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# Arab Nomads and the Seljūq Military

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## *1. Introduction*

The medieval state was basically a military state. The present study investigates nomadic tribes and their political organisation as a reflection of the political conditions as well as the economic development of sedentary states. What is the setting?

- The region: I will focus on northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia (al-Jazīra).

- The period: I will cover the breakdown of the early ‘Abbāsīd empire and its transition from the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century to the Mongol invasion in the 7<sup>th</sup>/ 13<sup>th</sup> century.

- The Arab nomads: A second wave of nomads – after the early Islamic conquest – immigrated from the Arab peninsula during the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century. A third wave arrived later during the Ayyūbīd period about 600/ 1200.

- Which sedentary military states are concerned: There is first the pre-Seljūq period, when Būyīds from Iraq, Byzantines from Anatolia, and the Fāṭimīds from Egypt, each tried to thwart the regional supremacy of the others. The second phase is the period of the conquering Seljūqs proper; while in the third, we find the successor states of the Seljūq empire, the Zangīds and Ayyūbīds.

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Back to the main thesis: The organisation and strength of a nomadic tribe reflects the level of organisation and strength of the sedentary military power that confronts it. This hypothesis will be tested in three instances: first, Bedouin political and military domination in the region; second, neutralisation of the nomads and finally a kind of integration of the nomads into the fabric of a sedentary state. In every section I will pose the following questions:

- First: What was the general political context?
- Second: What kinds of revenues were at hand for the sedentary powers to spend on their military? This question concerns economic development.
- And third, the outcome of the answers to the two preceding questions: How are nomads integrated into or excluded from the sedentary military machine?<sup>2</sup>

## *2. The Bedouin Domination*

### 2.1 The Political Context

The first period concerns the Arab nomad domination from the late 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>/ 11<sup>th</sup> century. After its political and financial collapse, the ‘Abbāsīd administration left northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia to the powerful clan of the Ḥamdānids. They served them as a buffer against the hostile Egyptian governor-dynasty of the Ikhshīds in the south and the pressing Byzantines in the north. The Ḥamdānids from the Banū Taghlib belonged to old Arab nomad stock and formed a kind of nobility. At this point however, the Banū Taghlib were quite well adapted to the sedentary structure of the ‘Abbāsīd empire, but still kept their ties to the nomads in the pasture.

The Ḥamdānids faced a new wave of Arab nomad immigration. These tribes were the Banū Kilāb, the Banū ‘Uqail and the Banū Numair. The Banū Kilāb acquired pasture lands in northern Syria, roaming as far as al-Raḥba. The Banū ‘Uqail were centred in the region of northern Iraq and the Diyār Rabī‘a. The

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the references and source work for this contribution can be found in *Die Renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien* by the author. In addition some of the basic research literature is cited here for further reading.

tribe of the Numair roamed between the region of Harran and the middle Euphrates area.

Between 380/ 990–1 and 401/ 1010–1 the Ḥamdānids lost their control over the tribes. These in turn got sway over the cities in various degrees. The Bedouin amīr himself remained usually most of his time in the *ḥilla*, the Bedouin camp, while having a military representative in the city extracting tax monies. The military power of the tribes – as reflected in the sources – consisted only of the tribe itself. These nomad principalities succeeded the Ḥamdānids. Although they were almost autonomous, the great regional powers, the Fāṭimids, the Būyids and the Byzantines, used them as buffer between each other. And the nomads, in turn, were able to engage the great powers for their own purposes.

Each of these powers integrated some tribes formally into its hierarchy of state. Some Mirdāsīd and Numairīd amīrs as well as the Marwānids even received Byzantine titles like *patrikios*, *magistros*, *vestarches* and *dux*.<sup>3</sup> For some of the Arab amīrs lead seals of Byzantine style are known, with a saint on one side, the protocol in Arabic on the other. In the year 422/ 1031 Mirdāsīds, Numairīds as well as Kurdish Marwānids took part in a kind of conference of all Islamic allies in Constantinople. All the amīrs of the tribes involved, however, derived their Islamic legitimation to rule formally from either the Fāṭimid or the ‘Abbāsīd caliph. This is evident from the coin protocol (*sikka*) of the nomad amīrs who always acknowledged one of the two caliphs, although some of them were practically vassals of the Byzantines.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 The Financial Situation

Like the ‘Abbāsīds, the Ḥamdānids were permanently short of cash. They exploited their territory for short term benefit with unprecedented measures. For example they stripped the Diyār Muḍar of all available iron including the

<sup>3</sup> Cappel, „Response“, 123–126; Felix, *Byzanz*, 113, 134; Ripper, *Marwāniden*, 34. cp. for example Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubda* I, 262–264; Yaḥyā, *Tārīkh*, ed. Cheikho, 184.

<sup>4</sup> See for the Arab principalities: Ḥamdānids (Bikhāzi, *Ḥamdānīd Dynasty*), the Banū Kilāb (Zakkar, *Emirate*), the Banū Numair (Rice, „Harran“; Heidemann, *Renaissance*), the ‘Uqail (Kennedy, „Uqailids“; Degener, *Banū ‘Uqail*), the Marwānids (Ripper, *Marwāniden*). For the surrounding sedentary powers: Byzantium (Felix, *Byzanz*, Cappel, „Response“), Būyids (Busse, *Chalif*), Fāṭimids (Bianquis, *Damas*). For the lead seals see Heidemann – Sode, „Metallsiegel“. For the nomad-sedentary relation the works of Rowton, „Autonomy“, „Urban Autonomy“, „Enclosed Nomadism“ as well as Lindner, „Nomadic Tribe“ were most influential.

famous iron gates of al-Raqqā in order to repay the Qarmatians in southern Iraq.<sup>5</sup> In particular, the contemporary geographer Ibn Ḥauqal accused the Ḥamdānid amīr Saif al-Daula (d. 356/ 967) for ruining the formerly rich region of the Diyār Muḍar.<sup>6</sup> Due to the shortage of money the armies of the Ḥamdānids consisted mostly of recruited nomads and a few military slaves (pl. *ghilmān*).<sup>7</sup>

These newly, only superficially Islamised tribes constituted a perpetual threat to settled life, agriculture, and the roads used for long distance trade. Agricultural lands contracted and pasturelands grew.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3 The Integration of the Nomads

How were nomads integrated into the military machinery? This is the point to consider the incentives for the Bedouins to join an expedition of an amīr who did not belong to their own tribe. The economic advantage of using nomads as warriors lies in the low cost involved. Bedouin armies do not need regular payments. Their incentive to take part in wars is mainly booty or a kind of tribute by the employing amīr. Their loyalty was thus limited to this flow of income and was based on the ability of the amīr to guarantee victory, booty or tribute. This economic logic lies behind the frequent complaints about nomadic unreliability in the field. The Banū Kilāb, Numair and ‘Uqail were mentioned in various changing coalitions with military expeditions and raids of the sedentary powers. The strength of each tribe as well as their ability and will to form a nomadic-sedentary state was

- first, a function of the particular interest which one of the three great sedentary powers put on them and
- second, a function of the wealth of urban resources the Bedouin rulers could draw on.

The Mirdāsids in northern Syria were generally protected by the Byzantine garrison in Antioch. They had the trade city of Aleppo as a source of cash revenues. This resulted in a form of state that Michael Rowton has called „dimor-

<sup>5</sup> Bikhazi, *Ḥamdānid Dynasty*, 899–902.

<sup>6</sup> Cp. Ibn Ḥauqal, *Ṣūra*, 225f.

<sup>7</sup> For the Ḥamdānid military see Bikhazi, *Ḥamdānid Dynasty*, and McGeer, *Dragon’s Teeth*.

<sup>8</sup> Cp. Ibn Ḥauqal, *Ṣūra*, 228; Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan*, 141. For the archaeological evidence of this situation see Bartl, *Frühislamische Besiedlung*, esp. 116, 186–194.

phic“: a nomadic state where the ruler tried to present himself as urban, while having his military power in the pasture.<sup>9</sup>

The ‘Uqailids were protected by the Būyids in Iraq and had a source of revenue in the trade city of Mosul and a couple of minor cities in the neighbouring region. When the Seljūqs began to extend their power into the West, they at first strongly supported the ‘Uqailid amīr Muslim ibn Quraish (d. 478/ 1085), so that he was able to extend the ‘Uqailid emirate over much of the former Ḥamdānid territory, namely northern Syria, the Diyār Muḍar and the Diyār Rabā’a.

The Numairids are the best proof of the afore-mentioned principle, since they enjoyed the favour to be protégé of one of the great powers only during two brief periods. Living in the pasture of the Diyār Muḍar, they had no major city to exploit except decaying mid-size towns such as al-Raqqā and Ḥarrān. Both were only temporarily under their control. The Numairids rose to regional importance for the first time after the afore-mentioned treaty with Byzantium in 422/ 1031. Their importance and their sway over both cities lasted almost only until the death of their tribe leader Shabīb ibn Waththāb in 431/1039–40. The second time the Numairids gained prestige and power happened during the pro-Fāṭimid rebellion of the former Būyid-general Arslān al-Basāsīrī in Iraq between 447/1055 and 452/ 1060. The Fāṭimids took a vital interest in the security of the middle Euphrates region as a deployment zone and lifeline of the rebellion. They therefore supported the Numairids against the Mirdāsids. In those years the amīr of the Banū Numair Manīʿ ibn Shabīb (d. 454/ 1062) represented himself as ruler of a „dimorphic state“, as it is most visible in the Numairid gate of the citadel in Ḥarrān. It is the first known representative building in the region in decades.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Rowton, „Urban Autonomy“.

<sup>10</sup> For the Numairid gate in Ḥarran see Rice, „Harran“, for a further suggested representative building activity of Manīʿ in al-Raqqā see Heidemann, „Schatzfund“.

### 3. Arab Nomads and the Seljūqs

#### 3.1 The Political Context

At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup>/ 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Seljūq conquest reversed the general situation. The Seljūq state was a military state. The Seljūqs started their conquests early in the 5<sup>th</sup>/ 11<sup>th</sup> century in the east of the Islamic world, in Central Asia, as nomadic Turkomans. But when they arrived in Syria, the character of the state had fundamentally changed. Now the main body of the army was a well-trained core of professional horsemen backed by an administration in the Persian tradition of the Sāmānids and Ghaznawids. Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/ 1092), the famous vizier of the Sultan Malikshāh (d. 485/ 1092), explains the ideal structure of the Seljūq military state in his *Siyāsat-nāme*.

In 479/ 1086 the Seljūq Sultan Malikshāh completed the conquest of the Jazīra and Syria with the seizure of Aleppo. For the first time since the collapse of the ‘Abbāsīd state, northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia were reintegrated into a greater empire. The Seljūq rule was definitely regarded as foreign, in language, culture and in some regards also in religious belief. As a professional military minority, the Seljūqs and their successors based their rule on fortifications and fortified cities.

The Seljūqs enforced imperial order against nomadic domination. Before the conquest and in the very early days of their rule the Seljūqs supported some of the local and regional influential tribe leaders, first of all the ‘Uqailid amīr Muslim ibn Quraish, in order to hold sway over the region at low cost. The clan of Malikshāh married into the Bedouin, namely the ‘Uqailid, nobility. Malikshāh’s aunt (*amma*), Ṣafīya Khātūn, was married to Muslim ibn Quraish and later to his brother Ibrāhīm ibn Quraish.<sup>11</sup> Malikshāh’s foster-sister (*ukhtuhū min al-raḍāʿ*) Zalīkhā was given to Muslim ibn Quraish’s son.<sup>12</sup>

The spread of Seljūq rule over northern Iraq, northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria followed a certain model. First, they tried to secure their rule over the great fortified cities, Mosul, al-Ruhā’, Aleppo and Antioch, thus leaving mid-size towns like Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, Naṣībīn and smaller locations to be governed by local amīrs mainly with nomadic background. Arab nomads

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil X*, 150. Degener, *Banū ‘Uqail*, 93f.

<sup>12</sup> Sibṭ ibn al-Jauzī, *Mirʿāt*, ed. Sevim, 238; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh 471–480*, 32f.

served as auxiliaries within the armies of various Seljūq commanders. However, their loyalty extended only as far as their own interest was concerned.

In the second phase, after the death of Malikshāh in 485/ 1092, Seljūq rule extended from the great to the mid-size cities and to the countryside, and thus came at the expense of the Arab nomads. The following twenty years saw the ousting and extinction of the Arab nomad groups. The indigenous Kilāb, Numair and ‘Uqail-Bedouins perished within the power struggle of the various pretenders to the sultanate. They were one by one expelled from the rule over the mid-size towns and fortresses. The peak of this development was the massacre of some ten to thirteen thousand ‘Uqailid nomads at Dārā/ al-Muḍayyā‘ in the Khābūr area in the year 486/ 1093. Thousands of the Banū ‘Uqail were killed and their cattle – their livelihood – were driven away. The final stage was the seizing of their last cities Naṣībīn and Mosul, which they governed as *iqṭā‘* by the high-ranging Seljūq amīr Karbughā (d. 495/ 1192) in 489/ 1096. Whether or not this policy was deliberate cannot be answered. None of these events and massacres was reported as taking place in the context of war against the Arab nomads; the sources just mention them as episodes in the internal Seljūq power struggle.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.2 Financing the Army

The Seljūq army consisted of professional horsemen, most of whom were only seasonally available. The centrepiece for their financial support was the *iqṭā‘*, the Islamic fief. Although this institution had been known before, it became now the major concept for payments. In a simplified model the land-taxes of ‘*ushr* and *kharāj*, the agricultural surplus, were now sent directly to the respective army unit and not re-distributed by the sultan’s administration.

The level of the cash-based fiscal-system and economy shrunk dramatically in the west from the 4<sup>th</sup>/ 10<sup>th</sup> century onward. Money as medium for the fiscal redistribution became scarce. Under Niẓām al-Mulk the *iqṭā‘* became the rule. The amīr would receive a certain agricultural region for fiscal exploitation so as to be able to pay and feed his troops. This might have been cash or more likely natural products for the consumption of the military. Theoretically, fiscal exploitation and political rule should have been in different hands. This was only

<sup>13</sup> About the Seljūq conquest of Syria see Bianquis, *Damas I*, 639–652, El-Azhari, *Saljūqs*, and Heidemann, *Renaissance*, 145–174.



feasible in the better developed east of the empire, where the cash-based economy and tax-system continued to operate at a much higher level than in the west. As a consequence fiscal and military rule became synonymous in the west. In order to forestall the centrifugal powers inherent in this kind of system Nizām al-Mulk advised the ruler to build up centrally paid elite troops.

The Seljūq army was in need of agricultural land. The old nomad elite and the Seljūqs competed in the use of land. One of the first orders given after a conquest of an area was to reorganise all financial matters within a city and to distribute the districts available as *iqṭāʿ* to the Seljūq officers. The Arab nobility had little military value and were soon ousted from their *iqṭāʿ*s. They were regarded as a threat for the agricultural base of sedentary society, and thus to the financial resources of the Seljūq military.

The outcome of Seljūq *iqṭāʿ* in the economically weak west was different from that of the *iqṭāʿ* in the Būyid times, when its effect had been devastating. The Seljūq amīr and eventually his heirs had to rely on their *iqṭāʿ* as their only permanent financial resource. This became even truer in the process of fragmentation of the western Seljūq Empire. The amīr could increase his income and his military power only through land cultivation. As a consequence military personal became seasonal warriors. During the autumn and winter they had to go home for the supervision of the harvest.

Not only agriculture was important for the support of the Seljūq army. The slave elite troops needed cash, to be purchased and to be paid. Therefore the long distance trade – which always operated with cash<sup>14</sup> – was burdened with special tolls, called *mukūs*. The autonomous Seljūq amīrs did everything to establish peace in the land in order to make the roads safe for this purpose. An awareness of the link between security and revenue can be found in the contemporary sources as well.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Also the derivatives the *ḥawāla* und the *suftāja* can be regarded here as cash in opposition to barter exchange.

<sup>15</sup> About the destructive consequences of the Būyid *iqṭāʿ* cp. for example Bosworth, „Military Organisation“, 159–166; Satō, *State*, 20f. About the ideal structure of the Seljūq *iqṭāʿ*-based system and a cash-based army as counterweight see Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāme*, esp. ed. Darke, 131, 299; trans. Schabinger, 306, 499. About the positive results of the Seljūq *iqṭāʿ*, cp. Becker, „Steuerpacht“, 243. About the relation of peace in the land and the increase of tax monies in contemporary sources, cp. for example Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubda* II, 104, 179, 181.

### 3.3 Nomads and the Seljūq Military

Turkoman nomads played only a minor role in the Seljūq army during the conquest of Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Arab nomads – except for the ‘Uqailid „dimorphic“ state under Muslim ibn Quraish – were only temporary allies, changing sides whenever it suited them. The structure and way of payment of the Seljūq army affected them in substantial ways. Arab nomads and Seljūq military were competitors in land use. After the extinction and ousting of the great tribal groups the remnants disintegrated further, sometimes changing names or merging with other tribes.<sup>16</sup> The Arab nomads had perished or been marginalized, and no longer played a significant role in the Seljūq army. Ibn al-‘Adīm spoke of this period as the „*zawāl mulk al-‘arab*“, the disappearance of the Arab-Bedouin reign.<sup>17</sup>

Later in the Seljūq period, nomads were mentioned occasionally, and then – with exceptions under particular political conditions – only in the *bādiya*, pasture lands, south of the Euphrates at Šiffīn, the Jabal al-Biṣr or in the region of Palmyra.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence nomads almost disappear from the literary sources.

### 3.4 The Role of the ‘Uqailids of Qal‘at Ja‘bar

Although the tribes disappeared as an important factor in military and political life, some of the Arab amīrs with tribal background adapted themselves fully to the Seljūq style of government. They survived as rulers of autonomous principalities within the heterogeneous patchwork of Seljūq rule in the western part of the western Seljūq Empire. These included the ‘Uqailids of Qal‘at Ja‘bar, but also the Munqidhids of Shaizar and to a lesser extent the Banū Mulā‘ib of Afāmiya. Let us take a closer look at the „dimorphic state“ of the ‘Uqailids.

Qal‘at Ja‘bar and al-Raqqā remained under the sway of Arab ‘Uqailid amīrs. They were not mentioned in the reports about the ousting and extinction of the nomads. The sources hardly mention that these ‘Uqailid amīrs had tribal ‘Uqailid followers. The extent of the tribal following must therefore have been

<sup>16</sup> For this phenomenon cp. Lindner, „Nomadic Tribe“.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubda* II, 58, cites a letter by Sābiq ibn Maḥmūd, the Kilābī-Mirdāsīd amīr of Aleppo (471/1078–9).

<sup>18</sup> Heidemann, *Renaissance*, 272f.

rather limited. It should also be noted that the middle Euphrates region did not belong to the traditional roaming region of the Banū ‘Uqail.

The power of the latter lay probably in their fortresses, in addition to their diplomacy, which led them to establish marriage ties to the neighbouring Arab tribes, the Numairids, the Munqidhids, the Mazyadids in Iraq and probably to the other tribes and Turkomans as well. The military weakness of the ‘Uqailids is most visible during a rebellion of a tribal Numairid group against the ‘Uqailid governor of al-Raqqā in the year 501–2/ 1108. No tribal ‘Uqailids were mentioned in this conflict. The indigenous ‘Uqail amīr of Qal‘at Ja‘bar was compelled to call the Seljūq governor of Mosul for help – an unprecedented incident.

The ‘Uqailids of Qal‘at Ja‘bar controlled an important crossing of the Euphrates between Syria and Iraq. The sources never mention any conflict with any of the rival Seljūq armies passing frequently through their territory. The ‘Uqailids and the Munqidhids took a neutral role in all the inner-Seljūq power struggles and later also in the wars between the Seljūqs and the Crusaders. In some instances they served as mediators – or they sheltered high-ranging refugees from Seljūq areas.<sup>19</sup> All of this shows how far they had become assimilated to the Seljūq state. At this point the ‘Uqailid emirate hardly qualifies as nomadic any more.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the ‘Uqailids with their various ties to the pasture served the Seljūqs by controlling the remaining Arab and Turkoman nomads in the region and by securing crossing of the Euphrates – something that the „sedentary“ Seljūqs may not have been able to achieve by themselves.

#### 4. *The Nomads in the Ayyūbid Period*

##### 4.1 The Political Situation

I will only briefly mention the next phase in developments under the Ayyūbids: the formal integration of the Arab nomads into a basically Seljūq state. In the course of the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup>/ 12<sup>th</sup> century, the western Seljūq Empire disin-

<sup>19</sup> Köhler, *Allianzen*, 146–148.

<sup>20</sup> Heidemann, *Renaissance*, 260–289.

tegrated into a number of autonomous principalities. Most of these became hereditary. Most prominent among them was the governor dynasty of the Zangīds. From 521/ 1127 onwards Zangī ibn Āqsunqur (d. 541/ 1146), later his son Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd (d. 569/ 1174) and finally Saladin (d. 589/ 1193) formed a viable powerful autonomous province, almost a state of its own. Put simply, the Jazīra had to provide land based seasonal warriors and supply of cereals; Egypt served the Ayyūbids as source of cash revenue, soldiers and cereals as well. Those were needed for the Syrian and Palestinian battlefields.<sup>21</sup>

Zangī and Nūr al-Dīn did everything to support agriculture in the region. Archaeology corroborates this impression.<sup>22</sup> The Zangīds and the Ayyūbids enforced public peace on the roads to foster long-distance trade with the ultimate aim to generate tax monies through custom tolls, the *mukūs*. But over time Nūr al-Dīn and his successors gradually began to remove tolls on long distance trade within their territories in favour of intra urban market taxes (i.e. *ḥaqq al-baiʿ*), perhaps regarding custom tolls now as impediments for trade. This development has much to do with the agricultural growth and overall positive economic developments following the Seljūq conquest.<sup>23</sup>

Nūr al-Dīn's rule saw a large rebuilding program of the cities, which included even mid-size cities like al-Raqqā and Ḥarrān.<sup>24</sup> The Zangīd state became even more powerful when Saladin and the Ayyūbids took over. Trade and agriculture flourished. The monetary economy grew enormously as compared with the period of the Bedouin domination and the early Seljūq rule. The autonomous remnants of the Arab principalities like the ʿUqailids of Qalʿat Jaʿbar were removed and the territory came firmly under Ayyūbid sway.

#### 4.2 The Payment of the Army

The principles of financing the military underwent little change from the Seljūq period. Economic growth enabled the establishment and maintenance of a much stronger army than before. However the problem of the seasonal availability of warriors from the Jazīra who had their base in the agricultural lands continued to make it felt, most visibly during the yearlong siege of Akkon from

<sup>21</sup> Cp. N. Elisséeff, „Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd“, in: EI<sup>2</sup>, 132 left; Gibb, „Armies“.

<sup>22</sup> Cp. Bartl, *Frühislamische Besiedlung*, 186–194, for the Balīkh-valley.

<sup>23</sup> See in detail Heidemann, *Renaissance*, 297–353.

<sup>24</sup> Cp. Tabba, *Patronage*.

584/ 1188 to 588/ 1191. The Jazīran troops of Saladin went home for harvest every autumn, but the siege and war with the crusaders continued. This accounts mainly for Saladin's capitulation.<sup>25</sup> Hence the later Ayyūbid ruler al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 647/ 1249) decided to rely mainly on a cash-based garrisoned elite-army consisting of Turkish and Circassian slaves (*mamlūks*) who served as professional full-time soldiers. For example in 647–648/ 1249–1250 they decided the victorious battle of al-Manṣūra against an equally professional Crusader army.<sup>26</sup> Cash-based Mamlūk elite-corps had been a centrepiece of the military concept since the early Seljūq armies, but under the Ayyūbids they became gradually the predominant force.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.3. The Relation Between the Nomads and the Zangīd-Ayyūbid State

Under the Zangīds und Ayyūbids nomads did not constitute any major military challenge and were gradually integrated into the fabric of state. Abū Shāma, for instance, tells us that, as for the reign of Nūr al-Din about 552/ 1157, nomadic tribes had to pay a tax called *ʿidād*. For the Ayyūbid period we have more information on this *ʿidād*, which was counted in money and live stock.<sup>28</sup>

Under the early Ayyūbids, a decade after the death of Saladin, about 600/ 1200, a third wave of immigration of tribal groups reached northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia. Groups of the Ṭayy' confederation extended their roaming region from the Arab peninsular into Syria and northern Mesopotamia. In northern Syria and the Diyār Muḍar we find the Āl Faḍl, a subgroup of the

<sup>25</sup> See Möhring, *Saladin*; Gibb, „Armies“, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Thorau, *Baibars*, 43–54; Gibb „Armies“, 77. About the professionalisation of the European knights and their organisation into orders see Thorau, „Ritterorden“. Cp. about the strength and deficiencies of Crusader armies Smail, *Crusading Warfare*, 97–100.

<sup>27</sup> Ayalon, „From Ayyubids“.

<sup>28</sup> Abū Shāma, *Rauḍatain*, ed. Kairo I, 16; ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad I/ 1, 38–40 (552 h.). *ʿIdād* is the plural form *fiʿāl of ʿadad* or estimation; cp. for the general meaning of „estimation“ de Goeje, *Indices*, 296, and Eddé, *Principauté*, 333, 498. Iṣfahānī, *al-Barq al-shāmī*, cited in: Hiyārī, „Origins“, 514, mentions *ʿidād* in a diploma for the new governor of Damascus in 578/ 1182. The plural *ʿidād* can be found several times with the meaning of tax-estimations or better payments of nomads during the Ayyūbid period in the tax lists provided by Ibn Shaddād: Ibn Shaddad, *A'lāq I/ 1*, 152 (Aleppo: „*ʿidād at-turkmān* in Aleppo 150.000 dirham and sheep 30.000 heads with a value of 600.000 dirham“); *I/ 2*, 396 (Bālis: *ʿal-ʿidād* 20.000 dirham“); *III*, 66 (Ḥarrān: *al-ʿidād* 50.000 dirham), 99f. (al-Ruhāʿ: *ʿidād al-ghanam* [of the sheep] 60.000 dirham). Cp. to a parallel financial right over Bedouins in the Crusader states Smail *Crusading Warfare*, 59.

Ṭayy'. Their region lay between Ḥimṣ, in northern Syria, up to Qal'at Ja'bar and al-Raḥba. In the east the Khafāja, a branch of the 'Uqailids, grew in importance, with their main roaming region situated between al-Kūfa and Hīt up to al-Raḥba. This new expansion occurred not without conflicts with the Ayyūbid principalities.

The Ayyūbid states which were much dependent on the security of the overland routes tried to integrate the nomads by offering them a legitimate place within the hierarchy of state. The brother of Saladin al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr (d. 615/1218) and his nephew al-Zāhir Ghāzī (d. 613/616) reacted to this new wave of Bedouins by the formalisation of the *imārat al-ʿarab*, the Bedouin emirate. The *amīr al-ʿarab*, the prince of the Bedouins, was an institution already known before in Syria and the Jazīra.<sup>29</sup> He was probably the most powerful or most dignified chief among the tribal leaders in the pasture and therefore served as their representative towards the sedentary powers. The invention lay in the appointment of the *amīr al-ʿarab* now by representatives of sedentary powers themselves. Al-Zāhir Ghāzī took the leadership in the northern Syrian pasture from a member of the old Banū Kilāb and bestowed this title officially to a member of the Banū Ṭayy' and especially to one of the groups of the Āl Faḍl. They received an *iqṭā'* or *khubz*. Salamiya near Ḥimṣ was usually the *iqṭā'* of the *amīr al-ʿarab* in Syria. In exchange for these benefits they had to bring their tribal following in line with the Ayyūbid state. Although we have no information about it, *the amīr al-ʿarab* might be considered as an important agent for the collection of *ʿidād*, the nomad tribute, which is mentioned in Ayyūbid tax lists of some cities in the region. The institutionalised leadership in the pasture served probably both sides.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> ʿAzīmī, *Tārīkh*, ed. Za'rūr, 376, reports in 520/ 1126–7 about an *amīr ʿarab al-Jazīra*. In Iraq there is an earlier example for the appointment of an *amīr al-ʿarab* by the caliph in 396/ 1005–6; Heidemann, *Renaissance*, 271.

<sup>30</sup> About the third wave of nomad immigration and the institution of the *amīr al-ʿarab* see Hiyari, „Origins“, esp. 514f.; Eddé *Principauté*, 506f. Cp. Ibn al-ʿĀḍīm, *Bughya* I, 545 (al-Zāhir Ghāzī); Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* IV, 205f. (al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr), referring to Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/ 1349) as his source.

## 5. Summary

Let me summarise the changing relation between the successive military states and the Arab nomads. It is my contention that the strength and political organisation of the tribal groups were direct reflections of the military and economical strength of the sedentary powers.

The first period is characterised by a new wave of tribal immigration and their domination of the region, which is linked to the surrounding political situation. They grew in power and developed a kind of „dimorphic state“ – a Bedouin ruler who presented himself as urban but had his men in the pasture – whenever they were under special support of one of the surrounding sedentary powers.

In the second phase, the Seljūq period, the tribes competed in land use with the Seljūq military state. The Seljūqs needed land in order to distribute it to the army and to develop it as *iqṭāʿ*. The power struggles of the various Seljūq pretenders which began in this period ended with the tribal groups being ousted or exterminated as further result. Only some amīrs with tribal background survived this situation owing to their neutral political position and the possession of fortified locations.

The third phase witnessed the formal integration of newly arrived nomadic groups into the framework of the Zangīd-Ayyūbid state. Operating at a much higher economic and military level the Zangīds were able to tax the nomads, while the Ayyūbids were in a position to nominate the *amīr al-ʿarab*, the chief of the Bedouins.

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