INTRODUCTION

LOCATION OF RULE IN A CONTEXT OF TURKO-MONGOL DOMINATION

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“Do not become sedentary, for sovereignty resides in those who practice the nomadic Türkmen way of life.” These are the reported words of Qara ʿUthmān Yülük (d. 1435), the founder of the Aqqoyunlu Türkmen state in Eastern Anatolia.¹ The similarity with the recommendations made seven centuries earlier in Mongolia to the Türk ruler Bilge Qaghan (d. 734) not to live in “permanent habitation places”, is striking.² This invites us to consider the kind of relationship that could or should exist between the exercise of power and the way of life—a question that is particularly relevant with regard to the various dynasties of Turkic and Mongol origin that ruled large parts of Eurasia during the pre-modern period.

By dealing with the issue of the location of rule in a context of Turkic and Mongol domination, this volume is at the intersection of four lines of research that have produced an extensive literature: first, studies on the topography of power, largely derived from the works of the German historical school on Raumordnung;³ second, urban studies, since the city is the presumed locus of power in the history of Eurasia;⁴ third, Inner Asian

¹ Yazıcıoğlu Ali, fol. 17a, quoted by Woods 1999, 17: “Olmasın ki oturak olasız ki beylik Türkmenlik ve yörlük edenlerde kalur”.
² Liu Mau-tsai 1958, 1: 172-3, quoted by Golden in this volume, p. 41. See also Biran in this volume, p. 257, note 5.
³ See the collective volume Raumordnung im Aufbau des mittelalterlichen Staates (1961) and Brühl’s classic study on royal residence in medieval Europe (Brühl 1967, 1968). Recent publications on ‘topography of power’ with contributions on the Islamic world include Theuws et al. 2001; Duindam et al., 2011. See also Borrut 2011, 383-466 (chap. 8: “L’exercice du pouvoir dans l’espace syrien”), with a useful summary of past scholarship on the question.
⁴ See Mumford 1938. Garcin (2000a, 2: 129-71 and 3: 93-109) has delivered a very clear and thought-provoking introduction to urban studies on medieval Islam, which completes the useful and still not superseded 1994 bibliographical handbook of Haneda and Miura. (Brill’s recently published Handbuch der Orientalistik dedicated to “The city in the Islamic World” (Jayussi et al. 2008), is far too Arab-centred to claim to be a synthesis on the subject and its main advantage is that it makes accessible in English research already published in other European languages.)
studies, since Turkic- and Mongolian-speaking people originate from this region; and last, nomadic studies, since the ‘nomadic identity’ has often been invoked to account for certain features that seemed characteristic of Turko-Mongol rulers: itinerancy, an ambiguous relationship with cities, an attachment to the tent.

The issue of ‘location of rule’ in the Turko-Mongol context itself has a history that might be useful to recall in a few words in order to better situate the present work. The first studies focused quite naturally on the Mongols, not only because their World Empire aroused the interest of scholars very early, but also because their irruption into the Muslim world seemed to mark a clear break with the past as far as location of rule was concerned. Even after the conquest of the ‘sown’, the centre of power remained the ordu, that is the military camp that moved with the ruler. In the early 1970s, Boyle published two short articles dealing with the royal “camping grounds” in Mongolia. He analysed in particular the seasonal travels of the Great Khan Ögödei (d. 1241) between summer pastures (T.: yaylaq) and winter quarters (T.: qïshlaq). His work was emulated by Honda, who in 1976 published an article listing and locating the camping grounds of the Mongol rulers in Iran, the Ilkhans (1256-1335). Twenty years later, John Masson Smith focused on the royal winter grounds to make deductions about the repartition of the Mongol military groups (the tümen).

An inspiring line of research was explored in the 1970s by Jean Aubin, one of the first specialists in medieval Iran to have taken spatial issues

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5 The references works on Inner Asian history are: Sinor 1990; Golden 1992; Asimov and Bosworth 1999; and now Paul 2012.

6 An excellent introduction to nomadic studies from a historical perspective has been written by Amitai and Biran for the collective volume Mongols, Turks and Others, also published in this series. See Amitai and Biran 2005: 1-12. See also Digard 1987 (synthesis of the results of the working group “Équipe écologie et anthropologies des sociétés pastorales” active in Paris in the years 1970-80) and Digard 1990 (excellent introduction to the interrelations of nomadic and sedentary peoples in the Middle East). In the present volume, several contributors have benefited in varying degrees from the experience and work of the Collaborative Research Center “Difference and Integration” (www.nomadsed.de), which has been investigating the relationship between nomads and sedentary peoples for twelve years from 2000 to 2012.


8 Honda 1976 (an adaptation of Honda’s map is inserted in this volume p. 249). Honda built up on Spuler 1968, 332-4 (“Verzeichnis der Aufenthaltsorte der Ilchane”).

9 Masson Smith 1999 (including several maps locating the royal pastures from Central Asia to Anatolia).