes of earlier scholars, this episode did not move the plot on, all of them have chosen to leave it out.

151 Ibn Funduq, *Tatimma* 155. Qaṭṭān and Waṭwāṭ were old enemies; a polemical exchange of letters is preserved in Waṭwāṭ's collections, as the editor of the *Jahān-gushā* notes. Do we have here an example of the

either, and his apologetic letter may not have convinced Juwainī's readers. It serves as an introduction to the second literary piece, the beginning of a *qaṣīda* Waṭwāṭ wrote in praise of the Khwārazmian victories and his lord Atsız. The line is introduced with the remark: "Because of Sanjar's defeat, haughtiness in Atsız's brain increased";[152] the verse – which is now the verse of a man who steals books – is the one quoted above: "Prince Atsız has ascended the throne of the realm * the [fortune of the] dynasty of Seljuq and his descendants is over."[153] Given the context of the verse, it is evident that it presents an impudent posture that should not be discussed seriously, and the question behind it is not allowed to arise. Was Qaṭwān the end of Sanjar's royal fortune? One might have thought so, particularly immediately after the battle; but Juwainī here acts as a Seljuq legitimist, and prefers not to broach the question: Atsız the *mudbir* could never have supplanted Sanjar.

Forfeiting Rights: The Ismā'īlī Murderer Motif

Juwainī follows the chronology, and so what comes next is his report on Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign, which he dates to 538, (began 16 July 1143), probably because Ibn al-Athīr placed it in that year, thus one year later than the "Khwārazmian" version. On the military side, too, the report is close to Ibn al-Athīr's: Sanjar was on the point of taking the city he was besieging, when Atsız, who felt that he could no longer resist, sent messengers with gifts for the leading emirs, and asked for pardon. By this action, he finally succeeded in winning Sanjar's clemency. (Perhaps this was a problem for Sanjar: he had a tendency to pardon even when it should not have been an option, and the rules of statecraft would have commended severity. But this is an aside, albeit one that Juwainī's readers and listeners may also have made.) Sanjar then returned to Khurāsān after something like a truce had been concluded.[154] The interesting question of whether Atsız really submitted at this point is left unanswered; no ceremony is described. And so it is not surprising to learn that Atsız continued with his rebellious behaviour.

The point of this report is probably to show Atsız as an inveterate rebel with whom it was practically impossible to come to terms. He was so obstinate that even the clemency that Sanjar time and again demonstrated was wasted on him. Juwainī makes a very successful presentation of the situation, but modern scholars have turned the judgment on its head and read the story as sympathetic to Atsız; instead of criticizing his obstinacy, they have praised his determination.

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miser as an object of satire?

152 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 7, *nakhwat dar damāgh-i Atsız ziyādat gasht.*

153 See above note 90.

154 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 7–8. *bar sabīl-i hudna wa muṣālaḥat bāz gasht.* Bartol'd is very brief here and passes over the second campaign in just one sentence (Bartol'd 1963, 391). Buniyatov follows Juwainī closely at first, and then adds the accounts from Ḥusainī and Bundārī (Buniyatov 1999, 23–24). Bosworth sees a Seljūq victory (Bosworth 1968, 145). Kafesoğlu is the source for Buniyatov's suggestion that, had Sanjar applied his entire force, he would have ensured "unconditional surrender" from the Khwārazmians (Kafesoğlu 1956, 56). There is in fact no basis for such an assumption: why would Sanjar *not* have made full use of his military superiority? (Sometimes Buniyatov looks like a summary of either Kafesoğlu or Köymen.)

The following episode is once again a story found only in Juwainī. It is a kind of melodramatic farce, with elements of a spy story. Sanjar sent a regular ambassador to Khwārazm – true, he also was told to look around a bit – the much-respected littérateur Adīb Ṣābir.[155] Atsız, too, took measures. He hired murderers, some Ismā'īlīs, whom he told to kill Sanjar. Adīb Ṣābir learnt about this (no one understands how) and sent a description of them back to Marw, hidden in a worn-out lady's boot. Thus, the two hired murderers were arrested – in a tavern, of course – and immediately tortured and put to death. Atsız took his revenge: he had Adīb Ṣābir thrown into the Amu Darya.[156]

A symmetrical tale of two murders? No. Sanjar had two hired murderers executed, Ismā'īlīs for good measure; nobody could object – this was an entirely justified punishment. But Atsız had an ambassador killed! Nobody in the audience could have missed the point. One of the reasons why Chinggis Khan attacked the Khwārazmshāh, Atsız' great-grandson, was because Muḥammad b. Tekesh had killed Mongol ambassadors. Killing ambassadors was one of the most heinous of deeds, and not only in the eyes of the Mongols, so there is no symmetry in the actions of the two rulers. In Atsız, we see the results of "turning one's back" on one's lord: you end up killing ambassadors, and sending murderers of the basest kind to kill your lord, thus wiping out all the "rights" you have previously earned in his service. This is the moral of the story, which is thus something of an *exemplum*. Since none of the earlier sources contains even a trace of it, it is utterly useless as a factual report, but it cannot be left out if one wants to understand Juwainī's agenda.

Moreover, in the "Khwārazmian" version of Sanjar's second Khwārazmian campaign, Atsız accuses Sanjar of sending Ismā'īlī murderers.[157] Thus, in the *Jahān-gushā*, Juwainī just turns the tables on Waṭwāṭ. Now, Sanjar was accused many a time of being too lenient with the Ismā'īlīs and even of being secretly allied to them. He had to defend himself against such rumours; remember that Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh claimed that Ismā'īlīs had succeeded in killing the Khwārazmian prince 'Ain al-Daula in Sanjar's camp, and that the Bāwandid "guest" or hostage, Girdbāzū, was also killed in Sanjar's camp – and Sanjar was held responsible for the latter crime; and there also was the story of the two Caliphs al-Rāshid and al-Mustarshid.[158] So Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ, in the letter to the caliph, could build on established opinions. Juwainī, however, could not point to any such thing. Never before had

155 There is a letter to him in Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ's collection, *Nāmahā* 57 (which could be tentatively dated to the situation immediately after Qaṭwān), and the editor explains that Rashīd al-Dīn was in constant exchange with him. Adīb Ṣābir wrote poems in praise of Sanjar and other dignitaries, among them Atsız, and there are poems in praise of him in Waṭwāṭ's *Dīwān*. On Adīb Ṣābir, see Browne 1906, 333–335.

156 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 8. This is a colourful story, and so many modern authors have quoted it (Bartol'd 1963, 391; Köprülü 1950, 267; Kafesoğlu 1956, 58; Bosworth 1968, 145; Buniyatov 1999, 24). None of these authors comments on the narrative function of the story, or has any reservations about its reliability – this is Juwainī, a learned author who does not tell bedtime stories. Without giving too much weight to this particular piece of evidence: A letter addressed to Adīb Ṣābir in *Aḥkām* and probably written by Rashīd al-Dīn Waṭwāṭ mentions that the Khwārazmian troops had proceeded to Āmūya; this makes one think of the situation in the early stages of Sanjar's captivity with the Ghuzz, thus much later than the cruel death that fate held in store for that man in Juwainī (*Aḥkām* 28b-29a).

157 See above note 92.

158 E. g. in a long letter he sent to the caliph's court. (*Aḥkām* 105b-113b, esp. 109b-110a). It is very probable that he really did come to an arrangement with the Quhistānī Ismā'īlīs, and probably also with Alamut (see

Atsız been linked to Ismā'īlīs; the Khwārazmian rulers had always taken pride in their strict orthodoxy, as Waṭwāṭ also points out in his letter to the caliph. Juwainī now makes that look like hypocrisy, and Atsız appears as an entirely ruthless person who stops at nothing.

There is another narrative tradition about Ismā'īlīs threatening to kill Sanjar, first attested in the hagiography about Shaykh Aḥmad-i Jām: Sanjar once found a knife under his pillow. He wanted to keep it secret, but the story goes on to say that the Ismā'īlīs knew about it and used the incident to wrest privileges from the sultan. There is no need to go into detail here. In the hagiographic source, the story serves to explain why Sanjar tolerated Ismā'īlīs to the degree he did (which was completely unacceptable to the very strictly Sunnī shaykh and his followers). The source does not link the event to any other person or group of persons; the Quhistānī Ismā'īlīs are behind it and no one else. But the account is proof that stories about Ismā'īlīs posing a threat to Sanjar's life circulated early, perhaps even in Sanjar's lifetime.[159] It was therefore perhaps not so difficult to tell such a story about the Khwārazmshāh.

The Sultan Laughed

Juwainī skips the consequences of the second campaign and comes directly to the third one after the literary contest – as mentioned, he adopts a pattern in which, generally speaking, military and literary duels alternate. The third campaign, again, is related by Juwainī alone, and so one has to ask whether it took place at all. There is only one more or less independent confirmation that Sanjar was in Khwārazm in 542 or 543 /1147–9: this is an appointment deed for Qutlugh Inanch Beg as governor in Raiy. The document itself is not dated, but in it Sanjar announces that he and his army have returned (victoriously, of course) from Khwārazm and have now started on their way back to Khurāsān, to proceed from there to Raiy.[160] I therefore think that this document was written sometime before Sanjar met his nephew Mas'ūd in Raiy in 543/1148–9.[161] If this is so, it is a little more certain that Sanjar went to Khwārazm for a third campaign, even if we still have only the *Jahān-gushā* to tell us how things panned out there and then.

Juwainī does not give us a particular reason for why the campaign started when he says it did. From the context, it may have been a punitive expedition in response to both the attempted assassination of Sanjar and the murder of the ambassador, just as Chinggis Khan and the Mongols had one good reason for their campaign against Khwārazm. But it may also have simply been unfinished business, since the second campaign had evidently not produced the expected results, and by now Sanjar would have had some reason to think that he had grown strong enough to try again. Sanjar therefore went to Hazārasp and laid siege to the town and fortress, as he did in the first campaign and, according to some reports, also

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Stroeva 1978, 138–139). And see note 45 for Girdbāzū, note 92 for the two caliphs, and note 95 for 'Ain al-Daula.

159 Ghaznawī 59–60. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh has a similar explanation for Sanjar's lenient attitude towards the Ismā'īlīs (Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh 51).

160 Juwainī, *'Atabat al-kataba* 70–71.

161 For the meeting, see Ibn al-Athīr 11:134; Bundārī 224; Ḥusainī 121; Nīshāpūrī 84; and see above note 108.

in the second.[162] However, it is not the battles and all the military action that are the focus of the story in Juwainī, but rather, again, a competition between poets, Anwarī for Sanjar and Waṭwāṭ for Atsız. They wrote their verses on arrows which they then shot, Anwarī into the city, Waṭwāṭ into the camp. This competition has become very famous and is frequently cited in Persian literary history.[163]

It is not important to decide who of the two poets won. Juwainī, for all his reservations about Atsız, respected Waṭwāṭ as a master poet and resourceful penman. The point and resolution of the story follows after the conquest of Hazārasp: Sanjar was furious because of Waṭwāṭ's insolent poetry, and swore that he would kill the poet and have him hacked into seven pieces, and so Waṭwāṭ went into hiding. Waṭwāṭ's saviour was Badīʿ Atabek al-Juwainī, the author of the *ʿAtabat al-kataba*. He topped both poets with his famous *bon mot*: "Your Majesty! The bat [*waṭwāṭ*] is a very small animal, and therefore it can hardly be hacked into seven pieces. What about hacking it into just two?" The sultan laughed, and Waṭwāṭ's life was saved.[164] This anecdote suits an anthology of poems, or a *tadhkira* collection of poets' biographies. Juwainī's source here may have been family lore, and the reason for telling it is to show the Juwainī clan's superiority in courtly manners and literary acumen – Waṭwāṭ now owed a debt of gratitude to the Juwainīs.[165]

Third Campaign: The Upside-Down Motif

The campaign continued, and Sanjar proceeded to Urganch. There, the Khurāsānians were again on the point of taking the city when an altogether unexpected character entered the scene, a dervish called Ahū-pūsh ("Dresses in Gazelle Skins"); Juwainī explains that this

162 If one follows the course of the Amu Darya, heading for Urganch, one necessarily passes by Hazārasp.

163 Kafesoğlu 1956, 58 note 117 with reference to İslâm Ansiklopedisi, art. *Enverî* (A. Ateş). Bartol'd was evidently so unresponsive to poetry that he does not even mention the competition. Buniyatov has a full version and also translates the poems (Buniyatov 1999, 26). Here are the poems: Anwarī wrote: "Shāh! all the realms on the face of the earth are yours, and thanks to your royal fortune, the world is your rightful property. Today, take Hazārasp by one attack, and tomorrow you'll win Khwārazm and one hundred thousand horses." Waṭwāṭ answered: "Shāh! even if your enemy were Rustam the hero, even he would not be able to take only one donkey out of your thousand horses." Again, the question of which of the two rulers has royal good fortune is mentioned, but the point is the pun on Hazārasp – *hazār asp* "one thousand horses" which both authors allegedly used in a very original way. *ay shāh hama-yi mulk-i zamīn ḥasb tu-rā st * wa z daulat ū iqbāl jahān kasb tu-rā st * imrūz ba-yak ḥamla Hazārasf bi-gīr * fardā Khwārazm wa ṣad hazār asb tu-rā st*; and the answer: *gar khaṣm-i tū ay shāh shawad Rustam-gird * yak khar zi Hazārasb-i tū na-tawān burd*. The other two lines of Waṭwāṭ's quatrain are not quoted in Juwainī, but they are to be found in the *Dīwān*. Here is the complete quatrain: "Oh king, in your cup there is pure wine, no pain; your enemies will have to drink blood out of pain. Even if your enemy were Rustam the hero, he would not be able to take even a donkey out of Hazārasp" *ay shah ki ba-jām-at may-i ṣāfī st na dard * aʿdā-yi tu-rā zi ghiṣṣa khūn bāyad khūrd * gar dushman-at ay shāh būd rustam-gird * yak khar zi Hazārasb na-tawān burd* (Waṭwāṭ, *Dīwān* 614). For the anecdote and the poems (as well as for a biography of Anwarī) see Browne 1906, 308–310.

164 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 9. The laughing sultan or caliph is often the *dénouement* of anecdotes in both Arabic and Persian. For the anecdote, see also Browne 1906, 310. The sobriquet *waṭwāṭ* (the term can mean "bat" as well as "swallow") was given to the poet and clerk because of his small stature (see Browne 1906, 330).

165 Again, this episode in poetry is not reflected in Bartol'd, Kafesoğlu just notes it, and Buniyatov has the verses, but none of them took the final point into account.

man was dressed in gazelle skins and also fed on gazelle meat.[166] This dervish now asked the sultan for pardon on behalf of the city's inhabitants. In pre-Mongol times, mediation would normally be provided by either the city ulema (first and foremost the qadi), or by high-ranking emirs or other emissaries sent directly by the ruler.[167] Thus, Ahū-pūsh is the beginning of a story line informed by the "upside-down" motif: in Urganch, things were not done according to accepted forms and protocol, but in an "uncivilized" fashion; things were not placed were they belonged, order was inverted, and a strange-looking uncouth man from the wilderness took the place of ulema and emirs. But "normal" formalities also took place: Atsız sent gifts to the sultan and the leading emirs. And the sultan pardoned him for the third time.[168] Sanjar's clemency knew no limits – clemency befits a king, but it must be coupled with majesty and also with severity; clemency that is not founded on strength leads to the destruction of the kingdom: such are the rules of Iranian pre-Mongol statecraft.[169]

Sanjar and Atsız (through their emissaries) agreed that a submission ceremony would be held on the banks of the Amu Darya (again), in which Atsız would have to do *khidmat* (obeisance), it being understood, from the standardized forms of *khidmat*, that this would involve his kissing the ground as well as other gestures and formalities.[170]

The ceremony was indeed held on 12 Muḥarram 543 (2 June 1148), but it did not take place according to the rules. Atsız did come to the place agreed by the two main actors, but he did not dismount (and thus, did not formally kiss the ground), and simply did *khidmat* from on horseback, inclining his head. Thus, he did not pay Sanjar even the minimal respect he owed the sultan, but behaved as if he were an equal, or with Sanjar being no more than a senior member of the same ceremonial rank.[171] This was not the only fault in the ceremony, however. Before Sanjar could react, Atsız turned his horse's head and left. Two mistakes are evident here: Atsız should have awaited Sanjar's greetings, and he had no right to be the first to withdraw from the place – he should have waited until Sanjar gave him leave to depart. This is not only bad form, but an insult, even an enormous insult, such as a sultan should not tolerate. Atsız, the *mudbir*, the perjurer, the killer of ambassadors, the patron of Ismā'īlī murderers, the faithless vassal, now added insult to his numerous crimes. The "upside-down" theme is continued: Atsız arrogated to himself the superior ceremonial position.

Sanjar's reaction is also out of order. He was enraged by the behaviour he witnessed, but again, caught in the dilemma he had faced several times before, chose clemency. He had promised his pardon before, and so would have had to renege on his commitment, which was contrary to what he understood to be royal conduct. He did not want to go down in

166 This is not the place to discuss "animal" saints (see DeWeese 1994). This strange character has attracted modern scholars from the beginning (Bartol'd 1963, 391; Köymen 1954, 349; Kafesoğlu 1956, 59; Buniyatov 1999, 27). All scholars take the story as a factual report.

167 In later periods, Sufi shaykhs frequently acted as mediators, and so Ahū-pūsh's appearance here may also be caused by a change that occurred after the Mongol invasion; but it is doubtful whether Juwainī had any sympathies for this group of people.

168 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 10, *bār-i siwum 'afw kard*.

169 Kaikā'ūs b. Iskandar, chapter 42 *dar ā'īn-i pādishāhī*, 179–191.

170 Bartol'd 1963, 391; Köymen 1954, 350; Kafesoğlu 1956, 59; Bosworth 1968, 145; Buniyatov 1999, 27. The ceremony is called: "a grudging submission" (Bosworth); "kadarcık" (minimal; Köymen).

171 Sanjar was about 12–13 years older than Atsız.

history as the sultan who broke his promises. On the other hand, he knew full well that he was losing face either way.

The real point of the story is in its conclusion. Sanjar went back to Khurāsān, and sent presents and gifts (from there) (*tashrīfāt wa-in'āmāt*): he wanted to underline that for him, the ceremony on the banks of the Amu Darya was valid because he willed it to be so. Atsız sent gifts and presents in return. But this is "upside-down" again: it is the vassal who should send gifts first, and the lord should send gifts in return, larger and costlier ones, thus initiating (or re-starting) a true lord-vassal-relationship. So, to all intents and purposes, such a relationship was not re-established between them, at least not in the proper fashion, and the incapacity of both rulers to act according to the rules is a sure sign that something was wrong with both of them.

Overall, Juwainī's report on the third campaign into Khwārazm contains highly symbolic features, and it is rhetorically stylized from beginning to end. It is therefore uncertain which events in the sequence he relates really took place, especially because we do not have another narrative of the whole campaign but, as stated above, only one indirect confirmation that Sanjar was in Khwārazm in 543/1148–9. The message is clear, however: Atsız's reputation is (once more) blackened, he is the "bad guy" in this story. But Sanjar also has some very serious faults; above all, he was unable, not only in this case, but again and again, to strike a balance between the most important characteristics of sovereignty: clemency and severity, pardon and punishment, mildness and harshness. By over-emphasizing clemency and neglecting severity, he prepared the way for his own downfall and the end of his kingdom. Contemporary readers and listeners will have understood that both dynasties, the Seljuqid and the Khwārazmian, were therefore not to last – what a contrast to the Chinggisids who, even if they were not Muslims, had a fine sense of both reward and punishment… and thus a much better grasp of the central royal virtues.

Buniyatov reproduces another letter that Atsız allegedly wrote to Sanjar at around this time.[172] The text itself is undated, neither sender nor addressee is identified, and it is impossible to put it into a given context. It is indeed a letter of *khidmat*, in the most general terms, the addressee is praised as the sultan of the east and the west (and so it is altogether possible that it was addressed to Sanjar), and the letter makes ample use of the rhetoric of slavery. The claim that this particular text belongs to the situation that arose in 543/1148, however, is altogether unsubstantiated.[173]

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172 Buniyatov 1999, 29–30, quoting the collection made by Thābitī (Thābitī 1346, 102–103). I have not found it in the collections made by Waṭwāṭ, who was presumably the author.

173 Buniyatov does not give any reason for why he thinks this letter belongs to that context. It is possible that he interpreted the following passage in that sense: "Now, since emissaries from Your Highness have come and brought the high decree which was adorned with the seal of the Most Noble Person, the humblest slave, after lying dead after the disappearance of relations, of remembrance and of all previous customs, came to life again" – but this is a not very original exercise in the "rhetoric of slavery" and cannot be interpreted as a *real* renewal of a lord-vassal relationship (Buniyatov 1999, 27–28, my translation from the Russian). In fact there are some letters of the same kind in the collection of Persian letters by Waṭwāṭ (ed. Tūysirkānī), addressed to Sanjar as well as to Sulaimān b. Muḥammad and also to Arslanshāh, ruler in the west (1161–76); the latter group must therefore have been written for Il Arslan.

Three Campaigns: A Triad of Campaigns?

To come back to the story: Sanjar possibly conducted three Khwārazmian campaigns. But in Juwainī's version of the third campaign – which only he describes – he takes up elements of the earlier campaigns, which he varies to suit his agenda. The third campaign, like the second in the "Khurāsānian" sources, does not end in a battle, but in negotiations and in a ceremony in which Atsız is expected to declare his submission; but after both the second and the third campaign, the ceremony is not regular. It is a "*khidmat* across the river" in the pre-Mongol sources in the second campaign, for which there were earlier models, and an altogether insulting form in Juwainī, for which there are no known parallels.[174] Taken together, it seems that Juwainī's third campaign is a literary development of the second one (which, it should be remembered, Juwainī does not describe in detail).

In modern scholarship – where the sources are all dealt with on an equal footing, and Juwainī's reports are simply added to the pre-Mongol sources or vice versa – a triad of campaigns is the result, with an ever-increasing tendency for Atsız to become "independent": in the first campaign, he is defeated and even temporarily deposed; in the second campaign, the military situation is not so clear, and a truce is negotiated, with Atsız doing obeisance in a much diluted form; and finally, the third campaign is no real victory for Sanjar, either, and the ceremony that concludes it is an insult. This is so smooth and its rhetorical form (a triad) so conventionally elegant that it has not been questioned – and indeed the story is quite convincing once Atsız is seen as a fighter for "independence". This way of seeing the confrontation between Atsız and Sanjar is perhaps best exemplified in Spuler's summary: "Three times, [Atsız] tried, between 1138 and 1148, to rebel against his overlord, but three times he was defeated and had to submit again."[175] Atsız was defeated only if one takes it for granted that his goal was to "found a strong and independent state",[176] but this was precisely not what he wanted; what can be proved is that he strove to be and stay attractive to all kinds of nomads around Khwārazm, to bring them into his orbit, to gain their allegiance, perhaps to acquire recognition as a "subject king", as Köymen has suggested.[177] Perhaps, if an opportunity presented itself, he would try his luck and challenge Sanjar for the sultanate, but ultimately, probably, he would wait and see who would win in order to be able to claim the Seljuqid heritage after Sanjar's death. Never did he conceive of himself as the ruler of a kingdom that was not within the Seljuqid empire, but still coexisted with it.

Another critical point in Juwainī is the Jand campaign of 547/1152, which once more only he describes. Bartol'd dismisses the clear date of the *Fatḥ-nāma-yi Jand* (see above) for the date given in Juwainī; he envisions only one campaign and has no difficulty in present-

174 The parallels are so evident that Köymen uses the same word to characterize them: *kadarcık*, "minimal", a diminutive of *kadar* "so much", evidently of Köymen's own making.

175 Spuler 1966, 195. "Dreimal versuchte er zwischen 1138 und 1148, sich wider seinen Oberherrn zu empören, dreimal aber erlitt er eine Niederlage und mußte sich [...] wieder unterwerfen." Spuler is carried away by the rhetoric, and he overlooks Sanjar's difficulties in the second and third campaigns, which were no clear victories. An equally undifferentiated view of the three campaigns is found in Kafesoğlu (1967, 377).

176 Bartol'd 1963, 391: "Since Atsız now had been defeated in his attempt to found an independent state and conquer Khurāsān, he again turned his attention to the banks of the Syr Darya."

177 Köymen 1954, 313–314; see above note 26.

ing a coherent narrative.[178] Bosworth follows Bartol'd closely enough to have only the later instance, and so does Köymen, whereas Kafesoğlu and Buniyatov have two conquests of Jand.[179] It is beyond the scope of this essay to reconstruct the exact chronology, but a case could be made in favour of the earlier campaign (of 540/1145), because there is no good reason to discard the date in the *Fatḥ-nāma*, and because Juwainī turns out in the end to be not very interested in exact renderings of "facts". The earlier date is in fact more probable: why should Atsız have waited until 1152 to reconquer Jand, which he had probably lost in the course of the events between 1138 and 1141–2? He was strong enough to come back to Khwārazm in 1139, to lay claim to the sultanate in 1141–2, to send Sanjar's army back from Khwārazm either defeated (in the "Khwārazmian" account) or with a truce that barely saved face for Sanjar in 1142–3 (or one year later), and to disregard Sanjar as his overlord until 1145–6. Therefore, I would suggest following Bartol'd in that there was only one reconquest of Jand, but dating it to 540/1145, and rejecting Juwainī's dating. On the other hand, as a letter in Waṭwāṭ's collection seems to inform us, retaining control of Jand and Manqıshlaq may have been an ongoing concern, and the "conquest" of both areas may have been precarious, so that a military presence was necessary, particularly in winter.[180]

During the Ghuzz years (1153–56), Atsız did not make any real attempts to profit from the situation, at least not openly. He built up some presence in Khurāsān, as already stated, and may have prepared for a bid for power, but this did not materialize, perhaps simply because he did not survive Sanjar.

The Faithless Vassal and the Faithful Castellan

Juwainī, again, has an account which is not confirmed in any of the other sources. In this story, again, Juwainī talks about lordship and vassalage, and again, his objective is to blacken Atsız's reputation, this time with duplicity. When Atsız learned what had befallen Sanjar at the hand of the Ghuzz, he moved to the banks of the Amu Darya, "craving for kingship, but under the pretext 'I come to respect the rights which my lord has over me'". The rest of the story is then about what rights a lord has over his vassal (and thus what rights Atsız evidently is not going to respect).[181] He came with a large army to the fortress of Āmūya, one of the most famous crossing points of the Amu Darya,[182] and wanted to take the fortress. The castellan there stayed faithful to Sanjar, however, and did not surrender it to Atsız. Atsız then sent a message to Sanjar: formally perfect, he demonstrated his submission, and asked to be given the fortress. Sanjar answered that he was quite prepared to give it, but that first, Atsız should send his son Il Arslan with an army to help the sultan. The really amazing thing is that something so evident should be subject to discussion, but it was – messengers went to and fro twice and three times. In the end, negotiations failed, and Atsız withdrew to Khwārazm. One of the claims which a lord had upon his vassals was, evidently, his help,

178 Bartol'd 1963, 392 with note 3.

179 Bosworth 1968, 145; Köymen 1954, 351; Kafesoğlu 1956, 60–61; Buniyatov 1999, 24, 28–29.

180 Waṭwāṭ, *Nāmahā* 127–128, see above 120.

181 Juwainī, *Jahān-gushā* 12, *ba-ṭam'-i mulk ba-bahāna-yi ānki qaḍā-yi ḥaqq-i walī-ni'mat-i khwīsh mī-guzāram.*

182 Āmūya (Amul) corresponds to present-day Türkmenabat (earlier Çärjew/Chardzhuy).

particularly in need, and Sanjar perhaps never needed help more desperately than when he was a captive in the Ghuzz camp. The literary references are clear as well: Sanjar reminded Atsız of the times when Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad had sent his son, Atsız, to Sanjar's court when he himself was unable to come; now, one generation later, it would have to be Il Arslan. Atsız, again, failed to honour his obligations as a vassal, even in such a situation. And he did so because he "craved kingship": he had given proof that he thought that the Seljuqs had lost their royal good fortune and now the Khwārazmians' turn had come. It is the unnamed faithful castellan of Āmūya who is the good guy, the knight in shining armour, a miniature contrast to Atsız, the great but faithless lord.

Concluding Juwainī

Juwainī's version of the conflict between Sanjar and Atsız is a very individual one. He makes use of some of the earlier sources, most notably Ibn al-Athīr and the collections of letters, both Seljuqid and Khwārazmian; he probably knew all the letters we have today and possibly even more. His section on Atsız is organized in a series of anecdotes, some with a focus on the two kings and their wars, some with a focus on men of letters. A number of more or less explicit references to earlier texts can be detected: the *mudbir* motif, the dangerous hunt, the sending of Ismā'īlī murderers, the irregular *khidma* ceremony. Other elements come from the context in which Juwainī was writing: the killing of the ambassador. In all, Juwainī relates his anecdotes so that they illustrate a number of questions that are at least partly specific to his early Mongol context. He blackens Atsız's reputation in manifold ways, but Sanjar is not without reproach, either. Atsız has lost his royal fortune because he has deserted his lord; in consequence, he develops into a full-blown villain, heaping crime upon crime; Sanjar for his part is too weak and cannot keep the balance between the most important royal virtues. As a result, the Khwārazmian is profoundly de-legitimized, and his descendants with him – the later Khwārazmshāhs, and above all Muḥammad b. Tekesh, are the true heirs of their ancestor. Disorder dominates the ceremonies – disorder in the giving of gifts, in the sending of ambassadors, even in the persons who mediate in conflicts. In short, Juwainī writes the prologue to the Mongol invasion.

On the level of the scribes and administrators and their epigrammatic contests, the representative of the Juwainī family has his place in the limelight. But this is not the main point. The literati take up almost as much space as do the kings and rulers – they are no less important. They are, all of them, absolutely loyal to their lords; this also implies that they try to save them from rash action and unjustified punishment. In praising their lords, they succeed in pinpointing the real questions. If there is a hero in Juwainī's narrative, it is neither Atsız nor Sanjar – it is the clerk as a social figure.

Juwainī's clear agenda, the fact that his *World-Conqueror* is the latest of the relevant sources, separated from the related events by the watershed of the Mongol invasion, the literary devices he employs – all these make it difficult to use his narrative as a source for the events.

Coda

Perhaps Juwainī did not know Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsat-nāma*.[183] But Juwainī's literary version of the conflict between Sanjar and Atsız has features that invoke the famous vizier's worldview in an almost uncanny way.[184] The downfall of the Seljuq empire was followed by a period of turmoil due to the *idbār* that befell all contenders: things got out of order, turned upside-down. The next cycle of *iqbāl* was inaugurated by the cataclysm of the Mongol invasion; in the *Jahān-gushā*, Chinggis Khan is God's scourge for the Muslims, and the Chinggisid whom Juwainī and his brother Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad served was a God-favoured ruler, even if he was not a Muslim. It therefore seems appropriate to quote the *Siyāsat-nāma* as a coda, at some length.

"At any time the state may be overtaken by some celestial accident, or influenced by the evil eye. Then the government will change and pass from one house to another, or the country will be thrown into disorder through seditions and tumults; opposing swords [will be drawn and there will be] killing, burning, plunder and violence. In such days of discord and disaffection men of noble birth will be crushed; base-born men will gain control and whoever has strength will do what he likes [...]. All the affairs of the country will lapse (and have lapsed) from their proper order and organization, and the king will be so distracted by expeditions, wars and anxieties that he will not have the opportunity to attend to such matters or even consider them."

"Later, when through celestial good fortune the evil times pass away, and days of peace and security follow, God (be He exalted) will bring forth a just and wise king from princely stock, and will give him power to vanquish his enemies, and the wisdom and intelligence to judge matters aright [...] so that after a time he may restore all the proper forms and rules of government".[185]

This is patently what Juwainī wanted to show and to convey to his audience, his fellow secretaries, Iranian intellectuals who were still trying to make sense of the Mongol invasion and of Chinggisid rule. His version of the struggle between Atsız and Sanjar should therefore be treated like the historical anecdotes in the *Siyāsat-nāma*: as stories illustrating a certain point and fashioned accordingly.

183 For an analysis of the *Siyāsat-nāma*, see Meisami 1999, 145–162. Meisami stresses that the *Siyāsat-nāma* is both a mirror for princes and a book of history: a mirror has "admonitions accompanied by exempla" whereas a history "furnishes lessons in statecraft through the examples of past kings" (158).

184 There is a long story in Niẓām al-Mulk about the faithful vassal who is slighted in his "rights" by a sultan (in that case, an unexperienced boy), fears for his life, and could have made a bid for the throne – but since he is an ideal faithful vassal, opts for Holy War instead and founds a kingdom for himself around Ghazna; this is the story about Alptegin, Niẓām al-Mulk's legend about the origins of the Ghaznavids (Chapter 27, translation Darke, 105–117; Persian text 111–127).

185 Niẓām al-Mulk 146–147; translation 139–140. Variant translation in Meisami (1999, 154–155), where a context for this passage is also given.

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