

ISHAYAHU LANDA

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

Oirats in the Ilkhanate and the Mamluk Sultanate in the Thirteenth to the Early Fifteenth Centuries: Two Cases of Assimilation into the Muslim Environment

Introduction

One of the main characteristics and consequences of the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century were the wide-ranging mass migrations across the Eurasian terrain, resulting in the intermingling of different cultures and ethnic groups. With regard to the migration of tribal units, one of the most interesting questions is how they adapted to the changing conditions as they moved out of their usual climatic, cultural and ethnic habitats. This paper investigates the migration and adaptation of one specific tribe, the Oirats, to the Islamic environment of western Asia and Egypt, where it was dispersed throughout the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. Two different groups of the Oirats will be discussed, one located mainly in Khorasan (but also in Iraq in the mid-fourteenth century), and another which moved to the Mamluk Sultanate in the late thirteenth century. In a longer perspective, the outcome was the same—the Islamization and gradual assimilation to the surrounding environment. However, as will be shown, different strata of the Oirat tribe (tribal nobility vs. the broader tribal masses) assimilated in various periods in different ways and at different rates, depending on the various factors functioning as the triggers for these processes in the Ilkhanate realm and in the Mamluk Sultanate.

The Oirat tribe originated from the border zone between the steppe and the forest southwest of Lake Baikal. Despite the attempts of the tribe to withstand Chinggis Khan before the *quriltai* of 1206, it submitted peacefully to his son Jochi around 1207.¹ Due to its significant numerical strength and the strategic importance of the areas controlled by the tribe, Chinggis Khan warmly accepted its

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013) / ERC Grant Agreement 312397. The first version of this paper was presented at the *Second Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies*, Liège University, 25–28 June, 2015. I would like to thank my teachers, Prof. Michal Biran and Prof. Reuven Amitai, for their help during the preparation of this paper, an anonymous reviewer for multiple important remarks and corrections, which were of great help, and my wife Sara, who always found time to hear more about Oirat history.

¹See my “Imperial Sons-in-law on the Move: Oyirad and Qonggirad Dispersion in Mongol Eurasia,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 22 (2016): 161–98, for a detailed discussion of Oirat origins, locations and general characteristics in the late twelfth–early thirteenth centuries.



©2016 by Ishayahu Landa.

DOI: [10.6082/M1B27SG2](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1B27SG2). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1B27SG2>)

DOI of Vol. XIX: [10.6082/M1HH6H5C](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1HH6H5C). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/Y9V3-8H75> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

submission. Its nobility was connected to the Golden lineage through marriages and about four thousand Oirats were brought into the right wing of the Khan's army.² Unlike those tribes that did not submit peacefully and were dispersed among other military units, the Oirats were permitted to remain in their areas under the rule of their own commanders. Due to their connections to the Chinggisid clan, over time the representatives of Oirat elite families, followed in most cases by the broader masses of tribesmen, spread all over Mongol Eurasia. Around the mid-thirteenth century, the Oirat sons-in-law of the Chinggisids and the Oirat princesses, along with groups of Oirat tribesmen, were located in China, Mongolia, and the Ilkhanate. It is the last area which is of interest here. As the Persian sources were mainly interested in the nobility, the destinies of the Oirat masses, the existence of which one can trace only up to a very limited point, remain rather unclear. Luckily, the Mamluk chronicles provide us an opportunity to have a look at the (perhaps similar) assimilation processes of Oirat tribesmen in the Mamluk Sultanate.

Before introducing the historical data, it is necessary to stress a few points that have been neglected by researchers until now. First, the importance of the imperial sons-in-law (*güregens*) for the throne, as opposed to the *nökers* (personal companions of the khan) or the members of the royal household (*keshig*), was in general based mainly on the military power supplied to the ruling clan through the mechanism of matrimonial relations with the tribal unit, and less on the personal loyalty of the specific son-in-law to a specific member of the Golden *urugh* (lineage).³ Therefore, in most cases the tight connections between the Oirat tribe and the Chinggisids point indirectly to the presence of broader military units behind the *güregens*. It would be a mistake to overlook this fact, especially in the context of the tight Ilkhanid connections with the Oirats. Another overlooked fact is that the clan was of greater importance for Ilkhanid matrimonial politics than the tribe *per se*. As will be shown below, the Oirat careers and their loyalty to the Ilkhans were connected mainly to their own clan, not to the ethnic group as such, a fact seen especially clearly in the chaotic years after the collapse of the Ilkhanate in 1335. Additionally, analysis of the Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate also relativizes somewhat the importance of *ʿasabīyah*, an important term in

²See *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. and trans. Igor de Rachewiltz (Leiden, 2004), 1:163–65, §239 (hereafter cited as *SH*); Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami' u't-tawarikh = Compendium of chronicles*, trans. and comm. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, 1998), 1:55–56 (hereafter cited as *JT*); and my "Oyirad and Qonggirad" for the discussion of the first years of the Oirat relations with the Chinggisids.

³On the general importance of the imperial sons-in-law of the Golden *urugh* in the political architecture of Chinggisid Eurasia, a topic rather neglected, see my "Oyirad and Qonggirad."



Ibn Khaldūn's understanding of the ethnic dimension of the history of nomadic peoples.⁴

The first part of this article discusses the dispersion and partial assimilation of the tribesmen into areas of Greater Iran and later into the Mamluk Sultanate during the thirteenth century, while the second part concentrates on the processes of the Oirats' political, cultural and religious assimilation in these areas toward the early fifteenth century. It will be shown that as far as can be seen from the case of the upper stratum of the tribal nobility, the Oirats in the Ilkhanate preserved their identity and their homogeneity as long as they preserved their relation of symbiotic dependence (and notwithstanding the Islamization that might already have happened) with the ruling clan. The collapse of Ilkhanid rule in 1335 went hand in hand with the collapse of power of the Oirat elite, but the tribe continued to appear in the sources until at least the early fifteenth century, although never reaching the same heights of power as in the Ilkhanid period. The conversion to Islam of the Oirats in the Ilkhanate was a rather less relevant (if not negligible) factor in their subsequent assimilation (and certainly so until 1335–36). The situation with the Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate was quite different, as the Oirat leadership was purged very quickly and the tribal mass was continuously exposed to the impacts of the assimilation processes, which led to their absorption into the host (Islamic) society. In this case the conversion to Islam was of primary importance in the loss of Oirat identity. However, despite all these processes, one can trace the Oirats in Syria until the mid-fourteenth century and in Cairo to at least the early fifteenth century. The reasons for this lie in the internal political processes of the Sultanate as well as characteristics of the tribesmen themselves, such as their beauty.⁵

Part I. 1230s–1299

The Oirats in Greater Iran

The presence of the Oirats in Western Asia can be seen as early as the late 1230s and early 1240s, when Arghun Aqa, the famous Oirat bureaucrat, was sent by

⁴One of the keynotes of Ibn Khaldūn's worldview was the idea of the importance of *ʿasabīyah*, the mechanism of social cohesion based on blood or ethnic closeness. "Group feeling results only from (blood) relationship or something corresponding to it...this is a natural urge in man, for as long as there have been human beings" (Walī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. F. Rosenthal [London, 1958], 1:264). As the following discussion shows, the importance of *ʿasabīyah* should not be exaggerated.

⁵See below.



the court in Qaraqorum to govern the conquered areas in the west.⁶ However, nothing is known about mass migrations of the Oirats to Iran until the western campaign of Hülegü Khan (1255–65). The Oirat military unit under the command of Buqa Temür, a grandson of Chinggis Khan and the son of Törelchi, son of the Oirat Qutuqa Beqi (an imperial son-in-law), was included into the right wing of the Khan's army, representing the interests of his mother Checheyigen, daughter of Chinggis Khan.⁷ Buqa Temür actively participated in the Mongol campaigns against the Ismailis and in the conquest of Baghdad.⁸ During the first two gen-

⁶Arghun Aqa, one of the most prominent and well-known Mongol bureaucrats of Mongol Eurasia, came to Greater Iran in the early 1240s, sent by the then regent of the empire, Töregene Khatun, widow of Ögedei Khan, to govern the western areas of the Mongol realm. Waṣṣāf clarifies that the areas under his control included Khorasan, Transoxania, Gurgistan, Sistān, Kerman, Fars, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Rum (*Geschichte Waṣṣāf's: Persisch herausgegeben und Deutsch übersetzt von Hammer-Purgstall*, ed. Sibylle Wentker and Klaus Wundsam [Vienna, 2012], 3:131). His headquarters were in Tūs in Khorasan, and his personal estates were most probably in the famous meadow of Rādkān nearby. Indeed, Minorsky states that Arghun Aqa died at Rādkān of Tūs, and suggests that Arghun Aqa's own estates were in that district (Vladimir Minorsky, "Tūs," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 10:743). For more about him see Peter Jackson, "Arghun Aqa," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2 (1986): 401–2; Georg Lane, "Arghun Aqa: Mongol Bureaucrat," *Iranian Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999): 459–82. About his family see my "New Light on Early Mongol Islamization: The Case of Arghun Aqa's Family" (forthcoming, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*).

⁷'Alā' al-Dīn 'Atā Malik Juvaynī, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, trans. John A. Boyle (Seattle, 1997), 607–8. *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* calls him "amīr bas mu'tabar wa mu'zam" ("extremely respected and very powerful commander"), locating him as the fifth in the list of Hülegü Khan's commanders (Yihao Qiu, *Wuzu pu" yu Yilihanguo shi—"Wuzu pu" "Yilihangshixi" yizhu yu yanjiu* [Beijing, 2013], 188—hereafter *SP*). *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* calls him a "great, respected amir," locating him in the first rank of Hülegü Khan's commanders (*Mu'izz al-Ansāb*, trans. Sh. Kh. Vohidov [Almaty, 2006], 75—hereafter cited as *MA*). The status of the regiment under his command is not clear, but it was presumably not less than a *tümen*. At the same time, a contemporary account of the conquest by [pseudo] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī does not mention Buqa Temür (cf. Hend Gilli-Elewy, "Al-Ḥawādīṭ al-ġāmi'a: A Contemporary Account of the Mongol Conquest of Baghdad, 656/1258," *Arabica* 58, no. 5 [2011]: 353–71). In general, the practice of Mongol rulers sending some military units in order to protect their interests during the ongoing campaigns was typical for the expansion period of Mongol rule in Eurasia.

⁸Buqa Temür is mentioned in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* in the section concerning the war against the Ismailis as having moved within the right wing of the army (*JT*, 2:483). He is also listed as one of the few commanders who expressed a positive attitude towards the prolongation of the siege of the Ismaili fortress Maymun Diz in the late autumn of 1256 (*JT*, 2:484). Buqa Temür's important role in the conquest of Baghdad is also stressed. Together with Baiju Noyan and Su'unchaq Noyan, he is known to have gained control of the western side of Baghdad on the eve of Saturday, January 22, a few days after the siege had begun (*JT*, 2:495). After February 1, Buqa Temür was ordered to patrol the water routes from the city towards Madayin and Basra with a *tümen* of soldiers in order to prevent the enemies from escaping (*JT*, 2:496). According to Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī, the Ajami Tower was seized on February 6 (John A. Boyle, "The Death of the Last 'Abbāsīd Caliph: A Contemporary Muslim Account," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6 [1961]: 158). Indeed, his



erations of Hülegüid rule, his clan was connected matrimonially with the Golden lineage: both his daughters married Hülegü Khan and his son Jaqir married a princess.⁹ After Buqa Temür's death in 1260, however, the importance of his clan decreased.¹⁰ His descendants and the Oirat tribesmen under their command pre-

troops prevented the caliph's *dawādār*, Mujāhid al-Dīn Aybeg, from fleeing and forced him to return to the city (*JT*, 2:497). The title *dawādār* in the Abbasid and Mamluk times meant "the keeper of the royal inkwell" (David Ayalon, "Dawādār," *EI2*, 2:172). About a week after these events, some "learned 'Alids" came from the city of Hilla to the south of Baghdad, requesting Hülegü to appoint them a *shahna* (governor). Buqa Temür was sent by the Khan "to test the people of Hilla, Kufa and Wasit," cities to the south and southeast of Baghdad. This expedition had a punitive character, leading also to the subjugation of Wasit, Shushtar, and Basra (*JT*, 2:499–500; Boyle, "Last 'Abbāsīd Caliph," 161). About the *shahna* and his duties see A. K. S. Lambton, "The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol periods*, ed. John A. Boyle (Cambridge, 1968), 244–45.

⁹The information provided by Rashīd al-Dīn concerning the daughters and sisters of Buqa Temür is controversial. However, one can clearly state that two of the close female relatives of Buqa Temür (either his sisters or his daughters), Güyüg Khatun and Öljei Khatun, were married to Hülegü Khan (*JT*, 1:56; cf. *JT*, 1:57; *JT*, 2:352). *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* does not give exact information about Güyüg Khatun, mentioning only that she is of the Oirat tribe, but claims Öljei Khatun to be a daughter of Törelchi, i.e., sister of Buqa Temür (*SP*, 186). *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* gives rather confusing information, according to which Öljei Khatun, though theoretically a daughter of Törelchi, was in fact a daughter of Chinggis Khan, and Güyüg Khatun was a daughter of one Buralji Güregen (*MA*, 74). According both to *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* and *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Hülegü married Güyüg Khatun before all other wives (*SP*, 185; *JT*, 2:472). It is also interesting that after the death of Hülegü, Öljei Khatun was taken by Abaqa (*SP*, 239; *JT*, 3:515). As mentioned in *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, before he married her, Abaqa already had other wives, but she is mentioned first in the text of the source due to her fame, "chūn āvāzah-yi ū" (*SP*, 239). The issue of those two wives was a significant one. Güyüg Khatun gave birth to Jumghur, second son of Hülegü, and a daughter, Buluqan Aqa, while Öljei Khatun gave birth to the Khan's eleventh son Möngke Temür and three girls: Jamai, Menggügen, and Baba (*JT*, 2:476). Further, at least half of the matrimonial connections of Hülegü Khan's children with some Oirat background were made with Oirat counterparts, probably to strengthen the union of the two sides. Thus, Tolun Khatun, the elder wife of Jumghur, was his cousin of Oirat origin, being a daughter of Buqa Temür, the brother of Jumghur's mother Güyüg Khatun. After the death of Jumghur, Tolun Khatun was given to Hülegü Khan's fourth son, Tekshin (*JT*, 2:474). Jumghur's half brother, Möngke Temür, also married, among others, his close Oirat relative. His first wife was Öljei Khatun, daughter of Buqa Temür and niece of his mother, the elder Öljei Khatun (*JT*, 2:475). Jaqir Güregen, son of Buqa Temür, married Menggügen, daughter of the elder Öljei Khatun and thus his cousin (*SP*, 218; *JT*, 2:476).

¹⁰Regarding the death of Buqa Temür see *JT*, 2:503. After the death of Buqa Temür one finds almost no trace of his clan in Ilkhanid politics or military affairs. It should be remembered that the clan of Buqa Temür preserved intensive relations not only with the Hülegüid lineage, but also with the Jochids. Köchu Khatun, another daughter of Törelchi or of Buqa Temür (*JT*, 1:56), married Toqoqan, second son of Batu Khan. Two of her sons, Möngke Temür (1266–80) and Toda Möngke (1280–87), later became Khans of the Golden Horde in the formative years of the Ilkhanate (1260s–80s). The matrimonial connections of Buqa Temür's family with the Jochids made him



served their dwelling area between Mosul and Diyarbakir, in today's southeastern Anatolia (the first being their *kishlaq*, winter residence, and the second, apparently, their *yaylaq*, summer residence) until the events of early 1296 described below.¹¹

The next Oirat clan to rise to power in the Ilkhanate was the family of Arghun Aqa. Though he enjoyed a high status as administrator and governor long before the 1260s, his position (and subsequently that of his clan) probably rose even more during the rule of Abaqa Khan (1265–82).¹² His clan seems to have been deeply

a high-standing relative of the Jochids in the service of Hülegü. Granted that the relations between the Oirat descendants of Qutuqa Beqi and the Jochids were still strong, the high position of Buqa Temür and his family (especially of his sisters and daughters) could also be explained by Hülegü's need to balance the Jochids' influence on the Oirats in his realm. Taking into consideration the tense relations between the houses of Jochi and Hülegü since the latter's move westward, favoring the Oirats and nurturing relations with them became an issue of strategic significance for the Ilkhan. In fact, one should remember that the Oirats were granted by Chinggis Khan to Jochi back in the early 1200s, as the latter subdued them along with other forest tribes without bloodshed and waste of manpower. The connection between the two sides seems to have continued for decades, and it might be that Buqa Temür preserved some connections with the Jochid house. The Jochid units in the Hülegüid army in the 1250s are always mentioned together with the units of Buqa Temür. Thus, for example, while listing the princes and amirs who stayed with Hülegü on the Hamadan plain in the spring of 1257 while preparing for the Baghdad campaign, the chronicler explicitly mentions three Jochid princes, Quli, Balagha, and Tutar, along with Buqa Temür, among the attending amirs (JT, 2:487; John A. Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Il-Khans," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. John A. Boyle [Cambridge, 1968], 5:346). This adds a new dimension to the allegedly suspicious deaths of all three aforementioned Jochid princes in the Hülegüid realm exactly in 1260, following or occurring at the time of Buqa Temür's death (Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 353).

¹¹ *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj*, trans. and comm. A. W. Budge (repr. Amsterdam, 1976), 597–98; cf. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah* (Berlin, 1998), 309. See John M. Smith, Jr., "Mongol Nomadism and Middle Eastern Geography: Qīshlāqs and Tūmens," in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (Leiden, 1999), 39–56, for a general discussion of the dwelling areas of the Mongol army in the Ilkhanate.

¹² Some observations support this conclusion. The first comes from analysis of the lists of Abaqa Khan's amirs in *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* and *Mu'izz al-Ansāb*. Arghun Aqa holds the first position there, whereas in the list of Hülegü's amirs, he holds the thirteenth place (SP, 191, 242; MA, 82). *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* calls him a "most respected great amir (Arghun Āqā amīrī ba-ghāyat mu'tabar muzām būd)." At the same time, *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* does not mention him in the list of Hülegü's amirs. Besides this, Arghun Aqa fought alongside Abaqa (when the latter was still a prince), including in the Battle of Herat against Baraq, the ruler of the Chaghadaid Khanate, in 1270 (Lane, "Arghun Aqa," 479–80, and Michal Biran, "The Battle of Heart [1270]: A Case of Inter-Mongol Warfare," in *Warfare in Inner Asia*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo [Leiden, 2002], 175–220 and esp. 191–96). Many of the Mongol administrators participated in military operations (e.g., Mas'ūd Beg, Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī), but in the time of Hülegü, Arghun Aqa is not known to have taken part in the Khan's wars.



rooted in Khorasan and the bordering areas since the time of the United Empire. This continued into the Hülegüid rule, the Oirat commanders from Arghun Aqa's family serving the Ilkhans and establishing multiple ties of marriage with them.¹³ Unlike the clan of Buqa Temür, the Oirat descendants of Arghun Aqa were connected with Khorasan.¹⁴ In parallel, the process of the gradual Islamization of the family took place. As some indications suggest, its gradual conversion to Islam started earlier than assumed before, in the first decades of Arghun Aqa's presence in Khorasan.¹⁵ In fact, it was this process that at least partly prepared the ground for the conversion of Ghazan Khan (and subsequently the Islamization of

¹³Arghun Aqa left at least ten sons, two daughters, and quite a few grandchildren, whose names are to a large extent unknown. All male descendants whose biographical details are known were involved in military affairs, two of them—Nawruz and Lagzi—explicitly being mentioned as imperial sons-in-law. Thus, Nawruz was married to Toghanchuq (Toghan Khatun), the fourth daughter of Abaqa, and was one of his commanders, while his brother Lagzi married Baba, mentioned above, the daughter of Hülegü and Öljei Khatun (*SP*, 246–47; *JT*, 2:471; *JT*, 3:517; *MA*, 85). Rashīd al-Dīn mentions that the multiple daughters of Arghun Aqa were married “to rulers and commanders” (*JT*, 1:57), but only two are known. An (unnamed) daughter of Arghun Aqa was married to prince Kingshū, Jumghur's son (*JT*, 3:595; Charles Melville, “Pādshāh-i Islam: The Conversion of Sultan Mahmud Ghazan Khan,” *Pembroke Papers* 1 [1999]: 162). Another daughter of his, Mengli Tegin, married Amir Tasu from the Eljigin clan of the Qonggirat, and their daughter Bulughan Khatun Khorasani is listed as the second wife of Ghazan (*JT*, 3:593, and see below, n. 61). She is mentioned in *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* as “Bulughan Khatun, daughter of Yisu Aqa from the Eljigin tribe” (*MA*, 93). Her name—Khorasani—could have some connections with her mother's family estates in Khorasan. She is also listed as the second wife of Ghazan in the *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, her father's name being Bisūqā (*SP*, 314). Additionally, according to Waṣṣāf, Nawruz was also related by marriage (unclear in what way) to Jochi's grandson Ureng Timur (named Ertoktimurschah in Waṣṣāf's chronicle)—Waṣṣāf, *Geschichte*, 3:136.

¹⁴After the death of Arghun Aqa his family kept its influence in Khorasan. In general, Khorasan had a special status in the Ilkhanate, as income collected in the province was not attached to the general income of the dynasty, and the administration of the province was often (at least formally) in the hands of the representatives of the crown prince (as, for example, of Ghazan when he was a prince). Cf. Vladimir Bartold “Istoriko-geograficheskiy obzor Irana,” in idem, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy* (Moscow, 1971), 7:112, and Qāshānī, who speaks about Abū Sa'īd (Maryam Parvisi-Berger, “Die Chronik des Qashani über den Ilchan Ölgaitü (1304–1316): Edition und kommentierte Übersetzung” (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen, 1968), 1:155—hereafter *TÖ*). After the death of Arghun Aqa in 1275, Nawruz inherited his father's status as an administrator of Khorasan (Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* [London, 1997], 57). His wintering area was in Dara-i Jaz, in the very north of Khorasan, near today's Iranian border with Turkmenistan (*JT*, 3:594). It is of importance that *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* calls him “one of the great and respected amirs of Khorasan (az jumlaḥ-yi umarā'i-yi mu'tabar-i Khurāsān)” already in the list of Abaqa's commanders (*SP*, 247).

¹⁵On this issue, which has been rather ignored, see my “New Light.”



the Ilkhanate) in 1295.¹⁶ Indeed, following the conversion of Ghazan (stimulated, if not orchestrated, by Nawruz, son of Arghun Aqa) and the former's enthronement, the clan of Arghun Aqa enjoyed a rise in status. Nawruz became one of the most powerful personalities in the Ilkhanate.¹⁷ As is well known, this changed abruptly in 1297, when Nawruz was accused of collaboration with the Mamluk Sultanate and was executed together with most of his family.¹⁸

The third Oirat elite clan in the Ilkhanate was of importance mainly in its last decades. Its founder, Tengiz Güregen, was a relative of Qutuqa Beqi,¹⁹ an imperial son-in-law, who married daughters of both Güyüg and Hülegü Khan.²⁰ In the times of Güyüg he already held a high position. According to Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, during the war between Qubilai and Arigh Böke, Tengiz was sent against the latter, captured him, and brought him to Qubilai, who, according to the chronicler, gave him Hülegü Khan's daughter Tögödech as "a reward."²¹ It was at this time, probably, that he also relocated to the Ilkhanate,²² his daughter Arighan

¹⁶Until now the main emphasis of the research on Mongol Islamization in the Ilkhanate was the analysis of the conversion of the highest levels of Mongol society (see, e.g., Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islam," 159–77; Reuven Amitai, "The Conversion of Tegüder Ilkhan to Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 [2001]: 15–25). A notable exception is the paper of Judith Pfeiffer, which deals with the conversion of the Mongol commanders in the early period of Ilkhanid history (idem, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam among the Mongol Elite during the Early Ilkhanate," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff [Leiden, 2007], 369–89). Concerning Oirat conversion, only a paper of Michael Hope, "The 'Nawruz King': The Rebellion of Amir Nawruz in Khurasan (688–694/1289–94) and its Implications for the Ilkhan Polity at the End of the Thirteenth Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 78, no. 3 (2015): 451–73, can be mentioned in addition to my "New Light."

¹⁷According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Ghazan Khan, "realizing how much he owed Nawruz for the favors and deeds he had performed, ... issued a decree awarding Nawruz the unconditional emirate and vizierate of all lands and peoples from the Oxus to Syria, and from the banks of the eastern sea to the farthest end of the western sea" (*JT*, 3:629); cf. Mu'in al-Dīn Naṭanzī, *Muntakhab al-tavarikh-i Mu'ini*, ed. Jean Aubin (Tehran, 1957), 151. Note that *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah* calls Nawruz "amir al-umara'" in the list of Ghazan's commanders (*SP*, 319). See Judith Kolbas, *The Mongols in Iran: Chingiz Khan to Uljaytu 1220–1309* (London/New York, 2006), 296–305, for the discussion of Nawruz's financial and administrative policies.

¹⁸On these events and on the detailed discussion of the sources see my "New Light."

¹⁹The exact nature of this connection is not clear. Rashīd al-Dīn uses the word *khwīshy*, which indeed means "family relation," but at the same time this connection could have been invented in order to raise the status of Tengiz's family (Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafā Mūsavī [Tehran, 1994], 101).

²⁰The name of the first is unknown; the name of the second was Tögödech (*JT*, 2:476; *SP*, 218).

²¹This statement is not clear (*Dhayl-i Jāmi' al-Tavārikh-i Rashīdī*, transl. and comm. E. R. Talyshkhanov [Baku, 2007], 148—hereafter cited as *DJTR*).

²²The time of his arrival in Iran is not clear, as he appears in the list of Hülegü's commanders (*SP*, 191).



Egachi becoming a concubine of Hülegü Khan.²³ Rashīd al-Dīn states that during the struggle for power between Aḥmad Tegüder and Arghun, Tengiz remained on the side of the latter, testifying that Abaqa wanted Arghun to rule.²⁴ It is not clear when he died, but his influence and high position passed to his children and grandchildren. Tögödech was delivered to Tengiz's son Sulaymish and grandson Chichek in a levirate succession, bearing children from all three.²⁵ Furthermore, Arghun Khan's first wife—and the mother of his fourth son, Khitai Oghul—was Qutlugh Khatun, Tengiz Güregen's daughter.²⁶ After her death the Khan married her niece Öljetü, but “since she was only a child, he did not touch her.”²⁷ According to *Mu'izz al-Ansāb*, she was married to Ghazan Khan,²⁸ but this is not mentioned in the *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*. Most probably she was married to Öljetü in 1305.²⁹ We will return to this clan in the second part of this article.

Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate

Close to the end of the thirteenth century the Oirats also appeared as a group in the Mamluk realm. The group under discussion comprised the descendants of Buqa Temür and the tribesmen under their command who had stayed in the area between Diyarbakir and Mosul from the death of Buqa Temür in 1260 until 1296, when the majority, if not all, of them left the Ilkhanate and migrated to the Mamluk Sultanate. Factional struggles within the Ilkhanate's ruling class are the most obvious reason for this migration. More precisely, competition between Baidu and Ghazan on the one hand, and the decision of Türaqai Güregen, son of Jaqir Güregen and grandson of Buqa Temür, to side with Baidu in the early

²³ She is called in *Shu'ab-i Panjānah* “the daughter of Bilkir Güregen,” which contradicts the data of *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh* (SP, 209). The reason for this inconsistency is not clear.

²⁴ JT, 3:558. As his daughter Qutlugh Khatun was the chief wife of Arghun, he certainly had reasons to side with him.

²⁵ JT, 1:56; MA, 89; SP, 218. If true, this indicates the great esteem in which this connection was held as well as the benefits the family reaped from it. Despite the fact that all of the chronicles speak about this three-fold re-marriage, Bai Cuiqin called this “unreliable,” especially with regard to Rashīd al-Dīn's claim that she bore children to her last husband (Bai Cuiqin, “Woyila guizu yu Chenjisihanxi lianyin kaoshu,” in Du Rongkun and Bai Cuiqin, *Xi menggu shi yanjiu* [Guilin, 2008], 33). The exact careers of his son and grandson are not clear. Chichak is known to have cooperated at some point with Baidu against Geikhatu Khan (MA, 87; SP, 280), but this did not prevent Öljetü from marrying his daughter. See below.

²⁶ JT, 3:561–62.

²⁷ SP, 287–88; JT, 3:561.

²⁸ MA, 93.

²⁹ See below.



1290s, caused this large-scale Mongol migration.³⁰ Following the rise of Ghazan, Türaqai—himself a Chinggisid son-in-law—decided to leave the Ilkhanate out of fear of the troops Ghazan had sent to arrest him.³¹ Türaqai, with his tribesmen, crossed the Euphrates and arrived in Damascus in early January 1296. The group

³⁰ An alternative motive, which concerned a property conflict between the Turcomans and the Oirats, was mentioned by Bar Hebraeus, but no additional sources support this explanation. According to the chronicle, which I cite for the sake of completeness, "...a certain tribe of Mongols, who were called 'AWIRATAYE, who were wintering round about the Monastery of Mar Mattai, and it happened that they had a complaint against the King of Kings. And messengers came from him to them, uttering curses and threats, because in the days when Baidu reigned, those 'AWIRATAYE had laid their hands on certain Turkomans and taken from them sheep and cattle, and herds of horses, and stallions, and mules, and camels without number. And after the kingdom of Baidu had come to an end and Kazan was ruling, the command went forth that the Turkomans should take it all back again from the 'AWIRATAYE, and everyone who resisted and would not obey was to die the death. And because the great number of these possessions had come to an end, and nothing at all of them remained with the 'AWIRATAYE, they suffered great tribulation, and they were treated with contempt by the ambassadors and by the Turkomans. [And] they leaped upon the ambassador and upon the Turkomans and killed them. And they took their families and everything which they were able to carry, and they fled to Syria—a body of ten thousand soldiers and fighting men" (*Chronography*, 597–98). This text might reflect some real conflicts between the newly arrived Oirats and the Turcoman population of the area, but the connection between this possible tension with the Turcomans and the Oirats' flight is undoubtedly wrong.

³¹ Al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 309; cf. Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān* (Cairo, 1989), 3:304. After his father's death, Türaqai married Menggügen, daughter of Hülegü Khan, in a levirate marriage (*JT*, 1:57). The Mamluk sources tend to stress the fact, even though at the moment of his migration Menggügen might have already passed away (*JT*, 1:57). The Mamluk sources apparently regard this as a "status" issue (Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, ed. E. Blochet [Paris, 1919], 2:590; Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann [Cairo, 1971], 8:361; Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībīrdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* [Cairo, 1986], 7:60). Note also a claim, which appears, e.g., in *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, according to which Türaqai married a daughter of Möngke Temür, son of Hülegü (al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 309–10). Thackston also claims that Türaqai Güregen had married Ara Qutluq, daughter of Möngke Temür, before Menggügen, referring probably to Rashīd al-Dīn himself, who claims this in the Oirat chapter (*JT*, 1:57, and *ibid.*, 2:476, n. 2). *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* gives an opposite version, i.e., that he married Ara Qutluq after Menggügen (*MA*, 83). Both these statements contradict yet another passage of Rashīd al-Dīn, according to which Ara Qutluq married Türaqai Güregen, whose sister Eltüzmiş Khatun was a wife of Abaqa Khan (*JT*, 3:515). This gives us two Türaqai Güregens, with different fathers. The father of the Türaqai Güregen who fled to Syria was the Oirat Jaqir Güregen, while the father of Türaqai Güregen of Qonggirat was Qutluḡ Temür Güregen (cf. *JT*, 1:56–57, and *ibid.*, 3:515). The real situation is not fully clear, but it seems that Türaqai had one wife only, i.e., Menggügen, daughter of Hülegü Khan.



was followed by their women, children, and livestock (the Mamluk sources talk about at least one *tūmen*).³²

Impressive as it was, the arrival of the Oirats in 1296 was an extraordinary event for the Sultanate only with regard to their number. Indeed, there had been a continuous stream of Mongol refugees from the Ilkhanate to Syria and Egypt since the 1240s. In general, they were understood in the chronicles as a part of a broader *wāfidiyah* phenomenon.³³ Usually those immigration cases were limited to individuals or small groups.³⁴ Additionally, the Oirats were also not unknown to the Sultanate, as some of the earlier Mongol refugees were of Oirat origin (such as Shaykh ‘Alī, a Sufi shaykh who arrived in 1282–83).³⁵ Oirats had also come to the Sultanate as prisoners of war, most notably al-Malik al-‘Ādil Zayn al-Dīn Kitbughā, the ruling sultan at the time of Tūraqai’s arrival.³⁶ He was a

³²The sources talk about ten thousand people (*insān*) or families (*bayt*). For the first see al-Malik al-Mu‘ayyad ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā, *Tārīkh al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, 1907), 4:33, and cf. “ten thousand soldiers and fighting men” of Bar Hebraeus (*Chronography*, 598); for the second see *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlukensultane in den Jahren 690–741 der Hīgra nach arabischen Handschriften*, ed. K. V. Zetterstéen (Leiden, 1919), 38; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:361; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 7:60. According to other versions, there were about eighteen thousand “families” (Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* [Cairo, 1992], 31:267; Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyādah [Cairo, 1934], 1:812; Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, ed. Costi K. Zurayk and Nejla Izzedin [Beirut, 1939], 8:203). There is a difference between “10,000 people” and “10,000 families.” If the latter version is correct, then the migration wave should indeed be considered highly significant (see Smith, according to whom an average Mongol family consists of 5–6 persons: Smith, “Qīshlāqs and Tūmens,” 40, and cf. Reuven Amitai, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin and Their Role in Early Mamluk Political Life,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12, no. 1 [2008]: 130).

³³On the general phenomenon of *wāfidiyah* see David Ayalon, “Wafidiyya in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951): 89–104.

³⁴See Nakamachi Nobutaka, “The Rank and Status of Military Refugees in the Mamluk Army: A Reconsideration of Wāfidiyah,” *MSR* 10, no. 1 (2006): 57–58, for the detailed list of the Mongol immigration cases to the Sultanate. See also Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, 1997), 99–103.

³⁵Not much is known about this person and his rather unusual life. He was of Oirat origin, converted to Islam of the Sufi type while still in the Ilkhanate, and went to the Mamluk Sultanate, together with some of his Mongol followers. They were accepted by the sultan Qalāwūn, and granted *iqṭā‘āt* and the titles of amirs of ten and forty (*ṭablkhānah*). The status of the shaykh deteriorated at some point and he was imprisoned along with his followers (al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 217; see also Reuven Amitai, “Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 1 [1999]: 37; Nakamachi, “Rank and Status,” 68).

³⁶Another example is Sayf al-Dīn Salār al-Manṣūrī, one of the most important mamluks of Qalāwūn (about him see Amitai, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 123).



mamluk of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and became sultan in early 1294 after successfully organizing a *coup d'état* against the then-nine-year-old future sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn,³⁷ brother of the murdered al-Malik al-Ashraf Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl (1290–93).³⁸ According to Ibn al-Dawādārī, Kitbughā was himself of Oirat origin.³⁹ His genealogical connections are not clear, but he was probably not of noble origin, as no information can be found about his background.

Before moving to the discussion of Oirat assimilation in the Mamluk Sultanate in the fourteenth century, the general outline of the events immediately following the Oirat migration should be given. First, messengers of the sultan, some of them sent directly from Cairo, met the group.⁴⁰ After a short stop in Damascus,⁴¹

³⁷He ruled three times: 1293–94, 1299–1309, and 1309–41. See further in Peter M. Holt, “al-Nāṣir,” *EI2*, 7:991–92.

³⁸Abū al-Fidā', *Tārīkh al-Mukhtaṣar*, 4:31, cf. Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 105. The new sultan was himself of Mongol origin, captured during the First Battle of Homs (December 1260) and bought by Qalāwūn (Ismā'il ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh* [Beirut, 1993], 13:399; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 7:55. More sources in Amitai, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 122, n. 16.).

³⁹Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:361. If this was true, he should have been of the first generation of Oirat tribesmen who came to Iran with Buqa Temūr. The ethnic origin of the sultan was of significance for the manner in which the later events were judged by other players on the Sultanate's political scene. For discussion of this see, e.g., Ayalon, “Wafidiyya,” 100.

⁴⁰In fact, five Mamluk amirs were entrusted with the mission of meeting the fleeing Oirats. Following the immediate request from Damascus concerning the newcomers, the amir 'Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Dawādārī received orders to meet the group (al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310, cf. al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 3:305). During the following week or so, three other amirs—Shādd al-Dawāwīn, Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-'Asar from Damascus, and Shams al-Dīn Qarāsunqur al-Manṣūrī, together with Sayf al-Dīn Bahādur al-Hājj al-Ḥalabī al-Hābib from Egypt—were dispatched by personal order of the sultan to appropriately receive the Oirats (al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310; Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 39; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 7:60). Of special interest is Shams al-Dīn Qarāsunqar al-Manṣūrī; though not being “Mongol” *per se*, Qarāsunqar is remembered in the sources as a one who had escaped to the Ilkhanate, married a cousin of Öljeitü, and died among Mongols, and he was “respected among the Mongols, as if he had been brought up among them” (Kobi Yosef, *Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)* [Tel Aviv, 2010], 48 and also n. 174). Possibly the sultan's choice to dispatch this person was connected to his interest in the Mongols. Concerning the meaning of *dawādār*, al-Qalqashandī explains it as “an associate of the wazīr,” appointed by the sultan from the military class, whose main duty was to collect taxes (Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria [678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.]* [Stuttgart, 1998], 222–24).

⁴¹“And there was a great celebration because of their arrival”—claim the chroniclers, while Ibn al-Dawādārī adds: “And the governor and all the warriors of al-Sham [put on their] best clothes [in honor of the Oirat arrival].” See Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 39; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:297; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Du-*



the leaders⁴² and the elders of the tribe were taken to Cairo, accompanied by Qarāsunqar al-Manṣūrī.⁴³ There they were warmly welcomed by the sultan in the citadel.⁴⁴ During the meeting in Cairo the Oirat nobles officially became amirs, were granted salaries and *iqṭāʿāt*, and some of them were elevated to the ranks of *ṭablkhānah* (such as Tūraqai) or commanders of ten (such as Ulūṣ).⁴⁵ According to one remark of al-ʿAynī, Kitbughā even wanted to give Tūraqai the rank of a commander of one hundred and control over one thousand warriors.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the majority of the tribesmen were left in Palestine or southern Syria, and were later settled in the area of al-Sāḥil, more particularly in Atlit.⁴⁷

These events were met with significant discontent among the Mamluk amirs.⁴⁸ The situation got even worse as these Oirats from Diyarbakir, unlike their tribes-

rar, 8:362. According to Ibn Taghribirdī, “the people were happy because of their [coming] and their submission [to the rule of Islam]” (Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 7:60). The Oirat leadership left Damascus on February 12, i.e., 7 Rabīʿ II, according to Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 39; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; and Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204. Al-Nuwayrī speaks of 17 Rabīʿ II, but this seems to be a mistake (al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298).

⁴²The Mamluk sources name three of them, the already mentioned Tūraqai and two others—Ulūṣ and Koktay (al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812). Ulūṣ was called “Arqawūn” by Ibn al-Dawādārī (Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362), and Koktay was called “Kokbāy” by al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812.

⁴³Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 343.

⁴⁴The sources mention 113 or 200 people altogether (Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Histoire*, 590; Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 39; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362). At least one chronicler mentions the number “two hundred” (Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Histoire*, 2:590), while al-ʿAynī says: “about one hundred” (idem, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:305). Al-Maqrīzī mentions larger numbers in his *Khiṭaṭ*, “about 300,” but this seems to be an incorrect estimate (Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawāʿiz wa-al-Iʿtibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* [Beirut, 1998], 3:43).

⁴⁵Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 7:60; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:305–6; al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 43. One can also find a profound discussion of this issue in Nakamachi, “Rank and Status,” 64–68 and Amitai, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 130–31. See below, n. 51, on the relation between getting an *iqṭaʿ* and converting to Islam in the Sultanate, a condition not fulfilled by the Oirats in 1296.

⁴⁶Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:305–6, 308; cf. al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310; Nakamachi, “Rank and Status,” 66.

⁴⁷Al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:299; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362. This was not the first time that a big *wāfidiyah* wave was settled on the Palestinian coast. An earlier case was 3000 of the Kurdish Shahrazūriyah who came to al-Karak from the Ilkhanate in 1259 (Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 100; Ayalon, “Wafidiyya,” 97–99).

⁴⁸Cf. Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil: “And so it happened that they [the Oirat commanders] sat in Bab al-Qalʿa [gates of the Cairo Citadel] in the places of [Mamluk] great amirs and commanders, ... and their



men in Khorasan, had not yet converted to Islam when they came to the Sultanate and preserved their shamanistic beliefs. This fact aggravated the discontent both in military circles and among the populace, especially since the Oirats did not fast during Ramadan and even ate in public.⁴⁹ Also, the way the Oirats slaughtered horses (they beat them on the head until they died, rather than cutting the throat) made many raise their eyebrows.⁵⁰ According to some sources, the amirs demanded that the sultan force the Oirats to convert to Islam first in order to get access to the military ranks, but Kitbughā refused to do so.⁵¹ The discontent of the Mamluk commanders, together with general popular suspicion towards the Oirats,⁵² as well as the rather unstable position of Kitbughā himself and the effects of a drought in the Sultanate, led quickly to the dismissal of the sultan by the vice-sultan Ḥisām al-Dīn Lājīn in November 1296.⁵³ The nobles

[amirs'] hearts got inflated by fear, that this issue [Oirat 'lawlessness'] would continue, and become worse, ... and they considered the Sultan to be imbecilic for bringing them [Oirats] closer to him" (Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Histoire*, 590–91). The chronicler probably refers to the places which the Mamluk commanders used to occupy during the gatherings.

⁴⁹See, e.g., al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310, and also cf. Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A'yān al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah* (Cairo, 1930), 3:262–63.

⁵⁰Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:298. Cf. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:204; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:812; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:308. On this issue see David Ayalon, "The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān: A Reexamination (Part A)," *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 118.

⁵¹Al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:307–8. As al-Maqrīzī mentions, the sultan prevented those who demanded Oirat conversion from imposing it on the tribesmen (idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, 43). It is important to note that it was an accepted practice since the time of Baybars to demand the conversion of *wāfidi*s to Islam before endowing them with *iqṭāʿāt* (most of the Mongols before the Oirats and also the *wāfidiyah* from the Crusaders' ranks did so; see more on this in Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 99–103). The distribution of the *iqṭāʿāt* to the Oirats did not follow these rules, and this fact understandably further weakened the position of Kitbughā among the Mamluks. Note an interesting remark by Muḥammad Ibn Shīḥnah al-Ḥalabī (d. 1412), cited uncritically by Sato, who claims in his "Rawdat al-Manāẓir fī 'Ilm al-Awā'il wa-al-Awākhir" that the Oirats were given *iqṭāʿāt* after their conversion to Islam, a statement which does not apply to the Oirats during the period of Kitbughā (Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 103, n. 1). The manuscript of this work, cited by Sato, as well as another manuscript, that of Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī's "Kitāb Durrat al-Aslāk fī Dawlat al-Atrāk," also cited *ibid.*, were unfortunately not accessible to me.

⁵²To some degree one could claim that the ensuing purge of the Oirat leadership was part of the traditional struggle between the Mamluks in the transition period between sultans. At the same time, the Oirat *wāfidiyah* was perceived as a treacherous group that could not be trusted, as they had left their previous masters (Yosef, *Ethnic Groups*, 192–93). It was not ethnic identity, apparently, but the question of anticipated behavior according to specific rules which played a larger role in the formulation of a negative judgment.

⁵³The sultan's dismissal less than a year after the Oirats' arrival was only partly caused by his support of the tribe, as well as their cultural and religious "stubbornness" (cf. al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 3:308, 311–12, al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 310; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 44). Other factors of



among the Oirats—Tūraqai and his close associates—were arrested and either incarcerated in the prison of Alexandria or executed.⁵⁴ Another Oirat commander, Ulūṣ, was later released and stayed in Egypt.⁵⁵ This same Ulūṣ, together with his tribesmen, attempted to reinstall Kitbughā in the early autumn of 1299, near Tall al-‘Ajjūl⁵⁶ on the outskirts of Gaza, as the Mamluk army entered Palestine and moved eastward toward Ghazan’s invasion.⁵⁷ The revolt was suppressed; the leaders were hung and other participants were imprisoned. As a result of the two purges, the period during which the Oirats had played a role in Mamluk politics was definitely over. The masses of the Oirats did not disappear, however, instead going through a complicated process of cultural and religious integration into the society of the Mamluk Sultanate during the fourteenth century. The mechanisms of this process will be discussed below in comparison with the Oirats in the Ilkhanate.

an objective nature, such as the pandemic that severely affected parts of the Sultanate during Kitbughā’s reign and the economic decline of that period, precipitated the sultan’s dismissal as well, but the explanations of a “psychological” or “cultural” nature should in no case be seen as less important. See Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il: “Moreover, there was a severe pandemic of plagues and an unknown number of people died in Egypt, up to the point that almost every place in the country was full of dead bodies of its citizens, lying on the street, and the population level had decreased, and it was impossible to bury everybody because of the big number of the dead, and the dogs ate some of them and some of them were gathered to heaps ...” (Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, *Histoire*, 591–92; cf. Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-ḡumān*, 3:299–303). Also see Sato, who states that Kitbughā was seen as an “ill-omen sultan” because of all these events (Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 106). Indeed, chroniclers discussed the fact that the Oirats were not Muslims and also pointed out the ethnic connection between the sultan and the newcomers (e.g., Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:361).

⁵⁴ Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-ḡumān*, 3:356. Many historical chronicles do not speak of these events, while al-Maqrīzī mentions it in his *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, explaining the reasons for the Oirat rebellion in 1299: “And the group of Oirats, who came [to the Muslim realm] in the times of al-‘Ādil Kitbughā, became furious, because a big number of their [Oirat] amirs was killed in the times of Lājīn ...” (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:883). He gives more information in his *Khīṭaṭ*, repeating more or less the information provided by al-‘Aynī (al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 43).

⁵⁵ Al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-ḡumān*, 3:356. The reason for this is unclear.

⁵⁶ This place is located about four miles from today’s city of Gaza (Carolyn R. Higginbotham, *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine: Governance and Accommodation on the Imperial Periphery* [Leiden, 2000], 82).

⁵⁷ Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 58; al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah*, 330; cf. Reuven Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army? Ghazan’s First Campaign into Syria (1299–1300),” in *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500–1800)*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Leiden, 2007), 227, and Nakamachi, “Rank and Status,” 80. It is interesting that we again find Ulūṣ in the military elite circles after his release from prison, but there is no more detailed information on him nor his accomplices. According to Ibn al-Dawādārī, among those whom these Oirats intended to kill during the revolt was Sayf al-Dīn Salār, also of Oirat origin (Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-ḡāmi‘ al-Ghurur*, ed. Hans R. Roemer (Cairo, 1960), 9:10).



Part II. 1300 until the Early Fifteenth Century

Oirats in the Ilkhanate

From the moment the descendants of Buqa Temür left the Ilkhanate, they had no further importance for Mongol history in Iran. Two other Oirat clans, however, continued to establish themselves in the Ilkhanate and can be traced more or less at least until Temür's rise to power (i.e., 1370s). The first is the clan of Arghun Aqa. Despite its systematic removal from power in 1297, the clan preserved its positions in Khorasan. According to a remark of Qāshānī, Oyiratai Ghazan, brother of Nawruz, came to the Ilkhanid court in 1306 in order to confirm his right to rule in the area.⁵⁸ It seems that the Oirat nobility did not constitute a united group in Khorasan in the first decades of the thirteenth century, as Faryūmadī mentions a cousin of Oyiratai Ghazan, Amir Hajji, as another local Oirat leader.⁵⁹ Not much, however, is known about their rule or the areas under their control. Even less is known about the basis of their power in the area, or more precisely what constituted the military backbone of the clan, which had been so deeply rooted in Khorasan since the 1240s. One can suppose that the main areas were Tūs and Mashhad.⁶⁰ Whatever the real state of affairs, however, the Oirats of this clan were positioned at a distance from the centers of Ilkhanid power—a remarkable change in comparison with the first years of Ghazan's rule.

The main winner of the *de facto* disappearance of the two major Oirat clans from the Ilkhanid scene towards the early 1300s was a third clan, that of Tengiz Güregen. The relations between Tengiz and Arghun Khan have already been mentioned. Analysis of the biographical and matrimonial information concerning the two last Ilkhans, Öljeitü and Abū Sa'īd, shows that they were both tightly connected to the lineage of Tengiz Güregen. Though he himself had probably already passed away, the matrimonial network connected his clan and the Golden *urugh* and supported the establishment of his descendants' position in the later Ilkhanate. Thus, two⁶¹ important wives of Öljeitü, namely Hajji Khatun, mother

⁵⁸ TÖ, 1:57.

⁵⁹ Jürgen Paul, "Zerfall und Bestehen: Die Čaun-i qurban im 14. Jahrhundert," *Asiatische Studien* 65, no. 3 (2011): 705.

⁶⁰ See below, n. 105, about the areas under the control of Arghun Shāh, son of Oyiratai Ghazan, towards the end of Ilkhanid rule.

⁶¹ Öljeitü had three additional wives of Oirat origin. Therefore, altogether five of his twelve wives were connected to this tribe. Those three were Gunjishkab, great-granddaughter of Buqa Temür, mentioned by Rashīd al-Dīn as the first wife of Ghazan Khan (JT, 2:473; note that Qāshānī does not mention any connection with Ghazan [TÖ, 1:25], as well as *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* [MA, 97]); Bujughan, daughter of Lagzi Güregen and his wife Baba (TÖ, 1:25; she is called YWH'AN in the manuscript used by Parvisi-Berger [TÖ, 2:7, l. 5b] and Bujughan in Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad Qāshānī, *Tārikh-i Ūljaitū* [Tehran, 2005], 7; cf. MA, 97), and the seventh wife of



of the future sultan Abū Saʿīd,⁶² and her sister Öljatai (Iljatai),⁶³ were direct descendants of Tengiz.⁶⁴ One can also find women of Oirat origin around Sultan Abū Saʿīd, not only his mother Hajji Khatun, but also his third wife, Malika Khatun, who was a daughter of Tuq, son of Sulaimish, son of Tengiz Güregen.⁶⁵ However, despite these close relations, the Oirat presence in Ilkhanid power circles is not visible in the sources in the first decade of the fourteenth century. Qāshānī, for example, names no recognizable commanders of Oirat origin in the list of Öljeitü's main amirs.⁶⁶ The analysis of Ghazan's will to his brother Muḥammad, the future sultan Öljeitü, is an additional indicator. Cited at the beginning of the

Öljeitü, the aforementioned Bulughan Khatun Khorasani, granddaughter of Arghun Aqa (TÖ, 1:26, 51; Charles Melville, "Bologan Khatun," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 4:339). Thus, the five Oirat wives of Öljeitü represented all three Oirat clans of the Ilkhanate. It seems, however, that since the 1300s those of Tengiz Güregen's clan were of primary importance. Concerning Bulughan Khatun, *Muʿizz al-Ansāb* calls the fourth wife of Öljeitü "Taghai, from Khorasan, daughter of Amir Yisu, son of Arghun Aqa, former wife of the son of Ghazan Khan" (MA, 97). This inconsistency between the sources can probably be explained by a simple mistake in *Muʿizz al-Ansāb*. Another confirmation regarding her identity can be seen in the report about her visiting the grave of "her husband" Ghazan Khan in Tabriz (TÖ, 1:72 and 2:74, l. 50b). She married the Ilkhan on June (or July) 12, 1305, and died on July 25, 1308 (TÖ, 1:78, and Melville, "Bologan Khatun," 339). Her multiple levirate marriages are a sign of the importance of the Khorasanian Oirats also after the 1290s, at least on the regional level.

⁶² TÖ, 1:51; 2:45, l. 30b.

⁶³ According to *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*, she died on October 4, 1315, and was buried in Tabriz near the tomb of her son Abū al-Khayr, who died as a child (Faṣīḥ Aḥmad ibn Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Hawafī, *Fasihov svod [Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī]*, transl. D. Yu. Yusupova [Tashkent, 1980], 45). Regarding the name of her son, his destiny, and burial place, see TÖ, 1:50, and MA, 99.

⁶⁴ It is difficult to identify the girl's parental connection. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the father of Arghun Khan's wife was Sulaimish, son of Tengiz (JT, 3:561). *Muʿizz al-Ansāb* agrees with him in the chapter that concerns the wives of Arghun Khan (MA, 93), while disagreeing in the chapter of the wives of Öljeitü (MA, 97), claiming that the father of Hajji Khatun, the fourth wife, and Öljetei, the sixth, was Chichak and not Sulaimish. Here he agrees with Qāshānī, who reports that the father of Hajji Khatun, wife of Öljeitü, was "Chichak, son of Tengiz" (TÖ, 1:25). At the same time, Qāshānī mentions that she was a granddaughter and not great-granddaughter of Tengiz (ibid.: 50). He probably makes a mistake, calling Sulaimish by the name of his son—Chichak. The name "Öljetei, daughter of Sulaimish" is presented in a different manner in *Muʿizz* in the list of Arghun Khan's wives, where she is called "Öljai" (MA, 93). The names of the aforementioned wife of Arghun Khan and the sixth wife of Öljeitü are written almost the same in Persian: "الجنای" (Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*, ed. B. Karimi [Tehran, 1959], ?806) vs. "اولجاتای" (TÖ, 2:8, l. 6a). Also, according to *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*, 45, the father of Öljetei was Sulaimish. In my opinion, the text of Qāshānī includes a mistake in the general list of wives and the person mentioned in all these sources is indeed Öljetei, daughter of Sulaimish.

⁶⁵ MA, 100.

⁶⁶ TÖ, 1:26–28.



Tārīkh-i Öljeitü, it includes a list of the most important military amirs and those among them who were called “the pillars of the state,” who ought to be the main supporters of the new khan. All of them were members of the *keshig*, representing the main power holders of the state.⁶⁷ None of those mentioned are of clearly Oirat origin.⁶⁸ The list of Öljeitü’s amirs given by *Mu‘izz al-Ansāb* differs from that of Qāshānī, and includes two amirs of possible Oirat origin: “Kharbanda Noyan, Yisu Aqa’s son” (presumably the same amir Yisu [Tasu] mentioned above) and amir Chichak, who could be that same Chichak, son of Sulaimish, the sultan’s father-in-law.⁶⁹ However, their identity cannot be confirmed. If this silence of the sources indeed represents the real state of affairs, it clearly attests to the decline of the Oirats’ position in the Ilkhanate by the end of Ghazan’s rule, when Arghun Aqa’s clan disappeared and the influence of Tengiz Güregen’s clan was still in its formative period.

This limbo was not long, though. Rather early, ‘Alī Pādshāh, the brother of Hajji Khatun and uncle of the future sultan Abū Sa‘īd, appears in the descriptions of the Gilan (1307) and Rahba (1313) campaigns of Öljeitü, though not in the lists of amirs.⁷⁰ He is also known to have accompanied Abū Sa‘īd in 1315 on his way to Khorasan, later appearing in the list of the sultan’s amirs alongside with his brother Muḥammad (son of) Chichak (the only Oirat *güregen* of that period, whose wife Qutlugh Mulk was a daughter of Geikhatu).⁷¹ Another com-

⁶⁷Ibid., 29–32.

⁶⁸A detailed analysis of the list and its decoding is not one of the goals of this article, so the aforementioned statement cannot be proven for the time being. Charles Melville is now working on decoding this list, and his findings might confirm or refute it (Charles Melville, “The Keshig in Iran: The Survival of the Royal Mongol Household,” in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff [Leiden, 2006], 153–54).

⁶⁹MA, 99. If this information is correct, then we can indeed see this as one more indicator of the preservation of the power of Tengiz Güregen’s line in the court after Ghazan Khan’s rule. This seems logical, as almost all of the powerful Oirat amirs at the end of Hülegüid rule are from his family.

⁷⁰DJTR, 35, 58; Charles Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37: A Decade of Discord in Mongol Iran* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 16. Note the Islamic and the somewhat Persianized name of this Oirat (as well as that of his brother Muḥammad). One wonders when the conversion to Islam took place in the case of Tengiz Güregen’s clan, and whether its conversion was similar to that of Arghun Aqa’s family. This issue cannot be resolved as the sources remain silent.

⁷¹MA, 102; DJTR, 125, 129; Melville, *The Fall*, 16. Muḥammad (son of) Chichak also appears as Muḥammad Beg. Al-Aharī calls the brother of ‘Alī Pādshāh Muḥammad Beg (Abū Bakr al-Qutbī al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, transl. and comm. J. B. van Loon [The Hague, 1954], 57; Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* [Cambridge, 2008], 141). Melville supposes this to be a mistake of al-Aharī, whose intention was to talk about the brother of ‘Alī Pādshāh, Muḥammad (son of) Chichak (Melville, *The Fall*, 31, n. 83). Ḥāfiz-i Abrū differenti-



mander of Oirat origin appears in the same list, mentioned as the brother of ‘Alī Pādshāh.⁷² Tight matrimonial connections with the Hūlegüid clan and the benefits they gave both sides, although not as strong as in earlier periods, served as a guarantor for Oirat loyalty to the throne. ‘Alī Pādshāh and Muḥammad (son of) Chichak not only participated in military campaigns on Öljeitü’s side, but also stayed loyal during Abū Sa‘īd’s rule.⁷³ In some periods they even served as governors. Thus, ‘Alī Pādshāh was sent by Abū Sa‘īd to Baghdad and the surrounding areas after the decline of Chobanid power in 1328,⁷⁴ while his brother was sent that same year to serve as a governor of Rum.⁷⁵ Although Muḥammad lost his position a year later after participating in the rebellion against the sultan’s wife, Baghdad Khatun, and the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn, ‘Alī Pādshāh kept his high position until the very end of Abū Sa‘īd’s rule.⁷⁶ It is also of crucial importance that

ates between Muḥammad Chichak and Muḥammad Beg (*DjTR*, 129), and Melville supports this distinction, citing Waṣṣāf, according to whom Muḥammad Beg (Qushchi) was a son of Baytmish Bayghala (Melville, *The Fall*, 19, 39). For more on his wife, the daughter of Geikhātu, see al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 64, and Melville, *The Fall*, 56.

⁷² MA, 102. Album mentions two brothers of ‘Alī Pādshāh: Ḥāfiẓ and Muḥammad Beg. He also agrees with al-Aharī, identifying the latter one with Muḥammad (son of) Chichak (Stephen Album, “Studies in Ilkhanid History and Numismatics I: A Late Ilkhanid Hoard (743/1342),” *Studia Iranica* 13, no. 1 [1984]: 67). The other commander, mentioned by Mu‘izz al-Ansāb, could thus be this Ḥāfiẓ. Also, Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū mentions Qunjushkab, a relative of Abū Sa‘īd on the mother’s side, as amir of Öljeitü. (*DjTR*, 121). The source is wrong, taking Gunjishkab, the wife of a sultan, for an amir (Melville, *The Fall*, 14, n. 30).

⁷³ *DjTR*, 119, 139; al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 55; Melville, *The Fall*, 22.

⁷⁴ Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 57. Aubin also claims (based on Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū) that ‘Alī Pādshāh was a hereditary chief of the Oirats of Diyarbakir (Jean Aubin, “Le quriltai de Sultān-Maydān [1336],” *Journal Asiatique* 279 [1991]: 179). Album claims that ‘Alī Pādshāh was the governor of Diyarbakir, citing *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys* and *Zayl Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh Rashīdī* (Album, “Studies I,” 61). These chronicles do not state this clearly, mentioning ‘Alī Pādshāh as the hereditary chief of the Oirats in general and talking about him as the ruler of Baghdad (*DjTR*, 148; al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 57). Apparently, this was correct only after the death of Sutai in 1332. According to the history of Diyarbakir, ‘Alī Pādshāh was appointed to the governorship of Mosul and Irbil after the death of Sutai in 1332, continuing the work of his predecessor of persecuting the *dhimmīs* of the area (Melville, *The Fall*, 42, n. 120). So also Ilish, citing Ibn al-Munshī (Ludger Ilish, “Geschichte der Artuqidenherrschaft von Mardin zwischen Mamluken und Mongolen 1260–1410 AD” [Ph.D. dissertation, Münster/Westfalen, 1984], 98); see also Claude Cahen, “Contribution à l’histoire du Diyār Bakr au quatorzième siècle,” *JA* 243 (1955): 73–74; Avedis K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301–1480* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 76.

⁷⁵ Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 57. Muḥammad (son of) Chichak is meant.

⁷⁶ For more information, see *DjTR*, 139–40, and al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 57. Another interesting remark is given by *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*. A few weeks before the death of Abū Sa‘īd, he ordered the “whole army of Baghdad and Diyarbakir” to proceed towards Arran and stay there, ready to react to the possible advance of Uzbek Khan (al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 59). Keep-



Sutai Akhtachi of the Sunit,⁷⁷ the ruler of Diyarbakir since 1312, was married to Buyan Agha, the daughter of Hülegü's son Möngke Temür and his Oirat wife Öljei Khatun.⁷⁸ Album claims that during his stay in Diyarbakir until his death in 1332, Sutai—and afterwards his son Hajji Taghay—had the powerful support of the Oirat confederacy of the area.⁷⁹ Besides this, Hajji Taghay's nephew, Ibrāhīm Shāh, son of his brother Barambay, was a favorite of Abū Sa'īd and was married to 'Alī Pādshāh's daughter.⁸⁰ These connections served as a basis for the Oirat support of Sutai's family in Diyarbakir, which changed only after Abū Sa'īd's death.⁸¹

The positions of the Oirats at the Ilkhanid court were continuously challenged by other factions at the court, among them the Chobanids and the powerful vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn. Compared to the gradual rise to power of the Chobanids and Jalayirids that took place during the reign of Abū Sa'īd, the outstanding position of Hajji Khatun's brothers was more of an exception, as no other prominent Oirats can be found at that time. The role which 'Alī Pādshāh played in the fall of the Chobanids in the mid-1320s was probably based on his sister's personal enmity towards Choban.⁸² His family's relative security *vis-à-vis* the power holders could not have been achieved without her support. Furthermore, at the end of Abū Sa'īd's rule 'Alī Pādshāh and his brother were in exile or disgrace. However, they preserved their influence and military power, which helped them after the death of Sultan Abū Sa'īd on November 30, 1335. As the Pādshāh did not have a son, a window of opportunity opened for those interested, among them the clan of Tengiz Güregen.

It was the combined influence of Hajji Khatun and her brother 'Alī Pādshāh which stood behind the short-lived but explosive rise of the Oirat star on the political scene of the disintegrating state. Different contenders for the throne were proposed by different power factions. The decision of Ghiyāth al-Dīn and the amirs of the court to give the throne to the descendant of Arigh Böke, Arpa

ing in mind the connections of the then ruler of Baghdad, 'Alī Pādshāh, in Diyarbakir, the fact that the armies of these two areas moved together can mean that this was the Oirat army—or at least an army under the control of Oirat commanders.

⁷⁷Jürgen Paul, "Mongol Aristocrats and Beyliks in Anatolia: A Study of Astarābādī's *Bazm va Razm*," *Eurasian Studies* 9, nos. 1–2 (2011): 115.

⁷⁸JT, 2:475; MA, 79, Melville, *The Fall*, 22.

⁷⁹Stephen Album, "Studies in Ilkhanid History and Numismatics II: A Late Ilkhanid Hoard (741/1340) as Evidence for the History of Diyar Bakr," *Studia Iranica* 14 (1985): 46–47, 71. If this is correct, one wonders who those Oirats were.

⁸⁰Melville, *The Fall*, 32.

⁸¹For more on the connections between the Oirats and the family of Sutai, and their relations to the Ilkhanate and the Mamluks, see Patrick Wing "The Decline of the Ilkhanate and the Mamluk Sultanate's Eastern Frontier," *MSR* 11, no. 2 (2007): 77–88.

⁸²*DjTR*, 144–45; Aubin, "Le quriltai," 179; Melville, *The Fall*, 15.



Khan (1335–36),⁸³ was supposedly a trigger for ‘Alī Pādshāh’s attempt to counter them.⁸⁴ According to Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, old strife between the families of Arigh Böke and Tengiz Güregen from the time of Möngke’s rule broke out and led to the disagreement of ‘Alī Pādshāh and his family with Arpa Khan’s enthronement.⁸⁵ Conflicts between the vizier and ‘Alī Pādshāh during Abū Sa‘īd’s reign might have aggravated the situation. In the beginning of April 1336, ‘Alī Pādshāh put Mūsā Khan, son of Baidu, on the throne.⁸⁶ During the months which preceded these events, he sought the support of Hajji Taghay in Diyarbakir, but was disappointed.⁸⁷ Remarkably, ‘Alī Pādshāh also asked for the support of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, to whom he promised Baghdad.⁸⁸ On April 29–30, 1336, the two parties engaged in battle, which ended when a significant percentage of Arpa Khan’s forces changed sides.⁸⁹ Ghiyāth al-Dīn and Arpa Khan died on May 3 and 15 respectively.⁹⁰ Yet another possible obstacle for ‘Alī Pādshāh’s plans was eliminated during those weeks. A short while after the death of Abū Sa‘īd, the latter’s wife, Dilshad Khatun, daughter of the Chobanid Demashq Khwaja, who was pregnant with a possible contender for the throne, fled to seek the protection of

⁸³He was connected to Arigh Böke through Mangqan, Malik Temür’s son.

⁸⁴Shabānkārahī states that the vizier secured the support of Hajji Khatun, while Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū claims this to be fully Ghiyāth al-Dīn’s decision (al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, 59; *DjTR*, 144; Melville, *The Fall*, 44). Melville suggests that the sympathies of Hajji Khatun were on the side of ‘Alī Pādshāh (Melville, *The Fall*, 44, n. 125).

⁸⁵*DjTR*, 148. This story was mentioned above. If it is true, it could testify to the preservation of family memory over such a long period of time. If false, this story might still have been used by the family of ‘Alī Pādshāh in a time of need to justify its disagreement with the decisions of Ghiyāth al-Dīn.

⁸⁶The Mamluk chronicles also mention these events; see for example Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, *Ägypten und Syrien zwischen 1317 und 1341 in der Chronik des Mufaḍḍal b. Abi l-Faḍā’il*, ed. Samira Kortantamer (Freiburg, 1973), 175 (German), 394 (Arabic).

⁸⁷The relations between ‘Alī Pādshāh and Hajji Taghay changed when the latter feared he would lose the hereditary right to rule in Diyarbakir (Ilish, “Geschichte der Artuqidenherrschaft,” 98).

⁸⁸Melville, *The Fall*, 47. ‘Alī Pādshāh was known as a very devoted Muslim, also being remembered in the chronicles as destroying churches of the area (ibid., n. 136). It is also of importance that Hajji Taghay is reported as being Christian—and so the conflict between the two leaders also seems to have had a religious dimension. There is no clear explanation for the contact with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Most probably this was simply a part of the *Realpolitik* strategy of ‘Alī Pādshāh.

⁸⁹Melville counts about five or six *tümens* changing sides, while especially stressing that Hajji Taghay, Sutai’s son, did not follow their example and remained loyal to Arpa Khan, being very hostile to ‘Alī Pādshāh and the Oirats (Melville, *The Fall*, 49, n. 145; *DjTR*, 152–53). Later Hajji Taghay is found among the supporters of Shaykh Ḥasan in Rum (*DjTR*, 153). Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il gives another date—April 13 to April 27 (Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, *Chronik*, 176 [German], 394 [Arabic]).

⁹⁰Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, 60, and Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 139.



‘Alī Pādshāh. It was probably the military power of the Oirats behind ‘Alī as well as his family connections with her deceased husband that led her to choose him as a defender. However, as Dilshad Khatun gave birth to a girl three days after Arpa Khan’s death, on May 18, ‘Alī Pādshāh could back Mūsā Khan as a legitimate contender. Dilshad Khatun had already refused to enthrone her child.⁹¹

The enthronement of Mūsā Khan in Tabriz on May 6, 1336, made ‘Alī Pādshāh the *de facto* ruler of the majority of both Arab and Persian Iraq.⁹² Nevertheless, unsuccessful in getting the support of the amirs and blamed for breaking the treaty with them, ‘Alī Pādshāh was confronted by Choban’s son-in-law, Shaykh Ḥasan Buzurg, the ruler of Anatolia.⁹³ Shaykh Ḥasan found another contender for the throne, a descendant of Möngke Temür, Hülegü’s son, and enthroned him as Muḥammad Khan.⁹⁴ In the battle on July 24, 1336, between the armies of the two contenders near Qara Darra, ‘Alī Pādshāh was killed. Mūsā Khan fled first to Baghdad (presumably to search for the Oirats’ help) and then to Khuzistan in southern Iraq, one of the dwelling areas of the tribe at that time.⁹⁵ Muḥammad Beg and Ḥāfiz, brothers of ‘Alī Pādshāh, joined him.⁹⁶ The army sent by Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to ‘Alī Pādshāh had already reached Ja’bar, close to the Euphrates. However, when the sultan received news of the death of ‘Alī Pādshāh, the army was sent back.⁹⁷

After the defeat of ‘Alī Pādshāh, a significant number of Oirats, led by his brothers, continued to support the army of Mūsā Khan. Joined by additional forces, among them Maḥmūd ibn Isan Qutluḡ, governor of Hamadan, Mūsā Khan

⁹¹ *DJTR*, 152; Melville, *The Fall*, 46.

⁹² The date of Mūsā Khan’s enthronement is given according to Faryūmādhī’s continuation of Shabānkārahī’s *Majma’ al-Ansāb fī al-Tawārīkh* (Album, “Studies I,” 66, n. 45). Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il calls ‘Alī Pādshāh a *mudabbir* (the real ruler) of Mūsā Khan (Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, *Chronik*, 178 [German], 393 [Arabic]).

⁹³ *DJTR*, 152; al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, 62. On these events and the two decades that followed the collapse of Ilkhanid rule, see also a newly published book on the Jalayirid tribe in the Ilkhanate and the post-Ilkhanid scene: Patrick Wing, *The Jalayirids* (Edinburgh, 2016), 74–100.

⁹⁴ *DJTR*, 153; al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, 62. It is not clear whether this boy had any Oirat roots, as Möngke Temür indeed was married to (among others, probably) the Oirat woman, who theoretically could be one of the ancestors of the child. Even if this was the case, this Oirat connection seems very weak and irrelevant.

⁹⁵ *DJTR*, 154–55; Album, “Studies I,” 67.

⁹⁶ Album, “Studies I,” 67.

⁹⁷ Ilish, “Geschichte der Artuqidenherrschaft,” 99. According to al-Shujā’ī, the army turned back after the arrival of the messenger sent mistakenly by Shaykh Ḥasan and Muḥammad Khan, who thought that the sultan had sent an army to their aid (Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā’ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi*, ed. and trans. Barbara Schäfer [Wiesbaden, 1985], 2:20–21). Ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il does not mention the sultan helping ‘Alī Pādshāh, but speaks of the arrival of the messenger at the court of the sultan (*Chronik*, 183 [German], 391 [Arabic]).



decided to cooperate with yet another contender for the throne in order to withstand Shaykh Ḥasan and his protégé. A new temporary ally of Mūsá Khan and his coalition was Togha Temür, a descendant of Chinggis Khan's brother Jochi Qasar, who was enthroned in Khorasan at the beginning of 1337.⁹⁸ Despite these efforts, the attempt of Mūsá Khan to win the throne did not succeed. On June 15, his army, together with the army of Togha Temür, faced Shaykh Ḥasan near Maraghah, 80 miles south of Tabriz. After the flight of Togha Temür, Mūsá Khan and his Oirat supporters were defeated.⁹⁹ Mūsá Khan was captured and killed by Ḥasan Buzurg on July 10, and Muḥammad, the brother of 'Alī Pādshāh, was killed by Kurds shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁰ The chronicles do not reveal much about the fate of the Oirat supporters of Mūsá Khan. Some massacres against Oirats during the period of Mūsá Khan's wars with Shaykh Ḥasan are mentioned, but their dates are difficult to determine. At least one of the massacres took place near the Jaghatu River in northern Iran.¹⁰¹ According to al-Shujā'ī, after the battle in which 'Alī Pādshāh was killed, a number of Oirats fled towards Mardin, while some of them died on the way.¹⁰² After the death of Mūsá Khan, the senior members of his Baghdadi administration, including the vizier Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd, fled to Cairo.¹⁰³

Following the death of 'Alī Pādshāh, the Oirat players in the post-Ilkhanid realm were fragmented, their matrimonial networks destroyed, and their military probably insufficient to lead the remnants of the Ilkhanate. During the confrontation between Mūsá Khan and Shaykh Ḥasan, Hajji Taghay and his nephew

⁹⁸ Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, 64.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Melville, *The Fall*, 55–56.

¹⁰¹ *DJTR*, 154–55. The Jaghatu river, also known as Zarrine-Rud, is one of the tributaries of Lake Urmia in today's Iranian province of West Azerbaijan (Henry C. Rawlinson, "Notes on a Journey from Tabriz, Through Persian Kurdistan, to the Ruins of Takhti-Soleimán, and from Thence by Zenjān and Ārom, to Gilán, in October and November, 1838; With a Memoir on the Site of the Atropatenian Ecbatana," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 10 [1840]: 11, and Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad: During the Abbasid Caliphate* [New York, 2011], 165). Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il mentions that about a thousand supporters of Mūsá Khan tried to fortify themselves in the Huftiyan fortress, "in [the] Kurdish mountains close to Mosul" (idem, *Chronik*, 185–86 [German], 390 [Arabic]; about the place see Le Strange, *Baghdad*, 193). Their fate is not clear.

¹⁰² Al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, 2:20.

¹⁰³ Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*, 195; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, 34; Ilish, "Geschichte der Artuquidenherrschaft," 99. According to al-Shujā'ī, after his arrival in Egypt he became an amir of a hundred and was appointed vizier of Egypt (al-Shujā'ī, *Beiträge zur mamlukischen Historiographie nach dem Tode al-Malik an-Nāṣirs, mit einer Teiledition der Chronik Shams ad-Dīn ash-Shugā'īs*, transl. and ed. Barbara Schäfer [Freiburg, 1971], 129 and 9 of the Arabic text).



Ibrāhīm Shāh, a son-in-law of ‘Alī Pādshāh, supported the latter.¹⁰⁴ Another Oirat, the Khorasanian Arghun Shāh, grandson of Arghun Aqa, was involved in a chain of fragile alliances with different actors in the territory of Khorasan, aimed at raising a “Khorasanian” Ilkhan as his puppet ruler.¹⁰⁵ Thus, in 1337, he fought on the side of Togha Temür, killing Muḥammad Mulayd, a protégé of Ḥasan Buzurg in Khorasan, with two of his sons in the second half of 1338.¹⁰⁶ At this time, matrimonial connections with the Oirats (and among the Oirats) no longer served as a guarantee of mutual support, especially in comparison to the situation a few decades earlier.¹⁰⁷ The reason for this was apparently the disappearance of the Ilkhanid ruling clan, the central power holder, whose support secured the high status of the Oirats and united them. After the death of those Oirat commanders who rose to power at the time of the Ilkhans, very few Oirat personalities can be found in the chronicles. Their power networks, created and preserved during Ilkhanid history, no longer existed, and the situation became worse with the decentralization of power in the territory of what had a decade earlier been the Ilkhanid state. The report of *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys* regarding the fact that the daughter of Muḥammad Beg, brother of ‘Alī Pādshāh, was given to Shaykh Ḥasan Buzurg after the death of her father should be seen in the light of the arguments given above.¹⁰⁸ Baghdad still seems to have been controlled by the Oirats for some time after the death of ‘Alī Pādshāh, but it was lost relatively quickly.¹⁰⁹ Except for Arghun Shāh (after the death of his cousin Ḥiyaṭugha in 1336), no promising Oirat leader who was able to reunite the tribal power survived in the post-Ilkha-

¹⁰⁴The same conclusion is drawn by Album (Album, “Studies II,” 72–73).

¹⁰⁵He was a son of Oyiratai Ghazan, mentioned above. He and two of his sons, Muḥammad Beg and ‘Alī Beg, controlled Ṭūs, Mashhad, and Nishapur most of the time from the collapse of the Ilkhanate until the conquests of Temür in the 1370s. The group ruled by them was called Ja’un-i Qurban, and the discussion about their origin is ongoing in the research. See more for the discussion of this Oirat lineage in Paul, “Zerfall und Bestehen,” 695–734, and my “New Light.” For a discussion of this period of Khorasanian history see also John M. Smith, Jr., *The History of the Sarbadār Dynasty 336–1381 A.D. and Its Sources* (The Hague/Paris, 1970), 93–102.

¹⁰⁶Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 65.

¹⁰⁷The conflict between two cousins—Arghun Shāh, Oyiratai Ghazan’s son, and yet another grandson of Arghun Aqa Ḥiyaṭugha, son of Amir Hajji—regarding the power on the parts of Ja’un-i Qurban in the mid-fourteenth century is very demonstrative (see more in Paul, “Zerfall und Bestehen,” 705).

¹⁰⁸Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 64–65. A possible explanation is given by Melville, who sees in this marriage an attempt of Shaykh Ḥasan to seal his victory against Mūsā Khan and his supporters and at the same time to strengthen his position by marrying a Hülegüid wife (Melville, *The Fall*, 56, also n. 168).

¹⁰⁹This conclusion can be based on some reports found in *DJTR*, 161–62, 169.



nid realm.¹¹⁰ Hajji, ‘Alī Pādshāh’s son, fled to the Mamluk Sultanate shortly after his father’s demise, following his father’s order, as ‘Alī Pādshāh was reportedly a friend of Sayf al-Dīn Tengiz, the governor of Syria. After his arrival, Tengiz sent Hajji to the sultan, who bestowed upon him an amirate (most probably an *iqṭāʿ*) in Damascus.¹¹¹

The marginalization of Oirat power and their solely local interests in the post-Ilkhanid realm become even more evident during the struggle for power between the Jalayirids and the Chobanids which began after the defeat of Mūsā Khan. This conflict began with the appearance of yet another contender for power, a grandson of Choban named Shaykh Ḥasan Kuchek. At the end of 1337, he staged the return of his father Temür Tash (who had been killed in Egypt by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1328) and proclaimed a new contender to lead the Chobanids (and even married to him two wives of his father, including his own mother).¹¹² A new coalition of Chobanid forces was created, and it included several unspecified Oirats, the former supporters of Shaykh Ḥasan. The rule of Ḥasan Buzurg and Muḥammad Khan in Tabriz came to an end on July 16, 1338, after the defeat of the Jalayirid by the Chobanid coalition.¹¹³ After another turbulent period, the pseudo-Temür Tash was denounced by his former master, Ḥasan Kuchek, and, after unifying his army and some Oirat forces (probably different from those staying with Arghun Shāh in Khorasan), entrenched himself finally in Baghdad.¹¹⁴ Following his victory against Mūsā Khan near Maraghah, Shaykh Ḥasan gave Baghdad and the area of the Oirats to his amir Qarā Ḥasan, but it seems that the Oirats still preserved their dominion there.¹¹⁵ At the same time, Ḥasan Kuchek enthroned a sister of Sultan Abū Saʿīd, Sati Beg, in Tabriz as a puppet ruler.¹¹⁶ She

¹¹⁰Paul, “Zerfall und Bestehen,” 705.

¹¹¹Al-Shujāʿī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, 2:44–45. I was unable to check the Arabic text of the source and used the German translation only. For this reason, the exact name of ‘Alī Pādshāh’s son is still unclear, as the translator of the German volume calls him “Hawaga.” “Khawaja” is thus my reading of it.

¹¹²As the real Temür Tash was executed by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 1328, the appearance of the false one caused a reaction from Cairo. A messenger was sent to Taghay ibn Sutai in order to inform him about the real state of affairs, but his mission was unsuccessful (Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Chronik*, 194–96 [German], 384–85 [Arabic]).

¹¹³*DJTR*, 158–59; cf. Wing, *The Jalayirids*, 86–87.

¹¹⁴As far as the information of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū is concerned, the pseudo-Temür Tash and some of the Oirats who cooperated with him controlled Baghdad and Arab Iraq at some point in 1339. A conflict finally arose between the two sides and the Oirats killed pseudo-Temür Tash (*DJTR*, 161–62).

¹¹⁵Al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 64.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, 67; *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*, 64. Al-Aharī is not clear enough, as he mentions both Hajji Khatun and Sati Beg in the same context. The translation by van Loon is as follows: “In Warzuqan, Hajji Khatun, the mother of the august sultan Abū Saʿīd ..., and Sati Beq was installed on the throne



ruled for another year, then was dismissed and forced to marry another puppet of Ḥasan Kuchek, enthroned around May 1339 as Sulayman Khan (1339–44).¹¹⁷ The coalition between pseudo-Temür Tash and some of the Oirat amirs was preserved during most of this period, controlling Baghdad and Arab Iraq.¹¹⁸

The fate of the Oirats in the post-Ilkhanid space in the following decades is somewhat unclear. As we can learn from the sources (as well as from their silence), following the rise of Oirat power during the first years after the collapse of the dynasty in 1335, the Oirats never succeeded in positioning themselves in the post-Ilkhanid world as a unified power comparable to the Jalayirid example.¹¹⁹ Starting in the 1340s, the Oirats continuously appear in the chronicles. Until the invasion of Temür, Arghun Shāh and his clan remained in power in

and obeyed” (al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 67). Beyond this, it is difficult to understand the remark of van Loon who suggests reading “sister” instead of “mother” in the cited sentence (ibid., n. 186), since Hajji Khatun was definitely the mother of Abū Saʿīd. A Russian translation of the same source makes it clear that both Hajji Khatun and Sati Beg were enthroned. At the same time, the Russian researchers mention that according to Hamdallah Qazwini, only Sati Beg was raised to the throne (al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Sheykh Uweys*, transl. and comm. M. D. Kyzimov and V. Z. Piriev [Baku, 1984], 117, n. 140). Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū mentions only Sati Beg (*DJTR*, 160).

¹¹⁷ Album, “Studies I,” 78–79. The date of her dismissal is unknown, but the first coins fabricated in Tabriz in Sulayman’s name appear in 1339 (*DJTR*, 164–65, and Album, “Studies I,” 78). The fate of Sulayman Shāh is not clear, but coins in his name were still minted in Baghdad and throughout the Jazira in 1344 and in Baghdad in 1345 (Album, “Studies I,” 100).

¹¹⁸ *DJTR*, 161–62. Ḥāfiẓ, the brother of ‘Alī Pādshāh, can be found on the side of Sati Beg and Ḥasan Buzurg in Baghdad in 1339–40 (al-Shujāʿī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, 81). This is confirmed by the fact that the messengers sent by Ḥāfiẓ and Ḥasan Buzurg are said to have come to Cairo that same year and to have asked the sultan for military help (Ibn Abī al-Faḍāʾil, *Chronik*, 213 [German], 376 [Arabic]).

¹¹⁹ Concerning the tribal units of Timur’s army which could be clearly identified as such, it seems that the Oirats never appeared in such a context, probably because they were mainly integrated into the Ilkhanid power networks, but not into the Chaghadaid, and they did not accompany Temür or were not connected to him in the first decades of his rise to power (cf. Beatrice Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* [Cambridge, 2007], 14–16, also 21–24). Note also a source of unclear origin from Mughal times (mid-seventeenth century), which was published in English translation by Major Davy in 1783 and was then understood as a record by Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī from Temür himself (idem, *Political and Military Institutes of Tamerlan*, transl. Major Davy [Delhi, repr. 2009]). According to Habib, this text was not a later forgery of the Mughal period but a genuine, original Turkic text, originating probably from the first decades after Temür’s death and representing thus “a very early post-Timur historical tradition” (Irfan Habib, “Timur in the Political Tradition and Historiography of Mughal India,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 3, no. 4 [1997]: 307–8). If so, this text, which also includes a detailed list of the twelve main tribal units of the Temürid army, is of great interest. Naming such tribes as the Barlas, Jalayir, Arghun, and Suldus, this list clearly does not include any mention of the Oirats (*Political and Military Institutes*, 112–13), which can also be seen as a reflection of the Oirats’ position under Temür, especially compared to Ilkhanid times.



Khorasan (Tūs and Mashhad, as well as other areas).¹²⁰ It seems also that there was a significant Oirat presence in the Diyarbakir area at least until the end of the fourteenth century.¹²¹ With time, mentions of the Oirats become scarcer. The name “Oirats,” however, lingers continuously on the political scene until at least the early fifteenth century, and in some rare cases also later.¹²² On the one hand, it appears as the identifier of some military units or groups, given usually as “the Oirat troops” (*lashkar-i ūyrāt*),¹²³ which participated in battles between different

¹²⁰See, e.g., *DJTR*, 161; for more information on the Ja'un-i Qurban under the Timurids and more sources see Paul, “Zerfall und Bestehen,” 713–18. It may be of interest that at the end of the nineteenth century, the area north of Mashhad was still called a “yurt of Juni Qurban tribe” (Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Ṣanī' al-Dawlah, *Maṭla' al-Shams* [Teheran, 1884–86; repr. 1976], 158; Minorsky, “Tūs,” 744).

¹²¹See, e.g., two remarks of Yazdī, in which the Oirats or their leaders appear in the context of Diyarbakir. The first one is Yazdī's description of Temūr's campaign in Diyarbakir, where he mentions one of the local commanders named Kyzyl Mir 'Alī Oyirat, who submitted to Temūr (Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abbāsī [Tehran, 1336/1957–58], 1:469). The second concerns the division of Temūr's empire in 1403, a time during which Temūr gave Arab Iraq and Diyarbakir “[as well as the] Oirats and hazarajāt of those places” to Aba Bakr Mirza (Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, 2:368–69). Concerning the term “hazarajāt”—“little thousand”—see H. R. Roemer, “The Jalayirids, Muzaffarids and Sarbadārs,” *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. P. Jackson and L. Lockhart (Cambridge, 1986), 6:19, who mentions this term in the context of the establishment of Ja'un-i Qurban. This also raises the issue whether the Oirats of Diyarbakir could have become parts of the Aq Qoyūnlū and Qarā Qoyūnlū Turkmen confederations, which evolved during the second half of the fourteenth century in the Diyarbakir areas. Note that the city of Āmed (Diyarbakr) became a capital of the Aq Qoyūnlū after Temūr made the Bayandor family, the leading clan of the confederation, custodians of this area in the early fourteenth century (R. Quiring-Zoche, “Aq Qoyūnlū,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2:163–68). Note also an interesting remark of Zayn al-Dīn Qazvīnī, according to whom a group of Oirats intended to go to Diyarbakir and to join Qarā Muḥammad Turkman, the father of Qarā Yūsuf, the future leader of the Qarā Qoyūnlū (idem, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i Guzīdah*, ed. Īraj Afshār [Tehran, 1372/1993], 100). Due to the limitations of this paper I will not delve into this issue further, but it is worth future research.

¹²²The Timurid section of *Mu'izz al-Ansāb* does not include any amirs clearly identified as Oirat, except one, named Muḥammad, the amir of Sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā, the ruler of Herat (1469–1506, except 1470). See MA, 188; Shiro Ando, *Timuridische Emire nach dem Mu'izz al-ansāb: Untersuchung zur Stammesaristokratie Zentralasiens im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1992), 194. About Ḥusayn Bāyqarā see Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden, 2007), 43–73.

¹²³See, e.g., al-Aharī, *Tārīkh-i Shaykh Uweys*, 66, 80; *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*, 158; Hāfiz-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, ed. Sayyid Kamāl Ḥājj-i Sayyid Jawādī (Tehran, 1380/2001), 1:538 and passim, 3:149; *DJTR*, 173. Oirats also appear in the army of Shaykh Uweys in 1358 against Akhidjuk, ruler of Tabriz (cf. Wing, *The Jalayirids*, 123, n. 23). Taking into account the fact that the base of Shaykh Uweys was in Baghdad as well as the previous connections between the tribe and Baghdad's vicinity, it is plausible to suppose that at least some of them remained there (*DJTR*, 195). The



coalitions and permanently changed sides, or in some cases as “Oirat servants” (*aḥshām-i ūyrāt*).¹²⁴ On the other hand, the Timurid chronicles include a remarkable number of personalities whose personal names include the addition “Oirat.”¹²⁵ Though in most cases these were the names of different military commanders in Timurid areas, they were not of primary rank. Therefore, the Oirats, as a tribal unit, do not seem to have played a significant role in the Timurid world, especially in comparison to their role in the Ilkhanid period, but their presence is unmistakable and clearly points to the preservation of their tribal identity (even if only in terms of their tribal name) at least until the early fifteenth century.

Oirat dispersion in the Ilkhanate and assimilation in the Islamic environment can be traced in two different periods of time. First, there is the period when the dynasty was strong, during which time we are mainly able to follow what happened to the tribal nobility and its relations with the central power. As shown, various Oirat elite families dominated the political landscape of the Ilkhanate at different stages of its history. In some regard, being located mostly along the borders in the northeastern (Khorasan) and northwestern (Diyarbakir) areas, Oirat tribal groups, whose support was well secured through such networks, served as a security belt for the dynasty, staying at the same time relatively far from the power centers. The status of the tribe was secured mainly by its military capabilities and strategic locations, and with very few exceptions Oirats are not present in the bureaucratic services of the Ilkhanate. After the massacre of Arghun Aqa’s family in 1297, tribal status *vis-à-vis* the ruling clan and other players at the court changed. Yet Oirat positions were still strong, with the family of Tengiz Güregen playing an important role (especially in the times of Abū Sa’id and after his death). While the migration of the Oirat *tümen* to the Mamluk Sultanate in 1296 probably weakened the Oirats in Diyarbakir, it was the fall of the Hülegüid dynasty which led to a severe loss of tribal strength in Greater Iran. We can suppose that the conversion to Islam reached the Oirat nobility relatively early, in the first decades of the Oirat presence in Iran and Iraq, at least in the cases of Amir Arghun and Tengiz Güregen. The conversion to Islam of the tribal nobility (and, as one can suppose, of the main mass of the tribesmen towards the first decades of the fourteenth century) prepared the ground for the following *de facto* integration of the Oirats also as a tribal body in the Ilkhanid and post-Ilkhanid Islamized

sources do not allow us to clarify the issue of the origin of the troops under the command of Tengiz Güregen’s clan, or their location during the Ilkhanate period in general.

¹²⁴ Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 3:148, 399–400.

¹²⁵ Some examples are Sayyid Aḥmad, a *kalāntar* (chief, tribal leader) of the Oirat tribe, killed by Sultan Aḥmad Jalayir’s army in 1378 (Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū, *Zubdat al-Tawārīkh*, 2:930); Amir Šāliḥ Oirat, mentioned by Zayn al-Dīn Qazvīnī (idem, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i Guzīdah*, 99–100), as well as Shaykh ‘Alī Oirat, *shahna* of Erbil, who went to meet Temür in 1393 near Tikrit (Yazdī, *Ẓafarnāmah*, 1:460).



realm in the broader sense. The conversion may have been a political choice for the Oirat elite, but was certainly not the trigger of Oirat assimilation in a larger sense, which eventually led to the disappearance of the tribe as such from the chronicles around the beginning of the fifteenth century. The immediate trigger, rather, was the collapse of Ilkhanid power networks connected directly to Hül-egüid central rule. Thus, when Ilkhanid central rule came to an end, the history of the Oirat tribe as a political body (except for the short rise of the Oirat star in 1335–36) also ended and the second period started. The Oirats were no longer able to create long-term strategic connections with the leading political core, but had to compete with other tribal groups. The result for the next decades was a power decline and marginalization of the tribe in comparison with other players, such as the Chobanids and Jalayirids. The main reason for such a development can be seen precisely in the way the tribe positioned itself throughout the whole period of Ilkhanate history and developed its matrimonial networks.

Analyzing the period from the collapse of the Ilkhanate until the early fifteenth century, one can also attempt to analyze the larger tribal groups. In a sense, tribal uniformity (even if connected not to the whole tribe but to specific clans) had been preserved and probably even strengthened among the Oirats as long as the Ilkhanid dynasty existed and flourished. When the dynasty disappeared and the *coup de etat* of ‘Alī Pādshāh failed, the Oirat nobility were either purged in the battles or lost their positions as the leading forces in the post-Ilkhanid realm. The Oirat tribesmen, however, did not disappear immediately, and at least in Diyarbakir (and partly in Baghdad and possibly Khorasan as well) they remained under the control of the local Oirat nobility. Loss of the connection to the ruling house, however, along with the ongoing Islamization, led throughout the following four or five decades to the *de facto* integration of the Oirats into the broader tribal landscape of the post-Ilkhanid space (probably due in part to their entry into newly established groups like the Turkmen confederations). The reason it took so long lies, in my opinion, exactly in the way the Oirat tribal identity was preserved and empowered during Ilkhanid times.

Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate

The mechanisms of Oirat conversion and assimilation into the Ilkhanid realm can be seen only through an analysis of the Oirat nobility, the top level of the tribal elite. The history of the lower levels of the tribe, their daily life, and assimilation processes is not accessible through existing sources. The case of the Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate, to which the next part of this article will be dedicated, therefore presents a unique case for a closer analysis of the lower strata of Oirat society in continuous contact with an Islamic host environment, providing rich material for comparisons with the Ilkhanate.



As a starting point I would like to take a remark of al-Nuwayrī, according to whom:

Numerous of them [Oirats] died. And amirs took their grown up sons to serve them, and they were the most beautiful people. And soldiers and others took their daughters for marriage. And those who were left of them became part of the army, dispersed in the Muslim lands and converted to Islam. Those who are left of them are in the [military]¹²⁶ service until today.¹²⁷

Three main issues from this quote deserve to be highlighted, namely the territorial dispersion of the tribesmen, their professional occupation in the Mamluk Sultanate, and their social contacts with the surrounding Islamic, primarily Mamluk, society. In the case of the Ilkhanid Oirats the question of territorial dispersion was left without a clear answer, though some main locations could be identified. The Mamluk sources, however, mention two main locations of imposed Oirat resettlement in the Sultanate in the late thirteenth to fourteenth centuries: in Cairo and on the northern Palestinian coast.¹²⁸ According to al-Maqrīzī, the Oirats settled in the northernmost quarter of Cairo (then the outskirts of the city), al-Ḥusayniyah, outside the Bāb al-Futūḥ, during the reign of Sultan al-ʿĀdil Kitbughā.¹²⁹ At that time it was already a center of *futūwah*¹³⁰ groups and not the most prestigious part of the capital, although certainly one of its liveliest.¹³¹ Since

¹²⁶This according to the translation of Elham (Shah M. Elham, “Kitbugā und Lāḡin: Studien zur Mamluken-Geschichte nach Baibars al-Mansūrī und an-Nuwairī” [Ph.D. dissertation, Freiburg i. Br., 1977], 173).

¹²⁷Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:268. Cf. al-Maqrīzī, who repeats some of this information and also says that they spread across the coastal areas, in particular in Atlit, or entered the local armies, or were dispersed (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:813). Cf. also Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:205, and David Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān: A Reexamination (Part C1),” *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972): 135.

¹²⁸Ayalon also mentions that the Oirat presence was known in the area of Qus in Upper Egypt, but it is not clear on which sources he bases this statement (David Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān: A Reexamination [Part C2]: Al-Maqrīzī’s Passage on the Yāsa under the Mamluks,” *Studia Islamica* 38 [1973]: 121); also cf. *ibid.*, n. 1, for the discussion of another claim of al-Maqrīzī concerning the settlement of the Mongol *wāfidīs* in the area of Al-Lawq.

¹²⁹Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 43. For a good map of Mamluk Cairo, on which the location of al-Ḥusayniyah can be clearly found, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo of the Mamluks* (London, 2007), 52–53.

¹³⁰Originally these groups included young noblemen gathered according to their interests (from sport to mystical search). However, towards the end of the thirteenth century the *futūwah* acquired somewhat negative, often criminal, connotations in Egypt (Robert Irwin, “Futuwwa’: Chivalry and Gangsterism in Medieval Cairo,” *Muqarnas* 21 [2004]: 162–64).

¹³¹Irwin, “Futuwwa’,” 163. According to al-Maqrīzī’s statement, cited by André Raymond, “Ḥusayniyya was the most prosperous artery of Old Cairo and Cairo” (André Raymond, *Cairo: City*



Fatimid times, this area had been inhabited by auxiliary military forces. Thus, seven thousand Armenian soldiers of the Fatimid vizier Badr al-Jamālī (1015–94) settled in this area together with the Armenian community of Cairo.¹³² The name of the quarter itself, al-Ḥusaynīyah, is derived from the name of the regiment of black slaves that were also settled there in Fatimid times.¹³³ Before the Mamluk period and during the early years of the Sultanate, this quarter (which later included the *zāwīyah* of Shaykh Khadr al-Mihrānī, Baybars' tutor) was still a residence for the military, inhabited since the 1260s by numerous Mongol immigrants from the Ilkhanate.¹³⁴ As has been mentioned, in the 1290s the quarter accepted a new wave of Mongols, this time of Oirat origin. If the decision to settle them in the quarter was Kitbughā's, he perhaps sought to keep the Oirats outside the central areas of Cairo, where existing Mamluk regiments were lodging. It seems reasonable to suggest that during the months between Kitbughā's first meeting with the Oirat leadership and his overthrow, a number of Oirats moved to Cairo (first to al-Ḥusaynīyah) spontaneously or were brought there by Mamluk commanders. These Oirats created a base for further tribal settlement in this area.¹³⁵ Regarding Oirat settlement in Cairo not much else is known, in part because Cairo faced a process of decline as a result of the years of the Great Crisis (1348–1412), which included three waves of the Black Death (1348–49, 1374–75, and 1379–81), a precipitous decrease in population, and a series of economic disasters, most significantly

of History [Cairo, 2001], 123). Indeed, it seems that the quarter was important enough for the city, at least in the first half of the fourteenth century, as eight out of ten mosques in the quarter were built during Sultan al-Nāṣir's reign (Raymond, *Cairo*, 124, 136).

¹³²Thus according to al-Maqrīzī; see Seda B. Dadoyan, *The Fatimid Armenians: Cultural and Political Interaction in the Near East* (Leiden, 1977), 116, on this issue and its historical context.

¹³³Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY, 1994), 180, n. 53; Raymond, *Cairo*, 55.

¹³⁴Irwin, "Futuwwa," 163.

¹³⁵According to Raymond, their numbers were not significant, probably amounting only to several hundred (Raymond, *Cairo*, 124). It seems plausible that more Oirats appeared in Cairo during the first half of the fourteenth century. At the same time, as Sato remarks, citing al-Maqrīzī, at its height the suburb's population did not exceed 7,000 people (Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 109, n. 2). If so, even several hundred could indeed be of significance for the quarter. Note also al-Maqrīzī, who mentions that the quarter expanded due to the Tatar refugees who were settled there in the late thirteenth century, the Oirats without doubt being counted as such (al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:22; Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo*, 55).



at the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹³⁶ At the same time, the Oirat presence in the quarter can still be traced up to the early fifteenth century.¹³⁷

As noted above, however, a great part of the tribe had been settled in the area of Atlit. The sources stress that on their way to the coastal areas the Oirats were not permitted to enter large cities, such as Damascus, instead staying in the open fields and having markets organized for them outside the urban area (in the areas of al-Ṣanamayn and al-Kiswah).¹³⁸ Given that the decision for their relocation was made by the sultan himself, one can suppose that these strict policies were also formulated by him.¹³⁹ Information concerning the ensuing developments is scattered, but one can find remarks concerning the Oirat presence in Palestine and northwestern Bilād al-Shām throughout the whole fourteenth century. There are hints of Oirats located in Damascus and Safed throughout the first half of the fourteenth century, and in Tripoli (Bilād al-Shām) in the early fifteenth (a fact which might suggest a continuous dispersion of the Oirats from the area of Atlit). A peculiar remark by al-Ṣafadī indicates that a group of Oirats could be found in the inner circle of Sunqur Shāh Shams al-Dīn al-Manṣūrī, a Mamluk

¹³⁶ About the Great Crisis and its influence on Cairo and its suburbs see Raymond, *Cairo*, 138–48, and esp. 147–48, about the fate of the al-Ḥusayniyah quarter (and cf. André Raymond, “Al-Maqrīzī’s *Khiṭaṭ* and the Urban Structure of Mamluk Cairo,” *MSR* 7, no. 2 [2003]: 150–51, on the history of the quarter according to al-Maqrīzī). See also Ayalon’s article about the impact of the plague on the Mamluk army, especially in Egypt (David Ayalon [Neustadt], “The Plague and Its Effects upon the Mamluk Army,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 [1946]: 67–73), as well as the relevant passage in Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* [Cambridge, 1993], 4).

¹³⁷ According to al-Maqrīzī, the Oirats “became known for their *zu‘ara* (gangsterism) and *shujā‘a* (boldness), and they were called al-Badūra. So an individual Oirat might be called al-Badr such-and-such. They adopted the dress of *futuwwa*, and they carried weapons. Stories about these people proliferate” (transl. by Irwin). Irwin also suggests that the Oirats organized their activities in Cairo based on the *futūwah* lodges, and that “there was no such thing as popular *futuwwa* in Egypt prior to the arrival of the Oirats and that they brought its rituals with them from Ilkhanid Iraq” (Irwin, “Futuwwa,” 164; cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:44–45). He does not explain his statement.

¹³⁸ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:299; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:205. So also Ibn al-Dawādārī: “and no one of them [Oirat tribesmen] succeeded to enter Damascus, and common people and artisans of all kinds went out to them [out of the city]” (Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:362). Both al-Ṣanamayn and al-Kiswah are today cities to the south of Damascus, located about 50 and 13 km from it respectively.

¹³⁹ On the one hand, as Ayalon stresses, these policies conformed with the usual Mamluk policies of dealing with the big waves of *wāfidiyah* (Ayalon, “Great Yāsa C1,” 135). On the other hand, it might be that Kitbughā also sought to prevent the Oirats from assimilation and dispersion, hoping to keep them as his power base *vis-à-vis* the established Mamluk circles. Nonetheless, it is difficult to surmise what the sultan’s policies towards the tribesmen would have been if his fall had not followed so abruptly and whether he would have tried to keep them separate in the following years.



governor of Safed in the early fourteenth century. According to the text, a few of those Oirats were in contact with the governor and hunted lions with him.¹⁴⁰ Another remark by al-Ṣafadī concerns a significant amount of the *iqṭāʿāt* which were given to the Oirats (and other *wāfidiyah*) troops in the area of Damascus by Sayf al-Dīn Ṭughay, amir of the stables (*amīr akhūr*) of Tankiz, the governor of Bilād al-Shām.¹⁴¹ Tankiz became governor in 1312, which means that the Oirat presence in Damascus was still relevant and recognizable as such in Bilād al-Shām during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This forced the people in the inner circle of Tankiz to take care of their needs (probably expecting their favors or support in return).¹⁴² Additionally, as mentioned in the *Nayl al-Amal fī Dhayl al-Duwal* of ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ, there was a quarter (*maḥallah*, residential neighborhood) called the *maḥallah al-ʿuwayrātīyah* in Tripoli around 809/1406–7.¹⁴³ It seems that a group of the tribe moved there at some point and settled in or established a quarter, which bore the trace of their name until at least the early Ottoman period. Two Ottoman censuses of the mid-sixteenth century state that a small number of Muslim families (one says 18, the other 28) inhabited the quarter, but nothing is known concerning the ethnic affiliation of the inhabitants.¹⁴⁴

The second issue on which Mamluk sources provide more data than the Persian ones is the personal and group careers of the tribesmen. First, as seen in the remarks of al-Nuwayrī and al-Maqrizī, some of the Oirats were taken into personal service of Mamluk amirs or entered the army. We will return to the first point while discussing the perceived beauty of the Oirats and its consequences. Concerning the second, however, it is known from other sources that the major-

¹⁴⁰ Khalil Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. Bernd Radtke (Wiesbaden, 1979), 15:499.

¹⁴¹ Al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. Wadad Al-Qadi (Wiesbaden, 2009), 16:447; Khalil Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-Aṣr wa-Aʿwān al-Naṣr* (Damascus, 1997), 2:599; cf. Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣafī wa-al-Mustawfā baʿd al-Wāfī* (Cairo, 1990), 6:407. Both sources mention a “thousand” *iqṭāʿāt*, but this probably just means “a lot.”

¹⁴² As we know, however, that the Oirats were accepted mainly in the *ḥalqah* regiments (see below), the importance of those Oirats in Syria and their possible influence on local politics should not be overestimated. It seems, however, that there were personal relations between Tankiz and the Oirats (see above the remark by al-Shujāʿī concerning Hajji, son of ʿAli Pādshāh, who fled to Tankiz in 738/1337–38 and got an *iqṭaʿ* in Syria).

¹⁴³ ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalil al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-Amal fī Dhayl al-Duwal* (Sidon, 2002), 1:23.

¹⁴⁴ ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ, *Nayl al-Amal*, 1:23, n. 4. I was not able to access the Ottoman census mentioned in the footnote by the editor of the Arabic edition, ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmuri. From the text of the footnote it seems that there is no basis to claim that those families found in the census were identified as Oirats. See more about the text and the author in Sami G. Massoud, *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian Period* (Leiden, 2007), 67–69.



ity of the Oirats entered the *ḥalqah* units, the usual resort for the *wāfidiyyah*.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, as far back as 1296, many of their elders and commanders were appointed as *ḥalqah* amirs with *iqṭāʿāt*.¹⁴⁶ Subsequent developments are less clear. In 1309 an Oirat unit (most likely stationed in Syria) joined al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during his exile in Karak, but as soon as the latter was restored to the throne, the Royal Mamluks forced him to dismiss the Oirats, not wanting them to have equal status and claiming the Oirats were untrustworthy.¹⁴⁷ There is not much information about this unit, however.

Oirats were involved not only in the military itself, but could also be found, for example, as attendants (or servants, *aṭbāʿ*) of the Mamluks in the Cairo citadel around the early 1330s.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, there is information that in the early 1330s a number of Oirats served as arms-bearers of the *silāḥdārīyah* and *jamdārīyah* mamluks.¹⁴⁹ Not much is known about these Oirat groups either, but, remembering al-Maqrizī's critical discussion of Oirat criminal behavior in Cairo toward the end of the fourteenth century, one wonders what alternatives remained for the hundreds of young Oirats who did not succeed in, or did not want to enter, military service *per se*.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Ayalon, "Wafidiyya," 99–100. The *ḥalqah*, one of the units of the Mamluk army (but known also under the Ayyubids), was composed mainly of non-Mamluks and was, as stressed by Levanoni, "a flexible military structure, open to change according to circumstances" (Amalia Levanoni, "The Ḥalqah in the Mamluk Army," *MSR* 15 [2011]: 38; on this unit see also David Ayalon, "Ḥalka," *EI2*, 3:99). It included a certain amount of different *wāfidiyyah* groups, but also a number of sons of the mamluks (*awlād al-nās*), and, moreover, some unfortunate mamluks and even amirs in a number of cases, as well as an increasing number of civilians starting from the early fourteenth century (see Levanoni, "Ḥalqah," 42–44; David Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army–II," *BSOAS* 15 [1953]: 449; Ulrich Haarmann, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fiefholders in Late Medieval Egypt," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi [Beirut, 1984], 142). Note also the remark of Ayalon, according to which the *ḥalqah* in Syria seems to have been a much stronger and much more important element than in Egypt (Ayalon, "Ḥalka," 99). It is therefore logical to surmise that the main Oirats in the *ḥalqah* units were stationed in Syria, which is also the reason why one hears about Oirat *iqṭāʿāt* in Syria and not in Egypt.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Maqrizī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 43.

¹⁴⁷ Ayalon, "Wafidiyya," 101; Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 8:258; al-Maqrizī, *Sulūk*, 2:83.

¹⁴⁸ Ayalon, "Wafidiyya," 101.

¹⁴⁹ See David Ayalon, "L'Esclavage du mamelouk," *Oriental Notes and Papers* 1 (1951): 15, for this issue and additional sources; cf. Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995), 61.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Shujāʿī's *Tārīkh* includes an interesting remark about a group called by the chronicler "*jund baṭālah min awlād al-Ḥusayniyyah*," "... soldiers from the sons of Ḥusayniyyah," which participated in the revolt of the Royal Mamluks against Sayf al-Dīn Qawsun al-Sāqī, one of the favorites of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who served as a regent of his infant son al-Ashraf. The revolt took place in late September and early October of 1341. Barbara Schäfer translated this sentence as indicating



Rather remarkable in this context is the case of one Qararnah al-Silāḥdār, who arrived in the Sultanate with the Oirats of Tūraqai Güregen and provides a rather unique example of an Oirat from the migration wave of 1296 who rose high in Mamluk society. According to Ibn Ḥajar, he advanced in his career under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad when the sultan sent him as an envoy to the Ilkhan Abū Saʿīd. The most obvious reason for this decision would be his knowledge of the Mongol language and customs, but taking into consideration the importance of the Oirat in the close circle of Abū Saʿīd, one wonders whether it was not the Oirat affiliation of Qararnah that led to his choice as an envoy to the Ilkhan. After returning from the Ilkhanate, Qararnah was appointed a *silāḥdār*. After the collapse of the Ilkhanate, he was sent by the sons of al-Nāṣir, al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl (1342–45) and al-Kāmil Sayf al-Dīn Shaʿbān (1345–46), as an envoy to the then ruler of Baghdad, Shaykh Ḥasan Buzurg. After his return, Qararnah was appointed an amir of 40 (*ṭablkḥānah*). He died in 749/1348–49 of the plague.¹⁵¹ Although the reason this specific Oirat had such a different trajectory is not clear, it serves as an interesting confirmation that the Oirats of Tūraqai could make a rather successful career in the Sultanate, the most deciding factors probably being their personal qualities and their patrons among the Mamluks at the beginning of their stay. Unfortunately, however, more information is not accessible.

The third issue is the least tangible one: the identity of the group. As mentioned by al-Nuwayrī (and confirmed by al-Maqrizī), the group converted to Islam. It is not clear whether the process of Islamization was fully completed when al-Nuwayrī wrote his book, as the chronicler died in 1331, less than 40 years after the Oirats' arrival. Yet it seems clear from the quoted passage that three decades after the arrival of the Oirat *wāfidiyah* in the Sultanate, the lines between the tribesmen and the surrounding society had blurred and their assimilation, in which Islamization played a leading role, was on its way. In addition to the objective processes listed, one should mention that the Oirats were not only non-Muslims, but were also not part of *ahl al-kitāb* from the point of view of Islamic law, and as such could not benefit from the advantages of the relatively secure and stable status *shariʿah* could give to *ahl al-dhimmah*. Being idolaters according to the *shariʿah*, the small group of Oirats with shamanistic beliefs could not expect any recognition from the Muslim religious and political authorities. In the

two groups, namely the soldiers and the sons of Ḥusaynīyah. However, I cannot see this from the manuscript provided in the end of her book (Schäfer, *Beiträge nach dem Tode*, 155, and cf. *ibid.*, 31 of the Arabic text). One wonders whether these “soldiers” were of Oirat blood, but the sources are silent concerning this issue. See Frédéric Bauden, “The Sons of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the Politics of Puppets: Where Did It All Start?” *MSR* 13, no. 1 (2009): 53–81 for discussion of the period immediately following al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's death, as well as the book by Schäfer, cited above.

¹⁵¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah*, 3:248; al-Maqrizī, *Sulūk*, 2:796; cf. Nakamachi, “Rank and Status,” 74 and 80.



longer run this also stimulated the Islamization of the tribe.¹⁵² It should also be kept in mind that the Oirats came from the Ilkhanate at a time when conversion to Islam had already become a common occurrence.¹⁵³ The conversion of Ghazan had already taken place only a few months before Türaqai's escape.¹⁵⁴ Surely the Oirats were already acquainted with Islam when they arrived in the Sultanate, especially after living in the Islamic environment of the Ilkhanate.¹⁵⁵ All these factors accelerated the Oirat assimilation into the Muslim society.

Analysis of the Islamization of other groups under Muslim rule throughout history (such as Jews and Christians) has illustrated that only those groups who succeeded in maintaining economic independence survived multiple persecutions, preserved their ethnic homogeneity, and were able to resist conversion to Islam in the long run.¹⁵⁶ The Oirat case was different. Everything that happened to the Oirats after their arrival tended to weaken the boundaries between them and the dominant society, eroding their identity. First, there were purges of their leadership. Second, intermarriage, mentioned by al-Nuwayrī, played an important role. According to Muslim law, interfaith marriage is permitted only between Muslim men and non-Muslim women, forbidding Muslim women to marry non-

¹⁵²Of course, when the Muslim conquerors faced idolaters in India, mostly beginning with the Ghaznavid period, legal scholars had to develop judicial arguments for how to deal with them, usually *de facto* accepting their right to live and preserve their religion without conversion. The situation in India cannot be compared with the Oirat situation in Egypt due to the small number of Oirats compared to the size of the Hindu population in India. See, for example, Nehemia Levtzion, "Towards a Comparative Study of Islamization," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York/London, 1979), 13, and Peter Hardy, "Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia: A Preliminary Survey of the Literature," in *ibid.*, 68–99.

¹⁵³Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islam," 161.

¹⁵⁴*JT*, 3:620–621.

¹⁵⁵Such a previous acquaintance with Islam, however, could also have promoted the Oirats' Islamization in the longer run.

¹⁵⁶On the subject of Jews, for example, in comparison to the Christian communities of Northern Africa and the Samaritans, see Shlomo D. Goitein, "Religion in Everyday Life as Reflected in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza," in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. Shlomo D. Goitein (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 3–17; Milka Levy-Rubin, "New Evidence Relating to the Process of Islamization in Palestine in the Early Muslim Period—the Case of Samaria," *Journal of the Economic and Society History of the Orient* 23, no. 3 (2000): 268–69; David J. Wasserstein, "Islamisation and the Conversion of the Jews," in *Conversions islamiques: Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, ed. Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (Paris, 2001), 55–56; Glayds Frantz-Murphy, "Conversion in Early Islamic Egypt: The Economic Factor," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. R. Hoyland (Aldershot, 2004), 14–17.



Muslim men.¹⁵⁷ Further, children born of mixed marriages automatically receive the religion of the father according to Islamic law, meaning that at least *de jure* the child becomes Muslim. Third, the dispersion of the Oirats throughout the Muslim lands also weakened their connections with their fellow tribesmen and, after they joined the Mamluk army, stimulated their conversion to Islam. Fourth, the Oirats could have found themselves in the Mamluk Sultanate in the early fourteenth century in a situation similar to (or much worse than) that of the Samaritans in Palestine a few centuries earlier, or of the Latin churches in Tunisia or elsewhere in North Africa under Almoravid (1040–1147) and Almohad (1121–1269) rule, as they lacked a self-sustaining economic structure which could grant them independence in social terms.¹⁵⁸ Finally, many, if not most, of their young boys were taken as servants and lovers by Mamluk commanders due to their outstanding physical beauty. This might have further eroded the borders of the group.¹⁵⁹ After their leaders were executed in 1299, the Oirats lacked representation at the highest levels of the state and were even more exposed to the processes of group deformation.¹⁶⁰ The fact that the Oirats almost disappear from

¹⁵⁷The prohibition is mainly based on the Quranic verse 2:221. See Yohanan Friedman, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge, 2003), 160–93, and Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire* (Cambridge, 2011), 123–24.

¹⁵⁸Michael Brett, “The Islamization of Egypt and North Africa,” *The First Annual Levtzion Lecture* (Jerusalem, 2005), 21–26. In the case of all accepted groups of *ahl al-kitāb*, some sort of economically sustainable community (such as that of the Jews in Fatimid Cairo or the lands and property of the Coptic Church in Egypt) existed before the arrival of Islam and was partly still preserved after it. See more in Goitein, “Religion in Everyday Life,” 3–17, and idem, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, Vol. I: Economic Foundations* (Los Angeles, 2000). Cf. also V. L. Ménage, “The Islamization of Anatolia,” in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Levtzion, 63–64.

¹⁵⁹The beauty of the Oirats, both women and men, was one of the most noted features of the tribe (see, e.g., Okada Hidehiro, “Origins of Dörben Oyirad,” *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher*, N.F. 7 (1987): 185, who stresses the beauty of the Oirat women and its importance for the status of the tribe, and cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 3:44). It is not clear whether the Oirat boys were taken as servants starting with their arrival in 1296 or whether this was one of the outcomes of the deterioration of their status. I can hardly agree with Levanoni, according to whom the Oirats “voluntarily chose to serve the Mamluks in Egypt” (Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 17). Levanoni also mentions that “their sons were taken as mamluks at an early age by the amirs in Egypt” (ibid.). As far as I can see from the sources she cites, namely Ibn al-Furāt (*Tārīkh*, 8:205) and al-Maqrīzī (*Khīṭaṭ*, 3:44–45 in another edition), the sons of the Oirats were primarily taken as servants and lovers, (even though, of course, there are cases of Oirat mamluks connected to this *wāfīdīyah* wave, as shown in this article). Even when they entered military service (*‘asākīr*), as claimed, e.g., by al-Maqrīzī (ibid.), this does not mean that they were accepted as mamluks.

¹⁶⁰Despite a significant number of Oirats who apparently entered military service in the decade following their arrival, Yosef claims that from 1293 until the end of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign there was a gradual decrease in the number of mamluks identified as Mongols (Yosef,



the sources during the fourteenth century might in itself attest to their rapid assimilation into the Muslim environment.¹⁶¹

For the sake of completeness, two more aspects should be discussed. First, despite the fact that the Oirats arrived with their livestock, it is not clear whether the geographical, climatic, and social conditions of the Palestinian coast were suitable for the continuation of the migration cycles common to the Mongols. While in power (in the Ilkhanate, the Golden Horde, and even in China), the Mongols could indeed partly preserve their traditional lifestyle, if not fully restore their traditional economic activity.¹⁶² Strangers in a territory that was not under their control, the Oirats could have faced the need to change their traditional nomadic way of life (as seen indeed in the case of the Oirat settlement in Cairo). At the same time, another option is possible, i.e., that the assimilation could have led not only to the Oirats' disappearance within the settled population, but that it could also have enforced a partial merging of the Oirat population from the Palestinian coast with other semi-nomadic groups of Central Asian origin dwelling in those areas, known by the general name Turcomans.¹⁶³ Not much information can be found about those tribal units, mostly loyal to Cairo, but it is possible that a significant part of the Oirat population which remained in the areas allotted to them disappeared during the fourteenth century, somewhat similar to the Oirats in the post-Ilkhanid areas, into the wider Turcoman population.¹⁶⁴ This could also ex-

Ethnic Groups, 62–63). It is difficult to explain this, considering that the most significant waves of Mongol migration took place after 1293. It might, as Yosef supposes, be a result of a change in the perception of the ethnic identity of the mamluks or of the change in the composition of the new mamluks. At the same time, it might also indicate that there were not many high-standing mamluks of Mongol origin mentioned in the sources. Almost certainly this was the fate of the Oirats after their leadership was exterminated—they entered the military but almost never rose to high positions.

¹⁶¹ Although, as suggested by Yosef, this may also have resulted from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's attempts to downgrade the memory of Mongol rule and its impact on the Sultanate, another explanation is given by Yosef, according to whom a policy existed during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, aimed at letting the previous periods of Mamluk history, when the Mongols *de facto* or *de jure* ruled the country, fall into oblivion (Yosef, *Ethnic Groups*, 72). If this is correct, it could provide an explanation as to why one cannot find Mongols in the chronicles.

¹⁶² Smith, "Qishlāqs and Tümens," 44–45.

¹⁶³ There is some research discussing this topic, but the issue has still not been explored in depth (see Tuvia Ashkenazi, *Les Turkmènes en Palestine* (Tel Aviv, 1930); David Kushnir, "The Turcomans in Palestine during the Ottoman Period," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, nos. 1–2 (2005): 81–94; Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, "The Turcomans and Bilād aš-Šām in the Mamluk Period," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation*, ed. Khalidi, 169–80.

¹⁶⁴ The exact nature of the Turcomans' economic activity in the territory of Greater Syria in the period under discussion is not clear. Most of them apparently kept to the lifestyle of pastoral nomadism (Kellner-Heinkele, "Turcomans," 169; Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi, "Turkomans in Syria



plain why the Oirats disappear from the chronicles so quickly.¹⁶⁵ Even if they had preserved their identity among the Turcomans, they would have been perceived as Turcomans by outside observers.¹⁶⁶

There is an additional, rather peculiar, point to mention before the end of the discussion. The rapid deconstruction of the Oirat community, their mass conversion to Islam and intermarriages, as well as possible changes in their way of life all testify to a one-sided influence of Muslim society on the newcomers. At the same time, though, the Mamluk chronicles tend to make a very curious connection of a reverse nature—one between the arrival of the Oirats and the development of homoerotic relations between the military elite of the Sultanate and Oirat youngsters.¹⁶⁷ The outstanding physical appeal of the Oirats resulted not only in attracting Mamluk men to Oirat women, but also to Oirat young men. The most detailed report of this is given by al-Maqrīzī, according to whom Oirat

and Circassian Power,” *Mediterranean World* [地中海論集] 20 [2010]: 47). See also Ibn Shaddād’s remark, according to whom about 40,000 Turcomans were allowed to settle in the area of al-Sāḥil during the rule of Baybars under the condition that they would conquer their *iqṭāʿāt* from the Crusaders (*Die Geschichte des Sultans Baibars von ʿIzz ad-dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm b. Shaddād* [st. 684/1285], ed. Ahmad Hutait [Wiesbaden, 1983], 335). Mentioning this quotation, Sato writes “[t]he Arabic text reads ‘mā yunif ‘alā arbaʿin alf bayt,’ but we do not understand what ‘bayt’ means exactly” (Sato, *State and Rural Society*, 100, n. 2). As above, by “bayt” one should understand “yurt,” “family,” meaning an organic household, consisting of five or six people; therefore the number of the Turcomans seems to have been even bigger than that of the Oirats.

¹⁶⁵The exact location of the Turcomans in Palestine and Southern Syria is also not clear, as according to Chapoutot-Remadi, at least in the fourteenth century one finds Turcomans mostly north of Aleppo (idem, “Turkomans in Syria,” 50). Kellner-Heinkele also mostly discusses the Turcoman population in the Aleppo area (idem, “Turkomans,” 169–70). Thus, more research on the Turcoman groups in Palestine should be conducted.

¹⁶⁶It is possible that with time, these Turcoman populations became part of a greater group of Bedouins. On a map published in 1938 by Ashkenazi, one can clearly see a considerable presence of semi-nomadic tribes of Turcoman origin (*Arab al-Turkmān*) to the west, northwest, and south of Atlit (today’s Emek Jesrael and Sharon area)—relatively close to the coastline (Tuvia Ashkenazi, *Tribus Semi-Nomades de la Palestine du Nord* [Paris, 1938], 21–22, 43, and the attached map).

¹⁶⁷Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 43–45. The usage of the label “homosexual” for describing relationships between Oirat boys and Mamluks would not suit the case under discussion and in no way should be seen in the modern sense of “homosexual” relations. The reason for this is the fact that the spectrum of sexual and gender identities in medieval Muslim societies was much more multifaceted and flexible than is sometimes perceived in modern times. That is why sexual relations between beardless boys and mature Mamluk men were seen as normal male sexual activity, especially when the young boys served as the “passive,” “accepting” partner. Additionally, the fact that beardless boys were not yet thought to be fully developed men should be taken into consideration. More on this issue can be found in Everett K. Rowson, “The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval Arabic Vice Lists,” in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York and London, 1991), 50–79.



youngsters were so desired by Mamluk commanders that when there were not enough of them in Cairo more were brought from Syria.¹⁶⁸ Even more interesting in this context is that the Oirats are blamed for bringing homosexuality into the Mamluk realm. In the early years of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's second reign, Ḥisām al-Dīn Azdamar al-Majīrī, messenger of the sultan, came to Ghazan. Among the topics raised by Ghazan was the following:

Al-Majīrī said: "He [the Khan] heard all these words, and there were no servants next to us, ... and he asked me: 'How [did it happen] that your amirs left women and are using boys [instead of them]?' That is—beardless [boys]." [Al-Majīrī] said: ... "God save the Khan! Our amirs were not acquainted with such a [behavior], but it was introduced to our country [recently] with the coming of Tūraqai of your [origin], and he came to us with boys from the sons of Tatars, and the people [started] to be engaged in them instead of women." And al-Majīrī said: "And when the Khan heard this answer, he took it close to his heart and it made him angry..."¹⁶⁹

Sexual relations between an older man and a younger boy in the military circles of the Mamluk army of course did not appear in the Sultanate for the first time after the Oirats came to its territory and had also not been brought to the Islamic lands by the Mongol invasion, but had rather been part of the Muslim military elite's customs for centuries, and not only in Egypt.¹⁷⁰ Yet the aforementioned connotation of the Oirat appearance in the Sultanate is not implausible. Taking

¹⁶⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 44; Everett K. Rowson, "Homoerotic Liaisons among the Mamluk Elite in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria," in *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire*, ed. Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 223–24. See also Ayalon, "Great Yāsa C2," 121, and esp. his n. 2, which discusses al-Maqrīzī's statement about the Mongol *wāfidiyah* in general. Cf. al-Maqrīzī's notice about the beauty of the population of al-Ḥusayniyah due to the large number of Oirats who settled there (al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 44; Rowson, "Homoerotic Liaisons," 223). Note also an interesting report, namely that the famous mamluk of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Sayf al-Dīn Ulmās, had a love affair with a boy from al-Ḥusayniyah (Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo*, 182). I was unfortunately unable to locate Behrens-Abouseif's source, and thus could not determine whether this boy was indeed of Oirat origin, but this remark certainly fits into the general framework of the discussion. See also the discussion of a mosque built by Ulmās in Cairo. In its inscription he asked God for forgiveness for his "temptation, lust, and greed," possibly connected to the love affair mentioned above (on this site and the inscription see Chahinda Fahmy Karim, "The Mosque of Ulmas al-Hajib," in *The Cairo Heritage: Essays in Honor of Laila Ali Ibrahim*, ed. Doris Behrens-Abouseif [Cairo, 2000], 123–47, esp. 128, and Behrens-Abouseif, *Cairo*, 180–83). For the biography of Ulmās see al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. Joseph van Ess (Wiesbaden, 2008), 9:370–71.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, ed. Roemer, 9:73–74.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Rowson, "Homoerotic Liaisons," 204–38.



into account the numerous mentions of the outstanding beauty not only of Oirat women, but also of their men, and the sexual connotations of a hairless young male body in Muslim (and especially Mamluk) culture, it seems reasonable that Oirat boys became so popular in the military elite circles that their homosexual connotation became visible and strong in the society.¹⁷¹ At the same time, the attempt of the chronicler (or of the amir himself) to shift the responsibility for the phenomenon onto the Mongols seems to be part of a larger framework of ascribing types of behavior condemned by the shari‘ah to immigrants and especially to Mongols.¹⁷² It would be interesting to ask whether the Oirats’ arrival changed the phenomenon under discussion in Mamluk society in the long run. As this question surpasses the limits of this article, sexual associations with the Oirats can be treated here merely as a curious addition to the discussion.

Conclusion

This paper has traced the migration of the Oirat tribe from the Mongolian plateau to the western parts of Eurasia—to eastern Anatolia and the Mamluk Sultanate—and its assimilation into its host environments from the thirteenth until the early fifteenth centuries. In the beginning of the fourteenth century the process of migration had already been completed, so that Oirats could be found from western Khorasan to Upper Egypt. Toward the early fifteenth century, as far as the sources tell us, most, if not all, of the tribesmen had assimilated into the Islamic environments of their host areas. Some retained their original tribal designation,

¹⁷¹See, for example, David Ayalon, “Sex, Romances and Marriages,” in idem, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study of Power Relationships* (Jerusalem, 1999), 316–25, esp. 317–18. At the same time, this homoerotic connotation could be interesting in the context of the *futūwah* initiation rituals, some of which included observing young beardless boys undressed before dressing them in the new garment of a *futūwah* member. As Irwin claims, it seems likely that the Oirats organized their activities in Cairo “on the basis of futuwwa lodges” (Irwin, “Futuwwa,” 164). This claim can hardly be confirmed or rejected, as no other information can be found, except that given by al-Maqrīzī in his *Khiṭaṭ* (see above, n. 129). Much more problematic is the claim of Irwin that “it is possible that there was no such thing as popular *futuwwa* in Egypt prior to the arrival of the Oirats and that they brought its rituals with them from Ilkhanid Iraq. While al-Maqrīzī clearly did not think that the Oirats were Muslims, they may still have thought of themselves as such” (Irwin, “Futuwwa,” *ibid.*). As was shown above, the Oirats of Tūraqai preserved their nomadic style of life in Iraq and Anatolia and that can hardly be supposed to include any *futūwah*-style rituals similar to those of the settled population of Cairo. Additionally, during the time of al-Maqrīzī the Oirats were certainly Muslims, and al-Maqrīzī did not try to deny this (cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:813).

¹⁷²As Yosef mentions, Mongols in general and Oirat *wāfidīs* in particular were seen in the Sultanate as unbelievers and the possessors of assorted bad qualities (Yosef, *Ethnic Groups*, 1:171). At the same time, homoerotic liaisons were not a rare phenomenon in Mongol society, so this could be a typical political accusation for al-Majīrī (see more in Rowson, “Homoerotic Liaisons,” 212–22).



but most lost it up to the point that it was no longer represented in the texts. As has been shown in this article, two different patterns of Mongol tribal assimilation can be distinguished in the Oirats' case. To put it simply, the assimilation of tribal nobility was different from the assimilation of the tribal masses, and the position of the tribal elite was crucial for the speed of the assimilation process. As neither Persian nor Arabic sources alone provide enough information on these processes, it is necessary to read both together. While the Persian sources concentrate mainly on the nobility and provide information about their conversion to Islam, the Mamluk sources fill in the gap and give us a significant amount of data concerning the lower strata of Oirat society.

The case of the elite in Ilkhanid society manifests gradual voluntary assimilation, during which the Oirats, closely connected to the Chinggisids, preserved the homogeneity of their tribal units and their identity (their name and their genealogical connections with the Golden *urugh*). The established power networks collapsed together with Ilkhanid rule, making room for new political actors. Probably due to their very close relations with the Ilkhanid clan (and especially with the last Ilkhan), and due even more to the failure of 'Alī Pādshāh's revolt, the Oirats were unable to compete with the Jalayirids, the Chobanids, and other players in the long run. The subsequent death and migration of members of the ruling elite, however, did not lead to the immediate disappearance of the Oirats from the chronicles. Even though the Oirats never rose to the heights of power they had had under the Ilkhanate, they remained a significant group, particularly in the military of the post-Ilkhanid realm, almost completely disappearing from the sources only after the death of Temür (1405). As far as I can see, the disappearance of the Oirats (as a tribe) from the sources correlates with the disappearance of the Oirat military commanders or local rulers of Oirat origin. This is seemingly related to the reestablishment of power networks in the post-Ilkhanid areas, either by Temür and his descendants, or by other nomadic actors such as the Jalayirids, as well as the Aq and Qarā Qoyūnlū.

As for the broader tribal masses, throughout the two hundred years under discussion their assimilation was highly dependent on the position of the tribal elite *vis-à-vis* the power-holder, whether the Ilkhanids or the Mamluks. In the first case, as long as the tribal elite was an integral part of the ruling elite, the Oirat tribe preserved its identity and cohesiveness, even if the main loyalty went to the clan (the specific lineage headed by a certain tribal leader), and not to the tribe. The collapse of the dynasty led to the collapse of the tribal elite, but the disappearance of the Oirats from the tribal landscape of the post-Ilkhanid realm took six decades or more. This is due first to the great prestige of the tribe and its strong roots in its home areas, mainly Diyarbakir, since the mid-thirteenth cen-



tury, and second to the numeric strength of the Oirats, a fact accounting for their important role in the Ilkhanid and post-Ilkhanid military.

The case of the Oirats in the Mamluk Sultanate was different, since the Oirat elites were purged almost immediately after their arrival. The sources show us fairly clearly what happened when the Oirats lost their leadership and had to survive in the Islamic environment. Dispersion and intermarriage, which encouraged conversion to Islam, led to the relatively fast disappearance of the Oirats as an organized group. Unlike the Ilkhanid case, this process was quick (it took just a few years rather than decades) and even if the tribal name was preserved (as in the case of al-Ḥusaynīyah), it is not clear whether one can talk about the Oirats in those areas as having preserved their tribal identity and identifying themselves with their former Mongol tribe, or whether the tribal name simply became a social marker, connected with the good-looking boys and girls on the streets of Cairo. Putting aside some specific characteristics of Mamluk society (as the homoerotic discourse does not appear at all in Ilkhanid or Timurid sources in the Oirat context), one can suppose that the same processes (dispersion, intermarriage, conversion) influenced the Oirat tribal masses in the post-Ilkhanid space after the collapse of their tribal elites. As suggested above, the Oirat “disappearance” from the sources may also have been connected with their becoming part of the larger Turcoman confederations in both Iraq and Syria.

