CHAPTER 10

Mamluks and Mongols: an overview

Now it is the custom of the Tartars never to make peace with men who kill their envoys, until they have taken vengeance on them.

John of Plano Carpini[1]

In this study, the origins and early course of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid war have been examined through narrative history interspersed with chapters of a monographic nature. Having looked at the war in some detail, it is appropriate to conclude this study with an overview of the subject, keeping in mind two paramount questions: why did this war continue, and why were the Mamluks successful in stopping the Mongols?

In recent studies, Professor J.M. Smith, Jr.[2] and Dr. D.O. Morgan[3] have offered fresh insights into the nature of the Mamluk–Mongol war. Professor Smith, in a wide-ranging article, analyzes the weaponry and tactics of both sides, and embarks on a technical discussion on the strengths and limitations of the Mongol and Mamluk horses. In the first section of this chapter, his approach will be considered and elaborated upon. In the second section, the question of the logistical problems encountered by the Mongols in Syria, as raised independently by Professor Smith and Dr. Morgan, will be examined. In the final section, I will suggest explanations for both the ongoing war and the Mamluk success in stopping the Mongols.

Troops and tactics compared

Professor Smith's discussion, the most detailed and systematic study of the subject yet attempted, can be summarized as follows:[4] the Mongol army was a people's army, that is, all Mongol adult males were enlisted. Since these soldiers, however, were not professionals, they had undergone a somewhat haphazard training. The majority of Mongol troops were armed with

[1] In Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 68 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 125–6).
[2] "'Ayn Jālūt," 307–45. [3] "The Mongols in Syria," 231–5.
[4] Smith, "'Ayn Jālūt," 314–20. This summary cannot do full justice to Smith's detailed analysis.

mediocre, homemade weapons, and most carried only bows and arrows, along with axes and clubs. Because of this lack of weapons appropriate for hand-to-hand combat and their inferior training, the Mongols were hesitant to engage in frontal attacks, preferring instead to depend on their archery and mobility. In order to maintain this mobility, each Mongol troop would lead a string of mounts, small steppe horses,[5] when they set out on campaign. While on march, they could thus change mounts when necessary. During the battle itself, the Mongols would remount at frequent intervals, and thus so maintain their famed mobility. The small steppe horse, really a pony, would quickly tire, thus necessitating rapid changes of mounts. The tactics of the Mongols reflected their dependence on archery and mobility:

> The Mongols . . . sent unit after unit galloping at the enemy as fast as could be with each man shooting one heavy arrow from as close as possible; each unit would then turn away and out of the path and line of fire of the next unit, which could follow almost on its heels. Thus the enemy would be repeatedly pounded by the Mongols' best shots, delivered by a quick and confusing succession of attacking units, each concealing the next until the last moment. Each unit would charge, shoot, turn and gallop away, and then circle into position for another charge, in this way making several attacks. . . The attacking units would then give place to fresh forces and retire to rest, rearm, and remount.[6]

The aim of such tactics, together with efforts at outflanking, was to wear down the enemy. If the Mongols faced cavalry, it was hoped that they could provoke a pursuit, with the Mongols shooting to the rear (the so-called Parthian shot) as they rode off. This would lead to the exhaustion of the opponents' horses. At some point, the Mongols, either on fresh horses or reinforced by additional troops, would turn against their pursuers, dealing them a crushing blow or harassing them as they withdrew. In general, the Mongols tried to avoid hand-to-hand combat,[7] because of their lack of personal arms and armor.

The Mamluk army was also based on mounted archers, but the equipment of its troops and its tactics were different. The Mamluk trooper was heavily armed with bow and arrow, sword, dagger, axe or mace, lance, shield and body armor. His horse, a large Arabian steed, was fed primarily on fodder. However, due to the expense of maintaining a horse in a sedentary society, most Mamluks only had one mount. The Mamluks were picked troops and thus on the whole were better raw material for soldiers than their Mongol

[5] On the Mongol horse, see *ibid.*, 331 n. 75. For an appreciative view of this horse, see J.R. Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols: A Thirteenth-Century Dalmatian View of Mongol Customs," *Florilegium* 4 (1982):168; also in J. Richard, "Les causes des victoires mongoles d'après les historiens occidentaux du XIIIe siècle," *CAJ* 23 (1979):111–12.

[6] Smith, "'Ayn Jālūt," 318–19. Previously, Smith wrote that a Mongol horse-archer could not fire more than one effective shot, as he charged his opponent; this arrow was let loose at a distance of about 30 meters.

[7] *Ibid.*, 319, citing Plano Carpini, Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, 37 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 82); Marco Polo, tr. Latham, 101 (= tr. Yule, 1:262).

counterparts, who were just average men. In addition, the Mamluks underwent thorough, long-term training. Of particular importance in their training was shooting while galloping, which was regularly practiced in the hippodromes.

The battlefield tactics of the Mamluks also differed from those of the Mongols. As they had only one mount, they could not compete with the mobility of the Mongols, each of whom had several horses at his disposal. Rather, they exploited their better-quality bows and arrows and their rigorous training. Mounted on standing horses, the Mamluks would let off a succession of deadly shots when the Mongols attacked. "Unless the Mongols could use their greater mobility to outflank and surround the Mamluks, or superior numbers to wear them down, Mamluk archery would balance and overbalance the Mongols' horsepower."[8] Although Professor Smith does not explicitly say so, it would seem, according to this suggestion, that the Mamluks having repelled a Mongol assault, would then attack, bringing into play their heavier shock power.

There is much that is convincing in this model, the first systematic attempt to compare the fighting abilities and tactics of the Mamluks and Mongols. I would suggest, however, that it must be modified to some degree by additional evidence from sources of various provenance. First, the Mongols may have been better equipped than has been suggested. While John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck describe poorly equipped regular troopers, having only bows, arrows and axes,[9] their contemporary, Thomas of Spalato, writes that the Mongols carried helmets, swords and bows.[10] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī reports that the Mongols used swords in their battles with the Khwārazm-shāh Jalāl al-Dīn.[11] Marco Polo, describing the situation later in the thirteenth century, states that the Mongols had sword and mace, and even shields.[12] In addition, it must be remembered that the Īlkhānids and their Mongol soldiers were no longer wandering about on the Eurasian steppes, but now had possession of an extensive empire encompassing major centers of urban civilization. This surely must have influenced the quality and variety of the arms that the Mongol soldier now carried. It would seem that the Īlkhāns and their officials by then had enough skilled craftsmen at their disposal to produce some high-quality weapons and other accessories for the Mongols.[13] Cer-

[8] Smith, "'Ayn Jālūt," 320–6; see *ibid.*, 331 n. 75, for the Mamluk horses.

[9] Smith, "'Ayn Jālūt," 319, citing Plano Carpini, 33 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 77), and William of Rubruck, ed. Dawson, 210–11 (= tr. Jackson, 259–60).

[10] Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato," 164. There are some scattered references to swords and lances in the *Secret History*; see R.W. Reid, "Mongolian Weaponry in *The Secret History of the Mongols*," *Mongolian Studies* 15 (1992):88.

[11] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, 8:671.

[12] Marco Polo, tr. Yule, 1:260, 2:460.

[13] Marco Polo (tr. Yule, 1:90 and n. on 96) praises the craftsmen of Kirmān for the implements of war which they manufactured, including swords, bows, quivers and "arms of every kind." One example of the Mongols, albeit from the Chaghatayid Khanate, employing local craftsmen in the 1260s to make military equipment is found in Waṣṣāf, 68; cited in Pumpian-Biran, "Battle of Herat," 7.

tainly, throughout the empire there were armorers who had made weapons for the pre-Mongol armies. This capacity would now be turned over for the use of the Mongols. All of this was in addition to military stores that the Mongols seized whenever they conquered a new area.[14] It might also be mentioned in passing that the skills of the Mongol nomads themselves in producing weapons and other implements of war were perhaps underestimated in the previous discussion.[15]

The occupation of greater Iran may have had a second possible influence. The Mongols could now supplement the diet of their horses with either grazing on cultivated fields or grains collected through taxes or expropriated in other ways.[16] This would lead to the strengthening of their horses. While there is no explicit evidence that the Mongols adopted the larger horses found in the areas under their control, there is information that they had shown an interest in both the horses used by local nomads[17] and those ridden by the Armenians.[18] In short, the Mongols of the Īlkhānid state may well have ridden on smaller horses and been less equipped for receiving and delivering frontal assaults than their Mamluk enemies, but perhaps the difference was not as great as suggested above.

The Mamluk troops were not quite the supermen they have been portrayed as. Certainly they were not all cut from the same cloth. Only the royal mamluks were usually given the first-rate training of the Sultan's military schools. The amirs' mamluks had an inferior military education.[19] In addition, during the early years of the Mamluk period, the period under discussion here, many of the troopers in the amirs' units were not even mamluks, but rather free horsemen. These could have been Kurds, refugee Muslim military personnel (including mamluks), and Mongol *wāfidiyya*.[20] The *ḥalqa*, then an important part of the Mamluk army, was mainly composed of these non-mamluk elements.[21] Some of the *ḥalqa* was actually quite similar to the Mongols in ethnic origin and military techniques.

Care should even be taken with regard to the royal mamluks, those

[14] See Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 210–16, for a discussion on how the Mongols organized craftsmen in their empire. Smith ("'Ayn Jālūt," 322–3 n. 47), writes that the Mongols "also developed a 'military-industrial complex' to supply weapons," but possibly only in Ghazan's time. On the use of captured equipment, see Richard, "Les causes," 109.

[15] "The Mongols were very adept at such work as blacksmithing and production of armor and weapons." Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture*, 316. I might add that I was impressed during my own visits to nomads in Mongolia by the high quality of their metal and leather-work, although – as far as I could tell – no weapons are being produced today. Cf. the comments in Plano Carpini, tr. Dawson, 18 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 50).

[16] For the effect of controlling settled areas on nomads' horses, see Lattimore, "The Geography of Chingis Khan," 2.

[17] In 658/1260, the Mongols seized horses from the bedouin in Trans-Jordan; Abū Shāma, 206. In 668/1269, the Mongols raided north Syria, looting the livestock of the bedouin in the area; *Rawḍ*, 270.

[18] Kirakos, tr. Bedrosian, 226: the Mongols constantly seized the horses of the Armenians.

[19] Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure," pt. 2, 460.

[20] See ch. 5, pp. 108–9.

[21] See Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure," pt. 2, 448–51; *idem*, "Ḥalḳa," *EI*², 3:99.

mamluks bought and raised by the Sultan.[22] At the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt, Qutuz had been Sultan less than a year, certainly an inadequate period in which to build a large unit of personal mamluks. In fact, the first decade of Mamluk rule (1250–60) had been characterized by instability, in-fighting and changes of rulers, hardly conducive to the orderly establishment of a strong corps of royal mamluks. At the battle of Homs in 680/1281, the majority of Qalawun's personal mamluks were young and inexperienced, while the body of veteran royal mamluks – the Ẓāhiriyya – had been weakened by Qalawun's purges.

There is no doubt that with time the royal mamluks received thorough training in swordsmanship, horsemanship, lancework, and archery on the ground and from a galloping horse. Having mastered horsemanship and the lance game, the young mamluks were sent to the hippodrome, where they received "cavalry training proper, i.e. coaching in teamwork. The mamluks did group exercises, learning how to enter, come out, turn right or left, advance or retreat together and to know, in any fight, their own place as well as that of their fellows."[23] It would seem that this training was of relatively small tactical units. There was nothing to indicate that maneuvers of large-scale units in the field were undertaken, as with the Mongols during their hunts.[24]

It is worth dwelling on the Mamluk horses. First, not all of their horses were of Arabian stock. A major source of Mamluk mounts was Cyrenaica (*al-barqa*). These horses were very strong and were something between an Arabian horse and a pack-horse, with the latter's sturdy legs; they were thus well suited to rough terrain.[25] Second, the Mongols were not alone in maintaining remounts. The Mamluks also brought with them to battle reserve horses, the *janā'ib* (plural of *janīb*). Al-ʿUmarī states that the amirs brought with them *janā'ib*, the number of which varied, depending on the wealth of each amir and the importance he attributed to this matter.[26] It is unclear if the regular Mamluk troops, be they royal mamluks, or the mamluks of amirs and *ḥalqa* troopers, had recourse to spare mounts, but it appears that their use was not as widespread as among the Mongols.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be suggested that the Mamluks and Mongols may have been more evenly matched than proposed by Professor Smith. While experienced royal mamluks may have had few equals among the

[22] The royal mamluks (*al-mamālīk al-sulṭāniyya*) were composed of the sultan's personal mamluks, those of former sultans, and mamluks of deceased or *declassé* amirs. See *ibid.*, pt. 1, 204–22.

[23] See: H. Rabie, "The Training of the Mamlūk Fāris," in V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp, eds., *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London, 1975), 153–63, esp. 157; Ayalon, *L'esclavage du mamelouk* (Jerusalem, 1951), 12–13.

[24] On the Mongol hunt, see Morgan, *Mongols*, 84–5; Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 6 and n. 17; Jagchid and Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture*, 27–37. Both Baybars and Qalawun went hunting, but it would seem that these were small-scale affairs involving the sultan and his entourage; see the sources cited in D. Ayalon, "Ḥarb, iii. Mamlūk Sultanate," *EI*², 3:188a.

[25] Ayalon, "System of Payment," 263–4; ʿUmarī, ed. Sayyid, 101.

[26] *Ibid.*, 33; for the *janā'ib* of the sultan, see *ibid.*, 38; Dozy, 1:221a–b.

Mongols (or any other army of the time), such troops did not form the majority of the Mamluk army, much of which was composed of less thoroughly trained amirs' mamluks, along with various non-mamluk troops, including Mongol *wāfidiyya*. On the other hand, after the consolidation of Īlkhānid rule the Mongol army was probably better equipped and perhaps better mounted than they had been when they came off the steppe. Even assuming that the training of the average Mongol was less rigorous than that of his Mamluk counterpart,[27] the Mongols enjoyed a clear advantage in the training of large-scale units.

The Mamluks themselves do not seem to have been aware of any great advantage over their Mongol adversaries. The resources, time and energy which the Mamluks devoted to training and expanding their army, along with the strengthening of border fortresses and the development of the espionage system, show how seriously they considered Mongol military prowess. The large-scale mobilizations of the Mamluk army at the slightest hint of a Mongol raid, let alone offensive, also indicate that the Mamluks did not disparage their enemy.

A compelling piece of evidence regarding the Mamluk view of the Mongols is found in Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm's continuation of Ibn Wāṣil's chronicle. The writer, a Mamluk official, accompanied Baybars's expedition to Rūm in 675/1277, and recorded the following incident: when the Mamluk army left Rūm, it camped near Ḥārim to rest. When ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā ("Sacrificial Feast") arrived, the Sultan forbad the beating of the "drums of good tidings" on the holiday. When the amirs asked for an explanation. He replied:

> How can I rejoice? I had believed that if 10,000 horsemen of my army were to meet 30,000 Mongols, I would defeat them. But I met 7000 [Mongols] with all my army. [The Mongols] aroused panic and [my] army lost heart. [The Mongols] defeated the [Muslim] Left. Without Allāh's grace, they would have defeated us. If I met them, and they were equal to the [Muslims in size], or larger than they, then [the matter] would not have turned out well.[28]

There is nothing in this story that rings false; Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm was in a position to record this incident. Even if it is apocryphal, it may well reflect the Mamluk perception of their strength *vis-à-vis* the Mongols. One thing is certain: a relatively small Mongol force (although apparently more than the number given here)[29] had given the Mamluk army, which included a large corps of experienced Ẓāhirī royal mamluks, a tough battle before they were defeated. This last fact, more than anything else, should call into question the idea that on a man-to-man basis the Mamluk army was inherently vastly superior to its Mongol counterpart.

[27] Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 325–6. For a different appraisal of the archery of the nomads and the training they underwent, see J.D. Latham, "Notes on Mamluk Horse-Archers," *BSOAS* 32 (1969):258–9.

[28] Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, in Ibn Wāṣil, MS. 1703, fol. 187a; MS. 1702, fol. 439b.

[29] See ch. 7, pp. 171–2.

I am in general agreement with Professor Smith's discussion of Mongol and Mamluk tactics, although this can be perhaps refined by specific information in the Mamluk sources. I must admit, however, that a number of questions present themselves for which clear-cut answers have yet to be found. It is true that Marco Polo describes how the horses of the Mongols "are trained so perfectly that they will double hither and thither, just like a dog would do."[30] Yet it is difficult to imagine Mongol troops riding forth towards the Mamluks and letting loose a volley at a short distance (ca. 30 meters), then wheeling round and galloping back. All of this while the Mamluks, perched on their horses, were letting off shot after shot. It is also unclear what happens next. Did the Mongols then ride past the side of the next unit coming up to launch an attack? Or did the new unit open up and let the previous force pass through it? It is clear that the succeeding unit could not launch its attack until the preceding one was well out of the way. Finally, the idea that the Mongol troopers would then go to replace their mounts is hard to picture. In the tumult of the battle, they would have to search out their mounts (were they with grooms, other soldiers?), certainly a far from simple task given the general confusion that accompanies any battle.[31]

As will be seen, there is some evidence that the Mongols did attack in waves, but it would seem this was not executed as easily as has been suggested. In addition, it appears that this was not the only tactic adopted by the Mongols. A fourteenth-century Mamluk military manual describes the Mongol attack thus:

> The Mongols [*al-mughul*] from among the Turks[32] customarily form one squadron [*kurdūs*], in order to push one another against the enemy [*li-yatadāfaʿa ʿalā al-ʿudūw*], [in order] to prevent all of them from retreating and withdrawing.[33]

This passage is problematic. There is sufficient evidence that the Mongols actually did divide their armies into separate squadrons (*aṭlāb* or *karādis*) in battle, as in the first and second battles of Homs as well as at Abulustayn (see below). But it is possible that on occasion at least, the Mongols adopted the tactic of a concerted, mass attack straight into the enemy formation (surely shooting as they went), eschewing the tactic of wave-after-wave of hit-and-run archery.

It has been suggested that the Mongols let off only one volley as they approached the Mamluk enemy, perhaps as close as 30 meters. Yet even the heavier type of Mongol arrow was effective to some degree at a longer distance, possibly to 150 yards. In addition, as both *The Secret History* and Marco Polo report, the Mongols had lighter arrows, which could be used for

[30] Marco Polo, tr. Yule, 1:262.

[31] See Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 316–19, for these suggestions of Mongol tactics, and *ibid.*, 322, for the Mamluk response.

[32] Muslim writers tended to see the Mongols as part of the Turkish peoples; see, e.g., Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh* (Beirut, 1965–6), 12:361.

[33] Anṣārī, 77 (Arabic text); cf. translation, 103.

shooting either longer distances or over the heads of forward ranks.[34] In the light of Plano Carpini's statement that when the Mongols attack, each one shoots "three or four arrows at their adversaries,"[35] it is possible to suggest that they let loose a volley or even volleys of these light arrows at a trajectory while still some distance away. As they were shooting at a large body, these volleys would appear to have had some effect. They would certainly be disconcerting to those under attack, making it difficult for them to return fire. In any case, the Mongol attackers would still have time to prepare for another volley, using heavier arrows at close quarters.[36]

Archery was certainly critical for the Mongols but not sufficient for them to win. As R.C. Smail wrote of the Turks (apparently referring to both mamluks and Türkmen): "The mobility and archery of the Turks alone were usually insufficient to give them victory. By such means they weakened the enemy, but his final defeat on the battlefield could be achieved only by the fight at close quarter with lance, sword, and club."[37] This applies *mutatis mutandis* to the Mongols. At some point, the Mongols would have had to throw themselves on the Mamluks armed with axes, maces,[38] and – as has been seen – swords.

The Mamluks, of course, did more than wait on their horses for the Mongols to attack, responding only by shooting from their bows. The intensive practice which the Mamluks underwent in the hippodrome in shooting while at full gallop[39] indicates that they were trained to launch a frontal attack at the right time, letting off arrows (whether or not in concert is another question) at their enemy. Then, relying on their heavier horses, armor and weapons, they would bear down on the enemy line, hoping to drive them back.

Thus it was in theory. What were the actual tactics and fighting methods used by the armies in the four pitched battles on an open field examined in this study: ʿAyn Jālūt (658/1260), the first battle of Homs (659/1260), Abulustayn (675/1277) and the second battle of Homs (680/1281)?[40] Unfortunately, as has been seen, the sources are usually less than explicit about the actual fighting methods employed in the battles. We find such expressions describing Mamluk attacks: "[Qutuz] himself and those with him launched a brave assault (*ḥamla ṣādiqa*)";[41] "they launched against them a concerted attack

[34] Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 314–16, who dismisses the use of light arrows or shooting over forward ranks; Marco Polo, tr. Latham, 314; Reid, "Mongolian Weaponry," 85–6.

[35] Tr. Dawson, 36 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 81). Cf. Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 318.

[36] These thoughts are based on a reading of "The Tartar Relation," ed. and tr. G.D. Painter, in R.A. Skelton *et al.*, *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* (New Haven, 1965), 98, par. 58, which includes information not found in the report by Plano Carpini.

[37] R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare* (Cambridge, 1956), 82.

[38] For the importance of these weapons, see Richard, "Les causes," 111; L. Mayer, *Mamluk Costume* (Geneva, 1952), 45–6.

[39] Rabie, "Training," 160; Latham, "Notes," 258–62; Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 320–4.

[40] The battle at the Euphrates in 671/1272 is not included, because of its unusual nature (the Mongols taking up position behind a palisade; the Mamluks attacking after fording the river).

[41] Maqrīzī, 1:631: ʿAyn Jālūt; cf. Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vatican, fol. 247b: *wa-ḥamala fī sabīl allāh*.

(*ḥamalū ʿalayhim ḥamlat rajul wāḥid*)";[42] "the [Mamluk] armies in their entirety attacked together (. . . *fa-ḥamalat al-ʿasākir bi-rummatiha ḥamlat rajul wāḥid*)."[43] For that matter, there is little mention of the use of bows and arrows by both sides, apparently because it was obvious to all authors that this was the way these armies fought.[44]

Information of a more exact nature, however, does exist: at the second battle of Homs[45] and possibly at ʿAyn Jālūt,[46] it is recorded that the Mamluks launched a series of attacks until the Mongols were defeated. It is also important to note that in three of the four battles the Mongols opened up the fighting by attacking first. The exception was the first battle of Homs, which in any case was actually won by a Syrian Ayyūbid army, albeit probably composed to a large degree of Ayyūbid mamluks.

Taking the above into consideration along with Professor Smith's research, the following general remarks on Mamluk tactics against the Mongols can be made: the Mamluks absorbed the initial Mongol attack, probably maintaining a steady fire of arrows as they approached.[47] If the Mamluks held their position and repulsed the Mongols, they would then go over to the offensive, launching a concerted, all-out attack, the front rank (at least) shooting as they rode until they reached the enemy lines, where they would then bring into play maces, axes, swords and perhaps lances. On occasion, it seems, the Mamluks employed repeated attacks, perhaps hit-and-run archery barrages (reminiscent of the Mongol tactics) in order to soften up the enemy.

As for the Mongols, we have two pieces of information that might confirm Professor Smith's suggestion for standard battle procedure: first, at the first battle of Homs, the Mongols were organized in eight squadrons (*aṭlāb*), one after another, as if they were ready to launch a series of successive attacks.[48] Second, during the second battle of Homs – according to Baybars al-Manṣūrī – when the Mongol Left attacked the Mamluk Right, "[The Mongols] were organized as squadrons (*aṭlāban*) in [the attack] and followed one another as groups (*tarādafū aḥzāban*)."[49] Although this is not unequivocal (there is no mention of a rapid succession of squadrons letting off volleys of arrows and wheeling off to the rear), there is nothing that contradicts Professor Smith's thesis and this evidence could be seen to complement it.

[42] Yūnīnī, 1:435: first battle of Homs. [43] Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rīkh*, 172: Abulustayn.

[44] Explicit mention of the use of bows and arrows (by the Mongols) is made in the descriptions of ʿAyn Jālūt (Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:74), and the second battle of Homs (*Faḍl*, fol. 47b; Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:162–3).

[45] Yūnīnī, 4:94: "[The amirs] counter-attacked against the Mongols, and launched several assaults against them, and totally defeated them."

[46] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, 7:79; ʿAynī, fol. 76b. The ultimate source of this report is unclear.

[47] The Mamluks were not necessarily mounted on their horses. Ibn Khaldūn (1:229) writes: "[The Turks] divide their army into three lines, one placed behind the other. They dismount from their horses, empty their quivers on the ground in front of them, and then shoot from a sitting position. Each line protects the one ahead of it against being overrun by the enemy . . . "; translation from *Muqaddimah*, tr. Rosenthal, 2:81. Ibn Khaldūn could be referring to Mamluks or Turkish (and by extension Mongol) nomads in general.

[48] See ch. 3, p. 51. [49] *Zubda*, fol. 115a.

At the battle of Abulustayn, however, things were different. There, the Mongols launched a frontal attack against the Mamluks, penetrating the enemy lines.[50] This may be an instance of the Mongol tactic of the concerted attack, described in the above-cited Mamluk military manual, although the Mongols were not organized here as one squadron, but at least initially were arranged as separate tactical units. As for ʿAyn Jālūt, we have no clear information beyond that the Mongols attacked first; for what it is worth, al-Maqrīzī tells us that the two sides "slammed into each other (*iḍṭarabat*)."[51]

Taken altogether, I would offer the following model for Mongol behavior on the battlefield. The Mongols sought to attack first. As the forward squadrons drew close, they let off as many arrows as possible. The Mongols were prepared to launch successive waves of archers, but if they caught the Mamluks in a state of relative disorganization, as at Abulustayn, then they plunged straight into the Mamluk lines.

At both Abulustayn and the second battle of Homs, the Mongols dismounted when the battle began to go against them. This tactic was not an innovation from the war with the Mamluks: the Mongols had dismounted in their battles with the Khwārazm-shāh Jalāl al-Dīn.[52] The Mongols may have dismounted because their horses were exhausted, although it is more likely that this was a more effective defensive maneuver: the Mongol troops could let off more accurately aimed arrows when standing than on horseback. In the case of Abulustayn at least, the Mongols realized that the battle was lost, and in effect declared their willingness to fight to the end by dismounting.[53] There are no examples of the Mamluks dismounting during battle.[54] At their one defeat at Wādī al-Khaznadār in 699/1299, the Mamluks, rather than fight to the death, for all their "professionalism" fled the battlefield in complete disarray.[55]

In the above discussion it has been suggested that in the long run, the Īlkhānid army may have been influenced by its control of a large, rich and settled country such as Iran, primarily in the size of the horses and the quality and type of weapons (and perhaps armor). It is difficult, however, to determine the rate and extent of this change, and how much of it occurred as a result of deliberate policy on the part of the Īlkhāns and the senior officers. In a recent article, Professor A.P. Martinez has suggested a thought-provoking thesis

[50] Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rīkh*, 1.72. [51] Maqrīzī, 1:431. See ch. 2, p. 41.

[52] Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, 8:671. I am grateful to Prof. Ayalon for this reference. The formation adopted by the Mongols when they dismounted may be similar to that suggested by Ibn Khaldūn (above, n. 47) for the Turks.

[53] At the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār (699/1299), the Mongol army was caught unprepared by the Mamluk attack, and a part received the Mamluk assault dismounted, taking cover behind their horses; Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 324 and n. 53; C.E. Bosworth, "Ḥarb, v. Persia," *EI*², 2:198. A full discussion on Mamluk and Mongol tactics should take into consideration this battle and Marj al-Ṣuffar (702/1303), but this is beyond the scope of the present study.

[54] Examples of dismounting during battle are found in the early Muslim period; Ayalon, "Ḥarb," 3:188a. [55] Irwin, *Middle East*, 100; Amitai, "Mongol Raids," 243.

that, in fact, the Īlkhāns themselves initiated a transition from light cavalry to heavy cavalry, and that this transformation began quite early on and reached its height in the reign of Ghazan. This innovation in the military sphere was connected to the terrain over which the Mongols now had to fight and the nature of their main enemies, the Mamluks, as well as to the changes in the Mongol society of the Īlkhānid state.[56] These are major subjects which transcend the limitations of the present study. In the following discussion, therefore, I will concentrate on examining the evidence of a possible transition having occurred from light to heavier cavalry in the Īlkhānid army within the period covered by this work (1260–81).

I must say from the outset that within this narrow framework I am not in full agreement with Professor Martinez's conclusions. One shortcoming of his study is the lack of a discussion of the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt. Taking this battle into consideration, we can see that the following statement cannot be made:

> The battle of Elbistan [i.e., Abulustayn in 675/1277 – R.A.] is significant because it marks a further stage in the development of tactical weight by the Īl-Xānid army. During it, for the first time, Īl-Xānid Mongol forces charged the Mamluk calvary [*sic*] and dismounted to receive their attack and to subject the onrushing enemy cavalry to an intensive barrage of projectile fire. However, that the Mongols had not yet achieved sufficient weight is evident from the thoroughness of their defeat....[57]

It has been clearly shown in chapter 2 that the Mongols attacked first at ʿAyn Jālūt, so this cannot be taken as an indication of any development within the Īlkhānid army. If anything, there are clear indications that this was standard Mongol practice.[58] In addition, it has also been seen above that dismounting was a tactic used by the Mongols as early as their conflict with the Khwārazm-shāh Jalāl al-Dīn, so this too cannot be taken as evidence for a change of tactics and equipment. Finally, the "thoroughness of their defeat" was probably due to the fact that the relatively small Mongol force was facing almost the entire Mamluk army. Several reservations were raised in chapter 8 regarding Professor Martinez's reconstruction and analysis of the second battle of Homs. There too, it was shown that there is little basis for the claim that the Īlkhānid army was in the midst of a deliberate reorganization on a massive scale.[59]

Professor Martinez discusses one other battle which falls within the timespan of my study, although it is outside its purview: the battle of Herat between Abagha and Baraq in 668/1270 (not 1269 as Martinez writes).[60] I will limit myself to several brief comments on his discussion. First, Martinez mainly bases his reconstruction on Sayf-i Harawī's *Ta'rīkh-nāma-i harāt* and to a lesser extent on Waṣṣāf's history. A look at Rashīd al-Dīn as well as the

[56] Martinez, "Īl-Xānid Army," 129–242. [57] Martinez, "Īl-Xānid Army," 158.
[58] Besides the example of the three battles given above in this chapter, see also Plano Carpini, tr. Dawson, 36 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 81): "when they come in sight of the enemy they attack at once..." [59] See ch. 8, n. 48 and p. 196. [60] Martinez, "Īl-Xānid Army," 152–6.

Mamluk sources might lead to a different reconstruction.[61] Second, the battle was fought well to the south of Herat, on an open plain,[62] and not "outside the town of Herat," with the associated implications which Martinez makes. Thirdly, although the Mongol elite guard, the *bahādurs*, may well have carried spears or lances of some type, as Waṣṣāf suggests,[63] there is no indication that this is something new. It is possible that the Mongol imperial guard – either of the Qa'an or the various khans – had long carried lances;[64] it certainly seems that these troops had more sophisticated arms or armor than the average Mongol. The presence of such troops at the battle of Herat cannot be seen as a tactical shift of the whole Mongol army. Fourthly, here – as at the second battle of Homs – Martinez may be overestimating the importance of the Georgian contingent at Herat. We have no idea what was the size of this unit, and what exact role it played.[65] In this connection, it is worth citing the words of Dr. Bedrosian:

> Because the Mongols considered their subject people expendable, they usually designated them as advance attackers. This was not, as the *History of K'art'li*[66] and Grigor Aknerc'i would have us believe, because the Armeno-Georgian troops were such excellent warriors, but first precisely because the Caucasians were expendable and second, because desertion was impossible with foreign troops fighting in front or in detachments surrounded by Mongols.[67]

The logistical limitations of Syria

Recent research has suggested that the Mongol failure to capture and hold Syria was not only a result of military losses at the hands of the Mamluks. Rather, it was also directly related to logistical problems encountered by the Mongols in Syria, namely the country did not have the capacity to feed a large Mongol army. This had a twofold affect on the Mongols. First, the Mongols were unable to bring with them all the troops that they would have liked, so as to increase the chances of defeating the Mamluks. Second, when they did succeed in conquering the country, the Mongols were unable to leave a large enough force to maintain their conquest.

The two proponents of this approach reached their conclusions independently and via different methods. Dr. Morgan found several references in

[61] This has already been done by Pumpian-Biran, "Battle of Herat."
[62] Boyle, "Îl-Khāns," 360.
[63] Waṣṣāf, 75; it is not impossible that Waṣṣāf's *ba-asnān-i nīzah* is merely a product of his literary imagination.
[64] Plano Carpini, tr. Dawson, 34 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 79), writing in the 1240s, reports that some of the Mongol troops had "lances which have a hook in the iron neck, and with this, if they can, they will drag a man from his saddle."
[65] The evidence of the Georgian Chronicle edited by Brosset cannot be taken too seriously, as this source tends to exaggerate the importance of the Georgian contribution to the Mongol war effort. [66] Translated in Brosset's *Histoire de la Géorgie*.
[67] R. Bedrosian, "The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13th-14th Centuries," Ph.D. diss., Columbia Univ. (New York, 1979), 194–5.

historical sources which gave evidence of difficulties the Mongols encountered in Syria trying to feed their troops and especially their horses.[68] Professor Smith tackled the problem from a different angle. He first calculated the logistical needs of Mongol armies, and then applied the result to Syria.

It is worth going over Professor Smith's calculations. His starting point was that each Mongol trooper set out on campaign with five horses. This figure seems justified on the basis of the evidence that Smith adduces and other information.[69] An army of, say, 60,000 Mongols would thus mean about 300,000 horses. Each horse needed some 9.33 lb (dry weight) of grass per day, so 300,000 horses required about 2.8 million lb (dry weight) of grass per day. Professor Smith does not have figures for Syrian pastures, but good Inner Asian pastures provide 534 lb of grass per acre per year, although actual figures depend on season and climate. Thus, 300,000 horses would need 5243 acres or about 8 square miles of grazing land each day. This is during the optimal growing season. In reality, the Mongols would probably have required more land to feed their horses.[70]

A second problem was water. A small horse or pony needs 5 (U.S.) gallons of water per day, so an army of 60,000 needs 1.5 million gallons of water a day. Some of this would be provided by the grass the horses consumed (up to half at the peak growing season), but in the summer this would be a problem. Likewise, the flow of water in the rivers of Syria would be sharply reduced in the summer: the Quwayq near Aleppo falls from an average of 167 million gallons in the winter to 1.8 million gallons per day, while the Orontes (ʿĀṣī) falls from 89 million to 7.1 million.[71]

It must be mentioned that these calculations are directly connected to Professor Smith's thesis which was discussed in the previous section. If the "amateur" Mongols were inferior soldiers to the "professional" Mamluks, then the only way that the latter could be defeated was by bringing a much larger army in to Syria. The Mamluks would thus be crushed by numbers, if not by skill and equipment. However, the problems of feeding and watering such an enormous army and its horses were so great that the Mongols were unable to concentrate enough troops to gain numerical superiority over the Mamluks at a given battle, and thus were condemned to defeat. If the Mongols did manage to defeat the Mamluks, as at Wādī al-Khaznadār (699/1299), then they soon had to withdraw most of their army from Syria due to the lack of adequate pastureland.[72]

[68] See n. 3 above.

[69] "ʿAyn Jālūt," 314 n. 18, to which can be added Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:85 (three horses per man in the campaign against Aqqush al-Barlī in 660/1262); ʿUmarī, ed. Lech, 79 (five horses in campaign of Golden Horde); Plano Carpini, tr. Dawson, 47 (= ed. Van den Wyngaert, 91; apparently three or four horses). See also D.O. Morgan, "The Mongol Armies in Persia," *Der Islam* 56 (1979):85–6.

[70] Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 336–9. On p. 332, Smith remarks that 50,000 horses would require 250 tons of hay and barley per day. Smith's figures are based on a number of technical works on horses and pasture economy. [71] *Ibid.*, 339–40. [72] Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 344–5.

These calculations, especially when complemented by Dr. Morgan's study, are compelling. I would suggest, however, that the picture has perhaps been overdrawn, and the logistical situation as faced by the Mongols was not as bad as Professor Smith and Dr. Morgan have suggested; thus the logistical factor was not the dominant reason for the Mongol failure decisively to defeat the Mamluks.

Let us start with the question of the total number of horses that the Mongols brought with them on campaign. The figure of five horses per Mongol trooper mentioned by Professor Smith seems to be correct, although in note 69 there is an indication that the Mongols on occasion may have been satisfied with less. In addition, not all soldiers in the Mongol army, however, were Mongols (or nomadic Turks). For example, in 680/1281, Mengü Temür's army contained a number of Armenians, Georgian and other auxiliary cavalryman; it can be assumed that these troops had with them only one horse (albeit bigger than the Mongol horse) per man. Some of the non-Mongols may have been infantrymen. All together these "allies" may have been more than a third of the Mongol army.[73] Thus, there may have been somewhat less horses all told for Mengü Temür's army than initially thought.

This, however, is only a minor reservation. More importantly, the Mongols did not have to rely only on pasturelands for feeding their horses when they invaded Syria. First and foremost, they gained possession of the various stores of grains and other foodstuffs when they marched into the country. For example, in 680/1281, it is related that when the garrison and inhabitants fled Aleppo, "they abandoned crops, granaries and foodstuffs."[74] These supplies could then be used by the Mongol invaders had they chosen to do so. In addition, there is no reason why the Mongols would have limited themselves to grazing their horses on pasturelands. While on campaign, and perhaps afterwards, they would certainly have had little compunction against pasturing their horses in agricultural fields, areas traditionally off-limits to nomads. The Mamluk practice of burning grasslands would not have adversely affected the Mongols here, because this organized incitement – when it happened – was limited to the frontier region and the Mongol side of the border. There is no indication that the agricultural areas of northern and central Syria were ever intentionally or otherwise set ablaze.[75]

The Mongols would also have had few scruples in grazing their horses on the pasturelands of Syria's indigenous nomads, be they bedouin or Türkmen. Professor Smith himself has shown that in modern Syria (ca. 1950), these lands had the capacity to support 80,000 nomads (= troops) with herds.[76] These

[73] See ch. 8, pp. 194–5; the actual number of Armenian and Georgian troops given in the pro-Mongol sources was not very large.

[74] Yūnīnī, 4:91; Ibn al-Furāt, 7:213; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, 7:302.

[75] See ch. 9, pp. 205–6; cf. Morgan, "The Mongols in Syria," 233–4.

[76] Smith, "'Ayn Jālūt," 309 n. 3, based on figures from: Syria, Ministry of National Economy, Dept. of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Syria, 1950*, 158–9.

pasturelands should have been able to contribute greatly to the maintenance of the Mongol horses in the months of the Mongol campaign. In the long run, had the Mongols been successful in occupying Syria, they could have taken possession of at least the better pasturelands of these nomads. This, it can be mentioned in passing, may help explain why the Syrian Türkmen and bedouin were so willing to join the Mamluks against the invaders. In addition, in none of their campaigns into Syria, including the successful one of 699/1299–1300, did the Mongols fully exploit the "logistical capacity" of all of greater Syria. Even discarding the marginal areas unsuitable for pastoral nomadism of the Turco-Mongolian type, there would have been large areas – both agricultural areas and pastureland of indigenous nomads – suitable for grazing their horses in the pasture areas in the regions today contained in Israel, Lebanon and Jordan. This argument has already been made with regard to 658/1260.[77] Although the campaign of 699/1299–1300 is beyond our concern here, it is worth dwelling on it to demonstrate this point. The Mongols, except for a large raiding party sent through Palestine, did not exploit the grazing areas of Lebanon, the Syrian coast, the Plain of Jezreel and the Jordan valley.[78]

The lack of water does not seem to have been an insurmountable strategic problem for the Mongols. They usually arrived in Syria during the winter, that is, the rainy season, when the riverbeds were full and the grass contained a high percentage of water. The campaign of 680/1281 was an exception, as it was fought in the mid-fall. However, the proximity of the battlefield to the Orontes would certainly have alleviated this problem to a great degree.

There are two additional arguments against the logistical thesis. First, during this period, a large number of Türkmens settled in Syria with their families and herds, particularly in the north of the country.[79] This shows that the nomadic pastoralism of the Turco-Mongolian tribes could be practiced to some degree in at least part of the country. The problem was first gaining permanent possession of Syria.

Second, if the Mongols were unable to surmount the difficulties of feeding their horses, and were thus limited in the size of the army they could bring and the time they could remain with a large force in Syria, why did they keep coming back?[80] After the debacle of ʿAyn Jālūt, the Mongols made four concerted efforts to invade the country (AD 1281, 1299, 1300–1, 1302). Given the awareness of logistical problems that Professor Smith credits to the Mongols,[81] this behavior is inexplicable. Since, according to this view, logistical considerations prevented the dispatch of a large enough army to deal with the Mamluks, the Mongols were essentially dooming themselves to defeat

[77] See ch. 2, pp. 28–9.

[78] See Amitai, "Mongol Raids," 243–7; *idem*, *Holy War*, 30–1. Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:338, writes that Ghazan withdrew because of the approaching warm season, an indication that Ghazan was indeed concerned with logistical problems. But Hetʿum, 196, writes that the Mongol ruler left because of an offensive of (Chaghatayid) Mongols on his eastern border.

[79] See ch. 3, pp. 69–70.

[80] For this comment, I must thank Dr. Morgan himself.

[81] Smith, "ʿAyn Jālūt," 344.

time after time. This is difficult to accept. The Mongols invaded Syria with the reasonable hope of conquering it. We must thus conclude that either the Mongols were not as logistically conscious as suggested and/or their logistical problems were not as overwhelming as have been proposed. In light of the above discussion, it would seem that at least the latter statement is correct.

This does not mean that logistical considerations among the Mongols were non-existent. Certainly, the Mongols refrained from setting out on a campaign in the summer, most likely from such considerations. Usually, the pro-Mongol sources euphemistically speak only of the hot weather,[82] although it would seem that the problem was not merely one of discomfort, but also of dearth of pasture and water. One indication of the interaction between hot, summer weather and the welfare of Mongol horses is seen in the following: Ibn Bībī reports that Abagha, having come to Rūm at the head of an army after the battle of Abulustayn, did not invade Syria because it was summer. Ibn Shaddād, describing these same events, reports that the reason behind Abagha's decision not to invade was that most of his horses had perished.[83] There may be some exaggeration here, but it is clear that the Mongol horses were in a sorry state, perhaps from the forced march in the summer, with all the attendant difficulties of procuring adequate food and water for the horses.

Taken as a whole, the Mongols were not significantly inferior soldiers to their Mamluk enemies, in spite of certain differences in arms, horses and tactics. Logistical problems did not prevent the Mongols from invading Syria with large forces, nor do they fully explain the withdrawal of most of the Mongol forces in the two instances when the Mongols did succeed in occupying the country. The reasons behind Mamluk success and Mongol failure must be sought elsewhere.

The dynamics of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid war[84]

The Īlkhānids of Persia were primarily responsible for the ongoing war with the Mamluks. It was the Mongols who launched most of the offensives and raids. Their aggressive attitude toward the Mamluks and their aspiration to conquer Syria are further seen in their repeated attempts to persuade the Western Christian powers to launch a concerted effort against their common enemy, along with the belligerent tone found in the many letters to the Mamluk sultans. Another indication of the long-term intentions of the

[82] Bar Hebraeus, 407 (Yasa'ur's attack against Aleppo in 1244; cited in Morgan, "The Mongols in Syria," 234); Kirakos, tr. Dulaurier, 487 (Hülegü's campaign against Baghdad), 506 (Īlkhānid wars against Golden Horde); Het'um, 198, 245 (Mongol difficulties in Syria in 1300, because of the heat of summer).

[83] Ibn Bībī, 319; Ibn Shaddād, *Ta'rīkh*, 182 (whence Yūnīnī, 4:186).

[84] Some of the ideas expressed in this section have been enlarged upon in R. Amitai-Preiss, "Aims and Motivation of Īlkhānid Strategy towards Syria and the Mamluks," in D. Morgan *et al.* (ed.), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, forthcoming. Several paragraphs here also appear there in a similar form.

Mongols towards Syria is the repeated attempts made to take the border fortress of al-Bīra. These efforts can be seen as an attempt to establish a bridgehead in Mamluk territory and to eradicate a possible obstacle to a future invasion. If the Mongols were interested merely in raiding, then they would not have taken such trouble to conquer this fortress.

The above generalization should be qualified. For all the importance attributed by the Mongols to the conquest of Syria and the defeat of the Mamluks, it must be remembered that this was only one of the many foreign policy concerns of the Īlkhāns. Throughout the period under consideration in this study, and afterwards, the Īlkhānid Mongols often fought with other Mongol groups. These wars were usually more crucial for the future of the Īlkhānid kingdom than the war with the Mamluks.

The Mamluks were not without responsibility for the continuing hostilities. Baybars sent his share of raiders across the border, and engaged in all kinds of surreptitious activity in the Īlkhānid kingdom. Rather than waiting passively for Mongol attacks, Baybars brought the war into the territories of the enemy camp and its allies. These activities destabilized the enemy to a certain degree and weakened his ability to launch attacks. At the same time, the Mamluk soldiery gained experience and morale was improved. There is no doubt that Baybars would have liked to have seen the Mongols pushed out of Iraq and even further back, out of the Islamic lands altogether. Yet for all his bluster and *jihādī* rhetoric, Baybars did virtually nothing to realize these abstract goals, if we discount the rather symbolic and not very effective efforts from his early reign, and the large-scale raid into Rūm before his death. Baybars, ever the political realist, surely understood that liberating Iraq from the Mongols was beyond his capabilities.

The dynamic of the conflict can be summed up as follows: the Mongols under the rule of Hülegü and his descendants wanted to occupy Syria. The Mamluks, under Qutuz, Baybars and Qalawun, refused to oblige. Thus, the Mongols tried various means to oust the Mamluks, who continued to resist and succeeded in keeping the Mongols at bay.

In light of the above, it would be reasonable to ask what drove the Mongols to fight the Mamluks over Syria. One suggestion was that the Mongols were looking for an outlet to the sea (presumably, in order to encourage and profit from trade). The "indirect" route via Asia Minor and Lesser Armenia was not sufficient.[85] This explanation can be rejected as a major reason for Mongol aggression. If anything, Ayās and Antioch were the most logical outlets for goods coming out of the Jazīra, north-west Iran and perhaps even Baghdad.[86] The origin of Mongol enmity towards the Mamluks must be sought elsewhere.

The original impetus for the Mongol expansion into southwest Asia was Mongol imperial designs, that is, to widen the territory under Mongol control. As has been discussed at the beginning of this study, these designs were a

[85] Spuler, *Iran*, 54; see also Labib, *Handelsgeschichte*, 71; cf. Morgan, "Eastern Mediterranean," 198. [86] Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 264–5.

mixture of traditional nomadic desires to expand and gain control over settled areas along with the Mongol belief that they had a right to conquer the world and place it under the aegis of Chinggis Khan and his descendants. I am suggesting that to a great degree these same imperial ideals continued to propel the Mongols to attempt to take Syria from 1260 onward. There can be no doubt that these ideals had taken a beating since the highwater mark of Hülegü's conquest in 1260: a Mongol army had been defeated at ʿAyn Jālūt; the Mongols were worsted in the border war; and, Mongol unity had been shattered in the civil wars after Möngke's death and the Īlkhānid–Golden Horde war. In addition, the tone of the letters to the Western Christian rulers became increasingly conciliatory; in order to woo the Franks, Mongol claims to world domination had to be eschewed, at least publicly.

Yet, there are clear indications that to some degree the Mongol imperial ideal still remained the official ideology of the Īlkhānid state. Thus, we find in the oral message from Abagha delivered to Baybars (before the written letter was handed over) in 667/1269, the following unequivocal statement:

> When the King Abagha set out from the East, he conquered all the world. Whoever opposed him was killed. If you go up to the sky or down into the ground, you will not be saved from us. The best policy is that you will make peace between us. You are a mamluk who was bought in Sīwās. How do you rebel against the kings of the earth?[87]

A second example is from 675/1277, when – according to Rashīd al-Dīn – after the battle of Abulustayn, Abagha wrote to Baybars, and *inter alia* declared that God had given the earth to Chinggis Khan and his descendants.[88] An additional indication of the continued belief in imperial mission is seen in numismatic evidence. We find on Abagha's coins such titles as: "lord of the world (*pādishāh-i ʿālam*)" and "ruler of the necks of the nations (*mālik riqāb al-umam*)."[89]

The presence of such expressions on such official documents as royal letters and coins leads to the conclusion that the Īlkhān at least maintained some belief in the traditional heaven-inspired manifest destiny of the Mongols. Whether this belief continued to percolate down the Mongol ranks is unclear, although I would hazard a guess that it did, at least among the higher echelons.[90] And it was the Mongol elite, together with the Īlkhān, that made the decisions.

[87] Yūnīnī, 2:407; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 8:139–40; Maqrīzī, 1:573–4; see ch. 5, pp. 121–2, for the relation of this message to the accompanying letter.

[88] Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:145, the Mamluk sources do not mention this letter; see ch. 7, p. 177.

[89] İ. and C. Artuk, *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzerleri Teşhirdeki İslâmî Sikkeler Kataloğu* (Istanbul, 1971–4), 2:768; S. Lane-Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum* (London, 1881), 6:23. The second example is not itself unequivocal, because it seems to have had some currency with other Muslim rulers of this time. Thus we find it twice in two inscriptions of Baybars: *RCEA*, 12:63 (no. 4485), 214 (no. 4723).

[90] Cf. A.K.S. Lambton, "Concepts of Authority in Persia: Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries AD," *Iran* 26 (1988):100. For the continuation of this idea after Abagha's reign, see Amitai-Preiss, "Aims," forthcoming.

The objection can be raised, that if the Mongols of Persia, or at least their ruler, continued to believe in the Mongol imperial ideal, why did they only aim their expansion efforts against Syria and the Mamluks? The Īlkhāns could not very well head for the the northeast (Transoxania) or north (the Caucasus), since the Chaghatayid Mongols and Gorden Horde were already there. The Īlkhāns had enough trouble holding off invaders from these directions without going off on an offensive (notwithstanding the occasional probe against these adversaries). The Negüderi Mongols in Afghanistan, unwilling to accept Īlkhānid authority, made expansion to the east difficult after AD 1262.[91] In addition, India was seemingly unsuited climatically and geographically for Mongol-style nomadism.[92] The indigenous rulers of southern Persia and much of Afghanistan had submitted to the Mongols, so there was no reason to march against them. Perhaps, also for climatic reasons, the Mongols were not attracted to southern Persia, although recent research shows that some Mongol settlement might have occurred in this region.[93] In Asia Minor, the Seljuqs and the Armenians of Cilicia had submitted and their realms were satellite countries. It is true that the Byzantine Emperor had not submitted, yet a *modus vivendi* had been worked out with Michael Palaeologus. Perhaps Hülegü and Abagha had not wanted to put too much pressure on Michael, out of fear of pushing him firmly into the Mamluk–Golden Horde camp. Thus, the only direction the Īlkhāns could go was west into Syria.

Yet the continual Mongol designs on Syria were not merely because there was nowhere else to go. Only in that direction did someone have the temerity not only to reject the Mongol call for submission, but to resist and even to succeed, and to keep on doing so. In 1260, the Mamluks had killed the Mongol envoys and had defeated the Mongol armies at ʿAyn Jālūt and Homs. This in itself was cause enough for revenge. To add insult to injury, the Mamluks thwarted all Mongol attempts to breach the border, and continued to launch raids across it with impunity, virtually entering at will Lesser Armenia, always loyal to the Mongols. Without a doubt, the desire to revenge defeats and punish provocations was an additional reason behind Īlkhānid policy towards Syria.[94] This was not just a question of revenge for specific defeats or raids. The continued existence of a strong Mamluk state in Egypt and Syria was an affront in Mongol eyes and a challenge to the whole Mongol imperial *raison d'être*. The Mamluks refused them any legitimacy, and called on them to withdraw from the Islamic countries.[95] It is perhaps not too extreme to suggest

[91] Aubin, "Qaraunas," 79–88; Jackson, "Dissolution," 238–44; *idem*, "Chaghatayid Dynasty," *EIr*, 5:344–5.

[92] Khazanov, *Nomads*, 67–8, 191. I am not claiming that this ecological difficulty was the main cause for the lack of Īlkhānid initiative in the direction of India, but suggest it in addition to the one previously given.

[93] Spuler, *Mongol Period*, 32–3; A.K.S. Lambton, "Mongol Fiscal Administration," 82–4.

[94] On the other hand, Krawulsky, *Īrān*, 586, may attribute too much importance to this particular reason; see Amitai-Preiss, "Aims," forthcoming.

[95] See, e.g., Baybars's reply to Abagha's call to submit in 667/1268, in ch. 5, p. 122.

that another motivation of the Īlkhāns in their war against the Mamluks was to punish and destroy those who were audacious enough to question the Mongol imperial dream.

Old ideals of imperial glory were probably hard to discard. The desire for Mongol expansion carried on through inertia, even if in reality it was no longer viable. Vestigial expansionist ideology combined with the desire for revenge felt against the Mamluks after ʿAyn Jālūt. The embers of Mongol imperial dreams were kept alive by the raids and occasional offensives into Syria.

Other reasons beyond the continual Īlkhānid antipathy towards the Mamluks and the desire to conquer Syria present themselves. First, there might have been the Īlkhānid dread of a joint Mamluk-Golden Horde attack. In order to defuse this potential danger, the Īlkhāns would have attempted to disrupt the border region, and weaken the Mamluks by taking Syria, and if possible destroy them. Secondly, the sultans were the leaders of the Muslim world, who had resurrected the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. The Mongol leaders may have feared the impact of a strong Muslim state, outside their control and offering resistance, on their own subject population, the vast majority of which was Muslim.[96] A third reason may have been the fact that Syria was included in the territories originally granted to Hülegü by Möngke, or so at least the pro-Īlkhānid sources claim.[97] The Īlkhānids thus thought they had a right to the country, and they tried to realize this right. Finally, the raids and campaigns, if nothing else, kept the tribesmen busy, and indulged their desire for adventure and booty. Of the latter, the Mongols must have been particularly interested in horses and other forms of livestock.[98]

Neither these explanations nor the ones already mentioned contradict each other, and it is possible that Īlkhānid designs on Syria and the Mamluks may have been inspired by several reasons. One matter is clear: the Īlkhāns kept their sights on Syria and hoped to defeat the Mamluks. Thus they sought to keep up pressure on the border and from time to time the Īlkhāns launched offensives when they thought the conditions were right. It was to take the Mongols some sixty years after ʿAyn Jālūt to realize that they could not defeat the Mamluks and officially to renounce the ideal of Mongol manifest destiny.

Why did the Mongols fail to realize their designs towards Syria and the Mamluks? It was not because they were vastly inferior soldiers, nor because Syria could not feed their horses. Rather, the root of their failure is to be sought elsewhere. I would propose the following reasons: (1) the building-up of the Mamluk military machine; (2) Baybars's dynamic leadership; (3) the morale of the Mamluks and the importance they attributed to the war; (4) the Īlkhānid war with the Golden Horde and other Mongols; (5) the failure to reach an understanding with the West.

[96] I would like to thank Prof. Ayalon for suggesting to me these two reasons.

[97] Dr. Jackson suggested this possibility; on this mandate from Möngke, see ch. 1, p. 12. On the importance the Toluids attributed to Möngke's edicts, see Ayalon, "Yāsa," pt. B, 168.

[98] See n. 17 above.

The first two reasons are obviously connected. Under Baybars's rule, the army – like that of the Mongols, based on mounted archers of steppe origin – was expanded and rigorously trained; fortifications were put in order; the bedouins firmly brought into line; an effective espionage system was established; administration was organized; Syria was integrated into the kingdom; rapid communications were established throughout the state; the Caliphate was reestablished in Cairo, providing him with legitimation; and, relations were opened up with Hülegü's enemy, Berke. The army reacted swiftly to the slightest rumor of a Mongol offensive, and Baybars himself either led the troops or was right behind them. The continuing war also strengthened his rule, because in the face of the Mongol danger Baybars would brook no disloyalty. In general, his policies were continued by Qalawun, although, in the part of his reign covered by this study, Qalawun's leadership was not as yet fully felt, at least as regards the war with the Mongols. As has been seen, the battle of Homs (680/1281) was won more by the army that Baybars had built up than by the generalship of Qalawun.

The Mamluks also had the advantage of morale over their enemy. They were fighting (usually) on home territory, for their religion, their kingdom, and their lives. They were also defending their status as a ruling caste. To their mind, they had no choice but to win. The sultans did their best to inculcate these feelings in their followers. The Mongols may have been fighting for an abstract imperial ideal, for personal honor, and for booty, but they could not compete with the Mamluks for motivation.

The contrast in importance attributed by each side to the struggle is seen in the different treatment of the border war and other aspects of the conflict in the respective sources. The Mamluk sources are full of references to this war, because for them it was a matter of life and death, while the pro-Mongol sources, especially the semi-official Persian works, are usually laconic to an extreme when it comes to reporting the struggle with the Mamluk enemy, and their silence is only broken on the occasion of a major confrontation. It has been suggested that this terseness may be due in part to the fact that for the Mongols the war with the Mamluks was only one of many conflicts with external enemies, and not necessarily always the most pressing one.

All of Baybars's efforts might have been useless without the wars the Īlkhāns had to wage against their various Mongol neighbors, especially the Golden Horde. Without these distractions, it is quite possible that the Persian Mongols would not have waited twenty-odd years to return in force to Syria, thereby permitting the Mamluks to build up their army. Certainly, this is what the authors of some Mamluk and Mongol sources thought might well have happened if Hülegü's attention had not been turned elsewhere.[99] Additional

[99] Rashīd al-Dīn, ed. ʿAlīzādah, 3:77; Hetʿum, 176; Maqrīzī, 1:474 (not in parallel passage in Ibn al-Furāt, MS. Vienna, fol. 7a); Ibn Khaldūn, 5:430–1.

confirmation is provided by Abagha himself: in his 667/1268 letter to Baybars, it was stated that the reason that (his) Mongols had not attacked Syria was that the Mongols had disagreed amongst themselves.[100]

The Īlkhāns sought to compensate themselves for their preoccupation with the Golden Horde and other Mongols by opening up a second front of their own. They initiated communications with the Pope and other Western rulers. That these exchanges came to naught was not out of a lack of interest on the part of Hülegü and Abagha: the vast distance between the Īlkhāns and the West militated against the negotiations coming to fruition. And yet at the one time when real cooperation was possible, in 1271, Abagha failed to exploit the opportunity to the full. In a sense, this failure helped to lay the stage for the Mongol defeat at Homs a decade later.

[100] *Rawḍ*, 340; see ch. 5, p. 121. A similar claim was made by Abagha in his letter to the Council of Lyon in 1274; Roberg, "Tartaren," 300–1; Lupprian, *Beziehungen*, 227. Berke is reported to have remarked that his war with Hülegü led to the cessation of Mongol conquests; see above, ch. 4, p. 80.