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COMPLEXITY OF INTERACTION
ALONG THE EURASIAN STEPPE ZONE
IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM CE

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
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NOMADIC EMPIRES – MODES OF ANALYSIS

NIKOLAI N. KRADIN Nomadic Empires in Inner Asia	11
NICOLA DI COSMO China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective	49
J. DANIEL ROGERS Empire Dynamics and Inner Asia	73
CLAUDIO CIOFFI-REVILLA, WILLIAM HONEYCHURCH, J. DANIEL ROGERS MASON Hierarchies: A Long-range Agent Model of Power, Conflict, and Environment in Inner Asia	89
PAVEL E. TARASOV, MAYKE WAGNER Environmental Aspects of Chinese Antiquity: Problems of Interpretation and Chronological Correlation	115

XIONGNU, THE HAN EMPIRE, AND THE ORIENTAL KOINE

BRYAN K. MILLER The Southern Xiongnu in Northern China: Navigating and Negotiating the Middle Ground	127
URSULA B. BROSEDER A Study on the Complexity and Dynamics of Interaction and Exchange in Late Iron Age Eurasia	199
MAREK JAN OLBRYCHT Arsacid Iran and the Nomads of Central Asia – Ways of Cultural Transfer	333

INNER AND CENTRAL ASIA FROM THE TÜRKS TO THE MONGOLS

SERGEY A. VASYUTIN The Model of the Political Transformation of the Da Liao as an Alternative to the Evolution of the Structures of Authority in the Early Medieval Pastoral Empires of Mongolia	391
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MICHAEL R. DROMPP	
Strategies of Cohesion and Control in the Türk and Uyghur Empires.....	437
ÉTIENNE DE LA VAISSIÈRE	
Away from the Ötüken: A Geopolitical Approach to the seventh Century Eastern Türks	453
SÖREN STARK	
Luxurious Necessities: Some Observations on Foreign Commodities and Nomadic Politics in Central Asia in the sixth to ninth Centuries	463
PETER B. GOLDEN	
The Turkic World in Maḥmūd al-Kâshgharī	503
THOMAS O. HÖLLMANN	
On the Road again – Diplomacy and Trade from a Chinese Perspective	557
MICHAL BIRAN	
The Qarakhanids' Eastern Exchange: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the eleventh and twelfth Centuries.....	575
JÜRGEN PAUL	
Forces and Resources. Remarks on the Failing Regional State of Sultānšāh b. Il Arslan Ḥwārazmšāh.....	597
TATIANA SKRYNNIKOVA	
Old-Turkish Roots of Chinggis Khan's "Golden Clan". Continuity of Genesis. Typology of Power	623

NOMADIC INTERACTION WITH THE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE WEST

MISCHA MEIER	
Dealing with Non-State Societies: The failed Assassination Attempt against Attila (449 CE) and Eastern Roman Hunnic Policy	635
TIMO STICKLER	
The Gupta Empire in the Face of the Hunnic Threat. Parallels to the Late Roman Empire?	659
MICHAEL SCHMAUDER	
Huns, Avars, Hungarians – Reflections on the Interaction between Steppe Empires in Southeast Europe and the Late Roman to Early Byzantine Empires	671
WALTER POHL	
Huns, Avars, Hungarians – Comparative Perspectives based on Written Evidence	693

INDEX OF AUTHORS.....	703
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FORCES AND RESOURCES.
REMARKS ON THE FAILING REGIONAL STATE OF
SULTĀNŠĀH B. IL ARSLAN ḤWĀRAZMŠĀH

Jürgen Paul

A well-known Persian metaphor for the unpredictability of political careers is the Wheel of Fortune. You are a king today, a beggar tomorrow, and we are all bound to the Wheel which turns around like the celestial bodies turn around us in the eternal Sky. The cosmic parallel to earthly events is of course intended. Indeed, empires are made and unmade so quickly that their rise and fall takes no more than a wink of the eye not only *sub specie aeternitatis*, but also in a more human measure of time. There does not seem to be a good explanation for the sometimes extraordinary speed with which empires or more modest states appear and disappear on the political scene. This paper¹ does not propose a solution, but it proposes a look at one or two factors which may be at work in this process: the significance of local rule and local support for the building of larger states, regional or imperial, and the significance of access to the human resources of the great steppe. A larger question emerges from the case study – the question about the links between a lord and a vassal. These are not discussed here, but for the sake of convenience the terminology of lordship and vassality is used, albeit with the caveat that these terms may not mean the same thing in 12th century Ḥurāsān as in contemporary France or England. The paper itself is a case study of the regional state founded by Sultānšāh b. Il Arslan Ḥwārazmšāh (r. 1172–1193) in northern Ḥurāsān.

The second half of the 12th century CE offers a very special situation in eastern Iran and Transoxiana (Fig. 1). The Seljuqid Empire had collapsed, perhaps not as suddenly and surprisingly as has been supposed, when Sanğar b. Malikšāh was defeated and taken prisoner by the Ġuzz in 1153. Although he made good his escape in 1156, when he died the following year without leaving male offspring, his empire had not really been restored.

There were a handful of major players competing for the Seljuqid heritage:

- a) the man named by the dying sultan as his successor, Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad, a Qaraḥanid prince and Sanğar's nephew by his sister;
- b) al-Muʿaiyid Ai Aba, one of Sanğar's leading generals, based at Nīšāpūr;
- c) Il Arslan the Ḥwārazmšāh who had taken over the succession from his father Atsız shortly before;
- d) the Ġuzz who had been instrumental in Sanğar's downfall.

¹ Research for this article was conducted in the framework of the Sonderforschungsbereich (Collaborative Research Centre) "Differenz und Integration" (www.nomadsed.de), funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Thanks to all SFB colleagues for many discussions around nomads and politics, nomads and power, and in particular to Johann Büssow, David Du-

rand-Guédy, and Wolfgang Holzwarth. Deborah Tor accepted to have a look at the English, special thanks to her. Needless to say, all mistakes and inconsistencies are my own. – A very preliminary version of this research was presented as a Gibb Lecture, Harvard University, October 2007.

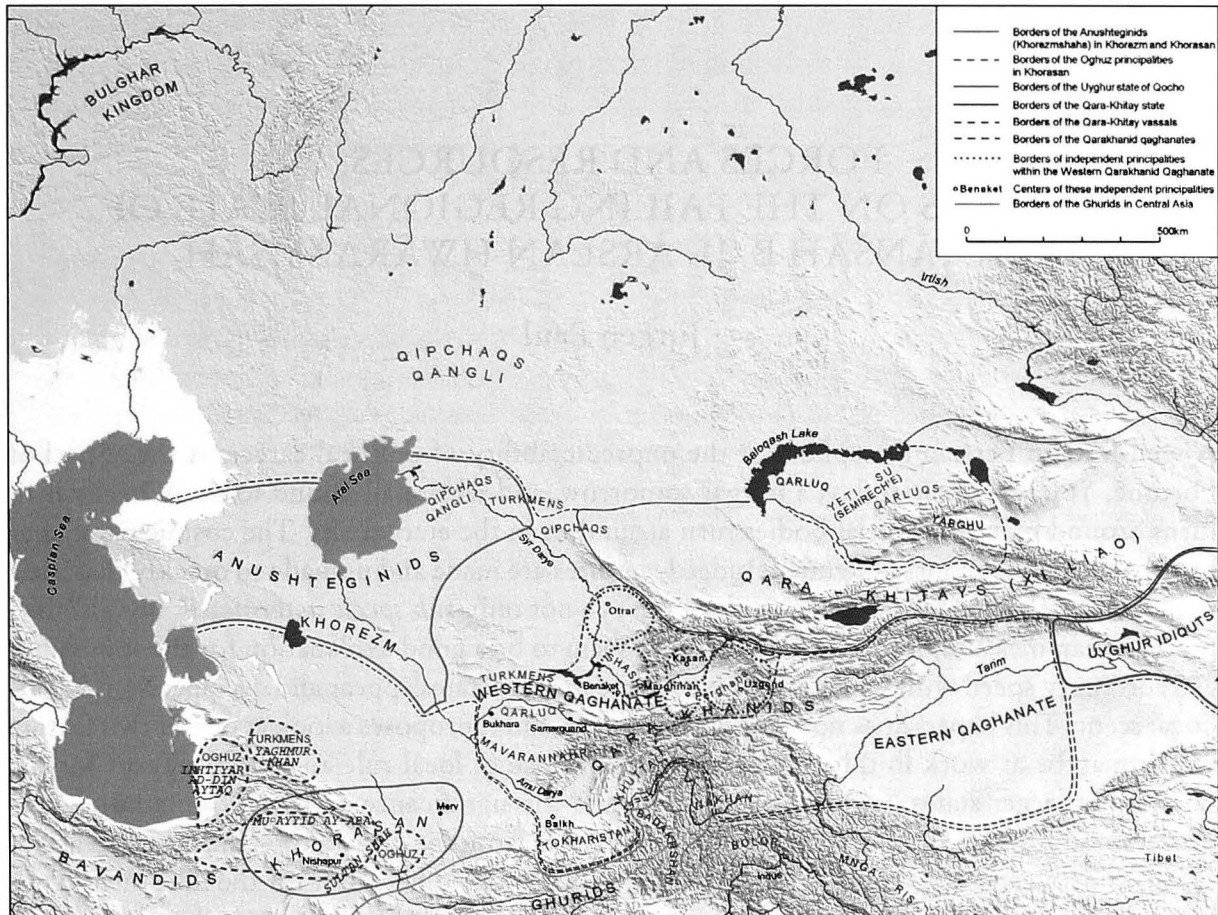


Fig. 1. Central Asia in the second half of the 12th century (after Bregel 2003, map 16).

The neighboring powers that could interfere in the region included:

- a) the Bāwandid rulers in Māzandarān;
- b) the Qaraḥanid rulers in different parts of Transoxiana such as Bukhara and Samarqand;
- c) the Ġūrīds in what is today Afghanistan; their rise, however, did not make itself felt in Ḥurāsān until the mid-1170s, say with their conquest of Herat in 1175–1176.

The Ḥwārazmians and the Qaraḥanids were vassals of the Qaraḥitai who were the only remaining great power in the region, but only rarely interfered directly in Transoxiana and very rarely beyond the Oxus. Ḥwārazm still was a regional power; Atsız had attempted the first steps in the direction of the sultanate (e.g., when he had the Friday prayer read in his name in Nišāpūr in 1141), but they did not last.

The political situation at the local level was rather complicated. The Ġuzz did not form a single dominion, but a number of statelets or principalities². The most important Ġuzz strongholds

² The sources use the term indifferently for different people. First, “Ġuzz” are a group of Turkic pastoralists who were considered and considered themselves as genealogically defined (a “tribal confederation”, see Golden, this volume); the genealogical definition is not visible in the sources under study, nor are subgroups

of any kind mentioned. Second, “Ġuzz” also is a pejorative term for all Turkic pastoralists who seem uncontrolled by any state power. Third, “Ġuzz” may be the following of a given leader such as Malik Dīnār (see below), without these men necessarily belonging to a genealogically defined group.

were Balḥ (the region that had been the scene of the decisive encounters with Saṅḡar and his emirs), and after 1153, Marw and Saraḥs as well. It is not clear how far Ġuzz control extended, their undertakings are described as raids, and they are not credited with establishing continuous forms of domination over larger territories. It must be stressed that the terms “Ġuzz”, “Qarluq”, “Qipčaq”, and so forth do not seem to denote unified groups with a common agenda; the narrative sources do not give names for subgroups of these large units. Besides the Ġuzz principalities, there were towns and regions under the control of men whom the sources call “Saṅḡarī” emirs, such as Herat and Tirmid.

Coming to the events following Saṅḡar’s demise, Köymen has a map of Ġuzz raids and campaigns for the years when they held Saṅḡar captive (Köymen 1954, 43). After a while, several Ġuzz leaders emerged, one of whom was Malik Dīnār who held Marw and Saraḥs. But on the other hand, Ġuzz groups invited political leaders from outside to rule over them, most prominently the Qaraḡhanid Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad just mentioned; when he refused, they invited his son Muḥammad instead, and he accepted – thus, there was a Ġuzz-Qaraḡhanid alliance³.

Other Turkish pastoralists were also present in the region. The Qarluqs must be mentioned in the first place. They had been behind Saṅḡar’s ill-fated campaign into Transoxiana, where he went on behalf of the Qaraḡhanid ruler of Samarqand who was himself unable to come to terms with the Qarluqs; this campaign ended in his disastrous defeat at Qaṭwān near Samarqand in 1141 (Biran 2005, 53–54; Paul forthcoming). The Qarluqs apparently had ousted some Ġuzz groups from their previous grazing grounds in southern Transoxiana. Afterwards, reports show them as restless throughout the 1150s and 1160s until they fade out of the narrative after 1171–1172. Most of the Qarluq actions during this period were directed against the Qaraḡhanids, in particular the rulers of Samarqand. The Qarluqs were sometimes allied to the Ḥwārazmšāh⁴.

The third relevant major grouping is the Qipčaq. They had their winter pastures south of the Aral Sea between the Amu and the Syr estuaries, and were probably also wintering in Mangqišlaq, the peninsula east of the Caspian Sea, and were present upstream the Syr as far as Signaq and probably even farther. The Qipčaq were allied to the Ḥwārazmšāhs most of the time; some sources claim that the Ḥwārazmian dynasty itself was of Qipčaq descent, and more sources agree that for several generations, the Ḥwārazmšāhs were married to Qipčaq women⁵.

Finally, there were other Turkish pastoralist groups. Turkish pastoralists were an old presence in the region, and the assumption that the Ġuzz were invaders is not well founded; some of them at least had been living around Balḥ and in other regions for generations, whereas others had been squeezed out of regions north of the Amu Darya not so long before the events of the 1150s (Schwarz 1992; Biran 2005, 51).

It is uncertain whether the people whom the sources (or at least some of them) call Turkmen are in every case different from all the groups mentioned before. They appear in the region of Gurgān as well as farther north, in Dihistān and Manqišlaq, under Saṅḡar (Durand-Guédy 2011), and they are mentioned rather frequently in the same period in central Ḥurāsān in Ġaznawī (Ġaznawī/Muʿaiyad 1960).

³ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, Vol. 11, 272. This alliance is also visible in the fact that Qaraḡhanid coins are recorded from Balḥ in 566 (?) (1170–1171), 574–575 and 583 (1178–1180 and 1187–1188) (Kochnev 1997, 273; 2004, fn. 1169). This region was indeed under Ġuzz control. The names of the Qaraḡhanid rulers on the coins are unknown from the written sources. Balḥ continued under “Turkish” (i.e., Ġuzz) rulers as Qaraḡḥītai vassals until 1198.

⁴ References in Paul forthcoming.

⁵ Ġūzḡānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 354–355. – Richter-Bernburg quotes *karīm al-tarafain* “of noble descent on both his father’s and his mother’s side” among the titles used for Atsız and supposes that the mother might have been a Seljuqid princess. One should not neglect the possibility of a Qipčaq lady (Richter-Bernburg 1976, 184).

In earlier periods, Turkmen groups allied to the Seljuqs were living in the region which is today partly in Turkmenistan, partly in Ḥurāsān, between Balḥ, Marw, Ṭūs, and Nasā. This part of Ḥurāsān had been a hotbed of “rebellions” in the times of Malikšāh and after, with a regionalist tendency. At least in some cases, the “rebels” worked for the restoration of a Ḥurāsān-based Seljuq Empire (Paul 2011a). It remains to be seen whether Saṅḡar’s empire was what they wanted – but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

This was the situation when the Ḥwārazmšāh II Arslan died in 1172. The succession was disputed between his two sons Tekeš and Sulṭānšāh. Tekeš won, and not only the succession in Ḥwārazm – he won the competition over Saṅḡar’s heritage as well, he had himself crowned as sultān in Ḥurāsān on the famous summer pastures of Rādkān-i Ṭūs in the summer of 1189 (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, Vol. 2, 26–27). His brother lost – not because his claims were not legitimate, but simply because Tekeš proved stronger in the end. This paper aims to retrace Sulṭānšāh’s career and to look at possible reasons for his defeat.

SULṬĀNŠĀH’S CAREER (SHORT VERSION)

Sulṭānšāh was a minor although apparently no longer a small boy when his father died; he was in the capital Urganč together with his mother, the Terken Ḥātūn who put him on the throne. Sources do say that his father had appointed him as his successor⁶, but Tekeš did not submit. In a long struggle, Sulṭānšāh tried consistently to win the throne in Ḥwārazm for himself, or, failing that, to establish a regional state in parts of Ḥurāsān. For the first seven or eight years or so of his career (from 1172 to 1179–1180) he did not succeed in either struggle, but from 1180 until his death in 1193, he acted as a regional ruler, with his center at Marw and Saraḡs. This state of his had shifting borders, including various regions at various moments. It extended at first westward to Ṭūs and northward to Nasā. This did not last very long, however. In 1183 at the latest, his brother won the initiative, and after a reshuffling of power which was most pronounced in the mid-1180s in the struggle for Nīšāpūr, his state was transferred a bit to the south-east. By a sort of international arrangement which was concluded in 1189, Sulṭānšāh received Bāḡharz and Ġām instead of the more westerly places such as the region around Ṭūs; Nasā was lost even earlier. However, he kept both Marw and Saraḡs. In consequence, he unsuccessfully attempted to enlarge his sphere of influence at the expense of the Ġūrīs. There was a confrontation with them over Fūšāṅḡ (a bit downstream the Harī-Rūd from Herat), and Sulṭānšāh kept raiding the rich pastures of Bādḡīs. In the ensuing counter-attack, the Ġūrīs soundly defeated Sulṭānšāh on the banks of the Murḡāb in 1190.

Sulṭānšāh had also tried several times to win Ḥwārazm, but he never succeeded. The last attempt was in 1192, and this must have been a kind of desperate move undertaken with altogether inadequate forces. Again, he had to withdraw, and in the ensuing campaign that his more successful brother led against him, he lost Saraḡs (by treason) in 1193; he died shortly thereafter

⁶ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 17; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 380 (this is the “second version”, the one which does not go back to Ibn Funduq’s “Mašārib al-taḡārib”); Ibn

Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 113–114. The question is discussed at some length in Schwarz 1992, 82–84.

(Ġūzġānī/Ĥabībī 1963, 359). There is no hint of any sons or other offspring continuing in his place. We do not even know whether he had any descendants.

SULTĀNŠĀH IN HISTORICAL MEMORY (14TH CENTURY)

In historical memory, Sultānšāh comes across as a highly romanticized figure. The following account apparently reflects stories told about him in the 14th century: He had lost his father early and his brother Tekeš had taken care of him. When Tekeš was away once on campaign, Sultānšāh sat on the throne without permission (a bit like a small child playing around). Tekeš therefore had to punish him, so he had his brother blinded and imprisoned, but went to see him every week – but Sultānšāh did not know that. He eventually found out, and when Tekeš came again, he recited:

Lord of the world, have a look at my face
 We are two brothers from the loins of one father
 How come the world is yours entirely
 And only a blinding iron is my heritage?

And when he died, his brother wrote for him the following quatrain:

Maḥmūd, my brother, this valiant lion
 Wanted to take the crown and the sealing ring from me.
 We divided everything into two, so that the people would calm down
 I took what is above, he got the underground⁷.

In another 14th-century account (which is also integrated into the learned tradition of historiography) Sultānšāh is remembered as a valiant captain, a manly person, but one who just did not have the stars on his side. The motif of “Tekeš away – Sultānšāh tries to rule” is present also in this story⁸.

Another point which is taken up in later literature is the division of the heritage. The quatrain which Qaršī ascribes to Tekeš evokes the division (of the world) in a somewhat macabre way. But the one he has Sultānšāh recite refers to the question of the heritage in more general terms: the poem indicates that people thought that Sultānšāh must have felt he had been despoiled of his heritage. In Ḥamdallāh Mustaufī (equally 14th century), the partition motif takes center stage. He narrates that after the death of their father and Sultānšāh’s takeover, Tekeš claimed his part of the heritage. This led to an exchange of quatrains, out of which the middle one, Tekeš’s reply to Sultānšāh, is the most interesting:

⁷ Qaršī/Vohidov/Aminov 2005, CLXII (russian transl. 116–117; english transl. J. P.) *Ay šāh-i ġahān yakī barūyam nigār * hastīm zi pušt-i yak pidar mā dū pisar * čūnast ki afāq tu-rā šud yaksar * yak mīl ba-man rasīd mīrāt-i pidar*. And the second: *Maḥmūd barādar-i man*

*ān šir-i arīn * mīhwāst ki az man ba-barad tāġ-i nigīn * kardīm dū hišsa tā bayārāmand ḡalq * man rū-yi zamīn giriftam ū zīr-i zamīn.*

⁸ Šabānkāra’ī/Muḥaddīṭ 1985, 137. On his bad luck: *amā baḥtī muwāfiq nadāst wa tālī’-aš šūrīda būd.*

One hundred treasures for you, the cutting dagger for us
 The homestead for you, the horse and the (battle-) field for us
 If you want that dispute settled
 Ḥwārazm for you, and Ḥurāsān for us⁹.

Thus, some generations after the events, Sulṭānshāh's narrative was conceptualized along questions of heritage; in no way was his right to rule disputed on principle. Tekeš's reply just quoted makes the dispute a matter of partition; interestingly, Tekeš here is made to claim not the "homestead" (Ḥwārazm, the region which indeed was his basis and where Sulṭānshāh never could establish himself after the very first months), but the battlefield – this goes to show how generous Tekeš was, but perhaps is said also with his career as a conqueror in mind: at the end, Tekeš emerged as the one who more than anyone else made good his claim to the Seljuqid heritage.

SULṬĀNŠĀH IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

Modern scholarship begins with Bartol'd. In his monumental "Turkestan", Sulṭānshāh is given short shrift, the focus of the narrative clearly is on Tekeš even if his rival is not entirely seen as a rebel¹⁰. Losers are in a difficult position: not only are the sources written in the perspective of the victors, but also modern scholarship. Buniatov's account is more detailed. He mentions that Il Arslan had wanted Sulṭānshāh to succeed him on the throne and does not put the legitimacy of his claims into doubt. But at the end, Buniatov too sides with the winner. "Sulṭānshāh's death put Tekeš's concerns about the future of the throne of Ḥwārazm to rest, and freed his hands so that he could implement his plans to enlarge his realm" (Buniatov 1999, 50). In his history of the Qaraḥanids, Karaev also mentions their struggle against the Qaraḥitai and the Ḥwārazmshāhs. For the period under study, he has nothing to say but that without doubt, Qaraḥanid forces participated in the wars between the Qaraḥitai, the Ḥwārazmians, and the Ġūrīs (Karaev 1983, 181).

Kafesoğlu anachronistically sees Tekeš as a champion of Turkish statehood, and in his chapter on the wars between Tekeš and his brother, the focus is on Tekeš's growing influence in Ḥurāsān. Tekeš's main objective as Kafesoğlu sees it, was to bring the Qipčaq Turks under control. Sulṭānshāh appears as a completely legitimate ruler, something which his Ġūrī hosts also recognized (Kafesoğlu 1956, 88–94).

Bosworth has a short report about the succession struggle which gives Sulṭānshāh more importance than Bartol'd did; he sees Sulṭānshāh as a "rival ruler" in Ḥurāsān¹¹. His entry on the

⁹ Qazwīnī/Nawā'ī 2009, 486: *šad gang tu-rā ḥanḡar-i burrān mā-rā * kāšāna tu-rā markab ū maidān mā-rā * ḥwābī ki ḥuṣūmat az miyān ḥizad * Ḥwārazm tu-rā mulk-i Ḥurāsān mā-rā* (transl. J. P.). – The same story also in Mīrḥwānd 1961, 365. In the rest of the entry, Mīrḥwānd follows Ġuwainī and Rašīd al-Dīn. – It is remarkable how the geography is maintained even if the players change their roles: Ḥurāsān for the "fighter", the one who has yet to create his kingdom.

¹⁰ Bartol'd 1963, 401–410. In the chronological table at the end of the work, Sulṭānshāh is given the title "Ḥwārazmshāh" only for his short rule in 1172 (ibid., 593).

¹¹ Bosworth 1968, 189–190; 1996, 179. The map in CHI shows Nišāpūr within Sulṭānshāh's domains – this has to be corrected; Sulṭānshāh never succeeded in taking the city. The areas around Nišāpūr likewise were not part of Sulṭānshāh's region. The text on p. 190 also makes Nišāpūr "fall into his hands", whereas some lines later, Toḡanšāh makes his appearance in that city. On the same map, Ġand should be within the region controlled by Tekeš. – I like the idea of calling the respective territories "Khwārazm-Shāhs (Sulṭānshāh)" and "Khwārazm-Shāhs (Tekeš)" because that underlines the equal status of both claimants and at the same time, reproduces an area of reference as the "Ḥwārazmian space".

Ḥwārazmian dynasty in the “Encyclopedia Iranica” is restricted to the succession of rulers and their various wars; Sulṭānšāh is mentioned as Tekeš’s rival¹².

M. Biran’s focus of course is on the involvement of the Qaraḥīṭai in the succession struggle, and for good reason since the Qaraḥīṭai supported first Tekeš and then – at least on one occasion – Sulṭānšāh, so that an alliance between Sulṭānšāh and the Qaraḥīṭai was a real danger for Tekeš (Biran 2005, 62).

Schwarz (1992) wrote a very detailed study about the short period between ca. 1153 and 1190, with a focus on source criticism. The work includes a German translation of part of Baġdādī; the work is remarkable for its scrutiny. Abdul Ghafur gives us the story from the Ġūrī point of view; he has many details for the “international” side of the problem¹³.

There is no scholarly work written on Sulṭānšāh in particular¹⁴. The Ḥwārazmian dynasty has not profited so far from the newly arisen interest in Seljuq history, and even within this dynasty, Sulṭānšāh of course is a minor figure. However, he is interesting enough, and in his case we can observe the making and the unmaking of a regional state in considerable detail, because he was a scion of a ruling dynasty and not a usurper. Therefore, the authors of our sources thought that he merited some attention, and by contrasting him to his brother, we can ask ourselves why Tekeš won and Sulṭānšāh lost. The success of state building can be understood much better if we take the losers into account.

In the following section, the course of events will be reconstructed in more detail, with commentaries, and after that, the reasons for success and failure in building regional states will be discussed.

SULṬĀNŠĀH’S CAREER (EXTENDED VERSION)

Unsuccessful claimant

When Il Arslan died in March 1172, he left two sons. Tekeš, the older one, was governor in Ġand; in a document relating to Ġand, Tekeš stressed the importance of the region and also mentioned that he had himself begun his career there¹⁵. Maḥmūd, better known as Sulṭānšāh, was

¹² Bosworth 2009a. In his article “Tekish b. Il Arslan” (2009b), Bosworth calls Sulṭānšāh “a thorn in his brother’s flesh” (this metaphor already in Bosworth 1968), and on the whole, this article sees Sulṭānšāh as a rebel more than a “rival ruler”. This latter article, it must be said, is marred by numerous inaccuracies. I could not find any information whether Tekeš and Sulṭānšāh were full brothers. After suffering defeat against Tekeš at the very beginning, Sulṭānšāh did not flee to Marv (this is only one account, the “second report” in Ibn al-Aṭīr), but first to the Bāwandid and then to Ai Aba. The *fu-ma* is not the Qaraḥīṭai ruler (*gūrhan*), but the queen’s consort (and leading general). It is not clear whether Sulṭānšāh “instigated” the Qaraḥīṭai to try a military strike against Tekeš – they did not need to be instigated, and see the contradicting reports in the sources. Sulṭānšāh never controlled Nīšāpūr, and it is unlikely that he kept control of Ṭūs after 1189 or even earlier.

Tekeš’s marriage to a Qipčaq woman, also called Terken Ḥātūn, stressed his links to the steppe dwellers, but the statement that “she provided him with access to the tribes” posits a distance between Tekeš and “the tribes” which is unproven at best.

¹³ Ghafur 1960. The work is structured very much on Spuler’s models. The involvement of the Ġūrīs with Sulṭānšāh is discussed on and off pp. 55–73.

¹⁴ There is no entry on him neither in the “Encyclopedia of Islam” nor in the “Encyclopedia Iranica”.

¹⁵ The narrative in this article does not significantly differ from those in Bosworth, Buniatov, and others. The most relevant sources are Ibn al-Aṭīr, Ġuwainī, Ġūzġānī, and Baġdādī (in places). – The possession of Ġand was required for better control of the steppes. Atsız had fought several wars over the lower Syr region, and in particular over Ġand (Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 13 pp.). Il Arslan had been governor at Ġand for

present in Urganč, the capital, and he ascended the throne with the support of his mother. We do not have to decide who had been the “official” crown prince, but it is quite evident that Sulṭānšāh thought he was; some sources state this explicitly¹⁶. It is possible that a “legitimist” opinion about the heritage was the consequence.

Tekeš was summoned from Ğand to pay homage, but refused to come; when Sulṭānšāh and his mother set out to fetch him with an army, he fled to the Qaraḥiṭai court, which was at Balāsāgūn, today in northern Kyrgyzstan (Biran 2005, 55). His demand for support went along with an offer; Ibn al-Aṭīr writes that he described the wealth of Ḥwārazm to the Qaraḥiṭai ruler and roused his desire (Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 377). Ğuwainī adds that he promised to spend the treasures of Ḥwārazm for military support and also to give annual tribute¹⁷. The success was quick, Sulṭānšāh and his mother left Urganč (in a south-westerly direction) and Tekeš ascended the throne in December 1172, nine months after his father had died¹⁸.

Thus, Tekeš won with the support of an army which was not his own. The Qaraḥiṭai were overlords over Ḥwārazm, and Il Arslan had delivered tribute every year (Ĝūzġānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 354). So would Tekeš until his death, if we follow Ĝūzġānī; and according to this source, he admonished his son and successor Muḥammad never to confront the Qaraḥiṭai¹⁹. In general, one can assume that Tekeš was interested in good relationships with the Qaraḥiṭai but protested as soon as their demands went up (see below). Hiring out armies was not uncommon, and the Qaraḥiṭai resorted to this as a means to meet the expenses of their salaried army (Biran 2005, 84–85).

Evicted from Ḥwārazm, Sulṭānšāh and his mother went to Nišāpūr – not directly, but with a short stay in the Gurgān plain where the Bāwandid ruler tried to profit from the situation in Ḥwārazm²⁰. But they ended up with Muʿaiyid Ai Aba, the lord of Nišāpūr, and they asked him for support. Again, treasures and tribute are part of the deal. Moreover, they depicted the situation in Ḥwārazm in such terms that Ai Aba had to come to the conclusion that conquering Ḥwārazm would be easy indeed: reportedly, they said that all the commanders and other important people in Ḥwārazm were just waiting for Sulṭānšāh to come and claim his throne again (Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 18). Ai Aba therefore summoned his warriors – his army consequently was not a standing one – and set out for Ḥwārazm.

Atsız (Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 12). – In this document, Tekeš tried to construe a tradition: Atsız had appointed his son and successor Il Arslan as governor there, and therefore he himself sent his most beloved son Malikšāh to Ğand; *ergo*: since Tekeš had been governor in Ğand, it is clear that he was his father’s favorite and should be seen as the legitimate heir (Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 14). See also Schwarz 1992, 83. Kafesoġlu very much stresses the importance of Ğand; he adds that one of the advantages was that one could listen into the steppe from the towns and markets of the lower Syr Darya. See Kafesoġlu 1956, 93, with a reference to Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 41 where a prince is appointed as governor in Barġīnliġkant, also in the lower Syr region. Among his tasks Tekeš mentions “to continuously send gatherers of information and spies into even the remotest corners of that country, and to constantly question those who come from there”.

¹⁶ In fact Ĝūzġānī is the only one of the earlier sources to deny his status as designated successor. An additional argument that indeed this must have been so is the long

title which Sulṭānšāh received in a work by Rašīd al-Dīn Waṭwāt dedicated to him during Il Arslan’s lifetime when the prince was a mere boy (see Richter-Bernburg 1976, 191).

¹⁷ Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 17. Il Arslan had given tribute already.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 377–378; for details of Qaraḥiṭai support: Biran 2005, 56.

¹⁹ Ĝūzġānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 357. There is a note of hindsight in this: after the Mongol invasion, the Qaraḥiṭai were seen as a „mighty wall“, which had protected the Muslim lands, and once it had fallen, the catastrophe was launched and overcame the Muslims like an avalanche (see Biran 2001a).

²⁰ Schwarz 1992, 84–85; Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 114. Ibn Isfandiyār makes Ai Aba and the Bāwandid compete over whom Sulṭānšāh would join. Ai Aba won – he was quicker, and besides, he offered to submit to the young Ḥwārazmian as his vassal. He and Sulṭānšāh are shown on campaign in Māzandarān for a while.

Due to the season of the year – mid-summer – and to the scarcity of water on the way from Ḥurāsān to Ḥwārazm, Ai Aba's army proceeded in detachments. On the fringes of the oasis, however, Tekeš was waiting in ambush, and he had no difficulty in defeating the first group in which Ai Aba happened to be. Ai Aba was taken prisoner on the day of ʿArafa, 569 (July 11, 1174) and beheaded²¹.

Again, the pretender made use of an army which was not his own. Ai Aba probably intended to use Sulṭānšāh as a puppet ruler in Ḥwārazm – Sulṭānšāh was still a minor. And again, military support is obtained through promises of booty and tribute. Apart from the financial side, there is a statement about the importance of local support. Nobody seems to entertain any doubts that, in fact, military leaders and notables in Ḥwārazm might prefer Sulṭānšāh, and everybody knows that if that were so, victory would be easy indeed. Sources repeat that Sulṭānšāh hoped all along that such local support would be forthcoming, but events were to prove that the Ḥwārazmian military and civil elite stayed loyal to Tekeš. The stubbornness with which Sulṭānšāh time and again seems to be persuaded to get support may have been grounded in his feeling that he alone was the legitimate heir and that in the end, justice would prevail.

After the disastrous defeat, Sulṭānšāh and his mother fled again, once more in a south-westerly direction. Tekeš pursued them and caught up with them in Dihistān, not far from the Caspian littoral; the siege did not last long, Tekeš imprisoned Terken Ḥātūn and had her killed. Sulṭānšāh, however, was able to escape. He turned to Nišāpūr again, but Ai Aba's son and successor Ṭoḡanšāh was unable (or unwilling) to provide any help – quite understandably since the military and financial resources of Nišāpūr had been depleted²². Ṭoḡanšāh started his rule in a precarious situation, and the first coins he had minted show him as a vassal of Ḥwārazm, or more precisely of Tekeš²³.

Sulṭānšāh thereupon proceeded to the Ġūrid rulers. Around this moment, they were making significant advances; they took Herat in 1175–1176²⁴. He was well received, but did not get the support he wanted. He wanted military support which would enable him to wrest Ḥurāsān from his brother and the Ġuzz emirs. What he actually got was a kind of hospitality appanage which surely did not imply a military command²⁵.

The next stage in the confrontation was triggered by Tekeš. The Qaraḥiṭai demands on Ḥwārazm apparently had increased, and Tekeš decided to strike back. He himself killed a leading member of the tribute-gathering embassy, and ordered all his retainers to kill an envoy each (so

²¹ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 19. Ai Aba's need or greed for the Ḥwārazmian treasures must have been enormous indeed if he decided to cross the Qaraqum desert in June–July, and Ġuwainī's comment: Ai Aba “was deluded by their words, and the Satanish whisperings of his lust for land and wealth led him far astray from the path of righteousness” makes sense in this context (“righteousness” could also be “sound judgment” *manḥāḡ-i šawāb*) (translation Boyle 1958, 291). Ibn Isfandiyār has a slightly different version of this campaign (Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 129).

²² Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 19; Ibn al-Aḡīr/Tornberg 1979, 377; Buniatov 1999, 45; Schwarz 1992, 88–89.

²³ Schwarz 1992, 90–92. Out of the various types of coins which Schwarz distinguishes, the first and the last name Tekeš as *al-sulṭān al-muʿazzam*. They are dated to 570/1174–1175 (with a possible extension until

572/1176–1177) and 577–579/1181–1184. On the other types which were minted between these dates, Tekeš is not mentioned. Ibn Isfandiyār also mentions that Ṭoḡanšāh minted coins and had the Friday sermon delivered for Tekeš (Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 133).

²⁴ Nizami 1998 just has a very short mention of Sulṭānšāh. Ġūzḡānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 358; Ibn al-Aḡīr/Tornberg 1979, 377. – Schwarz thinks that Sulṭānšāh arrived at the Ġūri's court after the conquest of Herat; that makes sense because this event established the Ġūrid Empire firmly as a major player in Ḥurāsān (Schwarz 1992, 95). – Abdul Ghafur (1960, 65 fn. 4) thinks so, too.

²⁵ Ġūzḡānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 357. The term for “hospitality appanage” is *iqṭāʿi ba-waḡb-i mihmān-dāst*; probably the Ġūri leaders saw that it could be profitable to keep a Ḥwārazmian pretender in the wings (see Kafesoğlu 1956, 88).

that they all had blood in their shoes). These events are not dated; M. Biran proposes a date in the mid-1170s²⁶.

It is not clear who had the initiative in what follows. Ğuwainī says that the Qaraġitai asked Sulṭānšāh to come and participate in their action against Tekeš; he also has the Ğūrīs offer “copious provisions and equipment” but does not speak of manpower; but since Ğūrī support is not mentioned in the following narrative, it cannot have been very important. On the other hand, Ibn al-Aṭīr has Sulṭānšāh take the first step²⁷. Consequently, it is the historian Ibn al-Aṭīr who informs us that Sulṭānšāh maintains that the Ĥwārazmians would go over to him as soon as they could. More material promises which Sulṭānšāh may have made are passed over in silence, but it is probable enough that at any rate, he would have had to give (at least) as much tribute as Tekeš had, and he must have assured the Qaraġitai rulers that with him, they would be spared the problems they were currently experiencing with his brother. But again, no local support was forthcoming, and the Ĥwārazmians remained staunch supporters of their ruler²⁸. The Qaraġitai commander wanted to turn back²⁹, but Sulṭānšāh asked him for just a part of the troops for a campaign in Ĥurāsān. For some unexplained reason, the Qaraġitai commander agreed, and thus, it was with Qaraġitai support that Sulṭānšāh succeeded in taking Marw from the Ğuzz leader Malik Dīnār; he had first tried his luck at Saraĥs against the same enemy, but failed (Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 378–379; Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 20–21).

Regional lord

After the conquest of Marw, the Qaraġitai troops left and crossed the Amu Darya³⁰. After their departure, Sulṭānšāh consequently was acting with troops he himself had raised; external support, if any, was minimal from now on. Therefore one of the central questions is where his war-

²⁶ Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 19; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 378. Of course there is a religious legitimation here and Ibn al-Aṭīr stresses that point. In all, Tekeš (and all the other Ĥwārazmšāhs) seems to have had a thoroughly instrumental relationship to religion. – For the dates, see Biran 2005, 56. Biran argues by consistency of Qaraġitai history. The major date which serves as orientation is the affair around empress Pusuwan, whose husband was the *fuma* in the Arabic and Persian sources. Pusuwan had begun an affair with his younger brother during her husband's absence and consequently was killed by her father-in-law in 1178. Therefore, Tekeš's action must have taken place early enough for the Qaraġitai army to be on campaign together with Sulṭānšāh at that moment. – Kafesoġlu (1956, 91) states that these events cannot be exactly dated and suggests something between 1175 and 1180, with a preference for an earlier date. This is quite in keeping with Biran's timing. – Abdul Ghafur votes for a somewhat later date, he puts the murder of the Qaraġitai embassy into 1178–1179 and has a very quick sequence of events for the rest until the conquest of Marw and Saraĥs which he sees as having taken place at basically the same moment (Ghafur 1960, 66).

²⁷ Ğuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 20: *bar raġm-i Tekeš istihdār-i ū kardand*. – Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 378.

²⁸ The revenge aspect should not be neglected here. All those who had participated in the killing of the envoys must have known that even if they rebelled against Tekeš, their future was more than uncertain – or rather, all too certain.

²⁹ M. Biran (2005, 61) adds that one of the reasons could have been that the *fuma* was called back by the events surrounding the Pusuwan scandal, see above fn. 26.

³⁰ The conquest of Marw cannot be dated precisely. Biran has 1181 (2005, 61). Here, she follows the “second report” in Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 380. In this report, Sulṭānšāh wins control over Marw, Saraĥs, Abīward and Nasā in a single campaign with Qaraġitai support; and this is also what Biran says. But the more detailed “first report”, based on Ibn Funduq's lost “Mašārib al-taġārib”, fits in better with the movements of Malik Dīnār and the Ğuzz as reflected in the regional Kirmānī historiography, and also with the details we can reconstruct for the remoter regions such as Abīward and Nasā which Sulṭānšāh can hardly have won until his victory over Toġanšāh in 1181. A new and decisive argument comes from a coin – one of the first ones to be clearly attributable to Sulṭānšāh – which is not dated, but shows the caliph al-Mustaḍī; since al-Mustaḍī reigned 566–577/1170–1180, the coin must have been minted before or in 1180 (Album 2011, A 1711. I thank Sebastian Hanstein, Leipzig, for pointing this out for me, and to propose a reading of the coin). Therefore, I'd suggest that Sulṭānšāh's victory over the Ğuzz at Marw could have taken place in 1179 or 1180, and that he won Saraĥs and the more westerly regions only after May 1181 as the “first report” states explicitly. The Qaraġitai campaign in Ĥurāsān would therefore not have lasted three full years as Biran thinks, but considerably less.

riors came from and what he could offer them; we shall come back to this question in a later section. The conquest of Marw marks the beginning of Sulṭānšāh's career as a regional lord. From now on, he was more than a largely unsuccessful pretender for the throne of Ḥwārazm; he was man with a power base of his own.

Sulṭānšāh was now constantly raiding the Ġuzz, and after some time, Malik Dīnār was sitting in the citadel of Saraḥs and had to watch his followers leave him³¹. There were only two men whom they could have joined if they did not simply leave for their more peaceful occupations³²: Ṭoġanšāh or Sulṭānšāh. Since Malik Dīnār now turned to Ṭoġanšāh for help, it is more probable that they went to Sulṭānšāh. Some of these followers of Malik Dīnār also left the region altogether, heading south for Kirmān³³. Malik Dīnār is explicitly seen as Ṭoġanšāh's vassal, and this is implied in the story that he asked for another place to serve Ṭoġanšāh, and got Biṣṭām³⁴. Ṭoġanšāh had placed himself under Tekeš's protection, and Tekeš warned his brother not to encroach on Ṭoġanšāh's possessions³⁵.

A confrontation between Sulṭānšāh and Ṭoġanšāh seemed inevitable. In a battle at Āsyā-yi Ḥafṣ (26 Dūlḥiġġa 576/13 May 1181), Sulṭānšāh won a decisive victory over the lord of Nīšāpūr³⁶. As a consequence, many of Ṭoġanšāh's emirs left him. Sulṭānšāh was able to take Saraḥs because the emir whom Ṭoġanšāh had sent there as a replacement for Malik Dīnār had abandoned the place³⁷. Additionally, he gained Ṭūs and other places. The information in the "second report" in Ibn al-Aṭīr that Sulṭānšāh's rule extended until Abīward and Nasā should also be referred to this moment³⁸.

Thus, Sulṭānšāh had succeeded in establishing his rule over much of the western "Ġuzz country", and in particular over the region where Malik Dīnār had ruled. In the eastern part of the Ġuzz region, with its center in Balḥ, Ġuzz emirs continued as Qaraḥīṭai or – depending on the circumstances – as Ġūrī vassals³⁹. It would be interesting to know how many Ġuzz had left the Harī-Rūd and Murġāb region either for Kirmān or else – with Malik Dīnār – for a location farther west, and how many Ġuzz stayed on and possibly accepted Sulṭānšāh as their new leader; but this cannot be quantified. It seems plausible, though, to assume that a substantial portion of "Ġuzz" groups joined Sulṭānšāh.

Nasā had been under Ḥwārazmian influence, sometimes rule, for quite a while at this point. The lords of Nasā can be traced back to ʿUmar b. Ḥamza al-Amīr who was appointed there by Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad the Qaraḥanid-Seljuqid in 554 (1159–1160), but it is possible that a man from this lineage had been appointed earlier by Atsız⁴⁰. Now, in the *inšāʿ*-collection made by

³¹ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 20, *akṭar-i ḥaṣam az ū bar-ḡaṣṭand*.

³² *Ḥaṣam* frequently is a term for pastoralist levies (see Paul 2006).

³³ See Schwarz 1992, 97–98. A body of Ġuzz arrived in Kirmān in 576 (1180–1181), they had been driven away from Saraḥs by Sulṭānšāh. They were about five thousand tents, but in bad shape (Kirmānī/Houtsma 1886, 106; the source gives the *ḥarāġī* year, 568 *māh-i mihr*). Malik Dīnār came in Ramaḍān 581/Nov.–Dec. 1185 with a small group of followers (Kirmānī/Houtsma 1886, 138). The report in Ibn Isfandiyār (2010, 138) is confused, but confirms that Sulṭānšāh succeeded in establishing his rule in Saraḥs and Marw.

³⁴ Mīrḥwānd 1961, 369. Ṭoġanšāh was Malik Dīnār's *munawwib*. The close alliance between the two is also expressed in Banākati/Šiʿār 1970, 236 who names Ṭoġanšāh as *mihtar-i Ġūz* – but this could be an error on the part of the author or a scribal mistake.

³⁵ Ghafur 1960, 67, sees a division of Ḥurāsān as the background.

³⁶ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 21; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 379. The sources underline that Ṭoġanšāh was not interested in war, but preferred music, literature, and feasting. Among the things taken as booty, Ibn al-Aṭīr mentions 300 boards for backgammon.

³⁷ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 379. As mentioned *supra*, Malik Dīnār reportedly had asked to be transferred to Biṣṭām.

³⁸ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 380; see the discussion in fn. 50.

³⁹ Apparently, the Ġūrī ruler profited from the situation after Sulṭānšāh's success at Marw (and Saraḥs) by taking over former Ġuzz-ruled towns such as Pangḍih, Marwarrūd, Maimana, and Andḥūd (Ghafur 1960, 63). The Ġūrī realm therefore included quite a number of "Ġuzz" after 1179–1180.

⁴⁰ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 232; Aḥkām, fol. 57a-b; Waṭwāt/Tüysirkānī 1960, 33–34 (the texts are largely identical); Horst 1964, doc. I-10, 119–120. See also Paul 2013, 29–33.

Bahā° al-Dīn Baġdādī, there is a letter, dated 577 (1181–1182), to an unnamed lord of Nasā who is warned against separating himself from Tekeš and Nasā from Ḥwārazm: “He is a servant of Our dynasty, and Nasā is submitted to this throne. He has to look for his subsistence to the grace We may accord him, and he has to ask Us for his *iqṭā°*, and he must not heed the talk of those newcomers who are sitting in the ambush of troublemaking [...]” (Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 196 [transl. J. P.]). The “newcomers” beyond doubt refer to Sulṭānšāh, and it is clear that the lord of Nasā had allied himself to the new power in Ḥurāsān. The letter also underlines that now there was an agreement between Sulṭānšāh and Tekeš⁴¹; therefore, a shift of loyalties did not make sense.

Nasawī reports that Tekeš had to besiege Nasā several times without being able to take it by force and had to come to an agreement with its lord – since Nasā was firmly within Tekeš’s realm again before 1183, Nasawī’s statement must be referred to this particular moment. The agreement included an obligation for the lord of Nasā to support Tekeš in his campaigns in Ḥurāsān (Nasawī/Buniatov 1996, 61). In another letter from the same collection, troops from Nasā are said to have participated in an action against Sulṭānšāh at practically the same moment (Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 155). The lord of Nasā was not the only one to be impressed by Sulṭānšāh’s success. The unruly former lord of Herat Bahā° al-Dīn Ṭuġril likewise joined him. Sulṭānšāh attracted other Saṅġarī emirs as well, but they are not identified in the sources⁴².

In this situation, Ṭoġānšāh turned not only to Tekeš, but also to the Ġūrīs for help; he also started to mint coins again on which Tekeš was mentioned as overlord⁴³. But he did not get any substantial support – apparently the rulers in Ḥwārazm and Ġūr thought as badly of the military stamina of the lord of Nīšāpūr as did the regional and local lords who had left Ṭoġānšāh. He did not get out of these straits before he died in April 1185 (Muḥarram 581).

Thus, we can conclude that Sulṭānšāh profited from a kind of power vacuum in Ḥurāsān which was partly due to Ṭoġānšāh’s weakness, partly to the instability of Malik Dīnār’s principality. But Sulṭānšāh also personally succeeded in imposing himself as a military leader, first with external support, later on his own. Due to his two major victories, over Malik Dīnār at Marw and over Ṭoġānšāh at Āsyā-yi Ḥafṣ, he was able to attract a considerable military following. Regional lords such as the lord of Nasā allied themselves to him; we have no information about other places such as Ṭūs and Abīward, but we can assume that in those cases as well, the locally powerful people joined Sulṭānšāh because they saw that it did not make any sense to stay loyal to Ṭoġānšāh. Sulṭānšāh did not have to conquer these places and regions – their lords went over to him. Ṭoġānšāh’s commanders likewise probably were not only commanders, but also territorial lords (as *muqṭa°*). For the former lord of Herat, personal interests may have played a more important role. A new player had emerged on the chessboard of power politics in Ḥurāsān, and a promising one at that.

In the meantime, Tekeš had started his counter-offensive in Ḥurāsān. His base of operations apparently was around Nasā; in the letters he sent to neighboring rulers, he mentioned that he

⁴¹ The letter uses titles which could go with a subordinate ruler: *barādar-i a°azz-i akram malik-i °ālīm-i °ādil*, but this does not reflect the power relationship at that moment (Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 196).

⁴² Ġūzġānī/Ḥabībī 1963, 358. It is not quite sure whether this report should be seen in the context of the early 1180s, it could also refer to the situation ten years later.

Bahā° al-Dīn was one of these “Saṅġarī emirs”; he had been in control of Herat until the Ġūrid takeover there in 1175–1176 (Ghafur 1960, 62).

⁴³ See above fn. 23; Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 22. The text has the term *ba-iltimās-i madadī iltiġā namūd*. This seems to imply an offer to submit as a vassal as borne out by the coins.

was writing from there⁴⁴. Nasā indeed was vital for Ḥwārazm because controlling it meant control over the southern fringes of the Qaraqum desert (in particular if control of Marw could not be achieved)⁴⁵. Therefore, Tekeš was eager to keep Nasā and its lords under his influence; he had to prevent Sulṭānšāh from gaining a foothold there.

The correspondence transmitted in Baġdādī shows that Tekeš apparently took care to “build international confidence” for his offensive in Ḥurāsān. In particular, the texts seem to show that he at least pretended to be willing to end an alliance with the Ġūrīs (Ghafur 1960, 68). The texts do not include any correspondence with the Qaraḥītai for understandable reasons. Therefore, we do not know when Tekeš resumed giving tribute again, and how the conflict he himself had initiated by killing the members of the tribute-gathering mission in the later 1170s was resolved⁴⁶.

Stalemate and climax

The next stage in the conflict between the two brothers revolved around Nišāpūr. Toġānšāh’s son Saṅġaršāh had followed him on the throne (in 1185), but real power was in the hands of his *atabek*, a person called Menglitegin (or Menglibeg). Menglitegin was not loved by the emirs who complained of his oppressive ways; many of them now defected to Sulṭānšāh; thus, most of the territory which Nišāpūr had controlled now fell to the Ḥwārazmian prince, although not the city itself (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 22; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 379).

The fighting between Sulṭānšāh and Tekeš included sieges of Šādyāḥ (the town next to Nišāpūr which had taken the place of the city by that time) by both contenders, quick attacks against Ḥwārazm by Sulṭānšāh, and sieges of Marw and Saraḥs by Tekeš. It is not necessary to go into details, both Tekeš and Sulṭānšāh coveted Nišāpūr: *mulk-i Nišāpūr* meant the Seljuqid heritage (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 22; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 379). The *atabek* Menglitegin is depicted as a very unsavory character in the sources. One detail was that after having concluded a truce with Tekeš as a result of a siege which had lasted for two months (end of May – end of July 1186), he imprisoned an embassy which Tekeš had sent, and had its members transferred to Sulṭānšāh⁴⁷.

At the end, it was Tekeš who succeeded in taking Šādyāḥ. In mid-May 1187, when he entered the town, Menglitegin was killed and Saṅġaršāh taken prisoner. Tekeš installed his own son Malikšāh as governor there. After Tekeš had left for Ḥwārazm in September, Sulṭānšāh again tried to impose himself, but failed: he lifted the siege on hearing that Tekeš was approaching with a huge army. The source tells us that this was a ruse, and in fact Tekeš was far away; he hurried back, and it was from Nasā that he sent someone ahead with a message that was meant to lead Sulṭānšāh into error (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 25).

⁴⁴ Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937, 184; Schwarz 1992, 46. Ibn Isfandiyār (2010, 138) has Tekeš act from a basis around Dihistān and parts of Gurgān, a bit farther to the east.

⁴⁵ Baġdādī has Atsız mention in the appointment quoted above that Nasā was at a crossing of major roads (*bar šāh-rāh-i āfāq ast*; Aḥkām, fol. 57a).

⁴⁶ It would be plausible if he had tried to prevent a solid alliance between Sulṭānšāh and the Qaraḥītai. Biran (2005, 62) is very careful when she says that “a kind of rapprochement” must have taken place between Tekeš

and the Qaraḥītai before Tekeš’s campaign in western Iran in 1194/95. Indeed this could have happened much earlier, soon after 1181.

⁴⁷ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 21. This embassy included Bahā’ al-Dīn Baġdādī, who left a long epistle dedicated to Tekeš, the “Risāla-yi ḥabsiyya”, edited as an appendix to his “Tawassul”. Unfortunately, this text does not address “politics” so much, and as far as I have seen, it offers no hint as to the reasons why Menglitegin extradited the Ḥwārazmian ambassadors to Sulṭānšāh.

Ṭoḡanšāh as well as Sanḡaršāh had been Tekeš's vassals (see the coinage), and therefore Menglitegin, who did not let him into the town and imprisoned his ambassadors, was seen as a rebel; did Menglitegin intend to go over to Sulṭānšāh? Probably not – otherwise the emirs who left the Nišāpūr group would not have gone over to the Ḥwārazmian. Perhaps Menglitegin had his own ambitions, but could not secure the loyalties of the Nišāpūrī notables who then went out and asked Tekeš for a truce (*amān*)⁴⁸. Nišāpūr was now firmly in Tekeš's hand.

At this juncture, when Tekeš was evidently the winning side, Sulṭānšāh lost much support among the military elite of Ḥurāsān, the emirs and the local lords; they now went over to Tekeš. This probably meant that the gains which Sulṭānšāh had made before were lost in the same way in which he had won them – by a shift of loyalties of the military elite⁴⁹.

Shortly thereafter, the brothers (again) came to an agreement, and the narrative approaches the climax, that is the moment when Tekeš finally ascended the throne of Ḥurāsān. The agreement is called *ṣulḥ*, and it apparently did not imply Sulṭānšāh's submission, at least the crucial questions of the Friday sermon and the coinage are left out, and the ritual context is likewise left in the dark. Yet it was not an entirely balanced discussion. It was Tekeš who gave something to Sulṭānšāh – the regions of Ġām, Bāharz, and Zīr-i Pul, to the south of Saraḡs and closer to the Ġūrid realm. Sulṭānšāh for his part freed the prisoners or hostages whom Menglitegin had put into his hands. No more territorial arrangements are on record, but it is clear that Sulṭānšāh had now waived all claims to the regions between Nasā and Nišāpūr; Tekeš had won complete control of the western and northern quarters of Ḥurāsān which he now could use as a springboard for an expansionist policy into western Iran.

Ġuwainī stresses that now, rebels and trouble-mongers were no longer active, and order was restored (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 26). The story consequently ends in the enthroning scene, on the summer pastures of Rādkān-i Ṭūs, in the first days of July 1189⁵⁰.

On the defensive

Sulṭānšāh was now on the defensive, and the brothers repeatedly came to arrangements which gave Sulṭānšāh time, whereas Tekeš may have only been interested in securing his advantages

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 379; “notables” is *aʿyān*. Rašīd al-Dīn (Rašīd al-Dīn/Raušan 2010, 8) has Menglitegin ask the notables to act as intermediaries: *aʿyān-i šahr-rā šafīc sāht*; Ġuwainī (1916, 25) has *aʿimma wa-sādāt*. Ibn Isfandiyār (2010, 147) mentions “people from Ḥurāsān” *mardum* who come to Tekeš and bring him to Nišāpūr.

⁴⁹ Rašīd al-Dīn/Raušan 2010, 9: *tamāmat-i umarā-yi Ḥurāsān badū* [Tekeš] *tawassul namūdand*; Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 26. The way in which Richter-Bernburg describes this shift of loyalties does not seem quite adequate. He has “Die Emire Ḥorāsāns, die bislang versucht hatten, ihre Unabhängigkeit zu bewahren, hatten sich schon vor dem Friedensschluß mit Maḡmūd Tegjīš unterstellt” (Richter-Bernburg 1976, 196). This does not take into account that many if not all of these figures had joined Sulṭānšāh in the same fashion earlier; they did not try to keep their “independence” – on the contrary, they were looking around for strong overlords. – The shift of loyalties is narrated after the enthronization in Ibn Isfandiyār. He very clearly shows how the eastern border of the Bāwandid

domains eroded when Tekeš had been proclaimed sulṭān; the paradigmatic cases are the lords of Gulpāyagān and Kabūdġāma who now chose to go over to Tekeš (Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 149–150).

⁵⁰ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 27. Ibn Isfandiyār is very short: “Tekeš won Ḥurāsān” *Ḥurāsān sulṭān-rā šud* (Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 149), as a direct consequence of his taking Nišāpūr. – The meadows of Rādkān-i Ṭūs were to become „imperial summer pastures“ under the Mongols, and held considerable prestige until the times of Timur (see Paul 2011b). – The sources do not tell us whether Sulṭānšāh ever controlled these summer pastures, nor what use he eventually made of them. Since he seems to have held Ṭūs for a while, he may have had Rādkān as well. – Abdul Ghafur leaves out the enthronement, but insists on the feasting afterwards. He calls the location where this took place “Rudkān suburb of Ṭūs” (Ghafur 1960, 70). Richter-Bernburg likewise has a memorable formula: “in den Wiesengründen von Rādkān unweit von Ṭūs” (Richter-Bernburg 1976, 196). It is curious how little understanding there sometimes is for nomadic forms of governance.

on all fronts, including the steppe zone and Iran. It was only when Tekeš decided to try further inroads into Iran and therefore was away for longer periods (in 1192) that the last act was staged.

Sulṭānšāh's conflict with the Ġūrīs was his main concern towards the end of his career⁵¹. After Sulṭānšāh was redirected to the Harī-Rūd and Murġāb valleys, the adjacent regions of Bāḥarḥ and Ġām, and both Tekeš and the Ġūrīs were stabilized, he was hemmed in between two greater powers. He started to raid Ġūrī domains, in particular the rich pastures of Bādġīs, but there also was a conflict over Fūšanġ, and the Ġūrīs may have seen their possession of Herat in danger. In the ensuing war against the Ġūrīs, Sulṭānšāh suffered defeat in a battle fought on the banks of the Murġāb in 1190 (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 27; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 381; 1982, 58). As a result, the Ġūrī sultan extended his rule over part of the territory (most probably the eastern fringes of what had been Sulṭānšāh's dominion) and retreated to Ġazna (Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1982, 58).

The Ġūrī leadership seems to have had problems finding a consistent strategy in its dealings with Sulṭānšāh. This is also reflected in a literary version of the conflict narrative, in the "second report" of Ibn al-Aṭīr. According to this account, there was both an "appeasement" and a "confrontation" party among the Ġūrī leadership concerning Sulṭānšāh's inroads along the Harī-Rūd. The appeasers were willing to abandon Fūšanġ and even the Bādġīs region together with some fortresses; this faction included the Ġūrī rulers. The confrontationists, on the other hand, have the sympathies of the author. They were unwilling to "abandon what we have won with our swords from the Ġuzz and the Saṅġarī Turks"⁵². This turn in the narrative clearly is meant to introduce a decisive encounter, and that is of course what comes next. The battle is the battle on the Murġāb mentioned before, with its well-known result. In this narrative, Tekeš appears again: he realized that his defeated brother (he had reached Marw with only 20 companions and was happy to see 1500 more of them join him there) might seek help from or escape to the Ḥiṭā, and therefore sent the larger part of his force to guard the Amu Darya. Sulṭānšāh, now desperate, reacted by addressing the Ġūrī leader (of the "appeasement" party), who treated him as his equal. Tekeš then wrote to the Ġūrīs asking them to hand over Sulṭānšāh, and the answer is a piece of chivalresque thinking which serves to praise the corresponding qualities in the Ġūrī sultan: "Now you say that Sulṭānšāh has laid waste the country and has wanted to rule. By my life: he is a king and son of a king, and his ambition is high, and he has striven for kingship just as others have, and things on earth have a master who makes things reach him who has a right

⁵¹ There are basically two narratives about Sulṭānšāh. The first is common to Ibn al-Aṭīr and Ġuwainī; it is the one which Ibn al-Aṭīr claims to have taken from Ibn Funduq. This cannot be the whole truth, because there are events in it which are later than Ibn Funduq's death (see Schwarz 1992) – there must have been some continuator of Ibn Funduq. This is the account I have followed thus far, also because its details fit in much better with independent accounts such as the regional Kirmānī historiography, and with the pivotal dates of the Qaraḥiṭai. The other narrative is much more hostile to Sulṭānšāh and has a clearer focus on the Ġūrīs; besides, it is in places closer to what one would call "popular" historiography. The commonalities between Ibn al-Aṭīr's second report and Ġūzġānī do not allow the statement that both authors profited from a common written source, but the outlook and also the sequence of events is on the whole comparable. – On the whole, it is difficult not to agree with Ibn al-Aṭīr who explains (after he has quoted the "second report" from an undisclosed

source): "This is what the account (*riwāya*) says. If I had been able to harmonize the two accounts, I would have done so. But one of them let precede what the other one refers to a later stage, and therefore we have quoted both of them. Moreover, the events took place in remote locations, and therefore we cannot tell which one is better, otherwise I would have quoted one report and omitted the other" (Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 385 [transl. J. P.]). The final stages of Sulṭānšāh's career are to be found in the annual reports for 586 and 590 (Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1982, 58; 106-107), and these are compatible again with the account in Ġuwainī.

⁵² Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 382. Remember that the Ġūrīs were Iranians. This outcry also is indicative of how the power-holders in that region were seen: Ġuzz and/or Saṅġarī emirs. The Ġūrīs had taken many towns from the Ġuzz, but also Herat from a "Saṅġarī" emir, Bahāḥ al-Dīn Ṭuġril, and had defeated the self-proclaimed lord of Ġarġistān, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Sunqur, also a "Saṅġarī" emir (Ghafur 1960, 47).

to them. Now Sulṭānšāh has sought asylum with me, and you should withdraw from his countries and hand out his share of what is his rightful heritage from his father, territories as well as treasure” [transl. J. P.]⁵³.

The following report in this narrative about a joint campaign which the Ġūrīs of the confrontationist party undertook against Ḥwārazm together with Sulṭānšāh, and in which Ai Aba also participated, is clearly not historical, but perhaps a reflection of the situation which prevailed at the beginning of Sulṭānšāh’s career when Ai Aba was still alive. The story has a coda, which shows how Tekeš wins most of northern Ḥurāsān. There is also a romantic episode in which Ai Aba pursues Tekeš across the Qaraqum but at the end has to surrender because his men are thirsty, and they therefore join Tekeš, whose water supplies are more plentiful⁵⁴. Because of this very literary context, the message quoted above should not be taken as a factual report. It is remarkable in that it openly recognizes Sulṭānšāh’s right to rule, which is founded on descent; and his high ambition is justified and indeed something positive in a prince. This may have been a current opinion in Sulṭānšāh’s surroundings⁵⁵. The text also insists on the division of the heritage: Tekeš is denied the right to keep it all for himself. This likewise may have been a widespread feeling in Sulṭānšāh’s camp, and, as we have seen above, was to live on in literary historiography. The Ġūrī presents the argument because it comes in handy for his (evident) refusal to break the codes of hospitality. After having been defeated by the Ġūrīs, Sulṭānšāh again turned west. Apparently, he asked for a re-negotiation of the arrangement he had with his brother, and at the same time, he acted in a way that could have been interpreted as a breach of that arrangement (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 27).

That was the beginning of the end. Tekeš undertook a first campaign against Saraḥs in 1190 and conquered the place. He took much booty, but after a while, an agreement again was reached, and Sulṭānšāh was allowed to return to Saraḥs. Ġuwainī states explicitly that he brought his treasure and military equipment there (we do not learn where Sulṭānšāh had kept them in the meantime, probably at Marw). Although it is doubtful that much was left of either treasure or equipment after two major defeats, still the source uses the expression “plentiful” – *maufūr* – for it⁵⁶.

In 1192, when Tekeš was away in western Iran, Sulṭānšāh made his last irredentist move to regain Ḥwārazm. Again, he seems to have supposed local support would be forthcoming, and

⁵³ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 382–383: *ammā qaḷuka inna Sulṭānšāh aḥraba l-bilād wa-arāda mulkahā falla-umrī innahu malik wa ibnu malik, wa-lahu himmatun ʿāliya, wa-idā arāda l-mulka fa-mīluhu arādahu, wa lil-umūr mudabbirun yūsiluhā ilā mustahiqqihā; wa-qad iltaḡara ilaiya, wa-yanbaḡi an tanzāha ʿan bilādihī wa tuʿīhu naṣībahu mim mā ḥalafa abūhu wa-min al-amlāk wa-min al-amwāl*. Again, the term *iltiḡāʿ* may imply some kind of subordination of the guest to the host. – See Buniatov 1999, 49–50. I propose to understand the *mudabbir* as God Almighty; Buniatov has “the strategically active one is he who is disposing of things and who is worthy of that” *deyatelen tot, kto upravlyaet delami i kto dostoin etogo*. I do not agree with his rendering of *fa-mīluhu arādahu*, either: it seems to me that the source insists on the equal rights of both claimants, and therefore the *mīluhu* should be the addressee of the message, Tekeš. The message would therefore imply that it is indeed Tekeš who is the usurper: God Almighty is the one

who at the end makes things get where they belong, and Il Arslan’s heritage does not belong to Tekeš alone.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 384–385. Buniatov who otherwise uses the report of the joint campaign against Ḥwārazm passes Ai Aba’s participation in it over in silence, and he deletes the “romantic” chase across the Qaraqum (Buniatov 1999, 50–51). A. Ghafur likewise uses part of the “second report” but leaves out what he apparently judged to be too “legendary” (Ghafur 1960, 72 with attempts at harmonizing the reports).

⁵⁵ The argument itself may refer to the “Turkish” concept of legitimate rule in which every male member of the ruling dynasty can claim the throne – and if he does so might win at least an appanage.

⁵⁶ This campaign against Saraḥs is dated to 586/beg. 8 February, 1190, and it is stated that Tekeš went to the summer pastures of Rādkān after having taken the fortress (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 27; Rašid al-Dīn/Raušan 2010, 9), so Tekeš must have taken Saraḥs in late winter/spring 1190.

again, he was mistaken. This last campaign must have been undertaken as a swift raid with a relatively small force, counting on surprise more than on military superiority; Sulṭānšāh was by now far from commanding adequate resources for enterprises of this scope. While somewhere on his way back from Iran, Tekeš learnt that Sulṭānšāh had approached Ḥwārazm, and hurried on. But he was still in Dihistān when news reached him that Sulṭānšāh had retreated (Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 29; Rašīd al-Dīn/Raušan 2010, 10).

The next year (spring 1193), Tekeš again went to war against his brother. When in Abīward, emissaries again tried to negotiate an agreement, but failed – the source says because of Sulṭānšāh’s inordinately foul language⁵⁷. Probably no such pretext was needed; simply the time had come to finish off the regional state which in Tekeš’s eyes certainly was nothing but a trouble-maker. Tekeš was not the only one who thought that there was no future for Sulṭānšāh. The castellan at Saraḥs also came to this conclusion and offered to surrender to Tekeš the fortress and the treasures. Sulṭānšāh died a few days later, in the last days of September, 1193. Ġuwainī says that Tekeš “inherited” Sulṭānšāh’s throne, position, treasure, and army. Ibn Isfandiyār adds that Tekeš had his brother’s corpse transferred to Ḥwārazm and buried there⁵⁸.

FORCES AND RESOURCES

How did Tekeš gain an advantage over Sulṭānšāh? The sources stress his personal qualities, but they are written in hindsight – all our authors knew that Tekeš was the winner, and therefore his final victory was self-evident. But it was not self-evident at all. There was a moment when Sulṭānšāh seemed to be on the winning side. After his victories over Malik Dīnār and over Toḡānšāh, many military leaders and local lords went over to him and thus further strengthened his cause. They would only have done so if they had had reason to believe that at the end of the day, this decision would pay off. They hoped that once Sulṭānšāh had finally deposed his brother, he would shower largesse, positions, and *iqṭā‘āt* upon them. Besides Sulṭānšāh’s qualities as a military leader, his alliance with the Qaraḥīṭai may have played a role. Tekeš had fallen out with them, and it was none too clear whether the great power of the steppe would let him continue to rule, even if he had succeeded for the time being in fending them off. This success, on the other hand, must have enhanced Tekeš’s prestige in the steppe⁵⁹.

Military support from external powers played a role for both pretenders in the initial stage: Tekeš had Qaraḥīṭai backing at first, while Sulṭānšāh allied himself with Ai Aba (who clearly was the leading party in that alliance) and later asked for Ġūrī and for Qaraḥīṭai support, both of which he received in some measure, yet – the Qaraḥīṭai contribution to his establishment at Marw cannot be quantified, but must have been decisive. It is not clear for how long and to

⁵⁷ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 29; Rašīd al-Dīn 2010, 10; Ibn al-Aḫīr/Tornberg 1982, 107. If one were to guess which language the source has in mind, it would be good to start from the assumption that Sulṭānšāh claimed a part of the realm as his rightful heritage, something Tekeš evidently was no longer prepared to even listen to at this stage.

⁵⁸ Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 30; Rašīd al-Dīn/Raušan 2010, 10–11; Ibn al-Aḫīr/Tornberg 1982, 107; Ibn Isfandiyār/Iqbāl 2010, 158. – Ibn Isfandiyār (2010, 157–158)

has a different narrative about Sulṭānšāh’s last campaign. He sees Sulṭānšāh (whom he calls “sulṭān Maḥmūd” in this instance) as a partner in a coalition with the Bāwandid ruler and the last ‘Irāqī Seljuqid Tuḡril; the objective of this alliance was to curb Tekeš and his expansion south and west. Sulṭānšāh’s part would have been to attack Tekeš in Ḥurāsān, and his prize would have been Nišāpūr.

⁵⁹ Kafesoğlu (1956, 91) insists on this particular point.

what extent Sulṭānšāh was considered or considered himself a Qaraḫīṭai ally during the following years, nor do we know whether he gave tribute to them or whether the Qaraḫīṭai had been satisfied with the spoils they may have earned in the conquest of Marw. However, after the initial stages of the confrontation – that is, roughly after 1180 – both brothers continued with the forces they could mobilize by themselves, and both were successful in their own field. However, it is apparent that Tekeš did better because he gained the upper hand after several years.

The turning point was reached in the mid-1180s without a direct confrontation of the two brothers. Tekeš succeeded early on in bringing the lord of Nasā back into his orbit, and this may have been the case with other local lords as well – we do not know anything about Abīward, for instance. Toḡanšāh, heavily under attack by Sulṭānšāh and his own erstwhile emirs, turned to Tekeš for help immediately after his disastrous defeat in spring 1181 and again recognized him as his overlord. Tekeš also succeeded in interrupting Qaraḫīṭai rule over Bukhara in 1182; in so doing, he further secured his connections between Ḥwārazm and the northern fringe of Ḥurāsān, even if this was not to last⁶⁰.

The history of Transoxiana in this period is extremely shadowy, and it is next to impossible to ascertain how far the Qaraḫanids of Samarqand were interested in what was going on in Ḥurāsān. Muḥammad b. Masʿūd (r. 1170/1–1178/9) is not known to have interfered in the struggle. There seems to be an inscription mentioning him in Mašhad, however; this would prove some interest in Ḥurāsān⁶¹. There is a bit more information about his successor, Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusain who ruled in Samarqand from 574 (1178/9) until 599 (1202/3) (Kochnev 2001, 58 and 66). He must have ruled in Bukhara as well, but it is not entirely clear in which period; Bukharan coins with his name are known from 574 and from 582 (1186/7) (see Kochnev 1997, in fn. 90). He was a highly respected ruler, as far as can be concluded from his praise being sung in a number of literary works⁶². But we do not know anything about his politics. He was a vassal of the Qaraḫīṭai, probably without trying to change anything about that; and it would be no surprise if he watched the events in Ḥurāsān with some suspicion, in particular the progress which Tekeš made – the Samarqandī Qaraḫanids had opposed Ḥwārazmian ambitions earlier. They also had agreed to a Ġuzz alliance. Did they now support Sulṭānšāh? What about their Qaraḫīṭai overlords? No quarrel between Sulṭānšāh and the Qaraḫīṭai is recorded. Thus, a kind of benevolent neutrality (or more) towards Sulṭānšāh in both Samarqand and the Qaraḫīṭai *ordu* is not excluded, at least for a couple of years, but must remain speculative.

When Tekeš won the struggle for Nīšāpūr, there was a landslide shift of loyalties which then enabled Tekeš not only to claim the sultanate in Ḥurāsān, but also to be recognized as heir to the Seljuqid Empire at least in the Ḥurāsānian heartlands. It is not quite clear whether Sulṭānšāh

⁶⁰ The reports about the fighting around Bukhara are confusing and cannot be dealt with in this article. See Kafesoğlu 1956, 97 with a discussion of the dating. Kafesoğlu comes to the conclusion that it is much more probable that Tekeš took Bukhara only once, that there is an error in Ibn al-Aṭīr, and that this event should be dated to 1182. Bartol'd (1963, 405–406) basically says the same with a remark that according to other accounts, these events took place towards the end of Tekeš's reign with clear anachronisms. See also Buniatov 1999, 53. – For a different version, see Biran 2005, 62; she also remarks that Qaraḫanid coinage resumed in Bukhara in 1193. A long-term occupation of Bukhara at that point therefore seems out of the question. – Qaraḫanid coinage from Bukhara (Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusain) is reported from 574 (1178/9) and 582 (1186/7) (Koch-

nev 1997, 264 fn. 1066). There seem to be no recorded coins from Bukhara for the period between the two dates, but it is impossible to base any firm conclusion on that (Bukharan coinage is far from continuous). At any rate, if there was a Ḥwārazmian occupation of Bukhara in 1182, it cannot have outlasted 1186. A return of the Qaraḫanid sometime before 1186, then, did not prevent Tekeš from taking Nīšāpūr in 1187. – Could a possible rapprochement between Tekeš and the Qaraḫīṭai have taken place between 1182 and 1186?

⁶¹ Richter-Bernburg 1976, 199 fn. 193 with a question mark. The inscription is said to be dated 577/1181/2; if this is so it would be a sign of bad communications, because Muhammad was long dead by then.

⁶² See the fragments of Samarqandī 1900 and Biran 2001b, 83–84.

afterwards accepted a subordinate position in the lands his brother “gave” him; there is no information about the Friday sermon in the cities which Sulṭānšāh controlled. The extant coins (no dated coins have surfaced until now, and no mint names have been identified yet – Marw would be the most probable place, however) do not name Tekeš, but only the caliph al-Mustaḏīr⁶³ (566–577/1170–1180) as overlord, and Sulṭānšāh styles himself as *al-malik al-ʿazam*⁶⁴.

The final stages of the conflict may have evolved on similar lines as internal disputes among Seljuqid princes did two or three generations earlier. To enforce recognition as imperial overlord had been a good reason to go to war, both for Sanġar and for other Seljuqid rulers⁶⁴. Agreements between Tekeš and Sulṭānšāh are on record from early on, and a division of the Ḥwārazmian realm may have been at stake for a while, with Ḥwārazm, Nasā, and Nīšāpūr going to Tekeš, whereas Sulṭānšāh would rule over Marw, Saraḥs, and other regions as Tekeš’s subordinate. That the brothers were seriously trying to figure out such an agreement may be behind the fact that there never was a direct military confrontation between the two after the very first stages, and both seem to have consciously avoided such a confrontation⁶⁵. Sulṭānšāh’s “foul language” and stubbornness, which are given as reasons for the failure of the last negotiations of the sort (after a number of arrangements which had proved to be extremely short-lived) could then be referred to his refusal to accept an explicitly subordinate status and to give up all further claims.

We do not know anything precise about Sulṭānšāh’s financial situation. The regions he controlled included rich agricultural land, although the Marw oasis and probably other parts of northern Ḥurāsān had suffered great damage during the “Ġuzz period” and afterwards on account of endemic warfare. Trade cannot have continued on the same level that it probably had under Sanġar. We do not know anything about Sulṭānšāh’s tax administration, nor do we know anything about his financial obligations towards the Qaraḫīṭai after 1180. On the other hand, he is not described as destitute, not even after the first conquest of Saraḥs by Tekeš in 1190. Tekeš had the superior resources of Ḥwārazm; the oasis probably had not suffered as much as Marw and other regions had.

There is not much information given in the sources about Sulṭānšāh’s army or military potential in general, but we can make an educated guess. It is clear that military slaves are out of the question; Sulṭānšāh must have been quite unable to acquire them in any significant measure. Tekeš, on the other hand, may have had any slaves who might have been part of Il Arslan’s army. But on the whole, the armies active in this period do not seem to have included military slaves in large numbers.

The hostile “second report” in Ibn al-Aṭīr says that Sulṭānšāh’s warriors were “Ġuzz and wrongdoers and highwaymen and all kinds of greedy people”⁶⁶. Part of the region which came under Sulṭānšāh’s control had been “Ġuzz country” for some decades before and even if many “Ġuzz” left the region (for Kirmān) some Ġuzz surely stayed on⁶⁷. There was some Turkmen

⁶³ Album 2011, A 1711. A sample has been published at www.zeno.ru (#123423). I owe this information to Sebastian Hanstein. – See Schwarz 1992, 101.

⁶⁴ Sanġar went west to fight other Seljuqid rulers who claimed the supreme sultanate in 1119 and 1131 (see Tor 2010). The conflict between Barkyāruq and Arslan Arġun also had a stage when Arslan Arġun asked to be recognised as regional ruler in Ḥurāsān; he was willing to accept Barkyāruq as Great Sultan in return (see Paul 2011a).

⁶⁵ Example: When during the struggle for Nīšāpūr both brothers tried to occupy the other’s capital, Sulṭānšāh abandoned his positions before Urganč and hurried back to Marw. With great difficulties, he managed to

get through Tekeš’s lines into the city. Immediately after that, Tekeš lifted the siege. – Ġuwainī/Qazwīnī 1916, 22.

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1979, 381: *min al-ġuzz wal-mufsidīn wa-quṭīʿ al-tariq wa-man ʿindahū ṭamaʿ*.

⁶⁷ It is unclear whether „Ġuzz” refers to a genealogically defined group in this particular case, see above fn 2. – Balḥ was under a Ġuzz leader until the end of the 12th century (Biran 2005, 55; 65; Ibn al-Aṭīr/Tornberg 1982, 134). – The Ġuzz who arrived in Kirmān are not said to have been very numerous, some five thousand tents; Malik Dīnār came with only a small following (Kirmānī/Houtsma 1886, 106, and see above fn. 33).

presence in the region (Bāharz and Ġām) to which Sulṭānšāh was transferred in 1189⁶⁸. We should also remember that the Qarluq who were so prominent in the earlier conflicts disappear from the sources – this of course could mean that they went elsewhere, but it could also mean that they now are included in the vast reservoir of “Ġuzz”, unruly Turkic pastoralists of indistinct background and affiliation.

The same report also has the Ġūrī “confrontationist” party exclaim that they are loath to abandon what they have won over the “Ġuzz and the Saṅgarī Turks”. The so-called “Saṅgarī” emirs often appear in parallel with the Ġuzz. Since roughly one generation had passed since Saṅgar died, many of the military slaves he had must have died in the meantime as well as their commanders. If any of the local emirs had ties to Saṅgar, these ties probably were inherited. In the cases where we know a bit more (Herat with Bahā³ al-Dīn Ṭuḡril, Ġarċistān with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Sunqur who earlier had held Tirmiḍ and Ḥuttalān) it is quite evident that their military strength did not have much if anything to do with military slavery. They must have relied on “Ġuzz” forces to a significant extent. Sulṭānšāh himself appears very much as a “Ġuzz” leader in the “second report” by Ibn al-Aṭīr and he roams the country in search of plunder. It must be remembered that “Ġuzz” groups sometimes turned to external persons of noble descent for leadership. One of the persons available at that moment certainly was Sulṭānšāh whose genealogy clearly outshone the pedigree of any of the “Saṅgarī emirs”.

The local and regional lords who joined Sulṭānšāh after his initial successes evidently were one of the most important sources of his strength. One is tempted to see these as the “greedy” men who shifted their loyalties according to where they saw their advantage; as soon as Tekeš emerged as the stronger candidate, they went over to him. This is the rule: a candidate for regional lordship has to be able to offer prospects of benefits in whatever form; if he fails to deliver, his followers are free to join a stronger man. This is also hinted at in the story about Ai Aba pursuing Tekeš through the Qaraqum desert: in that story, Tekeš is the one who has more to offer, in this case a vital resource, water; at the same time, he is ruthless and shrewd enough to use unconventional means by destroying the water holes on his enemy’s way⁶⁹.

On the whole, therefore, Sulṭānšāh had to rely on regional forces and resources. Not only because of his geographic position at Marw and Saraḥs, but also due to the nature of his military resources. These resources probably consisted of Ġuzz warriors and other local commanders, which make him appear as a successor to Malik Dīnār.

Tekeš, on the other hand, was successful in gaining support in the steppe. His strong position against the Qaraḥītai may have enhanced his reputation⁷⁰. While the Qipčaq alliance had been important for earlier Ḥwārazmšāhs, it was vital for Tekeš.

Probably in winter 1181/2⁷¹, a very substantial group of Qipčaqs appeared in the vicinity of Ġand, the Ḥwārazmian outpost in the lower Syr Darya region. They were first employed in the service of Malikšāh b. Tekeš, then governor over that region. Apparently, they undertook a

⁶⁸ This is the region where many of the stories which Ġaznawī (1960) tells are located. In this source – which was written during Saṅgar’s lifetime and does not know anything about the later Ġuzz – Turkmens appear rather frequently as people who turn to the hagiography’s hero for help and therefore can be seen as forming part of his clientele.

⁶⁹ See above fn. 54.

⁷⁰ See above fn. 26, and Kafesoğlu 1956, 91. For the rela-

tionship between the Qaraḥītai and the Turkic pastoralists along the Syr Darya, see Biran 2005, 53–55. The Qarluq, in their time, had rebelled against a Qaraḥītai-Qaraḥanid order to leave Transoxiana for the Kāšġar region (see also Paul forthcoming; Biran 2005, 150).

⁷¹ The following passages are based on Baġdādī/Bahmanyār 1937. See also the detailed description and German translation of these parts of Baġdādī in Schwarz 1992, 26–49.

long-distance raid deep into Qaraḥiṭai territory, but since this is not confirmed in any other source, researchers have tended to explain this detail by the peculiarities of the source (Kafesoğlu 1956, 93)⁷². In another letter from the same collection, written in summer 1183, Tekeš announced that he would be coming to fight the Ġūrīs with a force of fifty thousand Turkish archers. The letters also identify some of the regions these warriors came from, namely, they were from places along the lower Syr Darya and Mangqišlaq.

Tekeš therefore put the traditionally close connections which Ḥwārazm had to the steppe peoples to good use. He actively pursued the Qipčaq alliance and he connected his state to the seemingly endless human resources of the Great Steppe. Moreover, he succeeded in doing so without provoking a Qaraḥiṭai counterattack – possibly because he did not aim at the Qaraḥiṭai territories directly, but at their vassals and allies⁷³. Probably it was this Qipčaq connection that gave him the upper hand militarily in the struggle for Nišāpūr.

LEVELS OF LORDSHIP

The story of Sultānšāh offers a detailed picture of lords and vassals in Ḥurāsān in the second half of the 12th century. Sovereignty and rule are layered throughout, and lords appear on a number of levels.

The imperial level is represented by the Qaraḥiṭai⁷⁴. They did not recognize any sovereign, nor did they give tribute to any overlord. Their empire included a number of vassals such as the Qaraḥanid regional and local lords, e.g., the lords of Samarqand, but also lords in the steppe who have not been discussed in this paper (because they were to be found mostly on the eastern border of the Qaraḥiṭai Empire). At one point, the Qaraḥiṭai tried to enforce far-reaching decisions on the Qarluq, but failed. Their relationship to other Turkish pastoralists such as the Qipčaq and the Ġuzz is not altogether clear. Qipčaq groups possibly boasted of having raided Qaraḥiṭai territory, but since there was no single and united Qipčaq leadership, this does not mean that there were no Qipčaq among the Qaraḥiṭai forces.

Ḥwārazm was only beginning its transition from regional state to empire in this period. Tekeš paid tribute to the Qaraḥiṭai most of the time; there was a (probably not very long) period when he refused to do so (earlier than 1178, and perhaps no longer than 1183?), but reverted to Qaraḥiṭai vassality afterwards. Ḥwārazm in turn had its own vassals such as the lords of Nišāpūr, Toğanšāh and his son Saṅḡaršāh who minted coins with Tekeš's name on them, but with an interruption⁷⁵. After Tekeš had established his rule in Nišāpūr, he openly claimed the sultanate and had himself crowned; however, this apparently did not mean that he stopped giving tribute to the Qaraḥiṭai. Besides, Ḥwārazm had a close alliance with some Qipčaq groups which was reconfirmed over several generations in marriage alliances. Seen from the Ḥwārazmian perspec-

⁷² Bartol'd (1963, 405) merely mentions the raid without going into details. – It must be kept in mind that Baġdādī is a compilation of "official" correspondence, with a considerable amount of self-aggrandizement in the outgoing letters to foreign rulers, as in the case of the letters referred to here.

⁷³ One should recall that the Qaraḥiṭai were had been weak-

ened by the succession scandal in 1178 and were never to recover their initial strength again (Biran 2005, 60).

⁷⁴ I leave out the Ġūrīs who did not see themselves as anybody's vassals, either. Information on them and their empire is scanty.

⁷⁵ Toğanšāh was also appointed over Nasā at some unspecified moment.

tive, the relationship with the Qipčaq implied their participation in Ḥwārazmian military campaigns; there is no information about the Qipčaq understanding of the relationship.

The regional level of lordship is best represented by the lords of Nīšāpūr on the one hand and the lords of Nasā on the other. Nīšāpūr concluded an alliance with Ḥwārazm – that is, with Tekeš – after ʿŪḡānšāh's defeat in 1181, an alliance that implied vassal status. Before that, and above all until Ai Aba's death in 1174, the lords of Nīšāpūr had been one of the strongest powers in the region – and indeed, candidates for the sultanate. Nīšāpūr must have had many local vassals, as we can infer from the statement that many emirs and local lords left ʿŪḡānšāh and later Saṅḡaršāh after they had been defeated. Malik Dīnār himself is styled as a Nīšāpūrī vassal at the time when he asked to be transferred from Saraḡs to another place and received Biṣṭām. Besides Malik Dīnār and his Ġuzz, we do not know which groups of Turkish pastoralists, if any, were seen as being within the Nīšāpūrī orbit.

The lords of Nasā are of particular interest because they managed to remain in their place even when their alliances changed. The first man we know to have occupied this position was appointed by the Qaraḡanid-Seljuqid Maḡmūd b. Muḡammad; after a while, however, the lord of Nasā must have accepted Ḥwārazmian overlordship. It is not clear whether the same family continued as lords of Nasā when Tekeš put the region within ʿŪḡānšāh's zone of influence. But it is clear enough that afterwards, they first went over to Sulṭānšāh, but came back to Tekeš when put under pressure which included military action. They then had to participate in Tekeš's campaigns against Sulṭānšāh. They must have had some kind of working relationship with the Ġuzz, a fact which apparently spared the city and the region many of the hardships other regions in Ḥurāsān experienced at that time. We know from other sources that Nasā, like Nīšāpūr, was the place where local lords served; the lords of Nasā therefore had vassals of their own⁷⁶.

Finally, Saṅḡarī emirs and Ġuzz captains are a fuzzy group in which we rarely can identify any specific individual. It is tempting to see them as local lords, people who have a local power basis, by appointment or otherwise.

Overall, a complex situation emerges, a situation that is a tangled web of domination and subordination, of shared and disputed rights, of alliances and competition. Territories are not simply part of one state, they can belong to a plurality of lords of different standing; and a man who is a lord in one context can be a vassal in another. Yet, this situation cannot be described as a simple hierarchy of lords and vassals. Some lords are appointed by their superiors, some lords are usurpers, some lords have very deep local roots; lordship is hereditary most of the time, but there also are opportunities awaiting the strong and ambitious. In the way they behave on the political and military scene, there seem to be no real differences between lords with a background in military slavery (such as the lords of Nīšāpūr, and at some generations removed, the Ḥwārazmšāhs), lords coming from free-born noble families of the steppe (such as the Qaraḡanids, but also Qipčaq and Ġuzz captains), and lords from old Iranian families (such as the Bāwandids, local lords, and also the Ġūrīs).

Local lords shifted their loyalties twice or several times in the period under study. First, they went over to Sulṭānšāh and left their previous lords, Malik Dīnār and the lords of Nīšāpūr. In 1180 and 1181, there was some kind of massive movement which strengthened Sulṭānšāh in such a way that he became attractive even for regional lords such as the lords of Nasā. Just a couple

⁷⁶ See Paul 2013. The local lords in question are the lords of Ḥurandiz, the fortress where Nasawī's family had been sitting for centuries.

of years later, the same people again changed their loyalties; they now joined Tekeš after he had imposed his rule at Nišāpūr. Thus, they contributed in no small measure to the rise and fall of regional states and to the making of empires. In a way, they worked as amplifiers and only one or two victories were enough to bring about momentous changes because the local lords shifted their loyalties accordingly.

CONCLUSION: WHY DID SULTĀNŠĀH FAIL?

Sultānšāh's career is one of failure. He failed in two respects: he did not succeed in getting the throne of Ḥwārazm, and he did not succeed in making his regional state in parts of Ḥurāsān last. Why did he fail in Ḥwārazm? The sources are very explicit: he failed because he was unable to muster local support. The Ḥwārazmian generals and notables preferred Tekeš all along, probably from the start, and Tekeš was enthroned without doing battle while Sultānšāh had to flee. Why this was so is not explained apart from the very first encounter when Sultānšāh probably was considered too young to rule. Legitimacy was not an issue – Sultānšāh was not denied his right to claim the throne, he was a legitimate claimant. Religion was not an issue, as Tekeš's Qipčaq allies were not all Muslim and Sultānšāh's Ġuzz followers did not qualify as exemplary Muslims; both claimants accepted support from the non-Muslim Qaraḫītai. There was some rhetoric about fighting the infidels, but apparently this was not an important factor when it came to political and military decisions.

There must have been other reasons why Tekeš was preferred, but these cannot be discerned. He had Qaraḫītai backing at first, but so did Sultānšāh a few years later. Personal qualities may have been a factor, but also alliances in the steppe. It would be very interesting to know who the mothers of both princes were (if they were not full brothers), and what that meant among Qipčaq and other emirs.

Sultānšāh continued as a regional lord, but the state he founded did not last – in fact, it did not outlast him. We do not know whether he had any descendants, and therefore his brother “inherited” all he had. The treason (or should we call it otherwise?) of his castellan at Saraḥ surely sounded the death knell for his regional state. He lost as a regional lord because he had lost the struggle for Nišāpūr and the scramble for the sultanate, vacant since Sanġar's demise. We do not know whether Sultānšāh at some point explicitly claimed the sultanate, but Sanġar's heritage certainly was at stake at that point. However, once the prospects of his winning Nišāpūr had become minimal, many local lords left him, and he had to accept a shift in loyalties. This in turn entailed a loss of territory, as well as having to watch his brother being enthroned as sultan of Ḥurāsān. This was to prove fatal to Sultānšāh, as the consequences of a single victory were very much amplified by the ensuing shifts of loyalty on the local level. For the second half of his rule, Sultānšāh was reduced to some kind of subordinate position – it was his brother who gave him a region over which to rule. Although we do not learn whether Sultānšāh explicitly accepted vassal status as an appanage ruler, there can be little doubt that this was in fact the substance of the agreements between the two brothers.

Evidently the resources which Sultānšāh could muster were insufficient, financially as well as militarily. One of the decisive differences was that Tekeš had better connections to the great human resources of the steppe and his Qipčaq allies tipped the balance in his favor. Another

point apparently was that the neighboring powers, the Ġūrīs as well as the Qaraġitai, either did not stir in support of Sulṭānšāh or else defeated him. Local support evidently was dwindling even in Sulṭānšāh's core area during the last moments of his rule, so that at the end, a town like Saraḥs (or more precisely its citadel), which he had held for about twelve years, abandoned him.

Empires worked by the delegation of power (top down), but that is not the whole truth. They also worked by agglutination and agglomeration. The agglutination and agglomeration of local and regional components into larger structures was possible at enormous speed, much faster than conquest. It was enough to win fame in one or two noted victories, then local and regional lords, sedentary as well as nomadic, would join the new star in a kind of opportunist consensus. In times when there was no established empire left, local and regional lords had to be very careful and very quick, they had to evaluate a new situation immediately and to take their decisions accordingly.

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