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EDITED BY
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................. vii

Introduction: Inner Asian Ways of Warfare in Historical Perspective ........................................ 1

Nicola Di Cosmo

PART ONE

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD (500–1200)

Strategy and Contingency in the Tang Defeat of the Eastern Turks, 629–630 ........................................................ 33

David A. Graff

The Uighur-Chinese Conflict of 840–848 ................................................................. 73

Michael R. Drompp

War and Warfare in the Pre-Qinggisid Western Steppes of Eurasia ........................................ 105

Peter B. Golden

PART TWO

THE MONGOL AGE (1200–1400)

The Battle of Herat (1270): A Case of Inter-Mongol Warfare ................................................. 175

Michal Biran

Whither the Ilkhanid Army? Ghazan’s First Campaign into Syria (1299–1230) ...................... 221

Reuven Amitai
PART THREE
THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1400–1800)

Military Aspects of the Manchu Wars against the Qaqsars ........................ 337
Nicola Di Cosmo

Fate and Fortune in Central Eurasian Warfare: Three Qing Emperors and their Mongol Rivals ........................ 369
Peter C. Perdue

Military Ritual and the Qing Empire ........................................ 405
Joanna Waley-Cohen

General Index ................................................................. 445

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THE BATTLE OF HERAT (1270): A CASE OF INTER-MONGOL WARFARE*

Michal Biran

While Mongol campaigns of conquest in Asia and Europe have long caught the imagination of military historians, far less attention has been given to the inter-Mongol rivalries after the dissolution of the Mongol empire. This is not only because those conflicts seemed less engaging, but also because most of the inter-Mongol conflicts were merely raids or skirmishes which received only short notices in contemporary sources. In this context, the battle of Herat is an important exception.¹

When the armies of the Ilkhan Aqa (r. 1265-1282) met the troops of the Chaghaidaids Khan Baraq (r. 1266-1271) in 1270 at Herat in present-day Afghanistan, it was for a full-scale and decisive combat. Aqa's victory secured Ilkhanid rule in Khurasan and precluded any real threat to the Ilkhanate's eastern frontier for several decades. Baraq's defeat resulted in the loss of the independence of the Chaghaidaids, who were obliged to submit to Qaidu (1236-1301), Ögedei's grandson. Considering the role of the Golden Horde behind the scenes, the battle thus involved the four Chingissid khaganates, and was influential in shaping the borders of the independent Mongol khanates.

* This study was undertaken during the spring of 2000, whilst I was a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I would like to thank the director and staff of the IAS for their assistance during this time. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the IAS, Prof. Reuven Amitai, Dr. Peter Jackson, Prof. David Morgan and Prof. Naomi Standen, as well as Prof. Elizabeth Endicott (Middlebury VT) and Dr. Yuri Fines (Jerusalem) for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

¹ Other major inter-Mongol battles include the wars between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate mainly in 1262 and 1269, about which see, e.g., Reuven Amitai-Priias, Mongols and Mamluks (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 86-91; and the battle between the Central Asian Mongols under Qaidu and the Yuan forces in 1301, about which see Michal Biran, Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia (Richmond, Surrey, 1997), pp. 52-4. The description of the battle of Herat in contemporary sources is, however, far more detailed than the descriptions of the above-mentioned battles.
showed interest in Abaraq’s struggles in the east—struggles that kept him away from Syria—and their independent version of the conflict is therefore of interest. The most detailed Mamlik description of the battle of Herat appears in the work of the Syrian historian al-Ŷunun (d. 1326), which is repeated, with several changes, in the later works of Ibn al-Dawwārī (d. after 1335) and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qādirī (d. after 1356). Another set of Mamlik sources provides many details about the Tugurid incident that preceded the battle, though not all of them connect it to the battle of Herat. One should bear in mind, however, that apart from Marco Polo’s blurred version of this battle, all the sources originated in Herat or westward. The Chaghākālād version of the events therefore did not come down to us.

On the basis of a close comparison between Arabic and Persian sources, this essay aims to reconstruct the background and course of the battle of Herat. This is followed, after a short discussion of the battle’s results, by an analysis of the military aspects of the battle, in which I have tried to explain the reasons for Abaraq’s victory, as well as to compare this battle to Mongol wars against “foreign” (i.e., non-Mongol) rivals.


4 Šimr al-Ŷīd, written c. 1317, and especially the Taʾrikh-i šībāh, written c. 1317 or earlier. About those works see Bāmtān-Pārīz’s introduction to: Anonymous, Taʾrikh-i šībāh i Qarn Khōddīyān, ed. M.I. Bāmtān-Pārīz (Tehran, 1966-7), pp. 1-19, 30-32.

5 Šahānqāhī, de la Georgie, trans. M. Broset (St. Petersburg, 1850), Part 1, pp. 373-86 (hereafter, The Georgian Chronicle). This source is used by Howorth, Spuler and Martinez.
The Background: The Coming of Baraq into Central Asia

The battle of Herat was initiated by Baraq, the Chaghadaid khan who arrived in Central Asia only a few years before the battle took place. Yet the roots for Baraq’s actions are to be sought not only in his immediate circumstances, but also in the two great Mongol succession struggles: the Toluid coup d’etat of 1251, which promoted Möngke to the throne of the Qa’an, the supreme leader of the Mongol empire, at the expense of his cousins the Ogödeids; and the inter-Toluid rivalry that followed Möngke’s death (1259), when his two brothers Qubilai and Arigh Böke contested the Qa’anate.11

Möngke’s accession led to the dissolution of the Ogödeid ulus, and greatly harmed the Chaghadaids, who had been the Ogödeids’ allies. The Jochids, khans of the Golden Horde, whose leader was instrumental in enthroning Möngke, quickly manipulated Chaghadaid weakness, taking over Transoxania and Western Turkestan, formerly under Chaghadaid control. The Chaghadaid share in the empire’s revenues was also taken over by the Jochids and the Toluids.12 The Toluids were naturally the great beneficiaries of Möngke’s rise. After his accession Möngke placed his two brothers Qubilai and Hülegü, Abaqa’s father, in charge of China and Iran respectively. The two brothers expanded the empire’s borders each in his own direction, thereby creating the basis for two new regional khanates.13

The Qubilai-Arigh Böke struggle that followed Möngke’s death gave the deprived uluses of Central Asia a chance to restore the for

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Map 1: The Mongol Empire after the Death of Möngke (1259)
[After Biran, Qaidu [Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997], 114.]
tunes of their lineages. Taking advantage of the Golden Horde’s preoccupation with the Ilkhanate in the early 1260s, the new Chaghadaid Khan Alguh (r. 1261–66) took over the former Chaghadaid territories and much more, consolidated his authority in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, formerly under the Qa’an. Switching his support from Arigh Boke to Qubilai, thereby largely facilitating the latter’s victory, Alguh also gained Qubilai’s confirmation to his rule over the territory stretching from the Altai to the Oxus. Qubilai was also obliged to confirm Hulegu’s rule over the territory “from the banks of the Oxus up to the gates of Egypt,” in order to gain his support. This confirmation was a major factor in the outbreak of hostilities between, on one side, Hulegu and his descendants, the Ilkhans, and, on the other, the Golden Horde, which had its own claims on parts of Iran.

The Qubilai-Arigh Boke conflict also prompted Ögödei’s grandson, Qaidu, to restore the dissolved Ögödeid ulus, whose territories had become, after Qubilai’s arrangements, part of Alguh’s territory. Unable to cope alone with Alguh, Qaidu turned to the Golden Horde for help. The Golden Horde Khan, Berke (r. 1257–67) was willing to cooperate against their common enemy. With Berke’s aid, Qaidu managed to vanquish Alguh once, but was badly defeated in his second attempt. Only Alguh’s death in late 1265 or early 1266 prevented Qaidu from paying a heavier price for this defeat.

Alguh’s death set the stage for Baraq’s activities. Starting his career in Qubilai’s camp in China, where his father had been banished in 1251 due to his pro-Ögödeid tendencies, Baraq won Qubilai’s favor by performing “praiseworthy services” for him. Sometime after 1263 Baraq received Qubilai’s permission to return to Central Asia. According to Rashid al-Din, after Alguh’s death Baraq gained from Qubilai a yarid (‘command’ or ‘order’) appointing him as a joint ruler over the Chaghadaid ulus together with Mubarak Shâh (r. 1256–66). Mubarak Shâh was the son of Alguh’s widow, Orzhina, from her first marriage. She had chosen him to succeed Alguh, apparently without getting the Qa’an’s permission. By sending Baraq, Qubilai hoped to secure his interests in the Chaghadaid ulus, and to have an ally against Qaidu, who refused to accept his authority. When Baraq arrived in Central Asia, and found out that Orzhina and Mubarak Shâh had firmly established their power, he kept the decree in his possession a secret, and presented himself as a refugee seeking to return to his original appanage. Mubarak Shâh allowed him to settle on his patrimonial appanage in the Chaghâniyân region, near Tirmidh, on the banks of the Oxus. Baraq gradually won the loyalty of the members of Mubarak Shâh’s army, and eventually deposed him, degrading him to the rank of a hunting inspector. Rashid al-Din’s description is, however, incompatible with Jamâl Qarshi’s dates. According to Qarshi, the only Central Asian source for these events, Mubarak Shâh was enthroned in March 1266, and deposed by Baraq in September of the same year. If those dates are correct, then Baraq must have arrived in Central Asia before Alguh’s death, and indeed Rashid al-Din mentions that he asked Qubilai for permission to leave after the surrender of Arigh Boke, in 1264. It is hard to determine whether and when he received Qubilai’s decree, which is not mentioned at all in the T’ien shih, the official history of the Yuan dynasty. Since Baraq turned against the

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18 Song Liang, Yuan shi (Beijing, 1976), vol. 1, chap. 5, p. 91.
19 Rashid/Blochet, p. 188; Rashid/Boyle, p. 151; Barthold, Four Studies, vol. 1, p. 129; Biran, Qaidu, p. 24.
22 Jamâl Qarshi, Maktûbat al-Sâagh in V.V. Barthold, Turkestân u epohda mongol-dogho makhânina (St. Petersburg, 1900), vol. 1 (text), p. 138.
23 Rashid/Blochet, p. 189; Rashid/Boyle, p. 151.
Qa'an’s troops immediately after Mubarak Shab’s banishment, it is unlikely that the decree played a decisive role in his attaining the Chaghadaid leadership.  

If Qubilai expected Baraq to represent his interests faithfully, he was to be disappointed: Baraq’s first action as the Chaghadaid Khan was to defeat Qubilai’s garrison in Khotan, in east Turkestan, and plunder the city. Yet in 1268 Baraq received a grant from Qubilai, who probably still hoped to secure his alliance against Qaidu. Baraq, however, had his own reasons for confronting Qaidu. First, in trying to revive the dissolved territory of the Ogedeid khan, Qaidu took over territories that were allocated by Qubilai to Alghu, i.e., the Chaghadaid lineage. More concretely, around 1268, after an abortive attempt to invade Besh Balq, Qaidu was compelled to retreat westwards, evacuating Almalq and withdrawing more than a thousand kilometers westwards. Having moved west of Talas, he was getting dangerously close to Baraq. Fearing that Qaidu had set his sights on Samarkand and Bukhara, Baraq decided to attack him. Setting an ambush for Qaidu’s forces, Baraq inflicted a crushing defeat on Qaidu on the banks of the Jaxartes. Again Qaidu turned for assistance to the Golden Horde, whose new ruler, Mongke Temur (r. 1267–80), perhaps fearing the rise of a second Alghu, sent his uncle, Berkecher, to Qaidu’s help with allegedly 50,000 men. With their support Qaidu was able to defeat Baraq near Khojand, on the banks of the Jaxartes, and apparently overran Transoxania. 

24 Biran, Qaidu, pp. 24–5.  
25 Ibid.  
26 Yasaful, Ta’rikh-i Wusaful, p. 68; Ayat, Tahir, p. 38; Song Lian, Yuan shi, Chap. 63, p. 1569. The Chinese text, translated in Emily V. Bertschneider, Medieval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources (London, 1989), vol. 2, p. 36, reads Beiting, which in Yuan times usually means Besh Balq. Cf. Thomas T. Allen, “The Yuan Dynasty and the Uighurs in Turfan in the 13th century,” China among Equals, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley, 1983), p. 234, who, following Abe Takeo, understood Beiting as referring to Qara Qorum. Allen himself, however, recounts that due to this attack of Qaidu the Uighurs evacuated Besh Balq, a measure they had to take if Qaidu indeed attacked the much more northerly Qara Qorum. It is true that in Yuan times the name Beiting was also attached to a place in Mongolia in the vicinity of Qara Qorum (see the detailed discussion and references in Michal Biran, “China, Nomads and Islam: The Qara Khitai [Western Liao] Dynasty 1124–1218,” [Diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2000]), p. 52, n. 54), but this was quite an unusual use. See the very hestant discussion of Abe Takeo on the location of Beiting in his Xi Hua guo guo shi de yanyu (Uromqi, 1986), pp. 339–61, in which he does not even mention Qara Qorum.  
28 Yasaful, Ta’rikh-i Wusaful, p. 68; Ayat, Tahir, p. 39; Biran, Qaidu, p. 25.  
29 Ibid.  
30 Rashid al-Din, pp. 109–10; Rashid/Thackston, p. 521; Yasaful, Ta’rikh-i Wusaful, p. 69; Ayat, Tahir, p. 39.  

The descriptions of this battle in the sources are extremely terse, but the desperate steps that Baraq took in its aftermath imply that he had suffered a serious reverse. Baraq fled to Samarkand and Bukhara, plundered the cities and employed their craftsmen around the clock to prepare new weapons, as he was trying to rebuild his army. In the midst of his preparations, Qaidu’s messenger, the Ogedeid prince Qipchaq, reached Baraq’s camp with a peace proposal. The peace was offered in the name of the unity of the Chinggisid family, yet the sources stress that Qaidu’s main motive for conciliation was his fear that the Chaghadaid Khan would trample Bukhara and Samarkand under the hooves of his horses. Perhaps aware of his inability to defeat Qaidu on the battlefield, and with the encouragement of his governors among his sedentary subjects, Baraq accepted the proposal. The two princes decided to hold a qurilat (an assembly of princes) in the spring, and this took place either in Talas in the spring of 1269, according to Rashid al-Din, or in Qarwan near Samarkand at an earlier date, around 1267, as implied by Yasaful. It was during this qurilat that Baraq presented his plan to invade Khurasan.  

At the qurilat, Qaidu appealed for unity in the name of the shared heritage of Chinggis Khan. Baraq claimed that, in the name of this same heritage, the Chaghadaids were also entitled to an appanage and pasturage lands that others would not threaten. It was decided that two thirds of Transoxania (or its revenues) would be transferred to Baraq and one third to Qaidu and Mongke Temur, whose representative, Berkecher, also took part in the qurilat. The princes decided that henceforth they would dwell only in the mountains and plains and not in the cities; moreover, they would neither make exaggerated demands on their subjects nor graze their cattle in cultivated lands. The sedentary territories were entrusted to Masta Beq, the experienced administrator who served the Qa’an and afterwards the
Chaghadaiids, with the charge to restore Transoxania to prosperity.\textsuperscript{33} Summer and winter pastures were assigned to Baraq's troops. Qaidu and Baraq divided the military "thousands" (units of one thousand men)\textsuperscript{32} and the artisan workshops—including those devoted to the production of weapons—\textsuperscript{33} of Samarkand and Bukhara between the two of them, and this was probably the reward Qaidu demanded for defeating Baraq. Qaidu also stationed forces in the region of Bukhara to prevent Baraq's army from encamping there.

Dissatisfied with his expulsion from Bukhara and with his lot in the agreement, Baraq, who could not advance eastward or northward into his new allies' territories, proposed to traverse the Oxus the following spring. With this move, he intended to take possession of some of Abaraq's lands, which he declared to be areas that had been seized by force and not by virtue of inheritance.\textsuperscript{34} The Chaghadaiids might have had some older grudges against the Tohrid Ilkhans,\textsuperscript{35} yet Khurásán, with its rich pastures, was clearly the most convenient direction for Baraq's expansion. Qaidu accepted his plan, surmising that whatever the consequences of the battle, it would benefit him: If Abaraq were vanquished, Baraq would be occupied in Khurásán and much less concerned about Transoxania; were Baraq to be vanquished, much so much the better.\textsuperscript{36} Similar calculations probably also guided Mongke Temür, who approved of the quriltai's decisions, despite the fact that at that time he was apparently committed to maintaining a "peace" or "truce" with the Ilkhans.\textsuperscript{37} The quriltai was concluded with the princes exchanging gold cups with one another and addressing each other as qul (blood brothers).\textsuperscript{38}

Yet despite the solemn ceremonies, the quriltai's decisions were disregarded soon after it was held. Mongke Temür's army moved towards Transoxania, probably to take possession of the part to which he was entitled by the agreement (if not more). Qaidu sent his troops against Mongke Temür, and thereupon evacuated Bukhara. Baraq, who "saw the arena of his desires empty," rushed to reoccupy Bukhara.\textsuperscript{39} Determined to invade Iran, and disregarding the quriltai's other decisions, Baraq resumed the oppression of his subjects. He confiscated the local cattle, prohibited his subjects to ride horses, and killed all the oxen in order to use their skins for shields. Feeding his horses wheat and barley from the sown fields, eight maun per horse daily, Baraq soon caused a major depletion of the city's stock of foodstuffs.\textsuperscript{40} Only with great difficulty did Mas'ud Beg manage to convince him not to plunder Samarkand and Bukhara, pointing out that he had to secure his rear in case the Iranian campaign failed.\textsuperscript{41}

The Chaghadaiid Invasion

Yet Baraq had made preparations for his invasion of Iran even before entering Bukhara. Soon after the quriltai,\textsuperscript{42} or perhaps earlier, in the


\textsuperscript{32} The units mentioned are probably the forces which were stationed in those cities in Mongke's time and subordinated to the Qa'an or to other Mongol princes. See Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 51.


\textsuperscript{35} Though this did not prevent Aghú from cooperating with Hulagú against the Golden Horde. Peter Jackson, "Chaghatai Dynasty," \textit{Encyclopedia Iranica}, vol. 5 (1992), p. 244.

\textsuperscript{36} Mirkhwánd, \textit{Rawdat}, vol. 5, pp. 289, 293; see also Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 70; Ayáti, \textit{Tahá>, p. 40; Rashid/Alládzadáh, pp. 113–14; Rashid/Thackston, p. 523; Rashid/Blochet, pp. 173, 192; Rashid/Boyle, pp. 112, 150.

\textsuperscript{37} On this "peace" see Amirí-Peírs, \textit{Mongols and Mambik}, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{38} For a detailed description of the Talás' quriltai see Liu Yingheng, "Luo Talás huixi," \textit{Tsínglu lüxí}, vol. 4 (1992), pp. 256–65; Biran, \textit{Quriltai}, pp. 25–29. See the last source also for a refutation of the claim that this quriltai was an anti-Tohrid alliance that enshrined Qaidu.

\textsuperscript{39} Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{40} Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 71; Ayáti, \textit{Tahá>, p. 39; Mirkhwánd, \textit{Rawdat}, vol. 5, p. 289. See also Rashid/Alládzadáh, p. 114; Rashid/Thackston, p. 523, according to which Baraq took over all the animals "from the provinces that belonged to Qubilai Khan and Abaraq Khan" (east of the Oxus), not sparing even plow oxen. Unfortunately, maun is a unit of weight which has different values in different places (from 1/485 kg to 128 kg), and therefore the amount of fodder per horse cannot be determined. See Muhammad Mü'min, \textit{Faþang: fásîh} (Teheran, 1963), vol. 4, p. 366 for a list of the different weights.

\textsuperscript{41} Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 71; Ayáti, \textit{Tahá>, p. 39; Rashid/Alládzadáh, p. 113; Rashid/Thackston, p. 523; Mirkhwánd, \textit{Rawdat}, vol. 5, p. 289.

\textsuperscript{42} Thus according to Wasaš's description of the events (Wasaš, \textit{Ta'thik-i Wasaš}, p. 69). Rashid al-Dín dated Mas'úd's visit to winter 665/1266–7, i.e. before the
THE BATTLE OF HERAT [1224] A GASK OF INTER-MONGOL WARFARE

summer of 1268, he sent Mas'ud Beg to Aqaqa, apparently to take care of matters relating to the appanages of Qaidu and Baraq in Iran, as well as to express friendship and loyalty. Mas'ud's real mission, however, was to spy out the land, especially the roads and the size of Aqaqa's armies. After a short stay at the Ilkhanid court, fearing that the real motive of his visit had been discovered, he asked permission to leave. Aqaqa regretted this permission soon after he gave it, but Mas'ud, who had taken the precaution of leaving two horses at each post station through which he had passed, managed to cross the Oxus before Aqaqa's troops could reach him. After hearing his envoy's report, Baraq's eagerness to invade Iran grew considerably.

Another step Baraq took in 1267–8 was to contact Tegüder—the Chaghadaid prince who had accompanied Hulegu when the latter went to Iran and had stayed in the Ilkhanate ever since—who was the commander of a timen, a military unit of nominally 10,000 men. During the mission of Mas'ud Beg or shortly afterwards, Baraq's envoys presented to Tegüder a special hollow arrow, in the middle of which a letter was hidden. In the letter, Baraq informed Tegüder of his intention to invade Iran and asked for his help, perhaps even proposing to reward Tegüder by appointing him over Khurāsān and Māzandarān after they had vanquished Aqaqa.

According to Harawi, during the same mission Baraq also informed Aqaqa that he planned to arrive in Khurāsān, and promised to

his own vassal if Aqaqa assigned him an appanage in Khurāsān. According to Rashid al-Din, after this mission Baraq contacted Tūshšīn, Aqaqa's brother and his viceroy in Khurāsān, and demanded that he evacuate the region of Bādhgūs to Ghazna and the Indus River, which he defined as his forefathers' realm. Baraq had a point there: the region of Ghazna and Afghanistan as far as Sīnūd was taken away from the Chaghadaidis and annexed to Hulegu's realm only in Mōngke's time. Tūshšīn transmitted the message to Aqaqa, who fiercely declined the offer, stating that he had inherited this territory from his father and was ready to defend it. According to Harawi, Aqaqa offered Ghazna to Baraq, on the conditions that he remitted half of its income to the Ilkhanate's treasury and that Aqaqa still owned half of its artisans. Whatever Aqaqa replied, it did not satisfy Baraq, who was determined to fight.

As for Tegüder, after reading Baraq's letter, he asked permission from Aqaqa to return to his appanage in Georgia, intending to join Baraq via Darband, crossing through the Golden Horde's domains. He spent enough time there to outrage the Georgians and the Armenians by pillaging villages and caravans and especially by harassing the local Christian clergy. Due to the Armenians' complaints, or to his discovery of Tegüder's correspondence with Baraq, or perhaps as a result of the reports about Baraq's deploying his armies near the Oxus, Aqaqa summoned Tegüder to his court several times. When Tegüder refused to comply, Aqaqa decided to attack him first, despite Baraq's impending threat. He sent two of his senior commanders, Shiremin and Abatay, to pursue Tegüder with their armies.

According to the Mamluk sources, Aqaqa also summoned his troops from Anatolia, and both the Mamluk historian al-Yārīnī and the

1 Harawi, Ḥajī, pp. 307–8.
3 Rashīd/Alīzādah, p. 112; Rashīd/Thackston, p. 523.
4 Harawi, Ḥajī, p. 309, the artisans' main function was making weapons.
5 Ḥalīlī, Ḥalīlī, p. 375.
6 Ḥalīlī, Ḥalīlī, p. 375.
7 Ḥalīlī, Ḥalīlī, p. 375.
aforementioned Qipchaq as well as Chabat, grandson of Gilyug Qulan, with 2000 horsemen each, and possibly, according to Wassaf, a few more princes. At the same time Qaidu ordered his men to find an excuse and return to him before the battle actually started.69 Baraq placed Qaidu's troops in his vanguard66 and crossed the Oxus in late 1269-early 1270 (according to Rashid al-Din) or sometimes between September 1268 and August 1269 (according to Wassaf, Harawi and the Mamluk sources). This was shortly after the ga’l-ain took place, if Rashid al-Din’s chronology is reliable, and while Abaraq was still engaged with Tegider.64

Baraq advanced to Maruchaq, between Balkh and Herat, where Tubshein and Argun Aqa, the administrator of Khurasan, were waiting for him. After a short battle, the Ilkhanid troops were defeated and chose to retreat to Mazendaran, informing Abaraq of Baraq’s advance.65 During this fight, a commander of thousand from Tubshein’s army, named *Sehektu, whose family formerly served Qipchaq’s house (i.e., the Ogodeids) defected to Baraq’s ranks, and joined Qipchaq, presenting him with fine Arabian horses. Qipchaq’s keeping most of those horses to himself instead of offering all of them to Baraq annoyed Jalayirits, one of Baraq’s senior commanders. This dispute gave Qipchaq the excuse he needed to return to Qaidu. Baraq sent his brother and then Jalayirits with 3000 horsemen to pursue him, but they were unable to catch him. Soon afterwards, Habat also found a chance to withdraw, although he lost most of his troops when he ran into Baraq’s son in Bukhara. Baraq protested to Qaidu at the desertion of his forces.68 Qaidu ignored Baraq, but

Armenian chronicler Grigor of Akker mention the participation of Georgian and Armenian units in the Ilkhanid force.60 The incident was therefore a clash of a wider scale than can be gleaned from the Ilkhanid sources alone. After a bad start, the Ilkhanid troops had defeated Tegider and blocked his way to Darband. Tegider retreated into the mountains of Georgia, but got lost in the forest. He found a temporary refuge with the Georgian King David, but soon afterwards decided to beg for Abaraq’s mercy.61 Alternatively, Tegider was brought to Abaraq by Shiremmin, who defeated him in a second battle.62 According to Rashid al-Din, Tegider surrendered in April-May, 1270, but was brought to Abaraq only later,63 after having being exiled to the Kibudan isle in lake Urmiyah, west of Tabriz. After he defeated Baraq, Abaraq pardoned Tegider but deprived him of any real power. Tegider’s commanders, who according to Tegider had persuaded him to rebel, were executed, and his troops, divided into units of tens and hundreds, were incorporated in the Ilkhanid army. Tegider was not allowed to hold a bow or to ride a mature horse, limitations he dutifully observed.64

This was not perhaps the help Baraq had anticipated from Tegider, but certainly the engagement of part of Abaraq’s troops in the west facilitated his next moves. Having declined Abaraq’s proposals and being determined to fight, Baraq asked for Qaidu’s assistance despite his blatant breaches of the qurulim’s decisions. Qaidu agreed to Baraq’s request, hoping to push him into Abaraq’s hands, as the sources clearly indicate.65 He sent to his assistance two Ogodeid princes, the

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113-14; Rashid/Thackston, pp. 523; Rashid/Blocchet, pp. 173, 192; Rashid/Boyle, pp. 142, 150; Mirkhawand, Roudat, vol. 3, p. 293.
64 Wissaf, Tarikh-i Wissaf, p. 71; Ayati, Tabriz, p. 40; Rashid/Alizadah, p. 114; Rashid/Thackston, p. 523; Mirkhawand, Roudat, vol. 5, p. 293; Biran, Quaid, p. 39.
65 Harawi, Horat, p. 309.
68 Rashid/Alizadah, pp. 115-19; Rashid/Thackston, pp. 523-5; Mirkhawand, Roudat, vol. 5, p. 299; Wissaf, Tarikh-i Wissaf, p. 71; Ayati, Tabriz, p. 40.
he did send a message to Aqa, informing him of Qipchaq’s return. Subsequently, friendship existed between Qaidu and Aqa, who called each other "velay (friend, ally)."

Despite the defection of Qaidu’s troops, Baraq managed to take over and devastate large parts of Khurâsân, overrunning Badakhshân, Shaburghân, Tâlibân and Merv up to the borders of Nishapur, which his forces plundered on May 19, 1270, evacuating it on the following day. Baraq continued to oppress his subjects in his newly conquered territories and even planned to plunder Herat. He became convinced, however, that it would be more useful to gain the support of its ruler, Shams al-Din Kart, who could help him win the assistance of other Khurâsânî rulers and subjects. Shams al-Din Kart, up to then an Ilkhanid vassal, was obliged to arrive at Baraq’s camp and accept Baraq’s authority. Baraq promised to appoint him as the governor of Khurâsân when Baraq troops continued further westwards. In the meantime, Baraq appropriated money, weapons and cattle from the city, and appointed his tax collectors and inspectors in its markets, workshops and mints. Unimpressed by Baraq’s destructive policies, however, Shams al-Din Kart managed to return to Herat, allegedly to collect auxiliary troops and provisions for Baraq. Actually, what he did was to take refuge in his castle at Khayyâr, south-east of Herat, and wait for the arrival of Aqa.

Meanwhile, Baraq allocated pasturelands to his commanders: Bâdghis, the pastureland north of Herat, originally allocated to Qipchaq, was given to either Yasaur or *Misu-Mengu. Margha’ul, Baraq’s leading commander, received the western area of Tûs in the direction of Nishapur, along the Herat river and its tributaries, near the bridge of *Chaghchaghân. Since he knew the roads, Margha’ul was supposed to lead the vanguard troops in the invasion of Iran. Baraq himself stayed on the rear at Tâlibân. Although he boasted that after Khurâsân he intended to conquer Iraq and Azerbaijan—

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**The Battle of Herat (1270): A Case of Inter-Mongol Warfare**

That is to say over the Ilkhanate—he was in no hurry to do so. In the meantime, he ordered his troops to let their horses graze in the meadows and to ride oxen and donkeys, so his army had been idle for a few weeks when the rumors about Aqa’s arrival began to spread.

**The Coming of Aqa and the Battle**

Aqa made serious preparations to deal with the Chaghatayid threat. He ordered his chief minister to prepare arrows, bows and lances, and sent the commanders to assemble their troops and auxiliary forces. Aqa also ordered his brother, Yoshtum, who was stationed on the border with the Golden Horde, to join him with 10,000 soldiers. According to Wasaf, Yoshtum was sent earlier to aid the Tüishin while Aqa was engaged with Tegüder. After Baraq occupied Khurâsân, Yoshtum ran into him several times and suffered heavy losses.

Aqa left Azerbaijan on April 27, 1270. According to Rashid al-Din he ordered his army not to pluck a single stalk from the fields, yet the Mamlûk sources assert that his troops grazed their horses in the sown fields throughout their way. Aqa’s troops went from Azerbaijan to Mughan, Ardabil, and Shariâvân, the future site of Sulţânîya. There Aqa met a messenger sent to the Ilkhanid court by Qubilai Q’an. The messenger, who had just managed to escape from captivity in Baraq’s hands, reported that Baraq’s men were constantly drunk, and that their horses had become useless (gadaq). Hearing this, Aqa passed on. His troops reached Rayy,
and then Qumis, where they were accompanied by the troops of Tushin and Arghun Aqa, whom Baraq had driven away from Khurrazin. They continued to Radkan and Nishapur, where the Sultan of Kirmân, Hajjâj, as well as other auxiliaries (apparently from Yazd) joined them. Together they continued southwards to Bakhzar, and were joined near Herat by the Georgian contingents. Throughout the march, Abara concealed his presence among the troops, and gave orders to kill whoever divulged it. This policy seems to have worked well, since Baraq doubted the arrival of Abara almost until the beginning of the battle.

After having traveled for fifty-five days from Mughân, Abara’s troops were only at 5 days’ distance from Baraq’s. Abara and his commanders decided that the troops would carry their supplies for the five days’ march already cooked in order not to light fire. Then ten out of every hundred horsemen were ordered to move, half a day in advance of the main body, to collect information. This vanguard, estimated at 5000 men, included also the Georgian troops of King David, and was headed by the Ilkhanid commanders Abatai and Shikurt. Abara ordered them to kill every Chaghdadat soldier that they found on their way. They did so, until they closed in on Baraq’s vanguard. Abara’s advance troops caught the enemy contingent by surprise at dawn and annihilated it completely. They returned and reported to Abara that the distance between their troops and Baraq’s was a day and a half’s journey. This perhaps corresponds to Rashid al-Din’s report that when Abara was at Bakhzar, he sent a small group of 100 horsemen from Farâb: much further to the northeast, to check the enemy’s movements. This group clashed with some of Baraq’s troops, but managed to overcome them and to report back to Abara.

Abara then divided his troops into the standard three divisions—right, left and center—and sent Tushin to Chaghchaghân, on the Herat river, against Baraq’s vanguard commander Margha’ul, who headed 3000 men. Tushin ran into Margha’ul’s troops, defeated them, and took back the booty the Chaghchaghân army had previously collected from Khurrazin. Margha’ul managed to escape and inform Baraq, who withdrew his forces.

According to Harawi, Baraq heard from Margha’ul about the arrival of the Ilkhanid troops, rode towards them and the battle began. Elsewhere, like Mirkhwând, Harawi also cites Rashid al-Din’s detailed and beautiful version. Margha’ul indeed reported to Baraq on the arrival of the Ilkhanid army, but (since it was headed by Tushin), Baraq was not sure whether Abara himself had also arrived in Khurrazin. Baraq then received a messenger from Abara, who suggested that he take over the area of Ghazna as far as the Indus river, i.e., the area that Baraq had formerly demanded from Tushin. Baraq considered the offer for a while, but after consulting his commanders finally declined it, and decided to fight, despite the contrary advice of his astrologer. He sent three spies (jâwâs) to find out whether Abara had indeed arrived in Khurrazin, as claimed in the message.

Abara advanced to Herat and sent his commanders to choose the battlefield, which goes to show that he was less than confident that Baraq would accept his peace proposal. While there, they caught...
Baraq’s spies and brought them back to Aqaqa, who decided to manipulate them. After discussing the plot with a trusted Mongol soldier, he sat on his throne, feasting with his commanders, and made sure that the spies, bound to the tent’s pillar, could hear him. After a few hours, the man with whom Aqaqa conspired arrived, and reported that the Golden Horde had used Aqaqa’s absence from Azerbaijan to invade his domains in great numbers. “If you don’t hasten to return,” added the messenger, “you will not find your camps or people.” Aqaqa declared that he would withdraw immediately and suspend the fight with Baraq until after the Qipchaq threat had been eliminated. He ordered his people to return at once to Mżandarar, leaving their tents behind. He then ordered the three spies killed, but made sure that one of them was able to escape. Then he and his troops decamped and moved to the *Jina (or *Khanbeh) plain, which was chosen to be the battlefield.

The spy who had managed to escape rushed to report the good news to Baraq. Baraq was overjoyed and the next morning rode towards Aqaqa’s deserted camps. Even the refusal of the people of Herat, following Aqaqa’s commands, to open their gates to the Chaghadaid army did not change his good mood. Baraq and his troops crossed the Herat river, pillaged the deserted tents of Aqaqa’s troops and camped south of Herat. Only the next morning, after riding some twelve kilometres (two *farsaks) did they suddenly see the plain full of Aqaqa’s army, and understood they had been tricked. Baraq camped next to the Herat river, on the banks of one of its tributaries, the (unidentified) Qara Su (black water).³⁸

Although the use of disinformation was not uncommon among the Ilkhans and their contemporaries,⁹ this story is almost too convenient to be true. If one accepts it, however, it is worth noticing that to both Aqaqa and Baraq a large-scale attack of the Golden Horde in spite of the “peace” between it and the Ilkhaneate seemed quite plausible. Interestingly, the Mamluk sources also report that

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al-Din, the left flank was huge, as it comprised Arghun Aqa, to whom the armies of Kirmān under Sultan Ḥājjāj and of Yazd under the ʿābed Yūsuf Shāh were subordinated, as well as Sonitai, Shiktur, Buritai, and ʿAbdallāh Aqa.109 Harawi mentions only Yosumut and Boritai, Mirkhwānd records Yosmut and Sonitai Noyan, and Waṣṣāf only reports the names of Shiktur and Arghun Aqa.110 The Georgian Chronicle, according to which most of the aforementioned people were on the right, cites only Abatai and Shiremum on the left flank.111 According to Harawi, Mirkhwānd, and the Taʿrīkh-i šahī, Arghun Aqa and the Kirmānī forces were positioned in the center,112 which, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, was held by Abatai Noyan and a group of commanders.113 Aboaqa himself was in the center, according to Mirkhwānd and Harawi, but was persuaded to stand back, since he was supposed to be the target of the Chaghadaid attack.114 For this same reason, according to the Taʿrīkh-i šahī, Aboaqa chose to be on the left flank.115 It seems as if Baraq’s forces were also divided, but there is no reference to the composition of the different Chaghadaid units.116

The different sources also differ with regard to the course of the battle, although all of them agree that at one point Baraq was close to winning. According to the Taʿrīkh-i šahī, Baraq started the battle with a dense barrage of arrows, which left many people wounded.117 This might be identical with Marghaʿul’s attack, which most sources described as opening the battle. Marghaʿul, leading a thousand men,

109 Rashīd/al-Zādah, pp. 125, 127; Rashīd/Thackston, pp. 527, 530, where the translation is not accurate regarding the affiliation of the Kirmānī and Yazdi troops.
112 Taʿrīkh-i šahī, p. 290; Harawi, Harat, p. 326; Mirkhwānd, Rawdat, vol. 5, p. 305; Naṣr al-Dīn Munṣīr Kirmānī, Sunt al-deh (Tehran, 1949), p. 47 says that Arghun Aqa was with the Kirmānī troops.
113 Rashīd/al-Zādah, p. 127; Rashīd/Thackston, p. 530.
115 Taʿrīkh-i šahī, p. 290.
116 Waṣṣāf, Taʿrīkh-i Waṣṣāf, p. 74; The Georgian Chronicle, p. 580; Mirkhwānd, Rawdat, vol. 5, p. 305. Yet all these references are rather general. It is still possible that the Chaghadaid force was not divided, as implied, for example, by describing Marghaʿul attacking “from left and right” (e.g., Mirkhwānd, Rawdat, vol. 5, p. 306).
117 Taʿrīkh-i šahī, p. 289.
ABAQA attacked from left and right, but Jalayirtai managed to hold out, pursuing the Ilkhanid troops, killing and wounding them. When, however, he tried to return to Baraq, he could not make it, having been encircled by another division of Abaq's troops. Due to this ambush, Jalayirtai's troops dispersed. When Baraq saw that the situation was desperate, he entered the battle himself, attacking and retreating for a while before he was hit and left horseless. His desperate position, as he was lying on the ground and crying “I am Baraq, give me a horse,” was missed by neither Rashid al-Din nor Harawi. Eventually somebody recognized Baraq, and gave him a horse. “With eyes full of tears and a heart full of ire,” Baraq rode all the way back to Bukhara.

Thereupon, Abaq's troops pursued the Chaghdaids for two days. Some of them surrendered to Abaq, some sought refuge in Herat and were killed by its population, and a few others were burned alive by Abaq's troops. The only Chaghdaid who was still fighting at this stage was Jalayirtai. He assembled the routed Chaghdaids, drove them eastwards towards the sands of Amuya, near the Oxus, and held his ground till the remnants of the Chaghdaids got away. But while he was able to save some people, most of the Chaghdaids were in dire straits, and many of them drowned when they tried to cross a river, which may have been that of Herat or, more likely, the Oxus. The Mamluk sources also claim that when the fleeing Chaghdaids dismounted, each of them hamstrung his horse with his sword, so that the enemy could not make use of it, unique behaviour which is neither known from other Mongol battles nor corroborated by any other source. Many or even most of Baraq's troops perished in the battle, while Abaq's losses were smaller, but still significant.

### Results and Political Implications

Baraq's defeat sealed his destiny. In addition to his crushing defeat, soon after he reached Bukhara he was struck by paralysis, and had to be carried in a litter. Some of his commanders chose to join Abaq, while two princes decided to ride eastward. Baraq sent loyal princes after the deserters, and dispatched his brother, Basar, to ask for Qaidu's assistance, describing his desperate situation and attributing his defeat to the desertion of Qipchaq and Chabat. Qaidu imprisoned the messenger, but informed Baraq that he would send troops to his aid. He then led 20,000 men westward, hoping to take advantage of the Chaghdaid weakness, and to prevent Baraq from joining Qubilai. Baraq learnt about Qaidu's approach only after his

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120 Rashid al-Din, p. 129; Rashid al-Din, Thackston, pp. 530-1; Harawi, Herat, p. 330.
121 ibid; Wagṣṭ, Taʾriḵ-i Wagṣṭ, p. 75; Mirkhwand, Rauwaṭ, vol. 3, p. 307.
123 Rashid al-Din, pp. 130-1; Rashid al-Din, Thackston, p. 531; Harawi, Herat, p. 329.
124 Rashid al-Din, pp. 129-30; Rashid al-Din, Thackston, p. 531; Martinez, "II-Xanid Army," p. 155 describes Jalayirtai's actions as a second battle, in which the Chaghdaids were defeated.
125 al-Yunun, Dhai, vol. 2, pp. 435-5; Ibn al-Dawwda, Kanz al-durar, vol. 8, pp. 149-50; Mufadḍal, al-Nāfi al-sādāt, p. 525, according to whom there was a large-scale drowning; Harawi, Herat, pp. 329 30.
126 al-Yunun, Dhai, vol. 2, pp. 435-5; Ibn al-Dawwda, Kanz al-durar, vol. 8, pp. 149-50; Mufadḍal, al-Nāfi al-sādāt, p. 525. Hamstringing horses was, however, known in pre-Islamic Arabia and in the early Islamic period (see e.g. Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, Taʾriḵ al-maʾṣūr wa-taʾlīfuh, ed. DeGeorge (Leiden, 1879-1901), series 1, pp. 1476, 1614; M. Fishbein, trans, The Victory of Islam, vol. 8 of The History of al-Tabari (New York, 1997), pp. 19, 156, relating to the years 626-7 and 629-30. A horse was hamstring when its rider resolved not to attempt escape but to fight to the death, as is documented in a 9th century episode: During the struggle between the Caliph Harun al-Rashid's two sons, al-Amin (r. 809-813) and al-Mamun (r. 813-833), al-Amin's governor of al-Ahwaz fought a losing battle against a strong contingent of al-Mamun's army. When he realized that everything was lost, he offered the clients (mawla) to run and save their life and let him fight alone till the bitter end. The loyal clients refused, pointing out that they owe him too much to abandon him at this stage. They therefore dismounted and hamstring their horses so that they would not be able to change their mind (Tabari, Taʾriḵ, series 3, p. 653; M. Fishbein, trans, The War between Brothers (New York, 1992), p. 117 quoted in David Ayalon, Euphics, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study of Power Relations (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 26. I am indebted to Prof. Reuven Avital for this reference). However, already in the late 10th century scholar, Khaṭṭāṭī (d. 998), commenting on the hamstringing of the horse of Jafar b. 'Abd al-Tālib, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin in the battle of Mu'ta (629-30), see the first reference from Tabari above) explained the hamstringing as meant to prevent the enemy from making use of the horses of his defeated enemies. Khaṭṭāṭī also cited several Muslim legal opinions on the subject of hamstringing. Abu Sulaymān Khaṭṭāṭī, Mukālim al-wuṣūl (Alleppe, 1533), vol. 2, pp. 233-4; partially cited in 'Azīz Abūlī, al-ʿĀm al-maḥbūd (Medina, 1983), vol. 8, pp. 293-4; I am indebted to Prof. Michael Lecker and to Ms. Vardit Tocki for these references.
127 al-Yunun, Dhai, vol. 2, pp. 435-6; Ibn al-Dawwda, Kanz al-durar, vol. 8, pp. 149-50; Mufadḍal, al-Nāfi al-sādāt, p. 525, according to whom Baraq lost more than 40,000 men, and Abaq either 370, 370 or just "many many troops", part of them due to a disease; Harawi, Herat, pp. 329-30, where Abaq lost 5000 men and Baraq most of his army.
princes had already caught the rebels. He tried to convince Qaidu to go back, to no avail. Qaidu’s troops surrounded Baraq’s camp, planning to attack him on the following day. In the morning, however, they discovered that Baraq had passed away during the night. Most of Baraq’s troops, estimated as 30,000 men, chose to submit to Qaidu, who granted them pasturelands and shares of Baraq’s wealth. According to Wāṣṣaf’s alternative version, most of Baraq’s troops chose to enter into Qaidu’s service, while Baraq was still alive. Baraq was then obliged to seek refuge with Qaidu, who poisoned him. Baraq died in August 1271, and less than a month later Qaidu was enthroned as khan at Talas. Apart from being the Öğödeid khan, Qaidu was also empowered to appoint the head of the Chaghadai idas. In Central Asia, the battle of Herat thus led to the accession of Qaidu and to the loss of independence of the Chaghadai idas, which became subordinate to Qaidu. This did not happen without opposition: Baraq’s and Aghlu’s sons rebelled against Qaidu, and so also did the newly appointed head of the Chaghadaiids, Negūbe. Yet after being defeated by A baño, and having their troops divided between A baño’s and Qubilai’s army, the Chaghadaiids could not challenge Qaidu for long. Du’a, Baraq’s son, acknowledged this fact and chose to ally himself with Qaidu. In 1282, Qaidu appointed him head of the Chaghadai idas, and their cooperation, which lasted till Qaidu’s death (1301), enabled Du’a to organize the Chaghadai idas and regain its independence after Qaidu’s death. Yet even before Du’a’s accession, from the mid 1270s, Qaidu, thanks to the battle’s outcome, was able to assert himself as the ruler of the independent Mongol khanate in Central Asia. Another important advantage that Qaidu gained from Baraq’s defeat was the alliance of Mas’ud Beg, who after the battle moved into Qaidu’s service. The cooperation between the two lasted till Mas’ud’s death (1289), after which his sons continued to serve Qaidu.

Together they presided over the gradual recovery of Qaidu’s sedentary territories. A baño’s victory confirmed Ilkhanid control over Khurāsān, and for the remaining years of his rule, his eastern frontier remained quiet. Later on the Ilkhanids had to cope with local raids by Qaidu, the Chaghadaiids, and the Qara’unas against Khurāsān and Herat, but apart from the invasions during Öjęttu’s reign, the eastern border of Iran remained safe until the rise of Temür Lang (1370–1405). A baño also took several steps that were meant to secure his eastern border. He was dissuaded from his original intention of destroying the disloyal city of Herat, but its ruler, Shams al-Dīn Kart, who had flirted with Baraq, remained suspect in A baño’s eyes. In 1275, after several delays, Shams al-Dīn Kart was persuaded to go to Tabriz, the Ilkhanid capital, where he was detained and finally poisoned in 1278. Even before that, a Chaghadaiid appointee, who coveted Bukhara, reported to A baño that Qaidu and the Chaghadaiids were fighting in the city, and claimed, apparently from his own imagination, that they were planning to cross the Oxus again. A baño sent his troops to invade and destroy Bukhara, so that nobody would wish to fight for it again. The Ilkhanid force, which allegedly came to avenge the harm inflicted by Baraq on Khurāsān, reached Bukhara on January 29, 1273. Although they did not find in the city any Chaghadaiid or Öğödeid troops, A baño’s troops burned and pillaged for a week, reducing the city to ashes. After this week, however, A baño’s troops evacuated Bukhara. Despite their victory, the Ilkhanids did not try to expand beyond the Oxus, which remained their eastern border.

Another step that A baño took was to entrust the region of Ghazna to those Chaghadaiids who joined his troops after the battle. This step was meant to curb the power of the Qara’unas, who inhabited

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128 Rashid/al-ızādah, pp. 131-8; Rashid/Thackston, pp. 531-5; Rashid/Boyle, p. 153; Biran, Qaidu, pp. 31-2.
129 Wāṣṣaf, Tarikh-i Wāṣṣaf, p. 76; Ayān, Tabrīz, p. 44; Mirkhwānd, Rauwat, vol. 5, p. 309; Biran, Qaidu, p. 32.
130 Qardab, Mirkhwāq, p. 138; Biran, Qaidu, p. 32.
131 Ibid; Mirkhwāq, Rauwat, vol. 5, p. 130.
132 For the relationship between Du’a, Qaidu and Qaidu’s sons see Biran, Qaidu, Chs. 2, 3.
133 Biran, Qaidu, p. 33.
this area, and to check further Chaghadaid pressure on Khurasan. Aqa, who had formerly offered this region to Baraqq, after the battle appointed Mubarak Shah, the former head of the Chaghadaids, to command the Qara’unid army of Ghazna. It is unclear to what extent the “Ilkhanid” Chaghadaids managed to rule the Qara’unid’s effectively. In the late 1290s, however, Du’a’s troops took over the Qara’unid’s.\textsuperscript{141}

Aqa’s victory cost him already, however, on his western front, against the Mamluks. Being busy in the north and east in 1268–70, Aqa did not send troops to the help of Antioch, an Ilkhanid vassal state that in 1268 passed into the hands of the Mamluk Sultan Baybars. The Ilkhanid troops of Anatolia were by then busy with Tegud in Georgia. For the same reason Aqa also did not take steps to prevent Baybars’s advance against the Crusaders in 1269.\textsuperscript{142} Moreover, Aqa’s involvement in Herat, and his attention to the eastern front, probably contributed to his failure to implement a real joint campaign with the Franks against the Mamluks. When the crusade of Edward, shortly to become Edward I of England, reached Acre in spring 1271, Aqa sent to his help only a small and ineffective force that raided north Syria in October 1270, only to withdraw at the first indications of a Mamluk approach.\textsuperscript{143} Taking all this into account, it is clear why the Mamluk sources chose to describe the battle of Herat.

What was the reaction of the other Mongol khanates to the battle’s result? Soon after the battle, Qubilai’s emissaries arrived in Maragha to enthone Aqa,\textsuperscript{144} reconfirming his rule over Iran, and demonstrating at least the nominal authority of the Qa’an there. Although he was mostly preoccupied in 1268–73 with the siege of Xiyang, in Central China, Qubilai was also aware of Qaidu’s strengthening and took precautions. Already in 1271 he sent a coalition of princes headed by his fourth son Noguqan to Almaqi, in the upper Ilı valley, to guard against Qaidu. The serious threat this coalition posed to Qaidu, however, collapsed in the middle of the 1270s, when the princes rebelled against Noguqan and some of them even found their way into Qaidu’s ranks.\textsuperscript{145} Throughout his rule, Qubilai was unable to enforce his authority over the Central Asian Mongols.\textsuperscript{146}

Mongke Temür’s messengers also came to greet Aqa’s victory.\textsuperscript{147} Although he approved of Baraqq’s plan to conquer Khurasan, and despite his diplomatic efforts to forge an alliance with the far away Mamluks against Aqa, when the latter was faced by a real threat, that of Baraqq, Mongke Temür remained neutral, choosing only to congratulate Aqa after his victory. This was not only because in 1270 much of Mongke Temür’s attention was concentrated on the troubles in Novgorod, the northern outlet of the Golden Horde trade,\textsuperscript{148} but also because Baraqq was no less a threat to Mongke Temür than Aqa himself. The war, resulting in the curbing of the Chaghadaid force and the temporarily weakening of the Ilkhanids, certainly suited Mongke Temür’s interests. Nor did he have a reason to be worried by Qaidu’s accession. Despite the tension between them after the Talas qurilai, Qaidu remained Mongke Temür’s protégé at least till the mid-1270s.\textsuperscript{149} Soon after his greetings to Aqa, however, Mongke Temür renewed his attempts to ally with the Mamluks against the Ilkhanids, though these never materialized.\textsuperscript{150}

The battle of Herat was therefore a major event that shaped the borders of the emerging independent Mongol Khanates and their international relations. Let us now turn to our analysis of the reasons for Aqa’s victory.

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\textsuperscript{141} For Noguqan and the princes’ rebellion see Biran, Qaidu, pp. 37–41.
\textsuperscript{142} See Biran, Qaidu, pp. 37–57.
\textsuperscript{143} Rashid/Alizadah, pp. 139; Rashid/Thackston, p. 535; Mirkhwañ, Raukolat, vol. 5, p. 308.
\textsuperscript{145} Biran, Qaidu, pp. 63–4
\textsuperscript{146} Amir-ali-Peys, Mongols and Mamluks, pp. 89–91.

\textsuperscript{142} Amir-ali-Peys, Mongols and Mamluks, pp. 119–20.
\textsuperscript{144} Rashid/Alizadah, pp. 138–9; Rashid/Thackston, p. 535.
The Military Implications: Why did Aqaq win?

A.P. Martinez has claimed that “the battle of Herat was decided by the Ilkhanid heavy cavalry,” and considers the Ilkhanids’ better weaponry, lances mostly, that allegedly distinguished them from the Chaghadaid “light” archers, as the main reason for their victory. This conclusion, however, can be disputed.

The Mongol army had used lances already at the time of Chinggis Khan and certainly in the early 1240s, when Carpini and Thomas of Spalato described it. Therefore, being armed with lances does not necessarily justify the classification of its users as “heavy cavalry.” Moreover, Baraq’s troops also carried lances during the battle of Herat, and their use continued to be common later on among Central Asian Mongols. However, Baraq’s insistence on making weapons around the clock in Bukhara, his confiscation of cattle for their skins as well as plundering weapons before and during the battle, indeed suggest that his armament was inferior to that of Aqaq, at least in quantity. This makes sense: after all Aqaq had a much larger and better organized kingdom at his disposal than Baraq had during his short rule in Transoxania. Yet I doubt whether the difference in the armament of the two sides was that great, or whether it was this alone that decided the battle. A close reading of the different sources suggests that the two armies used a number of weapons besides bows and arrows. Aqaq’s forces indeed had lances, knives, javelins, and swords, but Baraq’s troops were also equipped with swords, lances, and daggers. Four thousand of them also wore mailcoats (jaunshan-i pish). Martinez concludes that less than five percent of the Chaghadaid force used armor. I do not think that the numbers given in the sources (see below) enable one to calculate percentages with any hope of accuracy. Yet it is no less significant that, to the best of our knowledge, none of Aqaq’s troops wore armor. Indeed, the 4000 armored Chaghadaid warriors managed to break up an important Ilkhanid division.

Despite all that, however, it is clear that the main weapon was still bows and arrows, and this is true for both sides. The barrage of arrows from Baraq’s troops is well attested, and the Chaghadaid repeated attacks (or attacks and retreats) also suggest the use of arrows and not of hand to hand combat. The Ilkhanid forces, however, also made good use of arrows, with which, for example, they managed to kill Margha’ul, and with which Tibusin and others damaged the Chaghadaid in the later stages of the battle. Only at the end of the battle did the Ilkhanid army turn to hand to hand combat, slaying the Chaghadaid with swords, as had also been common among the Mongols at the time of Chinggis Khan. During the battle, the

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155 Ta’īkh-i shāhī, p. 290; Harawī, Ḥen, p. 314; Waṣṣāf, Ta’īkh-i Waṣṣāf, p. 68, Ayāṭ, Ṭabīr, p. 38.
156 Waṣṣāf, Ta’īkh-i Waṣṣāf, pp. 74, 75; Harawī, Ḥen, pp. 326, 328, 329; Mirkhwānd, Rauṣat, vol. 5, p. 287; Biran, Qâsh, pp. 86–97.
157 Waṣṣāf, Ta’īkh-i Waṣṣāf, pp. 74, 75; Harawī, Ḥen, pp. 326, 328, 329; Mirkhwānd, Rauṣat, vol. 5, p. 287; Biran, Qâsh, pp. 86–97.
Ilkhanids also conducted repeated attacks in order to break the Chaghadaids' force. More important, their final victory was achieved after they had managed to drag Jala'iyirra into an ambush, and this testifies to their mobility, not to their “heavy” qualities.

Martínez claimed that the “heavier” quality of the Ilkhanid army caused Aqa' to choose as the battlefield “an agricultural area where irrigation channels restricted cavalry movements.” In fact, Harawi states (immediately after the lines cited by Martínez) that due to the multiple quantities of buildings and irrigation canals the “agricultural” area was found unsuitable by the Ilkhanid commanders, who therefore elected an open plain as the battlefield, a fact which is clearly confirmed by Rashid al-Dīn. Apparently what is most striking about this battle of Herât, when compared to battles fought in the region in the pre-Mongol period—mainly among the Khwārazmians and the Ghūrids—or even to later Mongol clashes in the region, is the complete absence of siege warfare and hydraulic warfare (i.e. flooding the river in the face of the enemy). This is not only because the issue at stake in 1270 was not the control of Herât but of Khūrāsān, but also because none of the Mongol troops seemed to have mastered those techniques, and they therefore preferred to fight outside the city.

If not exclusively because of his army’s better weaponry, why did Aqa’ win? This was due to a combination of several factors, which I shall examine here.

Size: I certainly agree with Martínez that both forces struck contemporary observers as unusually large, and they probably were. At least the lowest estimates of Aqa’'s troops—50,000 to 70,000—correspond with contemporary assessments of the Ilkhanid troops sent against the Mamluks, and are therefore quite plausible. It is much harder to accept the numbers given for Baraq's troops: 90,000, 100,000 or even 150,000. The Mamluk sources do not emphasize Baraq's numerical superiority, although they report 40,000 Chaghāhādīd dead. According to the Kirmānid chronicle, however, Baraq crossed the Oxus with 20,000 horsemen, while Aqa’'s troops (even without the Kirmānīd auxiliaries) are estimated at 100,000. One wonders how Baraq, ruling only in Transoxiana, deserted by Qaidu’s troops, and unsupported by any auxiliary troops, could bring to the field more troops than Aqa’. Estimates of the whole Central Asian armies (i.e., not only of Transoxiana) are usually much smaller in comparison to the estimates of the other Mongol khānates. Marco Polo, for example, attributed 100,000 horsemen to Qaidu’s army (including the Chaghāhādīd troops) and 300,000 horsemen to the Ilkhanate. One can also mention that except for Harawi’s generous descriptions, the actual fighting forces mentioned in the sources do not exceed a few thousands. Moreover, the desertion of Qipchaq and Chabat with their 4000 horsemen was taken as a great blow to the Chaghāhādīd troops. The only group that might have fought side by side with Baraq was the Qara’ūnīs, since Rashid al-Dīn maintains that the man who eventually gave Baraq a horse after his fall was Sali, the Qara’ūnī. Yet it is hard to...
assert how many of the Qara'unas, if any, indeed came to fight for Bāraq, and since they were not punished by Bāraq after the battle (unlike others among Bāraq's collaborators, such as Shams al-Din Kūrti) their presence in Bāraq's ranks was probably not massive. It is hard to determine the weight of these auxiliary troops, but Martínez certainly overemphasizes the role of the Georgian contingent, which the Ilkhanid sources do not even mention. One should bear in mind that enlarging the numbers of the defeated enemy could be a device used by Ilkhanid chroniclers to magnify Bāraq's victory, and that we have no pro-Chaghānids sources to balance this tendency. On the basis of our sources it is hard to claim unequivocally that Bāraq's forces were numerically inferior, but this seems to have been likely.

Horses: Rashid ad-Dīn stresses the unreadiness of Bāraq's horses as a main reason for his defeat. Bāraq's continuous complaints about his shortage of pasture lands, his confiscatory of horses in Transoxania and Herat, his feeding the horses with grain at the expenses of the city dwellers, and his ordering his troops in Khurasan to ride donkeys and asses till the horses got fat, all suggest that he had some difficulties with his supply and preparation of horses, though he certainly attempted to overcome it.

Mongol, one of Bāraq's intimates. See also Adbīn, "Qara'unas," 82 (based on Harawi, Herat, pp. 311–12, but not very convincing).

187 Cf. Shimo, "Qara'unas," 140, where he claimed that most of the Qara'unas fought with Bāraq.


189 Martínez, "Il-Xamid Army," p. 156; see Armitage-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, p. 225.


Two references suggest that Bāraq's troops also used "local" Arabian horses, stronger than the regular Mongol ponies. Before the battle Bāraq impatiently asked Bāraq for tafşaq horses, a term usually referring to Arabian or Turkmenian horses, and when Shīkh Ḥusayn dejected to Qipchaq, he brought a present of fine Arabian horses, which became a bone of contention between Qipchaq and Jalayirī. It is however impossible to determine how widespread was the use of such horses among Bāraq's troops or how significant it was. My impression is that it was more a matter of prestige than a true military asset.

Intelligence and knowledge of the terrain: Throughout the battle the two sides ascribed great importance to acquiring information on the enemy and on the terrain, through spies, scouts or diplomatic messengers, while at the same time trying to keep this information from reaching the enemy through subterfuge and disinformation. Bāraq had a certain advantage in this respect, not only because he caught the three spies (if he did), but mostly because his troops knew the terrain much better than the Chaghānids. This enabled them to choose the battlefield and to block the Chaghānids access to water.

Leadership and discipline: The importance of personal leadership is stressed throughout the descriptions of the battle: Bāraq's presence or absence was a major question for the Chaghānids, and he himself was their chief target during the battle. Both Bāraq and Bāraq took the field themselves rather late, when they were either winning (in Bāraq's case) or desperate (in the case of Bāraq). Many reports stress the boldness of certain commanders on both sides: Abatai and Tūbšīn on the Ilkhanid side, Margha'tul and Jalayirī on that of the Chaghānids. Indeed, the killing of Margha'tul greatly harmed the Chaghānids both practically and in terms of morale, and Bāraq described it as a major reason for his defeat. Moreover, Bāraq's commanders seemed to have had firmer control over their troops: Yoshmart managed to redeploy his troops after the Chaghānids
harmed the Ilkhanid flank, while Jalayirītai was unable to rearrange his dissolving troops in a similar situation. The desertion of Qaidu’s troops, of which Abaqa was informed in good time, also contributed to his victory, and in turn undermined Baraq’s leadership.192

The Ilkhanids won the battle not because they employed heavy cavalry, but because their troops were light, mobile cavalry, just like the Chaghdaids. Yet they had a somewhat better supply of horses and weaponry, had better knowledge of the terrain of the battle and were better organized under a more capable leadership. In fact, it was exactly the Ilkhanid mobility that allowed the westernmost side to defeat its eastern rival, in contrast to former battles in the regions, such as the battle of Dandānqān (1040), the battle of Qatwān (1141), or the battle of Andkhūd (1204), in which the more mobile, eastern party won.193

How was the battle of Herat different from Mongol battles fought against non-Mongol troops? In terms of tactics and armament, the battle of Herat had a lot in common with former Mongol encounters with non-Mongol rivals.194 The main difference, however, is that in the battle of Herat both sides used the same “Mongol” methods. They were therefore more or less evenly matched, and the fight was difficult for both of them.

Moreover, unlike most of the former Mongol battles, this battle did not end in conquest. Not only did Baraq not conquer Khurāsān, but Abaqa also evacuated Bukhara soon after his invasion, retreating back to the western side of the Oxus. The battle of Herat, like the battles between the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde, was a battle fought in order to determine the borders of the separate Mongol khanates that gradually emerged after Qubilai’s accession. The enormous size of the empire at the end of Mongke’s reign, Qubilai’s weakness due to his struggle with his brother, and his transferring the Mongol capital to north China—all these developments contributed to a situation in which the major Chinggisid lineages were trying to assert their local authority. This was done at the expense of the rights of the Qa’ān in the sedentary territories, and of the rights of absentee princes in different places.195

Another tendency, already present in Mongke’s time but reinforced when the dissolution of the empire hampered the Mongols’ ability to recruit and mobilize troops throughout the empire, was the increase in the importance of the sedentary territories. Baraq and Qaidu fought mainly over Bukhara and Samarkand and their workshops and troops, and Abaqa chose to reduce Bukhara to ashes. In this respect Baraq, who declared he would take over Iraq and Azerbaijan, and was therefore willing to plunder Transoxania and Khurāsān, perhaps showed some remnant of the old Mongol spirit. His contemporaries understood that the name of the game was now the consolidation of rule in the existing territories, rather than conquering new ones.196

In contrast with their battles against non-Mongol troops, when fighting against each other the Mongols could not use their imperial ideology to legitimize their actions, and the general theme of the Chinggisid lineage was not sufficient to secure Mongol loyalty. In shaping the new borders of the khanates, the Mongols tried to find allies along lineage lines (as in the cases of Teguder and *Sechku). Yet realpolitik, which temporarily connected, for example, Qaidu and Abaqa, was no less useful as a basis for alliance.

The battle of Herat was thus an important stage in defining the borders of the independent khanates. The Central Asian Mongols, however, remained a thorn in the side of the other Mongol khanates. This is not only because they lost the battle, but because two imperial lineages, the Chaghdaids and the Ögedeids, were stuck together there, and their struggles stirred trouble even beyond their own territories.197 Moreover, the relatively poor territory of Central Asia was squeezed between the other Mongol khanates, with no convenient scope for expansion other than at the expense of the neighboring khanates. Even as a way of keeping their troops busy, the Central Asian Mongols were likely to harass the other khanates. Yet they

192 E.g., Rashid/’Alîzâdah, pp. 134–5.
193 For Dandānqān see David O. Morgan, Medieval Persia (London, 1998), pp. 22, 26; for Qatwān and Andkhūd see Biran, “China, Nomads and Islam,” Chs 1, 3, 5.
194 For general assessments of the Mongol armies see Martin, “The Mongol Army,” passim; Morgan, The Mongols, pp. 89–95.
195 See Jackson, “From Ula to Khanate,” passim; Biran, Qaidu, p. 27; Rashid/’Alîzâdah, p. 114; Rashid/Thackston, p. 523.
196 Rashid al-Dīn stresses the apparent difference between Baraq’s “oppressive” rule and Abaqa’s benevolence. One should bear in mind however that in his dealing with Bukhara Abaqa was not less furious than Baraq was in Khurāsān.
197 See, e.g., the struggles in Central Asia between 1270–82 and after Qaidu’s death in the first two decades of the 13th century.
were unlikely to challenge them in large battles. The Central Asian Mongols, at least between Baraq and Temür Lang, probably realized they were unable to eliminate any of the other Mongol states. Nor were they necessarily interested in doing so. The rhetoric of the Chinggisid unity, so prevalent in the descriptions of the battle of Herat, did not prevent the different Chinggisid lineages from fighting each other, but it proved that they all acknowledged the rights of the other Chinggisids to rule over parts of the empire. Besides, the other Mongol khanates did not prove easy rivals, as the Ghaghadaiids found out at Herat. It is therefore not surprising that the Central Asian Mongols chose raids, not battles, as their main form of future warfare, thereby leaving the battle of Herat as a rather unique example of inter-Mongol warfare on the grand scale.

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194 See, e.g., Waṣṣāf, Taʾrīḫ-i Waṣṣāf, pp. 69, 74; Rashid/Alizādah, pp. 109–10; Mirkhwand, Rauṣfet, vol. 5, pp. 286–8; Ḥarawi, Herat, p. 305.

195 See, e.g., Biran, Qīda, pp. 81–92.
Figure 1: The Main Chingisid Branches and the Great Khans (After Biran, Qaidu [Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997], 120.)

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