



COURTS AND COURTIERS IV. UNDER THE MONGOLS

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During the early stages of the Mongol presence Persia was ruled, on behalf of the great khan (*qaḡan*, *qa'an/qā'ān*) in Mongolia, by military governors based in Azarbaijan and in Khorasan, but, with the coming of Hülegü (Hülāgū) in 654/1256 and the establishment of the Il-khanid state, the country was once again the seat of a resident sovereign. Like their kinsmen in other parts of the Mongol empire, the il-khans followed a pattern of seasonal migrations in search of fresh pasturage, and Rašīd-al-Dīn and Kāšānī, the “court” historians, have made it possible to trace most of their movements. In the winter the court often halted in Arrān, in Qarābāḡ and the Mūḡān steppe, or at Ūjān in the neighborhood of Tabrīz. Favored summer residences included Ālātāḡ (Ala Daḡ, northeast of Lake Van), where Hülegü built a palace (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīk* III, Baku, p. 90), Tabrīz, and Qarābāḡ. All these locations lay within a relatively restricted area in northwestern Persia, as dictated by the military threat from the Mongols of the Golden Horde in the Caucasus. But occasionally the il-khan wintered in Baghdad, in the so-called “palace of the catholicus,” according to 'Omarī (pp. 91-92); and Abaqa and Öljeitü (Ūljāytū) also sometimes wintered in Māzandarān. It should be emphasized that palaces and cities—even new cities constructed by the il-khans, like Solṭāniya, planned by



Arġun (*Arġūn*) and begun under Öljeitü in 706/1306-07—fit into this pattern, inasmuch as they simply formed part of an annual itinerary. They were not “capitals” in the full sense. A vivid description of the formalities of striking and pitching camp and of the order of march was given by Ebn Baṭṭūṭa (II, pp. 125-28; tr. Gibb, pp. 342-44; tr. Mowahḥed, I, pp. 250-51), who visited the *ordo* (*ordū* “camp”) of Abū Sa‘īd (q.v.) in about 727/1327.

As was the case with the Mongol *qaġans* in the east, the court did not consist merely of the sovereign’s headquarters but also included an establishment (*ordo*) for each of his wives and adult children. The papal envoy John of Plano Carpini reported, in his *Ystoria Mongalorum*, that a prince’s camp was never broken up on his death but was entrusted to one of his womenfolk (Van den Wyngaert, p. 115), and this rule seems to have applied to the princesses’ *ordos* in turn. They were heritable: The *ordo* of Hülegü’s chief wife, Doquz Ḳatun (*Dūqūz Ḳātūn*), for instance, passed on her death in 663/1265 to Abaqa’s wife Öljei (Üljāi) Ḳatun, and Abaqa ordered his grandson, the future island-khan Ġazan (Ġāzān), reared in the *ordo* of his wife Boloġan Ḳatun (*Boloġān Ḳātūn*), which the prince was destined to inherit. At first such establishments were maintained in the traditional fashion of the steppe: They were supported by levies from the subject population, gifts (*pīškaš*), and shares of the war booty. But from the last part of Abaqa’s reign special provision seems to have been made for them. Under Arġun they were allotted for their upkeep sums drawn on the revenues of particular provinces; and Ġazan endeavored further to regularize matters by granting to each *ordo* a province (*welāyat*) from the *injū* (*īnjū*), or “crown” lands (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme‘ al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 536-38; idem, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 329-31).

Occasionally a particular amir was designated as an *inaq* (*īnāq* “intimate”) of the sovereign; for example, Buqa (Būqā) under Abaqa and Aqbuqa (Āqbūqā) under Aḥmad-Tegüder (*Aḥmad Takūdār*) were so described by Rašīd-al-Dīn (*Jāme‘ al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 153, 190; idem, 1975, pp. 36-7, 57). According to ‘Omarī (p. 99), the *inaqs* were a private entourage (*kāšša*) comprising the sons of amirs, but there may be some confusion here with the *kešig* (*kešīktān*), or guard, for Grigor of Akner (Blake and Frye, pp. 343, 345) reported that Hülegü was surrounded by a guards regiment made up of young Georgians and Armenians of noble birth. In any case it must be assumed that the principal courtiers were largely identical with the vizier and great military officers of state, notably the four *omarā‘-e olūs* (commanders of the *olūs*) headed by the *amīr al-omarā‘* (commander in chief), whose names appeared on Il-khanid



decrees of the early 14th century (cf. also ‘Omarī, p. 93).

Associated with the Il-khanid court were a number of officials who were periodically referred to by contemporary authors like Rašīd-al-Dīn; the functions of certain of them were described more systematically by Nakjavānī, who wrote slightly later, in the mid-14th century, under Jalayerid rule (II, pp. 29-35, 53-72, 105-08). The *yurṭči* (*yūrṭčī*) was charged with setting up the royal encampment and with allotting pastures to the various *ordos*; the job of steward was performed by the *baḍurči* (*bāvorčī*); the *būke’ül* (*bokāvol*), originally a food taster, became responsible for overseeing the commissariat; the *čerbi* (*čerbī*) acted as chamberlain; the *šükürči* (*šükürčī*) held the ceremonial parasol; the *quščis* (*quščīān*) were falconers; the *yasaḍul* (*yasā’ol/yasāvol*) was marshal; the *bularquči* (*bolārqučī*) oversaw lost property; and the *aḳtači* (*aḳtājī*) was master of the horse. Judicial functions were delegated to the *yargū*, presided over by the *yargučī* (*yargūčī* or *amīr-e yargū*), who naturally dispensed Mongol, rather than Islamic law (Lambton, pp. 83-89). Attached to the court were also *bitikčis* (*bitikčīān*), or scribes, whose relationship with the administrative machinery headed by the vizier and other officials is unclear. And lastly there are references to *ev-oḡlans* (*īw-oḡlān/ān*), or “pages,” probably slaves, who were employed in various capacities, including missions to collect income (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme’ al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 167, 228, 254, 290, 335; idem, 1957, pp. 43, 80; idem, *Tārīk-e ḡāzānī*, pp. 12, 62, 127).

Prior to the reign of Ḡazan, when the Il-khans (apart from Aḥmad-Tegüder) were still pagan, it must be assumed that assemblies and etiquette followed lines similar to those described by observers like Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck at the *qāgan*’s court in Mongolia. At a general council, or *quriltai* (*qūriltāy*), for the election of a new *qaḡan*, once agreement had been reached, the princes and nobles removed their hats, slung their belts around their necks, took the successful candidate by each hand and had him raised up on a piece of felt before performing the triple genuflection, or *čök* (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 147, 207; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 187, 251-52; Simon of Saint-Quentin, pp. 90-92). The same procedure was apparently observed at the election and enthronement of an il-khan, as in the cases of Aḥmad-Tegüder in 681/1282, Arḡun in 683/1284, Öljeitü in 703/1304, and Abū Sa’īd in 717/1317, though in time the felt was superseded by a throne (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme’ al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 169-70, 198-99; idem, 1957, pp. 45, 62; Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, pp. 66, 122-23).

Feasting (*toy*, *ṭūy*) followed an election but occurred on other occasions also: The monarch’s birthday was celebrated at the il-khan’s court in the same way



as that of the *qaġan* in the Far East, and so was the advent of the new year according to the Turco-Mongol calendar (Vardan, p. 300; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīk* III, Baku, p. 352; idem, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, p. 143). Certain feasts were fixed, for instance, the one early in June at which all the white mares were consecrated and the first *qumiz* (*qomīz*, fermented mare's milk) of the year was consumed (William of Rubruck, in Van den Wyngaert, p. 302). During such celebrations, including the election of a new sovereign, the Mongol nobles wore clothes of a different color each day (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, p. 147; tr. Boyle, I, p. 186; Vardan, pp. 300-01; Plano Carpini, in Van den Wyngaert, p. 117; William of Rubruck, in Van den Wyngaert, p. 306). Special formalities were observed for visitors to the court. The *qams*, or shamans, "purified" them by making them pass between two fires; gifts brought for someone who had died were treated similarly (William of Rubruck, in Van den Wyngaert, p. 301). Members of the "religious classes" were exempted from performing the triple genuflection before a sovereign; hence the Armenian chronicler Vardan Arawelci, being a priest, was exempt at Hülegü's court in 1264 (p. 301).

There is relatively little information on court ceremonial in the Persian sources of the Il-khanid period, though Rašīd-al-Dīn described at some length a feast held by Ġazan at Ūjān in the summer of 701/1302. The il-khan sat upon a golden throne studded with gems, dressed in cloth of gold, wearing a jeweled diadem (*tāj*) and a magnificent girdle; the royal ladies (whose participation in public ceremonies was one of the distinguishing features of the Mongol period), the princes, and the courtiers were also luxuriously attired and rode on splendid horses. The feasting was followed by consultation on new military appointments and troop dispositions on various fronts (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 346-49; idem, *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 137-40). These occasions furnished an opportunity for lavish displays of generosity by the il-khan: Rašīd-al-Dīn reported that on one occasion Ġazan distributed 300 *tūmens* (*tūmān*) of gold and twenty thousand richly embroidered garments (*Jāme' al-tawārīk* III, Baku, pp. 393-94; *Tārīk-e ġāzānī*, pp. 184-85).



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