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VOLUME 31

Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and  
City Life

*Edited by*

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BRILL

LEIDEN · BOSTON

2013

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

RULERS AND CITY LIFE IN MONGOL CENTRAL ASIA (1220-1370)<sup>1</sup>

Michal Biran

Despite their gruesome reputation as destroyers of cities, the Mongols' influence on Eurasian urbanism has been significant and multifaceted. Much scholarly attention has been given to cities built by the Mongols, especially to their capitals, in Qaraqorum, Shangdu and Dadu (Beijing), Sultāniyya and Old and New Sarai.<sup>2</sup> Mongol Central Asia,<sup>3</sup> however, is often left outside this scholarly discussion. This is not only due to the relative lack of sources on this region, but also because in Central Asia the Mongols never founded a capital equivalent in size and importance to those of the other khanates. Nevertheless, the Chaghadaid (var: Chaghatayid, Chagataid) and Ögödeid Mongols had a noteworthy and complex impact on Central Asian urbanism, which contributed both to the severe decline of city life in Semirech'e and to the phenomenal growth of post-Chaghadaid Samarqand under Temür.

While in sedentary societies the city is often the nexus of the society's culture and the apex of its development,<sup>4</sup> nomadic empires usually had more ambiguous relations with cities, based on both need and antipathy. After all, while cities may be a source of wealth and much needed products (acquired through plunder, trade or taxation), a reservoir of human capital, and an administrative, economic and political centre, as well as a symbol of prestige and legitimation, they may also hamper the nomads' advance by their defences, become an economic burden, and be viewed as opposed to a nomadic lifestyle.<sup>5</sup> However, scholars discussing cities that were built

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Anatoly Khazanov, Nimrod Luz, Jürgen Paul and the editor for their valuable comments on earlier drafts.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Bemmman et al. 2010; Bemmman et al. 2009; Huttel and Erdenebat 2009; Zhang Jingming 2001; Steinhardt 1983; Blair 1986; Egorov 1985; Fedorov-Davydov 1994. See also Masuya's chapter in this volume.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'Central Asia' in this chapter refers to the region stretching from the eastern borders of modern Xinjiang to the Oxus.

<sup>4</sup> Mumford 1938, 1-12. This is the crux of Ibn Khaldūn's political theory.

<sup>5</sup> Charleux 2006, 175-80. A famous example of nomadic negative attitudes towards cities is Toyunquq's address to the Turkic *qaghan* in the eighth-century Orkhon inscriptions,



by nomads stress that the rulers who built them usually retained their peripatetic way of life, spending long periods of time moving between different capitals or in their mobile courts. Their cities were often built on the frontier of the steppe and the sown or on trade routes, frequently on the sites of existing cities, and had both practical and symbolic functions. The cities served as economic, administrative and religious centres, as well as being a means to settle, administer and control the nomads' sedentary subjects. Nomadic cities were also symbols of the authority and prestige of the ruler or dynasty that built them.<sup>6</sup> In the eastern steppe, prestige was often acquired by using Chinese urban models: this was certainly the case with Yuan Shangdu and Dadu. In Muslim Iran, nomadic cities of the Mongol period (e.g. Sulṭāniyya, Ghāzāniyya) often functioned as mausoleum cities, thereby highlighting the prestige of the ruling dynasty and its specific rulers.<sup>7</sup> In the Golden Horde, the Old and New Sarai both used Central Asian urban models rather than Russian, since their point of reference was the nomadic Turkic population, not the Russian sedentaries. Recent archaeological excavations in Mongolia suggest that even in this steppe heartland, the number and scope of nomadic cities founded by the Mongols and their predecessors is larger than was previously thought.<sup>8</sup>

Against this background, the relative lack of urban development in Mongol Central Asia calls for an explanation. This study aims to analyse the changing relationship between the Central Asian Mongol rulers and their subject cities from Chinggis Khan's conquest of Central Asia to the rise of Temür (1220-1370). Based on Muslim and Chinese literary sources and on archaeological evidence, the analysis is arranged chronologically, according to the sub-periods in the history of Mongol Central Asia. Each section refers first to the question of the capital and then to the general attitude of the Central Asian Mongols towards city life.

#### THE UNITED EMPIRE PERIOD (1220-60)

Central Asia was one of the first regions to be conquered by the Mongols, and was taken during Chinggis Khan's reign. The region had been under Qarakhitai rule for most of the century that preceded the Mongol invasion.

where he advises against building cities. See Tekin 1968, 263-73. See also Golden's chapter in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> Charleux 2006; Khazanov 2005; Haneda 1997; cf. Lin Hu 2010 for the Khitan cities.

<sup>7</sup> Haneda 1997; Charleux 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Waugh 2010; Huttel and Erdenebat 2009.

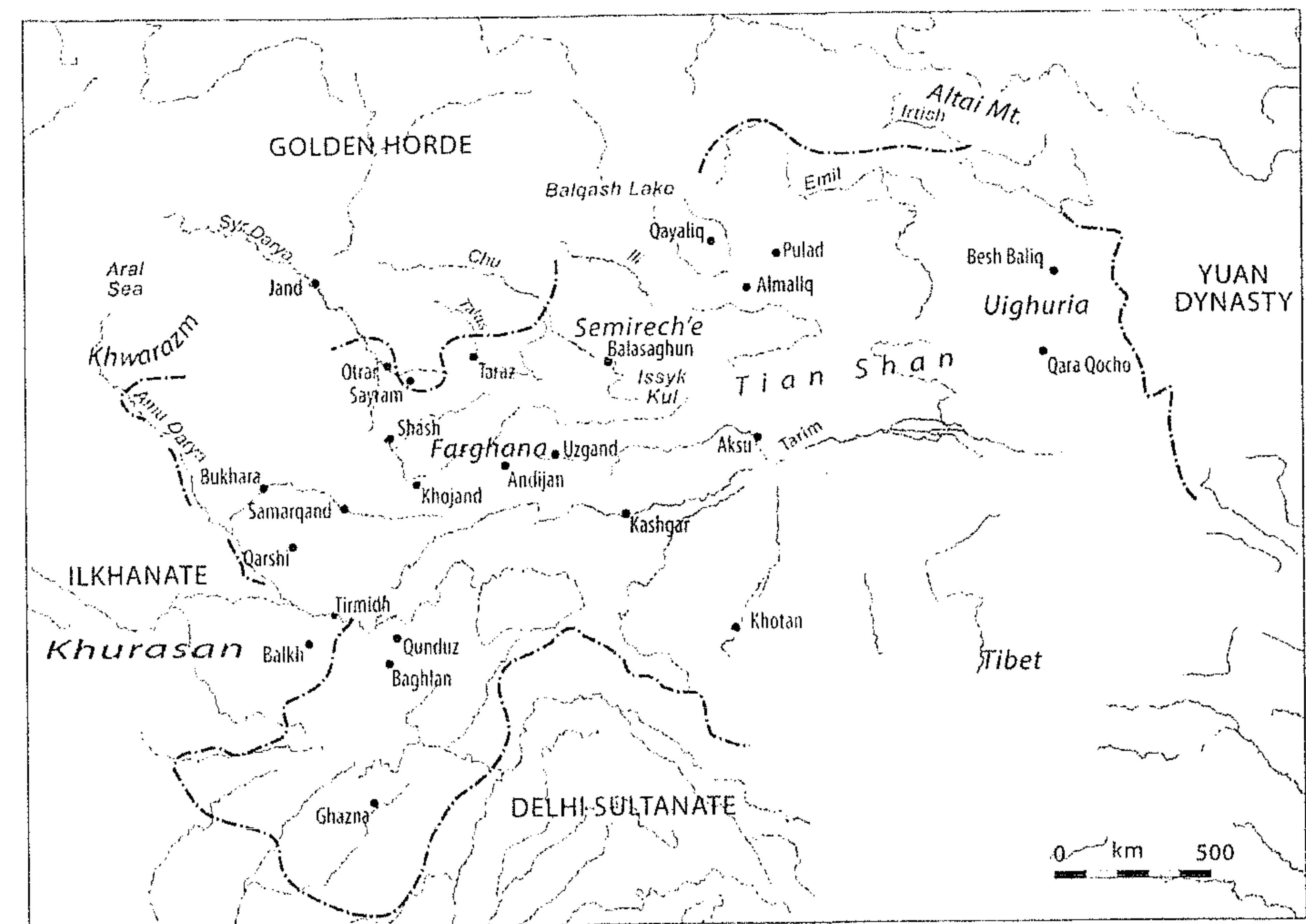


Fig. 1. The Chaghadaid Khanate ca. 1330.

It had enjoyed relative stability and prosperity for most of the second half of the twelfth century, and was a highly cosmopolitan and multilingual area. The eleventh to twelfth centuries were also characterised by growing urbanisation in Central Asia, with new towns rising mainly on the trade routes or at the meeting points of pastoral and agricultural regions.<sup>9</sup> Yet even at the height of urbanisation, the region lacked a unifying imperial tradition and a strong sedentary base like those that existed in Iran and China. In the early thirteenth century, the Qarakhitai' authority was considerably weakened due to the deterioration of the ruling family, the rebellion of their former vassal, Khwarazmshah Muḥammad, and the repercussions of Chinggis Khan's rise in Mongolia. All these caused the Qarakhitai to lose both Transoxania and Uighuristan (the Gaochang region), even before the Mongol conquest.<sup>10</sup>

The Mongol conquest of eastern Central Asia (Uighuristan, Semirech'e, the Tarim Basin, that is, the Qarakhitai's central territory and its eastern

<sup>9</sup> Biran 2005, 135-7 and the references there.

<sup>10</sup> Biran 2005, 60-90.



vassals, who were among Chinggis Khan's first non-Mongol allies) was surprisingly benign. However, the conquest of Transoxania, then under the Khwarazmshahs, was extremely harsh, resulting in the devastation of most major cities in the region. At the same time, it was a speedy conquest, completed in less than a year, and Transoxania's successful restoration had already begun in earnest in Chinggis Khan's time.<sup>11</sup>

When Chinggis Khan allocated appanages to his sons, Central Asia was divided between Chaghadaï and Ögödei. Chaghadaï received most of the territory, from Uighuristan to the Oxus, roughly equivalent to today's Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, parts of south Kazakhstan and southern Xinjiang, while Ögödei, Chinggis Khan's nominated heir, received a smaller adjacent region between Emil and Qobaq in Zungaria (north-east Xinjiang and south Kazakhstan), since as the future *qa'an* he was to inherit Chinggis's lands.<sup>12</sup>

Originally, the appanages given to Chinggis's sons were limited to pasturelands and did not include the cities, which remained under Chinggis's, and later, his heir's, administration. After he ascended the throne, Ögödei moved to Mongolia, establishing Qaraqorum and leaving his original appanage to his older son, Güyüg (who was mainly at the front during his father's reign). Chaghadaï remained in Central Asia, locating his summer pasture near Quyas and Almaliq (modern Yining/Kulja in Xinjiang, near the China-Kazakhstan border), and his winter pasture on the banks of the Ili.<sup>13</sup> The region of Almaliq was famous for its abundant pastures and hunting grounds and its multitude of animals.<sup>14</sup> It also had well developed agriculture, which impressed thirteenth-century Chinese travellers, and had been a station on the road from Central Asia to China, conveniently located on the way to the new Mongol capital at Qaraqorum.<sup>15</sup>

Almaliq became known as the headquarters of the Chaghadaï court, but the sources stress that Chaghadaï did not live in the city itself but outside it. Chaghadaï's court is called *ulug ev* (Turkish: 'the great house'/

*ordu*),<sup>16</sup> and Jamāl Qarshī, the only native writer of Mongol Central Asia, explains that Chaghadaï's *dār al-mulk* ('abode of royalty', i.e. capital) was called *Īl al-arghū*, and that the major city (*al-miṣr al-jāmi'*), Almaliq, was within it, thereby stressing the difference between the two places.<sup>17</sup> The continued existence of Almaliq's indigenous dynasty throughout the thirteenth century further suggests that the Chaghadaï centre was outside the city.<sup>18</sup>

Chaghadaï did his share of building in his appanage, establishing post stations throughout his realm, and connecting it to the domains of Ögödei and Batu, as well as erecting bridges and roads.<sup>19</sup> In the vicinity of Almaliq, he also created a hunting reserve (*shikārgāh*), surrounded by a wall of wood and clay with several gates, in which game could be trapped. He made pools to attract waterfowl, and even built a village (*dih*) named Quchlug (Turk.: 'lucky'), perhaps to accommodate the servants in charge of the reserve and the pools. Even so, Chaghadaï did not leave his mark on the city of Almaliq.<sup>20</sup> The Chaghadaï court, by contrast, enjoyed a prestigious position during Ögödei's reign, as the court of the oldest living son of Chinggis Khan and the *qa'an*'s main confidant, and even more so after Ögödei's death in 1241 (Chaghadaï died in 1244),<sup>21</sup> and was therefore frequented by travellers, traders, emissaries and scholars. The court contained the usual Mongol gathering of experts, including Chinese engineers, astronomers, physicians

<sup>16</sup> Juwaynī, 2: 241, 243, 272; 273, 3: 56, 98, trans. 504-5, 507, 536, 538, 586, 612.

<sup>17</sup> Qarshī, 138. For *al-miṣr al-jāmi'*, 'the all-embracing city' or urban centre of an agricultural hinterland, see Johansen 1981-2, 140-61. *Īl al-arghū* (from which comes the *nisba* Īl-arghū [Qarshī, 140]) is a mysterious term. Barthold has suggested that it was a general name for the whole province around Almaliq; another option is that it designated the court. *Arghu* may be a reference to *yarghu*, 'court', and so the *Īl arghu* may mean the family of the court (of justice), perhaps referring to Chaghadaï's position as the devout adherent of the *Yasa*?; or it may be a misreading for *ughruq*, 'grand family'.

<sup>18</sup> Qarshī, 140-5. The Almaliq dynasty was established in the early thirteenth century by an adventurous Qarluq who managed to establish himself as khan and received the recognition of the Qarakhitai ruler. In 1211, Ozar Khan submitted to Chinggis Khan. He was well received, and went back to his town, but was killed while hunting by Gūchūlūg, the Naiman prince who usurped the Qarakhitai throne. Chinggis Khan enthroned Ozar's son, who was then also married to a Jochid princess (a sister of Batu). The realm of Almaliq also included Pulād on the Ili and perhaps Balāsāghūn, the former Qarakhitai capital, as well (Qarshī, 136-7, 140-5; Juwaynī, 1: 57, trans. 75). Qarshī acquired his *nisba* (which means literally 'of the palace') because he was employed in the palace of the Almaliq dynasty. The dynasty continued till the late thirteenth century and was probably destroyed in the wars that followed Qaidu's death (see below).

<sup>19</sup> *Secret History*, § 279-80; Li Zhichang, trans. 85; Juwaynī, 1: 226-7, trans. 271-2.

<sup>20</sup> Juwaynī, 1: 21, 226-7, trans. 29, 271-2.

<sup>21</sup> Qarshī, 138; but cf. Rashīd al-Dīn 1: 544, trans. 2:376, according to whom he died before Ögödei.

<sup>11</sup> For the conquest and restoration of Central Asia, see Biran 2007, 47-70.

<sup>12</sup> For a general survey of Central Asia under Mongol rule, see Biran 2009, 44-66; for the United Empire period, see Liu Yingsheng 2006, 18-138.

<sup>13</sup> Juwaynī, 1: 272, trans. 271.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, 48; Juwaynī, 1: 21, 57-8, trans. 29, 76; but cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, 1: 627, trans. Thackston 2: 431-2; Mīrkhwānd 5: 63, who reports an unusual famine in Almaliq in spring 1264.

<sup>15</sup> Liu Yu, 13, trans. in Bretschneider 1888, 1: 127; Li Zhichang, chap. 1, 36b-37a, 40a-b; chap. 2, 1a-2b, trans. 88, 94, 105-6; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, 47; Waṣṣāf, 12; Juwaynī, 2: 217, 250, trans. 481, 513; Qarshī, 138.



and administrators, and Muslim physicians, poets, merchants and religious scholars—sometimes respected more for their miracles than for their religious learning.<sup>22</sup> The mobile court—not the city—thus provided the cultural capital for Chaghadaid and his heirs.

Almaliq, however, benefited considerably from being the nearest city to the Chaghadaid court, and from the ongoing traffic into it. By Chaghadaid's time, it seems already to have replaced Balāsāghūn, the former Qarakhitai capital, as Semirech'e's major base on the trade routes to China and Mongolia.<sup>23</sup> Apart from the economic benefit, it also gained culturally: at least one Chaghadaid courtier—the famous vizier Ḥabash 'Amīd, is said to have built a *khānaqāh* in Almaliq,<sup>24</sup> and the existence of a local Muslim dynasty there encouraged the immigration of Muslim scholars, mainly from other cities of Central Asia, and led to the establishment of a sophisticated scholarly community in this relatively new Islamic territory.<sup>25</sup> Mongol rule also resulted in a growing Chinese presence in Almaliq. While the Chinese traveller Chang De claimed in 1259 that they had a noticeable influence on the city's customs, Muslim sources, including Qarshī, completely ignored them.<sup>26</sup>

The Chaghadaid khans continued to dwell in the environs of Almaliq throughout the United Mongol Empire period, and some of them (Qara Hülegü, r. 1244-6, 1251; and Alghu, r. 1261-6 and see below) were buried in (or near?) the city.<sup>27</sup>

Another city mentioned in this period in relation to the Chaghadaids is Taraz (Ar.: Ṭarāz, Talās/Chin.: Talosi), which had been an important administrative and military centre during the Qarakhitai period.<sup>28</sup> Returning from the Mongol invasion of Europe in 1237-41, the Chaghadaid prince Büri, settled in Taraz a group of German miners who had been taken prisoner and who mined gold and made weapons for the Mongols. Taraz was a colony of subject

<sup>22</sup> Li Zhichang, trans. 97, 110, 116, 120; *Yuan shi*, chap. 151, 3581; Rashīd al-Dīn, trans. Boyle, 154; Juwaynī, 1: 227-32, trans. 272-6; Khwāndamīr, 44-6; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, 4ii: 903, 1106; 4.iv: 626.

<sup>23</sup> For Balāsāghūn's decline, see below. It was probably also due to the attack upon it by Qarakhitai troops after the city dwellers rebelled against them in 1211. See Biran 2005, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Qarshī, 140.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-5.

<sup>26</sup> Liu Yu (retrieving Chang De's account), 13; trans. in Bretschneider 1888, 1: 124, 127; Li Zhichang, chap. 1, 40a, trans. 92-3.

<sup>27</sup> Naṭanzī, 103-4. This fifteenth-century source is the only one that locates early Chaghadaid burial places.

<sup>28</sup> Biran 2005, 105 and *passim*.

artisans, like other cities the Mongols had established in Mongolia and northern China. By Möngke's time, however, the colony had been transferred east to Pulād (near Almaliq), and after that disappears from the sources.<sup>29</sup> Recently, Monik Kervran has suggested that the Taraz mausoleum, usually known as the tomb of 'Ā'isha Bibī, daughter of the (unidentified) amir of Taraz, is actually the mausoleum of Orghina Khātūn, the Chaghadaid regent who ruled the *ulus* in Möngke's time (1251-9).<sup>30</sup> If this is correct, we have here the first surviving Chaghadaid mausoleum, almost a century older than any other building ascribed to them and built in a rather unique 'baroque' style. Professor Kervran's argument, however, is highly conjectural, based only on the character of the ornaments in the mausoleum, which combine Muslim, Buddhist, Chinese and nomadic elements. She claims that such Chinese influence could have only started with the Mongols, and that some of the Chinese floral motifs are not attested in Iran and Central Asia before the mid-thirteenth century. Since she ascribes these Chinese motifs to the Liao dynasty (907-1125),<sup>31</sup> the monument could easily be a product of the Qarakhanid (ca. 955-1211) or Qarakhitai periods (1124-1218), when Taraz had been an important centre. Indeed a twelfth century dating for the monument is claimed both by local tradition and by Central Asian archaeologists.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from Almaliq and Taraz, Bukhara also benefited from the patronage of the Chinggisid family and its administrators, the polyglot Khwarazmian merchant Maḥmūd Yalawach (till 1238) and later his son, Mas'ūd Beg. By the 1250s, Möngke's wife had already built a college (known as *Madrassa-yi khānī*) in Bukhara and established the *waqf* of the Bākhazī family there, which was still active in the 1340s.<sup>33</sup> Around the same time, Mas'ūd Beg built the *Madrassa-yi mas'ūdiyya* in Bukhara.<sup>34</sup> Samarqand, alongside which Mas'ūd Beg entertained Hülegü in the 1250s,<sup>35</sup> seems also to have been restored.<sup>36</sup> For other, less central, Central Asian cities, how-

<sup>29</sup> Rubruck, 144-6.

<sup>30</sup> Kervran 2002, 5-32.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; Goriacheva and Peregudova 1995, 62-8. For Qarakhitai and Qarakhanid relations with China, see Biran 2005, 93-131 and *passim*; Biran 2001, 77-89; for Taraz under the Qarakhitai (who originated from the Liao), see n. 28. I have not found any textual evidence connecting Orghina to Taraz.

<sup>33</sup> Juwaynī, 1: 84-5, trans. 108; Sakhāwī, 2: 194-5. For Maḥmūd and Mas'ūd Beg, see Allsen 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Juwaynī, 1: 84-5, trans. 108; Qarshī, 139.

<sup>35</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, 1: 688, trans. 480.

<sup>36</sup> By the 1220s, Chinese travelers to Samarqand were already describing it as a peaceful and beautiful city full of gardens. See, for example, Yelü Chucai, *Zhan ran*, 6: 114-17; Li Zhichang, chap. 1, 36b-37a, trans. 88.



ever, Mongol rule was far less advantageous. Apart from the effects of the conquest, there were two reasons for this: first, the growing presence of nomads, especially in Mongol Semirech'e, and second, the continuous brain- and labour-drain caused by Mongol policies.

The decline of the Semirech'e cities (probably the fruit of the new urban development under the Qarakhitais) is attested by William of Rubruck, who went through the region in the 1250s. He reports that:

[T]here used to be sizable towns lying in the plain [leading from the Ili river north-eastward to Qayaliq], but they were for the most part completely destroyed so that the Tatars could pasture there, since the area affords very fine grazing lands.<sup>37</sup>

Chang De, who visited the region in 1259, a few years after Rubruck, documents only ruins, and not cities, in the territory "where the Khitans used to live", namely in the Qarakhitai central territory of Semirech'e.<sup>38</sup> As a region suitable for both pastoral nomadism and agriculture, the prevalent type of production in Semirech'e was determined by the number of nomads living on it and the priorities of its rulers. Under the Mongols, this meant partially reverting from urbanism to pasturing. The process probably involved turning the cities' agricultural hinterland into pasturelands and hence the disappearance of the hinterland necessary to sustain urban life, and some re-nomadisation of part of the Semirech'e population, or the migration of nomads (e.g. the Mongol troops), or both.

More generally, as one of the first regions to become part of the Mongol Empire, Central Asia's resources—both human and material—continued to be channelled for the benefit of the ever-expanding empire, often at the expense of local interests. Thus, numerous artisans were transferred eastward, mainly to Mongolia and northern China, to work for the Mongols.<sup>39</sup> The huge numbers involved—allegedly 30,000 artisans from Samarqand alone!<sup>40</sup>—suggest that this policy would have seriously damaged local industry. In parallel, the Mongols brought new populations into Central Asia: Chinese farmers, scholars and artisans; Tangut farmers; Khitan admin-

<sup>37</sup> Rubruck, 147.

<sup>38</sup> Liu Yu, 14, trans. 1:129. See also Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfi's description in *Nuzhat-al-qulūb* (1340s), which stresses the high number of nomads in Balāsāghūn. Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfi, 256, trans. 249.

<sup>39</sup> The Beshbaliq settlement, originally in the Chaghadaid realm, was probably transferred to northern China in 1283. See Allsen 1997, 41.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Juwaynī, 1: 95, 11, 101, trans. 13, 122, 128; *Yuan shi*, chap. 153, 3609; Allsen 1997, 35-6.

istrators; and German miners,<sup>41</sup> who were all located in existing cities (Bukhara, Samarqand, Almaliq, Taraz, Pulād), and were instrumental in repairing the damage caused in the course of the conquest. In some cases, the Mongols agreed to send back some of the artisans who had been transported, but this did not counter the original brain- and labour-drain.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, apart from forced transfers—and occasional flights—there was a considerable amount of voluntary migration due to the new opportunities opened up by Mongol rule. The Mongols needed experts to help them administer their growing empire and the educated, multilingual urban elite of Central Asia, already experienced in serving nomadic rulers, was highly qualified for this task. Many, therefore, chose to join the Mongol imperial venture and were dispersed across the empire. Thus, for instance, most of the famous Muslims who reached high positions in Yuan China, such as Sayyid Ajall, Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Raḥmān, originated in Transoxania, and Central Asian officials and scholars are attested in the other khanates as well. This constant emigration continued to characterise the region throughout the rule of the Chaghadaids.<sup>43</sup>

Despite certain—and quite successful—restoration attempts, some building activity and huge human mobility, the United Empire period was not beneficial to the urban sector in Central Asia. The political turmoil that followed did not improve the situation.

#### THE DISSOLUTION OF THE EMPIRE AND THE REIGN OF QAIDU (1260-1301)

When the Mongol empire disintegrated in the early 1260s, the importance of the cities, both as sources of wealth and as symbols of authority for the newly created khanates, increased dramatically. In Central Asia, however, internal turmoil hindered the restoration of city life. When the United Empire collapsed in 1260, the Central Asian *ulus*<sup>44</sup> did not have a good

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Rubruck, 144-6; Li Zhichang, chap. 1, 40a, trans. 92-3; Liu Yu, 13, trans. in Bretschneider 1888, 1:124, 127.

<sup>42</sup> Allsen 1997, 36-7; Allsen 1983, 248. The Mongols generally brought East Asian colonists to the west to repair the damage caused by their own military operations, while European and Muslim colonists were taken east as human booty to produce specialty industrial or agricultural goods. In other words, the Mongols sent East Asians to the west to increase the *quantity* of production and Westerners to the east to improve the *quality* of production (Allsen, forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> For migration and its consequences, see Biran 2007-8, 26-44; On Sayyid Ajall, Aḥmad and 'Abd al-Raḥmān, see the relevant articles in de Rachewiltz et al. 1993.

<sup>44</sup> The Mongolian term *ulus* refers to the descendants of a Mongol prince or his subjects, hence people and state (see Doerfer 1963-75, 1: 175-8). It is used below to refer to the territory and people under the control of Chinggis Khan's descendants.



starting point. Both were severely damaged by the transition of the qa'anate from the Ögödeids to the Toluids in 1251. The Ögödeid *ulus* was dissolved, and most of its senior members eliminated. The ranks of its former supporters, the Chaghadaids, were also considerably thinned out, and, while the Chaghadaid *ulus* was not dissolved, much of the Chaghadaids' original appanage was taken over by the Golden Horde.<sup>45</sup> Both *ulus* tried to exploit the dissolution of the empire in order to restore their fortunes. This was first done by the Chaghadaid Khan Alghu (r. 1261-6), who, shifting his loyalty from Ariq Böke to Qubilai, managed to take over the original Chaghadaid realm and to extend it at the expense of the Golden Horde and the Ögödeids. However, already during his reign, and especially afterwards, the Chaghadaids were challenged by the Ögödeid Qaidu, who strove to revive the Ögödeid cause. From 1271 until his death in 1301, Qaidu was the Chaghadaids' overlord. Chaghadaid attempts to resist his authority continued till 1282, when he enthroned Du'a as the Chaghadaid khan, and the two cooperated until Qaidu's death. Even after the internal struggle in Central Asia had calmed down, however, the combination of Qaidu's policies, the khanate's central location and the Chaghadaids' territorial ambitions led to almost constant tension—and frequent wars—throughout this period between the Chaghadaids, Yuan China and the Ilkhanate.<sup>46</sup>

During Qaidu's time, Central Asia did not have a specific capital city. The *Yuan shi*, the official history of the Yuan dynasty, describes Almaliq, formerly Alghu's base, as part of Qaidu's appanage and notes that his mobile encampment (*xingying* 行營) was there.<sup>47</sup> Almaliq, on the other hand, is hardly referred to during Qaidu's reign. Instead, the city of Taraz is mentioned more frequently as Qaidu's base: the 1269 *quriltai*, in which Qaidu first made peace with the Chaghadaid Khan Baraq (r. 1266-71), took place in the environs of Taraz, as did Qaidu's enthronement in 1271, and his meeting with the celebrated Rabban Sauma in ca. 1274/5.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Qaidu's

*sira ordu* (Mo.: 'yellow *ordu*') is said to have been located there.<sup>49</sup> The term *sira ordu* described the khan's residence in the reigns of Ögödei and Güyüg. It consisted mainly of huge lavish tents, though sometimes, as in the case of Qubilai's Shangdu, it also included more permanent buildings.<sup>50</sup> Whatever Qaidu's *sira ordu* was, however, it was plundered and burned during the princes' wars after his death.<sup>51</sup>

Taraz was located in the midst of Qaidu's realm, alongside abundant pastures, and was an important summer pasture for the Chaghadaids for at least two decades afterwards.<sup>52</sup> Qaidu's winter pasture was probably between the Ili and the Chu rivers, and he was buried in the mountains of that region. His burial place is described by Waṣṣāf as "the place of [his] throne" (*takhtgāh-i Qaydū*),<sup>53</sup> but Qaidu was mainly on the move throughout his reign, often fighting on the Yuan border or in Mongolia; that is to say, his court was mobile. This court included the typical Mongol collection of multi-ethnic experts: Chinese and Muslim physicians; Muslim astronomers; Muslim scholars and Chinese military experts.<sup>54</sup> Qaidu's cultural capital derived from his military success as well as from this court, not from his connection to a specific city.

We have no indication of where Du'a resided. Some of the lesser Chaghdaid khans who operated under Qaidu are said to have been buried in Uzgand (probably the Uzgand on the Syr Darya, where the Qarakhitai's treasury was located and not Uzgand in Farghāna), but there is no other indication of the city's importance during this period, nor are there any known remains of mausoleums.<sup>55</sup>

As for the general urban situation under Qaidu, he was well aware of the importance of the sedentary areas for the wealth of his kingdom, and of the danger of their being trampled under horses' hooves. This reasoning brought him in 1269 to make peace with the Chaghadaid Khan Baraq, and he insisted that the princes would henceforth live only in the mountains and deserts and not in the cities, would not graze their cattle in cultivated areas and would not make excessive demands on their subjects. The sedentary area

<sup>45</sup> See Biran 1997, 14-17; Allsen 1987, 30-4.

<sup>46</sup> See Biran 1997, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> *Yuan shi*, chap. 63, 1569; Arigh Boke took Almaliq from Alghu in 1263; Qaidu took it over after Arigh Boke's surrender and Alghu's death, but in 1268 had to withdraw westwards, leaving the city to Qubilai's forces. Yuan troops held the city till at least 1276, when the princes escorting Qubilai's son, Nomoghan, who had been sent to Almaliq to lead the struggle against Qaidu, rebelled against him, thereby enabling Qaidu to retake the city. See Biran 1997, 20-3, 37-41.

<sup>48</sup> Pelliot 1959-63, 1: 127-8; Qarshī, 138; Rashīd al-Dīn, 2:748, trans. 3: 521; Rabban Sauma, trans. 59.

<sup>49</sup> Qāshānī, 37, 210, 211 (*sira ordu*); 53; Waṣṣāf, 517, adapt. Āyatī, 291 (*sira ordu*).

<sup>50</sup> Masuya 2002, 78-9, and her chapter in this volume

<sup>51</sup> Biran 1997, 97.

<sup>52</sup> Waṣṣāf, 517; Qāshānī, 210-11, 213.

<sup>53</sup> Waṣṣāf, 452, adapt. Āyatī, 266 (where it is translated as "capital"); Rashīd al-Dīn, trans. Boyle, 27 n. 74; cf. Qāshānī, 210-11, where Esen Boqa's winter pasture is said to be near the Issyk Kul, while his summer pasture was in Taraz.

<sup>54</sup> Qarshī, 138, 143-4; Mirkhwānd, 5: 218; Biran 1997, 97.

<sup>55</sup> Naṭanzī, 104-5.



was entrusted to Mas'ūd Beg, who was ordered to restore it to prosperity.<sup>56</sup> These good intentions soon evaporated, however, due to the Chaghadaids' more pressing political and economic interests, which resulted in their regarding the cities as an easy source of wealth to be plundered. These interests led, among others, to Baraq's invasion of Khurasan in 1270 and to Abaqa's retaliatory expedition to Bukhara in 1273, which reduced the city to ashes. This and the subsequent Ögödeid-Chaghadaid struggles resulted in another huge wave of migration by the urban elite, who left the Chaghadaid realm and found new homes in the Ilkhanate, Mamluk Egypt, the Delhi Sultanate, the Golden Horde and Yuan China.<sup>57</sup> As soon as Qaidu stabilised his rule, however, he started to restore the cities, which were again entrusted to Mas'ūd Beg and later to his sons, who served Qaidu (and his son Chapar) up to the early fourteenth century. By the end of the thirteenth century, numismatic and literary evidence attests to the return of prosperity to the Central Asian cities, and the restoration of the monetary economy, agriculture and scholarly life.<sup>58</sup> In the early 1280s, Qaidu and Du'a also established a new city, Andijān, in Farghāna.<sup>59</sup> As none of the khans settled there, the city must have been created solely for the (mostly commercial) needs of the Mongols' subject population. Its successful location and future prosperity suggest that the khans (or their councillors) were well acquainted with the requirements of the sedentary population. While Andijān continued to exist, most other achievements of the late thirteenth century perished during the princes' struggles that followed Qaidu's death.

While Qaidu was well aware of the economic function of the cities, he did not choose to use the city as a source of legitimacy, nor did the Central Asian Mongols establish under him a capital equivalent to those of the other khanates. This might have been due to the relatively limited resources of Central Asia or to its less centralistic political culture, but the main reason seems to have been the uneasy existence of two *ulus*, Chaghadaid and Ögödeid, on the same territory. Ögödei's name was connected to Qaraqorum, a territory that the Central Asian Mongols did not hold for most of Qaidu's reign, nor was the Great Khan willing to give it up easily.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, 2: 749; trans. 3: 522; Waṣṣāf, 69, adapt. Āyatī, 39; Mīrkhwānd, 5: 266-8; Biran 1997, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Biran 2007-8[9], 41; Muminov 2003, 30-4; for the battle and its consequences, see Biran 2002.

<sup>58</sup> Biran 1997, 98-103.

<sup>59</sup> Naṭanzī, 106; Ḥamd-Allāh Mustawfī, 246, trans. 239; Biran 1997, 104-5.

<sup>60</sup> For Qaidu's only attempt to attack Qaraqorum and Qubilai's response, see Biran 1997, 47-8.

Emil, which was part of Qaidu's realm, was connected to Güyüg, Ögödei's son and successor, but Qaidu was not a descendant of Güyüg, and the city's location (on the eastern fringes of Qaidu's realm) was not ideal for a capital. Any strategically-located capital would have had to be founded on the Chaghadaids' appanage (which constituted the main part of Qaidu's realm), thus stressing Qaidu's primacy over them. The mere founding of such a capital, therefore, could have alienated the Chaghadaids and destroyed the delicate balance between the two *ulus*. Qaidu's position as the Chaghadaid overlord was somewhat of an anomaly in the Mongol world, and its legitimacy was questioned during and after his reign;<sup>61</sup> just as he was unable to dissolve the Chaghadaid army, Qaidu must have chosen not to create a capital city that would be too obvious a symbol of his authority.

#### THE RETURN OF THE CHAGHADAIDS (1301-47)

After Qaidu's death, the Chaghadaids regained ascendancy in Central Asia and made peace with the Yuan, but their attempts to overcome the Ögödeids undermined the khanate's stability. This led to the ultimate dissolution of the Ögödeid *ulus* (whose last ruler, Qaidu's son Chapar, surrendered to the Yuan in 1310) and, ironically, to another round of war between the Chaghadaids and the Yuan during most of the 1310s. The heyday of the Chaghadaids had been under Kebek Khan (r. 1320-7), who made peace with the Yuan, moved his residence to Transoxania, built a new capital city, Qarshī, in the Kashkadarya valley (see below), and reorganised the khanate's internal administration. After the reign of Kebek's Muslim brother, Tarmashirin (r. 1331-4), who also resided in Transoxania, the tension between the western and eastern parts of the khanate became more apparent, and the Chaghadaids entered into a civil war during which even the identity of the ruling khan was not always known. It was in this period that closer coexistence between nomads and sedentary people began to develop, at least in Transoxania.<sup>62</sup>

When the Chaghadaids resumed power after Qaidu's death, Almaliq (or rather its environs) returned to the limelight as a symbol of Chaghadaid independence: it was near Almaliq that the Chaghadaid khan, Du'a, summoned in 1307 a *quriltai* that deposed Qaidu's son, Chapar, and divided the Ögödeid *ulus* between the descendants of Qaidu and Güyüg; Du'a's son,

<sup>61</sup> For the Chaghadaids' status in Qaidu's state, see Biran 1997, 79-80 and *passim*.

<sup>62</sup> Biran 2009, 54-9; Liu Yingsheng 2005; Liu Yingsheng 2006, 359-433.



Könchek (r. 1307-8), was enthroned near Almaliq and most future Chaghadaid khans resided beside it or at least visited the place (and Tarmashirin's neglect to do so was one of the reasons for his deposition).<sup>63</sup> The disappearance of the local dynasty, probably in the post-Qaidu wars,<sup>64</sup> also facilitated the appropriation of the city by the Chaghadaids. In 1330, the archbishop of Sultāniyya described the Chaghadaid khan as emperor of Almaliq; Christians who sought the khan's favour settled in the city; and in 1340 a Christian missionary explicitly referred to Almaliq as the Chaghadaid capital.<sup>65</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, visiting the Chaghadaid realm in 1333, also noted that Almaliq was the Chaghadaid "abode of royalty" (*dār al-mulk*).<sup>66</sup> Almaliq remained a major stopping place on the trade routes from Europe and the Middle East to China;<sup>67</sup> in the mid 1320s a bishopric was established in the city and missionaries populated it and built churches there during the reigns of Iljigidei (r. 1327-30) and Changshi (r. 1335-8).<sup>68</sup> The Christian missionaries attributed the permission to build churches to the khans' religious zeal (in Changshi's case, a result of his son's healing by Christian doctors).<sup>69</sup> Both khans, however, are also described as adherents of Tibetan Buddhism,<sup>70</sup> so one cannot make too much of their Christian affiliation. Religious buildings, on the other hand, were an integral part of other Mongol cities (Qaraqorum is the most notable example).<sup>71</sup> Apart from these churches, there is no evidence for any Chaghadaid—or other—building in or near Almaliq that was meant to enhance its symbolic function, though this may simply be because of the lack of sources. Whatever was built, however, certainly suffered from the khanate's instability after 1334 (the churches, for instance, were destroyed by 'Alī Sultān, an ephemeral Ögödeid Muslim khan who coveted the Chaghadaid throne around 1339-40),<sup>72</sup> and the epidemics that struck the region in the late 1330s.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>63</sup> E.g. Qāshānī, 39-40 (Du'a in Almaliq; for the date, see Biran 1997, 77), 53 (Könchek's enthronement); Naṭanzī, 107 (Kebek in Almalik); Yule 1967, 3: 89 (Iljigidei).

<sup>64</sup> Shabānkāra'i, 231.

<sup>65</sup> Yule 1967, 3: 89, 212-13.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 3: 41, trans. Gibb 3: 561.

<sup>67</sup> Yule 1967, 3: 31, 87, 148, 212; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 3: 17-18, trans. Gibb 3: 548.

<sup>68</sup> Golubovich, 4: 252; Yule 1967, 3: 212-13; Moule 1917, 18; Jordanus, 54. In 1329, a bishopric was also established in Samarqand.

<sup>69</sup> Yule 1967, 3: 31.

<sup>70</sup> Biran 2007-8, 37.

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. Rubruck's description of Qaraqorum (Rubruck, 221, 251).

<sup>72</sup> Yule 1967, 3: 212-13.

<sup>73</sup> Biran 2009, 59.

Simultaneously with the rise of Almaliq, this period saw the establishment of a new centre for Chaghadaid rule in its western realm, Transoxania, in the city of Qarshī (Mo. 'palace'). Qarshī was founded by Kebek Khan (r. 1320-7), who had gained a reputation for being a just khan who protected the interests of his sedentary subjects. Although Kebek continued to visit Almaliq,<sup>74</sup> he seems to have built Qarshī as a second, western capital, thereby following the pattern of multiple capitals characteristic of many nomadic empires.<sup>75</sup> Qarshī's location and layout suggest that the main reasons for its founding were political.

Kebek built Qarshī in his winter pastures and next to good hunting grounds,<sup>76</sup> but this is the first time a Chaghadaid centre is located not on the open steppes but among Transoxania's river valleys and oases. Kebek built it at the time of or before his accession to the Chaghadaid throne. The region had been his centre of power in the decade that preceded his enthronement, when he served as commander of the Chaghadaid western territories in Transoxania and Farghāna on behalf of his brother, the reigning khan, Esen Boqa (r. ca. 1310-19), who was residing on "the borders of Kīsh and Nakhshab".<sup>77</sup> It was there, 6-7 km south-east of the major town of the Kashkadarya valley, Nakhshab (also called Nasaf), that Kebek established the fortress residence that became his capital. Qarshī's location might have reflected the new orientation of Chaghadaid expansion—into Khurasan and India, not into China, with which Kebek established peace in 1323. It might have also indicated Kebek's attempt to secure a centre of power to compete with that of his eastern amirs, who opposed his pro-Yuan policies.<sup>78</sup>

The ruins of Qarshī are now situated in the old part of Nasaf, not far from the banks of the Kashkadarya River. Surveyed by Masson in 1966 and by Raimkulov and Sultonova in the early 2000s, it was described as being square, measuring 630 m by 630 m, with a total area about 40 hectares. The city was bounded by a strong wall, 4.5 m thick, surrounded by a deep defensive ditch, 8-10 m wide and 3.5-4 m deep, and had four gates.<sup>79</sup> The original layout of the city (before Timurid additions) included one central

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Naṭanzī, 107; Qāshānī, 148-9; Waṣṣāf, 519, adapt. Āyatī 294.

<sup>75</sup> Notable examples are Yuan Shangdu and Dadu, as well as the five Liao capitals and see the references in note 2.

<sup>76</sup> Yazdī, fol. 13b; Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, 38, 49.

<sup>77</sup> Qāshānī, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Liu Yingsheng 2005, 351-3.

<sup>79</sup> Masson 1973, 72; Raimkulov and Sultonova 2005, 217; on its outer front walls were semicircular towers, used as buttresses.



fortress/palace surrounded by an open space designed for the erection of tents. This layout is typical of Mongolian and south Siberian cities from the Xiongnu period onwards.<sup>80</sup>

Apart from its political functions, Qarshī is said to have been the burial place of several Chaghadaid khans, including Esen Boqa and Kebek,<sup>81</sup> although no mausoleums are visible. There is no indication that Qarshī was the centre of Kebek's administration: it does not figure much among Chaghadaid mints, for example,<sup>82</sup> nor is it clear whether Qarshī served future Chaghadaid khans: Kebek's immediate successors returned to Almaliq.<sup>83</sup> If Qarshī was built as a visible sign of Kebek's dominion over the region, it did not succeed in impressing sedentary visitors: Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, the only source I have read that refers to it explicitly as the Chaghadaid capital, says that the city was "nothing special", neither in the past nor in (his) present (1330-40s).<sup>84</sup> Indeed, in 1333 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa ignored it completely, describing Nakhshab as a small town, unaware of its central position in the Chaghadaid realm, even though he met the khan, Tarmashirin, in its vicinity.<sup>85</sup> However, the mere founding of Qarshī indicates a certain development in Chaghadaid urban concepts. Furthermore, Central Asia's nomadic population might have been more impressed by Qarshī than the sedentary visitors referred to above, since the building of such fortresses was continued by at least one other Chaghadaid khan: Qazan Khan (r. ca. 1343-7) founded Zanjir Sarai (Turk.: 'the stony palace', but Persian: Zanjīr Sarāy: 'the chain palace'), two days' journey from Qarshī on the road to Bukhara. The remnants of Zanjir Sarai, also excavated by Raimkulov and Sultonova, reveals a layout similar to that of Qarshī (namely a wall inside which there is a central fortress surrounded by an open space designed for tents), although smaller. Around it, there is evidence of several other settlements, some of them of rural character.<sup>86</sup> Kebek's model thus developed into a more complex urban settlement. The decision to build Zanjir Sarai instead of residing in Qarshī suggests that the city-fortresses

had strong personal connections for the khans who built them. Since none of the khans of this period ruled more than a few years, this may explain why such fortresses did not become capital cities equivalent to those of other Mongol khanates, such as Sulṭāniyya.

The building of fortresses such as Qarshī and Zanjir Sarai did not mean that the Chaghadaids ceased to be nomads. In Qarshī's case, al-'Umarī explicitly says, "They call it their abode of royalty (*qā'idat al-mulk*) although they do not reside in houses or use walls."<sup>87</sup> And Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who had met Kebek's brother, Tarmashirin Khan (r. 1331-34), near Qarshī in 1333, asserted that the khan resided in his *ordu*-tent (that is, he maintained a mobile court), in which he received guests, directed the administration, commanded his amirs, and performed his prayers in the *ordu*'s mosque. This well-known description is the only one we have of the Chaghadaid *ordu*: the tent, protected by the khan's guard, was lavishly decorated with silken cloth of gold, and the khan sat in the middle of it on a throne covered with golden brocade, wearing a jewelled crown on his head. The principal amirs sat on chairs to the right and left of the khan, and in front of him were "the sons of the kings", perhaps hostages taken from local ruling families. At the tent's doorway stood the four heads of the khan's administration: his deputy, the vizier, the chamberlain and the seal keeper, who with him received guests such as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.<sup>88</sup> Past and future Chaghadaid courts probably retained a similar mobile character, reminiscent of the Great Khans' customs, and were not necessarily located in cities.

Yet the mere building of compounds such as Qarshī and Zanjir Sarai suggests a growing rapprochement between the Chaghadaid Mongols and their sedentary subjects. Another indication of such improved relations is Kebek's reforms, which reshaped the khanate's administration. These included the restoration (only partially successful) of devastated cities such as Balkh; limiting the commanders' ability to oppress their subjects; comprehensive monetary reform; and the division of the appanage into *tümens* (Mo. 'ten thousand'), an area that would supply revenues sufficient for supporting one *tümen* of troops.<sup>89</sup> While the *tümen* system might have had its roots in Qaidu's time,<sup>90</sup> the commanders' authority under Kebek was far greater, since there is no indication of a special official responsible for the sedentary areas and answerable to the khan, as was the case under

<sup>80</sup> Raimkulov and Sultonova 2005, 218-19; Rogers, Ulambayar and Gallon 2005, 801-18.

<sup>81</sup> Naṭanzī, 107.

<sup>82</sup> Petrov 2009, 301-4.

<sup>83</sup> Yule 1967, 3: 89; only Nakhshab, not Qarshī, is shown on the Yuan map of 1331 (Bretschneider 1888, 2: 61)

<sup>84</sup> See Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, 49, whose information is based on the oral evidence of people who visited the cities.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 3: 28-9, trans. Gibb 3: 555. In both cases, the evidence is from the post-Kebek period.

<sup>86</sup> Raimkulov and Sultonova 2005, 217-22.

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, 49.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 3: 33-8, trans. Gibb 3: 557-9.

<sup>89</sup> On Kebek's reforms, see Biran 2009, 57; Barthold 1956-62, 1: 52.

<sup>90</sup> Biran 1997, 99, 106.



