

THE ECONOMY OF ARMENIA UNDER THE IL-KHANS¹

Tom Sinclair

The period when Greater Armenia was governed, directly or indirectly, by the Il-Khans of Iran has always been reckoned critical in the economic history of Armenia. Although Armenia escaped the large-scale massacres of city populations and the wreckage of buildings and other infrastructure which had been visited on Iran,² it is argued that Mongol taxation was so heavy as to depress the economy, and particularly agriculture. This, implies the argument, was the beginning of a long decline which subsequent rulers did nothing to stop, and which it would have been hard for them to stop.

The subject can be approached by examining the Armenian chronicles. The latter certainly presents a picture of high and sometimes arbitrary taxation, of depredation by Mongol soldiers and of general impoverishment.³ And there is no reason to distrust the Armenian chronicles in this respect. The difficulty with the Armenian chronicles is that, despite their immediacy and poignancy, they are incomplete as to the distinctive characteristics of Il-Khanid taxation and other branches of economic policy. Complaints about high taxation, depredations, and so on are not peculiar to the Il-Khanid period. Moreover the picture of the incidence and rates of taxation which the Armenian chronicles present is only partial, and certainly not full enough to allow comparisons with other periods. Furthermore, even if the impression emerged from the texts that the general condition of agriculture worsened during the Il-Khanid period, the more convincing argument would be to connect such an impression with features of policy peculiar to the Il-Khanid period. This would not only strengthen the argument for saying that a deterioration took place, but also provide an argument that Il-Khanid policy was responsible.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the annual meeting of the Middle East Association of America in 1996.

² In the initial Mongol advance on the Seljuk sultanate of Rum, some Armenian cities were sacked and their inhabitants massacred, principally because they offered resistance rather than submission. See Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *Patmut'yun Hayots'*, ed. K.A. Melik'-Ohanjanyan (Erevan: Haykakan SSR Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1961), pp. 278-280, 283; Vardanyan Vardapeti [Arewelts'i], *Hawak'umn Patmut'ean*, [ed. Gh. Alishan] (Venice: I Surb Ghazar, 1862; repr. as Vardan Areveltsi, *Chronicle* [Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1991]), p. 216. See Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye: Siyâsi tarih Alp Arslan'dan Osman Gazi'ye (1071-1318)*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1993), pp. 429-431, 439-442; Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1971), p. 256.

³ For some modern views based on the Armenian sources, which argue for the above view of the Armenian economy, G. Dédéyan, ed., *Histoire des Arméniens* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 1982), pp. 305-306; Robert Gregory Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13th-14th Centuries* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1979), pp. 202-204.

The program of this article is to supplement the conclusions which have been drawn from the Armenian chronicles by drawing on other sources and by using the ideas of recent scholarly work concerned with the economic policy of the Il-Khans, particularly in Iran. This will suggest approaches which have the potential to reveal more accurately the state of the economy and those features of taxation and other policy which are more informative as to the Il-Khans' impact on the economy.

On grounds of differing impact, it is valid to divide Armenia into three regions for this purpose. These are northeast Armenia, governed locally by a series of Armenian princes; to the west, that part of Armenia which had been included within the Seljuk sultanate of Rum; and, to the south-east, the Il-Khans' province of Arminiya, the largest component of which was the district of Lake Van. This article will briefly survey all three, but it is in respect of the third region, Arminiya, that it is hoped to contribute new arguments.

The first of these regions is northeast Armenia, where the local Armenian princes were the vassals of the Il-Khans either directly or indirectly. Some were vassals, for example of the Zak'areans, who were themselves vassals of the Georgian kingdom, which itself was a vassal of the Il-Khans, an arrangement which had been instituted when Armenia was ruled by the Greater Mongol empire rather than by the Il-Khans.⁴

The Armenian *nakharars* (heads of and princely families) were subject to a tribute, the precise quantity of which we do not know, but which was so heavy that even at the beginning of the Il-Khanid period, some of the Armenian princes were driven to take part in the Georgian revolt of 1259-1261. By this time some of the Armenian *nakharars* had been forced to mortgage their estates in order to pay the tribute.⁵

Mongol policy bore on the princes of northeast Armenia in a second way. The princes owed military service to their masters. The Il-Khans used Armenian and Georgian troops in their campaigns, particularly those against Mamluk Syria, more or less until the end of the thirteenth century. We know that in several cases heavy

⁴ On Zak'aria, the founder of the dynasty, S. Eremyan, *Amirspasalar Zak'aria Erkaynabazuk* (Erevan, 1944). On the nobility under the Zak'areans, Bedrosian, *Turco-Mongol Invasions*, pp. 161-169; Dédéyan, *Histoire des Arméniens*, pp. 299-304. As vassals of the Il-Khans: B.N. Aṛak'elyan, ed., *Hayastanē zargats'ats feodalizmi darashrjanum (IX d keserits' minchev XIV d keserē)*; vol. 3 of *Hay zhoghovrdi patmut'yun*, ed. Ts.P. Agayan, et al. (Erevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademiyai Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1976), pp. 617-625; Bedrosian, *Turco-Mongol Invasions*, pp. 184-190.

⁵ Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, eds. and trans., "History of the Nation of the Archers (The Mongols) by Grigor of Akanc' Hitherto Ascribed to Maghak'ia the Monk," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12, no. 3-4 (December 1949), pp. 269-399 (hereinafter "Grigor of Akner"), p. 320, says that *mal*, *t'aghar* and *khalan* were imposed on the Armenian and Georgian princes, on top of which they had to pay tribute (*hark*). *Mal* very likely reflects the land tax then in force in Iran: the *qubchur*, to be discussed below (esp. n. 26) had not yet been introduced. *Khalan* appears to be a series of arbitrary exactions, which might include the demand for *ad hoc* labor services (see again n. 34). *T'aghar* perhaps means demands for provisions, as is suggested by Abdulkadir Yuvalı, *İlhaneliler Tarihi. I. Kuruluş Devri* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Matbaası, 1994), p. 156. The princes seem, however, to have undertaken to collect the taxes from their subjects and pay the taxes as representative of their subjects. On the revolt: Kirakos Gandzakets'i, pp. 389-391; on mortgaging, *ibid.*, p. 389.

losses were suffered, and in some cases the prince leading a particular contingent was himself killed.⁶

The Il-Khans' policy so squeezed the *nakharar* houses that, with the exception of a handful of families, they were simply crushed out of existence. By about 1360, only a few families survived. These, as is well known, held lands mostly south and east of Lake Sevan.⁷ The estates of the ruined *nakharar* families were sometimes given to Mongols, and the city of Ani became the domain of the Il-Khan himself.⁸ In what sense individual Mongols, including the Il-Khan, could gain possession of *nakharar* estates, and what economic effects such possession by Mongols might have had, will be considered below.

The Armenian princely families could have passed on to their subjects some or all of the burden of the tribute imposed on them. However, the circumstance that some mortgaged their own estates suggests that they allowed the burden to fall on themselves, and perhaps that they were responsible for the payment to the Il-Khan of some or all of the taxes, the terms of which required that they be levied from the populace rather than the prince.⁹ The strictly economic effects of Il-Khanid taxation in northeastern Armenia seem to stem from the loss of the Armenian princely families and from their replacement by Mongols. The absence of the *nakharar* families can only have led to a loss of cohesion in society and, in particular, to increased insecurity in town and countryside. It is no coincidence that during the first half of the fourteenth century the caravans formerly passing through Kars and Ani began to choose a more southerly line, that line passing Alashkert and Bayazit (called Dariwnk' in previous periods)—although no doubt the route was dragged southward fundamentally for commercial reasons connected with changes in origin and destination.¹⁰ The change in the alignment of this particular route is a dif-

⁶ For example Kirakos Gandzakets'i, pp. 387-389 (against Mamluk Syria and Egypt, 1261); Step'annos Orbēlean, *Patmut' iwn nahangin Sisakan*, ed. K.V. Shahnazareants' (Paris: I Gortsakan K.V. Shahnazareants', 1859), p. 162 (against Golden Horde, also 1261).

⁷ On the *meliks* who remained, Dédéyan, *Histoire des Arméniens*, pp. 378-384; R.H. Hewsen, "The Meliks of Eastern Armenia," parts I-IV, *Revue des Etudes Arméniennes* 9 (1972), 10 (1973), 11 (1975-76), 14 (1980), which includes the history of the dynasties, where appropriate, under the Mongols.

⁸ The inscription at Ani which seems to show that by the reign of the Il-Khan Abu Sa'id (1315-1335) Ani had become an estate of the Il-Khans is published and discussed in V. Bartold, "Persidskaya nadpis' na stene aniiskoi mecheti Manuche," *Aniiskaia seriia* 5 (St. Petersburg) (1911). The present author has some reservations as to what it does show about the personal interest of the Il-Khan in Ani.

⁹ This is the nature of the taxes mentioned by Grigor of Akner. The items which Grigor mentions as tribute (*hark*), and therefore necessarily to be levied from the princes themselves—falcons, etc.—do not appear ruinous.

¹⁰ H.A. Manandian, *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to World Trade*, trans. Nina G. Garsoian (Lisbon: Armenian Library of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1965), pp. 197-200. On Alashkert, G. Le Strange, ed., *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulub composed by Hamd-Allāh Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740 (1340)*, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series 23, pt. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, Imprimerie Orientale, 1915; London: Luzac & Co., 1915), p. 104 and the Alashkert coin quoted in n. 38 below. Bayazid first appears in the occupations of Timur and Shah Rukh. See İsmail Aka, *Mirza Şahrüh ve Zamani* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), p. 122; Besim Darkot, "Bayezid," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1949), pp. 368-369. Bayazid appears to have been named after the brother of Ahmad, the last Jalayrid sultan.

ferent matter from the renewed emphasis on a second route, which will be described below.

The second region to be considered is that which had been incorporated into the Rum Seljuk sultanate. Strictly within the boundaries of Armenia on the Classical and Late Classical definition, the only district of Armenia incorporated within the Seljuk sultanate was that of Erzinka/Erzincan.¹¹ Among the districts of the former Lesser Armenia, where the Armenian population had been supplemented by a heavy infusion in the eleventh century, the districts of Sivas and Tokat were within the Seljuk sultanate.¹² Elsewhere previous westward migrations had produced large Armenian populations in such districts as those of Tzamandos and Aplastay/Elbistan, both east of Kayseri, and Divriği; and since our subject is as much Armenians as it is Armenia, those populations should be included when we consider the part of Armenia incorporated within the Seljuk sultanate.¹³

The Seljuk sultanate was, from 1243, a vassal of the Mongol empire and from 1259, a vassal of the Il-Khans. The sultanate was subject to a tribute which increased in quantity, especially after the events of 1276-1277.¹⁴ In the latter, the powerful vezir Mu'in al-Din Sulayman was accused of complicity with the Mamluk sultan when the latter sent an invasion force onto Seljuk territory. The vezir's execution brought about a change in the relationship between the Seljuk sultanate and the Il-Khan empire, though this was a change whose elements had been developing since the initial Mongol conquest.¹⁵ The Il-Khans' emissaries increasingly interfered in the working and decisions, including ones concerning taxation, of the Seljuk state, and it was in this connection that the tribute exacted was progressively increased.¹⁶ The tribute had to be collected ultimately from the Seljuks' subjects. Increases in taxation might be carried to the point where peasants would starve, desert their villages, limit production, and so forth. The tendency would be for increased taxation to lead to agricultural decline.

The difficulty with assessing the impact of these developments on the Armenian territories of the Seljuk sultanate is that practically none of the districts in question is typical for the Il-Khanid period of Seljuk history. Tokat was part of the *iqta'*

¹¹ On the local dynasty and the incorporation of Erzincan into the Seljuk sultanate, Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History c. 1071-1330*, trans. J. Jones-Williams (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1968), pp. 108-109, 126-127.

¹² For the Armenian influx, see esp. R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071* (Paris: Payot, 1947), pp. 553-555, 591-595; G. Dédéyan, "L'immigration arménienne en Cappadoce au XI^e siècle," *Byzantion* 45, no. 1 (1975), pp. 43-117, esp. pp. 78-100, *passim*.

¹³ Dédéyan, "L'immigration" pp. 79-97, *passim*.

¹⁴ On the tribute, Yuvali, *İlhanlılar Tarihi*, pp. 155-157; on the coins, many of which were used to pay the tribute, Rudi Paul Lindner, "Hordes and hoards in late Saljūq Anatolia," in *The Art of the Saljūqs in Iran and Anatolia: Proceedings of a Symposium held in Edinburgh*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1994), pp. 278-285.

¹⁵ On the events of 675/1276-77: Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks. The Mamluk-İlkhānīd War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 157-177; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 284-291.

¹⁶ Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 293-301, esp. 299-300.

(domain) of that very Mu‘in al-Din Sulayman who was executed in 1277.¹⁷ In this period and context *iqta‘* meant that the rights to the taxes of certain estates were handed to a particular man, who in practice, though not in law, could treat them more or less as private property.¹⁸ It follows that the economic fate of the districts belonging to the *iqta‘* depended on its management by the beneficiary. In the case of Tokat and nearby districts, up to the 1270s, there is no evidence of agricultural decline or oppression and some evidence of prosperity in the form of an unusual number of building projects in a short space of time.¹⁹ Again, there is no sign of a slump in the fortunes of the city of Erzrnka during the Seljuk period. Admittedly the city itself lived partly on international trade and partly on manufactures, and trade kept a series of cities in northern Armenia (Sivas and Erzurum, for example) in prosperity.²⁰ The district of Divriği was the domain of a small Turkish principality subject to the Seljuk sultanate; and the fate of this principality after 1252 is unknown, nor is it known how the Mongol tribute would have borne down on that district.²¹ The Sivas district, certainly, is one where the Mongol tribute, indirectly, can be expected to have imposed an extra weight of taxation. In the countryside this may have been the case. The city does not show any signs of degeneration during the Seljuk period.²²

After that period, the former Seljuk sultanate of Rum was governed by a series of Mongol commanders as a province of the Il-Khans' empire.²³ It is fair to treat the province of Rum at this stage as directly administered. Since the third region of Armenia to be considered, southern and eastern Armenia, is that which precisely was directly administered, Rum as a province of the Il-Khanid empire can be discussed together with southern Armenia. There is no evidence to suggest that the two were treated in essentially different ways as regards basic tax policy.²⁴ The

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 179-182, 330-332.

¹⁹ J.M. Rogers, "Recent Work on Seljuk Anatolia," *Kunst des Orients* 6 (1969), pp. 134-169, esp. p. 148. On Mu‘in al-Din Sulayman's own medrese at Tokat, the building of which does not suggest an impoverished district, Aptullah Kuran, *Anadolu Medreseleri. I. Cilt* (Ankara: Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Mimarlık Fakültesi, 1969), pp. 96-99.

²⁰ Besim Darkot, "Erzincan," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1948), pp. 338-340, esp. p. 339.

²¹ The last that is known of this dynasty comes from an inscription on the citadel: Max Van Berchem and Halil Edhem, *Sivas, Divriği*, part 3, vol. 1 of *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, ed. Max Van Berchem, *Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Cairo* 29 (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1917), pp. 89-90, n. 56. The incident in which the Il-Khan had the citadel dismantled (Ibid., p. 91) in 675/1277 seems to show nothing about the survival of the dynasty. However the inhabitants of the nearby town of Elbistan were massacred in 1256 by the Mongol Bayju: *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, the son of Aaron, the Hebrew physician commonly known as Bar Hebraeus; being the first part of his political history of the world, Vol. 1: English Translation*, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 426.

²² See below, n. 51.

²³ Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 301-303, 362-363; Cf. Cahen, "Eretna," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965; London: Luzac & Co., 1965), II:705-707.

²⁴ In Rum, the *jizya* was the basic tax, as it had been under the Seljuks; and the *jizya* was introduced to other parts of the Il-Khanid state in 1306, though it is unclear whether it replaced

directly administered areas in question, besides the Van region, included the districts of Erzurum and Bayburt, of Alashkert and Bayazit to the north, and part of the lower Euphrates valley to the west. For the Il-Khans, this was the province of Arminiya.²⁵

Before the reforms of the vezir Rashid al-Din at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century, Il-Khanid Iran was subject to a series of taxes which can be described as follows. In the first place, agriculture was taxed by means of the *qubchur*, which the best evidence suggests was a poll-tax, sometimes graduated according to wealth, on the sedentary as well as on the nomadic population.²⁶ This had been introduced in 1253 by Arghun, who at this stage was the deputy of the Great Khan Möngke.²⁷ Strictly the *kharaj* (land tax) was levied by the Il-Khanid administration as well as the *qubchur*. However the two do not seem to have been levied simultaneously in the same province: it was either the one or the other.²⁸ The Armenian sources make it clear that in Arminiya, we are dealing with the *qubchur*. They describe the imposition of a poll-tax, which was preceded by a census.²⁹

What made the tax onerous was not its prescribed quantity, but the fact that it could be imposed time and time again without any limit. There are some indications, too, that the imposition of the *ad hoc* taxes, mentioned below, was sometimes described as the imposition of another round of the *qubchur*. The taxes on agriculture, which included these same *ad hoc* and arbitrary taxes, were spent on the army, on associated services such as the *yam* (messenger service), and on the expenses of provincial administration, rather than on the Il-Khan and his court. The general scale of the total take from the *qubchur*, however, may have been small; unfortunately the only indications date from after the reforms. But if those indications are any guide (see below), the expenditure financed by the *qubchur* amounted to only a quarter of the total tax receipts. Before Rashid al-Din's reforms, or at

or was imposed alongside the *qubchur*, which in effect was another poll-tax. On Rum, Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 333-334; on the Il-Khanid empire as a whole, below and esp. n. 26.

²⁵ Dorothea Krawulsky, *Īrān—Das Reich der Īlhāne: Eine topographisch-historisch Studie*, TAVO B/17 (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1978), pp. 417-424.

²⁶ J.A. Boyle, ed., *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, vol. 5 of the *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 530-531, cf. 533; A.K.S. Lambton, "Mongol Fiscal Administration in Persia," part 1, *Studia Islamica* 64 (1986), pp. 79-99, esp. pp. 85-93.

²⁷ Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 339.

²⁸ See the discussion in Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 533.

²⁹ Grigor of Akner, p. 324, says that the tax was imposed according to the number of heads of people, then that men (i.e., heads of households) between the ages of fifteen and sixty had to pay sixty aspers each and that women and children were exempt, which indirectly confirms the nature of the tax. Kirakos Gandzakets'i, pp. 361-362, says that men had to pay and women were exempt. Under Uljaytu the *jizya*, the traditional Islamic poll-tax, was permanently imposed in 1306; however it is not clear whether it was imposed alongside, or replaced by, the *qubchur* (CHI V.533). Some Armenians evidently saw it as an extra imposition (L.S. Khach'ikyan, *ZhD dari hayeren dzer'agreri hishatakaraner* (Erevan: Haykakan SSR Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakh'ut'yun, 1950) no. 61, p. 46; cf. no. 62, p. 47, and no. 178, pp. 138-139). The issue of the taxation of churches and monasteries, which was alternately taxed and given immunity after intercession, is different. See Grigor of Akner, p. 314; Khach'ikyan, *ZhD dari*, no. 178, p. 138.

least for a significant period until some date short of them, the *qubchur* was not intended as a means of paying the soldiers. The soldiers were not, in fact, paid at all: they had to live by means of depredation on the local population. Money or goods from the proceeds of the *qubchur* were only paid to those in dire need.³⁰ The small scale of the tax take and the inadequacy of the tax to pay the soldiery's income do not suggest that the *qubchur* was too high or that the extra impositions of the same tax grossly crushed the peasantry. It more suggests that they led to greater exploitation by the unpaid soldiery. The reforms of Rashid al-Din eased the tax load by defining a precise target for each province and by allowing half of the tax to be paid twice yearly by peasants. In Iran, at least this and other reforms are credited with helping agriculture to revive.³¹

After the reforms of Rashid al-Din, regular payments were, it seems, made to the soldiers, and this might be accounted for by an increase in agricultural production consequent to the lightening of the tax load. One calculation suggests that a soldier's pay only amounted to about twenty-five or thirty dinars per year. Clearly the effect was, again, that in order to live, Mongol soldiers must extract most of their needs from local villagers.³² As in the case of the pre-reform period, it is legitimate to wonder if some instances described as the unlawful imposition of one of the taxes were not in fact mere seizure by the soldiery.³³

Here is a direct connection between the incidence of taxation and the complaints about depredation by soldiers. It was not high taxation which caused the deprecations, but that the taxes were not high enough. All the same, two reservations must be made. If the taxes on agriculture were light in the first place, it might be that the extra-legal exactions by the soldiery simply brought taxation, in effect, up to the level where in states elsewhere in the Muslim world it would have been anyway. In other words, the taxation arrangements, violence apart, may not have been

³⁰ On the arbitrariness and frequency of exaction, Lambton, "Fiscal Administration," p. 90. That the term could cover other arbitrarily imposed taxes is suggested by, among other things, the term *qubchuriyya* as applied to a number of taxes (*ibid.*, pp. 91-92). On the lack of pay for soldiers and so forth, Mirzā Muhammad ibn 'Abdu'l-Wahhāb-i-Qazwīnī, ed., *The Ta'rikh-i-Jahān-Gushā of 'Alā 'u'd-Dīn 'Atā Malik-i-Juwaynī (composed in A.H. 658=A.D. 1260)*, Part 1: *Containing the History of Chingīz Khān and His Successors*, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series 16, pt. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, *Imprimerie Orientale*; London: Luzac & Co., 1912), p. 22; D. Morgan, "The Mongol Armies in Persia," *Der Islam* 56 (1979), pp. 81-96, esp. pp. 91-92. On the manner of expenditure of the proceeds from the *qubchur*, Philip Remler, "New Light on Economic History from Ilkhanid Accounting Manuals," *Studia Iranica* 14, no. 2 (1985), pp. 157-177, esp. pp. 170-171.

³¹ Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 494-495, 506. Some colophonists imply that Ghazan, the Il-Khan responsible for instigating the reforms, lifted the total tax burden on the Armenian population: e.g., Khach'ikyan, *ZhD dari*, 28, pp. 24-25.

³² Remler, "Accounting Manuals," pp. 171-173.

³³ Some of the exactions condemned by the text of the *yarligh*-inscription of Abu Sa'id at Ani (n. 8 above) are described literally as "unlawful," which is what we mean here by the "direct extraction" of goods from villagers by soldiers. But, the *tamgha* and customs duty apart, the inscription also prohibits the exaction of goods as tax—*kalan* (qalan; see below), *nemeri* and *tarh*. Although *nemeri* and *tarh* are unexplained, they may include some of the incidental and *ad hoc* taxes mentioned below. In any case we know that the *qalan* had by the reign of Abu Sa'id been abolished (see below). The implication is that the name of certain taxes was being used as the pretext for seizing agricultural produce and other goods from the population of Ani and its district, even though the taxes themselves were not legally in force.

any more damaging to agriculture than in any other state. Secondly, the discussion of quantities levied is based only on sums registered as payable. It is possible that some sums escaped the *divan* registers. Some of the tax income from *iqta'*, or concessions whereby the holder took over the taxation rights from the state, or from an informal version of such a concession may not have been registered; non-declaration being a perennial bane of tax systems everywhere.

The *qalan* appears to have been more in the nature of a bundle of arbitrary taxes, which would not necessarily have been imposed all at the same time. Within the bundle there seems to have been an element which was not strictly a tax at all: *ad hoc* demands for local services in aid of the upkeep of visiting members of the military élite. In Iran it was one of the most feared of the taxes. However, as with the *qubchur*, the vagueness of the evidence as to its nature and incidence suggests that in reality it consisted partly, or perhaps wholly, of the incidental taxes which are about to be mentioned below. It was abolished in the reforms of Rashid al-Din.³⁴

Other taxes on the peasantry are known. '*Alafa* (fodder) and '*ulufa* (food) were arbitrary exactions from local populations to feed visiting officials. The *ulagh* was the requirement to provide horses for the messenger service. '*Avarid* and *ikhrajat* are both, in theory, categories of extraordinary tax. In practice, naturally enough, the '*avarid* at least was levied regularly rather than in response to special needs, and in Iran was considered onerous. Despite the multiplicity of these taxes, it is not clear if the imposition of one or the other of them was not in fact something which was described as an extra round of *qubchur* or *qalan*. Under the reforms, at any rate, '*alafa*, '*ulufa*, and *ulagh* were abolished, and this seems to have contributed to a lightening of the peasants' tax burden.³⁵

In distinction to the taxes on peasants the *tamgha* was a sales tax on urban trades and crafts. It was levied initially at ten percent. The proceeds went toward the maintenance of the Il-Khan and his court, i.e., his family and the most highly-placed personnel in the army and civil administration. To judge from evidence dating from after the reforms of Rashid al-Din, the *tamgha* could be up to three-quarters of a province's total tax take. As we shall see, although the precise proportions may have changed, it is not invalid to look at the later evidence for a general idea of relative size. In the reforms of Rashid al-Din the *tamgha* was cut to five percent and in some provinces done away with. The reduction was aimed at reviving urban life and probably did so.³⁶

The reforms of Rashid al-Din under the Il-Khan Ghazan would certainly seem to have cut the peasants' tax burden, and in Iran at least there is some evidence that

³⁴ Lambton, "Fiscal Administration," pp. 89, 92-94, where the conclusion that the *qalan* was in reality just a form of *ad hoc* forced labor seems not to be borne out by the examples; David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986; rev., Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), p. 101; Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, p. 532.

³⁵ Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 532-533, 534, 536; Lambton, "Fiscal Administration," p. 95.

³⁶ Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, p. 532; Remler, "Accounting manuals," pp. 171-172.

agriculture revived as a result. How this happened, nevertheless, needs clarification. The *qubchur* was not lowered except insofar as limits were placed on the quantities levied and insofar as the tax was levied twice a year, so that part of the payment could be deferred. This would appear to be a reduction insufficient to lighten the peasants' load significantly and thereby bring about a revival in agriculture. The removal of the arbitrary taxes and of the requirement to provide services to visiting officials seems a measure more likely to have brought about the result in question. But as I have said above, it is not clear that the terminology was employed accurately and consistently enough to distinguish between the imposition of one or more of the arbitrary taxes and an extra round of *qubchur*. This apart, the same reservations as before must be expressed, this time in reverse. If the illegal exactions by Mongol soldiers were caused by too low a level of taxation in the first place, how precisely would it help that levels were lowered even further? And since the *tamgha* was levied on urban activities, how, again, could agriculture benefit from its reduction?

So far we have referred to the incidence of Mongol policy in terms of sectors—agriculture, urban trades, and so forth—and in terms of three broad regions. But it is possible to detect a shift in policy both within one of these regions and between them.

The starting-point is the likelihood that by the 1270s at least, individual Mongols had an interest, in a sense to be suggested soon, in the districts to the north of Lake Van. The city of Khlat', now Ahlat, on the lake's northwest shore, was, admittedly, the capital of the province of Arminiya. But this alone could not explain why a number of Mongols had themselves buried there in large mausolea in the 1270s and 1280s.³⁷

The second development to take note of is an increase in the number of mints in the Van region and the Diyar Bakr, i.e. the northeastern district of upper Mesopotamia, more than half of which had been part of Armenia on the strict Classical definition. The new mints all start their activity within a span of two years, A.H. 714/1314 to A.H. 716/1317. The mints in question are Van, Bitlis, Mush, Khanus, Alashkert (in the next plain north of the Van region), and Arzan.³⁸

A third phenomenon is the great activity, in a number of fields, of the two cities of Khlat' and Archēsh (Erciş) on the lake's northern shore, in the last three decades of the thirteenth century and the first four of the fourteenth. Both cities mint

³⁷ Nermin Tabak, *Ahlat. Türk Mimarisı* (Istanbul, 1972), pp. 12-14, 15-17, 18-22, for the tomb-towers in question.

³⁸ Van: a coin of 716/1316-17, in collection of Forschungstelle für Islamische Numismatik, University of Tübingen, GF7 E5. GE4 D3 of the same collection is certainly a coin of Ghazan (694/1294-703/1304), and may be of Van, but both mint and year are uncertain. Eduard von Zambaur, *Die Münzprägungen des Islams, Zeitlich und örtlich geordnet*, vol. 1: *Der Westen und Osten bis zum Indus mit synoptischen tabellen* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968), p. 269 (no. 141, 89, & 91), has coins respectively of 717 and 719, but as often it is hard to check the reference. Bitlis: Tübingen GE8 C4, of 715/1315-16. Mush: Tübingen GF3 E1 of 715. Coin no. 91-2-11 of the same collection is probably of Uljaytu (703/1304 to 715/1316), but the mint name is not certain. Khanus: Tübingen GF2 D6 of 715. Alashkert: 92-110-24 ("Bāzār-i Walāshjird," 714). Arzan: Tübingen 91-2-3 & 4 (715).

prolifically from the beginning of the fourteenth century, Archēsh tailing off after 1335 and Khlāt' after ca. 1343.³⁹ The gravestones of the Muslim cemetery at Khlāt' display an odd burst of frequency and elaboration in the years 1315 to 1335.⁴⁰ At some stage between 1312 and 1324, the fortifications of the city of Archēsh were rebuilt.⁴¹

This flurry of activity is not confined to the actions of the authorities and of the Muslim population. In the monasteries of the city of Archēsh and its district, by the northeast shore of the lake, an efflorescence of manuscript copying develops in the 1280s and 1290s, continuing into the first four decades of the fourteenth century. The surge of manuscript copying is not confined exactly to Archēsh and its district; it takes place more generally in the Van region, though the monasteries of Archēsh and its district are the most active.⁴² The manuscript illuminations display certain novel characteristics and revive others from the eleventh century.⁴³ Irrespective of where the painters and copyists might have come from, it is pertinent to ask why the phenomenon happened at all. Three different churches at Archēsh are named in the colophons (other churches, whose dedications are unknown, must have existed).⁴⁴

The impression which the cities give is that the Mongols, and not only the authorities, took an interest in the two cities and encouraged their development, against a background, to be sure, of general economic upswing during the reigns of Uljaytu (703/1304 to 715/1316) and Abu Sa'id (715/1316 to 736/1335). Khlāt',

³⁹ The coins are mainly in the Tübingen collection (previous note), and others are in the American Numismatic Society, the British Museum and elsewhere. They require a list for each city, which this author will publish in articles on the urban history of the two cities.

⁴⁰ Beyhan Karamağaralı, *Ahlat Mezartaşları* (Ankara: Güven Matbaası, 1972), pp. 180-187, 189-213, 216-218, 222-225, 226-237, 256-258, 259-260.

⁴¹ Krawulsky, *Īrān*, p. 419: these are the dates during which the builder, 'Ali Shah, was the Il-Khan's vezir, at first jointly with Rashid al-Din.

⁴² The churches and monasteries in question, besides those of Archēsh itself, are those of Aspiska Vank'/Aspisēnka Vank'; Argilan, near Berkri/Muradiye; the village of Arews, near Berkri; Metsop'; Ayri Dzor; Surb Kusank'; Šhinamaj; Akants'; Arjroy Vank'; Ūrnkar; Kharabastay; and Artskē/Adilcevaz. To save space I quote only the colophon numbers. Thirteenth century: A.S. Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren dzeragreri hishatakaraner ZhG dar* (Erevan: Haykakan SSH Gitut'yunneri Akademiayi Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1984), 431, 486, 498, 556, 557, 592, 593, 627, 636, 666, 681. Fourteenth century: Khach'ikyan, *ZhD dari*, 1, 23, 36, 48, 49, 52, 63, 64, 67, 69, 76, 91, 118, 123, 126, 143, 150, 168, 169, 180, 190, 191, 198, 239, 293, 295, 329, 331, 334, 384, 385.

⁴³ Alice Taylor, "Armenian Illumination under Georgian, Turkish, and Mongol Rule: The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illustrated Manuscripts*, ed. Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1994), pp. 84-103, esp. pp. 94-97. It is hard to know what to make of the fact that Armenian monastic painters of the area incorporated certain elements of illuminations done for Mongol patrons: see Priscilla P. Soucek, "Armenian and Islamic Manuscript Painting: A Visual Dialogue," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art, Religion and Society*, ed. Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1998), pp. 113-131, esp. pp. 116, 123-124. The borrowing, which is in fact mutual, may mean that Armenian copyists had been to a province capital or to the capital of the Il-Khanid empire as a whole and seen relevant Muslim illuminations, perhaps also that they had been employed as painters in some capacity.

⁴⁴ Mat'evosyan, *Hayeren dzeragreri*, no. 486, pp. 600-601 (S. Step'annos); no. 499.1, pp. 616-617 (S. Hakovb, = Hakob); 556, p. 685 (S. Geōrg, and so forth).

the province capital, was the one city in the province where Muslims congregated,⁴⁵ though its population was of course partly Christian, whereas Archēsh seems to have been more or less exclusively Christian. However the activity in and near that city, evidently tolerated by the authorities, may also have been encouraged by them, given their role in minting coins and rebuilding the walls.

The Lake Van area was attractive to Mongols as pastureland. In particular, the Ala Dağ, northeast of Archēsh and of the lake as a whole, provided ideal summer pasture, and it was somewhere on the lower slopes of the mountain or on the plain immediately to its south that the first Il-Khan, Hulagu (1259-1265), built a summer palace.⁴⁶ The attractiveness of the area's pastures might explain why individual Mongols felt at home in the area to the degree that they had themselves buried in its chief city. But it explains little else.

It is now thought that, certainly by the time of Rashid al-Din's reforms, which began in 1293, both the rank and file of the soldiery and the higher-ranking Mongols in the Il-Khanid empire no longer looked on the empire purely with the eye of pastoralists or saw it as a convenient granary to be raided without thought as to the future availability of grain. It was clear that the empire's borders were not going to be expanded, and that the Mongols had to adopt an attitude which suggested that they were there to stay and must look at the territory of the empire as their home. This attitude, in turn, led to a search, on the part of individual commanders and other high-ranking personnel, for a means of extracting a stable income from a given tract of land. The grants of *iqta'* known to have been made, as part of the reforms, to individual soldiers were a means of accommodating this desire.⁴⁷ What we may be seeing in the Lake Van region is the attempt by army officers to carve out livings for themselves locally; a process which might have been formally blessed by the grant of *iqta'*s.

Secondly, the creation of new mints suggests that the administration was trying to increase the tax take from the region. It is not clear whether it was local Kurdish or Turkish beys who minted the coins, or officials of the administration.⁴⁸ It does

⁴⁵ On the activities of its 'ulama in the period, Osman Turan, *Doğu Anadolu Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul, 1993), pp. 121-123.

⁴⁶ On the building of the palace, Kirakos Gandzakets'i, pp. 396-397; Grigor of Akner, p. 342; Vardanay Vardapeti, p. 151. The plain of Darn which these sources mention is that of the former district of Gārnī, immediately south of the mountain. Armenian Դ has been written for Գ. On the Il-Khans' use of the palace, Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 350, 356, 361, 373, 375.

⁴⁷ Morgan, "Mongol Armies," pp. 92-93. Of course the actual grant of *iqtas'* in Rashid al-Din's reforms at the end of the thirteenth century does not explain why Mongols should be settling in the district of Ahlat in the 1270s and 1280s. But the tendency to look for ways of settling on given areas had begun before: see Lambton, "Fiscal Administration," p. 83.

⁴⁸ There is no evidence except in the cases of Bitlis and Arzan. The first reliable mention of a local Kurdish dynasty at Bitlis relates to A.H. 733/1332-33: Ibn Fadl Allāh al-'Umarī, *al-Ta'rīf bi'l Muštalah al-Sharīf* (Cairo, 1314/1894), p. 34. However the history of the Kurds written by a prince of Bitlis, the *Sharafnāma* (Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, *Scheref-nameh; ou, Histoire des Kourdes*, 2 vols., ed. V.V. Véliaminoff-Zernof [St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1860-62]), 1.358-359, 364-365 (cf. 367-372), implies that the dynasty was established at Bitlis at or in the wake of the Ayyubid acquisition of Ahlat. This is not impossible, although a date early in the Mongol occupation or perhaps during the Rashid al-Din reforms is perhaps more likely.

not seem likely, given the relatively secure circumstances of the first fifteen years of the thirteenth century, that the new mints were concessions made to local beys by the administration to secure their loyalty. In either case, the appearance of a number of new mints in a short space of time suggests orchestration by that administration. But increasing the tax take was not necessarily a question of raising tax rates or imposing new taxes. Might it have been a matter of bringing new districts within the tax net; or at least of widening, somehow, the tax base of given districts? At any rate, the spirit of Rashid al-Din's reforms suggests that the increase in the number of mints was not associated with destructive exploitation.

Thirdly, the intense activity in Archēsh and Khlat' is probably to be accounted for, not just by the search for stable livings on the part of individual soldiers, but also by the renewed use for commercial purposes of the track passing through the cities of the north shore. Archēsh lay on a track from Khoy in Iran to Erzurum, from which the port of Trebizond and the trading cities of Erzinka/Erzincan and Sivas could be reached. There is evidence for the use of this track in the late thirteenth century, and then in the first decades of the fourteenth.⁴⁹ The track along the north shore of the lake past Archēsh and Khlat' led to Upper Mesopotamia and eventually Aleppo. Renewed use of the track was in turn probably brought about by the cessation of the series of Mongol-Mamluk wars in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia, which had blocked this route. The wars, which had lasted for fifty years, came to an end in 1313. The military accommodation was followed by a treaty in 1322.⁵⁰ All this might explain the evidence for a heightening of prosperity at Ahlat starting in 1315.

Taking all these phenomena together, a picture emerges of greater Mongol concern with the Lake Van region in the last quarter of the thirteenth and the first third of the fourteenth century. Looking further north, we note the effects of Mongol policy there, the decline of Kars and Ani, and the failure of similar cities to spring up or develop on the alternative line, i.e., that which passed Alashkert and Bayazit. No evidence of a similar input into the northeast can be seen, despite the fact that at least some districts became the domains of Mongols, including the Il-Khan himself, and despite the continued active use, on a different line, of the northerly trade route. The combined evidence does seem to suggest a shift in policy between regions.

Turning back now to the post-Seljuk period in those areas of Armenia lying within Rum, which after the demise of the Seljuk sultanate became a province, as opposed to a vassal state, of the empire, here again it is hard to say that Mongol

In the case of Arzan, there does seem to have been a dynasty in place by H. 715, as we hear of the death of a bey of Arzan in 710/1310: Ibn Hajar (al-'Asqalānī), *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī A'yān al-Mi'a al-Thāmina*, 5 vols. (Haydarabad, 1348-50/1929-31), II.376-377.

⁴⁹ Manandian, *Trade and Cities*, pp. 195-197, 200; and esp. Le Strange, *Nuzhat*, pp. 182-184.

⁵⁰ On the wars in the mid-thirteenth century, Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, chs. 5-8 and esp. ch. 9 on the nature of the border; esp. pp. 207-211 on the harm done to trade; Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 350-404, *passim*, and esp. pp. 402-404 on the final campaign. On the treaty, Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1382* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 118-119.

policy was deleterious to agriculture in this period; and there is evidence that those cities within the region which lay on the northern trade route (Sivas and Erzincan, for example) continued to prosper. The reason was simply that, for its time, the route in question carried highly important international commercial traffic.⁵¹

So far the evidence has been taken sector by sector and region by region, defining the regions according to the tax policy applied. But it is well known that an aggregate figure, that of Mustawfi, of annual tax revenues from each province of the empire is available both for the year 1340 and for the period before the Mongols. The figures for the province of Arminiya should be taken as an example, since this is the only province to lie wholly within the boundaries of Armenia either on the Classical definition or in the sense of the continuum of Armenian-populated districts with which we are also concerned. Before the Mongols, says Mustawfi, the revenue of the province was about 2,000,000 dinars; now it is 390,000.⁵²

Such figures have been interpreted as evidence of a catastrophic decline in agricultural prosperity. Tax revenue, of course, as an index of prosperity is decidedly ambiguous: as if one might tell a U.S. citizen that he had necessarily been impoverished because his tax burden had become lighter. This apart, the question arises whether the two figures are properly comparable. The second figure relates to the quantities arriving in the Il-Khanid divan, which do not include the revenue at the disposal of the court. We have seen (p. 44) how little of the total tax take actually reached the divan. Moreover, the figures are likely to be affected by an increase in the quantity of land under *iqta'*. Neither the figures for the pre-Mongol nor those for the 1340 divan receipts include *iqta'* revenues;⁵³ however if the proportion of land under *iqta'* goes up, the share of total tax reaching the divan naturally goes down. Thus Mustawfi's figures are likely to overestimate the decline.

The purpose of this article is not so much to challenge the assumption of a steep agricultural decline as to point out that complaints about high taxation and soldiers' exactions are not enough to establish that an agricultural decline took place, and that the incidence of taxation must be carefully looked at before concluding that taxation of the period was ruinous to agriculture. A decline surely took place, but it seems difficult to establish that this was irreversible.

Such a conclusion leads to the question, when did the irreversible decline take place? The succeeding period, i.e., that between the Il-Khans and the Ottomans, is a possibility. But, I believe that if an analysis similar to the present one, which, admittedly, is meant only to question a certain picture of the Armenian economy, were carried out on that second period, a similar conclusion would result. Thus, we are left with the probability that the irreversible decline in agriculture came in

⁵¹ Manandian, *Trade and Cities*, pp. 190-193, 200-201; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 320, 321-3; Besim Darkot, "Sivas," *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1966), pp. 569-577, esp. pp. 571-572.

⁵² Le Strange, *Nuzhat*, p. 100. Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, p. 498 tabulates the totals for all the provinces.

⁵³ Boyle, *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, pp. 488-489.

the Ottoman period, starting in the Ottoman-Safavid wars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁵⁴

UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS
NICOSIA, CYPRUS

⁵⁴ On the damage done to the Armenian economy by the Ottoman-Safavid wars, Edmund Schütz, "An Armeno-Kipchak Document of 1640 from Lvov and its Background in Armenia and in the Diaspora," in *Between the Danube and the Caucasus: A Collection of Papers Concerning Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. György Kara (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), pp. 247-330, esp. pp. 247-276.