The Legacy of Genghis Khan
Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353

The Metropolitan Museum of Art
THE LEGACY OF GENGHIS KHAN
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_Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353_

Edited by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni

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Frontispiece: Shah Zar Enthroned (detail), from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran, 1330s (cat. no. 19)

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Directors’ Foreword

The saga of Genghis Khan and the Mongols has long appealed to the Western imagination. Beginning in the late Middle Ages, firsthand travelers' accounts, such as those of Marco Polo and the Franciscan friars Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and William of Rubruck, helped create a place for the Mongols in the popular consciousness that continues to this day. Certainly part of this interest stems from their establishment of the largest contiguous land empire in history, reaching at its greatest extent from Hungary to Korea. The fact that the Mongol world empire was achieved through war and conquest has also added to its sometimes macabre fascination. But the legacy of Genghis Khan extends far beyond the battlefield. For over a century his descendants ruled an often loosely united Mongol confederacy in which the promotion of pan-Asian trade, the practice of relocating artists, and a taste for luxury goods combined to encourage a remarkable and widespread cross-fertilization of artistic ideas throughout Eurasia.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art are proud to present “The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353.” This exhibition is the first to explore the important artistic developments that occurred in the Iranian world as a result of the Mongol conquest of both western and eastern Asia. “The Legacy of Genghis Khan” focuses on the period of Ilkhanid rule—an era that witnessed extraordinary achievements within the sphere of Islamic art and culture—in an area encompassing Iran, Iraq, western Afghanistan, southern Russia, and eastern Turkey. It gathers more than two hundred outstanding works from public museums, libraries, and institutions and from private collections in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and the United States. We are grateful to these institutions and collectors for the loan of their treasures, which include illustrated manuscripts, illuminated Korans, tilework and ceramics, jewelry, metalwork, stone and wood objects, and textiles.

These vivid paintings, sumptuous decorative arts, and splendid architectural elements help reveal the complex cultural, political, social, and religious fabric of the Iranian world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In exhibiting them we also document and explore the creation of a dynamic visual language and of a new relationship between royal patrons and the fine arts—developments that resonated throughout the eastern Islamic world for some three hundred years. Our aim is to call deserved attention to the fresh artistic identity forged in the crucible of the Mongol invasions and their aftermath, a vital aspect of Genghis Khan’s legacy: a new manner of art.

We are grateful for the efforts of Linda Komaroff, Curator of Islamic Art and Department Head of Ancient and Islamic Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Stefano Carboni, Associate Curator of Islamic Art at The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, who organized this exhibition. On behalf of both institutions we wish to express appreciation to the National Endowment for the Humanities, dedicated to expanding American understanding of history and culture, for its important contribution toward this project. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity granted by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. At the Metropolitan Museum, our profound gratitude goes to The Hagop Kevorkian Fund for its generous support of the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. We are also indebted to The Adelaide Milton de Groot Fund, in memory of the de Groot and Hawley families, for its assistance toward the realization of the exhibition catalogue. At the Los Angeles County Museum, support for the conservation research project was provided in part by a grant from The Barakat Foundation. Transportation assistance was provided by Lufthansa German Airlines. Additional support for the Los Angeles venue came from the Al-Ameen Foundation and Joan Palevsky.

Philippe de Montebello
Director
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Andrea L. Rich
President and Director
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
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Although our work on this exhibition took considerably less time than the journeys of Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, and others who ventured to the Mongol empire, it seems as though we have traveled just as far and have seen sights almost as astonishing as those they witnessed.

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Department Head of Ancient and Islamic Art
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Notes to the Reader

Transliterations of Mongol, Persian, and Arabic names and terms have each been carried out according to the language of the original. Except for the ayn and hamza, most diacriticals have been eliminated, as is currently standard practice. Transliteration of Chinese follows the pinyin system.

The geographical area that is the main subject of this work has often been called Persia, but the ancient and enduring name used by its inhabitants is Iran. In this book the land is called Iran; the adjective “Persian” is frequently used to describe its culture.

Where relevant, both A.H. (Anno Hegirae, counting from 622, the year of Muhammad’s hegira, or emigration, from Mecca) and A.D. dates are given.
THE LEGACY OF GENGHIS KHAN

It is not concealed from the minds of the intelligent and perspicacious or those possessed of vision and insight that history consists of recording and arranging. For every strange incident and marvelous unusual event that happens and is recorded in registers and on folios, the wise call the beginning of that event its date, and the extent and quantity of time can be known thereby. . . . And what event has ever been more magnificently appropriate for making it a date than the beginning of Genghis Khan's rule?

—Rashid al-Din, Compendium of Chronicles
Introduction: On the Eve of the Mongol Conquest

[Genghis Khan] sallied forth, a single man, with few troops and no accoutrement, and reduced and subjugated the lords of the horizons from the East unto the West... and when through pride of wealth, and power, and station the greater part of the cities and countries of the world encountered him with rebellion and hatred and refused to yield allegiance (and especially the countries of Islam, from the frontiers of Turkestan to uttermost Syria), then wherever there was a king, or a ruler, or the governor of a city that offered him resistance, him he annihilated together with his family and followers, kinsmen and strangers.

—'Ala' al-Din 'Ata Malik Juvaini, The History of the World Conqueror'

The Persian historian 'Ata Malik Juvaini, who completed his history in 1260, was not an eyewitness to the initial wave of Mongol invasions led by Genghis Khan in the early thirteenth century, but he had just observed at first hand an equally devastating invasion of western Asia under the great conqueror's grandson Hulegu. Juvaini (1226–1283) belonged to a distinguished family from eastern Iran, many members of which had held high ministerial posts—most recently in the empire of the Khwarazmshahs, who were defeated by the Mongols in 1231. The young Juvaini himself rose to important offices under the Mongols, the highest being that of governor of Baghdad, southern Iraq, and western Iran; his brother, Shams al-Din Muhammad Juvaini, was appointed chief minister. Like his forefathers, Juvaini administered on behalf of princes who in turn made him wealthy. But the world in which Juvaini lived was very different from that of his ancestors. It was a world transformed by massive destruction and loss of human life, tempered by new practices of governance, and invigorated by contact with such disparate cultures as those of China and (to a lesser degree) Christian Europe.

For nearly two centuries prior to the Mongol conquests of the early thirteenth century, Turkish rulers had dominated Greater Iran (the territories of modern Iran, Afghanistan, and parts of Iraq, the Caucasus, and Central Asia). Foremost among these Turkish dynasts were the Seljuqs (1038–1194). Like subsequent non-Iranian rulers, they adopted indigenous practices: the administrative structure, the tax system, and, most significantly, the tradition of kingship and royal authority. In the process of assimilating Persian culture they became important patrons of art and architecture.

Decorative arts flourished during the two centuries preceding the Mongol invasions. Ceramic objects show the continued refinement of existing techniques and also benefited from the development of new ones. A new type of artificial ceramic...
body generally referred to as fritware came into use at this time. Combining ground quartz, glass frit (partially fused glass), and a small proportion of fine white clay, it was intended to approximate the light color and weight of Chinese porcelain. Such fritware was often decorated in one of two overglaze painting techniques, both of which were complicated and costly because they required the ware to be fired at least twice. In the first, luster-painted pottery, the decoration has a lustrous metallic color derived from silver and copper oxides. In the second and more colorful technique, so-called *mina‘i* (enamel) ware, enamel colors are applied to the previously glazed surface and then fixed in a second firing. The center for the ceramic industry was Kashan in central Iran. Luster vessels and tiles for architectural revetment continued to be made there after the Mongol invasions (figs. 2, 3), but the *mina‘i* technique, mainly used to decorate vessels, did not survive the Mongol invasions. It may have evolved, however, into a related technique known as *lajvardina* after the Persian word for lapis lazuli, *lajvard*.

Beginning about the mid-twelfth century, luxury vessels and implements of bronze and brass were lavishly inlaid with silver and either copper or gold. Metalwork of this period represents a refinement and a surpassing of earlier techniques. Finely drawn wire and small, thin pieces of precious metal were inserted into designs cut in the surface of the metal object, and the precious metal was then embellished with finer details. Many of these inlaid metal wares, including buckets, candlesticks, pen cases, and inkwells, can be associated with eastern Iran; metalworkers
displaced by the Mongols may have carried their art both west and east (fig. 1). Objects fashioned of precious metal from this period have not survived as well as base metalwork, but numerous references in contemporary texts provide additional information about them. Vessels, jewelry, and other items of personal adornment were produced in gold and silver. Gold- and silver-smiths were among the craftsmen spared by the Mongols, a circumstance that helped keep these traditions alive in the Iranian world (fig. 4).

Textiles played an essential role in the medieval Islamic world, serving not only as clothing and in all manner of furnishings but also as commodities for commercial exchange. Greater Iran was especially renowned for its luxury textiles, including elaborately patterned silks, sometimes woven with gold-wrapped thread; the most complicated and sumptuous silks were woven on drawlooms. The number of extant textiles of the eleventh to the early thirteenth century is few in comparison to the many textual references to great centers of production, especially in eastern Iran. While the textile industry of eastern Iran did not survive the Mongol invasions, many of its weavers and associated textile craftsmen were transplanted to other locales and played an important part in the subsequent development of the arts under the Mongols.

The tradition of calligraphy and illumination (manuscript decoration) was perhaps the most important and best-established form of art, having begun in the seventh century, when manuscripts of the Koran were first copied in beautiful scripts and decorated with gold. Baghdad, the capital of the ‘Abbasiid caliphate and for some centuries the cultural center of the Islamic world, was seminal in the development of calligraphy. This important tradition continued uninterrupted in Baghdad after the arrival of the Mongols in 1258 (fig. 5). The production of illustrated manuscripts of a scientific nature had a long-standing history in the Islamic world; it was prompted by the translation of Greek texts and their amplification with explanatory drawings. Few works of literature with illustrations from before the fourteenth century survive, but those that do indicate that book painting had scarcely achieved the creative force and eloquence it would reach under the Mongols and their
successors. As the extant pre-Mongol manuscripts demonstrate, a Byzantine-influenced style developed in the ‘Abbasid capital at the beginning of the thirteenth century, while a different style showing pronounced Iranian and Turkic influence was created in the Seljuq-controlled areas. Artists under Mongol rule in Iran would eventually absorb both styles and combine them with the fruits of their encounter with East Asian art, creating one of the most extraordinary moments in the history of Persian painting.

The main architectural achievement of the pre-Mongol period was the development of the classic Iranian mosque type, constructed of baked brick and comprising a central courtyard with four rectangular vaulted chambers, or iwans, aligned along the axes. Fewer secular buildings than mosques have survived. Excavated palaces,
mainly from the eastern Iranian world and often lavishly decorated, incorporate a plan like that of the congregational mosques, with four iwans opening onto a rectangular courtyard. The so-called four-iwan plan continued to be employed under the Mongols in both religious and secular architecture. Splendid patterns and designs, derived from the high-quality brick building material itself, were the primary means of architectural decoration in pre-Mongol Iran. Large-scale, extensive luster tilework began to be used to decorate the interior of religious monuments, especially shrine complexes, about the beginning of the thirteenth century. During the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongol period, the role of tile revetment as a kind of colorful decorative skin expanded considerably, extending to the exterior of buildings; at the same time a variety of new techniques and tile types were introduced.

Thus, on the eve of the Mongol conquest of the Iranian world, Persian arts, sponsored by Turkish patrons and built largely on indigenous traditions, had achieved a kind of golden age. The Mongols’ devastating invasions of Central and West Asia between 1218 and 1258 brought much of this to an end. What replaced it was an original aesthetic idiom forged by the dramatic confrontation between the nomadic traditions of the Mongols and the urban Islamic culture of Greater Iran, and invigorated and refined by contact with East Asian art. An exhibition presenting the remarkable cultural achievements that followed a period of almost unfathomable destruction may seem an unlikely project. The fact is, however, that the practices of governance, patronage, conscription, and mercantile exchange adopted by the Mongols after their conquest produced a singular environment for artistic creation, and this in turn had a profound impact on the development of art and architecture throughout Eurasia and particularly in the Islamic lands of western Asia.

This exhibition and accompanying catalogue represent the first systematic investigation of the important artistic and cultural achievements that occurred in the Iranian world as a by-product of the Mongol conquest of Asia. They consider the striking new visual language, and its functions, sources, and means of transmission, that developed under the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1353) within a vast territory encompassing present-day Iran, Iraq, southern Russia, western Afghanistan, and eastern Turkey. Politically, the invasion of western Asia brought to a decisive end the long period of Arab-centered dominance there—as was underscored by the Mongols’ termination in 1258 of the ‘Abbasid caliphate, which had ruled from Baghdad for over 500 years. Culturally, the Mongol invasions and the so-called Pax Mongolica had the effect of energizing Iranian art and infusing it with novel forms, meanings, and motifs that were further disseminated throughout the Islamic world. In unifying eastern and western Asia for over a century, the Mongols created a unique opportunity for an unrestricted cultural exchange that forever altered the face of art in Iran and made it a focal point of innovation and synthesis for the next three hundred years. This, too, was Genghis Khan’s legacy.

LINDA KOMAROFF
STEFANO CARBONI

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- Major routes of later Mongol invasions
- Present-day national borders and names

Albers Conic Equidistant Projection
Standard Parallels 23°N & 68°N
Greater Iran and Environs at the Time of the Ilkhanate

- Present-day national border

0 500 mi
0 500 km
The Mongol Khans

Great Khans shown in bold

Genghis (Chinggis) Khan
(d. 1227)

- Jochi (d. 1227)
- Chaghadai (d. 1242)
- Ögödei (r. 1229–41)
- Tolui (d. 1233)

CHAGHADEI KHANS

- Batu (d. 1256)
- Güyük (r. 1246–48)

KHANS OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

Möngke (r. 1251–59)

KHUBILAI (r. 1260–94)

Hülegü (d. 1265)

Arigh Böke

YUAN EMPERORS

ILKHANS

The Ilkhans

Ilkhans shown in bold

Hülegü (r. 1256–65)

- Abakha (r. 1265–82)
- Tarakhai
- Tegüder Ahmad (r. 1282–84)

- Arghun (r. 1284–91)
- Geikhatu (r. 1291–95)
- Baidu (r. 1295)

Ghazan (r. 1295–1304)

Öljeytü (r. 1304–16)

Abu Saïd (r. 1316–35)
1.
The Mongols and Their Legacy

In these days, when, thank God, all corners of the earth are under our control and that of Genghis Khan’s illustrious family, and philosophers, astronomers, scholars, and historians of all religions and nations—Cathay, Machin [North and South China], India, Kashmir, Tibet, Uyghur, and other nations of Turks, Arabs, and Franks—are gathered in droves at our glorious court, each and every one of them possesses copies of the histories, stories and beliefs of their own people.

—Rashid al-Din, Compendium of Chronicles

The widely held image of the Mongols as barbaric plunderers intent on slaughter and destruction is based principally on Chinese, Persian, and Russian accounts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These contemporaneous descriptions emphasize the extraordinary speed and ruthlessness with which, under the command of their dreaded leader Temüjin (Genghis Khan, ca. 1162–1227), the Mongols carved out the largest contiguous land empire in world history. Little attention has been paid, however, to the significant contribution these steppe peoples made as patrons of the arts during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Though the brutality of their military campaigns cannot be ignored, neither should their impact on Eurasian culture be overlooked.

The Mongols supported cultural manifestations of great variety. Chinese theater, patronized by Temüjin’s grandson Khubilai Khan and his successors during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), experienced a golden age. Mongol rulers gave employment to Confucian scholars and Tibetan Buddhist monks, encouraging the construction of temples and monasteries. In Iran, the Mongol era witnessed an outpouring of great historical writings, some of which dealt with the steppe peoples themselves. Mongol khans funded medicine and astronomy throughout their domain and sponsored construction projects that promoted science and engineering. These included

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2. I wish to thank Professor Charles Melville of Cambridge University, Dr. Stefano Carboni of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dr. Linda Komaroff of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Professor Sheila Blair of Boston College for their valuable comments on drafts of this essay.
4. See Chao and De Bary 1982 for more on Buddhism and Confucianism in the Yuan. A recent study of some of the religious art is Jing 1994a.
5. For complete or partial translations of these histories, see Juvaini 1948; Rashid al-Din 1971; Jurjani 1970.

Opposite: Fig. 6 (cat. no. 178). Mongol Rider with Administrator (detail), China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Color on silk. See fig. 15.

Fig. 7 (cat. no. 136). Saber, Iran, mid-13th–mid-14th century. Steel, iron. Lent by Oliver S. Pinchot

THE MONGOLS AND THEIR LEGACY

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the building of a capital city in Dadu (Daidu in Mongolian; present-day Beijing),
summer palaces in Shangdu ("Xanadu") and Takht-i Sulaiman, and observatories in
Maragha and Tabriz; the extension of China’s Grand Canal; and the development of
a sizable network of roads and postal stations.  

All of these developments stemmed from attitudes the Mongols held long before
they occupied vast regions of Asia. The policy of support for trade and the crafts, for
example, reflected the values and needs of a mostly pastoral nomadic lifestyle.

**Mongol Conquests**

Before their conquests, the Mongols were dependent largely on sheep, goats, yaks,
camels, and horses for their existence and migrated several times annually to seek
water and grass for the animals. The Mongols’ principal unit of social and political
organization was the tribe—a relatively small grouping and the optimal size for a
herding economy such as theirs. Larger groups with more numerous herds would
have depleted the grasslands very rapidly, necessitating even more frequent migra-
tions. While the tribal system of organization fostered divisions and worked against
the formation of a common identity, certain shared characteristics bound the tribes
together. One was the Mongolian language, a member of the Uralic-Altaic group
(which includes many of the languages spoken in Central and northern Asia, among
them the Turkic languages). Another was their shamanistic religion, centering on
belief in the shaman as an intermediary between humans and the spirit world.

The unforgiving, landlocked country inhabited by the Mongols embraced sev-
eral types of terrain (fig. 8). The Altay Mountains to the west and the Khentei
Mountains to the east hemmed in the northern areas of lakes and forest. The cen-
tral, steppe region sustained most of the rather small and dispersed population. The
south consisted of the inhospitable Gobi Desert, in which small numbers of nomads
were able to eke out an existence. Mongol nomads were vulnerable to heavy snows,
ice, and droughts (judging from contemporary trends, these last afflicted Mongolia about twice a decade), which jeopardized their herds and heightened their own sense of fragility. Beyond this demanding landscape to the south was China, with its vast population and its valuable goods. To the west were deserts and mountains, punctuated by flourishing oases, that were home to several regional powers, including the Xia dynasty and the Khwarizmian empire. They were crossed by the Silk Roads that led to Central and West Asia.

Chinese peasants could store the surplus of a bounteous harvest to tide them through some later catastrophe, but Mongol herders, despite occasional hunting and farming activity, had scant control over the conditions of their lives. Dependent on trade with China for their survival at times of natural disaster, they knew the value of commerce. Because China required few Mongol products, the economic relationship tilted in its favor. However, China was fragmented into regions controlled by three separate dynasties, the Jin and the Xia in the north and the Southern Song in the south. The Mongols, with their mobility, their powerful cavalry, and their accurate, far-reaching bows and arrows, had a decided military advantage, which induced the dynasties in northern China to consent to trade with them. Both the Jin dynasty, founded by a Tungusic people named the Jurchens, which dominated northern China from 1127 to 1234, and the Xia dynasty, ruled by a mixed Tibetan-Turkic group called the Tanguts, which controlled sections of northwestern China from about 985 to 1227, were trading partners of the Mongols.

A variety of factors help to explain the eruption of the Mongols in the thirteenth century. A drop in the mean annual temperature in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries drove some Mongols to leave Mongolia in order to escape the severe winters and to find food. Conditions deteriorated further when the Jin and Xia dynasties limited their trade with the Mongols.7

In addition, Temūjin was a man of powerful ambition. Claiming to seek conquest for the greater glory of the sky god, he proved extraordinarily adept at uniting the diverse and scattered Mongol tribes under his leadership, paving the way for military expeditions. Temūjin had been nine years old when his father was murdered, and he and his widowed mother had fend for themselves throughout his childhood and young adulthood—experiences that made clear to him the need for allies. His career in the late twelfth century consisted largely of forging blood brotherhoods, eliciting personal loyalty from tribal chiefs, and overwhelming and defeating hostile leaders.

Temūjin’s unification of the Mongols, a gradual winning of dominion over all the small tribes and confederations in a territory three times the size of modern France, was probably his greatest achievement. In 1206 the title Chinggis Khan, meaning “Oceanic Ruler” or “Fierce Ruler” and in English usually written Genghis Khan, was bestowed upon him by an assemblage of the Mongol nobility.8 His tightly disciplined army, which had helped him become ruler of all the Mongols, now acquired a new purpose. By 1215, within a decade after assuming his new title, Genghis Khan and his forces had defeated the Xia dynasty that ruled northwestern China and had routed the Jin troops, occupying the area around what is now Beijing. Shortly thereafter he moved farther west and became embroiled in a war with the
Khwarazmshah, the Islamic ruler of Central Asia (in areas corresponding to modern-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). During a campaign lasting from about 1219 to 1225, the Mongols conquered and occupied a vast territory that reached to Samarkand and Bukhara and northern Iran, with one military detachment dispatched all the way to the Caspian Sea.  

But Genghis Khan’s conquests were only the beginning. After his death in 1227 his son and successor, Ögedei (1185–1244), sent troops to impose Mongol rule in Korea, northern China, Georgia, Armenia, parts of West Asia, and Russia, prevailing with astonishing speed. In 1241 there were even forays into Hungary and Poland.

Genghis’s grandsons enlarged the Mongol domains to include the rest of China and Iran. His grandson Khubilai Khan (1215–1294) founded the Yuan dynasty ruling northern and western China in 1271 and in 1279 finally defeated the Southern Song dynasty to gain control over all of China. Farther west, Khubilai’s brother Hulegu (ca. 1217–1265) conquered the ‘Abbasid dynasty, which ruled from Baghdad and had at one time governed a huge territory extending from Spain and North Africa through West Asia to Iran (see figs. 33, 35). He also subdued the powerful Isma’ilis, or Order of the Assassins, a secret Shi’ite order of Islam based in the mountainous area south of the Caspian Sea. After these victories Hulegu established the Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran in 1259–60.

At the same time, and even before Khubilai’s accession, the Mongol empire had started to fragment because of internal rivalries among Genghis’s four principal sons and their families and supporters. By 1260 the empire was composed of four khanates: the Yuan dynasty, which ruled in China (including Mongolia); the Golden Horde, in Russia; the Chaghadai Khanate, in Central Asia; and the Ilkhanate, in Iran and other parts of West Asia.  

These separate powers were frequently in conflict with one another. Genghis had forged unity by inspiring a direct personal loyalty to him, but thereafter unity eluded the Mongols.

Khubilai Khan and his brother Hulegu, sons of Genghis’s son Tolui, dominated two of the most important of the Mongol domains, China and Iran. Their astonishing successes were due in part to military skill, characterized by tight discipline, fine cavalries, superb organization, innovative military tactics (for example, feigned retreat, which lured the advancing enemy into a trap), and the ability to recruit defeated Turkic, Chinese, and Persian commanders and soldiers into their armies.

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9. The primary source on this campaign is Juvaini, as translated in Juvaini 1958.
10. For some of these conflicts, see Rashid al-Din 1971; Rosabi 1988b; Rosabi 1988c, pp. 13–83.
The spectacular victories of a few hundred thousand troops over advanced civilizations with millions of inhabitants also owed much to the political disorganization across much of Asia. As noted, three separate dynasties reigned over different parts of China; Russia was far from united; and the Islamic ‘Abbasid dynasty that ruled in West Asia and North Africa was in a state of decline. Thus it was through a combination of their own prowess and their enemies’ weaknesses that the Mongols, who in the majority of conflicts were outnumbered, swiftly and decisively defeated the forces of most of the great Asian civilizations.

The Mongols Govern in China

Unlike previous invaders from the steppes—such as the Huns and several early Turkic peoples—the Mongols wanted more than plunder from the territories they seized. To be sure, they lusted after the resplendent silks, jewelry, carvings, and other goods found in China, Iran, and Russia (figs. 4, 11, 62, 66, 207). But by the time Genghis’s sons and grandsons came to power, their concern was partly to ensure a steady supply of these products, and they recognized that devastation of the native economies would be counterproductive in the long run. Rather than spread instability and chaos through systematic pillaging, they therefore opted to reestablish viable governments in the lands they had occupied. Iran and China proved to be the two principal countries that the Mongols worked to govern.

Although Hülegü’s uncle Ögödei (r. 1229–41) and his older brother Möngke (r. 1251–59) had begun the process of devising institutions for governance in China, it was Genghis’s grandson Kublai, reigning from 1260 until his death in 1294, who truly effected the transition from nomadic conquest to sedentary rule (fig. 14). All of China was reunited under his sovereignty: his predecessors had taken over the territories of the Xia and the Jin, and Kublai, by defeating the Southern Song in 1279, completed the unification of the country. His mother saw to it that he lived most of his early life in northern China and was tutored by Chinese Confucian scholars and Buddhist monks. Kublai developed feelings of empathy with his Chinese subjects alongside the traditional Mongol attitudes and beliefs that were part of his upbringing. His introduction of the latter into China and his effort to maintain a balance between the Mongol and Chinese cultures would have a substantial impact on Chinese art and its diffusion throughout the Mongol domains.

Before his confirmation as Great Khan, however, he had to withstand a major challenge to his power from his younger brother Arig Böke, who represented the Mongol traditionalists opposed to any accommodation with Chinese culture. By
Fig. 11 (cat. no. 139). Cup with fish-shaped handles, Golden Horde (Southern Russia), late 13th–14th century. Gold sheet, handles worked in repoussé and engraved. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SAR-1613)

Fig. 12 (cat. no. 153). Covered goblet with bird finial, probably Iran, late 13th–early 14th century. Silver, punched, engraved, chased. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Kab-364)

Fig. 13 (cat. no. 149). Handled cup, Golden Horde (Southern Russia), late 13th–14th century. Gold sheet, engraved, chased, and worked in repoussé. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SK-582)
Arigh Böke had been defeated, leaving Khubilai free to implement his own policies.

First he sought to ingratiate himself with his Chinese subjects by restoring familiar practices and institutions. He reinstituted the traditional Confucian rituals at court, including those of music and dance; he built Altars to the Gods of the Soil and Grain, at which officials performed ceremonies to ensure good harvests. Even more telling was his construction of a great temple, signaling his acceptance of the Chinese belief in the power of ancestors to intercede in human affairs and the necessity of consulting them on questions of great importance.

Confucianism taught that an emperor who ruled according to its traditional principles had a mandate from heaven to govern China. In seeking to legitimate himself as an emperor of China, Khubilai built a shrine for Confucius at his court and took other steps to gain the backing of Confucian officials and academicians. He supported the writing of dynastic histories, an activity valued by China’s rulers since the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). For Chinese officials, the consideration of historical events and the identification of parallels to contemporary developments often shaped the making of policy, giving enormous significance to history. Khubilai ordered archives and records of the dynastic regimes the Mongols had subjugated to be collected, in preparation for the drafting of a history. He restored the Hanlin Academy (a literary academy at which edicts were drafted for the emperor) and the National History Academy (composed of compilers, editors, and scholars) to coordinate the writing of these works. At the same time he impressed Chinese scholars by having some of the Confucian classics translated into Mongolian. Offering the Mongol elite greater access to a knowledge of Chinese civilization might lead to their Sincization, an appealing prospect for Chinese Confucians.

Khubilai had recruited Confucian advisers from his earliest days, a policy that would go on to influence the next generation of Mongols. Several of these counselors helped him devise the laws and administrative system for his dynastic rule. Others taught Khubilai and members of the Mongol elite the basic tenets of Chinese culture, lessons that were appealing because they emphasized practical knowledge that the steppe overlords could make use of in ruling China. Khubilai even chose to employ Confucian scholars as tutors for his second son, Zhenjin (“True Gold” in Chinese), an important signal to the Chinese of his growing interest in and attraction to their culture. The emperor adopted a Chinese name, Yuan, for his dynasty; the general meaning of “Yuan” is “origin,” but in the Book of Changes, a classic Chinese work, it signifies “origins of the universe” and “primal force.” Thus the dynasty’s name was directly linked to a major Chinese text and a central Chinese belief. Another demonstration of Khubilai’s effort to please the Chinese was his commitment

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12. See ibid., p. 134.
13. Fuchu 1946.
Fig. 15 (cat. no. 178), Mongol Rider with Administrator, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Color on silk. The Art and History Trust, Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (LTS 1995:7.7)

to achieving an accurate calendar, one major responsibility of a traditional emperor. Recruiting the Persian astronomer Jamal al-Din and the Chinese astronomer Guo Shoujing, he charged them to devise a new calendar more precise than any previous one.

The governmental institutions the Mongols established differed from their traditional Chinese models in only two significant respects. First, the new rulers did not restore the civil service examinations that had long been the sole means of recruiting officials. (When the tests were finally reestablished in the early fourteenth century, they were still not used as the only criterion for staffing the bureaucracy.) For the Mongols to rely on the examinations in choosing their officials would have been tantamount to turning over the government to the Chinese, who obviously were far better equipped to pass the Confucian-oriented tests.

Suspending the examinations for almost the duration of the Mongol dynasty made possible the second deviation from traditional practice, the recruitment of non-Chinese for government positions. The Mongol khans appointed Muslims from Central Asia and Iran to be fiscal administrators and in one case governor of a province, Tibetans to supervise the Buddhist monasteries, and a Nepalese to serve as manager of all the artisans in China.14

Otherwise, nearly all the institutions of Yuan government resembled those of the traditional Chinese dynasties. The khans fulfilled the duties of the emperors, the determination of policy and supervision of the bureaucracy; the Secretariat, as before, assisted the emperors in the formulation of policy and the drafting of edicts; and the Six Ministries—War, Justice, Public Works, Rites, Personnel, and Revenue—implemented and enforced the policies devised by the emperor and the Secretariat. The Censorate, which had been used by the Chinese emperors to spy on the bureaucracy, was granted even greater authority to inspect and report on corrupt, untrustworthy, or ineffective officials—partly because most officials were not Mongols. The Mongol system of local administration also followed that established by the Chinese dynasties.

**Social and Economic Policies and the Arts**

In their social and economic policies, however, the Mongols deviated from Chinese practice. New policies supporting trade and other dealings with foreigners had a dramatic impact on the arts and crafts and led to the diffusion of Chinese motifs and techniques westward. Chinese ambivalence about relations with foreigners had persisted since the time of the Han dynasty, a thousand years earlier. Most Chinese officials opposed any movement toward greater involvement with foreign lands, although merchants, innkeepers, and others who profited from trade were less hostile to the idea. The Mongols, on the other hand, had actively cultivated relations with foreigners. As pastoral nomads they had relied on trade, and now as they...

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*Fig. 16 (cat. no. 198). Paper bill (currency), China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Ink on paper. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE KH-307)*

*Fig. 17 (cat. no. 191). Wine jar with lion-head handles, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Porcelain, underglaze painted. The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund (1962.154)*

*Fig. 18 (cat. no. 192). Stem cup with dragon, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Porcelain, underglaze painted. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance and Greta Millikin Collection (1964.169)*
embarked on the rule of great sedentary civilizations they continued to foster commerce. In China they encouraged the increased use of paper currency (fig. 16), built roads and postal stations to facilitate transport, extended the Grand Canal almost to the new capital in Dadu, and promoted the development of ortoghs (merchant associations). 16 The ortogh benefited from government loans at low rates of interest—which, frequently used to finance the risky long-distance caravans that carried goods to Central and West Asia, reduced the economic burden on any single merchant. Support such as this paved the way for a considerable growth in commerce.

The Mongol rulers also lifted some of the earlier Chinese restrictions on travel by merchants and on the conduct of trade. In addition, the damagingly high tax on commercial exchanges was cut to a relatively modest 3½ percent. Unlike the Chinese dynastic rulers, they neither restricted the profit that could accrue to traders nor enacted sumptuary legislation to regulate their lifestyles. Perhaps equally important, the Mongol khans accorded merchants a higher status than they had had under the traditional Chinese dynasties. Official Chinese ideology denigrated trade and portrayed merchants as parasites who did not produce but merely exchanged goods. Chinese officials both perceived and treated merchants as a lower class in the social hierarchy. When the Mongols reversed that negative image of commerce and elevated the status of merchants, both Chinese and foreign traders benefited.

This change in perception and policy ushered in an era of unprecedented, large-scale trade throughout Eurasia. Goods flowed relatively freely from the empire of

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16 On the ortoghs, see Endicott-West 1989.
Fig. 20 (cat. no. 182). Textile with griffins, China, Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Lampas weave, silk. Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot
the Yuan dynasty to the Mongol Ilkhanate in Iran as well as to Central, South, and Southeast Asia. China received horses, camels, and spices in exchange for the copper cash (coins), silks, and porcelain it exported (fig. 17). Exposure to Chinese art influenced the work of craftsmen in Iran.

It was merchants from Iran and West Asia who transported most of the goods between Yuan and Ilkhanid lands. Few Chinese traveled westward; foreigners generally came to China. Persian traders arrived overland along the caravan trails of Central Asia to northwestern China and by ship via the Indian Ocean to the southeast coast of China. After trading they returned by the same difficult routes, bearing Chinese goods. Some from the West remained in Yuan China, where they formed virtually self-governing communities, with leaders known as shaiks al-Islam (in Chinese, huihui taishi) and qadis, or interpreters of Islam (huijiaotu faguan) (see fig. 19). 18

Quanzhou in southeastern China was an important center for these foreign merchants. Their community in that city had its own bazaars and hospitals and by the middle of the fourteenth century, according to one source of the period, six or seven mosques. 19 Excavations of the front doors, the mihrabs, and stone tablets nearby have shown that several of the mosques were either built or repaired during the Yuan dynasty. A Yuan-period Muslim cemetery yields more information on the contacts between Persians and Chinese. Names and titles in the gravestone inscriptions show that many, if not most, of the buried were Persians. Though the brief memorial writings are in a mélange of Arabic, Persian, and Chinese, nearly all the cited places of origin of the dead are in Iran. Several of those buried were from Tabriz; other cities mentioned include Isfahan, Nisa, and Bukhara. At least one had been on the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.

In light of the restrictions on foreign travel for Chinese merchants, the discovery in Quanzhou of a stone tablet that describes just such a mission is extraordinary. The stele commemorates a certain Chinese merchant’s trip to the court of the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), who had recruited him to come collect and then deliver tribute owed to the Yuan emperor, Khubilai's grandson. In 1299 the Yuan court sent the trader back to Iran as its official emissary. 20 There can scarcely be greater confirmation of the Mongols’ favorable attitude toward trade than the selection of a merchant to fill the position of court envoy.

This point of view and the growing trade with West Asia that it fostered paved the way for artistic cross-fertilization. Among the Chinese goods exchanged in commercial transactions were porcelains, silks (fig. 25), and perhaps scrolls, all lightweight and easily transported products. Persian craftsmen were able to admire these works, study them, and borrow their designs. It is known that Chinese books on agriculture and medicine and at least one major Mongol work, a historical chronicle known as the Ahtan Deber (Golden Book), reached Iran via trade. Other books may well have contained patterns, motifs, and descriptions of techniques used by Chinese craftsmen. 21

The Mongols’ generally benevolent policies toward foreign religions also facilitated relations among different territories within their recently conquered domain. Their own shamanistic beliefs notwithstanding, Mongol leaders determined early on that an aggressive imposition of their native religion on newly acquired subjects would make ruling them difficult. Instead they ingratiated themselves with prominent
local clerics, who then more readily accepted Mongol government. Genghis Khan himself initiated this policy by courting a Daoist monk named Changchun, as a contemporaneous account, translated by Arthur Waley, makes clear. Learning that the Daoists had a formula for immortality, Genghis invited Changchun to accompany him on one of his campaigns and in the course of it asked for some of the concoction. The monk’s response (recorded by a disciple traveling with him) was, “I have means of protecting life, but no elixir that will prolong it.” Genghis, despite his disappointment, continued to treat Changchun as a sage and offered him lavish inducements to remain with the Mongols. The most plausible explanation for this hospitality is that Genghis hoped to gain the confidence of the Daoist wise man and through him of his own Chinese subjects, on the assumption that a religious leader could induce his followers to acquiesce to a new overlord. Genghis prudently cultivated the Daoist and Buddhist monks and rewarded them, principally with tax exemptions, to induce them to remain loyal to the Mongols.

The same policy was pursued by Genghis’s son Ögedei and his grandsons Möngke and Kubilai. Kubilai was an especially generous patron of the religions in China. Buddhism was the faith favored by Chabi, his most influential wife (fig. 27), and he also supported his mother’s religion, Nestorianism, a heretical Christian sect. Marco Polo, who was in China from 1275 to 1292, quoted Kubilai as saying, “There are four prophets who are worshipped and to whom everybody does reverence. The Christians say their God was Jesus Christ; the Saracens Mahomet; the Jews Moses; and the idolaters Sagamoni Burcan [the Shakyamuni Buddha], who was the first god of the idols; and I do honour and reverence to all four, that is to him who is the greatest in heaven and more true, and him I pray to help me.”

The Yuan dynasty’s openness toward foreign religions allowed relations between China and Iran to flourish. The Mongols, who had never ruled a great sedentary empire, needed foreign assistance to govern China. Kubilai in particular recruited Persian and Central Asian Muslims, some already living in China, to help him. He needed non-Chinese to serve as officials and advisers, since it would not have been wise to rely exclusively on the Chinese, whom his uncle Ögedei and he had only recently subjugated. Although from time to time, fearful that Muslims might gain too much power, Kubilai imposed political and occasionally religious restrictions on them, in general he offered them countless opportunities. Muslims were employed as supervisors of trade, darughachi (commissioners), censors, and tax collectors. The skilled administrator Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Din was Kubilai’s choice to become the first governor of the newly conquered province of Yunnan. Kubilai even recruited Persians and Central Asians into his military forces. In 1271, for example, his nephew ruling in Iran, the Ilkhan Abakha, dispatched two specialists who were quite helpful to the Mongol troops laying siege to the important Southern Song town of Xiangyang. The two Persians constructed a mangonel and a catapult, which hurled huge boulders, one of which crashed into the central tower at Xiangyang and did so much damage that the Chinese forces surrendered. Impressed with the Westerners’ ability, Kubilai set up a special government office, the Superior Myriarchy of Muslim Trebuchet Operators and Military Artisans, to maintain and operate siege engines obtained from Iran.
In addition to playing roles in government and in the military, Muslims offered scientific and cultural expertise to Khubilai and his Yuan-dynasty successors. The Mongol rulers of China recognized that the Persians had superior astronomical instruments, and at least one Persian astronomer was invited—or perhaps compelled—to come to China. His diagrams of an armillary sphere and the actual instruments he brought with him served as models for Chinese astronomers. Guo Shoujing, the leading Chinese astronomer, developed a calendar that the Chinese used for four centuries, basing it on one previously devised by a Persian astronomer. These Persian contributions prompted the court to found in 1271 the Institute of Muslim Astronomy, which subsequently supervised the Yuan government’s observations and its activities concerning climate and the skies.

Through their close contacts with Islam, the Mongol rulers in China also learned about the effectiveness of Persian medicine. Plagued by physical ailments, perhaps caused in part by an increasing rate of alcoholism after their successful conquests, the Mongols were interested in obtaining the most advanced therapies. They imported thirty-six volumes on Persian medicine and founded Muslim pharmaceutical bureaus in Dadu and Shangdu, both eventually subsumed under the Office for Muslim Medicine. These various offices supplied medicines for the imperial family and its guards and also for poor residents of the cities. Culinary dishes of Persian origin were imported along with medical know-how. Even so quintessentially Chinese a dish as jiaozi (dumplings) may have come to China from West Asia during the Mongol era.

Exploring these interests required knowledge of the languages of West Asia, especially Persian. In 1289 the Yuan court established the Muslim National College.
with Erudites for Teaching the Arabic Script, in which officials were trained to translate and interpret Persian. A special group of clerks, designated Muslim Scribes and Muslim Copyists, were parts of the sub-bureaucracy throughout the empire. These measures ensured that anywhere in the Mongol domain there were a certain number of bureaucrats who could communicate in Persian.

Eager to encourage artisans and the practice of crafts, the Mongols instituted policies that had the additional effect of dispersing artistic motifs from one to another of the Mongol lands. Genghis recognized that the almost constant movement of his people when they were pastoral nomads had prevented their developing a sizable artisan class. Therefore he set about acquiring access to the talents of foreign craftsmen. Even in military operations he put artisans in a special category: after conquering Samarqand, for example, he spared thirty thousand craftsmen, whom he distributed among his sons and kinsmen. Genghis not only saved the craftsmen but also frequently freed them from ordinary corvée labor and taxes. His son Ögedei continued the same policy, particularly after he had begun building the first Mongol capital, at Khara Khorum in Mongolia. He needed to recruit and employ numerous foreign artisans, who were mostly either Chinese or from Muslim lands. The palaces in Khara Khorum, the buildings for storage, and the sites of ordinary housing—in many cases heated by steam canals beneath the floor—offer strong evidence of Ögedei’s success. One of the recruited craftsmen, a French silversmith named Guillaume Boucher captured by the Mongols in eastern Europe, constructed a remarkable fountain that dispersed a variety of liquors. Bronze mirrors, gold and silver vessels, porcelains, and lacquer cups were discovered in the 1940s by Russian archaeologists excavating the site. Although some of these may have been imported, the find in its totality testifies to the high quality of craftsmanship Ögedei could command in this relatively remote area in Mongolia. Like his nomadic forebears, Ögedei cherished his mobility and built several additional seasonal residences, each of which required the efforts of large numbers of artisans.

Khubilai was the master builder of the Mongols in East Asia. The summer capital he constructed in Kaiping, which he renamed Shangdu (Coleridge’s Xanadu), in what is now Inner Mongolia, had a marble palace described by Marco Polo: “The halls and rooms and passages are all gilded and wonderfully painted with

33. For a report on the work of the Russian archaeologists, see Kiefer 1965. For the French silversmith, see Olshcki 1946.
pictures and images of beasts and birds and trees and flowers and many kinds of things, so well and so cunningly that it is a delight and a wonder to see.”15 Modeled in a general way on existing Chinese capital cities, Shangdu consisted of several sectors. In the Outer City lived the bulk of the population, mostly in mud or board houses. The Inner City, surrounded by a brick wall 10 to 16 feet in height, housed the khan, his retinue, and other officials. Though its grandiose palaces and offices do not survive, tiles and other objects from them have been found (figs. 21, 22, 83, 105). The city also encompassed a wild preserve retained for hunting, a traditional Mongol pursuit. The mosques and Buddhist monasteries in the Outer City required the services of foreign artisans.

Khubilai also recruited craftsmen to build the even more elaborate capital Dadu, in China. One of the principal construction supervisors was a Muslim; where specifically he came from is unclear.16 Although most of these skilled workers were Chinese, artisans of other groups—Khitans, Jurchens, Muslims, and eventually Nepalese—also took part in the construction. The city was modeled on a traditional Chinese capital, with walls, ancestral temples, and Altars to the Gods of the Soil and Grain.

Khubilai sought to entice craftsmen for his architectural and public works projects by offering them favorable treatment. Although traditional Chinese scholar-officials had prized fine handiwork, they had accorded a relatively low status to the artisans themselves. Khubilai raised their social standing and granted them special concessions and privileges. In addition to being relieved of corvée obligations, craftsmen were often provided with food and clothing. Once they had filled their government quotas they could sell on the open market any products that remained.17

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15 Marco Polo, Il milione, as translated in Polo 1938, vol. 1, p. 185.
16 C.Y. Liu 1992 downplays the role of the Muslim architect and emphasizes that the city was based on Chinese models.
17 Chu 1936, p. 144.
18 Farquhar 1990 provides a complete list of these agencies.
19 Ibid., p. 260.
In time the Mongols acquired an astonishing number of government offices to supervise the production of craft articles, some of them traditional agencies but many newly established. Representative of this proliferation is the array of departments concerned solely with textiles. The directorate general of the Office of Rare Textiles managed Superintendencies for Brocade Weaving and Dyeing, Rare Embroideries, and Gauze, which produced silks for the court. In addition, the heir apparent had his own Offices of Brocade, Gold Brocade, and Weaving and Dyeing. The Ministry of Works supervised additional Embroidery, Gauze, and Gold Brocade Offices and a Bureau for Patterned Satins, which in turn managed government and private artisan workshops both in the capital and in various silk production centers throughout the empire. About one-half of the eighty agencies in the Ministry of Works dealt with the production and collection of textiles (see fig. 20).  

Other agencies in the Ministry of Works oversaw other crafts. Several offices managed metal works, with separate Bronze, Silver, and Steel Bureaus. Jade Polishing and Carving had its own office (fig. 23), as did Leather and Felt Production. Though the principal tasks of the ministry were the construction and repair of government works and the supervision of artisans, the majority of its subordinate offices were actually government workshops in which luxury items were manufactured for the imperial court. The imperial court also had its own, separate bureaus, including a Gold Thread Office, a Porcelain Office (fig. 18), an Ivory Office, and a Gold and Silver Utensils Superintendency.

Unlike the preceding Song dynasty, the Yuan did not have a separate governmentsponsored painting academy. Instead, the Mongol rulers appointed to the Hanlin Academy those Chinese painters who were willing to serve them (see figs. 15, 24), including the most renowned painter of the Yuan dynasty, Zhao Mengfu. Many painters refused positions in an alien government. They continued to work on their own, developing an amateur painting tradition that would dominate Chinese painting henceforth.

As with astronomy and medicine, artisanship that had developed in other parts of the domain was explored by Mongol rulers, who enticed or compelled talented craftsmen to move from their original lands. For example, Ögedei and succeeding khans based in Mongolia and China admired textiles produced in Central Asia and transported several communities of weavers eastward—to northern China and what are now Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. In particular, they sought craftsmen...
skilled at weaving the renowned “cloth of gold” (navij) (fig. 25).46 Because the Mongol leaders cherished these luxury products, they took pains to sustain the silk-producing communities, keeping them busy with orders for silk robes, banners, or items with Buddhist motifs. It is possible that the Mongols also moved craftsmen working in media other than textiles from Iran and Central Asia to China and vice versa, but there is no written record of any such relocations.

Many of the “craftsmen” so valued by the Mongols were women.47 It was women who wove textiles, in particular the cloth of gold prized by the Mongol court. They and their households received the same privileges and exemptions as male artisans. Little is known of these craftswomen because the Chinese scholar-officials who wrote the historical accounts hardly mentioned women. Women received little recognition in traditional Chinese society and thus rarely appear in historical records.

Mongol society placed fewer restrictions on women, and there were notable female figures in Mongol China, Central Asia, and Iran.47 Because women played a vital role in the pastoral economy of the Mongols, milking and caring for the livestock and making clothing as well as performing household tasks, they had considerable status and a degree of power. In addition to their usual work, they assumed the duties of the men during military campaigns, an obligation that was formalized in the legal codes.45 Thus Mongol women led more active lives and were more valued than other East Asian women, although they did not achieve equality with men.

It is, therefore, no accident that several women among the Mongol elite enjoyed considerable authority and power. Genghis’s mother, widowed by the murder of her husband, was praised in the histories for keeping her family together during difficult times. But the most influential and renowned woman among the Mongol elite was Sorghaghtani Beki, Genghis’s daughter-in-law and the mother of Kublai. The Persian historian Rashid al-Din (1247–1318) wrote that she was “extremely intelligent and able and towered above all the women in the world.” The contemporary Syrian physician Bar Hebraeus (1226–1286) quoted these words of another: “If I were to see among the race of women another woman like this, I should say that the race of women was far superior to that of men.”44 Sorghaghtani Beki raised all four of her sons to be rulers, insisting that they become literate and be tutored by an international coterie of advisers and also that they adopt policies of religious toleration in their

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Fig. 27. Chabi, Consort of Kublai Khan, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), second half of the 13th century. Album leaf; ink and color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei

42. Rosaldo 1993.
domains. She governed her own lands in North China, fostering rather than exploiting the native agrarian economy and offering a model of proper rule for her sons. The most celebrated women of the next generation were Chabi and Dokin Khutun. Chabi, Khubilai’s wife (fig. 27), substantially influenced her husband and the direction of his government. A fervent Tibetan Buddhist, she made sure that Khubilai supported the religion by funding monasteries and recruiting Tibetan monks for government positions (this was compatible with his endorsement of Confucian philosophy). She persuaded Khubilai to accord every possible consideration to the two captured empresses of the defeated Southern Song dynasty and to oppose the Mongol impulse to expropriate Chinese agricultural land and convert it to pastureland. In Iran, Hülegü’s wife Dokin Khutun, a Nestorian Christian, promoted the interests of her coreligionists at the Ilkhanid court, seeing to it that several Nestorians assumed prominent government positions. She may have played a role in negotiating, or at least fostering, a marriage between Hülegü’s son Abaka and Maria, the illegitimate daughter of the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII. Because of their considerable status and the major roles they occasionally played, Mongol women of the elite were able to influence artistic developments. Women were supporters of the arts; Khubilai’s great-granddaughter Sengge achieved renown as an outstanding collector of Chinese painting and also one of the great patrons of painters. Her distinctive taste in art is reflected in the unorthodox collection of bird and flower paintings she assembled. Other Mongol women who

Fig. 28 (cat. no. 127). Square tile with inscription in Persian, Golden Horde (New Saray, Southern Russia), 14th century. Fritware, underglaze painted. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE SAR-1491)

Fig. 29 (cat. no. 144). Comb and sheath, Golden Horde (Southern Russia), 14th–15th century. Silver gilt, engraved, chased, punched, and inlaid with a black compound. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (TB-414, b)
adopted Buddhism provided funds for Buddhist ritual and artistic objects. Still others were consumers who specially ordered jades, textiles, and porcelains for themselves or their households.

**Parallels with Ilkhanid Iran**

This discussion of the Mongol impact on the arts has so far been focused on China. Many similar patterns prevailed in the western Mongol domains, particularly in the Ilkhanate, centered in Iran. This is not surprising, since the Ilkhanid rulers and the Mongol rulers in China maintained relatively close contact and were political allies. In 1260, when Khubilai and a younger brother, Argh Böke, had competed for the throne, their brother Hülegü, in power in Iran, had supported the eventual winner, Khubilai. Khubilai had been opposed, however, by the Golden Horde in Russia and the Mongol khanate in Central Asia, neither of which accepted Khubilai as the Great Khan. Hülegü, in choosing the title Ilkhan (subordinate khan), acknowledged the supreme authority of the Great Khan. For some years his successors accepted this nominally subordinate status—for example, issuing coinage inscribed with such phrases as “struck by Abakha in the Khaghan’s [Khan’s] name”—even though the Ilkhanate was politically autonomous. Later the Ilkhan Ghazan, a convert to Islam determined to govern as a Muslim ruler, would reject this symbolic fealty to the Great Khan, and his successors would turn even further away from East Asia.

Until that time, however, relations between the Ilkhanate and the Yuan remained

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*Fig. 30 (cat. no. 145). Pendant, Mongol empire, mid-13th century. Gold sheet, worked in repoussé, engraved, filigree, granulation, set with rock crystal. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SA-8091)*
close. Marco Polo provides an account, confirmed by other sources, of Khubilai sending the Mongol princess Kökejin from China in 1291, by ship, to be the bride of the Ilkhan Arghun (r. 1284–91), in response to the Ilkhan’s request for a wife. The emperor’s embassy accompanying Kökejin consisted of Arghun’s envoys, the Polos, and an escort of ninety men. In addition, officials privately funded the travel of seventy merchants to return to China with Persian goods, calculating that as part of an official mission they would be able to bring the merchandise in duty-free and it could then be sold at a handsome profit.\(^{50}\) The episode attests to the habitual flow of goods back and forth between Iran and China, as well as to the relative ease of sea travel. Land travel was also feasible, despite Khubilai’s conflict with the ruler of Central Asia. The Nestorian cleric Rabban Sauma, the first native of Dadu (Beijing) known to have reached Europe, encountered few problems when he journeyed from China to the Ilkhanate sometime between 1275 and 1279.\(^{51}\) Persian ambassadors and traders continued to arrive in China, strengthening the Ilkhanate’s relations with the Yuan dynasty. Even routes from as far away as Europe, via Iran, to China had become so well traveled that in the 1330s the Florentine writer Francesco Balducci Pegolotti could describe the itinerary in great detail, specifying the number of men and animals required for the caravans, the quantity of goods needed to turn a profit, and the approximate distance from one major halting place to another.\(^{52}\)

Thus in the years from about 1259 to 1295, during the reigns of Hülegü and his successors, Iran was uniquely open to interchange with Central and East Asia and receptive to influences from those lands.\(^{53}\) Like their Yuan cousins, the early Ilkhan actively promoted contact with foreigners, recruiting non-Persians, particularly non-Muslims, to serve in their bureaucracy. Their encouragement of commerce resulted in Persian merchants reaching west to Europe and east across Asia and in Persian becoming a lingua franca for merchants and bureaucrats in Eurasia.

The Ilkhanid rulers borrowed from the Yuan the concept of paper money and tried to introduce its use. While the policy’s goal was to add to the government’s coffers—the profligacy of corrupt officials had drained the state’s treasury—it would also have been a boon to trade. The attempt failed, however, because the government could not persuade native merchants of the new money’s efficiency and soundness; most merchants suspected that the government intended, by means of the currency, to gather up for itself all the precious metals in the country.\(^{54}\) When Ghazan assumed the throne he sought to adopt policies even more favorable to merchants than those previously in effect. He reduced taxes on traders and commercial transactions, devised uniform weights and measures, and established fixed standards for the weight and value of coins, measures that resembled ones taken by the Mongols in China.

Both the Yuan dynasty and the early Ilkhanid rulers tolerated a wide variety of religions. The Ilkhan supported Buddhism, for which many temples and monasteries were established. They did not discriminate against the Nestorian Christian community in their midst, however, and permitted the continuation of a patriarchate in

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\(^{50}\) Cleaves 1976, p. 188. See Rachevitz 1997 for a magisterial refutation of those who doubt that Marco Polo reached China.

\(^{51}\) See Ruzabi 1993 for an account of his travels.


\(^{54}\) Jahn 1970, p. 102.
Fig. 32 (cat. no. 159). Footed bowl, Golden Horde (Southern Russia), early 14th century. Silver gilt, worked in repoussé, punched, engraved, and chased. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ZO-741)

Baghdad. Arghun even selected a Nestorian, Rabban Sauma, to undertake the delicate mission of forging an alliance with the European monarchies and the Papacy. In an account of his travels through Central Asia and Iran, Rabban Sauma described the hospitality he received in numerous Nestorian communities that thrived unpersecuted in towns and oases. Many Nestorians were traders, and the government’s tolerance of them thus contributed to the vigor of long-distance commerce with China.\(^{55}\) Jews, another group with many traders in their number, were also favored by the Ilkhanids. Several individuals recruited to be prominent government officials were Jews.

With the accession of the Muslim Ilkan Ghazan in 1295 came an aggressive resurgence of Islam, which was particularly characterized by the growth of Shi‘ism and Sufism. The policy of religious toleration underwent something of a reversal. Buddhist monasteries and temples in western Asia were closed (some damaged or destroyed), and Buddhism there would not recover from this assault.\(^{56}\) The attacks adversely affected relations with the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty, some of whom had converted to Tibetan or Chinese Buddhism (see fig. 126). Although Nestorianism and Judaism did not suffer the same fate as Buddhism, their political influence gradually eroded from the time of Ghazan on, and there were some attacks on churches and synagogues. Still, this development scarcely impinged upon trade with the Yuan because Muslims in China played many of the key roles in commerce.

As with the Yuan rulers, the Ilkhanid’s support for crafts reflected the traditional Mongol attitudes toward artisanship. Policies were designed to foster craftsmanship and the arts and to benefit from technical or artistic innovations developed else-

\(^{55}\) A longer discussion may be found in Rossabi 1991b, pp. 37–31.

\(^{56}\) Boyle 1968b, pp. 179–80. Much of this section is based on Boyle 1968b.
where in the Mongol domains. Artisans were granted tax reductions. Those based in
cities along the major Eurasian trade routes had no trouble marketing their wares
and profited from the Mongol rulers’ support of commerce. Others living near the
residences of the Ilkhans, whether permanent or temporary, also had a substantial
market for their wares: the Mongol capital at Tabriz, the city of Maragha, and the
summer palace at Takh-i Sulaiman were all dense with wealthy consumers who
craved luxury articles (figs. 29–32). Craftsmen were generally freemen organized in
corporations or guilds. However, they were obliged to turn some of their products
over to the state or to landowners, and often to work gratis on public projects.

Some artisans were slaves and could be compelled to move wherever their
overlords wished. It is very likely that the Ilkhans recruited Chinese craftsmen and
forced them to migrate to Iran to work in their service. Although Chinese and
Persian written sources contain few references to the movement of Chinese artisans
and painters into Iran, this paucity of evidence is not particularly significant. The
authors of Chinese histories generally evinced little interest in foreigners and
scarcely mentioned contacts with them, while Persian histories focused on political
events and omitted much of social interest. In fact, Chinese of other professions
were present in Iran, and it seems probable that Chinese craftsmen were as well.
Chinese doctors reached Iran, along with drugs and Chinese medical texts that were
subsequently translated into Persian. A Chinese chef worked for the historian
Rashid al-Din. The Ilkhanids imported seeds from China, employed translations of
Chinese agricultural texts, and brought in Chinese agronomists to help foster the
growth of an agrarian economy in Iran.⁵⁷ Mongols played roles in transmitting to
Iran technical texts and historical works, the latter of which exerted an influence on
the writing of Rashid al-Din’s monumental history. When Mongols from China trav-
elled to the Ilkhanate, a few Chinese surely accompanied them. It is not unreasonable
to assume that Chinese craftsmen and artists were among these escorts and that they
brought with them works of art including textiles and scrolls, or at least pattern
books of designs.

The policies regarding trade, religion, crafts, and the arts that the Mongols
implemented in the vast Asian domains they had subjugated were ones that facili-
tated cultural and artistic diffusion. The Mongols themselves were not artistic cre-
ators or innovators; however, they helped transmit cultural developments from
China to Iran and back again and in addition were patrons and consumers of a wide
range of arts. Even after the Ilkhan Ghazan adopted the title Sultan and distanced
himself from the Great Khan in East Asia, cultural and artistic relations persisted
between Yuan China and Iran, enriching both civilizations. It ceased only when
political and economic turbulence engulfed the two Mongol domains. It may be
that the most enduring aspects of the legacy of Genghis Khan and his successors
were not their military exploits but the unification of much of Asia and the cultural
and artistic flowering that ensued.

2. The Mongols in Iran  CHARLES MELVILLE

Hülegü Khan consulted the great men of state and his closest courtiers concerning his intention. . . . Husam al-Din the astrologer advised him not to attack the caliphal dynasty nor lead the army to Baghdad. "If the King does not listen to his servant's words, six evil consequences will quickly appear: 1, all the horses will die and the troops will fall sick; 2, the sun will not rise; 3, the rain will not fall; 4, a strong wind will rise up and the world will be destroyed by an earthquake; 5, the plants will not grow from the earth; and 6, a great king will die within the year." . . . Then Hülegü consulted Khwaja Nasir al-Din Muhammad Tusi, who said, "None of these things will occur." Hülegü asked, "Then what will happen?" He said, "Hülegü Khan will take the caliph's place." — Rashid al-Din, Compendium of Chronicles

Eighty years elapsed from the time Hülegü Khan's forces arrived in Baghdad, till the death of Sultan Abu Sa'id. During this period, the kingdom of Iran had a rest from the oppression of men of violence, particularly in the days of the Sultanates of Ghazan Khan, Öljeitü Khadabandah and Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan. How can anyone describe how well the affairs of the kingdom of Iran were regulated during these three reigns?

— Auliya Allah Amuli, Tarikh-i Ruyan

On January 1, 1256, the Mongol prince Hülegü, a grandson of Genghis Khan, led his army west across the Oxus River into Iranian territory. This invasion can be seen as a new episode in the ancient cycle of confrontations between Iran and lands to the north and east. One of its main consequences, in the long term, would be the reorientation of Iran toward Central Asia and away from the Arab lands of the Fertile Crescent with which it had been so closely associated since the rise of Islam in the seventh century.

History of the Conquest

A complex chain of events, filled with warfare and family rivalries, preceded Hülegü's invasion of Iran. Almost forty years earlier, Genghis Khan had conducted his first devastating raid across Asia. In three hectic years (1219–22) the Mongol forces carried out their first objective, annihilating the Khwarazmian empire to the east of the Caspian Sea. The great conqueror himself pursued the Khwarazmshah's warlike son Jalal al-Din all the way to the banks of the Indus River, while other commanders systematically besieged and sacked the capitals of Khwarazm and Transoxiana. Hülegü's father, Tolui, presided over the destruction of Merv, Nishapur, and Herat, the great cities of Khurasan in northeastern Iran. The Mongols then reduced to ruin anyone who stood in their way as they swept on across northern Iran, up through the Caucasus, and into the Crimea, before withdrawing via southern Russia.
The death and destruction caused by Genghis’s western campaign cannot now be calculated; what is certain is that those who experienced and reported the events were horrified by the unprecedented scale and violence of the attack. Alongside the urban ruin and loss of life came the destruction of many libraries and treasures and thus, perhaps, precious evidence about the nature of cultural and artistic activity on the eve of the Mongol invasions. Still, the possibility of some continuity was ensured when Genghis spared artisans and craftsmen and deported them, largely to Mongolia, to serve the conquerors’ needs.

Genghis Khan’s son and successor, Ögedei (r. 1229–41), sent his general Chormaghn to deal with the elusive prince Jalal al-Din and to extend Mongol control farther west. Nevertheless, various powers remained uns-submitive to the Mongols. Most notable among them were the ‘Abbāsid caliphate of Baghdad—the titular head of the Islamic world for five hundred years—and the Isma’īlis, popularly known as the Assassins, a religious sect entrenched in mountain strongholds in eastern Iran and south of the Caspian Sea.

Hülegü’s mission in 1256 was to complete and consolidate the conquests of his forebears. His forces, perhaps about two hundred thousand strong, included a significant component (possibly even a majority) of Turkic troops from Central Asia, absorbed into the Mongol armies in the course of Genghis Khan’s westward expansion. Hülegü first suppressed the Assassins, capturing the key fortress of Alamut late in 1256 (see cat. no. 73, fig. 68). A year later he was encamped before Baghdad, which fell in February 1258 after a short siege (figs. 33, 35). The caliph and most of his kinsmen were executed. Previous conquerors of Baghdad had stopped short of such action, choosing instead to retain the caliphate and through it legalize their usurpation of power, but this new invader had no need of such sanctions. The method of execution was also unprecedented: the caliph was rolled up in a carpet and trampled to death so that none of his royal blood could soak into the ground. According to ancient Turk–Mongol beliefs, blood was sacred, one of the seats of the soul; by not shedding his blood, the Mongols showed respect for the nobility of the caliph and ensured that he would survive in the afterlife. Nothing could have demonstrated more clearly that these warriors from the wilds of inner Asia had their own taboos and a view of the world utterly alien to the Islamic civilization they had overwhelmed.

The sack of Baghdad effectively brought to an end the caliphate that had been Islam’s principal political institution since the death of the prophet Muhammad in A.D. 632. A couple of ‘Abbāsid survivors made their way to Cairo, where they became figurehead caliphs for the new Mamluk masters of Egypt and served to confer some legitimacy on their rule. The Mamluks, a regime of military slave origin who were establishing themselves in Egypt during the 1250s, were to become the most stubborn and successful opponents of the Mongols in western Asia. They maintained a well-guarded frontier along the Euphrates and resisted the Mongols’ repeated efforts to penetrate into northern Syria, presenting this resistance as a holy war (jihad) against the pagans.

Hülegü had more to confront than external foes such as the Mamluks. His expedition west was launched at a time of internal conflict within the Mongol empire. When Ögedei’s son Güyüg (r. 1246–48) died, there had been a struggle for
Fig. 35 (cat. no. 25). The Conquest of Baghdad, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran, 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 70, S. 4)
Fig. 16 (cat. no. 49). *Iskandar Killing Far of Hind*, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Keir Collection, England (PP1).
Fig. 37 (cat. no. 19). Shah Zor Enthroned, page from the Great Mongol Shahname (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1310. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.107)
succession to the throne of the Great Khan, which culminated in the election of Hulegu’s older brother Mongke in 1251. Mongke was the son of Tolui, Genghis Khan’s youngest son. The descendants of Ögedei, dispossessed of their inheritance, were purged, together with the family of his brother Chaghadai (ruler of the Central Asian Mongol kingdom, the Chaghadai Khanate), who supported them. Mongke was backed, however, by the senior line of the family in the person of Batu, who was the son of Genghis’s oldest son, Jochi, and khan of the Mongols in their westernmost territories (the so-called Golden Horde). Cousin was set against cousin across the empire (see map of the Mongol empire, pp. 8–9; genealogical chart, p. 11).

To assert his control throughout his realms, Mongke dispatched his brothers Khubilai to China and Hulegu to the west—that is, into territory originally granted to Jochi. Thus seeds of rivalry were sown in the west as well, particularly in the Caucasus. This situation was drastically altered by Mongke’s death in 1269. In the ensuing succession crisis, Hulegu supported the cause of his brother Khubilai in China. Against him stood their youngest brother, Arigh Böke, who ruled in Khara Khorum, the Mongol capital, and maintained that the traditional homeland in Mongolia should remain the center of the empire. Although Khubilai eventually triumphed, the cost was steep: the Mongol empire was effectively dismembered, and his own authority was confined to China. Meanwhile Hulegu seized the opportunity to carve out his own kingdom in the Iranian lands, where he styled himself Ilkhan, or subject khan, subordinate to Khubilai. Flanking him were hostile Mongol khanates—to the north, in southern Russia and the Caucasus, the Jochids of the Golden Horde, and to the east, in Central Asia, the remnants of the Ögedeid-Chaghadayid alliance. Born at this time of strife within the empire, the Ilkhanate would eventually be undermined and then destroyed by similar succession crises.

9. The most penetrating accounts of these developments are Jackson 1978 and Jackson 1999, esp. p. 9, n. 11, pp. 23–32.
The Land of Iran

One of the many consequences that flowed from the establishment of Mongol rule in Persia was the revival of the concept of the land of Iran ("Iranzamin," known before the advent of Islam as "Iransahr"). While Iransahr had been the cradle of a succession of imperial regimes from the time of Cyrus the Great (r. ca. 558–529 B.C.), its glory had been finally, and apparently permanently, eclipsed by the Muslim Arab conquests of the seventh century A.D. With their new religion the Arabs brought a hostile attitude to secular kings and dynasts. Iran was absorbed into a new political dispensation, whose center of gravity, even after the transfer of the capital to Baghdad and the old heartlands of Iransahr, was farther west—the so-called Fertile Crescent and beyond it the Mediterranean world of late antiquity, to which the Arabs were heirs. The great arch of the Sasanian palace of the Khusraus (Chosroes) at Ctesiphon, just across the Tigris from Baghdad, became a poetic symbol of the lost grandeur of ancient Iran, one viewed with nostalgia but, from an Arab and Islamic perspective, no serious ambition to restore (fig. 37). In a way that has not been fully explored (but that we will touch on again later), the Mongols and their Persian administrators reinvigorated the idea of the political and cultural autonomy of Iran, renewed her ties with the Central Asian world that had played such a large part in her past history, and in so doing released to an extraordinary degree the creative talents of her people.

The North

The Ilkhans did not exercise their authority evenly throughout Iranian territory (see map of Greater Iran, p. 10). In 1275 the scholar and historian Qadi ʿAbd

Fig. 39 (cat. no. 22). Mongol Traveling, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 71, S. 53)
Fig. 40 (cat. no. 111). Star tile with man seated before a tent, Iran (Kashan), A.H. 689/ A.D. 1290–91. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Private collection.

Allah al-Baidavi defined Iranzamin as extending from the Euphrates to the Oxus, that is, from the borders of the Arab lands to Khojand (in present-day Tajikistan). According to Hamd Allah Mustaфи Qazvini, a historian and geographer writing in 1340 at the end of the Ilkhanid period, Iranzamin stretched from Konya (central-west Turkey) in the west to Balkh (Afghanistan) in the east, and from Darband (in the Caucasus) in the north to Abadan (on the Persian Gulf) in the south. The Mongols, numerically rather insignificant in comparison both with the Turkish elements in their armies and with those inhabitants who managed to survive their massacres, were concentrated in the north of this large area, in Khurasan and particularly Azerbaijan. Here the Mongols frequented a series of seasonal capitals and built their main palaces and principal monumental constructions. Hülegü commissioned an observatory for the astronomer and polymath Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201–1274) outside Maragha, his first capital; later rulers developed substantial complexes at Takht-i Sulaiman, Tabriz, and Sultanbeyli (see below and Tomoko Masuya’s chapter 4).

The reasons for this concentration in the northwest were partly military and partly ecological and economic. A nomadic people, the Mongols were at home on horseback and in tents (figs. 38, 40). When they moved, whether in war or in peace, they took the whole camp (ordo, horde) with them, together with the herds of sheep, goats, and horses on which they depended for their livelihood and mobility. Northern Iran and central Anatolia lie in a zone of high mountain valleys and steppe vegetation that provided the kind of terrain and climate the Mongols needed for summer and winter pasturing of their animals (fig. 41). The military chiefs maintained seasonal camping grounds in these areas throughout the Ilkhanid period.

Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Khurasan were border regions that needed defending...
against the Ilkhanids’ enemies—the Mamluks in the west, the Golden Horde to the north, and the Chaghadai Khanate in the east.

The seat of rule also remained peripatetic. In addition to conducting campaigns against the Mamluks and other opponents, normally over the winter or in early spring, the Ilkhan in general kept on the move. By the reign of Abu Sa’id, the last generally recognized Ilkhan (r. 1316–35), the most common pattern was for the court to migrate between Sultaniyia in the summer and Baghdad in the winter. Magnificent tents were created to reflect the rulers’ imperial splendor, such as one for Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) that was three years in the making and took two hundred men twenty days to erect (see fig. 42). It was completed in Tabriz in 1302 and first installed at Ghazan’s favorite summer quarters at Ulan (see fig. 80). This adherence to the seasonal rhythms of life was not merely nostalgic; pastoral nomadism was an important element in the Mongols’ economy, particularly since their original destructiveness and subsequent methods of raising taxes had done much to reduce agricultural production, the traditional basis of Iran’s economy.

Northern Iran lay astride one branch of the so-called Silk Road connecting Anatolia with China and was a natural corridor for east-west trade and the movement of goods and ideas (see fig. 34). The Mongol courts were active in the pursuit and encouragement of trade, providing capital and security for merchants to traffic on their behalf in commercial associations (ortoghis), which channeled wealth into the hands of the ruling circles. Princesses and royal wives (khatuns) played an important role in these enterprises, since they had considerable freedom to dispose of their assets. The most impressive efforts to stimulate international trade and provide the urban infrastructures necessary for commerce can be seen in the development of Tabriz, which Ghazan made his capital. (First the Mongols had to overcome their antipathy to cities and recognize how they could be exploited to generate revenue, especially through taxes.) Tabriz city was greatly enlarged and furnished with baths and caravanserais to accommodate merchants from all points of the compass. Azerbaijan was at the knot of a string of routes, some of which wound southeastward from the Black Sea and the Caucasus down to Hormuz on the Persian Gulf.

The South

If the Mongols quickly imposed themselves across northern Iran, the situation was very different in the south. Unscathed by the invasions of Genghis Khan and offering only notional allegiance to his first successors, the southern provinces started to become more closely integrated into the Mongol realm after Hülegü’s capture of Baghdad. The various established local powers

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The Mongols in Iran 45
submitted to Hulegu and were left in place. These were small principalities, mainly in the hands of Turkish atabegs, who were originally guardians and advisers to young Seljuk princes but later wielded power in their own right. They included the Salghurids in Fars and other dynasties in Yazd and Luristan. There were also the indigenous Shabankara tribal chiefs in Fars, and, in Kirman, the Qara-Khitai or Qutlugh-Khanids, descended from a Khwarazmian military commander.\(^{18}\)

Relations between these southern regions and the ordu (here, the center of government, or court) varied with changing circumstances, but as a general principle the local ruling families were tied to the ordu by marriage. There is no documentary evidence that any of the Ilkhanons ever went in person to southern Iran. They were able to intervene in the affairs of the provinces by supporting one claimant to power against another family member or by the simple device of dividing rule between two rivals, thus reducing their local influence and making them dependent on the ordu. These regional princes were frequently minors, and it was often their mothers who acted as regents, wielding considerable authority. Many of these princesses were patrons of the religious classes and made extensive pious endowments, or \(\text{awqaf}\) (fig. 269); an outstanding example was Qutlugh Terken in the Kirman region. Indeed, the prominence of women in both economic and political affairs is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Mongol period in Iran. Their influence was personal rather than institutionalized, however, and it is not necessarily the case that such freedom existed for women outside the ruling circles.\(^{19}\)

The Mongols did not have the same strategic interests in the south as in the border zones of the north, but here as elsewhere they were determined to collect taxes and tribute. Moreover, the southern lands offered access to the lucrative trade of the Persian Gulf, which, as Marco Polo recorded in the 1270s, consisted of spices and precious stones, pearls, cloths of silk and gold, ivory, and other goods from China and India, as well as an important trade in horses. The main emporia for this trade were Hormuz and the nearby island of Qais (Kish). Some of those involved in this commerce, both merchants and government officials, acquired extraordinary wealth. (One such was the Malik al-Islam Ibrahim ibn Muhammad [d. 1306], whose career spanned the reigns of four Ilkhanons. His riches, partly gained from his appointment as tax farmer, made him indispensable to the court but also the object of suspicion and repeated intrigues.)\(^{20}\) Even after Fars, Kirman, and Yazd came under the direct control of the ordu, the Mongol presence in the south remained minimal. The area was predominantly hot and dry and had little to attract permanent occupation. These contrasts between the north and south do much to explain the distinct cultural and artistic developments in the different regions of Iran, both during and after the Ilkhanid period.

**Cultural Life**

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as in earlier periods, the large distances between provincial centers and the strong tendency toward political fragmentation encouraged the growth of regional schools of literature at a variety of princely courts, particularly in western and eastern Iran. Fars, along with its capital,
Shiraz, became something of a haven for poets and artists and was soon associated with a vigorous production of illustrated manuscripts. The poet Sa’di (d. 1292), author of two much-loved didactic masterpieces in prose and verse, the *Gulistan* (Rose Garden) and the *Bustan* (Scented Garden), as well as a fine corpus of lyrical poems (*ghazals*), looked with a philosophical gaze on the political upheavals of the time from the relative sanctuary of the gardens of Shiraz. The Mongols attempted to administer the province directly after the death of Abesh Khatun, the last Salghurid (fig. 43), in 1287, but they can hardly be said to have controlled it closely. From about 1304 on the local ruling family of Injuids (originally, administrators of Mongol *inji*, or crown estates) enjoyed considerable independence; they were essentially autonomous from about 1325 until their eclipse in 1357 by the Muzaffarids, a family that had seized power in the Yazd region during the reign of Abu Sa’id. Miniature painting and metalwork particularly flourished under the Injuids (fig. 44), especially the last of them, Abu Ishaq (see Stefano Carboni’s chapter 8).²¹

Iraq had been reduced to a border province, but it clearly recovered some cultural life; its artists set the standard, for example, in calligraphy and inlaid metalwork (figs. 5, 46). Hüləgü quickly gave orders for Baghdad to be restored, and in 1260 it came under the authority of the historian ‘Ala’ al-Din ʿAta Malik Juvaini, whose brother Shams al-Din rose under Abakha Khan (r. 1265–82) to become sahib-i divan, the highest official in the Ilkhanid administration. It was the usual Mongol practice for a Persian bureaucrat to work in harness with a Mongol military chief, and Juvaini was paired with Sughunjakh Akha, who was also military governor of Fars.²² A century later, when the Ilkhanate disintegrated, Baghdad became the center for the long-lived successor regime of the Jalayirids, under whose patronage an important school of painting developed (see chapter 8) and poetry flourished.²³

In the more northerly heartlands of Ilkhanid rule, the contrast between the situations in Anatolia and Azerbaijan offers another illustration of the interplay between cultural
Fig. 45 (cat. no. 60). Nushirvan Writing to the Khaqan of China, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 111.7).
activity and political evolution. The Mongols did not extend their direct control over Anatolia until the late 1270s, and up to that time local Seljuq patrons continued to endow a number of fine madrasas (religious colleges), Sufi convents, and caravanserais across the country. As in more distant peripheries of the empire, such as southern Iran and northern India, the semi-independent Seljuq regime in Konya provided a refuge for scholars, most notably the Sufi master and charismatic poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273). The image of Islamic piety that he, his descendants, and other followers presented, according to their hagiographers, deeply impressed the pagan Mongol and Turk invaders. However, once Anatolia was brought more closely under central government administration, its cultural life declined, and this decline continued after the disintegration of the Ilkhanate. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, there was no prior cultural development comparable to that fostered by the Seljuqs in Anatolia. Yet the Mongols’ acculturation to Islam in the fourteenth century (see below) encouraged the formation of an imperial center of artistic production there in the capital, Tabriz. This activity continued to be influential even in the very disturbed political climate that prevailed in the period before the region came under Jalayirid control in the 1360s.

In short, the Mongols, as non-Muslims, steppe dwellers, and pastoralists, did not settle evenly throughout the Iranian realm they conquered, and this had varying consequences in the different provinces. Nor were they equipped, at first, to govern Iran in the traditional manner of previous regimes, any more than they were in China, that other great area of ancient sedentary civilization finally conquered by Khubilai Khan in 1279. The Mongols were guided by their own traditions, epitomized by the Yasa (code of practice) of Genghis Khan. The exact nature of the Yasa is still vigorously debated by scholars. It seems to have been essentially a set of unwritten norms for the regulation of military discipline, hunting (fig. 50), and social behavior at feasts and other ceremonies; it also governed the nomads’ relations among themselves and with the sedentary population. The authority of the Yasa, frequently invoked throughout the Ilkhanid period and later eras, remained a potent idea, although, as has often been observed, on its own it was not sufficient to bring political stability to the areas under Turko-Mongol control.

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25. See most recently F. D. Lewis 2000. Amir Khurram of Delhi (1253–1278), author of the Khamsa (Quintet), was also a refugee from the Mongols.
26. More remote regions, such as the Caspian provinces and Sistan, remained essentially self-governing under their own rulers throughout the period. See, for example, Bosworth 1994, esp. pp. 479–44; Melville 1999b.
adjust to Persian ways in some circumstances and in others their determination
to maintain their own customs within the Persian context.

The Early Ilkhanids

The successors of Genghis Khan ruled Iran directly for just under a century. The
Ilkhanate is generally considered to have begun in 1258 with Hulegu’s conquest of
Iraq, an event that was marked by the inauguration of a new calendrical era. The
last Ilkhan, Togha (or Taghia) Temur, was murdered in 1353, after the collapse of the
dynasty’s undivided authority some twenty years earlier. Historians both contempo-
rous and modern have usually divided the period between these dates into two
approximately equal halves, with the separation coming at the start of the reign of
Ghazan Khan in 1295.

In the early period of Iran’s conquest, the full implications of the change in
regime and the alien character of the new dynasty quickly became evident. This
time of warfare brought economic hardship and the undermining of Islamic institu-
tions. With one or two exceptions (mainly in peripheral areas such as Anatolia
and Fars, as previously noted), cultural patronage and artistic production were
almost nonexistent.

At the outset of his reign, Hulegu Khan (r. 1258–65), having conquered
Baghdad, regrouped his forces and invaded Syria to further expand the empire. He
captured and sacked Aleppo and then occupied Damascus in March 1260, at which
time he received the news that his brother Mongke Khan had died the previous sum-
mer. Hulegu withdrew to Azerbaijan, where he would be better situated to respond
to events in Khurasan. The small occupying force he left behind was defeated by
the Egyptian sultan Qutuz at Ayn Jalut (Goliath’s Well in present-day Israel) on
September 3, 1260. This defeat proved to be a turning point, marking the western
limit of Mongol military success in the Middle East and becoming a key event in the
establishment of the Mamluk regime in Egypt. Later efforts to avenge Ayn Jalut by
both Hulegu and his successor, Abakha, were in vain. The Mongols suffered further
severe reverses, in eastern Anatolia in 1277 and in northern Syria in 1281. The su-
periority of the Mamluks’ military training and equipment, their commitment to
defend their territories against aggression, and the logistical difficulties faced by the
Mongols all played a part in the Egyptians’ success.

Another factor was disunity within the Mongol empire. Confronted with the
hostility of their Mongol neighbors, the Golden Horde and the Chaghadai Khanate,
the Ilkhans were unable to concentrate their full strength against the Mamluks. After
a series of indecisive engagements with the Golden Horde, Abakha constructed a
fortified dyke along the Kur River to mark the northern boundary of the Ilkhanate.
But the Golden Horde remained a threat throughout the period, maintaining close
ties with the Mamluks of Egypt even after the Mamluks and the Ilkhans were
officially at peace. (The alliance between the Horde’s Berke Khan [r. 1257–63], a
convert to Islam, and the Mamluk sultan Baibars [r. 1260–77] had turned into an
enduring relationship because of common commercial interests.) In the East, the
Chaghadai Khan Barakh (r. 1266–71) also laid claim to Ilkhanid territory. He invaded Khurasan and suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of Abakha himself at the battle of Herat, on July 22, 1270. Abakha’s forces later followed up this defensive campaign with an expedition into Transoxiana, sacking Bukhara in January 1273. 11

Hemmed in by foes, the Ilkhans had to look farther afield for friends. Support came from their Toluid relatives in China, although it was largely ideological and moral rather than material. Hüllegi’s nominal subjection to the Great Khan Khubilai is reflected in his coinage. Khubilai’s preeminence is further demonstrated by his mandate authorizing Abakha’s succession as Ilkhan; Abakha went through a second coronation ceremony when permission arrived. His son Arghun (r. 1284–91) later did the same, and retained the services of Khubilai’s representative, Bolad Chingsang, throughout his reign. This anachronistic vision of a universal Mongol empire persisted under the Ilkhan Geikhatu (r. 1291–95) (figs. 47, 48). Even once their political and ideological importance had waned, contacts with China remained relatively close. Bolad’s continued role as an adviser to Ghazan and Rashid al-Din (see below) provided a conduit for cultural exchanges between China and Iran. 12

A dramatic example of these links across Asia, one that also illustrates the continuing efforts of the Ilkhans to develop diplomatic contacts with the European powers, took place during Arghun’s reign. Sometime after 1275, Khubilai Khan gave permission for two Chinese Nestorian Christian monks, Bar Sauma and Markos, to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Arriving in the Ilkhanate in early 1280, they became involved in the internal politics of the Christian communities in Iran and found their way to Jerusalem blocked. The following year Markos was installed as catholicos (patriarch) in Baghdad, the seat of the Nestorian church. The Ilkhans were still pagan, and the Christians retained hopes of converting them—hopes encouraged by Mongol diplomacy with the Christian West. In 1287 Arghun sent Bar (now Rabban) Sauma on a mission to the European courts, charging him to seek an alliance against the Mamluks. Rabban Sauma traveled as far as Paris and Bordeaux, where he was able to present Arghun’s proposals to the French and English kings, and finally to Rome, where he met with the new pope, Nicholas IV. However, the result of his mission was the same as those of previous efforts to coordinate an anti-Muslim crusade: by Arghun’s death in 1291, the promised aid from the West had failed to materialize. 13

28. However, there is no specific evidence that the new calendar was used. See Melville 1994, p. 83 and n. 6.
33. Rosaffles 1995B, for earlier contacts, see, for example, Rusbridger 1990, esp. pp. 15–47; Amitai-Preiss 1994, pp. 94–104.
This series of contacts reflected the high profile of the Christian communities within Iran during the early Mongol period. Instinctive allies against the Muslims, who had long been their oppressors, the Christian communities—Nestorian, Monophysite, and Armenian—initially hoped to benefit from the recent destruction of the caliphate and concomitant blow to Islam. However, despite brief moments of tranquillity and some protection from a succession of Christian royal wives, starting with Hülegü’s queen, Dokhuz Khatun, the situation of Christians remained uneasy. Internal rivalries undermined their position, and they were the objects of bitter hostility from their Muslim neighbors, against whom they were not always effectively protected by the courts. Despite the Ilkhan’s professed sympathy and even supposed preference for Christianity, the church steadily lost ground to Islam among the Mongol elite and seemingly even sooner among the Mongol rank and file.34

The Jews fared little better, although at first they, like the Christians, were exempted from the requirement to pay jizya (poll tax levied on non-Muslims) and from other discriminatory measures. One of their number, Sa’d al-Daula Abhari, achieved high office under Arghun, first as controller of the financial administration of Iraq and then (1289–91) as sahib-i divan (chief minister). Despite his considerable competence and success, his Jewish background aroused great opposition, and he was murdered shortly before the death of Arghun. Among the projects for which he is notorious was his effort to establish that Arghun had inherited the quality of prophethood from Genghis Khan, and thereby to merge Mongol and Muslim notions of legitimacy. This revelation was to be accompanied by a purge of dissenters and a plan to turn the Ka’ba in Mecca into an idol temple.35 The most celebrated Jew in Mongol service, however, was Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), who achieved his fame only after converting to Islam. We will meet him again later.
hostile subject population and naturally sought them among either outsiders or those indigenous minority groups more likely to be sympathetic to the regime. In the case of Christian and Jewish bureaucrats, their coreligionists benefited little: like their religious policy, the Ilkhans’ financial oppression was evenhanded.

Meanwhile, the struggle for the salvation of the Mongols’ pagan souls had quickly gotten under way. Abakha’s brother Tegüder Ahmad (r. 1282–84), named after the dervishes of the Ahmadiyya sect who had converted him sometime in his childhood, was the first Muslim Ilkhan. Although his election as khan probably owed little to his religion, it is certainly true that his most influential supporter was the
chief minister, Shams al-Din Juvaini. Juvaini was undoubtedly responsible for several discernible shifts in policy during Ahmad’s reign, which included a new readiness to reach a truce with the Mamluks; a guarantee of the inviolability of Islamic endowments, or waqaf (singular waqf); and the introduction of discriminatory policies against Christians and Jews. Ahmad’s own outlook was more ambiguous. Although the strife with his nephew Arghun, who successfully overthrew and executed him, is described in Persian and Arabic sources as a conflict of pro- and anti-Islamic factions, there is no real evidence for this interpretation. Essentially, this was the first of several succession disputes that rocked the Ilkhinate and was a direct consequence of the notorious inability of the Mongols to achieve a reliable system for the transfer of power. Still, religion was undoubtedly an aggravating factor as the dispute developed; clearly the Mongols were not yet ready to embrace the faith of their subjects.

It is significant that Tegüder was converted by dervishes and continued to associate with them rather than with the orthodox religious scholars espoused by Juvaini and the bureaucratic establishment. When a more general conversion of the Mongols came about in the next generation, it was also at the hands of Sufi shaikhs, as we shall see.

Islamization was only one of the means employed to transform the Mongols. The Juvaini brothers and their circle also sought to fit the new rulers into the old mold of Iranian kingship. Hence the revival during the reign of Abakha of the symbolically laden site at Takht-i Sulaiman, south of Maragha, where the coronation ceremonies of the pre-Islamic kings of Iran had taken place (see also chapter 4). The palace that the Mongols built there over ruins from the Sasanian period was decorated with tiles bearing illustrations and verses from the Persian national epic the Shahnama (Book of Kings) by the poet Firdausi (ca. 935–ca. 1020), suggesting that the new rulers wished to present themselves as heirs both of the Sasanians, who reigned from 224 to 651, and of Iran’s legendary heroes (fig. 49). On a lesser scale, al-Baidawi’s History, written in 1275 for Shams al-Din Juvaini and his colleague Sughunjakh Akha, sought to present the Ilkhans as the latest in a long sequence of Iranian dynasts, all endowed with the traditional virtues of justice and concern for cultivation. Later this idealization would be carried even further in the repackaging of Ghazan, the convert khan, as a second Alexander, a philosopher king, and a Persian emperor (figs. 36, 51).

The value of such imperial propaganda was no doubt apparent to the Mongol rulers, who needed a more locally relevant image with which to impress their sub-
jects than the appeal to Genghisid legitimacy. It was the equivalent of Kubilai Khan adopting a Chinese dynastic name, Yuan (“the Origin”), for his regime, also on the advice of indigenous officials. It is thus not surprising that Firdausi’s Book of Kings became the vehicle par excellence for the reassertion of Iranian identity at the Mongol courts and the model for a number of heroic verse chronicles of Mongol history in the idiom of ancient Iran. Likewise, the revival of the concept of Iranzamin and the participation of Iran once again in a world empire of Central Asian origins provided a powerful impetus to literary and artistic creativity, the most dramatic and original expressions of which are surely the illustration of the Shahnama and the composition of other historiographical texts.

For the direction of the empire, Mongol values at first prevailed and determined the character of government. Arghun was a Buddhist and eliminated Juwaini soon after seizing power in 1284. He relied on his Mongol lieutenant, Bukha, to head the government, and after him the Jew Sa‘d al-Daula, as mentioned above. Sa‘d al-Daula had as a colleague the Mongol amir Ordukhiya, just as Juwaini had been paired with Sughunjakh Akha. The Mongols fully intended to retain control of the administration, even when much of the practical work of the bureaucracy, as in China, was left to indigenous officials. The Mongol characteristic of appointing two government officials to one post fostered factionalism and rivalries at court, however, while in the provinces the multiplicity of officials and their rapacity brought despair to the population. An oppressive system of dual taxation also seems to have operated, with arbitrary taxes being levied by the Mongols in addition to the traditional ones already in force.

During Arghun’s reign, outlying areas, such as Anatolia and Fars, came directly under central government control. When Arghun died in 1291, poisoned by an elixir intended to make him immortal, the Ilkhanate entered a short but disastrous period in which two khans were deposed and executed in four years. Geikhatu, a son of Abakha, succeeded his brother Arghun, but he quickly alienated supporters by his licentiousness and lax government. His chief minister, the capable but ambitious Sadr al-Din Zanjani, in a desperate attempt to counteract the damage done by the court’s profligacy, presided over the disastrous introduction of paper currency on the Chinese model. While drunk, Geikhatu insulted his cousin Baidu, who responded by leading a rebellion in which Geikhatu was killed. Baidu claimed the khanate, but his brief reign was immediately challenged by Ghazan, son of Arghun, whose triumph in October 1295 ushered in the second phase of Mongol rule in Iran.

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Fig. 54 (cat. no. 3). Left side of a double-page frontispiece from the *Kitab jam'i al-tasansif al-rashidi* (Collected Writings of Rashid al-Din), copied by Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Baghdadi, illuminated by Muhammad ibn al-'Aif al-Kashi, Iran (Tabriz), A.H. 707–10/ A.D. ca. 1307–10. Fol. 4r, ink and colors on paper. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (MSS or. Arabe 2324).
The Later Ilkhanids

Ghazan’s success and his subsequent reputation as the greatest of the Ilkhans were due to his conversion to Islam, which brought him the support of some key Muslim Mongol commanders, such as Nauruz and Chupan. Ghazan was also fortunate to be served by the converted Jewish doctor Rashid al-Din (here too, always with another colleague in the vizierate). The renewed impetus given to courtly patronage of the arts and letters, largely inspired by the example of Rashid al-Din himself (fig. 54) but not discouraged by the Ilkhan, is what particularly distinguishes the second phase of Mongol rule from the first, rather than any significant alteration in the government of the kingdom; however, Ghazan’s efforts to reform the worst aspects of the postconquest phase of Mongol rule have also contributed to his reputation.

Outside Tabriz, Ghazan developed a new city quarter, called Ghazaniyya. There he erected a spectacular mausoleum for himself (thus breaking with the practice of his predecessors) and also constructed a mosque, two madrasas, a hospice for sayyids (descendants of the Prophet), an observatory, and other buildings. Rashid al-Din emulated his master by constructing the Rashidiyya suburb on the east side of Tabriz, establishing, among other foundations, an atelier (kitabkhana) for the production of illustrated manuscripts. Commissioned by Ghazan and later by his brother and heir, Oljeitu (r. 1304–16), Rashid al-Din produced his great history of the Mongol empire and the peoples with whom it came into contact. Called the Jami’ al-tavarih (Compendium of Chronicles), the work presents the Mongol achievement in a world context and, as importantly, in its place in Persian history, setting the Mongol chapter after a survey of the previous dynasties that ruled Iran. Rashid al-Din and later his son, Ghiyath al-Din (d. 1336), were themselves patrons of numerous writers and members of the religious classes. The Ilkhan Oljeitu went on to develop an extensive complex of buildings around his mausoleum in the new capital at Sultaniyia (see Sheila Blair’s chapter 5). During the reign of his son Abu Sa’id, a monumental mosque was constructed in Tabriz by the vizier Taj al-Din ‘Alishah (Rashid al-Din’s rival and nemesis). Its design was inspired by the arch that remained from the ancient palace of the Khusrus at Ctesiphon, which it was intended to surpass.

The religious scholars, or ‘ulema, found some consolation in this revival of Islamic institutions, which included a reaffirmation of the validity of the religious law (shari’a), a renewed interest in the pilgrimage (hajj), and the construction of mosques and madrasas. However, the main agents and beneficiaries of the Mongols’ conversion to Islam were the Muslim mystics known as Sufis. Ghazan himself was converted at the hands of Sadr al-Din Humuya, a shaykh of the Sufi order founded by Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221) of Khwarazm. Many Mongols had already taken this step. The charisma of individual shaykhs, such as Jalal al-Din Rumi, Qutb al-Din Shirazi, ‘Ala’ al-Daula Simnani, and Safi al-Din of Ardabil, made them influential in the ruling circles. Moreover, the size of their popular following—not least among the Turko-Mongol tribesmen who constituted the military power of the Ilkhanate—and their increasing readiness to champion the rights of the people against the authorities made the shaykhs a potent force that it was

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46. There is a vast literature on Rashid al-Din. For some of the most important recent work, with reference to earlier studies, see, for example, Blair 1995; Blair 1996; Hoffmann 1997; Rajabzadeh 1998.
impolitic to ignore. Shaikh Safi al-Din (d. 1334), the ancestor of the Safavid dynasty that would rule Iran from 1501 to 1722, was courted by all three of the last Ilkhanids and frequented the cultured circle of Rashid al-Din and his son in Tabriz. The favors he received contributed greatly to the wealth and prestige of the Safavid order in Ardabil.49

Popular religious sentiment embraced other, more extreme forms. Many antinomian dervishes, known as qalandari, were also very successful in impressing the Mongol chiefs and their coarse followers. Among the most prominent dervishes were ‘Abd al-Rahman and Baba Ya’qubiyán in the time of Tegüder Ahmad, and Baraq Baba under Ghazan and Öljteitü.50 The heterodox tendencies expressed by such figures remained powerful in the mainly tribal society of northwest Iran and eastern Anatolia. Particularly strong was the appeal of Shi’ite Islam, which looked to ‘Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, and his descendants as the legitimate leaders of the Muslim polity. In the post-caliphal world of Sunni collapse, Shi’ite views found fertile soil and were elaborated by writers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi and ‘Allama al-Hilli (d. 1325). The crowning moment of this development was Öljteitü’s conversion to the sect of Twelver Shi’ism in 1309, after a long career of spiritual vacillation (he had previously been baptized Nicholas in honor of the pope). Öljteitü’s attempt to force Shi’ism on his subjects, symbolized in the fine mihrab added in 1310 to the Friday Mosque in Isfahan (fig. 138), was a failure. Nevertheless, in the Mongol period the seeds were sown for the close identification of Shi’ism not only with Iranian mysticism but also with popular piety and, ultimately, the national religious faith (figs. 55, 56).51

Though the conversion of the Mongols was an important turning point in their rule and enabled them to acquire both legitimacy and authority in Iranian and
Islamic terms, it did not on its own have many practical consequences. Rashid al-Din devoted much of his account of the rule of Ghazan, the Padshah-i Islam (Muslim King), to reforms that were implemented: reviving agriculture, improving the fiscal system, standardizing weights and measures, regulating the coinage, maintaining the army, and removing many of the oppressive taxes that fell on the peasantry. The enumeration of these measures serves partly to cast into greater relief the violence and disorder of the early period of Mongol rule; still, it is not clear how effective they were in the short term. The figures subsequently provided by Mustawfi Qazvini comparing the general situation under the Seljuqs with those before and after Ghazan’s reforms do illustrate a dramatic decline before and a small recovery afterward, but the relationship between conditions in the country and the amount of revenue reaching the central treasury is hard to determine.\(^5\)

The conversion of Ghazan and Öljeytu did not preempt further hostilities against the Mamluks; quite the contrary. Adding his new Islamic credentials to the previous Genghisid claims to universal rule, Ghazan demanded the submission of the Mamluk sultanate. When this was not forthcoming, he invaded Syria and captured Damascus (January 1300). However, as with their previous foray into Syria, the Mongols found that they could not operate so far from home, and they soon withdrew. A third attempt met defeat at the disastrous battle of Marj al-Suffar near Damascus (April 1303). Öljeytu’s desire to expand the empire was more ambivalent, and a desultory campaign against Rahba on the Euphrates in the winter of 1312–13 was quickly abandoned. Lowered expectations paved the way for a peace treaty with the Mamluks in 1323, in the reign of Abu Sa’id, by which time rivalries were expressed more in ideological and symbolic terms than through military confrontation, although numerous sources of tension remained.\(^6\)

Within the Ilkhanate, tensions between traditional Mongol attitudes and forces for accommodation erupted in several serious disorders, which weakened the cohesion between the army chiefs and undermined the authority of the regime. Ghazan’s accession to power was followed by the execution of no less than ten royal princes. His brother Öljeytu’s reign was ostensibly a more peaceful interlude, but the accession in 1316 of Öljeytu’s twelve-year-old son, Abu Sa’id, soon saw the rivalries and ambitions of different factions spill over into open warfare.

One of the first casualties was the aged vizier Rashid al-Din, who was killed in 1318, a victim of the intrigues of his rival Taj al-Din ‘Alishah. The Rashidiyya quarter in Tabriz was pillaged, although Ghiyath al-Din was able to revive it for a while. A revolt in 1319 against the senior amir (military commander), Chupan, was defeated, but after his fall from power in 1327 the Mongol chiefs became increasingly resentful of the influence that Ghiyath al-Din, the new vizier, exercised over the young sultan.\(^7\) Ghiyath al-Din’s attempt to administer the kingdom according to Islamic norms, and more particularly his patronage of scholars, Sufi shaikhs, poets, artists, and musicians, gave the impression that the cultivated court of Abu Sa’id was presiding over a golden age. Tabriz itself, as described by the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta in 1327, was visibly flourishing. However, evidences of a decline in commercial activity with the Italian city-states and of successive debasements of the coinage, together with the problems of asserting central control over the provinces, suggest that all

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7. See Melville 1997b; Melville 1999b.
was not well.\textsuperscript{15} Crucially, Abu Sa'id died without an heir, and in 1335 the Ilkhanate rapidly began to unravel.

Arpa Ke'ïn, a descendant of Hülegü's brother Arigh Böke, was the first ruler to emerge. Although he warded off an invasion by the Golden Horde, who were eager to take advantage of the disarray in the Ilkhanate, Arpa could not rally enough support to hold power, and after his elimination in May 1336, chaos erupted. During the next twenty years puppet sultans from the house of Genghis Khan were elevated to the throne in succession by rival factions, sometimes more than one being acknowledged at the same time. They found support principally in the north and northwest of Iran. The descendants of Amir Chupan put forward a number of Genghisids, including Abu Sa'id's sister Sati Beg, before themselves taking control of Azerbaijan and the northwest in about 1345 in the name of a non-Genghisid sultan. Ironically, they called him Anushirvan, a name associated with the famous Sassanian king celebrated for his justice; Chupanid rule was particularly violent and oppressive. (Still, some building work continued in the capital, Tabriz.)\textsuperscript{16}

More significant were the Jalayirids (1336–1432), based in Baghdad, who at first acknowledged the sovereignty of various claimants including Geikhatu's grandson Jahan Temür, but then from 1346 on ruled independently. Since they gained power in the north as well, the Jalayirids presided over two of the main centers of artistic production in the late fourteenth century, Baghdad and Tabriz. Under Jalayirid patronage, the courtly arts that had developed under the Ilkhanids spread to the provinces.\textsuperscript{17}

Meanwhile in the cast, in Khurasan, Togha Temür was elected Ilkhan in 1336, but all his efforts to gain control of western Iran were defeated. Finally he was murdered in his camp near Sultan Duvin in December 1353, by the Sarbadarids. This regime of local landowners was based in Sabzvar and Nishapur. Attempting to satisfy the aspirations of the rural population, they formed an uneasy alliance with a dervish movement called the Shaikhiiya and later also associated themselves with a type of messianic Shi'ism—indications of the growing importance of these trends in late Ilkhanid society. The Sarbadarids were able to restore some measure of security to western Khurasan before submitting to Timur (also known as Tamerlane) in 1381.\textsuperscript{18}

In southern Iran, other forms of independent rule emerged under former representatives of the Ilkhanid government, notably the Injuids in Fars and Isfahan and the Muzaffarids, who ultimately replaced them, in Yazd and Kirman (see chapter 8). The celebrated poet Hafiz of Shiraz (1326–1389) lived through this transitional period; he was not alone in lamenting the passing of the Injuid rulers and their enlightened patronage.\textsuperscript{19}

Not until Timur (r. 1370–1405) did there appear a ruler able to forge the scattered fragments of the Ilkhanid state into a new amalgam. Rising to power in the Chaghdaï Khanate in Transoxiana, he revived to some extent the goals of Genghis Khan's conquests, lightly cloaked in a veneer of Islamic political propaganda. During a long career of almost ceaseless campaigning, Timur brought further waves of nomadic troops, mainly Turkish, into all corners of Iranian territory. He left it to his descendants to tackle, with some success, the enduring problems of accommodating
the Turko-Mongol military and ruling circles to the norms of Iranian and Islamic culture, of which they had now become a permanent ingredient.

The dichotomy between Turk and Tajik ("Persian"), nomad and settled, an alien military leadership and the urban and agrarian society it dominated was an ancient one. Indeed, the wedding of new Persian culture to Turkish military might had already begun in the eleventh century under the Ghaznavids, a dynasty of Turkish slave origin based in what is now Afghanistan, which extended its sway over eastern Iran and northern India. But the massive injection of Turkish and Central Asian elements into the Iranian world in the wake of the Mongol invasions exaggerated these distinctions and altered the balance within Persian society. The formation of vigorous new states on the Iranian plateau governed by military chiefs of Turkish background and Genghisid horizons reoriented Iran, bringing it closer once more to its traditional and historical position in the world, as celebrated in Firdausi’s Book of Kings. The presence of new patrons to impress and to educate, combined with a new freedom of self-expression, stimulated Persian cultural creativity, resulting in remarkable original achievements. Historiography, art, and architecture, partly released from the restraints of previous conventions, now recalled more ancient glories; in the field of manuscript illustration, artists broke completely new ground (see Robert Hillenbrand’s chapter 6). Meanwhile on a humbler level, away from the princely capitals and their courts, local provincial families did much to support the religious classes (the ‘ulema and Sufi shaikhs) by building schools, mosques, and dervish convents. Such pious patronage helped reaffirm the values of Islamic communal life previously undermined by the shocks of the Mongol conquests.60

This reorientation of Iran, and the political continuities with Central Asia and northern India that were created especially by the Timurids in the fifteenth century, led to an extension of the Turko-Persian ecumene eastward across the Oxus and the Indus Rivers, to lands where it enjoyed a lasting future. In its westward gaze, this world was open to the merchants and merchant states of western Europe, glancing lightly over the intervening Arab lands of the Levant— to which it had been somewhat unnaturally joined and which also went their own way, first under the Mamluks and then as part of the Ottoman empire.

In terms of political culture, however, the new ruling classes proved to be too strongly rooted in their rather informal Turkish steppe traditions to adapt easily to Iranian notions of centralized dynastic rule. Their unwieldy and impractical concept that sovereignty resided in the whole family was compounded by the lack of any single agreed system of succession. The independent instincts and competition for leadership characteristic of tribal society further heightened the violence in political life, which was scarcely if at all modified by notions of justice or fear of religious sanctions. The dilemma for the series of secular Turko-Mongol regimes that ruled all or parts of Iran after the conquests of Genghis Khan was how to reconcile his political legacy with the very different expectations of rule, rooted in Islamic legal principles, that had evolved during the previous caliphal period. Successive Mongol and post-Illkhanid rulers treated Iranian territory as little more than a military camping ground, despite conversion to Islam and an ostentatious acculturation to Persian courtly manners. Although the Mongol flood subsided, the course of the riverbed had changed.
3. A Note on Artistic Exchanges in the Mongol Empire

JAMES C. Y. WATT

[Ögedei] commanded a hundred balish to be given to a poor man. The Ministers of the Court said to one another: “Does he know how many dirhems there are to so many balish?” They took the hundred balish and scattered them where he would pass by. And when he passed by he asked, “What is this?” They replied that it was the hundred balish for the poor man. “It is a miserable amount,” he said. And so they doubled it and gave it all to the poor man.

—‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini, The History of the World Conqueror

THE EARLY PERIOD, 1206–CIRCA 1270

It is well known that Mongol conquerors, who ruthlessly slaughtered the inhabitants of cities resisting their military advances, nonetheless spared those with any claim to skill in a useful craft. Particularly favored were weavers and metalworkers, including armorers and gold- and silver-smiths. In the early days, during the Mongols’ first sweep across Central and West Asia, captured craftsmen were sent to Khara Khorum, the capital of the empire, on the upper Orkhon River in Mongolia. Alternatively, they were dispatched to production centers located in various parts of the empire at the previous seats of government of recently conquered states and now under the nominal control of Secretariats. In the time of Ögedei (r. 1229–41), the Secretariats were located in Yanjing, the former Middle Capital of the Jin dynasty (present-day Beijing); Besh Baliq, the capital of the Uyghur kingdom, in the northern foothills of Tianshan (northeast of Urumqi in present-day Xinjiang province); and somewhere in Transoxiana, which contained the rich cities of Samarqand and Bukhara and previously had been under the control of the Khwarazmian empire. 1 The secretaries were charged with collecting revenues, “mainly in the form of precious metals and silk,” within their respective administrative territories and forwarding them to the Great Khan in Khara Khorum. 2 Workshops were generally situated in places with long-established traditions of craft production, although for silk textiles new centers were established in North China, within convenient reach of Beijing but near or on the border with Mongolia.

These early workshops were staffed with craftsmen drawn from all across the newly founded empire. An example is Xunmalin, located along one of the routes between Beijing and Shangdu (the Upper Capital, Khubilai’s seat of rule before he founded the Yuan dynasty and set its capital at Beijing, whose name he changed from Yanjing to Dadu); in the time of Ögedei, naiij (cloth of gold) was being produced in Xunmalin by a colony of three thousand households of weavers from Samarqand. 3 At the same time in Hongzhou, west of Beijing, over three hundred households of “weavers of patterned cloths of gold from the Western Regions” and three hundred

2. Xiao Qijing 1966, p. 47.
3. Dardes 1972–73, p. 118. This article provides the historical background on which the present essay is based.

Opposite: Fig. 57 (cat. no. 143). One of a set of belt fittings, Golden Horde (Southern Russia) and China, 13th century. Gold. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (KUB-704–721). See fig. 61.
Fig. 58 (cat. no. 69). Textile with winged lions and griffins, Central Asia, mid-13th century. Lampas weave (tabby and tabby), gold thread on silk foundation. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund (1989.50)
households of weavers from Bianjing (the former capital of the Jin dynasty, present-day Kaifeng) were added to the workshop, where young boys and girls and master craftsmen "from all over the empire" were already employed. In Besh Baliq there were artisans from Herat and probably also from Nishapur (although in the years 1236–39 some weavers were repatriated to Herat to revitalize the weaving industry there). This massive movement of craftsmen over vast distances in the days of the early empire, particularly during the reigns of Ögedei and Möngke (r. 1251–59), would have long-lasting effects for the arts across all of Asia.

Each of the textile production centers established under the Mongols contributed to the development of new styles of patterning and weaving techniques. Although it is not possible to identify a particular textile as the product of a specific workshop, some general indications as to area of production—North China, Central Asia, Transoxiana, or Khurasan—can be gleaned from an examination of the patterns and structures of the not-very-numerous fragments of textiles that survive (fig. 58). Both Chinese and Iranian elements of design and technique can be discerned in varying proportions in nearly all Mongol textiles, irrespective of their place of origin. A contribution specific to Central Asia has, however, only recently been pointed out. Designs of dragons and other animals in Central Asian textiles display characteristics that are endemic in the age-old arts of

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Fig. 59 (cat. no. 101). Frieze tile with dragon, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), ca. 1270s. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The Nasir D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (POT 796)

Fig. 60 (cat. no. 202). Torque, China, probably Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Silver, worked in repoussé. Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

Fig. 61 (cat. no. 196). Footed cup, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Gold. Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

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ARTISTIC EXCHANGES IN THE MONGOL EMPIRE
the Eurasian steppes. Although the images of dragons and phoenixes perhaps had originated in China, they were transformed when interpreted by weavers in Central Asia. The animals and birds are given twisting or writhing bodies and are imbued with a vitality not seen in Chinese models. For example, the dragons and phoenixes on the tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 59, 97, 100, 101; on Takht-i Sulaiman, see Tomoko Masuya’s chapter 4) are as often as not of the Central Asian type rather than the type derived directly from a Chinese source. Indeed, the phoenixes in Yuan China themselves took on a more rigorous, almost aggressive look compared with those from other periods of Chinese history (see fig. 210). Their distinctive quality could well be attributed to influences from Central or northern Asia.

Fig. 63 (cat. no. 138). Saddle arches, Mongol empire, first half of the 13th century. Silver gilt, worked in repoussé. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ChM.1199, -1200)
Records about the production of precious metal objects are even scantier and less specific than those for textiles. Since workers in gold and silver can ply their crafts individually and require little elaborate equipment, they can be stationed almost anywhere. There certainly were goldsmiths working in Khara Khorum itself. The Franciscan friar William of Rubruck, who had an audience with the Great Khan Möngke at his court at Khara Khorum, has left us with a detailed description of an elaborate silver fountain spouting four different kinds of wine, made for Möngke’s palace by a Parisian goldsmith. The iconography of this wine fountain seems from the description to be purely European; its main body was in the form of a tree, with an angel on top blowing a trumpet. In the same way, goldsmiths captured in newly conquered areas would have produced works in their native styles. A good example is the set of gold belt fittings and ornaments found at the site of Gashun Uta, North Caucasus (Russia) (fig. 62; see also fig. 65). Its technique of manufacture and its motif of deer among foliage are both typical of work done under the Jin dynasty in North China, which was overrun by the Mongols in 1115 (although the Southern Capital of Jin State did not fall until 1234). Found with the set of fittings and ornaments was a small plaque bearing the heraldic crest of the house of Batu, a grandson of Genghis Khan and founder of the Golden Horde. This set must have been made for a family member of Batu by a Chinese goldsmith from the Jin State, unless it is simply war booty. Other examples of Chinese workmanship are an incomplete set of silver belt fittings found at the Crimean city of Simferopol and a silver bowl from the Ob basin in Siberia. The Simferopol treasure is particularly instructive: the large hoard of precious objects includes articles from Iran and Central Asia as well as a set of Italianate gold belt plaques that could have been brought from Italy.

Hybrid styles are exhibited by other metal objects found within Mongol territory. A bronze bowl from Khara Khorum combines Islamic and Chinese motifs, very much in the manner of textiles known to have been produced in Central Asia. It is likely that the bowl was made in Central Asia in the area of textile workshops and sent to Khara Khorum as tribute.

In connection with metalwork, mention should be made of the paiza (from the Chinese paizi), a tablet signifying official authorization (see cat. no. 23, fig. 68).
This universal instrument of Mongol administration owes its original form to that of paizi used by the Liao dynasty in North China (907–1125); a gold version of a Liao paizi with an inscription in Khitan reading "By imperial command, expedite" was recently found near Chengde in Hebei province (fig. 70). This oblong form survived through the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and was adopted by the Mongols. A round version (fig. 69) was used in Yuan China from the time of Khubilai (r. 1260–94); the "tiger head" of its handle is in Tibetan style. Early paizi have inscriptions only in Phagspa—the new script for writing Mongolian devised in the 1260s by the Tibetan monk Phagspa—in gold or silver, inlaid in iron. Later versions, especially in South China, are inscribed in Phagspa, Persian, and Chinese. In other areas, including Iran, paizi are usually, if not exclusively, inscribed in the Uyghur script.

Generally speaking, the available archaeological and art historical evidence for East-West cultural exchange within the early Mongol empire can be interpreted as the result of a three-way interaction between North China, eastern Central Asia, and the Iranian world. This interpretation accords well with historical accounts of the organization and administration of craft and industrial production at the time.

**After circa 1270**

In the early Mongol period, up to the reign of Möngke, the flow of tribute in the form of luxury goods from all over the empire created a great concentration of wealth at Khara Khorum, the capital. This made possible the legendary liberality of Ögedei, described by the historian Ša Malik Juvaini (see quotation at head of this essay). But with the succession...
Fig. 68 (cat. no. 21). *A Royal Procession*, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran, early 14th century. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 71, S. 50)

Fig. 69 (cat. no. 197). *Raza* (passport) with inscription of Phagspa script, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), late 13th century. Cast iron, inlaid with silver. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1993 (1993.256)

Fig. 70. *Raza* (passport) with Khitan inscription, Liao dynasty (907–1125). Gold. Found near Chengde (northeast of Beijing), Hebei Province. Hebei Provincial Museum, Shijiazhuang
crisis that ensued after Mongo’s death in 1259, the great empire gradually disintegrated into basically independent khanates, each still encompassing a vast area. While the central administration of production and the collection of tributes continued, now they obtained within each separate state. Soon after his accession as Great Khan in 1266, Khubilai began to consolidate his economic base in North China and to deprive his rivals khanes of the same. Craftsmen in Mongolia were relocated to China.18 In 1275, when Turpan was under siege by Khaidu and Du’u (Mongol princes of the Ogodei and Chaghadai houses, respectively), Khubilai transferred weavers from Besh Bariq, the principal city of that area, to Dadu (Beijing), the new capital of the Yuan dynasty.20 Khubilai’s edict, which was recorded, required the Besh Bariq office in Dadu to “weave na-shi-shi [nasiṣ], that is, cloth of gold for collars and cuffs for imperial use.”21 This is confirmed by the thirteenth-century portrait of Chabi, Khubilai’s wife (fig. 27), in which the collar of her dress is of cloth of gold patterned with heads of griffinlike birds, a design certainly imported along with weavers from Central Asia.22

Thus the period of large-scale movement of craftsmen over long distances and the resulting creative exchange of techniques and ideas ended with the political reorganization of the Mongol empire in the 1260s and early 1270s. If the Yuan empire in China and Mongolia is taken as a model, it can be postulated that elsewhere too under the Mongols, the populations of craftsmen stabilized, and new

5. Iambli 1976, pp. 365–64 (chap. 120).
8. To date, the key work on this subject is Wardwell 1988–89.
10. Raybrooke 1990, pp. 709–10. See also Morris Rossabi’s chapter 1, pp. 77 and n. 32.
11. The motif of deer among foliage was the prescribed decoration on the uniforms and accoutrements of officers who accompanied the Jin emperor on the autumn hunt (qiuqian).
13. Fedorov-Davydov 2001, no. 34, pl. 64.
14. Marshall and Kramarovsky 1996, no. 77 (English summary of Marshall’s introductory article, pp. 221–32; see particularly the comments on no. 77).
18. For an Ilkhanid patina, see Ghouchani 1997.

Fig. 27 (cat. no. 200). Two hairpins, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Gold, worked in repoussé and chased. Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

Fig. 27 (cat. no. 199). Covered box, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Gold, pierced, chased, and worked in repoussé. The Art and History Trust Collection

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recruits for the workshops were drawn locally. At Hongzhou and Xunmalin, workshops founded at the time of Ögedei, the number of weavers had so far dwindled by 1278 that an imperial decree went out for the enlistment of "unemployed and vagrants," who would be taught to weave. Xunmalin declined to the extent that the following year it came under the administration of the Hongzhou office, although after a period of revival it was granted a certain degree of administrative independence. The chief commissioner overseeing both offices was named Hu-san-wu-ting (perhaps Hasan-al-Din).²³

It seems that after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in 1271 and particularly after the conquest of the Southern Song dynasty in 1279, exchanges within the Mongol world of motifs, patterns, and stylistic features took place mainly through trade, by both land and sea.²⁴ The period of technical innovation that resulted from the working together of craftsmen of different cultural backgrounds (and training) was over. The hybrid styles that had been created, a different one in each artistic center of the early empire, gradually were absorbed into local traditions.

However, artistic motifs continued to travel across the Asian continent and from one medium to another. The probable influence of Chinese and Central Asian textiles on the patterns of tiles at Takht-i Sulaiman is discussed in chapter 7 of this catalogue.²⁵ In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, textiles from the eastern Iranian world occasionally reflect contemporary Chinese patterns developed after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty. An example is the silk and gold-thread lampas in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin (fig. 76). Its patterning and its dragons enclosed in lobed roundels display a striking similarity to those of a Yuan Chinese cloth of gold in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 206).²⁶

Especially intriguing and much less tractable is the question of the transmission of pictorial styles in drawings and paintings. Most writers on Persian painting have noted the Chinese influence on landscape in Ilkhanid painting, particularly in the

²⁴. Of all the goods traded from China to Iran in the Mongol period, only the porcelain has survived in any quantity. For an excellent account of fourteenth-century Chinese porcelain in Iran, see J. A. Pope 1956. For trade and other contacts between Yuan China and the Ilkhanate, see chapter 1 in this catalogue.
²⁵. See also Crowe 1991, written before Central Asian textiles became generally known.
²⁶. See Watt and Wardwell 1997, p. 151, no. 42.
Fig. 75 (cat. no. 71). Textile with paired parrots and dragons, Central Asia, first half of the 13th century. Lampas weave (twill and tabby), silk and gold thread. Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum (1875.338)

Fig. 76. Textile with coiled dragons and inscription (detail), eastern Iranian world, late 13th–mid-14th century. Lampas weave, silk and gold thread. Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin (60.53)

treatment of mountains and trees. A more fundamental aspect of this inquiry concerns the treatment of space in landscape painting, a subject tackled by Linda Komaroff in chapter 7. It is important to recognize that the treatment of space in Chinese landscape painting underwent a major change in the late thirteenth century. Whereas in previous Southern Song paintings the middle distance had been shrouded in mist, at this time there appeared in paintings a continuous ground leading from the foreground to distant mountains. Although often this “ground” is water, still the lost middle distance has been replaced by a unified space. This observation holds true for most early Yuan paintings, particularly those that can be associated with painters at the court of Khubilai. The salient example in this regard is *Khubilai Khan Hunting* by the artist Liu Guanda, dated 1280 (fig. 77). The scene is that of the vast grassland of Mongolia, and the painting’s continuous ground may follow from the natural landscape it depicts. However, the same treatment of the ground is evident in a painting by Zhao Mengfu, whose ostensible subject matter is the two famous mountains in
Shandong province (fig. 78). It was painted in 1296, soon after the artist had returned south after some years of unsatisfactory service in the capital, Dadu.37 In Zhao Mengfu’s painting, the flat ground is broken up by a series of spits of land extending into the water and marked by clumps of grass. Lines of grass also extend from either side of the roots of the trees. This manner of depicting the ground appears in a later Chinese textile and also in Ilkhanid painting, as discussed in chapter 7 (see p. 183 and fig. 215). Whether or not further research reveals other possible modes of transmission of pictorial styles, the parallels between Yuan and Ilkhanid pictorial art will be the starting point for further discussion on the subject.

This summary note is intended only to provide a general background for the inquiry into East-West artistic exchange in the Mongol period. Much of the detailed work remains to be done.

Fig. 77. Liu Guansao, Kublai Khan Hunting. China, dated 1280. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei

Fig. 78. Zhao Mengfu, Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains (detail). China, dated 1296. Handscroll, ink and color on paper. National Palace Museum, Taipei
4.
Ilkhanid Courtly Life  

In Rabi’ II [April–May of 1256] they pitched a tent of nasij [cloth of gold] in Jinh-al-Fuqara near Tus at the gate of a garden that had been laid out by the Emir Arghun. That tent was one which the World-Emperor Mengü Qa’an [Möngke] had ordered the Emir Arghun to prepare for his brother [Hülegü]. In obedience to the Emperor’s command the master craftsmen had been called together and consulted, and in the end it had been decided that the tent should be made of a single sheet of cloth with two surfaces. And in executing the weaving and dyeing of it they had surpassed the art of the craftsmen of San’a [in Yemen]: the back and front were uniform and the inside and outside in the exact correspondence of the colours and designs complemented one another like the simple-hearted. That gilded cupola and heaven-like tent, the disc of the sun, lost its brightness out of jealousy of the truck of this tent, and the resplendent full moon wore a sulky expression because of its roundness. For a few days they feasted and revelled here, and the access of mirth and joy to their breasts was unrestricted.

—‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini, The History of the World Conqueror

The Ilkhans in Iran were always conscious that their territory was part of the great Mongol empire and that they themselves were subordinate to the Great Khans in Mongolia and later China — as the title Ilkhan, meaning “subject khan,” suggests. The Great Khans were absolute models to the Ilkhans, who tried to emulate the Great Khans in their courtly life, conducting many of their private and official affairs in the Mongolian fashion of their ancestral homeland. To some degree this situation changed when the seventh Ilkhan, Ghazan, converted to Islam in 1295; at that time some new Islamic features were introduced into city building and planning and into the rituals observed at weddings and burials. Nevertheless, the greatest part of Ilkhanid courtly life continued to follow Mongolian traditions.

This essay is divided into two sections. The first deals with Ilkhanid courtly life in general and treats subjects such as locations of the court, types of buildings, and the observance of Mongolian annual events. Because historical sources contain few detailed descriptions of the life of the Ilkhans, the discussion is augmented by information about the Great Khans. The subject of the second part of the essay is the only Ilkhanid palace of which some structures remain, Takht-i Sulaiman. Both archaeological evidence and written sources are examined to discover what an Ilkhanid palace looked like and how it was used, drawing on the unique testimony about Ilkhanid courtly life that Takht-i Sulaiman offers.

The Itinerant Court

Seasonal Migrations

Ilkhanid courtly life did not take place in a single settled location. The court was itinerant because the Ilkhans moved among their seasonal camps in the course of the year. These movements are an essential aspect of the life of nomads, who each
season must bring their animals to a locale that offers good pasture, sufficient water, and mild climate. Genghis Khan, the first leader of all the Mongols, incorporated seasonal migration into the procedure of his rule in the early thirteenth century, and the practices of migration and herding were continued under his successors. On their migrations the Great Khans were accompanied by their enormous ordus, or hordes. In Turkic and Mongolian, ordu originally meant “headquarter” or “encampment,” but it sometimes acquired more specific meanings, among them “imperial camp,” “palace,” and “unit of horde under the management of a ruler’s khatun (legitimate wife).” Genghis Khan established four ordus for his four legitimate, or principal, wives, and if one of them died, all the property of her ordu was transferred to another wife from the same tribe. A Great Khan’s entire ordu could consist of the ordus, or households, of his four legitimate wives; his ministers and bureaucrats; his royal guards; and thousands of army troops. The Ilkhanid rulers took similar ordus with them when they moved between their seasonal camps.  

While the first Ilkhan, Hülegü (r. 1256–65), spent his summers and winters at certain seasonal camps within his territory, it was his successor, Abakha (r. 1265–82), who regularized the seasonal migration of the Ilkhan. These migrations are comparatively well documented. The names of many of the royal summer camps (jaylaqs) and winter camps (qishlaqs) are given in fourteenth-century writings.

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of the historians Rashid al-Din, Abu al-Qasim 'Abd Allah Kashani, and others.\footnote{Yaylaks frequented by the Ilkhans (see fig. 8o) were Ala Tagh (presently Ala Dau in Turkey), Siyah Kuh (somewhere northwest of Hamadan), Sughurlukh (now in ruins and called Takht-i Sulaiman), Khonkhur Öleng (later the Ilkhanid capital Sultaniyia), Ujan (southeast of Tabriz), Sayn (somewhere between Sarav and Ardabil), and Hasht-rud (east of Maragha). Ilkhanid qishlaqs were at Jaghatu (possibly on the lower Jaghatu River, south of Lake Urmia), Baghdad, Hulan Mören (somewhere along the Qizil Uzun River), Qarabagh (northeast of Nakhichevan), and unspecified sites in the regions of Mazandaran, Arran, and Mughan. It seems that much of the Ilkhans' activity was in the Azerbaijan region and that they usually situated their summer camps upriver and their winter camps downriver.}

Probably the early Ilkhanids did not have a capital that functioned as a governmental and economical center. While Rashid al-Din notes that Abakha selected Tabriz as his \textit{dar al-mulk} (capital),\footnote{4. See Melville 1993a; Honda 1991; Smith 1999.} the site seems to have been used as nothing more than a seasonal camp that the Ilkhans visited only in the summer. It was during the reign of the seventh Ilkhan, Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), that Tabriz became a true Ilkhanid capital and the administrative center from which Ghazan’s political reforms were implemented.

Sultaniyia, the Ilkhanid capital established at the site of the summer camp Khonkhur Öleng by Ghazan’s successor, Öljaitü (r. 1304–16), was indeed a “sultan’s capital.” Within the city were constructed the various governmental, public, and imperial buildings necessary for capital functions, as well as the starting points of six royal highways leading to diverse regions of Iran. Nevertheless, Öljaitü and his successor, Abu Sa’id (r. 1316–35), continued the practice of seasonal migration. The Ilkhans stayed at Sultaniyia only during the summer.

\textit{Temporary Buildings and Permanent Buildings}

The popular conception is that nomads live in tents — that is, temporary, portable buildings made of textiles and wooden supports — and make no use of permanent, immovable constructions. However, most of the Mongol capital cities and many of their seasonal camps contained permanent buildings of some kind. Recent archaeological research in Mongolia attests to the existence of permanent structures at Genghis Khan’s seasonal camps. According to the excavator, some enclosures contained platforms that supported wooden buildings with roof tiles in a Chinese style. In others, permanent and temporary elements were combined: tents were pitched over immovable structures of stone and brick that served as foundations, supports, or space dividers (fig. 81).\footnote{5. Rashid al-Din 1994, vol. 2, p. 1061.}

At the same time, strictly temporary buildings and tents continued to be used by Mongol
royalty. Enormous tents often served both official and private purposes. Tents generally were kept in place for a few months, then removed and taken to the next seasonal camp or put away for use at the same camp the next year. The Great Khans Ögödei (r. 1229–41) and Güyük (r. 1246–48) both had a huge tent called Sira Ordu (Yellow Ordu) pitched at Örmügetü, a summer camp in Mongolia. The camp was visited by an emissary from the pope, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, in 1246, when the Mongols were holding a khurultai, or great meeting, to name Güyük as Ögödei’s successor. Giovanni described the tent as a large pavilion made of white velvet, “so big that more than two thousand men could have got into it,” and wrote that “around it had been erected a wooden palisade, on which various designs were painted.” He was then taken to another tent, Golden Ordu, pitched three to four leagues away from Sira Ordu. It rested on pillars covered with gold plates fastened with gold and wooden nails, and its top and sides were decorated with baldachins. In this tent the ceremony of Güyük’s enthronement was held. Finally Giovanni was taken to a third tent also pitched in the Örmügetü area, a wonderful tent all of red velvet, given by Chinese people; here the Mongols held feasts. These three enormous tents were apparently each assigned a specific purpose: the yellow/white tent was for khurultai, the golden tent for enthronements, and the red tent for feasts.

Written sources and archaeological findings make clear that tents and permanent buildings were used together in Yuan-dynasty China, at Shangdu, the summer capital of the Great Khans. The city was enclosed by three sets of surrounding walls (fig. 82). The innermost walled precinct was the Palace City; incorporated into its northern wall was the audience hall, a structure called Dia’ange. Surrounding the Palace City was the Imperial City, and west and north of that, between the middle and outer walls, lay the Outer City, an area designated for the pleasure of the Great Khans. Its western section, Xinei (Western Inner Space), contained a pleasure palace called Bai Ordu (Rich Ordu) with at least five permanent buildings, but their exact location has not been determined. Official activities, such as lectures given for the Great Khans by scholars and theologians, parties to reward officers’ service, feasts of zhama (described below), and audiences with foreign envoys were held there. The city’s northern area, Beiyuan (Northern Garden), contained a botanical garden, a zoo, and a pleasure palace called Sira Ordu. Sira Ordu was in a walled area in Beiyuan where excavators found no trace of a permanent structure. Khubilai’s “cane palace” in Shangdu, which Marco Polo described, must be this Sira Ordu: it was a temporary building made of canes of an enormous size and supported by girt and lacquered columns, each of which bore a dragon entirely girt. In Chinese sources this palace is called a zongmaodian or zongdian, both words meaning “palace of palm fiber.” The Great Khan Yesün Temür (r. 1323–28) ordered the construction of a new zongmaodian in 1325, for which two carpets were prepared covering 2,343 chī (about 850 square yards, or one-sixth of an acre), and made from 2,344 jin
(about 3,000 pounds) of blue and white wool. Khubilai's Sira Ordu in Shangdu seems to have been very similar to the one in Örümgetü. What distinguishes Shangdu, however, is the coexistence in one city of permanent buildings and temporary buildings.

Permanent buildings were constructed to be palaces for the Great Khans in Dadu (now Beijing), their main capital city. Excavations and various historical sources give evidence of a city plan based on the Confucian ideal as prescribed in the Zhou li of the eleventh century B.C., and of palace buildings that were purely Chinese. These were aspects of the Mongol rulers' attempt to legitimize their rule over China.

Overall, the Great Khans utilized four types of palatial building: temporary buildings only, as at Örümgetü; structures that combined permanent and temporary features, as at Genghis Khan's seasonal camps; erection at the same site of both permanent and temporary buildings, as at Shangdu; and permanent buildings only, as at Dadu. There is archaeological or written evidence for Ilkhanid palatial structures in Iran of all these types except the combined form.

Hülegü (later the first Ilkhan), sent from Mongolia by the Great Khan and his brother Môngke to conduct campaigns in western Asia, rested in lavish tents prepared by Mongol amirs, or military commanders, on his way. For instance, when in the fall of 1255 Hülegü arrived at Samarqand, Mas'ud Beg, the Mongol governor of Central Asia, erected for him a tent of naqīj (cloth of gold) with a covering of white felt. Hülegü remained there for almost forty days, enjoying revelry and merrymaking, in the spring of 1256 he left for the area of Tus in Iran, where he stayed in another splendid tent, prepared for him by Arghun Akha, the Mongol governor of Khurasan, again on the order of the Great Khan (see the opening quotation of this essay). According to Rashid al-Din, the tent had a thousand gold nails and consisted of an antechamber and an audience hall.

As the Great Khans did at Shangdu, the Ilkhans at their seasonal camps erected a mixture of permanent buildings and tents. In 1302 Ghazan pitched a "golden tent" that took engineers a month to set up in the midst of the garden at Ujan, a site where he had previously had a number of buildings constructed, including "kiosks, towers, baths, and lofty buildings." He celebrated the tent's completion with a feast and held a khuriltai there.

The Ilkhans constructed permanent palace buildings at their capital cities and seasonal camps. There is no record of palaces at the early Ilkhanid capital Tabriz itself, but beginning in the late thirteenth century, Ilkhans, and in one case a vizier, built private cities just outside Tabriz. Ilkhan Arghun (r. 1284–91) founded his palatial city, Arghuniyya (Arghun's city); subsequently his son Ghazan built his own complex, Ghazaniyya (Ghazan's city), and the vizier and historian Rashid al-Din established Rashidiyya (Rashid's city), also called Raba'i Rashidi (Rashid's quarter). Rashidiyya was basically a religious foundation, and its endowment deed, which survives, does not indicate that the vizier had a residence there. Unfortunately, little is known in detail about any of the palaces built in the two Ilkhan's cities except for the mention of "lofty houses at

12. In Kaogu ji (Record of Trades), a section of the classic Confucian text Zhou li (Rituals of the Zhou Dynasty), an ideal state capital is described: "a square nine li on each side; each side has three gates. Within the capital are nine north-south and nine east-west streets. The north-south streets are nine carriage tracks in width. On the [east] is the Ancestral Temple, and to the [west] are the Altars of Soil and Grain. In the front is the Hall of Audience and behind the markets." Steinhardt 1990, p. 33.
17. See Blair 1984.
Fig. 84 (cat. no. 19). Enthronement Scene, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 76, S. 22)
Arghun’s tall-domed mausoleum and some religious foundations at Ghazanqiyqa. 18

Arghun’s son Öljeitü established his capital, Sultanqiyqa, at the Ilkhanid summer camp Khonkhor Öleng in Iranian Azerbaijan, a spot where his father had previously constructed some buildings. According to the Timurid historian Hafiz-i Abrü (d. 1436), Öljeitü built an enormous palace there that had at its center a square court paved with marble. Adjacent to the court was a huge iwan, or rectangular vaulted room open on one side. Twelve small palace rooms were also ranged around the court, each with a window overlooking it. An audience hall, or kiaj (kirü in Mongolian), accommodated two thousand people. 19 The popularity of a court with iwans in Iranian and Iraqi architecture of the pre-Islamic period is well established. Such a scheme was utilized in various secular buildings of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, including the palaces of the Ghaznavids in Afghanistan and the Seljük palaces and caravanserais in Turkmenistan. 20 Öljeitü’s palace at Sultanqiyqa seems to have followed the plan of a traditional Persian palace, in which a large central courtyard is surrounded by huge iwans and small rooms. A variation can be observed at Takht-i Sulaiman, the only surviving Ilkhanid palace, which is discussed in the second part of this essay. A historical source attests to the existence of a similar palace, with four iwans around an arcaded court, in Isfahan; it belonged to the family of ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini, the important Ilkhanid historian and statesman. 21

That palaces were built at the seasonal camps in Ala Tagb, Arran, and Siyah Kuh is reported in historical writings, but the structures are not described in any detail. 22

Activities at Palaces and Tents

As far as can be determined from historical writings, the activities conducted at seasonal camps under the Ilkhanids were very similar to those at pleasure palaces of the Yuan dynasty. However, the Ilkhanid court more fully retained the quality of nomadic life. Thus, while the Great Khans ruled from large capitals like Dadu and Shangdu, the Ilkhanids had no such cities and conducted a larger number of state affairs, including khuriltai and enthronements, at camps. At least seven Ilkhanid khuriltai were held at the seasonal camps. The enthronements of some Ilkhanids also took place at seasonal camps: of Abakha in 1270, at Jaghatu; of Tegütler Ahmad in 1282 and Geikhatu in 1292, both at Ala Tagh; and of Arghun in 1286, at Arran (fig. 84). In attendance at these ceremonies were official envoys from the Great Khan carrying a letter of his approval. 23 The Mongolian New Year (keyünükemish) was celebrated at a camp near Qazvin in 1257. Trials, executions, appointments of officers, and audiences of foreign envoys were also carried out at camps. 24 In addition, the Ilkhanids kept their imperial treasuries at seasonal camps. According to Rashid al-Din, Hülegü’s treasury was located on Shahu Tala Island in Lake Urmin (now Shahi Peninsula; the level of the lake has fallen), Abakha’s was at Siyah Kuh, and Argun’s was at Sughurluk. 25 Although the treasuries were probably guarded all year long, their management and security were haphazard until Ghazan’s reign, when the treasures were finally itemized and sealed for safekeeping. 26
State affairs were usually accompanied by enormous feasts that lasted anywhere from a few days to a month. At a feast, a Mongol ruler gave garments and gifts to the participants. Since Ilkhanid feasts are not fully described in the sources, we can only imagine them from descriptions of those of the Great Khans in Mongolia and China. The most famous feast was the feast of zhama (Persian *jama*, meaning garment), called in Mongolian the feast of *jisun* (color). The celebration continued for three days, and the participants were all required to wear clothes of a different, specified color each day. Before Hülegü set out for western Asia in 1253, the Mongol princes held such feasts for him in Khara Khorum: “Each in turn gave a feast, and they cast the die of desire upon the board of revelry, draining goblets (*jamha*) and donning garments (*jamaha*) of one colour, at the same time not neglecting important affairs.” At feasts, the ruler was seated on a platform at the northern (or north-northwestern; see below) end of the tent or hall, facing south (or south-southeast). The first wife sat next to him at his left. Male royal participants were seated to his right and females...
opposite them. This seating arrangement was also adopted by the Ilkhans, as can be seen in several Ilkhanid paintings (figs. 85, 86).

Hunting, including archery and falconry, was a favorite sport of Mongol rulers and constituted an important part of their private lives. Mongol rulers selected the sites for their seasonal camps based on the presence of abundant natural resources, such as water, grass, and hunting game. Chaghan Na’ur in Hebei, near Shangdu, a pleasure palace of the Great Khans built in 1280 by Khubilai, is well documented. The General Administration of Imperial Demands (Yunxu), established in 1315, was in charge of guarding Chaghan Na’ur and taking care of supplies for the pleasure palace encampment.39 Marco Polo, who visited the complex sometime before 1290, noted the plentitude of game birds and described Khubilai’s falconry.40 A Chinese poet wrote that there was a hut to keep falcons and that many officers of the Yunxu Administration were falconers.41

Hunting was also an important activity for the Ilkhans in Iran (fig. 98). They were trained for it when very young; Ghazan, for example, learned to ride a horse when he was three years old and practiced archery at five. His first hunt, with his grandfather Abakha in Damghan (in northeastern Iran), took place when he was eight years old and was accompanied by a three-day celebration.42 Professional falconers and cheetah keepers supplied hunting animals for the Ilkhans, at great expense. Indeed, it was necessary for Ghazan to regulate the practice because large sums were being siphoned off by the suppliers through abuse of their position,43 a measure of the significance hunting held for the Ilkhans.

Much royal life was lived at the seasonal camps of the Ilkhans: births, education, marriages, deaths, and mourning rituals (see figs. 86, 87, 122, 134).44 The early life of Ghazan, the first Ilkhan born in Iran, is instructive. His birth in 1271 was at an unlocated winter camp named Abaskun in Mazandaran, a region on the southern coast of...
the Caspian Sea, and from the age of five he received his education at seasonal camps, where Chinese (Khitayi) tutors taught him Mongolian and Uyghur scripts and the scholarship and literature of those languages. Ceremonies surrounding the death of Hülegü also typify Mongol practices. After he died at the winter camp of Jaghatu in 1265, his body was taken to Shahu Tala Island in Lake Urmia, where it was buried together with jewels and human victims. Religious ceremonies probably took place in the camps as well, although a specific record of such ceremonies exists only for the court of the Great Khans.

**Takht-i Sulaiman, the Remains of an Ilkhanid Palace**

Only one actual setting of Ilkhanid courtly life survives, the seasonal palace known as Takht-i Sulaiman (fig. 88). The archaeological site, on a mountainside at an elevation of about 7,900 feet, is in the Azerbaijan region of Iran, two hundred miles south of Tabriz and southeast of Lake Urmia. The camp was a walled town of oval shape about a third of a mile long and a quarter mile wide and contains a small lake. Its Ilkhanid structure was built over a Zoroastrian sanctuary that dates from the Sasanian period (224–651). The palace remains, excavated by the German Archaeological Institute between 1959 and 1978, provide valuable evidence about the physical nature of an Ilkhanid seasonal camp. The function of its various parts can to some degree be reconstructed from the writings of Rashid al-Din.

Takht-i Sulaiman, literally meaning "Throne of Solomon," is a name given to this site long after the Ilkhanid reign, probably during the Safavid period (1501–1722), when it appears in a historical document by Qadi Ahmad al-Qumi. It is likely that the name comes from "Sulaiman-makan" (one who takes Solomon’s place), one of the epithets of Isma’il I (r. 1501–24), the first Safavid ruler, who visited the spot several times. A geographical survey written by Hand Allah Mustaufi Qazvini in 1349 that contains a description of the site allows us to identify Takht-i Sulaiman with the Ilkhanid summer camp Sughurlukh. Writes Mustaufi Qazvini about Sughurlukh:

> It stands on the summit of a hill and it was originally founded by King Kay Khusraw the Kayanian. In this town there is a great palace, in the court of which a spring gushes forth into a large tank, that is like a small lake for size, and no boatman has been able to plumb its depth... This palace was restored by Abaqa Khan the Mongol, and in the neighbourhood there are excellent pasture grounds. Its revenues amount to 25,000 dinars.

Mustaufi Qazvini’s attribution of the Ilkhanid palace to Abakha is in accord with the archaeological evidence at Takht-i Sulaiman. Construction of the palace there must go back at least to Abakha’s reign (1265–82), because luster-painted tiles excavated at the site carry the dates 670, 671, and 674 (A.H.), that is, A.D. 1271–73 and 1275–76.

**History of the Site**

The Ilkhanid structure at Takht-i Sulaiman was built over a Sasanian fire temple of Adur Gushnasp that seems to have been in use from the late fifth to the early seventh
century. Adur Gushnasp, one of the three sacred fires of Zoroastrianism, is often associated with the legendary Iranian king Kaikhusrau the Kayanian, who founded its altar in Azerbaijan, according to a Zoroastrian tradition.\(^4\) In Arabic sources of the ninth and tenth centuries the site was called Shiz, and it is reported that a Persian king customarily visited the temple there on foot when he was newly crowned.\(^4\)

The Ilkhanids renamed this site Sughurlukh, in Turkic “place abounding in marmots” (Turkic toponyms were very commonly used throughout the Mongol empire). The marmot is frequently hunted in Mongolia, and its fur is highly prized. Presumably the spot was selected for an Ilkhanid summer camp because of its suitability as a hunting ground rather than because of its glorious Zoroastrian past.

In the Jami‘al-tavarikh (Compendium of Chronicles) of Rashid al-Din, Sughurlukh figures in a complex family drama, although less in connection with Abakha himself than with Abakha’s son Arghun, his grandson Ghazan, and his wife Bulughan Khatun the Elder.\(^4\) Ghazan, according to Rashid al-Din, was born in Mazandaran in the year corresponding to 1271. When he was three years old he was taken by his father, Arghun, then governor of Khurasan, to see his grandfather Abakha at Khongkhor Öleng. Abakha became very fond of the boy and told Arghun that he would oversee Ghazan’s education. Since Abakha’s favorite wife, Bulughan Khatun, had no son, Arghun suggested that the child be entrusted to her care. Rashid al-Din writes:

Abakha was pleased [with this idea], and Bulughan Khatun proceeded to Sughurluoq. Arghun followed her bringing Ghazan’s belongings, then returned to Khurasan. Bulughan Khatun was overjoyed; she called [the child] god’s gift, who to her was like her own son. Arghun left [Ghazan] ten servants . . . from the tribe of Önggüt [a Turkish tribe]. Abakha said, “Ghazan should remain in this ordu, and this ordu should belong to him. And after me this ordu shall be his, and he shall be its head.” Most of the time Prince Ghazan stayed in Bulughan Khatun’s ordu.\(^4\)

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\(^4\) Boyce 1984, p. 475.
\(^4\) Ibn Khurdadbeh 1889, p. 91 (trans.); al-Mas‘udi 1894, pp. 95–96. See also Minorsky 1964 for the identification of Takht-i Sulaiman with a number of places mentioned in historical sources.
\(^4\) In the Jami‘al-tavarikh she is called Bulughan Khatun-i Buzurg because there is another Bulughan Khatun. See Melville 1990, p. 339.
Bulughan Khatun (the Elder) was Abakha’s tenth wife and was favored by Abakha over his other wives. The passage quoted suggests that the palace at Takht-i Sulaiman did indeed belong to Abakha and that the *ordu* led by Bulughan Khatun was based there, although it may not have been permanently located there.

Following the Mongol custom, after Abakha’s death in 1282 Bulughan Khatun was married to his son Arghun. Rashid al-Din writes that she even acted as Arghun’s deputy when he was absent.\(^4\) When Bulughan Khatun died in 1286, Arghun inspected her treasury, which was filled with precious jewelry and pearls given to her by Abakha. After taking some of the robes and gold and silver ware for himself, Arghun said that, in accordance with Abakha’s wishes, the rest of the treasure, the *yurt* (appanage), and the *ordu* should be sealed and kept for Ghazan.\(^4^6\) Although Rashid al-Din does not specify where Bulughan Khatun’s treasury was, it may have been at Sughurlukh, and Arghun’s unusually long stay at Sughurlukh that year may have been in order to inspect her treasury.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 1216.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 1214.
Fig. 10 (cat. no. 37). Salmukht Becoming Aware of Rudaba’s Actions, page from the Great Mongol Shāhnāma (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1350. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.102)
In 1290 Arghun married another Bulughan Khatun and granted her the ordu that had belonged to Bulughan Khatun the Elder.\textsuperscript{47} Thereafter, Sughurlukh was frequently mentioned in association with the new Bulughan Khatun. After Arghun’s death in 1291, a struggle for her arose among three aspirants to the throne: Arghun’s son Ghazan, Arghun’s brother Geikhatu, and Arghun’s cousin Baidu. She was married to Geikhatu (r. 1291–93) in 1292, but later Ghazan married her, according to Islamic law, when he was enthroned in 1295. The great interest members of the royal family showed in these two Bulughan Khatuns seems to have been partly motivated by their wealth, originally given by Abakha to the Elder and then passed to the Younger, and probably kept at Sughurlukh. Arghun’s own treasury was also situated at Sughurlukh, although Rashid al-Din states that after his death it was stolen or wasted by Geikhatu and Baidu (r. 1295) and that nothing remained when Ghazan came to the throne.\textsuperscript{48}

Rashid al-Din makes frequent mention of amirs being stationed at Sughurlukh. He also records stays there of the reigning Ilkhan, usually only for a few days as a rest stop on a long journey. Sometimes an Ilkhan handled state affairs during his stay at Sughurlukh; for example, Arghun issued an edict there in 1284 appointing Bukha as his vizier and another in 1289 appointing Sa’d al-Daula vizier.\textsuperscript{49}

Sughurlukh/Takht-i Sulaiman, a summer residence of the Ilkhan, was apparently smaller and politically less important than those in Ala Tagh and Arran, since no khuriltai or enthronements were held there. However, it may have had its own particular significance as the site of the treasuries belonging to the two Bulughan Khatuns and to Arghun.

Plan of the Palace

The oval perimeter walls at Takht-i Sulaiman (fig. 91) date to the Sasanian period. Their main gate was at the north end of the oval, and the sanctuary complex within was situated north of the lake. Ilkhan builders kept the pre-Islamic perimeter walls and also reused other Sasanian structures, incorporating them into the North Iwan, the Palace Hall, and the West Iwan of the new palace.

Building a palace over ruins was a common practice among Mongols in both eastern and western Asia. The city of Khara Khorum in Mongolia, the capital of the Mongol empire until 1266, is said to have been built on the remains of an Uyghur fortress.\textsuperscript{50} In China, the main capital of the Yuan dynasty, Dadu, was created by Khubilai on the site of Zhongdu, one of the five capitals of the previous Jin dynasty (1115–1234). The building of Dadu began in 1264 with the reconstruction of a Jin-dynasty pleasure palace on Qionghua Island, located within the Imperial City of Zhongdu.\textsuperscript{51} In the West, Hülegü built his palace at Ala Tagh over the much earlier summer residence of the Armenian Arshakids (53–428).\textsuperscript{52} The reuse of older structures was less common. Da’ange, the most important official building in Shangdu (fig. 82), was constructed in 1266 out of materials taken from a building called Xichunge that had been erected in Bianjing (modern Kaifeng), the capital of the Northern Song dynasty during its reign (960–1127).\textsuperscript{53}

At Takht-i Sulaiman, the builders of the Ilkhanid period ignored the old Sasanian main gate on the north-northwest and a secondary gate to the southeast. They
established a new gate at the south-southeastern end; it faces the North Iwan across the lake and thus emphasizes the major role of that iwan, the main building of the complex. Another palace structure, the remarkable Dodecagon in the western arcade, has its only doorway on the south-southeastern side, contributing to the south-southeast orientation of the Ilkhanid palace.

The Mongol tendency to orient buildings to the south was noticed by contemporary observers. William of Rubruck, who traveled to the Mongol domain in 1253–55, wrote that the Mongols pitched their tents with the doorway facing south and placed the master’s couch at the northern end, opposite the entrance.⁵⁴ At Khara Khorum, he reported, the palace of the Great Khan Môngke extended from north to south; there were three doors on its southern side, and at the northern end

⁵⁴ Ruybroeck 1990, pp. 74–75.
sat the Great Khan, in an elevated position. Archaeological research has determined that the main axis of Möngke's palace in fact ran north-northwest to south-southeast. L. K. Minert, a Russian archaeologist, suggests that rather than resulting from miscalculation, the south-southeast (rather than south) alignment of the building was intentional. His argument is supported by the south-southeast orientation found in almost all the excavated Mongol cities built during the first half of the thirteenth century. Minert quotes D. Maydor, a Mongolian archaeologist, to the effect that this south-southeast orientation was the characteristic one for Mongol tents and that it was based on the direction of sunlight, with the purpose of dividing a tent used as a residence into functional zones. The redirection of the plan's axis at Takht-i Sulaiman most probably occurred because of this Mongol preference.

The Takht-i Sulaiman palace included several polygonal structures, the North and South Octagons in the West Iwan complex and the Dodecagon in the western arcade. Their presence is unusual, for in Iran a polygonal plan was normally a feature of a mausoleum, not a residence. These buildings seem to reflect a Mongol preference for polygonal structures ultimately based on the form of the Mongol round tent, or ger. The ger, the most common and traditional Mongol type of residential tent, consists of a collapsible lattice wall of birch slats arranged in a circle, with coverings of felt. Mongol round tents are mentioned by most of the Europeans who traveled to the court of the Great Khans during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Several other Mongol palaces, most of them pleasure palaces, also contained round or polygonal structures. Indeed, the Mongol enthusiasm for palatial polygonal or round buildings was remarkable. In the palace of Dadu there were at least ten polygonal or round buildings, many of them in pairs like the North and South Octagons at Takht-i Sulaiman. These Octagons, which were lavishly decorated, may have been private quarters of the Ilkhan. The Dodecagon, however, is a curious structure. As mentioned above, its single doorway is set at the south-southeast like that of a Mongol tent, even though the building is in the western arcade, where it would have been more natural for the doorway to face east. The difficult route of access to this building suggests that it may have been the treasury reportedly located at Takht-i Sulaiman.

Since specific Mongol features were incorporated into the architecture of the palace at Takht-i Sulaiman, the functions that individual buildings served probably also followed Mongol custom. At the same time, many aspects of the plan and the construction materials are characteristically Iranian. The Ilkhanid buildings at Takht-i Sulaiman were undoubtedly built by Iranian workers and craftsmen striving to satisfy the requirements of the Mongol rulers while making use of their own Iranian techniques.

If the rectangular area enclosing the lake and surrounded by arcades is regarded as a central courtyard—and Mustaфи Qazvini calls it a "court" in the passage quoted above—the plan of the entire palace can be seen as a variation of the traditional Iranian four-iwan scheme discussed above. In a typical four-iwan plan, each barrel-vaulted iwan opens onto one side of a quadrangular courtyard, and two facing iwans usually share the same central axis. At Takht-i Sulaiman, while the North and South Iwans almost face each other along the building's central axis, the West and East
Iwans are placed at the northern ends of their arcades rather than in the center. The atypical corner location of these two iwans probably occurred because the foundations and walls of a pre-existing Sasanian structure were used as a basis for the western iwan. Öljeitü’s palace at Sultanıyya also was designed with a central courtyard and a huge iwan. An Ilkhanid palace with a courtyard and iwans—a version of the traditional Iranian palace—seems to be represented in Ilkhanid manuscript paintings such as Shah Zav Enthroned from the Great Mongol Shahnama (fig. 37).

The foundations of the Ilkhanid buildings at Takht-i Sulaiman were made of rubble masonry with mortar, red sandstone, and reused Sasanian ashlar masonry. (Both rubble masonry and ashlars are found in other Ilkhanid buildings as well.) The walls were constructed of bricks and wood, although little of the latter has survived. Architectural elements such as columns, column bases, capitals, and doorjambs were of red sandstone. Panels of limestone and marble lined the walls of certain buildings, and some floors were covered with marble slabs. The use of dressed stone is a characteristic of building in Azerbaijan. According to Hafiz-i Abru, in Sultanıyya the Ilkhanid Great Mosque was built of marble, and the courtyard of Öljeitü’s palace was paved with marble.  

Decoration

The Ilkhanid structures at Takht-i Sulaiman, especially the North Iwan–Palace Hall complex and the West Iwan complex, were lavishly decorated with tiles and stucco. The most striking use of stucco was for muqarnas, a three-dimensional architectural decoration on vaults and domes composed of nichelike elements arranged in geometric patterns. Dramatic in its intricacy and play of light and shadow, muqarnas decoration was much employed in Islamic architecture. At Takht-i Sulaiman, some of the stucco muqarnas elements are decorated with animals, animal scrolls, and stylized vegetal decoration in carved and incised relief; others are painted. A square gypsum plaque with an incised geometric pattern, excavated at the site, is thought to be the plan for one-quarter of a muqarnas dome. Stucco was also used to cover walls that were then richly painted. Polychrome mural painting, one of the most popular techniques for wall decoration in Iran, was also applied to palace buildings in Mongolia; several sources report that the palaces at Khara Khorum were painted with pictures of some sort. Unfortunately, the painted stucco walls at Takht-i Sulaiman are too badly damaged to compare with examples elsewhere.

The large number of tile fragments found at Takht-i Sulaiman makes clear that the Ilkhanid palace there was also adorned with lavish tile decoration, both externally and, especially, internally (fig. 92). The tiles display a wide range of techniques and designs and are of different shapes and sizes (figs. 49, 91, 204). About one hundred different molded tile designs can be identified from the fragments. These finds are important because, with their certain provenance and date, they provide a firm benchmark to apply when examining various aspects of tile production during the Ilkhanid period.

The tiles at Takht-i Sulaiman display six different techniques. There are unglazed tiles, partially glazed tiles, monochrome-glazed tiles, luster-painted tiles, lajvardina

Fig. 91. Tiles on the wall of the West Iwan at Takht-i Sulaiman, Iran. Photograph Archive, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin (neg. 1974-301)


tiles, and underglaze lajvardina tiles. All the techniques are strongly related to those in contemporary Iranian use for the making of pottery. A potter’s workshop and kilns have been excavated within the precinct of Takht-i Sulaiman, and at least some part of the tiles were manufactured at the site (see technical study 2 and fig. 279).

Luster painting was widely used for ceramic decoration in Iran between the late-twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries. The technique is mentioned in the treatise on ceramics written in 1301 by the Persian historian Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd Allah Kashani, who came from a family of potters.70 According to the most recent analyses by the Conservation Department of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (see technical study 2), the ceramic received its first firing with a translucent glaze and underglaze oxides. The glazed surface was overpainted with a pigment containing oxidized silver or copper, which was reduced in a second firing, leaving a metallic sheen on the surface. A wall covered with luster-painted tile would have seemed like a wall of gold.

Fig. 93 (cat. nos. 88–91). Two hexagonal tiles and two double pentagonal tiles, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, underglaze painted. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I. 13/69, 15h; I. 13/69, 15h; I. 13/69, 15; I. 13/69, 15; I. 4/67, 8).
Fig. 94 (cat. no. 104). Tile panel (exterior tile), Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. High-clay fritware, unglazed and underglaze painted. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I. 4/67, I. 6/712-b)

Fig. 95 (cat. no. 105). Hexagonal tile with phoenix (exterior tile), Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. High-clay fritware, unglazed and underglaze painted. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I. 1988.10)

Fig. 96 (cat. no. 105). Hexagonal tile panel (exterior tile), Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. High-clay fritware, unglazed and underglaze painted. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (I. 11/69)
Fig. 97 (cat. no. 99). Frieze tile with phoenix, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), ca. 1370s. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.4). See figure 79.

Fig. 98 (cat. no. 94). Frieze tile with hunters on horseback, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 1170s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lujardina). Miho Museum, Shigaraki, Japan (S1486)

Fig. 99. Faridun Goes to Inaj’s Palace and Mourns, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.100A)

THE LEGACY OF GENGHIS KHAN
Fig. 100 (cat. no. 100). Frieze tile with dragon, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), ca. 1270s. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (541-1900)

Fig. 101 (cat. no. 84). Star tile with phoenix, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lajvardina). Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Gift of Osborne and Gratia Hauge (S1997.114)

Fig. 102 (cat. no. 86). Hexagonal tile with dragon, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lajvardina). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (1.6/31c)
Laβardīna technique, also mentioned by Kashani, was in use from the late thirteenth to the late fourteenth century.73 On a monochrome glaze of cobalt blue, turquoise blue, or white, over-glaze painting was done in black, white, and red enamel with highlights of gold (fig. 275). These are fixed by a second firing. For underglaze laβardīna, a hybrid technique, enamel overglaze painting and gold highlights were applied on a translucent glaze that had been underglaze-painted with turquoise blue and cobalt blue, rather than on the monochrome glaze of ordinary laβardīna. This hybrid technique is so far known only from Takht-i Sulaiman.

Both these techniques produce a rich, showy effect. Tiles decorating the interior at Takht-i Sulaiman consisted of floor tiling; dado tiling on the walls to a height of about six feet; and tile friezes running horizontally higher up on the walls. The same decorative scheme and the metallic and cobalt blue colors of the Ilkhanid tiles used for it are clearly depicted in a few manuscript paintings from the Great Mongol Shahnāma (figs. 90, 99).

While some of the motifs that figure in the palace decoration display the repertoire of the Iranian craftsmen, others seem carefully chosen by the Mongol overlord. Chinese dragons and phoenixes are depicted on frieze tiles and eight-pointed star tiles, which in most cases are paired (figs. 97, 100, 101, 204). The dragon and the phoenix are considered good omens and are two of the oldest and most popular mythical animals in Chinese culture. Most importantly, both were symbols of sovereignty in China. Often forming a pair, they were used as decorative motifs on imperial belongings—buildings, palanquins, robes, and miscellaneous objects for daily use.74 The Great Khans in China followed this Chinese tradition, and indeed, it was during the Yuan period that the imperial monopoly over these two motifs was firmly established. The code stipulating the types and colors of officers’ robes that was issued in 1314 prohibits the appearance on robes of officers, vessels, plates, tents, or carts of any design using the dragon with five claws and two horns, or the phoenix.75 The use of dragon and phoenix designs in the architectural decoration of Mongol cities in Mongolia and China is documented by both historical texts and archaeological evidence. In Dadu, historians described an audience hall surrounded by terraces of white stone sculpted with dragons and phoenixes, while behind it in a private hall of the Great Khan, the interior walls were covered in silk painted with dragons and phoenixes.76 Glazed roof tiles carrying a relief decoration of dragon and phoenix have been found on governmental buildings or imperial palaces in many Mongol cities in Mongolia and China (figs. 103–105).

The affinity between the dragon and phoenix designs on the East Asian tiles and some of those on tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman
suggests that the Iranian tile makers obtained their designs, directly or indirectly, from the Yuan court. They may have worked from Chinese models, probably from pattern books of some kind that supplied several different designs of a paired dragon and phoenix.  

Like the Great Khans in China, the Ilkhanids used these motifs in their palaces as symbols of sovereignty. But the presence of only four claws on the dragons at Takht-i Sulaiman may have expressed the Ilkhans’ respect for the suzerainty of the Great Khans, who claimed for themselves the exclusive use of the five-clawed dragon.

A lion, a deer, and a peony are the principal motifs on other tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman. The lion—with a knotted tail, holding in its mouth a tufted band with a ball and leaping amid foliage—is apparently based on a Chinese motif, the “lion playing with a ball,” which is considered an auspicious emblem.  

The deer symbolizes wealth in China. A crouching deer, like that on the Takht-i Sulaiman tiles, was used to decorate palanquins of the crown prince at the courts of the Song and Jin dynasties.  

In China, the peony is called the king of flowers and symbolizes wealth and nobility.

The use of this group of East Asian motifs at Takht-i Sulaiman is significant evidence of the close relations between eastern and western Asia within the great Mongol empire. The introduction of the dragon and phoenix motifs into Iran was especially important. The motifs as used at Takht-i Sulaiman were almost exact copies of ones of Chinese origin, and they may have carried the same significance there as in China. However, these motifs gradually became assimilated into the Iranian artistic repertoire, acquiring new identities as the Iranian dragon and the mythical bird Simurgh.
Fig. 108 (cat. no. 97). Frieze tile with Bahram Gur and Azada on a camel, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), ca. 1270-75. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1841-1876)

Fig. 109 (cat. no. 96). Frieze tile with elephant and rider, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 17th c. Ceramic, overglaze luster-painted. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Nasli M. Heeramanek Collection, Gift of Joan Palevsky (M.73.5.222)

Fig. 110 (cat. no. 55). Bahram Gur Hunting with Azada, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass., Gift of Edward W. Forbes (1957.193)
On the other hand, a completely different situation obtains with one group of objects. A few of the figural scenes represented in molded relief on Takht-i Sulaiman frieze tiles illustrate the national epic that celebrates Iran’s ancient kings, Abul al-Qasim Firdausi’s Shahnama. On some tiles, the story of Faridun, who overthrew the tyrant Zahhak and became the sixth king of Iran, is depicted (fig. 167). Another type of tile presents the Shahnama story of Bahram Gur, the fifteenth Sasanian king, hunting gazelles with his harpist slave girl Azada (fig. 108). The tiles carrying these two episodes from the Shahnama have differing dimensions and thus did not belong to the same frieze. The Bahram Gur tile was accompanied by another tile showing a hunting scene in which two unidentifiable horsemen are stabbing a deer with swords (fig. 50). Probably the frieze that contained these two tiles depicted various scenes of hunt, a theme particularly suitable for a pleasure palace, where hunts were frequently conducted. No tiles with dimensions matching those of the Faridun tile have been found at Takht-i Sulaiman, and it is difficult to identify the general theme of the frieze to which it belonged.

A number of tiles found at Takht-i Sulaiman carry quotations from the Shahnama. The texts are written in the borders of eight-pointed luster-painted star tiles and in the main fields of frieze tiles (figs. 49, 111, 112). At least three long quotations are featured, each from the beginning of a story. The first comes from the opening of the Prelude at the head of the entire Shahnama cycle. The second is the beginning of the story of Rustam and Suhrab in the Book of Kaika’us. This telling of how Rustam killed his own son Suhrab has long been one of the best-known tales in the Shahnama. The third quotation is from the first part of an ode to Mahmud of Ghazna (to whom the Shahnama was dedicated), which introduces the popular story of Rustam and Isfandiyar in the Book of Gushtasp. The quotations contain little narrative content and apparently no specific allusions; verses referring to Kaikhosrau and Adur Gushtasp, for example, which would have had special relevance at Takht-i Sulaiman, are not quoted. Instead, by supplying the opening verses of the Shahnama and those of popular episodes, these passages seem to allude to the entire epic cycle.

Figs. 111, 112 (cat. nos. 81, 82). Frieze tiles with inscription from the Shahnama, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B60P2145, B60P2146)
Fig. 113 (cat. no. 108). Star tile with bull, Iran (Kashan), A.H. 689/ A.D. 1290–91. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The David Collection, Copenhagen (13/1963)

Fig. 114 (cat. no. 109). Star tile with elephants, Iran (Kashan), A.H. 689/ A.D. 1290–91. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The David Collection, Copenhagen (14/1963)

Fig. 115 (cat. no. 110). Star tile with horse, Iran (Kashan), A.H. Muharram 689/A.D. January 14–February 13, 1290. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The David Collection, Copenhagen (12/1963)
Fig. 116 (cat. no. 117). Star tile with horse, Iran, a.h. 710/a.d. 1310–11. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Maria Antoinette Evans Fund and Gift of Edward Jackson Holmes (31.729)

Fig. 117 (cat. no. 118). Star tile with camel, Iran, early 14th century. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Martin Brimmer (66.1896)

Fig. 118 (cat. no. 117). Star tile with two men fighting, Iran (Kashan), early 14th century. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (48.1288)

Fig. 119 (cat. no. 116). Star tile with seated man and attendant, Iran (Kashan), a.h. 739/a.d. 1338–39. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. The Trustees of the British Museum, London (OA + 1123)
as if giving a cue for the recitation of all those *Shahnama* verses that Iranians would have learned by heart. In this they are palatial counterparts to the quotations from the Koran found on tiles in religious structures built in Iran between the late twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries (figs. 151, 152).

Decoration based upon the *Shahnama* did not begin at Takht-i Sulaiman. The same Faridun who appears on its tiles is represented mounted on a humpbacked cow on large numbers of ceramic and metalwork objects dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth century.\(^{15}\) Another popular motif decorating the same type of object, also drawn from the *Shahnama*, is of Bahram Gur and Azada mounted on a camel. Illustrations of these two stories adorned buildings datable to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.\(^{16}\) The theme of Bahram Gur and Azada in particular had long figured in palace decorations: a series of stucco panels with depictions of the story in high relief adorned a palace near Rayy (south of Tehran) attributable to the second half of the seventh century or the first half of the eighth century,\(^{17}\) and an overglaze-painted tile illustrating the subject, datable to the late twelfth century, was excavated at a Seljuk palace of the sultanate of Rum in Konya, Turkey.\(^{18}\) As for the *Shahnama* text, the historian Ibn Bibi (active ca. 1285) reports that in 1221 the sultan of Rum, ‘Ala’ al-Din Kaiqubad I, had maxims from the epic inscribed on the walls of the palace in Konya and also of one in Sivas.\(^{19}\) The examples cited in this paragraph demonstrate that it was an established practice, before the construction of the palace at Takht-i Sulaiman, to embellish a palatial building with tiles and other forms of decoration carrying quotations from the *Shahnama* or illustrations of its stories.

Thus, the potters crafting tiles for Takht-i Sulaiman were following an existing tradition; were they also formulating a new decorative program specifically for this palace? The *Shahnama*, the epic of Persian kings, was undoubtedly regarded as a powerful symbol of the tradition of Iranian kingship. As non-Persian rulers of Iran, the Mongol Ilkhans would have been wise to invoke this symbolism while simultaneously benefiting from a well-developed Persian tradition of palace decoration. The inclusion in the design scheme of dragons and phoexises, Chinese symbols of rulership, was, on the other hand, a deliberate importation of foreign imagery that had special significance for the Ilkhans. At Takht-i Sulaiman, Chinese symbols of rulership were used together with Iranian symbols of rulership to decorate the palace of the Mongols. The site’s architecture represented a similar blending of diverse features.
The palace at Takht-i Sulaiman must have offered an ideal setting for the amusement of the Ilkhan: rich pasture for their animals, an abundance of marmots for hunting, comfortable climate for the summer stay, and a beautiful landscape, with the lofty iwans encircling a lake. Both exterior and interior surfaces of the buildings were richly embellished. Most conspicuous were the multicolored tile revetments, with hints of glistening gold. Dragons and phoenixes on the tiles sounded a familiar note for the Mongols, while the other, Persian designs created a setting that perhaps was experienced as exotic. A noble Mongol lady, Bulughan Khatun the Elder, once sat there far from her native land; beneath the intricate muqarnas vault she spoke of the glory of Genghis Khan to a small, bright boy named Ghazan.

It is probably only by chance that Takht-i Sulaiman alone has survived while all the other Ilkhanid palaces, including ones that served more important functions, were lost. At Takht-i Sulaiman, within the framework of a Persian sedentary palace, we can visualize the Mongol rulers continuing to deal with state affairs and conduct their private lives in traditional Mongol ways. This palace complex exemplifies the early stage of confrontation and accommodation between Iranian craftsmen and architects and their Mongol rulers. It was not until later in the Ilkhanid period — after the Ilkhan Ghazan converted to Islam, after Ilkhanid courtly life began to be conducted according to Islamic law and a functioning capital was built — that these conflicts were resolved, and the separate strains merged to become a truly new culture.

80. See the list of representations of Faridun and of Bahram Gur with Azada on medieval Islamic objects provided in Simpson 1981, pp. 141–46. See also Eitingerhausen 1979 and Fontana 1986 for representations of Bahram Gur and Azada in Iranian art, including in the pre-Islamic period.
81. Faridun is depicted on the fragment of a polychrome-painted fresco datable to the early thirteenth century (Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass., 1935.2). Bahram Gur and Azada are represented on two tiles probably dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, a monochrome-glazed tile (Musée du Louvre, Paris, MAO 246) and a so-called mina'i tile (Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, 1159/9).
82. They were excavated from the main palace of Chal Tarkhan ‘Ishqabad near Rayy. One of the panels is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (39.485).
83. Konyalü, Konya.
عُرِمْساً فِي رُكْمِ الْمَتَحَدِّي،
لَخَلِيلٍ وَمَزِيدٍ فِي هَذَا زَرَاءً.
فَقَلَّ يُحَبّ عِملَهُ وَهوَ فَي إِلَّا هُمَا مَنْ فِي الْأَخْرَى مِنْ الْحَسَنِ يَبَّاحَا.
الذُّي أَمَّنَوْاذَا أَقَمْتَ الْصَّلَاةَ.
5.
The Religious Art of the Ilkhanids

Until now it has been the custom of the Mongol emperors of Genghis Khan’s urugh [lineal descendants] to be buried in unmarked places far from habitation in such a way that no one would know where they were. . . . When the emperor became Muslim and elevated the customs of religion to the skies, he said, “Although such was the custom of our fathers . . . there is no benefit in it. Now that we have become Muslim we should conform to Islamic rites, particularly since Islamic customs are so much better.” . . . Since he was in the capital Tabriz, he chose it as the site [of his tomb] and laid the foundation himself outside the city to the west in the place called Shamb. They have been working on it for several years now, and it is planned to be much more magnificent than the dome of Sultan Sanjar the Seljuk in Merv, which is the most magnificent building in the world.

—Rashid al-Din, Compendium of Chronicles'

In religion as in many cultural and artistic affairs, the Mongols were eclectic. Like people everywhere they adopted religion for a variety of reasons, ranging from a personal desire to understand the ineffable to broader concerns about social cohesion and political control. The Mongols were also ecumenical. Unlike many others, they had an extremely wide range of religions upon which to draw. The geographical and social changes the Mongols underwent in the course of their transformation from a nomadic regime on the Mongolian steppe to a sedentary Islamic polity on the Iranian plateau, and their pivotal position on the transcontinental trade routes connecting China and Europe, meant that they were exposed to many of the major religions practiced in Eurasia: shamanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeanism, at least four types of Christianity (Nestorian, Jacobite, Armenian, and Catholic/Latin), Judaism, and several approaches to Islam (notably Sunnism, Shi‘ism, and Sufism). Like the Mongols in China, the Ilkhanids initially tolerated and even encouraged a variety of religions as a way of ingratiating themselves with their subjects in foreign lands; and all these religions, to differing degrees, affected the arts and architecture patronized by the Ilkhanids during the period of their rule in Iran and Iraq, the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century.

After the Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) officially converted to Islam in 1295, adherence to other religions was curtailed. Many non-Muslim monuments were destroyed, and official chronicles written after this date trumpet orthodox Islam. Traces of other religious practices are nonetheless discernible in some surviving works of art and architecture, and these can be used to elucidate the changing religious affiliations of the Ilkhanid court and its subjects. In looking at such works, however, it is important to remember that the evidence is sometimes scanty and equivocal and can be interpreted to justify a particular position or interest. The same complex of rock-cut caves near Maragha in northwestern Iran has been identified, for example, as both a Jacobite monastery church and a Buddhist cave...

2. For a general overview of religion in the Mongol period, see Bausani 1968.
3. For the Mongols’ generally tolerant view of religion, specifically Khubilai’s cultivation of Confucianism in China, see Morris Rossabi’s chapter 1 in this catalogue.
4. The basic study of Ilkhanid architecture remains Wilber 1969.
temple. Nevertheless, carefully putting together small pieces of evidence allows us to reconstruct a multistranded tapestry in which elements from one religion were often woven into the traditions of another.

BEFORE THE ADOPTION OF ISLAM

The Mongols of the Eurasian steppe believed in shamans—leaders who could intercede between humans and powerful spirits both good and evil—and prepared for an afterlife with elaborate ceremonies. Both Genghis (d. 1227) and his son Ögedei (r. 1229–41) were shamans, but we have little visual information about the religious customs practiced during their rule. Some of the first surviving illustrations of their funeral practices are paintings in manuscripts of Rashid al-Din’s Compendium of Chronicles, or Jami‘ al-tawarikh. Rashid al-Din, vizier to the Ilkhan Ghazan, was commissioned by Ghazan to compose a history of the Mongols; under Ghazan’s brother and successor Öljdet (r. 1304–16), the work was expanded to become the earliest known history of the world. The multivolume work, including numerous appendixes, was completed in 1310, and multiple copies of it were prepared for the vizier in the years before his downfall and execution in 1318. The Compendium’s first volume, one of the main sources of information about the history of the Mongols, contains illustrations depicting royal funerals following traditional Mongol custom. These scenes are found both on detached pages mounted in several albums in Berlin (figs. 87, 122) and in later, complete copies of the Compendium. Depictions of the ruler’s coffin set on a throne surrounded by mourning courtiers match the sparse accounts of Mongol burial customs given in the sources and pieced together by the noted Orientalist V. V. Barthold. According to these accounts, the body was put in a coffin bound with gold bands, which in turn was placed on a catafalque of white felts and carpets, or later, after the death of the Great Khan Möngke in 1259, on a throne.

Even after Ghazan’s official conversion to Islam in 1295, the Ilkhanids seem to have maintained elements of traditional Mongol orientation practices. The Mongols had set the entrances of their tents and the gates of their encampments to the south and faced that direction during religious rites. This custom apparently persisted into Islamic times. The monumental tomb of the Ilkhanid sultan Öljdet at Sultanîyya, for example, is positioned not toward the southwest to face the qibla, as it should be according
Fig. 173 (cat. no. 42). Iskandar’s Funeral Procession, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1933 (33.70)
to Islamic practice, but rather on a cardinal north-south axis, with the rectangular hall situated directly south of the domed room (fig. 141).12

Similarly, the Mongol interest in astrology and the stars continued to be pursued under the Ilkhanids. Astrological concerns underlay one of the first Ilkhanid acts of architectural patronage, Hülegü’s foundation of an observatory at Maragha, begun in 1259, the year after his conquest of Baghdad.13 The observatory became a center for scientific discovery and innovation under Nasir al-Din Tusi, who developed there the well-known astronomical tables known as the Zij-i Ilkhan. It was founded, however, because of Hülégu’s desire to predict terrestrial events from configurations of the planets, stars, and astrological places.14 Astrology remained important for the Ilkhanids and their successors, the Jalayirids, who continued to use the Chinese-Uyghur animal calendar15 and commissioned large, heavily illustrated copies of the astrological treatise Kitab al-balhan.16

Genghis’s grandson the Great Khan Kubilai (r. 1260–94) embraced Buddhism, which had arisen in India sometime between the seventh and fourth centuries B.C. and had gradually spread into Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia. Buddhism became the dominant religion in Yuan China under the auspices of the Tibetan monk Phagspa (see fig. 126). Kubilai’s brother Hülégu (r. 1256–65), founder
Fig. 126 (cat. no. 18). Mandala with imperial portraits, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1330–32. Silk tapestry (ksh). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1993 (1993.54)
of the Ilkhanid line, may also have adopted Buddhism, which grew particularly strong in Iran under his grandson Arghun (r. 1284–91). Arghun reportedly had Buddhist priests brought from India and is even said to have died from an elixir promising eternal life prescribed by one of them. After Arghun’s son Ghazan converted to Islam, the Ilkhanids grew antagonistic toward Buddhism, and most Buddhist temples were destroyed.\(^{17}\)

Although various ruins in Iran have speculatively been identified as Buddhist, that for which the best case can be made is the rock-cut complex carved into the northern slopes of the Kuh-i Rustam range in northwestern Iran, south of the city of Zanjan.\(^{18}\) The complex consists of several caves containing carved reliefs, traces of steps, and cavities that could have enclosed wooden elements. Its identification as a Buddhist monastery is supported by the name of the site, Viar, which may derive from \textit{vihara}, the Sanskrit term for a Buddhist monastery. Like Öljiejüt’s tomb at nearby Sultaniyya, the rock-cut complex at Viar is positioned cardinally, with the principal cave, measuring about 30 feet across and 26 feet deep, on the south side. The west wall preserves some fine reliefs, notably of two large serpentine dragons, each with an unusual tuft of hair growing from the nape of its neck (fig. 127). This style of dragon, which had been popular in China under the late Song and Yuan dynasties, was adopted in Ilkhanid Iran, where it appears on objects (fig. 128) and capitals and tiles found at Takht-i Sulaiman, the Ilkhanid palace erected in the 1270s in northwestern Iran.\(^{19}\)

Following Ghazan’s conversion to Islam in 1295, much of the physical evidence of Buddhism in Iran was eradicated. The same thing happened with ancient indigenous systems of belief, including Zoroastrianism, a dualistic religion based on the
concept of a struggle between good and evil that traced its foundations back to the teachings of Zoroaster, and Manichaeanism, a gnostic religion first preached by Mani. The Ilkhanids’ continued interest in the religious traditions of other eras and cultures is nonetheless evident from surviving manuscripts made for the court in the opening years of the fourteenth century. A manuscript of Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni’s treatise on calendrical systems, Kitab al-athar al-baqiya copied by Ibn al-Kutbi in 1307, demonstrates this curiosity. Virtually the only illustrated copy of the text ever made, the manuscript has several images depicting the celebration of pre-Islamic Iranian holidays such as Mihrjan and Sa’da. Both this manuscript and the section on ancient prophets in the Arabic copy of Rashid al-Din’s Compendium of Chronicles also contain representations of legendary Iranian figures, such as the tyrant Zahak.

Al-Biruni’s original text included a section on Zoroaster, curiously missing from the Ilkhanid copy, as well as one on the life of Mani. The subject of Mani’s execution seems to have captivated the Ilkhanids, for the scene is depicted both in al-Biruni’s text, where the illustration follows the Christian account of Mani’s death by hanging, and in the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings) made a generation later, where the illustration follows the traditional Muslim account of Mani’s death by flaying (fig. 129). Here, Mani’s flayed body lies on the ground, while his stuffed skin dangles from a palm tree. At the right is the hospital mentioned in the text, with female onlookers peering out of the upstairs windows. The group of onlookers on the left wear distinctive hats, tall, pointed, and brimmed. Mongol envoys wore such hats (see fig. 68); they were depicted by European artists in a variety of settings, ranging from the scene of Mongols eating their victims in a manuscript of Matthew Paris made about 1240 to the representation of Mongol envoys in Franciscan Martyrdom, a fresco painted in the 1330s by Ambrogio Lorenzetti for the cloister of San Francesco in Siena. European artists put similar tall, pointed hats on many sorts of foreigners, such as the money changers in the Temple in a Gospel book made in Verona in the late thirteenth century. The hats may have evolved into the tall ones typically worn by magicians and witches in the West.

Artworks and traces of architecture also provide insights into the several types of Christianity that existed in Ilkhanid Iran. The Jacobites, or Syrian Monophysites, believed in the single divine nature of Christ. The head of the Jacobite church in the Persian territories was the historian and polymath Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286). He frequently stayed in the Ilkhanid capitals at Maragha and Tabriz, and his chronicle describes the churches there. None remains, although some scholars have tried to match various rock-cut ruins with these textual accounts. The Jacobites were at odds with the Nestorians, who asserted the independence of Christ’s divine and human natures. Nestorian Christianity had been denounced as a heresy by the Western church in the fifth century but had spread widely in Asia. It was

20. Charles Melville informs me that very little information on Zoroastrianism during this period survives. During the reign of Abuqa, the poet Zartush Bahram wrote a work called Zarubahram (F. Rosenzweig’s edition, Le Livre de Zoroaure [Saint Petersburg, 1904], was unavailable to me) in which he alluded to contemporary events and to the just deserts the Muslims got at the hands of the Mongols. Zartush’s father, Bahram Parsu, also wrote a verse chronicle, Baharayat, praising Zoroastrianism and its founder, but the work is said to have little literary merit. See Amuzgar 1989.
22. The only other example (Paris, BN Ms. arabc 1489), datable to the seventeenth century and probably of Ottoman provenance, is a copy of the Ilkhanid version.
24. Reza Abbasi Collection, Tehran; Grabar and Blair 1980, no. 46.
25. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Ms. 16, fol. 166v; illustrated in L. Arnold 1999.
26. For a Mongol emissary wearing such a hat, see Blair 2002. The Matthew Paris manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Ms. 16, fol. 166v) and the Lorenzetti fresco are illustrated in L. Arnold 1999, fig. 1.7.
27. Vatican, Biblioteca Vaticana, ms lat. 19.

Fig. 119. The Slaying of Mani, page from the Great Mongol Shahname (Book of Kings), probably Tabriz, 1330s. Ink and colors on paper. Reza Abbasi Collection, Tehran.

RELIGIOUS ART OF THE ILKHANIDS 111
Fig. 130 (cat. no. 6). *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad*, from the *Jami‘ al-tavarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles) by Rashid al-Din, Iran (Tabriz), ca. A.H. 714/A.D. 1314–15. Fol. 447; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Edinburgh University Library (MS Arab 10).

popular with prominent women of the Ilkhanid line; Hülegü’s wife Dokhuz Khatun was a Nestorian. The Chinese Nestorian monk Rabban Sauma, sent by Khubilai as an envoy to Pope Nicholas IV (papacy 1288–92) in Rome, traveled through the Ilkhanid realm and noted many churches there. He reached Rome in 1288 and was sent back the following year with gifts and letters urging the Ilkhan Arghun to convert. Arghun did not embrace Christianity, but he had his son (later the ruler Öljeytü) baptized Nicholas in the pope’s honor.

Christian friars of the Franciscan order were also active in Ilkhanid Iran. Nicholas IV was the first Franciscan pontiff, and during his papacy many Franciscan monks embarked on missions to the East. The friars carried religious objects for both personal devotion and proselytizing, and the merchants who accompanied them had their own devotional objects. These portable altars, diptychs, Gospel books, missals, and other treatises became sources of imagery for Ilkhanid painters. The period of Ilkhanid rule saw the rise of the illustrated book in Iran, with manuscript painters drawing upon ideas from both East and West. Illustrations from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, made in the 1330s, reveal the inspiration of Italian works by the likes of Simone Martini, Lorenzetti, and their contemporaries. The borrowed features are both compositional devices—such as a circular arrangement with *repoussé* figures in the foreground and receding planes to indicate perspective—and individual motifs, such as gold halos behind faces in profile, transparent veils, and recumbent or mourning figures. Stock compositions from Christian illustrated books were adapted for Muslim stories; for instance, the
Fig. 131 (cat. no. 47). King Kayd of Hind Recounting His Dream to Mihan, page from the Great Mongol Shahnameh (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 1115)
Nativity of Christ provided a composition for the birth of the prophet Muhammad as illustrated in Rashid al-Din’s world history (fig. 130). Other subjects of Western medieval art, among them the seasons and the labors of the months, were also taken over and appear on metalwork and in manuscripts made in northern Syria and Mesopotamia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.  

The Christianity of neighboring Armenia also played a role in Ilkhanid art, particularly in connection with the arts of the book. The most important center for the production of Armenian manuscripts was Sivnik, the mountainous area north of the Araks River. Monasteries there were exempted from taxes and flourished as major centers of learning and artistic production. The one most prominent at the end of the thirteenth century was the monastery of Gladzor. Nearly seventy of the manuscripts scribes produced there survive, including twenty with illustrations. Armenian artists who trained at these monasteries were peripatetic and often worked in a number of cities, including ones within the Ilkhanid domains.
For example, the painter Awag, who trained at Gladzor, practiced not only in Cilicia but also in the Ilkhanid cities of Tiflis, Tabriz, and Sultaniyā.

When working in Ilkhanid domains, Armenian painters incorporated typical Ilkhanid techniques and styles into their own art of book painting. Such adaptation may be seen in a fine Gospel book copied by the deacon Toros at Tabriz in 1311 and now dispersed.14 While Armenian manuscripts of the period are generally on parchment, this copy of the Gospels, like most Ilkhanid manuscripts, is written on paper. Toros used a quite ordinary paper that is wrinkled, has tiny inclusions, and was never polished. His paintings are very dramatic, with vividly colored figures set against a highly burnished ground. Quite distinctive are the pink and blue washes employed to represent rows of receding hills in the foreground and the blue hands and faces of the figures. While the use of wash rather than opaque color may represent an adaptation to the paper support, it is also characteristic of the major illustrated manuscripts produced in Tabriz at this time, copies of Rashid al-Din’s *Compendium of Chronicles*. Similarly, the receding hills and blue faces typical of Toros’s work appear in a Persian manuscript painting made in Tabriz a generation later, *King Kayd of Hind Recounting His Dream to Mihran* (fig. 131).

Jews too were prominent in Ilkhanid Iran,15 with significant Jewish communities in Isfahan and Hamadan. At Linjan, about 8 miles southwest of Isfahan, the tomb of the Sufi mystic Shaikh Muhammad ibn Bakran (known as Pir-i Bakran; d. 1303) is set near a large cemetery that includes Jewish tombstones from an earlier period (fig. 132).16 This reuse of the site exemplifies the religious syncretism of the Ilkhanid period; a similar history has been posited for the tomb of Sayyid Muhammad west of Isfahan17 and for the sanctuary at Qaydar (now Khudabanda) in the area around Sultaniyā.18 The tomb of Pir-i Bakran took the form of a monumental iwan—that is, a rectangular, vaulted hall open on one side—decorated with tiles and some of the finest and most elaborate stucco embellishment to survive from the Ilkhanid period.19 The superb quality of the decoration shows that the shrine was underwritten by a wealthy patron and hence that such religious syncretism occurred in the highest levels of society.

Like the art commissioned by Armenians, art made for Jews in Ilkhanid Iran partook of the milieu’s characteristic styles. This is evident in the wooden cenotaph for the so-called tomb of Esther and Mordecai at Hamadan.20 Although it includes an inscription in Hebrew, the carving otherwise resembles work done for Muslims, with geometric designs, vase-shaped capitals, and small mihrablike niches. The cenotaph is in very fine condition and may be a later replacement for an older work. The tomb itself may have been an older structure restored by the vizier Rashid al-Din, a native of Hamadan and a Jewish convert to Islam, whose interest in Judaism is well known. His *Compendium of Chronicles* contains a history of the Jews that parallels other sections devoted to histories of the Chinese, Indians, and Turks. Many depictions of Jewish prophets are found in two important manuscripts of the period, the calendrical treatise of al-Biruni copied in 1307 and the Arabic copy of Rashid al-Din’s world history copied in 1314–15.

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16. The finest and most profusely illustrated is the Gladzor Gospels, done by several painters in the opening years of the fourteenth century. See Matthews and Wieck 1994, nos. 36; Mathews and Taylor 2001.
18. See Charles Melville’s chapter 2 in this volume.
Fig. 134 (cat. no. 31). Tent Mosque; Birth Scene, illustrations from the Diez Albums, Iran, 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 70, S. 8, nos. 1, 2)
Fig. 135 (cat. no. 174). Double dinar of Öljeytū, Iran (Shiraz), a.h. 714/A.D. 1314–15. Gold. Art and History Trust Collection

Islam

With Ghazan’s conversion to Islam, the patronage of religious art in Iran became focused on promulgating Islam. Many of Ghazan’s actions as described by Rashid al-Din parallel those taken by Khubilai in China in the 1260s: commissioning dynastic chronicles, encouraging theological debates, and underwriting religious buildings. Most people in Iran at that time were Sunni Muslims, traditionalists who believed that succession to the prophet Muhammad is determined by the consensus of the community. In various pockets of the country, notably southern Iraq and the area around Kashan in central Iran, the population was made up of Shi’ites, followers of the sect according to which succession passed to the Prophet’s family via his cousin and son-in-law ‘Ali. Both Sunnis and Shi’ites venerated ‘Ali and his sons Hasan and Husayn, and this devotion to the Prophet’s family may help explain why depictions of Muhammad became popular at this time. Although today conservative Muslims reject any attempt at representing his person, such was not the case in Ilkhanid times. The Prophet is depicted enthroned at the beginning of a copy of the Marzubannama (Book of the Margrave) transcribed in Baghdad in 1299, and cycles of illustrations of Muhammad’s life appear in manuscripts from the Ilkhanid period—including an undated copy of Abu al-Fadl Muhammad Bal’ami’s history, the 1307 copy of al-Biruni’s treatise (figs. 136, 137), and several copies of Rashid al-Din’s Compendium of Chronicles (fig. 130).

Religious debates between Sunnis and Shi’ites grew vociferous under Ghazan’s successor Öljeytū. He is said to have had a mobile madrasa, or theological school, follow his camp, and in the evening he was entertained by Shi’ite scholars debating their learned Sunni counterparts. The Shi’ites were ultimately successful in their arguments, and Öljeytū officially converted to Shi’ism in a.h. 709 (1310). The date can be verified by his coins; those issued after this date carry a differently shaped cartouche, an expanded profession of faith including the phrase “Ali is God’s friend,” and blessings on the Twelve Imams (fig. 135). The imposition of Shi’ism, however, was only temporary, and under Öljeytū’s young son Abu Sa’id, traditional
Sunni authority was restored by his amirs. Nonetheless, Öljeytü’s conversion foreshadowed the permanent conversion of Iran to Shi‘ism two centuries later in Safavid times, when many Sufi orders rewrote their histories, transforming themselves from Sunni to Shi‘ite.

The arts and architecture produced under the Ilkhanids reflect the diverse sectarian trends active in the early fourteenth century. The last two illustrations in al-Biruni’s calendrical treatise copied in 1307 deal with major events dear to Shi‘ites: the Day of Cursing, when Muhammad exchanged curses with the Christians of Najran and proclaimed Hasan and Husayn his heirs (fig. 136); and the investiture of ‘Ali at Ghadir Khumm, when Muhammad instructed his followers to transfer their loyalty to ‘Ali, invoking God’s support for the friends of ‘Ali and his vengeance on ‘Ali’s enemies (fig. 137). These are the finest and largest illustrations in the text; the investiture at Ghadir Khumm occupies more than three-quarters of its page. They also differ, in both style and iconography, from other illustrations in the manuscript, employing a brighter palette, larger figures, and more dramatic compositions and including detailed renditions of such elements as the Prophet’s cloak and his braided hair.

Mosques

Öljeytü’s conversion to Shi‘ism is also documented by the finest sculptural achievement of the age, the stupendous new mihrab added to the Friday Mosque at Isfahan (fig. 138). Some 20 feet high and 10 feet across, the stucco mihrab displays a set of
Fig. 137 (cat. no. 4). The Investiture of 'Ali at Ghadir Khumm, from the Kitab al-atbar al-baqiya 'an al-quran al-khaliya (Chronology of Ancient Nations), copied by Ibn al-Kutbi, northwestern Iran or northern Iraq, a.h. 707/a.d. 1307–8. Fol. 162r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Edinburgh University Library (MS Arab 161).
concentric niches within rectangular frames. Each area is elaborately worked in a
distinct pattern carved to several depths; grounds of intricate floral design sup-
port arabesque scrolls with inscriptions in different styles of angular and round
script. The texts extol the virtues of Shi‘ism and the traditions of ‘Ali and carry
the date Safar 710 (June–July 1310), just months after Ōljeitū’s official conver-
sion to Shi‘ism.31 The mihrab was evidently commissioned to counter religious
dissension in this traditionally Sunni city, where rioting is said to have broken out
upon news of the ruler’s decision to convert.

After Ghazan’s conversion to Islam he had ordered the construction of baths
and mosques in all towns of the realm; the profits from the bath were to be used to
support the upkeep of the mosque.52 Since most of the Iranian population was
Muslim before Ghazan’s conversion, major cities already had large congregational
mosques that were simply restored or rebuilt under the Ilkhanids, as at Isfahan and
Ardabil. New mosques were added in rural areas opened up for cultivation and col-
onization, such as the Isfahan oasis, where mosques were built or restored to the
southeast of the city at Dashti, Kaj, Aziran, and perhaps as far down the Ziyanda
River as Barsiyān.53

Fig. 138. Stucco mihrab added in 1310 to the Congregational Mosque, Isfahan, to celebrate Ōljeitū’s conversion to Shi‘ism; two views
Ilkhanid congregational mosques vary in material, plan, and form. Though a few in the northwest are built of stone and have horizontal beams (for example, at Asnak, 1332–33), most are constructed of brick, with vaults and arches. Smaller mosques consist of a single domed chamber (Kaj, Dashti, and Aziran, all ca. 1325). Larger mosques are usually composed of iwans, ranging in number from one (mosque of ʿAlishah, Tabriz, early fourteenth century) or two (Ashtarian, 1315–16) to four (Halshuya, early fourteenth century; Friday Mosque at Kirman, 1349). The most stunning of them is the mammoth single-ivan mosque of ʿAlishah at Tabriz, which epitomizes the gargantuan scale of Ilkhanid architecture. The vaulted iwan was designed to outshine the great arched palace of the Sasanian kings at Ctesiphon, then still standing outside Baghdad, the Ilkhanids’ winter capital.

Some mosques built in the Ilkhanid period were variations of the standard four-ivan plan. This classic Iranian mosque plan, in which four iwans are arranged around a central courtyard with the largest iwan leading to a domed room containing the mihrab, is best exemplified in the Fridy Mosque at Veramin just south of Tehran. According to the foundation inscription around the qibla iwan (the iwan pointing toward Mecca), the mosque was commissioned in 722 (1322–23) by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mansur al-Qahwah through the efforts of his son and pious successor Hasan. Another large inscription around the dome chamber gives the date 726 (1325–26), so construction must have taken at least four years. A small inscription in a side aisle identifies the building as the work of ʿAli Qazvini. The patrons were probably members of a family from the nearby village of Qahad that was prominent in the Ilkhanid administration. The amir ʿIzz al-Din Qahad, for example, served as vizier under Öljeitu.

The mosque at Veramin may have been intended for Shiʿites. In about 1340 the Ilkhanid accountant Hamd Allah Mustafa Qazvini reported that Veramin was noted for its population of Twelver Shiʿites (the largest Shiʿite sect), and several shrines to the descendants of ʿAli were built or rebuilt in the town during Ilkhanid times. One of these, the Imamzada Yahya (the tomb for a descendant of ʿAli named Yahya), was extensively decorated with luster tiles. A dado composed of star and cross tiles with geometric, floral, or arabesque designs carries the date 660–61 (1262), and a large mihrab signed by ʿAli ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Tahir is dated 663 (1264). In 1307 the tomb was redecorated, and a new luster cenotaph, signed and dated 10 Muharram 705 (August 3, 1307), was added. A second Shiʿite shrine in Veramin was the tomb tower for ʿAlaʾ al-Din Murtada ibn Fakhr al-Din al-Hasan al-Varamini (d. 1276), completed in 1289. An additional small mosque or shrine was built in 1307. Pious inscriptions on the Friday Mosque—not only the name of ʿAli on the end-plugs between the bricks, but also an invocation to his sons Hasan and Husayn, written prominently in square Kufic above the main doorway—attest to the veneration of the Prophet’s family in the town.

The inscription around the dome chamber in the mosque at Veramin (fig. 139) illustrates some of the problems associated with interpreting texts during this period of religious splintering and syncretism. A large band, over 30 inches high, contains a curious Koranic text, the first seven verses of sura 62. The text opens with four verses glorifying God, who sent a messenger with signs to instruct...
mankind and confer benefits upon them as part of his bounty, which he bestows on whomever he wills. This relatively standard passage about God’s power is followed by three more unusual verses that compare Jews loaded with the Torah to an ass (himar) carrying books and state that God does not guide evildoers.

It is not clear why this particular text was chosen for this location, although various explanations can be proposed. The opening verses about God’s power also occur in the stucco inscription dated 707 (1307) that runs around the Imamzada Yahya, and the text there may simply have been repeated in this nearby congregational mosque, with the extra verses about Jews added to fill the space. This seems unlikely, however, as stucco carvers in the Ilkhanid period were experts at spacing their inscriptions and choosing appropriate texts. The Koranic text on the portal to the dome chamber in the Friday Mosque contains the last three verses of the sura (9—11) along with an altogether appropriate text about Friday prayer. Thus the inscriptions connected with the dome chamber might be read as together containing the whole sura, but this explanation is also insufficient because it presupposes that the stucco carver unconsciously omitted verse 8. V. Krachkovskaya (see n. 58) suggested that the reference to Jews was connected with the conversion of several Jewish doctors to Islam during Ramadan 705 (March—April 1306). But given the two-decade gap between those events and the construction of the mosque, this idea too seems unlikely. Another possibility is that the text was chosen because it contains a pun on the word ass; since the village of Quhad, the hometown of the mosque’s patron, was sometimes called Quhad of the Asses (Quhad-i Kharran), either to distinguish it from a nearby Quhad of the Water (Quhad-i Ma’i) or because living there were many adherents of the Hanifi school of law.65 This explanation, which depends on punning in two languages—Arabic in the Koranic text, Persian for the village names—is once again difficult to accept. Finally, the verses may simply have been chosen to please a Shi‘ite audience, for they contain the phrase “friends to God” (awliya Allah), a term interpreted by Shi‘ites to designate their special relationship through ‘Ali, who was God’s friend (wali allah).

In many ways, mosque architecture of the Ilkhanid period represents the culmination of the style formulated under the Ilkhans’ predecessors, the Seljuqs, rulers of Iran and Iraq from the mid-eleventh century to the end of the twelfth. The dome chamber at Veramin, for example, repeats the classic elevation developed in Seljuq times: above the square chamber (33 feet wide) is an octagonal zone composed of four squinches alternating with four blind arches, which in turn supports a sixteen-sided zone, on which rests the hemispherical dome. The proportions of

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64. The thirteenth-century geographer Yaqut gives the first explanation; the Ilkhanid accountant Hand Allah Musta‘fi Qarvini the second; Hand Allah Musta‘fi Qarvini 1948, pp. 58–59.
65. Rashid al-Din expressly mentions Sanjar’s tomb as the most magnificent building in the world, which Ghurid himself had seen and used as the model for his own tomb. Rashid al-Din 1998, p. 685.
Ilkhanid architecture, however, are refined and attenuated compared with those of their Seljuq counterparts. Rooms are generally taller in relationship to their width; arches are pointed, struck from four centers, and crowned high, with a height greater than half their span. Iwans are correspondingly narrower and higher, and minarets are taller, often with several stories divided by balconies supported on muqarnas corbels. The courtyard, as at Veramin, is smaller in relation to the size and scale of the structure. Ilkhanid mosques also make fuller use of color, particularly in glazed tile. The portal at Veramin is covered with strapwork patterns in light and dark blue, and the dome chamber contains panels of tile mosaic worked in the same two colors. The extensive use of glazed tile and tile mosaic is what most visibly differentiates Ilkhanid from Seljuq architecture.

*Tombs and Shrines*

While Ilkhanid mosque architecture was conservative, Ilkhanid funerary architecture was innovative. Tomb chambers, large and domed, were meant to outdo the colossal tomb that the Seljuq sultan Sanjar had built for himself at Merv (see quotation at head of this chapter). Tombs were integrated into complexes, which typically included a mosque, a madrasa, and other buildings clustered around the tomb itself. These were the precursors of the type of large, planned funerary complex, known as külliye, that was built by the Ottomans at Bursa and elsewhere beginning in the second half of the fourteenth century.

The tomb complexes sponsored by the Ilkhanid court, as one might expect, were the largest and finest of their time. The two outside Tabriz built for the ruler

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*Fig. 140 (cat. no. 79). Star tile, Iran (Kashan), A.H. Ramadan 663/A.D. June 1265. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B60F2034)*

*Fig. 141. Tomb of Öljeitü at Sultaniyya, 1315–25*
Ghazan and his vizier Rashid al-Din are known mainly from their endowment deeds, but the tomb for Sultan Öljeytu survives at Sultaniyä (see fig. 141), although the surrounding lesser structures have disappeared. The site, on the grassy plains between Tabriz and Qazvin, had been chosen by the Mongols for their capital, and the stunning tomb befits the name Sultaniyä, which means “imperial.” The huge octagon, some 125 feet across, is crowned by an enormous dome more than 80 feet in diameter and 165 feet high and once ringed by eight minarets. Attached on the south is a rectangular hall measuring 50 by 65 feet. The monumental scale and sophisticated handling of space, notably the interpenetration of volumes and the superbly decorated vaults in the galleries (fig. 142), place the tomb among the masterpieces of world architecture. Its builder was able to realize the sultan’s desire for monumentality with sophistication and grace. The building remained the prototype for imperial tombs built by the Mongols for centuries, down to the Taj Mahal.

The interior of Öljeytu’s tomb is sadly worn. Originally decorated in tile (figs. 143, 144) and plaster, it was redecorated with painted plaster soon after its dedication in 1313. Above the strapwork dado, once-majestic inscriptions in white against a blue ground frame the interior iwans. The soffits are stuccoed with shallowly molded bands of ornament that were then painted and gilded. An enormous inscription rings the dome, which is also studded with huge ogival medallions of stucco shaped over bases of coarse cloth stiffened with glue or size. The upper galleries had low balustrades of wood or marble; the windows were once fitted with bronze grilles ornamented at the juncture of the bars with bronze knobs and balls inlaid with gold 

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Fig. 142. Gallery vault in the tomb of Öljeytu, Sultaniyä, 1314–25

Fig. 143 (cat. no. 121). Section of a tile frieze, from the tomb of Öljeytu, Iran (Sultaniyä), 1307–13. Earthenware, glazed, cut and assembled as a mosaic. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Madina Collection of Islamic Art, Gift of Camilla Chandler Frost (M 2002.1.144)

Fig. 144 (cat. no. 122). Quadrangular tile, from the tomb of Öljeytu, Iran (Sultaniyä), 1307–13. Earthenware, underglaze painted. Private collection
and silver. A few surviving specimens of these are inscribed with the name of the patron;⁷⁹ slightly smaller examples with a mounted horseman (fig. 145) must have been made for similar monuments. Many of the decorative designs in the tomb, particularly those in the galleries, recall contemporary book illumination, suggesting that in this period designers worked from pattern books and that patterns common to a number of media were executed by specialists in each.

Sufi orders played a crucial role in the religious affairs of the period (fig. 146). The two most important orders were the Suhravardiyya and the Kubraviyya, but there were many others, notably the Kazaruniyya, which gained such wealth from commerce that it was able to mint coins at the main shrine center outside Shiraz.⁷⁷ Sufi shaikhs (scholars or religious leaders) were responsible for the Ilkhanids’ conversion to Islam, and members of court often belonged to these mystical orders.⁷⁷

The type of wandering (Sufi) dervish known as a qalander became widespread at this time. One of the most famous was Baraq Baba (d. 1307), a crypto-shamanic Anatolian Turkman who was close to the Mongol rulers Ghazan and Öljëtitü, even serving as their official ambassador and possibly spy.⁷¹ He was renowned for his outlandish appearance, which recalls that of a Mongol shaman: he usually went around filthy and naked except for a red loincloth, a felt turban with cow horns, and an assortment of bones and bells around his neck, to which he danced in imitation of bears and monkeys. A commentary on his writings written some fifty years after his death suggests that there was no clear line of demarcation between his type of crypto-shamanic Sufism and its more orthodox counterpart.

⁷⁷ The abridged text of these is given in Rashid al-Din 1998, pp. 685–88; on the Rab‘i-i Rashidi (Rashid’s quarter), see Blair 1984.
⁷⁸ Blair 1986c.
⁷⁹ Sims 1982.
⁸⁰ A. U. Pope and Ackerman 1938: 77, pl. 1357a.
⁸¹ Blair 1982a. For a biography of one of the members, Shaikh Amin al-Din Balyani, see Aigne 1997b.
⁸² There is a vast and growing literature on the subject of Sufism under the Mongols. On the role of Sufis in conversion, see DeWeese 1994; Melville 1999b.
⁸³ Algar 1984a; on qalandars and popular religion in the Ilkhanid period, see Gronke 1997.
Funerary complexes like those built for Ilkhanid rulers and viziers were also created for Sufi shaikhs, both living and dead. Lisa Golombek nicknamed these complexes “little cities of God.” The finest to survive from the Ilkhanid period surround the graves of Bayazid Bastami at Bastam, the Suhravardi shaikh ‘Abd al-Samad at Natanz, Shaikh Sāfi at Ardabil, Shaikh Jam at Turbat-i Jam, and Pir-i Bakran at Linjan. In plan these Sufi shrines are generally additive and rather haphazardly arranged, as they were built over extended periods and often incorporated earlier structures on the site. A typical example includes iwans and some sort of monumentalization of the grave, either a tomb tower or an elevated fenced-in plot known as a hazira. The continued sanctity of these shrines may be the reason they have survived in better condition than similar tomb complexes for rulers and their courtiers.

Members of the Ilkhanid court often underwrote the major components of these Sufi shrines. Sultan Öljeitū commissioned some of the restorations at the shrine of Bayazid Bastami, including its flanged tower, which was intended as a tomb for the sultan’s son. Öljeitū’s vizier Zain al-Din Mastari sponsored the construction of the buildings in the tomb complex for ‘Abd al-Samad in the first decade of the fourteenth century. Öljeitū ordered a tomb built for Baraq Baba at Sultanīyya in about 1310 and assigned a daily stipend of fifty dinars for his followers there. Despite that shaikh’s bizarre attributes and behavior, the tomb is a typical octagonal tower (fig. 147) and served as the model for one built in Isfahan in 1325 to honor the grave of the Imamzada Ja’far, a prominent Shi’ite. A khanqah (hospice for Sufis) was added to the site of Baraq Baba’s tomb in 1333. His influence lasted for generations; his successors in Anatolia had ties to the Ottoman court.

Women were also patrons of Sufi shrines. Fars Malik Khatun, daughter of Mahmudshah (d. 1336), the governor of Fars province and founder of the Inju dynasty there, had a tomb complex built over the grave of the local Suhravardi saint Najib al-Din ‘Abd ibn Buzghush. He had been a disciple of Shihab al-Din ‘Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191), founder of the Suhrawardiyaa, a Sufi order that combined mysticism and philosophy.
Women’s capacity to be patrons of religious art reflects their political importance in Ilkhanid times, particularly in southern Iran. Abesh Khatun (ca. 1260–1286), enthroned at age four as Salghurid ruler of Fars, had the right to strike coins in her own name (fig. 43), making her the first female officially to reign over Persian territory in Islamic times. She married Hülegü’s son Tash Möngke; her status as Chinghizid princess by marriage enabled her to escape persecution by the Ilkhan Arghun after her participation in an unsuccessful attempt to secure independence for the province of Fars. Although Abesh was the last of the Salghurid line, her daughter Kordujin was later appointed governor of Fars under Abu Sa’id. The role of women in day-to-day religious activities is harder to document; contemporary chronicles offer little on the subject. The upper story incorporated into many mosques built during this period (notably the congregational mosque at Yazd) has sometimes been interpreted as an area designated for women.

The tombs of Sufi saints were decorated with the finest materials money could buy. The tomb of ‘Abd al-Samad, a member of the Suhrawardiyya, at Natanz is roofed with a stunning muqarnas vault (fig. 148), perhaps a reference to the muqarnas dome over the Baghdad tomb of the order’s founder. The walls at Natanz were once revetted
Fig. 151 (cat. no. 124). Mihrab tile, attributed to 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn 'Ali Abi al-Husain, Iran (Kashan), early 14th century. Fritware, overglaze luster-painted. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (C1977-1910)


with luster-glazed tiles, including those making up a dado of star and cross tiles surmounted by a frieze with inscriptions and birds. Many of these tiles, now dispersed in museums, are identifiable by their birds, whose heads have sometimes been defaced by a zealous iconoclast (figs. 149, 150). The mihrab in the tomb had an elaborate lusterware hood that clearly was specially crafted to fit the space. Its large size and threedimensionality must have sometimes made the piece extremely difficult to fire.

A contemporary painting, The Bier of Alexander (fig. 153), gives us a good idea of the setting provided in these tombs for funeral services. Since elements in the painting correspond closely to surviving objects and to the description in the endowment for Rashid al-Din’s tomb complex outside Tabriz, we can assume that this is an accurate, if generalized, depiction of real spaces and activities. The scene is set in a room with a tiled dado and painted designs similar to those found in Öljettü’s tomb at Sultanıyya. In the center is the large wooden coffin, placed on a cenotaph. Aristotle weeps into his handkerchief, and Alexander’s mother is prostrate with grief over the coffin. (Her figure, seen from the back like the chorus of veiled and wailing women in the foreground, is modeled on figures from contemporary Italian paintings.)

Four large candlesticks surround the bier; hanging lamps and incense burners are nearby. The arrangement matches the description of Rashid al-Din’s tomb, which was to be lit by four hanging lamps and beeswax candles...
in four large candlesticks, with incense perfuming the air. The candlesticks in the
painting resemble the very large one that Öljëtitù’s vizier Karim al-Din Shughani
presented to the shrine at Bastam in 1308–9 (fig. 154), of brass inlaid with silver and
decorated with floral designs, cartouches, and a dedicatory inscription.53
Candlesticks with inscriptions or geometric decoration were probably intended for
mosques or tombs; similar candlestands with figural decoration (figs. 224, 228) may
have been designed for household use.

The painting shows the cenotaph set on a carpet that has a repeating geometric
field inside several borders of geometric designs or pseudo-Kufic letters. There is little
with which to compare this image; only a few carpets survive from the period. Most
are small animal carpets, which, to judge from contemporary paintings,54 were
designed to be set under thrones or in palaces. Cotton flat-weave (zilu) carpets with
repeated niche designs (fig. 155) may have been intended for large congregational
mosques, particularly in central Iran, where they are still produced and popular. So
far, however, we know of no examples of the type of tomb carpet seen in the painting.

Manuscripts

Tombs were the setting for Koran recitation and prayers. According to the
endowment deed for Rashid al-Din’s tomb, a trio of Koran readers took turns
reading from small minbars (pulpits) set near the latticed screen connecting the

Fig. 154 (cat. no. 160). Candlestick, Iran,
A.H. 708/A.D. 1308–9. Bronze, inlaid with
silver. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of
Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes (35.106)

Fig. 155 (cat. no. 78). Fragment of a flat-weave prayer rug, Iran, early 14th century. Cotton, weft-faced
compound tabby. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (IR-1253)
tomb to the adjacent mosque. The reciters were to continue around the clock and deliver special readings on holidays. Fittingly, Ilkhanid patrons channeled much of their money into magnificent thirty-volume copies of the Koran that were endowments to tombs and shrines. Although illustrated manuscripts of the Ilkhanid period are the ones most prized by scholars and collectors today, these monumental and lavishly decorated (but unillustrated) copies of the Koran were clearly the most important manuscripts in their own time (figs. 121, 158). The paper they are written on is some of the finest ever produced; it was made in enormous sheets that were glazed and polished to almost glassy perfection.89 Most folios measure approximately 21 by 16 inches, but those of the whopping copy given to Öljii’s tomb at Sultaniiya are twice that size and fit descriptions of so-called Baghdadi-size paper. More than two thousand enormous Baghdadi-size sheets were required to make this extraordinary copy of the Koran.

Equally fine is the calligraphy of these splendid works. Each page typically has five lines of large script, written in a calligraphic style that merges many features of the formal muhaqqaq with the more curvilinear thuluth. The script is penned in gold or black ink, often painstakingly outlined in ink of the other color (figs. 121, 156, 245). The manuscripts were executed by the most famous calligraphers of

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Fig. 156 (cat. no. 65). Page from Öljii’s Mosul Koran, copied by ibn Zaid al-Husaini ‘Ali ibn Muhammad, Iraq (Mosul), a.h. 706–11/ a.d. 1306–11. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (ls 1613.1, fol. 1v)

Fig. 157 (cat. no. 125). Koran box, made by Al-Hasan ibn Qutumak ibn Fakhr al-Din, northwestern Iran, a.h. shortly after mid-Rajab 745/a.d. November 1344. Carved, painted, and assembled wood boards, bronze hinges. The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Atar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait National Museum (LNS 135 W)

80. Blair 1996.
81. See Melikian-Chirvani 1987.
82. See, for example, the scenes Zahab Enthroned (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 25.5) and Farsan Going to Iraq’s Palace (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C., S86.0100) from the Great Mongol Shahnama; Grabar and Blair 1980, nos. 1, 8. Ettinghausen 1959a.
83. On paper, see Bloom 2001.
Fig. 158 (cat. no. 63). Right side of double-page frontispiece from the Anonymous Baghdad Koran, illuminated by Muhammad ibn Aybak ibn 'Abdallah, Iraq (Baghdad), A.H. 701–7/A.D. 1302–8. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Is 1614.1)
the day. One of these was Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi (d. ca. 1331), known as Shaikhzada (son of the shaikh), who belonged to the family that supervised the Suhrawardi khanaqa at Baghdad; there Ahmad became the leading calligrapher of his generation. Calligraphers worked on these Koran manuscripts in tandem with illuminators, and Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi was paired with Muhammad ibn Aybak. The fact that both scribe and illuminator repeatedly signed their works attests to the status of these artists, who took as many as six years to complete a thirty-volume manuscript.

Women were among those who endowed their favorite shrines or their own tombs with lavish copies of the Koran. Tashi Khatun, wife of the Injuid Mahmoudshah
and mother of his fourth son and ultimate successor, Abu Ishaq (r. 1343–53), gave such a work to the Shi‘ite shrine of Ahmad ibn Musa al-Rida in Shiraz. The manuscript shows that many of the traditions developed at the Ilkhanid capitals of Baghdad and Tabriz passed to the governors and successors of the Ilkhanids in Shiraz. Like its metropolitan counterparts, the Koran made for Tashi is transcribed on large sheets of half-Baghdadi-size paper with five lines of gold script per page. It too was produced by a team, the scribe Pir Yahya al-Sufi working with the illuminator Hamza ibn Muhammad al-‘Alawi. However, the copies of the Koran produced in Shiraz and many other manuscripts made for the Injuids there are inferior to the manuscripts earlier produced at Baghdad and Tabriz. Although the calligraphy of the later manuscripts is good, the paper and pigments used are of poorer quality.

Tashi Khatun was not the only woman to commission a multipart manuscript of the Koran: Mahmudshah’s daughter Fars Malik Khatun also did so (fig. 269). Smaller in size and with more lines to the page (seven) than that commissioned by Tashi, Fars Malik’s copy of the Koran, despite its fine illumination, was a cheaper manuscript. According to the endowment deed, it was to be kept in her house until her death and then placed at the head of her tomb. Apparently the manuscript was still unfinished when Fars Malik died and was only completed some thirty years later; in 1375–76 it was given by the Muzaffarid vizier Turanshah to the Masjid-i ‘Atiq (“Old Mosque”) in Shiraz.

While these glorious manuscripts of the Koran were the acme of Ilkhanid religious art, many of their features are also found (as with innovations of Ilkhanid religious architecture) in secular arts of the period. The large sheets of fine paper used for exquisite calligraphy and illumination also provided a smooth, expansive surface for painters, who consequently refocused their attention from pottery to paper. It is true that many of the secular manuscripts are on mediocre paper, but one of the first illustrated manuscripts to survive from the period, a copy of the Shi‘ite encyclopedia Rasa‘il ikhwan al-safa‘ transcribed in Baghdad in 1287, has a stunning double-page frontispiece executed in glowing colors on extraordinarily fine polished paper. Greater use of paper also gave artists a way to transfer designs from one medium to another, allowing motifs produced for book decoration to be used on glazed tiles, painted plaster, and carpets. Designs on the gallery vaults at Sultanliyya, for example, share many features with the geometric patterns decorating frontispieces of Koran manuscripts. The religious arts of the Ilkhanid period reflect the varieties of patronage and the vast range of media and techniques available at this time of extraordinary cross-continental interchange. The great achievements of Ilkhanid religious art, whether monumental mosques and tombs or exquisitely calligraphed manuscripts of the Koran, provided inspiration to artists both within Iran and beyond it for centuries to come, and their transcendent beauties still speak to us today.
The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran  

ROBERT HILLENBRAND

Then, the custom of portraiture flourished so in the lands of Cathay and the Franks until sharp-penned Mercury scribbled the rescript of rule in the name of Sultan Abusâ’id Khudaybânda [i.e., until Sultan Abusâ’id Khudaybânda came to the throne]. Master Ahmad Musa, who was his father’s pupil, lifted the veil from the face of depiction, and the [style of] depiction that is now current was invented by him. Among the scenes by him that lighted on the page of the world in the time of the aforementioned emperor, an Abusâ’idnama, a Kalila u Dimna, a Mi’rajnama calligraphed by Mawâlana Abdullah Saryafi, and a Tarikh-i Chingizi in beautiful script by an unknown hand were in the library of the late emperor Sultan Husayn Mirza.

—Dust Muhammad, Preface to The Bahram Mirza Album

To judge by what has survived, there can be no doubt that the luxurious decorated and illustrated books produced from about 1280 to about 1336 were, along with architecture, the principal achievement of the visual arts in Ilkhanid times. Ceramics and metalwork, which had developed so dramatically in technique, subject matter, and expressive range during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, failed to sustain quite the same momentum under the Ilkhans. Perhaps there was less call for them, which may reflect changes in the pattern of patronage, especially in mercantile circles, arising from the cataclysmic Mongol invasions. The massive loss of life in northern Iran and Khurasan would have greatly thinned the ranks of patrons and also to some extent craftsmen, causing a loss of continuity in technical expertise that could not readily have been rectified. Yet Abu al-Qasim Kashani’s treatise on ceramic techniques, written about 1300; such sumptuous new wares as lajvardins; and pictorially complex metalwork all indicate that these arts were still vibrant.

The sudden rise to prominence of book painting may stem in part from its capacity to carry more subtle messages than any other medium (fig. 161). Political developments are of direct relevance in this regard. The rapid conversion to Islam of the Mongol elite after 1295 had the most direct impact on the arts. (Significantly, the year before, the death in China of Khubilai Khan, the supreme Mongol ruler, had given greater independence to the Mongols in Iran.) A building boom, concentrated on religious structures, was matched by a corresponding revival in the output of top-quality Korans. Of exceptionally large scale thanks to a special so-called Baghdadi paper, the finest then available, these works also featured calligraphy and illumination of the highest possible standard. The new emphasis on massive scale continued in the field of book painting and also characterized several buildings ordered by the most exalted patrons in the land. Among these were the mosque of ‘Alîshâ in Tabriz, the tomb of ‘Îljîtî at Sultanîyya, and the mausoleum of Ghazar...
Khan himself, whose liberal endowment paid for multiple copies of the Koran and also for regular readings from it, which gave the structure a religious function. Such high-profile emphasis on traditional Islamic piety found a somewhat less traditional counterpart in the creation of multiple images of the prophet Muhammad and narrative scenes from his life. Other gestures of ostentatious piety among the Mongol elite included building mosques and charitable institutions for the poor, honoring holy men, wearing Sufi garb, undertaking the chillah (a forty-day ascetic retreat), visiting popular shrines, and ordering public Koran readings. Ghazan Khan did all of these things.8

The Rise of Book Painting

A crucial side effect of the very public Mongol conversion, and of the Ilkhans’ desire to draw propaganda capital from it, was a sudden surge in the production of manuscripts, made possible by the development on a grand scale of all the expensive facilities required to sustain such production. Papemaking factories were obviously the

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8. Baussani 1968, pp. 122–43; Boyle 1968b, pp. 389, 391, 395; Melville 1998b, pp. 163, 168. He may also have been the patron of one of the finest of Ilkhanid Korans; see James 1988, pp. 12, 38, 96, 235.
key element, and surviving Ilkhanid manuscripts document how wide-ranging were the size and quality of their output. However, calligraphers and workers in their ancillary trades—those who prepared the paper, pens, and ink, bookbinders and leatherworkers, illuminators and painters—also benefited from the new direction taken by royal and vizierial patronage. In fact, the extremely rapid development of book painting in this period can be seen as an unexpected by-product of calligraphy, which contemporary culture regarded as its principal art form. But it also represents a distinct change of direction in artistic priorities, and thus a redeployment of the artistic energies then available.

Why book painting? An answer is perhaps more likely to be found in the purpose of the newly commissioned volumes than in the medium itself. All these books had a closely focused aim: to assert and promote either religion or heritage. The needs of the first were met principally by Korans, but also by prestigiously produced volumes of hadith (sayings of the Prophet) and ta’ṣīr (commentaries on the Koran). Heritage was served by history books such as ‘Ala Malik Juvaini’s Tārīḵ-i jahan-gūsha (History of the World Conqueror, fig. 201), Abu al-Fadl Muhammad Bal’ami’s translation of al-Ṭabarī’s Ta’rīḵ al-rusūl wa al-mulūk (Chronicle of Prophets and Kings), and of course Rashid al-Dīn’s Ḫamsī al-tavārikh (Compendium of Chronicles, fig. 162), as well as by a flood of illustrated copies of the Shahnama (Book of Kings), the Persian national epic (fig. 163). In such works, the hitherto stubbornly alien rulers of Iran were expressing a new and public commitment to the religion and cultural heritage of the very lands that they themselves had devastated some two generations previously—and doing so with an urgency that suggested they were making up for lost time.

Fig. 162 (cat. no. 7). *Mountains between Tibet and India*, from the Ḫamsī al-tawārikh (Compendium of Chronicles) by Rashid al-Dīn, Iran (Tabriz), A.H. 714/A.D. 1314–15. Fol. 261v; ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (MSS 727)
Fig. 163 (cat. no. 14). Arslan Captured by Aushir, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.103)
The Extant Manuscripts

Some three dozen illustrated manuscripts have survived in whole or in part from the Ilkhanid period. Clearly this amount of material allows for adequate study—enough to avoid skewed generalizations founded on too little evidence. It is possible to isolate significant trends while remaining alert to the remarkable variety of these manuscripts. Major centers of production can be identified, as can the most popular texts. But in order to make sense of what happened in this period, and to analyze how it relates to earlier and later production, a close, detailed focus on key manuscripts is required rather than brief and thus possibly superficial comments on all or most of them. This account therefore omits the various manuscripts of the *Kalila va Dimna* (a book of animal fables), none of which seem to be crucial to the argument; the fascinating scientific anthology *Muʿnis al-ahmar* with its highly individual illustrations and precious evidence that a school of book painting flourished at Isfahan (fig. 261); and other books on star lore, cosmography (fig. 258), history, and ethics, several of them with a secure or at least likely Iraqi provenance.

The range of texts chosen for illustration in Iran during the Ilkhanid period is much wider than that of earlier Arab painting. In addition to the subject matter just cited, there are bestiaries, fables, epics,
Fig. 166 (above). Scene from the *Samak-i 'ayyar* (Samak the Knight-Errant) by Sadaqa ibn Abu al-Qasim Shirazi, Iran, ca. 1330s. Fol. 217v; ink and colors on paper. Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Ouseley 379)

Fig. 167 (right). Page from the *Samak-i 'ayyar* (Samak the Knight-Errant) by Sadaqa ibn Abu al-Qasim Shirazi, Iran, ca. 1330s. Fol. 253r; ink and colors on paper. Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Ouseley 380)

Fig. 168 (cat. no. 29). Landscape, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran, 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 71, S. 10)
encyclopedias, works of philosophy, calendrical systems, lyric or panegyrical poetry by various authors (figs. 164, 165), and even a prose romance (figs. 166, 167). This largely new material posed problems of illustration that could not be solved simply by reshuffling the standard iconographic components of earlier painting. Instead, it called for a fundamental reevaluation of the functions of illustrated books to keep abreast of the dramatic expansion in their subject matter. They became fashionable, collectible objects of high status, popular in many fields of learning and leisure, perhaps as a result of the educational function of several key manuscripts.

The variety of styles employed to illustrate this remarkable array of subjects is correspondingly wide, as is the range of centers at which the books were made. These styles were further enriched by borrowings from western Europe and from the Far East (fig. 168), and the latter in particular decisively broadened the pictorial (as distinct from the purely iconographic) repertoire. A readiness to experiment was, it seems, fostered by patrons who sought to use illustrated books for new purposes.

The Morgan Bestiary

The sequence of key manuscript opens with a bestiary by Ibn Bakhtishu', an `Abbasid court physician, that was originally written in Arabic and then translated into Persian as *Manafīs-i hayawan* (On the Usefulness of Animals). The Persian copy in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, was made in Maragha in 1297-98 or 1299-1300. Though smaller (14 by 11 inches) than some of the other ambitious Ilkhanid manuscripts, it is typical of the school in its innovative approach to page layout, with illustrations big and small distributed throughout the available space and in different formats from page to page. The painters lift the depiction of living creatures out of the doldrums of stereotype and investigate the potential of naturalism, expressiveness, and even sheer fantasy.

In many images, this new interest in the depiction of specific rather than prototypical creatures goes hand in hand with an unprecedented awareness of the potential of landscape. This is an unmistakable response to Far Eastern works of art, although precisely what they were remains uncertain. Hence the Morgan Bestiary is an early but classic example of the Iranian encounter with Chinese art. The impact of Chinese handscrolls can be sensed in the many pictures in which the frame abruptly terminates the scene, thereby forcing viewers to complete it in their imaginations. Often enough, Chinese landscape features serve merely as a miniaturized decorative backdrop for the large-scale creatures occupying center stage, but they also occasionally suggest specific habitats, from misty mountain ranges to a bird's-eye view of a tropical island (fig. 169). The spatial relationships so integral to the types of Chinese art that inspired the Iranian artists (probably at one remove or more) are reversed, so that, for example, gigantic blossoms and birds contradict the proportions of the tree in which they are set. Strong, assertive, clashing colors and powerful outlines replace the
Fig. 169 (cat. no. 2). The Simurgh (a mythical bird), from the Manafi’-i hayawan (On the Usefulness of Animals), copied by 'Abd al-Hadi ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Ibrahim al-Maraghi for Shams al-Din ibn Ziya’ al-Din al-Zushki, northwestern Iran (Maragha), A.H. 697 or 699/A.D. ca. 1297–1300. Fol. 527; ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MS M. 500)
restricted palette and deliberately ambiguous modeling of the putative Chinese originals, and thus their distinctive sense of illimitable space is lost. Rather than simply copying Chinese elements, then, the Iranian artists harnessed them to their own way of seeing. China was less a model than a catalyst.

The "Chronology of Ancient Nations"

That scientific manuscripts remained as popular in Ilkhanid times as in thirteenth-century Iraq is shown by the surviving manuscripts datable between 1275 and 1315. Along with two bestiaries, two cosmographies, and a book on the stars, there is the Kitab al-athar al-baqiya (Chronology of Ancient Nations) by the eleventh-century polymath Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni, dated 797 (1307–8) and now in the Edinburgh University Library. Despite the rather forbidding nature of its contents—the calendrical systems of the known world, past and present, and their associated festivals—this lengthy, three-hundred-year-old text offers numerous if fleeting opportunities for illustration. The twenty-five illustrations of this copy present al-Biruni’s text as a survey of the world’s religions, true and false. The patron who ordered it made, while obviously sharing the author’s fascination with other systems of belief, did not share his tolerance—or at any rate the painters commissioned to illustrate the book did not. An underlying charge of fervent sectarian belief can be detected throughout the cycle of illustrations; in particular, three of the five scenes depicting Muhammad have a markedly Shi’ite emphasis. Because of the wide-ranging scope of the text, entirely different subjects could have been chosen for illustration, and, by the same

Fig. 170 (cat. no. 4). Muhammad Forbids Intercalation, from the Kitab al-athar al-baqiya (an al-quran al-khaliya (Chronology of Ancient Nations), copied by Ibn al-Kutbi, northwestern Iran or northern Iraq, A.H. 707/A.D. 1307–8. Fol. 6v; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Edinburgh University Library (MS. Arab 161).
token, the choices actually made must have been deliberate. Thus it is appropriate to look for evidence that the illustrations were an integrated cycle projecting specific ideas or at any rate to inquire what motivation lay behind the choices made.

Distinct emphases immediately assert themselves in the subject matter and placing of the pictures. The scenes involving the prophet Muhammad, for example, are strategically located at roughly the beginning of the book, on folios 6v (fig. 170), 10v; the middle, on folio 92r; and the end, on folios 161r, 162r—a symmetrical pattern of distribution that recalls the use of full-page illuminations at the beginning, middle, and end of Korans. This arrangement may have been intended as a means of sanctifying the entire book or at least of asserting the dominance of Islam amid so many other conflicting systems of belief. In the number of illustrations, too, Islam takes pride of place among the religions represented. Other marked attitudes detectable in the paintings are a hatred of heresy and freethinking, in both Islam and other faiths, and an interest in pre-Islamic Iranian beliefs and festivals.

The treatment of Buddhist, Judaic, and Christian images is particularly revealing. Special favor had been extended to these three faiths under the earlier Ilkhans, some of whom espoused Buddhism and Christianity; at that time all three faiths flourished as never before in Iran,18 and Jews and Christians alike rose to high office. But the Mongol conversion to Islam was followed by state discrimination against, and even persecution of, other religions.19 The razing of Buddhist temples, monasteries, and statues is referred to obliquely here in a painting of Abraham destroying the idols of the Sabians, which are anachronistically depicted with the shaven heads, ample bellies, cross-legged poses, mudras, and (in one case) gilded surfaces of Buddhist devotional images.

Judaism and Christianity, however, are approached in a somewhat more complex manner. Two images of Judaic content depict key moments in which God punished his chosen people by allowing foreigners to destroy or capture the symbols of his presence among them. The scene of Bukhtnassar (Nebuchadnezzar) overseeing the destruction by fire of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem—here represented as the Dome of the Rock—records one of the great catastrophes of Jewish history, itself followed by the Babylonian exile. The other scene represents a disaster of comparable magnitude from the earlier era of the judges. The High Priest Eli, old, blind, and fat, falls back in shock, breaking his neck, as he hears the news that the Philistines have captured the Ark of the Covenant and that his two wicked sons have been killed (fig. 171).20 When the images allocated to any given faith are so few, each carries a greater freight of meaning, and in this case the highlighting of two major disasters for the Jews could be interpreted as a sign of hostility on the part of the painter and perhaps also of his patron.

The treatment of Christian scenes reflects similar preoccupations, although here emphasis is secured by omission and commission alike. The omissions, in a text devoted to calendars and their associated festivals, are indeed striking. The central festivals of the Christian faith—Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, normally rep-

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20. Eli’s elaborately decorated chair subverts the standard format of an enthronement scene, while also suggesting a Torah shrine. For a brief discussion of this image, see Sourab 1975, pp. 141, 143.
resented by scenes of Christ’s birth, Crucifixion, and Resurrection—are absent. The core of Christianity has, so to speak, been airbrushed out of the picture. Instead, the two images devoted to traditional Christian themes depict the Annunciation, an event alluded to in the Koran, and the Baptism of Christ—Nestorians believed that this was the moment when Jesus became divine. The latter is of course an event of central theological importance, but the artist has cleverly contrived to drain away its significance (while still ensuring that the scene is recognizable) by opting to illustrate not the Baptism itself but the moments after it. In thoroughly humdrum fashion John the Baptist helps Jesus to put on his coat, while the Savior’s slippers float off downstream. Not surprisingly, the hand of God is absent, though related concepts were known to Islamic painters at the time; the Holy Spirit, now metamorphosed into a bird of Chinese appearance, is not placed above Christ’s head but in the middle distance to his right, thereby robbing this motif too of its traditional significance. In much the same spirit, Jesus is overlapped by Muhammad in the scene where they ride together, while on folio 161r (fig. 136) Muhammad triumphantly outfaces the Christians of Najran.

The stylistic hallmarks of these paintings are consistent: a preference for a strong graphic line, bright colors, and formulaic compositions involving single figures or tightly massed groups disposed serially along the frontal plane. The figures take up most of the space, with only intermittent attempts to develop a more sophisticated setting by means of Eastern landscape elements. Instead, the principal decorative accent is provided by obsessively convoluted drapery that seems to take on a life of its own and for which the closest parallels are in Byzantine rather than Islamic art. This feature suggests that the manuscript may have been produced in Mosul, with its preponderantly Christian population.

**The “Compendium of Chronicles”**

Nothing in earlier Islamic painting foreshadows the striking innovations found in the next major surviving manuscript, the *Compendium of Chronicles* of Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), the outstanding Ilkhanid vizier of his time. The earliest, though fragmentary, portion to survive is divided between the Edinburgh University Library and the Khalili Collection in London and is dated 714 (1314). The reasons for its importance have been laid out with exemplary clarity and scholarship by Sheila Blair in a series of pioneering publications. The *Compendium* is indeed a phenomenon in itself, in which an ambitious concept was realized with remarkable discipline. Tabriz, the Ilkhanid capital, was perhaps the major metropolis of the contemporary world, a multicultural, multiconfessional, political, and commercial center that served as a bridge between Europe and East Asia. Rashid al-Din had the vision to capitalize on its unique advantages and to set in motion a colossal intellectual enterprise of which the *Compendium* was merely one facet. He founded a suburb, named Rab’-i Rashidi after himself, that contained within a walled precinct his tomb, a hospice, a Sufi center, a hospital, and the so-called *tazoda*, which had living and teaching accommodations plus a small mosque, arranged around a courtyard. The

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21. See the image of Bahira and Muhammad in the *Compendium of Chronicles of Rashid al-Din*; D. T. Rice and Gray 1976, pl. 30.

entire complex employed more than three hundred people, and all its expenses were shouldered by Rashid al-Din himself. The detailed provisions of his endowment deed reveal the meticulous planning that underpinned the entire project.

The *Compendium* was commissioned successively by two Ilkhans, Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) and Öljaitü (r. 1304–16), and was nominally written by Rashid al-Din himself, though it is far more likely, given his onerous political and administrative responsibilities, that his major input was financial and editorial rather than authorial. In its final form, dating to about 1310, it comprised a history of Ghazan Khan (volume 1), a universal history (volume 2) probably some four hundred folios in length, a survey of the genealogies of the Arabs, Jews, Mongols, Franks, and Chinese (volume 3), and a geographical compendium (volume 4). The entire *Compendium* probably had no fewer than twelve hundred large-format folios and perhaps 540 paintings.

What was the overall purpose of this work? The original commission makes sense as an attempt to display the Mongol commitment to Iran’s cultural heritage, while also exalting the history of the Mongols themselves. Those motives had obvious educational and propaganda dimensions that would be served (as well as contemporary technology allowed) by copying the text as widely as practicable. In addition, the exceptionally large size of the manuscripts made them well suited for display and even for study by several people at once.
Rashid al-Din’s plan was to produce a copy, alternately in Arabic and Persian, every six months, not just of the *Compendium* but of each of his other six works, which dealt respectively with theology, philosophy, zoology, culture, industries, and architecture (four of them in several volumes).\(^{14}\) It is worth considering in practical terms what is implied in executing such a colossal undertaking. After the initial translations had been done, an entire army of scribes, papermakers (there was a mill nearby),\(^{19}\) burnishers, binders, leatherworkers, specialists in materials (inks, brushes, pigments, pens), and painters would have had to work in the closest harmony and under very tight supervision to achieve success. Moreover, they actually had less than six full months for the job, since this mountain of texts needed to be checked before being dispatched to the Arab or Persian city for which they were destined.

These highly unusual production circumstances strongly affected the nature of the illustrations. They made the development of a house style virtually mandatory. They encouraged speed at the expense of meticulous technique, and copying or adapting at the expense of originality.\(^{19}\) Formulaic solutions were sought to the problems of composition, although the images still had to be impressive. To maintain the taxing production quotas, individual artists or groups of artists probably developed special time-saving skills for depicting particular subjects, such as landscapes, groups of almost identical figures, battle scenes (fig. 172), enthronements (fig. 173), or clothing; a given painting might therefore be subcontracted to several painters. The presence of certain extremely repetitive details suggests that the artists were working from painted prototypes that they subjected to successive minor modifications in order to avoid monotony.

Both the nature and the placement of the illustrations demand comment, and the two issues are intimately linked. The Edinburgh fragment, the most important one, will serve as our focus. A few singletons apart, its images can be easily divided into only four categories: scenes from the Old Testament, incidents from the life of the prophet Muhammad, battles or sieges, and enthronements. The images are by no means of equal interest visually: those in the first two categories are as varied as those in the last two are stereotypical. That distinction, which is quickly apparent, raises interesting questions about how the book was meant to be viewed, as distinct from being read.

Where the illustrations occur is no less interesting. In the Edinburgh fragment, the section on pre-Islamic Arabian prophets and Iranian mythical kings (which comes at the beginning of the manuscript in its present form) and that on the Old Testament are very lavishly illustrated. The opening folios are especially so, with images on both sides of successive folios and sometimes even two on a given side. Thus there are twenty-six illustrations in the first twenty-four folios. Suddenly, however, after folio 24r, this rapid rate of illustration falls off; the next illustration occurs at folio 34r, and the one after at folio 41r. At this point, the text takes a new direction as the section on the life of Muhammad

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30. This could explain some of the bunching discussed below, in which case it seems that speed of production counted for more than the visual consistency achieved by a steady rate of illustration.

Fig. 173. Sultan Berkyaruq ibn Malikshah (r. 1093–1105), from the *Jami‘ al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles) by Rashid al-Din, Iran (Tabriz), a.d. 714/A.D. 1314–15, fol. 187v; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Edinburgh University Library (MS Arab 20)
There are also imbalances in the coverage of the unillustrated sections. The portion on early Islamic history spans a period of well over three hundred years and fills fifty-seven folios, while that narrowly devoted to the eastern Islamic (i.e., Persian-speaking) world is substantially shorter (thirty-five folios) and covers a much smaller geographical area and a shorter period of time (some two hundred years). This very uneven approach to both text and illustrations implies a deliberate manipulation of emphasis. In that case, the process of production must have been much more complex than simple copying.

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open. Here again illustrations are relatively plentiful. After folio 371 there are no illustrations at all for the fifty-one folios of text covering the period of the Rightly Guided caliphs, the Umayyads, and the golden age of the ‘Abbasids. Yet this is the most eventful and politically successful period of Islamic history up to the time of Rashid al-Din himself. The images begin again only when the text reaches the history of the eastern Iranian world from the late tenth century on—a period in which the Buyids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Seljuqs (to say nothing of lesser power blocs like the Simjurids and Qara-Khanids) were successively contending for mastery of these territories. Between folios 188 and 147 there are thirty-three pictures, a rate of illustration almost as intense as at the beginning of the manuscript.11

This bunching probably cannot be explained by regarding the Edinburgh fragment as part of an individualized copy intended for a city in eastern Iran. Nor does it seem plausible that its highly uneven rate of illustration reflects poor organization. It is most likely that the Edinburgh manuscript was “standard issue” and that its bunching of illustrations was part of an overall strategy. So what could this strategy have been?
The emphasis on the Old Testament can be explained in several ways. Such scenes would have been entirely appropriate to begin the story of mankind, spotlighting with a kind of visual fanfare the heroic figures of the key prophets and patriarchs of the Judaic-Christian and Islamic traditions. The episodes depicted were also familiar from the popular commentaries that embroidered the tales of these personages with picturesque detail (fig. 174). Moreover, since Rashid al-Din was himself of Jewish birth, these Old Testament episodes might well have enjoyed a special place in his affections. Finally, Byzantine,\textsuperscript{15} western European, and Jewish manuscripts (such as the nearly contemporary Golden Haggadah with its extensive Exodus images)\textsuperscript{13} all provided ample models for such scenes—an especially important factor given that the Rashidiyya artists were, it seems, always pressed for time. In the contemporary West, too, the fashionable genre of world histories, as evidenced by the Weltchronik of Rudolf von Ems of about 1260, also featured a lengthy opening section from the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{16}

The numerous scenes of violence and enthronement in the Compendium make some sense, since the major turning points of history are so often key battles and key usurpations of power. But here, too, a breakdown of the material is revealing. From folios 108v to 135r there are twenty-six scenes of actual or implied violence—four sieges, four executions or amaimings, and eighteen images of war (figs. 172, 173)—some of them as extreme as the visual language of the time allowed. Such illustrations, conspicuously absent in the earlier part of the manuscript, represent a decisive change in tone. In particular, the effect of this repetition on the reader, whether casually leafing through the text or studying it carefully, should not be minimized. Successive large-scale and vivid images of warriors wreaking havoc—warriors clad in Mongol armor, carrying Mongol weapons and yak-tail standards, and mounted on wiry Mongol ponies—would have rammed home the reality of the Ilkhanids’ military might. They may also be seen as attempts to “Mongolize” the past, imposing a Mongol pattern on pre-Mongol history. It may well be, as Sheila Blair has argued,\textsuperscript{17} that the artists drew on illustrated histories of the Ghaznavids for this section of the text, just as the illustrations for the Old Testament episodes derived in part from already well-established models.

As suddenly as they erupted onto these pages, the warriors disappear, to be replaced in the last six images of the Edinburgh fragment by a series of bland enthronement scenes, possibly deriving from lost illustrated Seljuq histories (fig. 173).\textsuperscript{18} The rulers are presented as quasi-divine beings, dispensing justice and representing the state. Solemn icons of power, they epitomize the absolute authority of the monarch. Yet here again the message often has a secondary purpose, for the presence of Persian advisers and scribes implies that the ruler does not exercise his power arbitrarily but calls on local people for counsel. An inclusive rather than exclusive pattern of government is thus advertised.

What of the cluster of images dealing with the life of the Prophet? The flirtations of earlier Ilkhans with Buddhism and

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36. I am grateful to Sheila Blair for this suggestion.

Fig. 175. Jurjays Miraculously Protected When Tortured by the King of Mowal for Refusing to Worship Idols, from the jaami’ al-tawarikh (Compendium of Chronicles) by Rashid al-Din, Iran (Tabriz), A.H. 714/A.D. 1314–15. Fol. 26r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Edinburgh University Library (MS Arab 76)
Christianity had accustomed them to religious images, and thus they had none of the traditional inhibitions of Muslims on this score. Instead, they might well have wished to celebrate, indeed broadcast, their recent conversion by honoring the Prophet and singling him out in this way. The very fact that the images in the Compendium are not isolated but, as in the al-Biruni manuscript, form a cycle signals a decisive change of pace and intention. However, for all their unmistakable religious content, even spiritual exaltation, these images of the Prophet are found in several different categories of manuscripts. Their location in books of historical, scientific, or epic character is of defining importance: religious painting entered Islamic art by the back door, and this may well have helped to secure its acceptance. In the Iranian world, at least, the moment for images of the Prophet had finally come.

The “Mi’rajnama”

The next and culminating stage of this particular fashion was a predictable one: a manuscript of exclusively hagiographic character. The first illustrated religious manuscript in the history of Islamic art is the fragmentary Mi’rajnama (Book of the Ascent) preserved in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul, album H.2154. Its date is very hard to fix. Its images may well be the work of the artist Ahmad Musa, whom the Safavid librarian Dust Muhammad identifies as the chief painter for Abu Sa’īd and to whom he attributes a Mi’rajnama (see the passage quoted at the head of this essay). While this identification might date the illustrations to the late Ilkhanid period, they do not correspond in style to any work from that time and could indeed be later. 37 The images are for the most part remarkably large: they have been removed from their parent manuscript and are now textless, but some of them might have occupied a full page. They are also brightly colored and of simple composition, which made them well suited for a devotional purpose. Their sustained emphasis on perhaps the most miraculous and otherworldly episode of Muhammad’s life, his nocturnal journey to the seven heavens, underlines the special status of the Prophet. Parallels with Buddhist apsaras, contemporary Italian (especially Sienese) paintings, and Byzantine icons furnish yet another example of the fruitful interplay of East and West in fourteenth-century painting. But the unmistakable naïveté of this cycle, so different from the pictorial sophistication displayed in the Great Mongol Shahnama, betrays the uncertainty of the artists in tackling such a new and highly charged genre of painting. The stakes were high.

Illustrated Copies of the “Shahnama”

By far the most popular illustrated text of the period was the Shahnama (Book of Kings), an epic poem of some sixty thousand couplets written by Abu al-Qasim Firdausi about 1010. The ten illustrated Shahnamas datable from approximately 1300 to 1350 are all individual creations in the sense that their iconography does not
Fig. 176 (cat. no. 34). Buzurjmihr Masters the Game of Chess, page from the First Small Shahnama (Book of Kings), northwestern Iran or Baghdad, ca. 1500–1520. Ink, colors, gold, and silver on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1934 (34.24.1)

Fig. 177 (cat. no. 33). Zahhara Rudaba in Her Palace, page from the First Small Shahnama (Book of Kings), northwestern Iran or Baghdad, ca. 1300–1330. Ink, colors, gold, and silver on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 104.5)
derive from a single model but was fashioned anew for each successive manuscript. However, the obvious need to make the paintings reflect the main stories and emphases of the epic in an appropriate manner ensured that there was a great deal of overlap between the various pictorial programs.

The variety in the illustrations was a direct outgrowth of the nature of Firdausi’s text and of the medieval approach to it, which was by no means reverential. The verses were, it seems, orally transmitted, and a standard text did not exist; thus no two medieval Shahnama manuscripts are textually identical. Firdausi himself, after all, did not compose his epic from scratch but assembled a motley series of oral narratives, recasting them as the Shahnama. It is only to be expected that some of the alternative versions, occasionally further lengthened or shortened by the scribes themselves, survived in the oral repertoire and generated illustrations.

The differences between the extant Ilkhanid cycles of this epic also partly result from its adaptable nature, which is furthered by the medium of painting, with its capacity to privilege certain aspects of the text above others. The poem can be interpreted as a succession of adventure stories, battles, fantastic episodes, or romances, but also as a guide to ethics, a chronicle, a celebration of royalty, and a manual for royal conduct. In fact, Firdausi’s text is inherently suited to being adjusted, even manipulated, to fit the personal tastes of a patron or to transmit a particular message. The illustrations thus function as a parallel text, highlighting a given theme. And, as the familiar adage has it, a picture is worth a thousand words.
The surviving manuscripts, most of which have been broken up, have been attributed to various centers—Baghdad, Isfahan, Shiraz, and even India—and not surprisingly reflect several distinct styles. But in format and approach they have much in common. The most frequent pattern is that of a two-volume text containing about a hundred illustrations, each usually taking up between a fifth and a third of the framed text block. The standard illustration format, a horizontal oblong strip, encourages the disposition of figures along the frontal plane in a simple narrative sequence (figs. 176, 177). Yet square and stepped designs (figs. 178, 179) also occur, and sometimes a visual pun is attempted, as when the shape of the painting mimics a plunging shaft in a scene that depicts a well or pit. Since the human figure, in formulaic poses and gestures, dominates the pictorial space, little room is left for ambitious landscapes or highly detailed interiors: mere indications suffice. Bright, strong colors and simple, direct, though often powerful, compositions capture the surface verve of the Shahname narratives (fig. 180) but are less well equipped to plumb their subtleties. By the same token they discourage experiment in the third dimension, the creation of subplots, and the development of a subsidiary focus of visual interest.

Despite isolated references to earlier examples, the concentration of illustrated Shahnames in the first half of the fourteenth century signals a dramatic new departure that cannot be explained by the previous history of the genre. Several theories have been proposed to explain the sudden fashion for such works, which did not all serve identical purposes. Marianna Shreve Simpson has argued convincingly

38. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani has unearthed a reference from the poet Suzani Samargandi that he interprets as pointing to the existence of illustrated Shahname under the Qara-Khans in the early twelfth century; he also proves conclusively that Shahname scenes were painted on the walls of royal palaces in that century. Melikian-Chirvani 1988, pp. 43-44.
in favor of a teaching, even a propagandist, aim for the Shahnamas that she attributes to Baghdad, a motive that can be invoked for several other Ilkhanid manuscripts.\(^{39}\) After the cultural havoc wrought by the Mongol invasion, in which cities and especially their educational establishments suffered grievously, there was much ground to be recovered in the world of learning. These Shahnamas could also have expressed a new Mongol commitment to the country and culture that they ruled, as suggested by the tiles with Shahnama inscriptions at Takht-i Sulaiman.\(^{40}\) Moreover, the lavish use of illustrations would make the book accessible to Mongol patrons who, even if not illiterate, would derive more pleasure from images than from words.

Those Shahnamas made in areas outside direct Mongol political control, most notably in southern Iran, might have been intended to boost national sentiment. The vizier of the quasi-independent Inju dynasty in Shiraz, for example, ordered a celebrated Shahnama that is dated 1341 (fig. 181). Firdausi’s original project, after all, had as one of its aims the assertion of Iranian identity vis-à-vis the alien Arabs—a motive that helps to explain why the poem ends with the last Sasanian king (see fig. 182), rather than continuing into the period of Arab domination, and why Firdausi so carefully purged its language of Arabic elements. Thus the illustrated

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39. Simpson points out that the illustrations of the Shahnamas that she assigns to Baghdad stick closely to the text, which may imply an intended readership not very familiar with the poem, whereas the Shiraz painters seem to have felt free to stray from the text and thus may have assumed that their readers knew it well. For a penetrating discussion of the whole topic of text-image relationships, see Simpson 1982. For other Ilkhanid manuscripts that seem to have served a teaching function, see Fitzherbert 2001, pp. 366–73.
40. See Tomoko Mauya’s chapter 4 in this volume as well as the works of recent scholarship cited in it.
Shahnama could serve the purposes both of a Mongol elite seeking to ingratiate itself with hostile Iranians and of Iranians seeking to reassert their hitherto oppressed but millennial culture, of which this epic is the distillation.

The Great Mongol “Shahnama”

Given the dominant role of the Shahnama in Ilkhanid painting, it is entirely appropriate that the supreme masterpiece of that school should be the only royal copy of Firdausi’s epic. Not only is it by far the largest of the Shahnama manuscripts, but its paintings in general are by far the most complex and sophisticated, and again the largest, of the entire school (fig. 184).

Controversy has surrounded the Great Mongol Shahnama for almost a century. Now only a torso, for it was cut up and mangled for the sake of profit in the early twentieth century, its folios are so widely scattered that a comprehensive study of the manuscript is difficult (figs. 183, 186). Moreover, it was never finished in the first place. This may have been due to the hubris of those responsible for its design and execution, who perhaps simply took on more than they could handle; maybe

Fig. 182 (cat. no. 58). Baham Gur Fighting a Wolf, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass., Bequest of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1960.190)

41. See Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. 11–12; Blair 1989, p. 128.
Fig. 183 (cat. no. 57). Bahram Gur Hunting Onagers, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Mass., Jerome Wheelock Fund (1935.74)
time or money ran out. Or perhaps the project was cut short prematurely by entirely external factors such as political events, like the death of the vizier Ghiyath al-Din or indeed the fall of the Ilkhanid dynasty itself, a disaster that would have had a direct impact on the royal ateliers.

The majestic physical scale of the work, with trimmed pages measuring 16 by 11 3/8 inches and originally, when the margins were intact, very much more, enabled its illustrators to think big (fig. 185). The original plan for the illustrations was probably equally ambitious and indeed unprecedented, calling for some two hundred paintings, of which fifty-seven survive. Since Shahnama iconography was presumably still in its infancy, the painters had no models for scores of the projected images. Even existing models would have required thorough reworking to fit naturally into the unusually large spaces set aside for painting; mere proportional enlargements would not do. The continual pressure to be innovative propelled the painters into unfamiliar territory in search of fresh inspiration. It also required that they react more than mechanically or literally to the text. Such pressures perhaps account for the fact that their paintings speak with many voices.

This much may legitimately be inferred from the physical evidence provided by the manuscript itself. But the disappearance of much of the text itself, which may have been discarded by the Belgian dealer Georges Demotte when he broke up the bound manuscript, means that information vital for more detailed analyses is not at hand. For instance, the precise balance between illustrated and unillustrated folios as well as the exact subject matter of the lost or projected paintings remain matters for speculation.

Fig. 184 (cat. no. 53). Ardaher Battling Bahman, Son of Arslan, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1372. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, Edsel B. Ford Fund (15.54)

42. Sarah Bertalan’s remarks on issues of paper and pigments in her technical study in this catalogue suggest that the Great Mongol Shahnana may have had more in common with the Compendium of Chronicles manuscripts than was previously thought; wide margins are only one aspect of this.

43. One of the fifty-eight to survive into the twentieth century (no. 16 in the standard numbering) was destroyed by fire in 1917.
No colophon survives to provide key information as to date, provenance, patronage, and perhaps even the identity of the artists. These are formidable losses, but scholarship over the last sixty years or so has crystallized in favor of certain propositions regarding these issues. Among them are a date in the 1330s, though strong arguments have been made for both earlier and later dates; a provenance in Tabriz, the Ilkhanid capital; a royal patron, probably Abu Sa'id; and the participation of Ahmad Musa, the artist mentioned in the somewhat enigmatic and minimalist account of the history of Persian painting by the Safavid royal librarian Dust Muhammad (the Vasari of Iran), writing in the 1540s (see above).

Most previous accounts of this manuscript have emphasized its key significance in fourteenth-century painting without seeking to probe its illustrative program for deeper meanings. In keeping with the Eurocentric approach of scholars from the 1930s onward, which was preoccupied with questions of date, provenance, patronage, and style, the tacit assumption was that the purpose of the paintings was to illustrate the accompanying text. Only two scholars, Oleg Grabar and Abolala Soudavar, have made a concerted effort to explain the paintings as something more than a succession of ambitious textual illustrations. Grabar proposed that the cycle of paintings revolved around four themes: death and mourning, legitimacy, human frailty, and divine revelation.

Soudavar suggested a still more comprehensive interpretation, namely that the Great Mongol Shahnama is the manuscript described by Dust Muhammad as the Abusaidnama (Book of Abu Sa'id) and that it is nothing less than a daring attempt to reconfigure the Shahnama as a channel of the royal Mongol house. By this reckoning, every episode chosen to be depicted in the illustrative program was selected because it also served to present some event in recent Mongol history and thus brought Firdausi's text right up to contemporary Iran. It is a most audacious theory and has thus not won universal acceptance. Nevertheless, Soudavar has been able, thanks to his impressive familiarity with the historical sources, to propose a sequence of remarkably exact correlations between episodes in Firdausi's epic and Mongol history in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. To interpret all of these as accidental would be to stretch the proverbially long arm of coincidence well beyond breaking point. In its essentials, Soudavar's theory is compelling and has far-reaching implications for the study of Persian painting. In particular, attention must henceforth be paid to the political and propagandist (and perhaps at times religious) dimension in depictions of scenes from familiar texts. (Soudavar also marshals
Fig. 186 (cat. no. 41). *Iskandar Emerging from the Gloom*, page from the Great Mongol *Shahnama* (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Keir Collection, England (PP1)
ample evidence to suggest that the finest calligrapher of the time, ‘Abd Allah Sayrafi, renowned for his Korans, was the principal scribe for the manuscript.)

This elusive masterpiece also provides copious material for other types of investigation. It pioneers a new complexity in storytelling techniques, with plot and subplot artfully juxtaposed or interwoven, or the main event richly embroidered with complementary detail. The emotional range is wide and expertly orchestrated. The pictures capture the clangor, confusion, and carnage of battle (figs. 160, 184, 188), the gore-spattered scenes of monster slayings evoke a frisson of horror (fig. 187), and the images of death and mourning speak of grief by turns measured and frantic. Yet there is room too for images of love and passion, betrayal and fantasy. Many an image is shot through with conflicting emotions, with wonder, or with sly humor.
In general, all the surface is painted and all the space is used, thereby actively contributing to the narrative. The three-dimensional world thus created is made all the more credible by the meticulous rendering of detail, from costumes to carpets, from patterned floors to tiled dadoes, from frescoes and balconies to window grilles and lacquer thrones (fig. 189). In this one manuscript the largely lost court arts of the Ilkhanids are on display in concentrated splendor, complementing and enhancing each other to achieve a whole much more than the sum of its parts. They bring the technicolor ambience of the Ilkhanid court to vivid life.

The incomplete state of the manuscript means that not one of the illustrative cycles that punctuate Firdausi’s poem can be followed pictorially in all its fullness. Yet even these fragments suggest that, quite apart from the pointed references to
Mongol history suggested by Soudavar, such cycles worked very successfully within the primary context of Firdausi’s epic. This double life is typical of the multilayered nature of the manuscript. Thus the paintings speak of patriotism, of succession disputes, of a fierce desire for justice, of the painful road from pride to humility, of the vanity of human wishes. They glorify kings rather than heroes, and sometimes, as in the case of the cycle of Iskandar (Alexander the Great; figs. 190, 191), they do so to an extent not equaled in earlier or later Shahnamas. Taken together, they create a memorable “Mirror for Princes,” a pictorial equivalent to this fashionable literary genre.50

Perhaps nothing captures the boldness of these painters better than their confident appropriation of ideas from other cultures. Tabriz was thronged with European missionaries, Chinese officials, and merchants and diplomats from all over the old world. This cosmopolitanism must account in part for the truly unique openness to Christian images found in the Great Mongol Shahnama. Gospel archetypes such as the Adoration of the Magi, Entry into Jerusalem, Flagellation,
Fig. 190 (cat. no. 50). Taimush before Iskandar; The Visit to the Beakhans, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnameh (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.105)

Fig. 191 (cat. no. 52). Iskandar Building the Iron Rampart, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnameh (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.104)
Fig. 191 (cat. no. 61). Mihrun Sital Selecting a Chinese Princess, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Helen and Alice Colburn Fund and Seth K. Sweetser Fund (22.392)
Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion, Deposition, Lamentation, and Entombment are freely adopted and adapted, to say nothing of images of Dominicans, Franciscans, warrior saints, and the Virgin Mary. Along with the recycling of these images, so familiar in another context, come sudden unmistakable echoes of contemporary European fashions and conventions, whether for plaited hair, the depiction of drapery, or the stylized mime of grief.

This willingness to echo contemporary Italian and French art is balanced by an equal readiness to copy and refashion elements of Chinese art (fig. 192). The paintings contain details taken from Buddhist images, among them mudras, the trailing leg, the recumbent pose, and the triratna (Three Jewels); dragons; the sacred fungus; architecture; lacquer thrones; screens; and all kinds of Far Eastern textiles, including a Chinese imperial robe for the dying Rustam. Above all, Chinese landscape elements are widely used to create an atmosphere or to comment on the action, rather than simply to provide a background (fig. 193). Their integration with large-scale figures, a flouting of Chinese convention, is nonetheless pictorially and emotionally compelling.

The Great Mongol Shahnama is a thoroughly appropriate place to end this survey. At once a climax and a coda, it built on past achievements but at every turn unveiled new vistas. The team of masters who worked on it forged, with intuitive mutual understanding, a new style. But that style was less important in itself than for what it attempted to convey, for it embraced depths of meaning and expression hitherto unknown in Islamic book painting. So ambitious were these artists that they effectively broke the bounds of the medium, taking book art into areas for which it was perhaps unsuited and from which their successors recoiled. Within the covers of this two-volume book, one can trace the sequence from paintings that are simple illustrations to ones that are commentaries, then metaphors, and finally independent

51. It remains to be seen whether these different approaches were undertaken in any particular order; it is too early, for example, to assume that those at the beginning of the poem were also the first to be painted, as can be suggested more boldly for those at the beginning of the Shahnameh-i shahi of Shah Tahmasp.
works of art operating confidently on several levels of meaning. More and more content—descriptive, emotional (fig. 153), historical, symbolic—is gradually pumped into these paintings, and only an absolutely assured command of pictorial language enables the greatest of these painters to control the forces that they unleash (figs. 160, 194).

All this visual splendor and intellectual complexity are, however, destined for the eyes of only a very few. Thus to modern viewers there may seem to be an inherent mismatch between the medium and the message. It could be argued that the extremely limited intended readership makes it absurd to suggest that the images of the Great Mongol *Shahnama* carried a complex freight of politico-historical, let alone symbolic, meaning. But that would be to underestimate the despotic, accountable power of the Ilkhan as ruler, and indeed to misunderstand the very nature of Muslim panegyric, whose prime purpose was to exalt that ruler.\(^1\)

Precisely because the text illustrated in the Great Mongol *Shahnama* was not written to glorify the Ilkhan Abu Sa’id but rather was written for the ages, the images in this manuscript—however relevant to Mongol history—have a timeless validity. So long as Iran has rulers, so long will the *Shahnama* remain relevant to its

\(^{1}\) Metsami 1987, pp. 40–76.
people. Ironically enough, it is only in the past century that these images have come into their own, and then in a way that could scarcely have been foreseen by their original patron. Extracted one by one from their parent volumes, reproduced in color in books and as posters, projected as slides, scanned as images on the Web, viewed by thousands of people at exhibitions, they can now at last be given their due as supreme masterpieces, not of an age but for all time.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the extraordinary half-century or so of achievement in Ilkhanid book painting is the sense of barely contained energy. Artists of this school responded vigorously and imaginatively to the new challenges posed by unfamiliar subject matter and hitherto alien ways of seeing. Content and style became the matrix for the transformation of Persian painting during this brief formative period.

The two greatest undertakings of Ilkhanid book painting—the Compendium of Chronicles and the Great Mongol Shahnama—can both be seen as attempts (one public, the other rigorously private) to harness the expressive powers of manuscript illustration to political and propagandist ends. In both cases the attempt miscarried, defeated by the nature of the medium itself, which does not lend itself to being experienced by many people at once. Manuscript painting is an exquisitely selfish art form; to be reminded of that fact one has only to try reading a book together with someone else. Even when the huge dimensions of books made large-scale paintings an option, even when the volume was displayed on a lectern in a mosque or a madrasa and thus visible to a group of readers, it remained in the very nature of a book for the memory of one image to be obliterated by the sight of the next. Referring back to earlier images to refresh the memory or for purposes of comparison is possible for only one reader at a time.

The ambitions of Ilkhanid patrons and painters, then, to some extent outran the means at their disposal. The enormous enterprise set in motion by Rashid al-Din, and the measures he took to ensure that it had the necessary financial backing, leave no doubt that the constraints were neither intellectual nor monetary. The sheer size of the books produced under these circumstances was crucial, giving them a palpable presence from the moment one saw them. It opened new perspectives in book painting and pushed that medium to its very limit. Indeed, the next logical step would have been to emancipate painting altogether from the confines of the book by turning to fresco and easel painting. But this was not to be. Sadly, later generations of painters gracefully declined that implied challenge and chose to work on a reduced scale, loading more and more visual content into less and less space. Such pictures invite prolonged, absorbed meditation. Rather than explore the potential for expression and narrative offered by very large and lavishly illustrated books, artists preferred to reduce the number of images and to refine their techniques. And given the beguiling mix of intellectual complexity and visual splendor that marked mature Timurid painting in the following century, who is to say that they were wrong?

53 I have had the pleasure of verifying this proposition by means of the immediate reactions of generations of Edinburgh students who were seeing the Rashid al-Din manuscript for the first time.
7.
The Transmission and Dissemination of a New Visual Language  

LINDA KOMAROFF

The banner of Chingiz-Khan’s fortune was raised and they issued forth from the straits of hardship into the amplitude of well-being, from a prison into a garden, from the desert of poverty into a palace of delight and from abiding torment into reposeful pleasures; their raiment being of silk and brocade . . . and their everyday garments are studded with jewels and embroidered with gold.

—‘Ala’al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini, The History of the World Conquerer’

And when you have ridden seven days eastward through this province [Tenduc, probably in Inner Mongolia] you get near the provinces of Cathay [China]. You find throughout those seven days’ journey plenty of towns and villages, the inhabitants of which are Mahommetans, but with a mixture also of idolaters and Nestorian Christians. They get their living by trade and manufactures: weaving those fine cloths of gold which are called Nasich and Naques, besides silk stuffs of many other kinds. For just as we have cloths of wool in our country, manufactured in a great variety of kinds, so in those regions they have stuffs of silk and gold in like variety. All this region is subject to the Great Khan.

—Marco Polo, Il milione

Ilkhanid artists created a new visual language in response to the demands of their patrons, whose aspirations and tastes were shaped not only by their encounter with the urban, Islamic culture of Iran but also by contact with the highly sophisticated civilization of China. As is indicated by James Watt in chapter 1, cultural developments in China prior to the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in 1271 seem to have contributed to the formation of an Ilkhanid artistic idiom, with the arts of North China and to a lesser extent of Central Asia also being vital elements in this creative process. Subsequent chapters examine several specific aspects of Ilkhanid art. This essay considers, more broadly, that art’s presumed sources and transmission. One issue is the transfer of artistic ideas from eastern to western Asia after 1256; another is the subsequent dissemination in Iran of an original aesthetic idiom—characterized by new designs, compositions, and themes—into a variety of media.

**Sources and Transmission: Textiles**

Many artists and a great variety of works of art passed freely between eastern and western Asia under the fluid conditions that prevailed during the Pax Mongolica. However, one medium, textiles, seems to have played a dominant role in the creation of a new aesthetic in Iran. Indeed, textiles were perhaps the principal transmitters of artistic ideas from China to Iran.
Fig. 196 (cat. no. 75). Striped brocade, Iran, 14th century. Lampsas weave (satin and tabby), silk and gold thread. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstgewerbemuseum (1875-259)

Fig. 197 (cat. no. 155). Dragon-handled cup, Golden Horde (Southern Russia), second half of the 13th century. Gold. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SAR-1625)
of East Asian (primarily Chinese) visual culture to the West. Their importance to the development of art in Iran after the Mongol invasions has been noted by others, particularly in relation to the motifs on tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman. What is new is the substantial data on Mongol textiles published in recent studies by James Watt and Anne Wardwell and by Thomas Allsen. The former provides a wealth of information about the extant textiles, their contexts, and their antecedents, while the latter examines a large group of diverse texts with a bearing on the subject. Taken together these studies reveal the tremendous emphasis placed by the Mongols on the manufacture and acquisition of luxury textiles, delineate the methods of their production, and help visually define the textile art of this period.

The Importance of Textiles

These luxury textiles included silk woven with gold-wrapped thread and, especially, fabrics in which both pattern and ground were woven in gold on a silk foundation—the so-called cloth of gold (nasiij) (figs. 58, 196). Apart from their obvious aesthetic appeal, there are several reasons why such textiles engaged the Mongols. They were rare, costly, and easily transportable, and—as surely was well known to the Mongols—had long been a vital element in the highly profitable trade across Asia. As nomads, the Mongols were attuned to the concept of portable or wearable wealth. Among other luxury goods that they seem to have especially appreciated were belts and belt ornaments of gold or silver, small drinking vessels that could be attached to the belt, and horse trappings and saddles of precious metals (see figs. 10, 63, 197, 198). Moreover, silk textiles had a value equivalent to that of currency and could serve for the payment of taxes or war indemnity or tribute. Textiles were clearly a highly desirable commodity to the Mongols, who also must have appreciated them as symbols of political power and prestige.

From the beginning of their rule, the Mongols appear to have gone to great lengths to obtain luxury textiles and to control the sources of their production. Under Genghis Khan (d. 1227) and his son and successor, Ögedei (r. 1229–41), communities of textile workers were established by the forced resettlement of
Persian artists in three locations on the southern boundaries of the Mongol homeland (see the Marco Polo quotation at the head of this chapter). The artists were taken primarily from Iranian cities in Khurasan (such as Herat, which was renowned for its silk and gold cloth) and in Turkestan (among them Samarqand). Going in a different direction, Chinese textile workers were relocated to eastern Central Asia, to produce fine fabrics for the Mongol overlords there. This transfer of artists and their techniques, described in both historical sources and travelers’ accounts, facilitated a kind of hybrid development in textile art and its technology that is documented by the extant textiles (figs. 200, 295, 196, 199). Particularly significant for this essay, it provided an important means for the diffusion of East Asian motifs and forms to the West.

Textiles produced in China could also be obtained in Iran. They arrived through commercial channels, since under the Mongols, luxury textiles were a significant component of trade within Asia and beyond it to Europe, and Iran was both an intermediary and a destination of the overland and sea trade routes connecting East and West. Courtly prerogative also brought textiles westward: the Ilkhan Hülegü (r. 1256–65), and through him his Ilkhanid successors, had been allocated territories and financial interests in China, from which they received regular income—partly in the form of silks.

Under the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), the sheer number of government offices set up in China to regulate and control the manufacture of textiles further attests to the importance the Mongols placed on this medium. To date there is only limited evidence that the Ilkhanids followed the Yuan practice of mobilizing and organizing textile workers and other artists by placing them under the control of
government agencies. Still, a sufficient number of skilled textile workers could be pressed into service in Tabriz to fill an order for gold woven cloth intended as a diplomatic gift from the Ilkhan Tegüder Ahmad (r. 1282–84) to the Mamluk sultan in Egypt.

Luxury textiles appear to make up the costumes and furnishings represented in Ilkhanid manuscript paintings. Only a few illustrated manuscripts survive from the late thirteenth century; in the depictions of the new Mongol rulers and ruling elite that they contain, the conquerors’ ethnicity is conveyed not only by their physiognomies and costumes but also specifically by the fabrics of which their clothes, accoutrements, and even horses’ accessories are made, as seen in frontispieces from the Tarikh-i jahan-gusla (History of the World Conqueror) of 1290 (fig. 201) and the Marzubannama (Book of the Margrave) of 1299 (fig. 200). The enthroned prince in the Marzubannama frontispiece wears a robe of what appears to be silk, decorated with a gold floral pattern. The turbaned figures seated to his left and right, both non-Mongols, are, significantly, clothed in robes with a simpler pattern, clusters of three dots. This evident concern to delineate specific types of fabric continues in the more numerous early-fourteenth-century manuscript illustrations (see, for example, figs. 37, 51, 183, 193). Manuscript illustrators were very likely depicting what they saw or knew to be so, namely, that the Mongols wore elaborate costumes and surrounded themselves with textiles of costly materials carrying specific types of designs. For example, in a scene from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings),

Fig. 201 (cat. no. 1). The Author with a Mongol Prince and A Horse and Groom, double frontispiece from the Tarikh-i jahan-gusla (History of the World Conqueror), copied by Rashid al-Khwāfi, probably Iraq (Baghdad), finished on A.H. 4 Dhu’l-hijja 689/A.D. December 8, 1290. Fols. iv, 2r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (MSS or., Suppl. persan 205)

14. On the organization of artists under the Yuan dynasty in general, see Chu 1946. Also see C.Y. Liu 1991. In Iran, members of the Mongol royal family seem to have had artisan households in their retinues; the Persian author Rashid al-Din notes in his Jami’ al-tawārikh that in a contest for the throne, Tegüder’s troops “seized all three hundred households of artisans who belonged to Arghun”, Allen 1997b, p. 57.
16. The author (a non-Mongol) depicted at the center of the right-hand frontispiece (fol. 3r) of the Shi‘ite encyclopedia Ras’ul ‘l dikhan al-safa’ of 1285 appears in a similarly patterned robe; see Ettinghausen 1962, p. 99.
Fig. 202 (cat. no. 135). Textile with coiled dragons, China, Jin Dynasty (1115–1234). Tabby, brocaded, silk and gold thread. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Lilis Holmes, 1989 (1989.204)

Fig. 203 (cat. no. 183). Textile with phoenixes on a field of flowers, eastern Central Asia, 11th century. Silk tapestry (kesi), silk and gold thread. Textile Traces Collection, Los Angeles (T-0292)

Bahram Gur, a prince and later ruler of Iran, is shown wearing a robe decorated in gold with a recumbent deer, its head turned backward, set in a landscape (fig. 110). A very closely related motif, brocaded in gold on a red silk ground, forms the repeat pattern on a Chinese textile (fig. 66), probably a fragment of a garment, dating to the Jin dynasty (1115–1234).18

The range of textiles that played a part in the artistic transmission westward to the Iranian world goes beyond the products of Mongol patronage. It includes earlier textiles of the Northern Song (960–1127), Liao (907–1125), and Jin dynasties in China, as well as textiles of the eleventh to the thirteenth century from Central Asia.19 These pre-Mongol luxury textiles (figs. 66, 202, 203, 207) display the motifs and techniques that the transplanted artists must have brought with them. It should be
noted that the Central Asian and Liao and Jin examples already represented a certain synthesis of Chinese and non-Chinese forms.\textsuperscript{10}

\textit{The Spread to Other Media}

Given the importance of luxury textiles to the Mongols and their evident presence in Iran, it is not surprising that designs and motifs found in textiles are mirrored in many aspects of Ilkhanid art and architectural decoration. Tiles, pottery, metalwork, and the arts of the book all reflect to varying degrees the impact of textile art, as the examples that follow should make clear.

The only excavated palace of the Mongol period in Iran, Takht-i Sulaiman, provides unique evidence of the types of architectural decoration produced for the Ilkhanid court in the 1270s. Most prominent among the finds at Takht-i Sulaiman are glazed tiles that decorated the interiors, particularly of the northern octagonal chamber at the northwest corner of the palace complex, which may have been part of the ruler’s living quarters.\textsuperscript{11} Numerous other tiles of identical types that were not obtained archaeologically have passed through the art market into public and private collections. Both the excavated and non-excavated tiles provide information on the broad range of motifs used to adorn the Ilkhan’s private space and to express his royal status (figs. 59, 97, 100).

The walls of the northern octagonal pavilion had a tile revetment rising to a height of six feet composed of interlocking star and cross tiles. They were decorated

\textsuperscript{10} I am grateful to James Watt for pressing this important point in several conversations.

\textsuperscript{11} E. Naumann and R. Naumann 1969. See also Sheila Blair’s chapter 5 in this catalogue.

\textbf{Fig. 204 (cat. no. 83).} Star and cross tiles, Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lajvardina). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Shinji Shumeikai Acquisition Fund (AC 1996.115.1–4)
in the overglaze painting technique that is known as lajvardina, after the Persian word lajvard (lapis lazuli), because of the distinctive deep blue employed. The tiles were made in molds and carry relief decoration: floral and abstract motifs on the cross tiles, and on the star tiles either a boldly rendered coiled dragon chasing what appears to be a flaming pearl—the well-known motif of dragon and pearl has its basis in Chinese literature—or a phoenix in flight with outstretched wings. The tiles are glazed either turquoise or the previously noted deep cobalt blue (figs. 101, 204). They are overglaze-painted with red, white, and black for subsidiary details, and the relief design was originally entirely covered with gold leaf. Thus the star tiles would each have displayed a coiled dragon or a soaring phoenix rendered in gold against a turquoise or deep blue ground. According to the excavators, the star tiles may have been clustered in separate groups of either blue or turquoise.

A reconstruction drawing suggests that the tile revetment presented a dense pattern of alternating dragons and phoenixes within star-shaped lozenges (fig. 205), not unlike a textile design. There is, in fact, a Chinese Yuan-period textile fragment decorated with staggered rows of medallions bearing either a coiled dragon chasing a flaming pearl or a soaring phoenix (fig. 206). Its mythical beasts are woven in gold against a blue ground. Closely related designs also woven in gold, these with a repeat pattern limited to either the coiled dragon chasing a pearl or the soaring

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23. For the pre-Mongol tiles, see O. Watson 1985, pp. 122–23, and figs. 105–7. A silk fragment of the eighth or ninth century from Iran (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 46.156.6) is decorated with a star and cross motif; it is tempting to think that this pattern was translated from textiles and wall hangings to tile revetment. For a discussion of the importance in general of textiles in the medieval Islamic world, see Golombek 1988.

24. In an album in the Topkaps Palace Library, Istanbul (H. 3372; see below), there is a small drawing of a phoenix enclosed by a ten-pointed star (fol. 397r), a configuration not found among the
phoenix, are preserved from the Jin period (figs. 202, 207), and their golden creatures set against a turquoise or deep red ground compare somewhat more closely to the tile revetment. The imperial symbolism of the dragon and the phoenix is discussed by Tomoko Masuya in chapter 4; it may be that the combination of these two motifs on a textile or a wall revetment was intended as a particularly emphatic declaration of royalty.

Despite the greater density of its pattern, the tile revetment is strikingly similar to the textiles in overall effect. Textiles were certainly used as wall hangings under the Mongols (see fig. 189, where related tile decoration is also depicted, and fig. 90) and earlier in Iran, and it may be that the tile revetments at Takht-i Sulaiman were inspired by this medium. The star and cross format for tile revetment, and other patterns at Takht-i Sulaiman created by the combination of tile shapes—see, for example, fig. 204—predate the Mongol invasions in Iran; the source for some of these patterns may well prove to be earlier Islamic textiles.

The actual motifs of the dragon and the phoenix on these tiles are very close to those on the textiles just mentioned. In fact, the textiles make it possible to read more clearly the subsidiary relief and other designs on the tiles—and to see that the dragon is indeed grasping at a pearl, or at least that such was probably the original idea of the design, perhaps not fully understood by the tile’s Persian maker.

Closely related lajvardina revetment tiles (this time hexagonal) bearing either a coiled dragon (fig. 102) or a soaring phoenix were also found in situ at Takht-i Sulaiman, in the central room between the two octagonal pavilions. These would have produced a somewhat less densely patterned effect, perhaps even more reminiscent of a textile design. Dragons and phoehixes form the main decoration as well on a number of other types of tile from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 93, 104, 166, 275), most notably large square frieze tiles with a relief dragon or phoenix amid clouds, rendered in both lajvardina and lustre techniques (figs. 59, 97, 106). According to the excavators, the lajvardina tiles were set above the dragon and phoenix star and cross revetment in the north octagonal chamber. All of these frieze tiles have a narrow upper border composed of a band of vine scrolls with large peony flowers and a narrower lower border with scrolling vine and rosettes. Their dragons are related to dragons depicted on a group of strikingly colored silk tapestries thought to have been made in Central Asia between the eleventh and early thirteenth centuries, and the floral motifs on the borders of the tiles have parallels in the same textiles.

A group of ceramic bowls decorated with phoehixes that belong to the general category known as Sultanabad wares also bears comparison with textiles. In the past

most of the landscape were molded in relief and covered with gold leaf, strikingly contrasting with the deep blue or turquoise ground. No exact parallels exist in textiles, but there are several comparisons worth making. The tile with recumbent deer is very similar in composition and overall effect to a silk with a design of reclining t’ouan, or Central Asian antelope, within a landscape, brocaded in gold on a red ground and dating to the Jin dynasty (fig. 66). The design is repeated in reverse in alternate rows. The excavators’ reconstruction drawing of the hexagonal tile revetment at Taht-i Sulaiman with alternating deer and feline, creating a pattern of golden animals and landscape elements against a blue or turquoise ground, is, although denser in feel, very similar to the design of the Jin textile, for the reconstruction drawing, see E. Neumann and B. Neumann 1969, fig. 6. The recumbent deer and the leaping feline also find parallels among the group of Central Asian silk tapestries noted above. The feline with tufted tail, possibly a lion, can be related to the playful lions with tufted tails chasing a ball against a floral background on an eastern Central Asian silk tapestry, or kesi, of the eleventh or twelfth century; for the kesi, see Watt and Wardwell 1937, p. 68, fig. 23. Crowe 1991, p. 177 and fig. 7, has compared the tile with a feline to a Song textile band that seems to lack any floral or landscape elements. 17. For a recent study of Sultanabad wares, see P. Morgan 1995.

11. See, for example, Allan 1991, pp. 34–35. P. Morgan 1995, pp. 35–36, suggests instead a connection with Chinese ceramics of two related types, Cizhou and Jizhou wares. such wares were attributed to Sultanabad in western Iran, where many of these vessels were found, although there is no evidence that any of them were actually made there. They were probably produced during the first half of the fourteenth century. 17 The hemispherical shape of the bowls, their exterior decoration of radiating petal-like designs, and the muted gray-green color scheme have often led to the suggestion that so-called Sultanabad pottery was inspired by imported Chinese celadon wares (fig. 240; fig. 238 is an Iranian bowl imitating celadon). 11

On the Sultanabad bowls under discussion, phoenixes depicted in pairs or groups of three or four are typically arranged in a radiating design that is emphasized by the birds’ long, curved tail feathers (figs. 208, 242). This scheme is particularly well suited to the deep interior of the bowl. The phoenixes are set against a background of peonies, a typical feature of Sultanabad wares. A very closely related motif composed of two phoenixes, one with much fuller plumage than the other, was evidently popular under the Yuan dynasty and was rendered in a variety of media, although the design likely predates this period in China. 14 One example is a Yuan-period stone slab found at Dadu (Beijing), on which the motif, framed by a lobed medallion, is carved in relief. Floral blossoms fill the spaces between the phoenixes, which fly toward one another not unlike amorous birds of prey. The same dynamic motif occurs on more portable objects, such as a small carved lacquer tray (fig. 209) that has been dated to the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) and a silk canopy of the Yuan period on which the phoenixes are embroidered in gold thread (fig. 210). It seems likely that the radial phoenix motif found on early-fourteenth-century Sultanabad pottery was derived from the Chinese design related to it, and that textiles like the embroidered canopy served as the intermediaries. 15
34. Watt and Wardwell 1997, p. 60, see the motif as an innovation of the Yuan period and suggest that the phoenixes represent two different "species." Although they note this design's presence in an illustrated Song encyclopedic work on architecture and architectural decoration from the early twelfth century, Yingzao fashi. For a different interpretation of the pair of phoenixes (male and female), see Rawson 1984, p. 100, which also includes examples that are said to predate the Yuan period. See also P. Morgan 1995, p. 30, which notes the occurrence of the motif in Yuan silver.

35. For example, a brocaded tabby in the Tokyo National Museum bears roundels with paired male and female phoenixes in gold on a red ground; see Meibutsu-gire 2001, no. 32. I am grateful to Nobuko Rajishi of the Metropolitan Museum for this reference.


Fig. 211 (cat. no. 169). Basin, western Iran, early 14th century. Brass, inlaid with silver, gold, and black compound; engraved champlévé technique. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (546–1905)
Motifs borrowed from textiles may also play a part in the decoration of some types of metalwork from the Ilkhanid period; one example is a large faceted brass basin originally inlaid with silver and gold (fig. 211). As very little has survived of the inlays, which carried most of the detail of the extensive figural decoration, what remains are mainly the outlines of the original compositions. While the form of the basin and the compartmentalization of its decoration in medallions and cartouches are familiar from earlier Iranian metalwork, most aspects of the decoration originated in the Ilkhanid period. The medallions bearing a coiled dragon or a soaring phoenix, the extensive aquatic landscape at the bottom of the basin, the use of waterfowl as a subsidiary motif in surrounding zones, the depiction of figures within a landscape, and the figures garbed in Mongol costume all indicate an Ilkhanid date.¹⁶

The images of the dragon and the phoenix within medallions are similar to those found on the star tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 101, 204) and to the textiles already cited as related to them (figs. 202, 206, 207). On this basin, however, the resemblance to the textile designs is even more striking. As the coiled dragon grasps a flaming pearl, its lower torso coils and twists around toward the head to form a circle, just as on the textile. The soaring phoenix on the basin, with outstretched wings and elaborately trailing tail plumage, differs from the textile version mainly in flying downward rather than upward. While the dragon and phoenix are similar to those on Chinese textiles of silk woven with gold like the ones noted, the other animal scenes on the basin are comparable to ones on certain silk tapestries ascribed to Central Asia of the eleventh to the thirteenth century.

The lush aquatic landscape, framed in a large medallion at the bottom of the basin, replete with waterfowl such as swans and geese, recalls the decoration of a silk tapestry, or kesi, with aquatic birds amid a dense pattern of lotus buds (fig. 213). The ducks or geese among floral blossoms in adjacent compartments on the basin are even more closely related to the textile design. On the faceted walls of the basin are twenty panels containing a variety of animals set against a vegetal, generally floral, background. Although decoration with bands of pacing animals predates the Ilkhanid period in Iran, the greater naturalism with which the animals are rendered here and the inclusion of "landscape" elements are features unknown earlier. Closely related bands of animals are used as subsidiary decoration on frieze tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 50, 98, 107–109), while similar bands of animals against a floral background appear in relief on a large jar glazed cobalt blue and dated 1282–83 (fig. 212) and on silk tapestries ascribed to Central Asia.¹⁷ It is perhaps textiles that introduced this motif to Ilkhanid Iran. In its original state, the densely decorated interior of the basin—with nearly all its surface covered with silver or gold,
probably against a black inlaid ground—would have presented an elaborate pattern not unlike that of a textile.

The last Ilkhanid art form to be considered here in the context of textiles is manuscript illustration, whose development and main forms of expression are discussed in the preceding chapter. The relationship between textiles and manuscript illustration has exclusively to do with the presentation of landscape and the conception of space, both of which were dramatically transformed in the Ilkhanid period.

With depictions of landscape in Ilkhanid painting, particularly mountainous landscapes, the influence of East Asian art is undeniable. This is evident, for example, in illustrations from the Manafi‘-i hayawan (On the Usefulness of Animals), the Jami‘ al-tavarikh (Compendium of Chronicles), and the Great Mongol Shahnama (for example, figs. 162, 168, 187; see Robert Hillenbrand’s chapter 6). The most obvious candidate for the role of transmitter, Chinese scroll painting, is perhaps not the likeliest or at least the most consistent source. Persian landscapes
Fig. 215 (cat. no. 45). Bahman Meeting Zal, page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Collection des Musées d’Art et d’Histoire, Geneva (1371-109/12a)
differ in both concept and detail from those depicted in Chinese paintings. They do incorporate certain generic features from Chinese painting, for example the rugged contours of the mountains, but without the sense of mass, texture, space, monumentality, or intimacy of the originals, as though the models had been viewed at second hand or in a much distilled form.

Textiles may be a more likely source than scroll painting for the introduction of certain Chinese landscape elements into Persian painting. For example, the silk tapestry Immortals in a Mountain Pavilion (fig. 214), made under the Northern Song dynasty in the early twelfth century, depicts a pavilion set in the mountains and is obviously based upon a painting. In it the overlapping peaks of the mountains are defined by solid blue, green, and gold outlines that give them a dense, patternlike quality. This woven rendition of a mountainous landscape sheds light on the depictions of dense and spiky peaked mountain ranges in numerous Ilkhanid paintings, such as the Shahnama illustration Bahram Gur Slaying a Dragon (fig. 187), where the mountains are similarly defined by green, brown, and gold outlines with almost no additional color or detail. While Persian manuscript illustration was formulated with influences from a number of sources, Chinese textiles may have provided the foundation for its landscape imagery.

Space is newly suggested in Ilkhanid paintings by a variety of means, including converging or overlapping diagonal planes within the landscape, marked by tufts of grass, as in the Shahnama illustration Bahman Meeting Zal (fig. 215). The same device is found in Chinese textiles. In the silk embroidery Welcoming Spring (fig. 216), dating to the Yuan period or later, the figures are placed within or between diagonal lines that suggest planes and help to situate them in space. The gnarled tree at the top of the same embroidery, bending with the weight of years, is a frequent motif in Ilkhanid painting (fig. 208) and may also derive from Chinese textiles rather than Chinese painting. This is not to say that such pictorial devices do not occur in Yuan painting, for example as discussed in chapter 3, but rather that at present better evidence exists for textiles having served as the primary transmitter from East to West.

In China under the Yuan, a clear relationship linked silk tapestry and other patterned silks with painted portraits. Painted portraits served as models or cartoons for woven versions, which the Mongols evidently preferred. This must have been the case with the royal portraits in the lower corners of the Yamantaka Mandala silk tapestry (figs. 125, 126). The well-known painted imperial portraits of Kubilai Khan and his consort Chabi (figs. 14, 27) were very likely reproduced as woven images for a Lamaist Buddhist shrine. This process may have been reversed in Iran; there, imported textiles provided models for paintings and drawings. Indeed, the interrelationships between textiles with complex weave structures and their two-dimensional counterparts may have been quite significant for the dissemination and adaptation of East Asian artistic ideas and motifs in Iran, and is the subject of the next section of this essay.

So far an attempt has been made to show that luxury textiles were an important means for the introduction of a new aesthetic to Iran. This is not to suggest that all manner of Persian artists had direct access to these expensive imported goods; textile workers, however, presumably did, if only for the purposes of producing copies.

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39. This is not to imply that Chinese landscape painting speaks with a single voice; on the contrary. See, for example, Forg 1984, pp. 20ff.
40. While there is no direct evidence that scroll paintings on silk traveled from China to Iran during this formative period for Persian painting, many have speculated whether Chinese paintings of this type were present at the Ilkhanid court. Blair 1991, pp. 46–50, discusses the possibility that Chinese

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Fig. 216, Welcoming Spring. Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) or later. Embroidery. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1981 (1981.410)
In the early Ilkhanid period textile workers were perhaps the principal group of artists familiar with the practice, if not the art, of drawing. It is proposed below that through drawings on paper, designs were made accessible to a wide range of artists in Iran anxious to please their Mongol patrons.

**Dissemination of the New Visual Language: Drawings on Paper**

There was a design by Mir Dawlatyar for a saddle. Khwaja Mir Hasan copied it, and Khwaja Mir Hasan’s son Mir Shamsoddin and Ustad Dawlat-Khwaja are busy executing it in mother-of-pearl.

—Anonymous, Arsadash†

The evident significance of luxury textiles in Mongol Asia both east and west and the number of correspondences between textiles and Ilkhanid art in various media are the grounds for the proposal that textiles were crucial in the transmission of artistic ideas and motifs from East Asia to Iran. It is possible that not only textiles but also textile workers were transported from China to Iran, and of the Islamic weavers and other specialists conscripted and sent to the East, at least some were allowed to return home. If textiles did play such an important part in the formulation of a new visual language in Iran, perhaps textile artists and the techniques they employed also had a role in the dissemination of this new language throughout the Iranian world. In fact, the ascendency of this medium may have brought with it, quite literally, a paper trail.

Only one textile bearing internal evidence that it was made for an Ilkhanid ruler survives, but the Ilkhans must certainly have set up and patronized textile workshops in Iran, since textual sources clearly indicate that the court commissioned luxury textiles. For example, cloth woven with gold was produced in Tabriz to be sent as diplomatic gifts to the Mamluk sultan by the Ilkhan Tegüder Ahmad, as noted above; and from Rashid al-Din’s account of the contest for the throne between Tegüder Ahmad and Arghun (r. 1284–91), we know that the latter sent orders to the workshops in Nishapur, Isfahan, and Tus, all cities in Khurasan, for garments to be distributed to his military commanders. A number of other
Fig. 218. Hexagonal tile with recumbent deer, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lapardina). Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin (DAI 7)

Fig. 219. Textile design in a sketchbook belonging to Jacopo Bellini, Italy, late 14th century. Fol. 88v; ink over metalpoint or silverpoint on parchment. Musée du Louvre, Paris (RF 1556v)

textiles have been attributed to Ilkhanid Iran, although their Iranian or in some cases even Islamic provenance is not assured. Whether Iranian, Egyptian, Italian, Chinese, or Central Asian, the textile artists who produced these luxury stuffs must have broadly shared a common technology and methodology.

Some form of graphic instruction was almost certainly necessary for the production of complex, patterned silk weavings of the types here under discussion, which must have been made on drawlooms. A draft for a luxury woven textile had to be made by someone familiar with the workings of the loom and the specific requirements of the cloth; it would have been executed on squared paper and annotated. Such drafts may themselves have been based on working drawings like those known from fourteenth-century Italy, which were likely produced for a silk-weaving workshop; an example is a drawing (fig. 219) in an album in the Louvre (in another twist, this particular drawing was probably derived, in part, from an Ilkhanid textile). This is not to suggest that the paper trail was composed of the types of drawings known from Islamic albums or medieval European model-books, but rather that the practice of making squared and annotated drafts helped to introduce and popularize the use of drawings as a means of transmitting and transferring designs. While it is true that drawloom textiles (based on some type of preplanned design) were made in Iran and elsewhere in the Islamic world prior to the Mongol invasions, the greatly enhanced importance and increased production of grooms and a white horse that had been sent from Iran to China on a previous embassy. See Lentz and Lowry 1989, p. 185. Also see Thackston 1989, pp. 179–97, on the Timurid/Ming missions, in particular the one from Herat to Beijing in 1419, which included the artist Ghayath al-Din; he left an important account of his trip, here translated by Thackston. On the impact of Chinese drawings on Persian drawings in the Timurid period, see Rosborough 2002, pp. 50–53.

41. Fong and Watt 1996, p. 149 and pl. 117.
42. Soucek 1986, p. 89, briefly considers the role of textiles in the formation of landscape in Persian painting.
43. Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 194–96, no. 59, where it is dated to the Yuan period; however, James Watt has suggested in a conversation that the work might be a later copy of a Yuan embroidery.
45. Ibid., pp. 96–99.
47. Thackston 2001, pp. 43–64.
48. Allen 1998, pp. 39–40, for the weavers who were eventually restored to their home in Herat.
49. This well-known gold and silk textile is inscribed with the name and titles of Abu Sa'id (r. 1316–34) and was subsequently used for the burial robe of Duke Rudolf IV of Austria (d. 1365). See Wardwell 1988–89, pp. 168ff., and fig. 45, detail.
textiles under the Ilkhans would have brought new attention to the practical value of drawings and designs on paper. Artists in Iran who produced designs containing unfamiliar motifs, such as the dragon and the lotus on woven silks (figs. 75, 199) or the deer on glazed tiles (fig. 218), may have copied the motifs from imported textiles of the types exemplified by figs. 202, 206, 207, with drawings on paper serving as the intermediary.

The quotation a few paragraphs above is from the Arzadasht, a kind of progress report written by the head of an atelier for his princely master in the early fifteenth century. This highly significant document may indicate that preparatory drawings were in use in Iran by the first half of the fourteenth century—before the Timurid period (1370–1506), when the practice is far better documented. According to Dust Muhammad, a sixteenth-century Persian painter and historian, Mir Daulatyar was known for his pen-and-ink drawings and was an artist active at the court of the Ilkhan Abu Sa’id (r. 1316–35). During that reign, Ahmad Musa, Mir Daulatyar’s teacher, is credited with inventing the art of Persian manuscript painting (see quotation at head of chapter 6). It is not known what type of saddle (zain) or part thereof Mir Daulatyar’s drawing originally represented. Perhaps the design was for a saddle covering made of gold (see figs. 9, 63) or possibly a woven or embroidered example like the one on the horse in the right-hand frontispiece of the Tarikh-i jahan-nasha (fig. 201), with a lion in a solar disk and clouds in gold on a blue ground. Two other key facts emerge from the Arzadasht citation: first, Mir
Daulatyar’s drawing was preserved and still in use a century after it had been made, indicating that such designs were considered worth saving; second, the design, although intended for use in one medium, was later copied to be executed in another (mother-of-pearl, not a suitable material for a saddle).

Among the numerous extant Persian drawings of the fourteenth through the sixteenth century, many survived because they were bound into albums. Most of these drawings were apparently not conceived as autonomous works of art but rather played an intermediary role in the creative process from preliminary design concept to finished object—whether that object was of paper, silk, or metal. Such designs were in a sense tools, and the majority of the drawings preserved today in albums in Istanbul and Berlin (see below) show marked signs of use and reuse. The fact that many drawings were rebacked, patched, and ultimately incorporated into albums is a measure of their importance in Persian artistic practice. David Roxburgh, who has closely studied the Istanbul albums and their contents, cogently suggests that the “albums functioned as storehouses of models and visual ideas.”

The first albums, created in the fifteenth century, are seemingly random assemblages of paintings, calligraphy, pounces (tracings marked for transfer), sketches, and designs. Three albums in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul (H. 2152, H. 2153, H. 2160), and a group of albums in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, long known as the Diez Albums (Diez A) incorporate material relevant to the Ilkhanid period. They include early-fourteenth-century paintings, some perhaps made for an unfinished or dispersed copy of Rashid al-Din’s Jam‘ al-tavarikh and for a Shahnama. However, it is not yet possible to identify drawn designs that clearly date to the Ilkhanid period. Some of the drawings seem to be fifteenth-century copies after Ilkhanid designs, reflecting a practice already attested to in the passage from the Arzadash quoted above (for example, fig. 223).

Especially significant for this discussion is a drawing in one of the Topkapi Palace Library albums (H. 2152; fol. 98r) composed of four bands of figural compositions and a fifth band of pacing animals, both real and imaginary (fig. 221). Illustrated in the second and third bands are stories from the Shahnama of Firdausi—from the cycles of the legendary Persian heroes Bahram Gur (here shown with the ill-fated Azada) and Faridun (leading the even more unfortunate Zahkh, his hands bound behind). Depictions of these particular legends may have had special significance for an Ilkhanid audience, since the same or related scenes are featured on tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 107, 108). The drawing’s first register shows a lady and her maid, both on horseback, an image that also may have some narrative function, while represented in the fourth band is a royal enthronement scene (as in the Jam‘ al-tavarikh; see, for example, figs. 84, 222). The costumes and headdresses, horse trappings, accoutrements, and abbreviated landscape elements in the drawing are all reminiscent of Ilkhanid-period work. The halos seen here are common devices in Ilkhanid painting (figs. 51, 187) and decorative arts, such as metalwork and ceramics (for example, figs. 1, 108, 118, 224). The fifth register of the drawing is ornamental rather than narrative and carries depictions of a bull, a griffin whose curled tail terminates in a dragon’s head, and a lion charging through an arabesque-like landscape of flowers.
Fig. 221. Drawing with bands of figures, from an album, Iran, 14th century. Fol. 98r; ink on paper. Tokapi Palace Library, Istanbul (H. 2158)

Fig. 222 (above, right; cat. no. 18). Enthronement Scene, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century. Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 70, p. 10)

Fig. 223. Drawing of designs in medallions, from an album, Iran, early 15th century, possibly after a 14th-century drawing. Ink and gold on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 75, p. 47, #5)

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Roxburgh dates the drawing to the second half of the fourteenth century and proposes that it is a kind of antiquarian work by an artist who looked back more than one hundred years at a variety of decorative objects and copied their decoration. However, given the established practice of saving and copying earlier designs, it seems more likely that the artist selectively copied and combined two or more Ilkhanid drawings used to transmit motifs. Perhaps these were intended for translation into a variety of media. Compositions abridged from the *Shāhnāma* are found among the square frieze tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 107, 108) and in the decoration of metalwork (fig. 270). The enthronement scene is a common one on fourteenth-century metalwork (see below). Bands of pacing animals set against a rich foliate background also occur on the upper registers of certain frieze tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 50, 98, 107–109) as well as on other molded tiles, as a subsidiary design in Ilkhanid metalwork (fig. 228), and in textiles. While the motif is

63. Which he dates prior to the Mongol invasions; Roxburgh 2002, pp. 57–59, fig. 77.
64. Although such scenes certainly occur earlier; see Simpson 1984.
found in earlier Iranian art, it does not seem to occur in this precise form until the Ilkhanid period. Birds nearly identical to the cranes and the falcon (?) pictured above the female figures in the drawing’s uppermost register are likewise seen flying above horsemen in the central register of frieze tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman and other related tiles (fig. 98). The evident relationship between decorative arts and the Istanbul drawing, particularly as regards the Shahnama scenes, suggests that such drawings had a role in Ilkhanid art even apart from their obvious connection with manuscript illustration.

Another drawing important to the present discussion (fig. 223), from the Diez Albums in Berlin, is probably an early-fifteenth-century copy of several Ilkhanid designs. The drawing contains two separate scenes of enthronement, one of the ruler and one of his consort, each enclosed in a roundel, with all figures clad in typical Ilkhanid costume and headgear. The enthronements obviously relate to early-fourteenth-century enthronement scenes illustrating the Jami‘ al-tavarikh (see figs. 84, 222) and to textiles (fig. 195). But the closest analogues for the designs are in metalwork, such as a candlestick lavishly decorated with silver and gold inlay that has on its base four large figural compositions depicting enthronements set within medallions (fig. 224). Two of the medallions show the enthroned ruler with his attendants; in the third the ruler and his
consort are represented together on one platformlike throne; and the fourth shows the enthroned consort, wearing the typical Mongol bughtaq on her head (as in figs. 27, 84, 122, 126). The Ilkhanid designs on which the Berlin drawing is likely based must have survived into the fifteenth century. A related enthronement scene occurs

Fig. 228 (cat. no. 166). Candlestick, Iran, early 14th century. Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold. The Trustees of The National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh (A. 1909-547)

Fig. 229. Textile fragment with charging lion, northern China, Mongolia, or Central Asia, second half of the 13th century. Lampas, silk and gold thread. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence (574)

Fig. 230. Candlestick base, Iran, early 14th century, detail (see fig. 228). Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold. The Trustees of The National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh (A. 1909-547)
on an Ilkhanid silk and gold tapestry (fig. 195). The motif in the third roundel of the drawing, a deer with mushroom-shaped antlers, is again found in metalwork of the Ilkhanid period.\textsuperscript{71}

Two further drawings, both in the Diez Albums, are noteworthy. The first (fig. 225) is a design depicting two charging animals, either qilins (Chinese mythical deerlike creatures) or winged djireans (antelopes). Whether qilin or djirean, the beast on the right is shown from the back in a tortuous position, with head and forelegs twisted to the right. The second drawing (fig. 226) is a design for a cloud collar point, one of four scallop-shaped pieces making up the collar of a robe.\textsuperscript{72} Here a pair of playfully combatant qilins in contorted but balanced poses dominate the drawing; such paired mythical beasts are a common theme in fifteenth-century album designs.\textsuperscript{73} Significantly, a design similar to these two drawings occurs on the base of another candlestick of the Ilkhanid period, in Edinburgh (fig. 227). Most of the inlays have been lost, revealing the strong linear design of the candlestick's gracefully twisting qilins and emphasizing their relationship to those in the drawings.\textsuperscript{74}

One or both of the fifteenth-century drawings from the Berlin albums may be based upon Ilkhanid designs that can in turn be linked to textiles. Decoration from the previously noted Edinburgh candlestick also helps to enhance the proposed links among designs, textiles, and drawings. The compressed power of the lion attacking a young camel on the candlestick (fig. 230) is strikingly similar to the open-mouthed, charging lion with twisting head on a fragment of a silk and gold cloth with a pseudo-Arabic inscription (fig. 229).\textsuperscript{75} Related figures of combatant lions exhibiting a similar inner tension occur in fifteenth-century designs from the Istanbul albums that may be based on earlier drawings.\textsuperscript{76} Drawings on paper evidently played an important part in the formulation and transfer of
designs in Iran during the Ilkhanid period, and that function continued into, and became a hallmark of, the Timurid period.77

One final example can be noted, a pair of inlaid brass bowls, one of which is dated 1347 and has lost most of its inlay (fig. 231). Both vessels (for the other, see fig. 232) are decorated with complicated and extensive figural compositions that recall contemporary manuscript illustration (see fig. 234). Perhaps not unexpectedly, at just about the time that Dust Muhammad said the veil was lifted from the face of painting in Iran (during the reign of Abu Sa‘id, 1316–35; see chapter 6), a closely related phenomenon was occurring with the decoration of metalwork. From the 1330s to the 1350s the figural compositions of inlaid metalwork achieved their most elaborate form, becoming like paintings in silver and gold.78

On each of these bowls is a band presenting a variety of powerfully conceived, dynamic figures of huntsmen and warriors. In fact, the bowls display identical figures—see the pair of charging horsemen spearing a bear (figs. 232, 233)—but arranged in a different order. Furthermore, the internal and external outlines of certain figures showing how and where the inlay was to be applied are exactly alike on the two vessels. The details of their inlays themselves may have varied, just as the arrangements of the figures vary, the result being two consanguine but not identical compositions. It seems likely that the use of one or more drawings similar in type to fig. 220 accounts for the familial relationship between the two bowls. The striking resemblance of the swordsmen on the two bowls—each with a blade raised above his head and mounted on a rearing horse (fig. 231)—to the figure of Iskandar (Alexander) in the Great Mongol Shahnama of the 1330s (fig. 234) further emphasizes this connection.79

In manuscript illustration, the copying of figures or compositional elements is well known, going back at least to the end of the fourteenth century. Direct copying was one method; compositions, groups of figures, and single figures were also repeated by means of drawings, pounces, and sketches, many of which are preserved in the previously noted albums.80 It now seems likely that drawings first became an important tool for the transmission and copying of compositions at an

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77 As outlined in greater detail in Komaroff 1992, pp. 9 ff.
78 The same rearing horse and rider occur on the two previously discussed candelsticks, there enclosed in a roundel (fig. 230).

Fig. 231. Bowl, Iran, ca. 1347, detail. Brass inlaid with silver and gold. Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence (Bronzi 7161)

Fig. 232. Bowl, Iran, A.H. 748/A.D. 1347–48, detail (see fig. 231). Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (E 347-22)
This does not mean that drawings on paper became the only source of preliminary designs. A lustre-glazed cross tile excavated at Takht-i Salihman (National Museum of Iran, Tehran, no. 2131) preserves a sketch of a horse and rider on its reverse. Additional preliminary sketches are found on other Ilkhanid lustre tiles. See Porter 1995, figs. 39, 40; one of the tiles shown is dated 1284.

Watson 2000, p. 44. The author proposes (pp. 44–46, 83) that an illustrated text known as Yingzao fashi (Techniques and Styles of Architecture), compiled in the Song dynasty and published in 1103, functioned as a kind of design manual that facilitated the transmission of motifs. However, there does not seem to be general agreement among scholars of Chinese art on either the specific intention or the subsequent use of this text. See, for example, Guo 1998, where even the title of the text is translated in a significantly different manner, as State Building Standards. Also see Yingzao fashi 1989, especially vols. 7, 8. I am grateful to J. Keith Wilson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to Jonathan Hay, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and especially to Craig Clunas, University of Sussex, for their insightful comments on this text and for the bibliographical references they suggested.

Fig. 234. Ikandar Battling the Habash Monster, from a page of the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Tabriz, 1330s. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Denman Waldo Ross Collection (10.105).

earlier date, in the Ilkhanid period, and that this tool was employed in a variety of media. Furthermore, the diffusion of this practice may initially have been connected to the new importance of drawloom textiles and the method of their manufacture, for which designs on paper were essential.

To be sure, it is not solely drawings that facilitated the rapid, widespread dissemination of East Asian textile-derived motifs into Iranian art during the Mongol period. It is especially tempting to look for a more direct Chinese model and source in the form of design manuals or model books. At least one scholar of Chinese art has suggested that potters in China used woodblock prints to circulate ceramic designs and ideas for shapes. Until there is more extensive study of the working methods of Chinese artists and the interactions of artisans in a variety of media, no model of artistic practice that might have been transplanted to Iran can be postulated. Nonetheless, if drawings did first come into general use in Iran during the Ilkhanid period, then this era represents a watershed not only for its infusion of Iranian art with new motifs, not only for the rise of newly important media (manuscript illustration, glazed tile revetment), but also for the introduction of an artistic practice that was to have a great impact on subsequent art in Iran, Ottoman Turkey, and Mughal India.
Fig. 235 (cat. no. 152). Two plaques, Iran, 14th century. Gilt bronze, worked in repoussé, chased, punched, and engraved, attached to metal base. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (JLY 503)
8. Synthesis: Continuity and Innovation in Ilkhanid Art  

Stefano Carboni

When I entered Bagdad [in 1327], the Sultan of the two Ikars and Khurasan was Abu Sa‘id Bahadur Khan. . . . He left no issue, and the consequence was, his Emirs each claimed and exercised the rule in those parts in which he had been placed. When Abu Sa‘id left Bagdad for his own country, I travelled for ten days with him, and saw the wonderful arrangement of their march, and their numerous army. . . . I presented myself to him, and was honoured with a dress and other large presents.

—Ibn Battuta, Travels

The sultan of Shiraz at the time of my visit [in 1347] was Abu Ishaq, one of the best of sultans, handsome and well-conducted, of generous character, humble, but powerful and the ruler of a great kingdom. . . . At one time Abu Ishaq desired to build a palace like the Aywan Kisa [at Ctesiphon], and ordered the inhabitants of Shiraz to undertake the digging of its foundations. They set to work on this, each corporation of artisans riving the other, and carried their rivalry to such lengths that they made baskets of leather to carry the earth and covered them with embroidered silk. . . . Some of them made tools of silver. . . . When they went to dig they put on their best garments, with girdles of silk, and the sultan watched their work from a balcony.

—Ibn Battuta, Travels

The Ilkhan Ghazan’s conversion to Islam in 1295 was a significant moment for the Ilkhanate. His official acceptance of the faith that had been the region’s predominant one before the arrival of the Mongols exerted an immediate impact on the religious arts, especially evident in the creation of luxury Koran manuscripts and the erection of buildings of devotion. The importance of this development is accentuated by the almost complete absence today—probably due both to deliberate demolition and to sheer neglect—of monuments and furnishings produced for followers of the various religions embraced by Ghazan’s Mongol predecessors, from shamanism to Buddhism to Nestorianism (see Sheila Blair’s chapter 5, particularly pp. 105–15).

This dramatic change in the religious arts reached its peak during the reign of Öljaitü (1304–16) and the years in office (1298–1318) of his vizier Rashid al-Din. Analysis of the secular arts and decorative vocabulary of the Ilkhanid period before and after the turn of the century reveals, however, a remarkable continuity in the artistic language. The most outstanding creations of the fourteenth century—such as Öljaitü’s mausoleum of 1307–13 at Sultaniyya, the thirty-volume Koran manuscripts made for use in it (ca. 1302–13), copies of Rashid al-Din’s Jami‘ al-tavarikh done about 1314–15, and the Great Mongol Shahnama, probably of the 1330s—as well as all other extant material from this period (alas, just a fraction of the original)
must be understood as part of a process that has its roots in the first forty years of Mongol domination in the region. Undeniably, however, the period corresponding to the reigns of Ghazan, Öljietü, and Abu Sa‘id (1295–1335) saw a newly heightened interest in current artistic trends on the part of the court, which took direct control of the most important ateliers and workshops in the Ilkhanid-dominated areas. The main intent of this essay is to present a brief exploration of the arts of the late or “mature” Ilkhanid period and an analysis of how this extraordinary chapter in the history of Islamic art influenced developments in the greater Iranian region and beyond.

The continued use throughout the Ilkhanid era of an existing ornamental language and of certain materials, techniques, styles, and subjects is evident in both secular and religious art. The luster-painted star and cross tiles and plastered walls in the shrine of Yahya at Veramin1 (1260s) and the summer palace of Takht-i Sulaiman (1270s; figs. 101, 204) apparently provided direct inspiration for the lavish interior decoration of mosques, shrines, tombs, and palaces erected in the first decades of the fourteenth century, known from monuments such as the shrine of ‘Abd al-Samad at Natanz2 (1299–1312; see figs. 149, 150), the mosque of ‘Ali at Qohrānī3 (1300–1307), and the royal settings illustrated in the Great Mongol Shāhnāma of the 1330s4 (for example, fig. 90). Another example is provided by a complex design drawn for muqarnas (“stalactite”) vaulting, found at Takht-i Sulaiman, which is echoed in the vault of the dome over the 1307 tomb of ‘Abd al-Samad.5 The dynastic motivations behind the celebrated Shāhnāma manuscript become clear when its layout and choice of illustrations are examined in the context of the long-standing tradition of such epic images in the region, since scenes and verses from the Shāhnāma appear on frieze tiles of the early Ilkhanid period from Takht-i Sulaiman (figs. 49, 111, 112).6

**Ceramics**

The decoration of walls with luster-painted tiles is a centuries-old tradition that originated and developed in the Islamic world and enjoyed great success under the Seljuqs, predecessors of the Ilkhans in Iran.7 The lustrous finish is created when the design is drawn over an opaque off-white glaze with a paste that contains high levels of silver and copper, and then the tile is fired in a reduced atmosphere—that is, a kiln from which the oxygen is slowly removed.8 During the Ilkhanid period, luster-painted ceramic became extremely popular as architectural decoration but less common, judging from the surviving material, on vessels and other functional objects (see fig. 3). These were more often decorated in underglaze painting or in the so-called lajdārīna style.9 The Iranian town of Kashan had a virtual monopoly on luster tile work under the Seljuqs and the Ilkhans, and its craftsmen were commissioned for the decoration of buildings throughout the kingdom, especially during the most active period of construction in the first decades of the fourteenth century. The best ceramists sometimes signed and dated their creations, which included not only the ubiquitous star and cross tiles, ranging from A.H. 600 to 740 (1203 to 1340), but also impressive mihrabs faced with large square or rectangular

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4. Grabar and Blair 1986, for example figs. 8, 17, 50.
5. Blair 1986a, pp. 34–35, 56, pls. 34–38, 101; Blair and Bloom 1994, fig. 11.
9. O. Watson 1977, pp. 162–63, lists eleven vessels or vessel fragments dated within the Ilkhanid period; they range from A.H. 679 (1280–81) to A.H. 683 (1284–85), demonstrating that this technique became obsolete for functional vessels by the close of the thirteenth century. The two large round tiles in the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, dated 711 (1311; figs. 155, 16), although more elaborate than frieze tiles in function and design, can still be regarded as architectural decoration.
10. The Iranian town of Kashan had a virtual monopoly on luster tile work under the Seljuqs and the Ilkhans, and its craftsmen were commissioned for the decoration of buildings throughout the kingdom, especially during the most active period of construction in the first decades of the fourteenth century. The best ceramists sometimes signed and dated their creations, which included not only the ubiquitous star and cross tiles, ranging from A.H. 600 to 740 (1203 to 1340), but also impressive mihrabs faced with large square or rectangular...
The most distinguished Kashan family of potters, spanning at least three generations under Ilkhanid rulers both non-Muslim and Muslim, was the Abu Tahirs. The family is known not only from the works of its members, in particular frieze tiles and a mihrab signed by Yusuf ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir, but also through a text by Yusuf’s brother Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd Allah Kashani, which contains a section on the technique of Kashan luster pottery.

With the exception of luster-painted tile work, Ilkhanid pottery production was rather conservative from a technical viewpoint. Influenced by the stream of luxury items in porcelain arriving from East Asia, Iranian ceramists successfully imitated celadon ware (fig. 240) by firing a pale greenish glaze over a hard fritware; they also

12. O. Watson 1985, fig. 125.
14. Two frieze tiles signed by Yusuf once belonged to buildings dated to about 1309–10 on the basis of dated tiles from the frieze. The mihrab, now in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, was originally in the shrine of ‘Ali ibn Ja’far in Qom. See O. Watson 1977, pp. 355–56, nos. 100, 102, 112. See also O. Watson 1985, fig. 120.
15. The treatise on pottery is translated into English in Allan 1973.
Fig. 238 (cat. no. 123). Bowl with three fishes, Iran, first half of the 14th century. Fritware, modeled and monochrome glazed. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer, in memory of her husband, Horace Havemeyer, 1959 (59.60)

Fig. 239 (cat. no. 130). Plate with fishes, Iran, late 13th–early 14th century. Fritware, overglaze painted (lajarismo). Musée du Louvre, Paris (6456)

Fig. 240 (cat. no. 194). Vase, Longquan celadon ware, China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Stoneware, molded decoration. Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

Fig. 241 (cat. no. 131). Storage jar (albarello), Iran, late 13th–14th century. Fritware, overglaze painted (lajarismo). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Henry G. Lebretton Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Wallace Chauncey, 1937 (37.61.152, b)
copied Chinese designs, as can be seen on the bowl with three swirling fish on a bowl in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 238). As far as we can tell, however, they did not attempt to imitate the renowned blue-and-white Chinese porcelain until later in the century, and this style became a trend only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under the Timurids and the Safavids.  

The most distinctive type of ceramic ware produced under Ilkhanid rule, one apparently confined to a few decades in the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, is commonly known as *lajvardina* (from *lajvard*, Persian for lapis lazuli) because of the deep blue glaze that characterizes most examples; less common are pale blue and off-white glazes (fig. 239).  

*Lajvardina* ware was placed in the kiln twice, once to fire the glaze and the second time to fix enamel-like colors and gold over the glaze (see the technical study 7). This overglaze-painted technique was popular in Iran before the advent of the Ilkanids and was used for a colorful ware, frequently decorated with lively figural scenes, known as *mina’i* (enameled).  

*Lajvardina* is often described as a natural development of *mina’i*, which is perhaps true from a technical standpoint, although the two types are extremely different in color, decoration, and artistic intent. On *lajvardina* ware the coloring of the overglaze is limited to white and reddish pigments and gold, and the decoration consists almost exclusively of dense geometric and vegetal patterns that create a rich, textured surface like a woven pattern, usually set in contrast by a dark blue background (fig. 241). The generous use of gold, the refined decoration, and the typically large
dimensions of the bowls, bottles, and vases suggest that *lajvardina* filled a market
demand for luxury ware under the new rulers, although one without a specific
patronage, given the absence of dedicatory inscriptions.

Also important during this period is a type of pottery known as “Sultanabad”; in
this case the ceramic, painted before a layer of clear, thick glaze (sometimes with
blue highlights) is applied, requires only one firing. The design is executed largely
in white with black outlines against a pale-colored brown or gray thin slip, and this
palette makes the ware distinctive in the realm of Persian pottery. The restrained
color schemes and the subjects of direct Chinese origin—mostly zoomorphic
scenes such as the oft-encountered revolving phoenixes (fig. 242)—suggest that this
short-lived class of pottery was directly inspired by drawings of eastern origin and
was meant to satisfy the taste of the new ruling class. The most successful creations
are large bowls, sometimes with a thick inward-turned rim, and vases, shapes that
are paralleled in *lajvardina* pottery (see figs. 241, 243); large mihrab tiles were also
painted in these underglaze colors (fig. 152).

Continuity between the earlier and later Ilkhanid periods is noticeable as well in
decorative details that entered the Iranian repertoire only following the Mongol
invasion, such as the Chinese dragon, the phoenix, the lion, the crouching antelope
(*djietran*), the lotus, and the peony. These individual elements, studied in Linda
Komaroff’s chapter 7 to determine how they were transmitted to and disseminated
within the Ilkhanid repertoire, initially had an imperial connotation linked to the
court of the Great Khan in China; later they lost most of their original significance
and became essentially decorative patterns. The motifs were present in all media
in the fourteenth century, from inlaid metalwork to ceramics to illuminated and
illustrated manuscripts, greatly enriching the decorative language of late-Ilkhanid
portable arts and remaining almost unchanged throughout.

**Manuscripts**

The pursuit of legitimacy for the Iranian dynasty was expressed in particular in
the writings of ‘Ala’ al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini (1226–1283) and Rashid al-Din
(1247–1318), both of whom were historians as well as high government officials,
and in the creation of a new style of illustration and design. The effort coincided not
only with unofficial independence from the Yuan dynasty in East Asia but also with
the development of a new sense of spiritual mission and an active role in the Islamic
world. To fulfill this mission the Ilkhans made use of the cultural legacy of the
westernmost area of their domains, allowing and even encouraging the mostly
Arabic-speaking population of Iraq to continue cultivating their centuries-old tradi-
tions of paper and book production, calligraphy, and illumination. The city of
Baghdad had suffered a heavy blow from its conquest by the Mongols, but it never
entirely lost its crucial position in the cultural and artistic sphere of the Arab Islamic
world, a role established as early as the eighth century, when the ‘Abbasid caliphate
was founded.

Emblematic in this regard is the figure of Yaqt al-Musta’simi (ca. 1221–1298),
one of the most celebrated calligraphers of all time. Yaqt’s career began in Baghdad under the last ‘Abbasid caliph and ended when the ruling Ilkhanids were officially turning to Islam.\textsuperscript{11} A protégé of the powerful governor Juvaini (see n. 21) and an artist embedded in the tradition that called for the transmission of calligraphic skills in an uninterrupted chain, Yaqt trained his famous six pupils during the very decades when Baghdad was presumably on its knees and the Ilkhanids were showing little interest in their Iraqi province or Islamic matters. The pupils, led by the towering artist Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi (d. ca. 1326), developed the so-called Six Pens, or six calligraphic styles (\textit{al-aqlam al-sitta}) (see fig. 245).\textsuperscript{24} They also devised the system and provided the models for the production of Koran manuscripts at the Ilkhanid court, an endeavor that culminated in the thirty-volume copies made in the fourteenth century for the mausoleum of Ōljeitu at Sultanīya (figs. 121, 156, 158, 245). The manuscripts were commissioned from the best calligraphers of the time in the main centers of book production in Iran and Iraq and were copied in the monumental \textit{muhqqaq}, \textit{thuluth}, and \textit{rayhan} scripts on the best and largest Baghdadi-size paper.\textsuperscript{25}

These majestic works would never have been created for the Ilkhanid court had

\begin{itemize}
\item More than twenty different scripts were in use by the late ninth century, of which six cursive styles came to be known as \textit{al-aqlam al-sitta} or \textit{al-aqlam} (the Six Pens, or six calligraphic styles). Called \textit{thuluth}, \textit{naskh}, \textit{muhqqaq}, \textit{rayhan}, \textit{riqa}, and \textit{tawqi}, they have each typically served for a particular function. \textit{Naskh} and \textit{muhqqaq}, for example, have a wide application, being used for the text in Koran manuscripts and literary documents; \textit{thuluth} is commonly employed as an ornamental script for inscriptions and titles; while \textit{riqa} and \textit{tawqi} are scripts for records and legal documents. See Safafi 1978, pp. 14–24.
\item Islamic manuscripts are composed of quires each made up of a variable number of sheets folded in two. The thirty-volume Koran manuscript made for Ōljeitu in 1306–7 is composed of pages that measure about 28 by 30 inches, that is, 28 by 40 inches before folding. These dimensions correspond to the “full Baghdadi” size mentioned by the Egyptian historian al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418). One of the best papers ever produced in whiteness, smoothness, and evenness is that used for the Koran copied by Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi (fig. 244). See Bloom 2001, pp. 13–14, 112.
\end{itemize}
Fig. 245 (cat. no. 64). Left side of a double-page colophon from the Anonymous Baghdad Koran, copied by Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri, illuminated by Muhammad ibn Aybak ibn ’Abd Allah, Iraq (Baghdad), A.H. 701–7/ A.D. 1302–8. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1955 (55.44)
Yaqt been forced to cease his activity following the conquest of Baghdad. The models provided by Ibn al-Suhrawardi and his colleagues made possible a proliferation of both elaborate and less ambitious single-volume Korans in Iran, and this happened especially in Tabriz under the sponsorship of the vizier Rashid al-Din, whose collection in the Rab’-i Rashidi (Rashid’s Quarter) included at least a thousand high-quality copies of the Koran. Yaqt and his pupils perfected the calligraphic styles that had been established by Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Bawwab (d. 1022) in Baghdad, the premier center of development of calligraphy for centuries. With the six principal styles becoming increasingly popular, the days were long forgotten when Korans in Iran were copied in the angular, vertical script known as Eastern Kufic. The refinement that the six styles represented also influenced calligraphers producing texts for other media, such as ceramics and metalwork. Tile friezes in early fourteenth-century buildings, for example, carry Koranic passages in flowing thuluth script (figs. 149, 150), and the same calligraphic style appears on the inscriptions in cartouches on brass bowls, boxes, and candlesticks (figs. 224, 246).

**Illumination**

Along with calligraphy, illumination—nonrepresentational decoration embellishing manuscript frontispieces and chapter headings—was integral to the development of Koran production in Baghdad. An important example, a volume from a thirty-part Koran, is an autograph copy by Yaqt done in muhaqqaq script and dated 681 (1282–83). The left half of its illuminated frontispiece displays a geometric composition that ultimately goes back to the period of Ibn al-Bawwab in Baghdad (fig. 5). The page’s decorative details belong to Baghdad’s thirteenth-century development;

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27. Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali ibn Hilal, known as Ibn al-Bawwab, an esteemed calligrapher from Baghdad, perfected an art of writing that was to be surpassed only by Yaqt al-Musta’imi. He also wrote a treatise and a didactic poem on calligraphy. See Maque 1971.
28. For a typical and very fine example of the Eastern Kufic style, see Islamic World 1987, fig. 20. Six other pages from the same Koran manuscript are in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
29. See examples in Carboni and Masuya 1993, figs. 13, 21, 23, 29.

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Fig. 246 (cat. no. 166). Polygonal box, Iran (probably Fars), first half of the 14th century. Brass, inlaid with silver and gold. Musée du Louvre, Paris (1355).

Fig. 247 (cat. no. 62). Two pages with calligraphy and illumination from juz‘ 15 of a thirty-part Koran, copied by Yaqt al-Musta’imi, Iraq (probably Baghdad), A.H. 681/A.D. 1282–83. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (QUR 29).
Fig. 248. Vault in the exterior galleries of the tomb of Öljéitü at Sultaniyya, 1315–25

Fig. 249 (cat. no. 74). Textile with paired felines (detail), western Iran, 1340–80. Lampas weave, silk. Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Gift of John Pierpont Morgan from the Miguel y Badía Collection (1902-1-251). Shown on a diagonal because of fragment’s shape.

its illumination may be attributed to the most prominent artist of the time, Muhammad ibn Aybak. This painter collaborated with Ibn al-Suhrawardi on one of the most sumptuous Korans produced for the Ilkhanids, the so-called Anonymous Baghdad Koran of 1301–7 (figs. 158, 245). His work demonstrates the stylistic continuity of illumination before and after the turn of the century and emphasizes the vital role Baghdad played in the production of Korans. Like types of calligraphy, the styles of illumination on frontispieces probably influenced designs used for other ornamental purposes, such as those on the exterior gallery vaults of Öljéitü’s mausoleum at Sultaniyya (fig. 248).

A digression is necessary at this point to demonstrate the important role that Baghdad calligraphers and illuminators played in the development of their arts in Mamluk Egypt and Syria as well. The Mamluks (1250–1517), a dynasty of Turkic origin that became the dominant Muslim force in the Arab world, can be regarded as the most formidable opponents of the Mongols. They repeatedly prevented the Ilkhanid armies from conquering Syria (most famous is the victory at ʿAyn Jalut in
and settled for an uneasy truce, often jeopardized by border skirmishes and intelligence dealings, until the Ilkhanid Abu Sa’id (r. 1316–35) and the Mamluk al-Nasir ibn Qalawun (r. 1291–1341, with brief interruptions) signed a formal peace agreement in 1322. The relationship between the Ilkhanids and the Mamluks was a complex one: although sworn rivals who mistrusted each other, they exchanged embassies frequently and kept various avenues of communication open.

This close relationship is reflected in the arts—predictably so, since manuscripts, textiles, and portable objects not only were exchanged as gifts through high-level embassies but also were passed along the regular trading routes, which were never shut down or even seriously disrupted. A fragmentary silk Ilkhanid textile in the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin (fig. 75), for example, carries the name of the Mamluk sultan al-Nasir ibn Qalawun; another fragment, in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York (fig. 249), has been assigned a Mamluk origin by some scholars and an Ilkhanid one by others. Movements back and forth of large quantities of jewelry and items in gold and silver are mentioned in original sources. Artistic influence seems to have traveled almost exclusively one way, east to west, following the general direction of trade in luxury items during the Pax Mongolica. Sometimes it is far-reaching and peculiar, as in the case of a large, wide-bodied bottle, a typical product of Cairene or Damascene glassmakers, which is enameled and gilded with

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**Fig. 250.** Bottle depicting crouching lions, Egypt or Syria, late 13th century. Enameled and gilded glass. Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon (7370)
the imposing figures of two Chinese crouching lions with their typical attribute of a ball and ribbons (fig. 250). There is little doubt that the glass painter’s inspiration came from Ilkhaniid textiles, which were readily available in the Mamluk capitals and served as “pattern books.”

In the production of Mamluk Koran manuscripts, however, Ilkhaniid-controlled Baghdad is once again the crucial factor. The illumination, calligraphy, and page layouts of courtly Mamluk Korans are so similar to those of their Ilkhaniid counterparts that it has often been suggested that the lavish copies made in Cairo in the fourteenth century were directly modeled on a famous thirty-volume royal Koran made for Öljeitü. This manuscript, dated 713 (1313) and now in the National Library in Cairo, is known as the Hamadan Koran after the city in Iran where, according to its colophon, it was created (fig. 251). Rather than going to its expected final home at Sultaniyah, it was taken to Cairo before 1326 for unknown reasons, perhaps as a gift during the final peace negotiations. It was given as an endowment to the khanaqah (hospice for the poor) of the Mamluk amir Baktimur. The influence of this manuscript on Mamluk production in general was minimal, however, since Korans produced in Cairo in the first decade of the fourteenth century, before the Hamadan manuscript was copied, already show an “Ilkhaniid” influence. There was therefore a common source that inspired the creation of similarly conceived manuscripts in

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13. For a discussion of the exchange of silver, see Albini 1992, p. 54.
41. Ibid., p. 126 and nos. 1–6.
Egypt and in the Ilkhanid area at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, and that source must be the works of Yaqut and his pupils in Baghdad. David James suggests that Ibn Mubadir, who was responsible for a number of illuminated frontispieces on a seven-volume copy made for the Mamluk sultan Baibars II in 1304–6 (fig. 252), was “an Iraqi-trained artist who had come to Cairo to work.” This seems plausible; certainly the impact of Baghdadi Ilkhanid works on Mamluk ones is indisputable. Whether the influence came by way of displaced artists or a flow of manuscripts toward the Mamluk area, Baghdad can in either event be regarded as the true source of the calligraphy and illumination of royal Ilkhanid Korans in Iran and also of their Egyptian Mamluk ramifications.

Illustration

Baghdad also played an important role supporting the creation of secular illustrated manuscripts in the Ilkhanid world. The production of illustrated codices in Baghdad may have taken two or three decades to recover from the havoc created by the Mongol conquest of the city, which resulted in the loss of thousands of volumes and the destruction of entire libraries. The very few extant works suggest, however, that the style of painting predominant in Iraq before the fall of the caliphate (often referred to as “Arab” or “Mesopotamian” and aptly described as “Byzantine art in Islamic garb”)41 survived into the last two decades of the thirteenth century, following the same pattern as calligraphy and the illumination of religious manuscripts. Its continued existence is reflected in literary works of different nature—philosophical and scientific texts and moral tales in both Arabic and Persian—giving evidence of an active literary life in Iraq during its days as the western province of the Ilkhanid kingdom. The best-known manuscript of this small group is a copy of the Rasa’il Ikhwan al-safâ wa khullan al-wafa’ (Epistles of the Sincere Brethren and the Loyal Companions; fig. 253),44 an encyclopedic Shi‘ite text45 with a double frontispiece that portrays the authors in the purest preconquest Baghdad style. Dated 686 (1287), it is the last example of this style of painting, which was soon thereafter “corrupted” by the introduction of eastern features such as Mongol attire, peony and lotus flowers, and foreign landscape elements, all of which had been present in the Ilkhanid world in other media for some time.46 A striking example of this development is provided by a copy made in 1299 of the Marzubannama, a collection of moralizing stories written by the Bawandid prince Marzuban ibn

41. Ibid., pp. 103–4.
42. Eitingerhausen 1902, p. 63.
43. Perhaps the best study of this text is Husaini 1978.
44. Shi‘ism was widespread particularly in southern Iraq.
45. See chapters 4 and 7.
46. Fig. 255 (cat. no. 168). Footed cup, Iran, first half of the 14th century. High tin bronze, inlaid with silver and gold. The Trustees of the British Museum, London (OA 1893.6–21.4)
Rustam in about 1000 and then compiled in Persian by Sa'id al-Din al-Varavini in about 1210–25. The earliest known manuscript of al-Varavini’s text contains three miniature paintings, adaptations of the “frontispiece” genre that was popular in pre-Mongol Baghdad and Mosul (northern Iraq) and that continued in Baghdad in the second half of the thirteenth century. In one of these illustrations, Enthroned Patron in Royal Guise, an oversize lotus or peony occupies the upper right corner (fig. 260). Looking awkwardly out of context in this miniature painting, the design was clearly copied from another medium. The wide, gold-painted outlines of the flower—similar outlines define the contours of figures and tree leaves in all three illustrations of the Marzubannama—have parallels in inlaid metalwork from the first half of the fourteenth century (figs. 254, 255). Although no dated examples of inlaid brass or bronze survive from before the end of the thirteenth century (apart from a pen box in the British Museum, fig. 46), in that period as well such work probably had wide outlines, since they make perfect sense for the inlay technique in which inner areas are filled and hammered in with color-contrasted silver. Thus, while textiles and possibly drawings may have provided the original models for metalwork, the painter of the Marzubannama perhaps took direct inspiration from contemporary Iranian metalwork, which must have been widely traded in Baghdad in those years. Book illustration, a private art form mostly for personal enjoyment and consumption, was probably less susceptible to the rapid absorption of foreign elements than metalwork or other portable objects.

There had been a long history of production of scientific manuscripts in the Islamic world before the advent of the Mongols, so it is not surprising to see the tradition continue uninterrupted under the Ilkhanids. Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazvini (d. 1283) is a typical representative of the Persianized Arab intelligentsia who made the most of the situation developing in Iraq after the arrival of the Mongols. A qadi (legal officer) at Wasit, near Baghdad, under the last ‘Abbāsid caliph, and a polymath, he allegedly retired from public life until he found a generous patron in the Ilkhanid governor Juvaini, just as the calligrapher Yaqut had done in the same years. His scientific interests are summarized in a cosmography, or compendium of all scientific knowledge of the known universe, that he finished compiling in the 1270s and dedicated to his patron. Called Kitab ‘ajāʾ ib al-makhluqat wa gharaʾib al-mawjudāt (Book of the Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things), it is a true synthesis of many sciences—astronomy, geography, botany, zoology—into a well-organized text that remained extremely successful for many centuries. True to the tradition of scientific manuscripts, it is also one of the few texts that can be proved to have been conceived with original accompanying illustrations, since its earliest extant copy was finished in 679 (1280), during the author’s lifetime and therefore probably with his supervision or approval (fig. 266). This manuscript was copied in Wasit; its illustrations are, understandably, in the pre-Mongol style, although the pale watercolor-like palette is a foretaste of future developments.
In a development certainly fueled by the keen interest Ilkhanid patrons took in scientific texts, al-Qazvini’s *Wonders of Creation*, both text and illustrations, rapidly became popular in Iran and Iraq, and painters working on copies soon adopted the new Chinese-influenced Persian style that was coming into being at the close of the thirteenth century. A fragmentary copy that surfaced recently on the art market and is presently in the British Library has been attributed to the first decade of the fourteenth century. Its illustration is principally inspired by the developing new Persian style, and also by Anatolian models (fig. 257); some of the paintings look back to pre-Mongol times, while others defy any attribution (fig. 258). This mixture suggests that the work was produced in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, where many stylistic strains coexisted. It is an intriguing fact that the miniature painting

53. See, for example, the Morgan Library *Beautv* (fig. 169), discussed in chapter 6.
Fig. 318 (cat. no. 16). The Beast Called Sannaja, from a Kitab ‘ajza’ al-makhlusat wa ghara’ab al-mawjudat (Book of the Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things), Iraq (possibly Mosul), ca. 1295–1310. Fol. 129v; ink, colors, and gold on paper. British Library, London (Or. 14142)
Fig. 259 (cat. no. 154). The Singer Ibrahim and the Jinn, from a Kitab ‘ajrāṣib al-makhlaqat wa ghara’ib al-mawjūdat (Book of the Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things), Iraq (possibly Mosul), ca. 1295–1310. Fol. 107v; ink, colors, and gold on paper. British Library, London (Or. 14466)

Fig. 260. The Singer Ibrahim and the Jinn (i), from a page in the Diez Album, probably from a lost copy of the Kitab ‘ajrāṣib al-makhlaqat wa ghara’ib al-mawjūdat (Book of the Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things). Ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 71, S. 11).

depicting the story of Ibrahim and the Jinn (fig. 259) either served as the model for or followed the model of one of the many illustrations without text pasted into the so-called Diez Albums in Berlin (fig. 260). This al-Qazvini manuscript well represents the blend of influences that is typical of the formative period of any artistic style and as such is close to the Morgan Bestiary as well as to a copy of Muhammad ibn Ahmad Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni’s Astar al-baqiya (Chronicle of Ancient Nations) in Edinburgh (see figs. 169, 170).

With Ilkhanid painting, the formative period was swift and dramatic and gave birth to an extraordinary style that is recognized today as one of the finest and most exciting achievements in the history of Persian painting. In an outline of its progress based solely on the surviving manuscripts, the style was inaugurated with a manuscript
Fig. 261 (cat. no. 9). Enthroned Couple, left side of a double frontispiece from the *Ma'nis al-ahar fi daqa'iq al-aib'ur* (Free Men's Companion to the Subtleties of Poems), copied by the author and compiler, Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jajarmi, Iran (Isfahan), A.H. 741/A.D. 1341. Fol. 27r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. Kuwait National Museum, The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait City (LNS 9 MS)
of Juvaini’s *Tarikh-i jahan-gusha* (History of the World Conqueror), copied in 1290 and culminated in copies of the 1310s of the historical writings of Rashid al-Din, the *Jami‘ al-tavarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles) and, especially, manuscripts of the 1330s of the Persian epic *Shahnama*. This exceptional moment is the subject of Robert Hillenbrand’s chapter 6 in this catalogue and will not be further discussed here. It is the background for the new developments that took place shortly after, or possibly shortly before, the death of the sultan Abu Sa‘id in 1335, which once again dramatically changed the style of Persian painting. That year is often regarded as the official date of the collapse of the dynasty, although in fact it corresponds only to the beginning of its end; the ensuing two decades saw different ruling groups and families position themselves in separate areas of the Ilkhanid realm (see Charles Melville’s chapter 2).^55^ A brief guide to this period can be found in Boyle 1968, pp. 413–17.

56. The manuscript is discussed in Swietochowski and Carboni 1994, pp. 9–76.
57. Ibid., pp. 13–11, 12. See also Wright 1997, pp. 41–42, with a list of eight 14th-century illustrations showing the woman on the right.

A small number of extant dated manuscripts copied and illustrated in the two decades following Abu Sa‘id’s death are evidence that the Ilkhanid style survived, while at the same time new styles developed in southern Iran and in Iraq. The *Mu‘nis al-ahnar fi daqa‘iq al-ash‘ar* (Free Men’s Companion to the Subtleties of Poems), an anthology of Persian poetry compiled and written in a clear hand by Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jajarmi in Isfahan in 1344, contains a damaged double frontispiece representing a hunting scene and an enthroned princely couple surrounded by attendants (fig. 261).^58^ The courtly scene is unusual because it portrays the female figure at the right of the prince, suggesting that she is the more important person and possibly the patron of the book.^59^ This “switched” position seems to be characteristic of southern Iranian painting and may reflect a distinct southern version of the princely ceremony. Isfahan, in central Iran, was more closely linked to the southern city of Shiraz than to the Ilkhanid capitals in the northwest. However,

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Fig. 261. Scene from a *Muqna al-tavarikh va al-qu’an* (Summa of Histories and Stories), Iran, 1352–53. Fol. 180v; ink and colors on paper. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Or. 2371)
there is no doubt that the painting is of a Mongol royal couple, clearly identified as such by their attire, and that the entire scene follows the typical Ilkhanid style for depicting an open-air courtly reception—known, for example, from many illustrations in the Jami‘ al-tawarikh and the Diez Albums (figs. 84, 222). This frontispiece of the Mu‘nis al-ahwar can be considered the last set of illustrations produced in an almost untainted Ilkhanid style, although a few other surviving codices must also be attributed to this school of painting.

One of these is a little-known manuscript that has not appeared before in the scholarly literature, an early copy of a historical text entitled Mujmal al-tawarikh wa al-qisas (Summa of Histories and Stories), originally composed by an anonymous writer in the twelfth century. The manuscript is firmly dated by its colophon to 751 (1352) and contains seven illustrations, mostly plans, maps, and depictions of buildings, in a geographical section that describes travels by sea. Although these are compositionally naive and clearly developed along provincial lines, their Ilkhanid style is evident, especially in details of the vegetation, such as a contorted tree and a stripe of grass with red flowers bordering the water in the manuscript’s sole illustration of figures in a landscape (fig. 262).

The last dated codex in the Ilkhanid style has been known for some time, although its five brightly colored illustrations have been reproduced only in black and white. It is the earliest known copy of the epic poem Garshaspnama (Book of Garshasp), which narrates the life and heroic feats of Garshasp, an Iranian prince and great-grandfather of Rustam, the hero of the Shahnama) and was written in Persian by Ali ibn Ahmad al-Asadi for Abu Dulaf, ruler of Arran, in the eleventh century. The manuscript is in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul; its five intact miniatures depict Garshasp killing a tiger, pursuing into the sea the dog-headed men of the island of Qalum, defeating the son of Bahu at sea, watching parrots on a tree (fig. 263), and meeting the daughter of the emperor of Byzantium. The compositions of the illustrations and all the details of vegetation and costume are in the tradition of the best creations of Ilkhanid painting, while the vivid palette demonstrates that the painter learned the lessons of artistic developments of the 1330s and 1340s.

**The Injuids**

A rather different style of illustration developed in southern Iran in the province of Fars, and especially in its capital, Shiraz. The Ilkhans held this area as one of their royal estates when the Ilkhan Ghazan sent Sharaf al-Din Mahmud Shah to be its administrator in about 1303. Later, encouraged by the relative freedom (or lack of interest) accorded the area by the Ilkhan Abu Sa‘id, Mahmud Shah became
effectively independent, and historians are inclined to view the Injuids (from the original name for “royal estate,” or injū) as a dynasty in their own right (ca. 1303–57). The high point of Injuid rule in Shiraz and Fars, and the most significant for the arts and literature, is usually thought to be the reign from 1343 to 1357 of Mahmud Shah’s son Abu Ishaq, years that were also the final ones of this short-lived dynasty.

It is a sign of an effort paralleling or perhaps mimicking the Ilkhanid pursuit of dynastic legitimation that four of the seven known illustrated manuscripts attributable to Injuid patronage on stylistic grounds are copies of the Shahnama. They range in date from 1330 to 1352. Only one has a dedication, a Shahnama executed for the vizier al-Hasan al-Qavam al-Din in 741 (1341) (figs. 264, 265). However, the manuscripts are so similar stylistically that the entire group is attributed to the Injuid capital. Their simple, almost naïve compositions and absence of refined detail, the rigid postures of figures, the oversize trees and plants, and the rapid, imprecise brushstrokes do not diminish the broad appeal of these illustrations. Vivid red-lead or orpiment-yellow backgrounds dominate the scenes, further emphasized by the sparing use of gold for armor and other metal objects, although unfortunately the once-brilliant orpiment yellow has now turned to a dull pale brown.

These copies of the Shahnama were created in roughly the same years as the Great Mongol Shahnama discussed in chapter 6, but their stylistic viewpoint is so radically different that the Injuid

Fig. 264 (cat. no. 13). Bahram Gur in the Peasant’s House, page from a copy of the Shahnama (Book of Kings) dedicated to the vizier al-Hasan al-Qavam al-Daula wa al-Din, copied by Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Husain al-Mawsili, Iran (Shiraz), A.H. Ramadan 741/A.D. February–March 1341. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (W.673a)

Fig. 265 (cat. no. 11). Bizen Slaughterers the Wild Boars of Iman, page from a copy of the Shahnama (Book of Kings) dedicated to the vizier al-Hasan al-Qavam al-Daula wa al-Din, copied by Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Husain al-Mawsili, Iran (Shiraz), A.H. Ramadan 741/A.D. February–March 1341. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1939 (79.160.22)
Fig. 166 (cat. no. 3). Scenes with Animals, page from a Kalila wa Dimna (Kalila and Dimna) copied by [Abu] al-Makarim Hasan, Iran, A.H. 707/ A.D. 1307–8. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. British Library, London (Or. 13506)
codices can hardly be regarded as minor works stemming from the same tradition, a mere provincial ramification of Ilkhanid painting. Yet despite their penchant for the old-fashioned, pre-Mongol compositions and color schemes that were still to be seen in the area, especially in wall paintings, the painters of Shiraz did not work in total isolation. Many Chinese-type elements are superimposed on their generally archaic-looking compositions. Moreover, the red backgrounds and receding pointed mountain peaks that appear so often in Injuid works were not a novelty in the fourteenth century; they also appeared in Ilkhanid manuscripts, among them a *Kalila va Dimna* (a book of moral fables) dated 707 (1307–8; fig. 266),64 one of the so-called Small *Shahnama* codices (figs. 176, 177),65 pages in the so-called Diez Albums in Berlin, and the *Muʿnis al-ahrar* copied in Isfahan and discussed above (figs. 236, 261). Injuid manuscript illustration grew out of a fascinating combination of pictorial influences, beginning in Seljuq Iran and then incorporating the Ilkhanid style and local southern Iranian traditions. The Injuid style of painting was a local phenomenon that must be linked to a specific patronage. Subsequently, under the Muzaffarids (1314–93), it was replaced in that area by a rather different style, one influenced by developments taking place in the Jalayirid-controlled areas of the former Ilkhanid kingdom and in areas conquered by the rapidly rising Timurids. For that reason it was hardly at all influential in the subsequent development of Persian painting.

As noted, royal or courtly Injuid patronage cannot be firmly established for any illustrated codices except for Qavam al-Din Hasan’s *Shahnama* of 1341. Since the production of Korans, with their calligraphy and illumination, always required high standards and rich patrons (an Ilkhanid example is fig. 268), it is not surprising that we know of two Injuid royal sponsors for them—in this case two related women, Tashi Khatun and Fars Malik Khatun, mother and sister of Abu Ishaq.66 Sections of Korans made for each of them have survived, one in the Khalili Collection in London (fig. 269),67 the other in the Pars Museum in Shiraz (inv. no. 456).68 These Korans’ flowing *muhafqeq* calligraphy in gold letters with black outlines and their superb illumination are equal in refinement to those of contemporary Ilkhanid works (although the paper is not as fine or highly polished as that of the splendid Korans made for Öljæitü; see chapter 5, pp. 130, 133). Both schools of book arts stem from the excellent work done in Baghdad in the previous century.

64. Several scholars have emphasized the probable continued influence of Sasanian wall paintings in southern Iran; see, for example, Gray 1961, p. 48. Although likely to be correct, this hypothesis is speculative, since no Sasanian wall paintings survive in the Shiraz area.
65. Tiley 1971, for example figs. 11, 12;
   Grube 1991, fig. 39.
68. Ibid., p. 126, no. 29.
Fig. 268 (cat. no. 66). Opening pages from juz' 11 of a thirty-part Koran, copied by 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Fadlallah ibn 'Abd al-Hamid al-Qadi al-Qurvin, Iran (Maragha), s.n. Shawwal 738—Shawwal 739/A.D. April 1338—April 1339. Fol. 1v, 2r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (IS 1479)

Fig. 269 (cat. no. 67). Opening pages from a juz' of a thirty-part Koran, Iran (Shiraz) ca. 1336–75. Fol. 2v, 3r; ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (QUR182)
Injuid courtly patronage can also be established for the production of inlaid metalwork, which has rightly been called "one of the richest and most complex forms of artistic creation in the Iranian lands." In the first half of the fourteenth century Shiraz was the most important and active center in Iran for this craft; this becomes clear from the study of a series of spectacular objects inlaid with silver and gold that either carry dates and names of patrons or can be linked to those that do by comparative features or formulaic inscriptions. Perhaps the earliest is a bowl signed by a craftsman from Shiraz and seemingly dated 705 (1304) but more likely of 750 (1349-50), a date that would make the group even more homogeneous, since the majority of the dated or datable objects belong to the last two decades of Injuid rule over the region. They range from a wine bucket made by a Shirazi artist, inscribed for Sharaf al-Din Mahmud Shah and dated 733 (1333; fig. 44) to a candlestick dedicated to Abu Ishak (r. 1343-57) (fig. 224) to a bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum completed in 1351-52 (fig. 270). Another important bowl of similar profile, dated 748 (1347; fig. 231),4 and a sizable number of other works of different types, such as a polygonal lidded box and a footed cup (figs. 246, 255), have been linked to the same production.

The clear identification of an important metalworking center patronized by the Injuids, outside Ilkhanid control, is all the more striking because no such center has yet been identified in the Ilkhanid capitals, Maragha and Tabriz. Yet there is little doubt that a number of undated and unsigned objects of the same high artistic standard as these southern Iranian ones can be attributed to western Iran and the first half of the fourteenth century. They are exemplified in this catalogue by a large crenellated basin, a candlestick, and a ball joint for a grille (figs. 211, 228, 145); luxury items of the same type are depicted in many illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama. A comparison of the metalwork production of the two areas is a fascinating subject that calls for an in-depth comparative study. It is worth noting here that alongside many common elements are a few divergent ones. They include the fact that Chinese elements placed in confined spaces, usually medallions, are more common on Ilkhanid pieces, whereas Injuid craftsmen had a predilection for

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72. A recurrent phrase honoring the royal patron, "heir to Solomon's kingdom," has been identified as typical of the region of Fars. See ibid., pp. 147-48.
73. Galleria Estense, Modena, inv. no. 8082. On the vesel's date, see Michele Bernardini in Curatola 1993, p. 267.
74. Melikian-Chirvani 1994. Its attribution to Fars is questioned, however, by Komaroff 1994, p. 32, n. 42. See also Wright 1997, pp. 31-35.
bands containing complex open-air scenes with mounted horsemen and royal couples (see figs. 231, 270), although with the notable exception of the candlestick in Qatar (fig. 224). As pointed out by Linda Komaroff, both manuscript illustrations and textiles may have been sources for the designs on metalwork. The relationship between Ilkhanid miniature painting and metalwork is rather different, however, from that between the Injuid counterparts. With Ilkhanid production, inlaid metalwork entered the mainstream of artistic activity and followed the general style that was being developed at the time and that was characterized by the dissemination of patterns among different media. This generally high-quality production probably attracted a rich clientele but little direct sponsorship, which may partially explain why there are so few inscriptions, including those of patrons’ names, linking the objects directly to the Ilkhanid court (see cat. no. 160, fig. 154). In southern Iran, on the other hand, inlaid metalwork reached a royal status and, being rather superior in quality to contemporaneous book illuminations, had little in common with it in terms of taste and refinement. Whether this was the result of an established tradition of excellence in metalwork going back to the Seljuk period or came about because metalworkers in Shiraz took inspiration from the book illustrations and textiles circulating in the Ilkhanid capitals is still a matter of speculation. In any event, fine inlaid metalwork from Fars contributes to the complex and fascinating picture we have of artistic developments in Iran following the death in 1335 of Abu Sa’id, the last Ilkhan.

JALAYIRID PAINTING

The 1330s through the 1350s are extremely important years for the development of the arts of the book, since they were witness simultaneously to traditional Ilkhanid painting, both courtly and provincial; production in the peculiar Injuid style; and the birth of the Jalayirid manner. Thus, while the Mu’nis al-ahhar (figs. 236, 261) and the Garshapnama (fig. 263) were being copied and illustrated and the purely Ilkhanid style of painting was on its way to extinction, something different, and more central to the development of Persian painting than the Injuid parenthesis, was taking place. We cannot be sure where this Jalayirid style emerged, but a likely possibility is once again the city of Baghdad, where the Jalayirid Hasan Buzurg, one of the new lords profiting from the Ilkhanid downfall, had moved from Tabriz after governing Rum (Anatolia) under Abu Sa’id. The distinctive double-page frontispiece of a manuscript on alchemy, dated by its colophon to the year 739 (1339) and attributable to Baghdad, differs from most frontispieces, in which the author of the book and/or its patron are usually depicted. This frontispiece illustrates the entrance and interior of a barba, or Hermetic temple, at Abu Sir in Egypt, as observed by the author and his companions (fig. 271).

A mural painting at the temple’s entrance is represented; in it, on the right, four men standing under an arch and a woman at the window above them observe the flight of nine predatory birds carrying curved sticks in their claws. On the left a
figure resembling a Byzantine icon, seated on a chair, holds the *Tabula chemica* (alchemical chart), symbolizing the contents of the book. Inside the domed temple building seen to the left is a wall panel composed of six-pointed star-shaped tiles, double-pentagonal tiles, and hexagonal ones in typical Ilkhanid style. The most remarkable elements in the frontispiece, however, the elongated, graceful figures on the right, are of a type that appears consistently in Jalayirid manuscripts only toward the end of the century. This painting in a codex dated 1339 thus represents the earliest, and an isolated, example of the style that later in the century entirely superseded Ilkhanid painting.  

The Jalayirid style leaves behind the type of dramatic, heroic compositions seen in the Great Mongol *Shahnama*. Most characteristic are lyrical scenes, with many graceful small figures set in lavish interiors or in gardens in full bloom. A taste for pastel colors, the integration of lines of text into the paintings, and in particular a preference for subjects from romantic Persian poetry rather than epic works are distinctive features of the new Jalayirid manner. As aptly described by Ernst Grube, it is "an academic tendency that tries to codify, to simplify, to reduce, and finally to freeze the sweeping energy of the new forms and movements created by the revolutionary masters, bringing them within the reach of all the artists of the period, making them palatable once again for general princely and courtly consumption."

Yet the Jalayirid style seems to have sprung from nowhere, and one would be...

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inclined to believe the sixteenth-century assertion of Dust Muhammad that it was one individual, Master Ahmad Musa, who dramatically changed the style of Persian painting. But Dust Muhammad also tells us that Ahmad Musa was active under the Ilkhanid Abu Sa'id and thus implies that the master was well acquainted with court-style Ilkhanid painting, if not one of its creators. Did Ahmad Musa really create a new kind of art after serving as one of the main painters under Abu Sa'id? Perhaps he went to work for Hasan Buzurg in Baghdad or directed an atelier for Hasan in Tabriz, also a Jalayirid city.82

The passage from the Ilkhanid to the Jalayirid manner was not, however, as sudden as it seems. A hybrid style that looks both back to the Great Mongol Shahnama and forward to the late fourteenth century can be seen in the most accomplished copy ever produced of the Kalila va Dimna. The surviving illustrations of this work were collated and pasted in an album made for the Safavid shah Tahmasp in the first half of the sixteenth century and now in the University Library in Istanbul (fig. 272). Dust Muhammad mentions that Abu Sa'id commissioned from Ahmad Musa a spectacular copy of the Kalila va Dimna, and thus it has been speculated that the master began the work on the paintings now in the University Library album and that some
of his pupils finished the task in the years after his death, when the new style was better defined.\textsuperscript{93} The same hybrid style occurs in illustrations from a Mi\textit{rajnama} pasted in the so-called Istanbul albums (see chapter 6, p. 150).\textsuperscript{94}

Exactly what happened we do not know. We do know, however, that the Ilkhanid and Jalayirid styles coexisted for a short time in the central decades of the fourteenth century and that in just those years “the veil” was lifted “from the face of depiction,” to use Dust Muhammad’s words describing these dramatic stylistic changes in Persian book illustration;\textsuperscript{95} although it still lingered over the face of a great, declining, short-lived Ilkhanid tradition.

Thus, Ilkhanid painting did not die with the demise of its last ruler. Jalayirid painters continued it for a few decades, creating from this style an ideal, quiet world of poetry and romance far from the dramatic epic images of the Great Mongol \textit{Shahnama} (fig. 273). This is the world that will suit the vision of Timur (Tamerlane) and his princes at the beginning of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{86} Timur was said to have been born in A.H. 736, the year that Abu Sa’id died, and there is no question but that the Timurids saw themselves as the heirs of the Mongols in Iran and found inspiration in their artistic achievements. In Persian miniature painting, however, there was a Jalayirid lily that bloomed after the Mongol lotus and peony and before the flower bed of the Timurid gardens.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{83} Cowen 1988; Grube 1990–91; Grube 1991, pp. 53–76.

\textsuperscript{84} Grube 1991, p. 59.

\textsuperscript{85} Thackston 2001, p. 12.


\textsuperscript{87} The Chinese peony and lotus are among the hallmarks of Ilkhanid art; a tall red lily growing from a small bush with long leaves frequently appears in the backgrounds of Jalayirid manuscript illustrations.
TECHNICAL STUDY 1:

Close Examination of Leaves from the Great Mongol Shahnama

SARAH BERTALAN

It is etched on the minds of the masters of the arcane that the garden of painting and illumination is an orchard of perfect adornment.

—Dust Muhammad, The Bahram Mirza Album

Technical investigation is most meaningful when part of a collaboration between specialists. These observations are based on an examination intended to contribute physical evidence to the study of the remarkable Great Mongol Shahnama, whose history and significance are more fully discussed in Robert Hillenbrand’s chapter 6. The most extensive treatment of the manuscript to date is that by Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair.

Two leaves of this dispersed work in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and nineteen leaves in other collections were examined using a binocular microscope, transmitted light, ultraviolet light, and infrared reflectography. These tools aid visual examination and enhance our ability to scrutinize techniques, structure, and alterations to works of art. Fiber samples were taken from the paper supports of the Metropolitan Museum leaves in order to investigate distinctions noted during close observation of the supports.

Styles and Alterations

The Great Mongol Shahnama, also known as the Ilkhanid or Demotte Shahnama, has been dated about 1330–35 and connected to Tabriz and the patronage of the vizier Ghiyath al-Din. The two leaves in the Metropolitan Museum are stylistically diverse. Close examination under magnification has made it possible to further characterize these styles, and continued study of information gained may enable us to understand the nature of later alterations to the Shahnama leaves.

Isfandiyar’s Funeral Procession (fig. 123) is executed with a limited palette of predominantly inorganic pigments. In keeping with the tradition of illustrations of the Jamī’ al-tawārikh (Compendium of Chronicles) of 1314–15 (figs. 130, 162, 174), prominent areas of the image surface are unpainted. An unaborned paper surface is employed for the sky around the colorful clouds, the figures, faces, and hands. Pigments are used in pure, unmixed form. For example, on the figures, a thinned black is used to create gray rather than a mixture of black and white pigments. The contours of the figures are rendered in pure opaque color, and there is no detectable

2. See Grabar and Blair 1980. Doris Brian was the first to propose an order for the images in Brian 1939.
3. I would like to thank Marjorie Shelley, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, Sherman Fairchild Center for Works on Paper and Photograph Conservation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for giving me the opportunity to work with the Museum’s Islamic collections. I am also grateful to Daniel Walker, Patti Cadby Birch Curator; Marie Luken Swietochowski, Research Fellow; Stefano Carboni, Associate Curator; Navina Haidar, Assistant Curator; and the staff of the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, who have afforded me rewarding and ideally collaborative experiences over the last five years. For this study, I would like to thank, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Julia Bailey of the Department of Asian Art for making its Shahnama leaves available to me, and my colleagues Joan Wright, Anne Evans, and Jacki Elgar of the Department of Asian Art Conservation for sharing equipment, time, and their stimulating collegial interest in this study. Martha Smith of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., generously shared information, time, and equipment, making it possible for me to examine the large number of leaves in those institutions.
4. The leaves at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery have received the most extensive

Opposite: Fig. 174 (cat. no. 59). Nashirun Eating the Food Brought by the Sons of Mehbud (7), page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330s. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 (52.102.1)
analytical attention. Elizabeth West FitzHugh has examined all of these paintings and analyzed pigments on numerous leaves; a small part of her results is published in FitzHugh 1988. Janet G. Snyder published her fiber analysis of two leaves from the Great Mongol Shahnameh in Snyder 1988. In 1994, Martha Smith, collaborating with Victoria Banning, Elizabeth West FitzHugh, Janet Douglin, and Richard FitzHugh, examined the borders attached to the leaves and prepared an internal memorandum (Conservation Department, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery). In 1978, E. Z. Holmberg, working at the Harvard University Art Museums, analyzed pigments on Shahnameh leaves in several collections. The unpublished results are on file at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge. For the present study, no pigment sampling was done and identification is based on microscopic appearance.

5. A variety of dates have been put forth for the manuscript. Several miniatures date from 1330–40 and some from the 1350s or 1360s. Others place the images at the beginning of the century, and still others date them all to the middle of the century. These datings are summarized in Ettlinger 1959, p. 47. In Grabar and Blair 1986, p. 48, the manuscript is connected to the patronage of Ghiyath al-Din and the more exact date of November 1335 to May 1, 1336 is proposed, based on ideographical and historical developments. Recent research is summarized and the same date maintained in Blair and Bloom 2001. Carnovi in Swietochowski and Carnovi 1994, p. 17, propose a slightly broader date range.

6. Retouching is visible under shortwave ultraviolet illumination and with the binocular microscope. The largest example is a triangular-shaped area at the top left of the painting. In minute areas throughout the page, color was used to mask losses or tears in the paper support.

7. Artists tended to be faithful to traditional techniques and preparations, and the same palette was employed for hundreds of years. A consistent palette over five hundred years is demonstrated in FitzHugh 1988, p. 430. Therefore the manner in which colors were applied becomes a particularly important diagnostic tool.

8. Throughout the manuscript there are areas of sky where the original ultramarine has been lost, worn, or abraded, and these have been handled in various ways. In some cases the lost color has been restored with Prussian blue, which is clearly modern. In other cases losses have been repainted with natural ultramarine or indigo; these changes are not demonstrably modern. Here I again acknowledge the extensive work of Elizabeth West FitzHugh and the assistance of Martha Smith, who made available to me the information from Ms. FitzHugh’s examination of the manuscript leaves in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. The implications of a brown stain on the verso of the leaf corresponding to the area of the blue sky on the recto are not clear.

9. A well-known instance of this medium stain is in the so-called Small Shahnameh of 1344 from Shiraz, which is known for its ochre-colored backgrounds. Underdrawing or preparatory drawing. The figures are in some cases further tinted with a distinct wash of pure color, applied just within the opaque contour and without overlap, sometimes in washes so thin that the fibers of the support show through. Small areas of later retouching are easily distinguished, being glossy, thick color admixtures. 6

Less obvious are alterations made to the delicately toned image with materials that are historically correct and/or not demonstrably modern. 7 Such changes may have been necessary in order to replace inherently unstable colors, repair damage, or emphasize details in the rendition of the epic as tastes and painting conventions changed. The sky in the Isfandiyar image is, atypically, broadly painted and opaque. Under magnification it becomes clear that there is extensive damage to the paper support in this area. This solid dark blue may have been applied to hide the damage and repair the area or to replace an original, unstable color. 8 The horse at the right is painted opaque gray in a mix of black and white pigments that is different from the gray used in the figures. Far more typical throughout the manuscript is a “tinted drawing” style for rendering animals in which the color is so thinly washed that the subtle drawing in carbon black is visible.

The saddles of the horses provide an example of an unstable color. Under magnification, the unmistakable, mica-like flakes of opaline are visible. This often fugitive pigment was widely used in Central Asia. Because of its tendency to fade or lose its brilliant yellow color, a brownish medium stain on early Islamic manuscripts is often a clue that opaline had been used. The presence of a medium-rich layer under the painted gold in this image may be such a residue, indicating that opaline was originally used there as well. 9 Similarly, the two ruled gold borders around the image are clearly not original. The inside ruled line covers an original brownish black line that has deteriorated the paper underneath. This damage is consistent with the interaction of iron gall ink and paper. The gold borders may have been painted on to cover the original damage, to satisfy a taste for the use of gold in manuscripts, or to enhance the appearance or value of the manuscript.

In the same way, a change in taste or the evolution of a local painting style may explain the opaque coating layer around the figures in this image. The figures themselves clearly belong to an earlier painting tradition in which the luster of the paper surface was employed evocatively. The background, however, is covered with a solid white paint layer that is now cracked overall, unevenly discolored, and darkened. The curious flowers and tufts of grass are out of scale with the figures in the composition and closer in style to those in paintings of later in the century. 10

The second leaf in the Metropolitan Museum was tentatively identified by Grabar and Blair as Nushirvan Eating the Food Brought by the Sons of Mahboud (fig. 274). 11 The scene is rendered in shallow space, and the entire image surface is painted. The colors, predominantly inorganic, are applied both as pure pigments and as mixtures. Gold is used to fill the background and as a final layer to enrich some of the garments, creating the appearance of brocade. Thinly painted areas of pure color are limited to the trunk of the large tree and the vegetation at the top right of the composition, both rendered in the Chinese ink-painting style. A relatively thin brown wash or dye colors the second figure from the right and two rectangular details of
the architecture. A purple stain corresponding to these areas on the reverse of the sheet suggests the use of a fugitive and possibly organic pigment or dye that has subsequently faded or altered in color. For the remaining figures, unmixed, inorganic pigments were used. The figures, in keeping with the Baghdad style, are rendered as a uniform, monochromatic field, with detailing on the surface in a darker color or in black. Rather than mixing or modulating color within the figures, the detailing layer is used to give shape and volume and to indicate garment folds. In the figures at left a masterful underdrawing can be detected where the opaque paint layer has been lost.

Unlike the figures, the architecture is thickly painted using mixtures of inorganic pigments. The color used to depict building facades varies throughout the manuscript, from off-white in the minimally colored paintings of Durab Sleeping in the Vault and Bahram Gur in the Treasury of Jamshid (both, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.), to an implausibly bright pink. Here the color is in the middle of this range and close to the coral that later becomes a convention for architecture. The brightly contrasting patterns of blue and white are also pigment mixtures that belie any sense of space, giving the impression that “separate pieces were rather clumsily added together.” While obvious distinctions in execution exist, and the image is today somewhat confusing due to subsequent alterations and damage, the palette is consistent throughout.

This leaf does not appear to have been subjected to restoration to increase its market value, since highly visible areas of damage were untouched. The prominent tree at the left is an indistinct smear. Obvious losses in the sleeves of the figures and other areas at the left of the image remain unrestored. When it was reproduced in black and white in 1939, gaping white losses were apparent in the figure at the right that either were unrepaired or had not been compensated with color (inpainted). This was prior to the leaf’s acquisition by the Metropolitan Museum but presumably after Georges Demotte dispersed the manuscript, when the page was in the possession of D. K. Kelekian, New York. Therefore, the restoration attributed to Demotte may not have been a sweeping and systematic campaign.

It is natural for the conservator to approach the compositions in the Great Mongol Shahnama from the point of view of palette and execution. Close examination of twenty-one leaves of the manuscript has shown that several hands employed pure and unmixed colors, allowing the paper surface to function as part of the image. This technical feature connects the works to an earlier generation of painting, the manuscripts of On the Usefulness of Animals of Ibn Bakhtishū, the Chronology of Ancient Nations of Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni, and Rashid al-Din’s Compendium of Chronicles. While the extent of nineteenth-century restoration of this Shahnama has often been discussed, it is also clear that alterations have been made using pigments and pigment mixtures consistent with the palette employed by artists for hundreds of years. Changes to the original may have been necessitated to replace unstable colors or after inadvertent water damage, evidenced by staining on some leaves (see below). Moreover, changes may have been made to underscore aspects of the iconography or as a taste for more fully colored or more colorful paintings developed. Such broad speculation is, however, beyond the scope of the current discussion of the Metropolitan Museum leaves.
Fiber Identification and Structure

Grabar and Blair noted leaves where images are pasted onto unrelated text. Thus we know that the supports and structure of the manuscript have been altered, but the extent and date of the alteration are not known. Both Sheila Blair and the conservators who conducted an analysis at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery found that strip borders of a short-fibered, wave paper of poor quality bearing a Russian watermark and date of 1839 were added to the folios. (For a page, although not from that institution, shown with its strip borders, see fig. 183.) The borders are made up of four separate strips of paper, painstakingly beveled and attached to each edge of the manuscript leaf. On the basis solely of the physical evidence (without evaluating the written text) gathered while examining twenty-one leaves for the present study, three types of structure were noted. The first is a folio composed of a single, uniform sheet with four strips of wave paper attached with a beveled edge at the front and a straight cut edge at the back, slightly overlapping all edges of the manuscript leaf. (The final effect is like an inset or passe-partout.) The second is an image pasted onto a single and uniform folio, with the image partially covering some calligraphy and the folio inset as above. The last is an image inset into a “doubled” folio, with an area cut out of one side to create a “sink” for the image and the wave paper borders beveled and sandwiched between the two sheets. Water staining on the uniform, single-sheet supports suggests water damage and at least a hypothetical need for restoration, possibly earlier than the nineteenth century and for reasons other than market value. As previously noted by Grabar and Blair, in some cases the images appear to have been pried up or split from an original support. Clues that indicate that splitting of the support took place are extensive creases (vertical, horizontal, or diagonal creases at the corners), with associated loss to the media layer.

Initial scrutiny of the Metropolitan leaves was inconclusive regarding the uniformity of the support sheets. Sampling was undertaken not so much for definitive fiber identification but as a means of comparing various parts of the leaves to ascertain whether the supports were composed of a unified sheet or an assemblage of support papers. The combined results of examination and sampling follow.

Close examination of Ifsandiyyar’s Funeral Procession (fig. 123) showed that the paper support in the image area is a golden color—darker, more smoothly polished, and with a less open fiber structure than the text support. It is extremely brittle, with extensive tears and creasing at the top edge under the dark blue sky. This damage and the pronounced creases in the image are not evident on the verso of the folio. At the bottom left corner of the image, diagonal creases with associated loss to media are consistent with the mechanical damage caused by paper splitting. The image is separated from the text by a thin border, decorated with a pattern in carbon black ink and two ruled gold lines of differing colors. The inner gold border covers an original brown ruled border, possibly of iron-gall ink or a combination of iron-gall and carbon inks, that corroded the paper beneath it. On the lower third of the left edge and in three places along the top edge there are some damaged areas where one may arguably detect gaps between the image and the black and white border; this, however, is inconclusive.

18. The subject was first discussed in Blair 1989. The results of the examination of fifteen leaves were summarized by Martha Smith and Victoria Bunting in an internal report, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, October 1994.
19. Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. 1–12, and throughout the discussions of the individual leaves.
20. Also, any physical evidence we can gather adds to the little known about papermaking at this time. We are fortunate that two books have recently been published on the subject of Islamic paper; see Bloom 2001 and Loveday 2001. For her publication on Islamic papers in the Vever Collection (now in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery), Janet Snyder obtained samples from two leaves of the Shahname. In one case, the image and text are on a single sheet, and she sampled from a damaged area on the image; the identification was inconclusive. The second leaf was composed of three pieces of paper; she identified linen from a sample taken from the border. See Snyder 1988, p. 417. For the present study, fibers were examined with a polarizing light microscope with magnification 100–400 times. Fiber length was measured using an ocular with a calibrated scale. I am grateful to Debora Dyer Mayer, conservator of art and historic artifacts on paper (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), for graciously sharing her time and her expertise in fiber analysis.
In the text area of the folio, the support is light golden in color and soiled overall. Where the paper has been creased, the surface appears burnished rather than abraded. No water stains were detected at the lower edge of the support, but there is a 1/16-inch-wide brown stain of residual adhesive along the bottom edge of the verso. The support is thick and relatively opaque to transmitted light compared with other papers examined. In strong transmitted light, the distribution of fibers appears uniform with few inclusions. Several discolored paper patches and a brown stain in the exact shape of the dark blue sky are present on the verso. However, areas where copper green was used in the image have not discolored to the verso. The verso appears to be a uniform, single sheet. The edges of the folio have been strip lined with the Russian paper, beveled at the front and straight cut at the back, with new ruling lines added all around. Fiber samples taken from the support of Isfandiyar’s Funeral Procession were not identical. The recto text area was sampled at the left column of the text above the image. The image area was sampled by teasing fibers under a lifted paper flap in the center of the foreground. The verso of the sheet was sampled at a crease approximately at the center of the image.

The fibers from the text recto, Sample 1, are extensively beaten and fibrillated. They are long, measuring from .4 to .7 millimeters. Beating is so extensive that diagnostic features are difficult to discern, and identification based on morphology was not possible for approximately half of the sample. Half of the fibers show characteristic features of a bast fiber, but further differentiation was not possible, given the small size of sample. Also present in abundance are flakes of a proteinaceous material, possibly sizing.

The fibers taken from the image recto, Sample 2, are uniformly and extremely short, .1 to .2 millimeters, up to eight times shorter than the text fibers. Not extensively beaten, all are easily identifiable as bast. Some proteinaceous flakes are also present. The fibers from the text verso, Sample 3, are comparable in length to those in Sample 1. Two-thirds of the fibers were readily identifiable by morphology as bast. Identification of the other third of the sample was not possible. There were no proteinaceous particles in the sample, although staining indicates the possibility that some fibers were saturated with a proteinaceous size; however, this is inconclusive, since yellow staining is also an indicator of lignin content. The fibers are generally more distinct and may be the same as those of Sample 1 but not processed to the same degree.

In the image Nushirvan Eating the Food Brought by the Sons of Mahbud (?), there are no unpainted areas available for examination. An incised horizontal line is visible at the area of the smeared tree in the left part of the top edge. This does not appear to be a gap or join between the text and image supports, however, and there are no other visible clues to the structure of the folio on the recto. The sequence of ruled border lines immediately adjacent to the image is two black, one red, one gold, one red. (The handling of borders immediately adjacent to the images is not uniform in the manuscript.) Extensive stains caused by the media on the verso of the sheet also suggest that this is a single sheet—that is, the painting was executed directly on this paper support. A dark-brown-stained area corresponds to the silver door, and purple stains correspond to the brown (possibly altered) color of the figure in the fore-

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21. Identified by microscopic appearance.
ground and of the two areas in the architecture noted above. There is an overall pattern of brown staining that corresponds to the building facade.

The surface of the text area of the folio is golden and highly burnished; however, on both recto and verso, where abraded or damaged by water the surface is rough and feltlike, with distinct, long fibers that are visible to the unaided eye. The verso is a darker golden color, with a slick, highly burnished or polished surface. In transmitted light, dark stains are visible along the bottom edge of the sheet, indicating that the sheet has sustained damage from water. The paper is translucent and the fiber distribution is somewhat uneven or floccular, with numerous fiber clumps and inclusions that appear to be chaff from the raw fiber source. Some blue fibers are also present. The ink over the fibrous, water-damaged area of the folio is feathered. The page is strip lined with the Russian wove paper, beveled at the front and straight cut at the back, and ruled with new borders.

The text on the verso was sampled in a slightly abraded area behind the image. The image was sampled at an area of damage in the door. The recto of the text support was sampled by lifting the roughed fibers from the surface of the water-damaged area under the image. The fibers from this folio are relatively unprocessed, with no sign of beating and no fibrillation. Based on the readily visible morphology, the fibers are uniformly bast. The fiber lengths vary enormously, ranging from approximately 1.5 or 2.0 millimeters to well off the scale. When stained and top lit, the fibers appear the characteristic pink of bast fibers. Under higher magnification and in transmitted light, individual fibers appear yellow, suggesting high lignin content. The ultimate tips of the long fibers are pointed.

The samples taken from the support of the Nushirvan image show a uniformly processed bast fiber in identical condition at all three sites. This corroborates observations that the current support is a uniform sheet. The fibers sampled from the support of the Isfandiyar image differ significantly at all three sites, adding useful information to the inconclusive results of the visual examination. The fibers vary in their degree of processing and condition, suggesting that the leaf may be composed of several sheets of paper.

Continued technical examination of the known leaves of this Shahnama should provide a larger context in which to consider the implications of the findings presented here.
TECHNICAL STUDY 2:

The Glazed Press-Molded Tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman

JOHN HIRX, MARCO LEONA, AND PIETER MEYERS

Thus if they want to compound a body out of which to make pottery objects . . . and house tiles, they take ten parts of the aforementioned white shukar-i sang . . . and one part of ground glass frit mixed together and one part of white Luri clay dissolved in water.

—Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd Allah Kashani, Treatise on Ceramics’

Islamic ceramic technology has been the subject of extensive research drawing on archaeological excavations, critical translations of medieval treatises, scientific analysis of tiles and tile fragments, studies of twentieth-century crafts that preserve older traditions, and art-historical evaluation of extant objects. The manufacturing process of Islamic ceramics is now well understood. However, although the tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman have been extensively studied from the art-historical viewpoint, to date there is only one (unpublished) technical study of them. The organization of the exhibition “The Legacy of Genghis Khan” became the occasion for us to begin a comprehensive study of a number of excavated tile fragments from the site and complete objects not obtained archaeologically. The aim of our study was, with the aid of petrographic and elemental analysis techniques, to achieve a detailed understanding of the fabrication of the ceramics from Takht-i Sulaiman. While the study is by no means complete, we can now offer a clear description of the materials that compose the tiles and their method of fabrication. As the project proceeds, we hope to be able to determine whether the Takht-i Sulaiman ceramics present any unique characteristics that could be used to conclusively link non-excavated objects to the site.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Ceramic Body

The tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman are composed of a fritware body glazed with either a translucent alkali glaze or a tin-opacified lead-alkali glaze. This material is referred to by a confusing variety of names: quartz-frit-clay paste, quartz-frit, faiance, composite ware, artificial paste, stonepaste, and kashi. The term fritware will be used throughout this text.

Various descriptions of this technique exist, both historical and recent. One of the best known comes from Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd Allah Kashani, a potter himself and the member of a famous family of Kashan potters. In his treatise on ceramics

4. Ceramic samples for this study were taken from both whole objects and fragments. Samples were kindly provided by Dr. Jens Kröger of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Mr. Hajime Inagaki of the Miho Museum, Shigaraki, Japan, and Dr. Linda Komaroff of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
5. We anticipate a future collaboration with the National Museum of Iran, Tehran, from which we hope to obtain more ceramic samples for study.

TECHNICAL STUDY: THE TILES OF TAKHT-I SULAIMAN 233
of A.H. 700 (1301–2), Abu al-Qasim describes the manufacture of a ceramic ware composed of ten parts quartz, one part glass, and one part sticky white fine clay. References to a similar material can be found in other ancient sources. Modern writings on the subject essentially repeat and corroborate Abu al-Qasim’s description. A variety of theories have been voiced about the origin and development of this type of ceramic, but whether discovered in the attempt to reproduce Chinese porcelain or as an answer to the difficulty procuring fine clay that Iraqi potters experienced in Fatimid Egypt, fritware represented a brilliant innovation.

To manufacture fritware, quartz from dry riverbeds or quartz quarries (or on rare occasions, sand) is finely ground and mixed with clay and glass frit. The quartz provides bulk, compression strength, and chemical stability; the small percentage of highly refined clay lends plasticity to the body during shaping (gum arabic may also have been added to enhance the working qualities of the mixture). Fritware is truly a composite material in the modern, technical sense of the word; that is, raw materials having different properties are combined together to yield a new (composite) material with unique properties. By using fritware the potter was able to obtain a white ceramic body without having to consume large quantities of fine white clay, which was usually very expensive. The main ingredient, quartz pebbles, was abundant. The saving in the cost of materials may in part have offset the cost of additional fuel needed to produce fritware. Thus the use of the artificial ceramic body fritware rather than natural clays has socio-economic implications that are extremely interesting; at present these have been only partially explored.

The tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman can be divided into two categories. Tiles with a light body color, ranging from off-white to buff to light yellow to light pink, were used for interior walls and floors; tiles with a brown-colored body were reserved for exterior applications. The majority of extant tiles are those with a lighter-colored body, which also have more sophisticated glaze decorations. The tiles examined in the present study are polygonal floor and wall tiles, some with sunken or raised designs and some with no design at all, as well as rectangular frieze tiles.

Our preliminary semi-quantitative analyses with the electron microscope (SEM-EDS) show that the tiles with a light-colored body have a compositional range that
approximately matches the one described by Abu al-Qasim. Based on the alumina content, the initial fraction of clay must have been in the range of 11 to 15 percent, while the glass fraction, calculated from the total alkali (sodium and potassium oxides), lime, and magnesia content, should have been 8 to 11 percent. Alkali, lime, and magnesia have been grouped together because their relative proportions seem to match those in the ashes of desert plants (saltwort, or *Salsola soda*, and Russian thistle, *Salsola tragus*), a likely source of glass-making alkali.

The petrographic examination of thin sections of the tiles shows a ceramic fabric generally composed of: angular quartz grains, of varying sizes; grains of coarse and finer chert; occasional fibrous quartz; and sporadic mineral inclusions such as feldspar and plagioclase. The mineral grains are held together in a glassy matrix. Relic glass fragments are clearly visible as rounded pores with rims of microcrystals. This kind of petrofabric appears in a fragment from an irregular five-pointed star tile, shown in figure 276.

The brown-colored tiles contain a larger proportion of clay, up to 40 percent. This clay has a larger iron oxide content than the clay in the white-body tiles as well as a host of mineral inclusions seeming to indicate that the clay used in these tiles was not as pure or as refined as that in the white-body tiles. At the same time, the glass content is much lower than in the white-body tiles, approximately 3 percent—as should be expected, since the higher proportion of clay contributes to the stability of the fired tile, making glass a less necessary ingredient. An example of brown-body tile is seen in figure 277.

**Ceramic Glaze**

A glaze is essentially a glassy phase (meaning, in this case, a coating) on the body of a ceramic manufact; glazes display different characteristics, depending on their ingredients and production methods. Traditional glaze-making practices still followed in modern Iran call for quartz to provide silica, plant ashes as sources of alkali fluxes, lead oxide as an additional glass modifier, tin oxide as an opacifier, and various transition metal oxides as coloring agents. In general, glazing can be carried out in two ways, either by applying the necessary glazing ingredients directly to the ceramic or by pre-fritting together quartz and alkali (and lead, tin, and coloring agents when opacity or color is desired) and applying the resulting material as a fine suspension. The solubility in water of plant ash alkalis (which would lead them to diffuse deeply into the ceramic body) and the toxic

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10. For this and other technical terms, see the glossary at the end of this study.
nature of some of the metal oxides make pre-fritting a very desirable step, since the
glass precursors thus formed are safe and easy to handle. Additionally, the use of
frits for glazing leads to more uniform glaze layers.\textsuperscript{16}

Determining if a glaze is made from a frit is not straightforward, since the
frit melts completely during firing, producing a continuous glassy phase.
Evidence of the use of frits can sometimes be found in the form of relic frag-
ments whose composition differs from that of the bulk of the glaze. A very uni-
form thickness and the presence of a very narrow glaze-body interface (the area
where the glaze has reacted with the body to produce a glass phase of interme-
diate composition) can also be taken as an indication of pre-fritting. The cross sec-
tions of tile fragments in figures 276 and 277 show, respectively, a tin-opacified
glaze and a clear glaze.

The question of whether the same glass composition was used for making the
glazes and as an additive for the bodies is a most interesting one. The method of
making glass from fine quartz and plant ashes described by Abu al-Qasim is prac-
tically identical to the procedure used by traditional potters in contemporary Iran.
The ashes obtained from soda plants like \textit{Salsola soda} or \textit{Salsola tragus} were burned
until all the volatile components had been removed. The solid mass resulting from
this calcining process contains alkali but also magnesia and lime,\textsuperscript{17} compounds
that promote the formation of a hard, insoluble glass. Mixed with finely ground clear
quartz pebbles in fairly equal proportions and heated to about 1,000 degrees centi-
grade, the quartz particles react with the alkali to form areas of glass. In practice the
resulting frit is also ground, mixed, and fired several times, to produce a more or
less homogeneous glass powder.

Our initial analyses of two glazes, an opaque white glaze and a clear blue
translucent glaze, seem to indicate that the relative proportions of sodium, potas-
sium, calcium, and magnesium in the glazes are identical to those in the bodies.
Moreover, the ratios of potash, lime, and magnesia to soda closely follow the ratios
in the ashes of soda plants. This might indicate that one glass frit composition was
used throughout the tile-making process, both as an additive for the ceramic body
and a precursor for the glazes. The glaze layers appear to be of very uniform thick-
ness overall, and the glaze-body interface is always quite shallow, possibly hinting at
the use of pre-fritted glazes.

Different types of glazed tiles have been identified at Takht-i Sulaiman:\textsuperscript{18}
monochrome glazed tiles, overglaze enamel-painted and gilded tiles, poly-
chrome glazed tiles, and luster-painted tiles. In studying a ceramic, there is often
a question as to the number of times the ware was fired. The most economical
method of manufacture is to fire as few times as possible. The most complex tiles
were fired at least twice.

Based on a knowledge of common ceramic glazing practices and on the
microscopic study of photographic thin sections, several techniques for applying
glazes can be proposed: dipping, ladling, and brushing a glaze slurry onto the
surface (followed by removing excess glaze) are all possible application tech-
niques for creating monochrome-glazed tiles, that is, tiles with a continuous uni-
form glaze layer.

\textsuperscript{16} Tite and Bimson 1986, and see glossary at the end
of this essay for a discussion of fritting.
\textsuperscript{17} Kingery and Vandiver 1986, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{18} Maurya 1997.
The next more complex process is overglaze enameling and gilding. In this procedure, as confirmed in this study, the base glaze was locally gilded and then various enamels were applied to the surface, locking in the gilding, after which the ceramic was fired (fig. 278). The overglaze decoration of the tiles followed a definite color scheme. White, black, and red enamels were the only ones used. When gold leaf was applied it was not fused in position during a final firing, as is usually the case for modern ceramics. Rather, the gilding was applied to the fired glaze and then the various enamels were painted over it to create a design, visually incorporating the gilding into the design while mechanically locking the gilding in place. During firing, the enamels melted on top of the gilding and glaze, holding the gilding in position. It is interesting to note that the gilding protected the glaze to a certain extent. Ridges can often be seen in the glaze, formed after seven hundred years of aging, erosion, and exfoliation; they once defined the border of the gilding before it detached and became lost.

Another technique being studied is the local application of underglaze oxides, followed by the application of a translucent glaze layer directly to the ceramic, followed by the application of a translucent glaze (fig. 275). In this variation, the oxide migrates up and through the glaze, giving color to select areas rather than a monochromatic effect.19

The last category of glaze type is luster-painted ware. Here the glaze is a lead alkaline glaze, opacified by the addition of tin oxide. The luster is achieved by painting a compound containing copper or silver on the surface and subsequently firing the ware until the glaze is molten. At that time the kiln is slowly and controllably cooled until, at a predetermined point, oily organic materials are introduced into the kiln; these combust and make dense smoke, creating a reducing atmosphere. This results in the production of a colloidal suspension of metallic particles, with copper yielding a red metallic sheen and silver producing a yellow-golden sheen.

The chemical analysis of the two glazes from Takht-i Sulaiman confirms earlier results obtained on similar materials.20 The translucent glazes at Takht-i Sulaiman are essentially composed of silica and alkali, while lead is found only in association with tin, in the opaque glazes. It is correct, therefore, to refer to the translucent glazes as alkali glazes and to the opaque ones as tin-opacified lead-alkali glazes. Historically, tin oxide is the opacifying agent of choice: its preparation and use have been described by Abu al-Qasim.21 It is a powdery white material that is insoluble in the molten glaze; its fine crystals suspended in the glaze scatter light very efficiently, making the glaze opaque. Tin oxide is still made today according to the traditional process, in an oxidizing furnace where the tin and lead metal are heated in a crucible and the oxide forms on top of the molten metal.22 The white skin is continuously lifted off with an iron scraper until the metal has completely converted to the oxide. Particles of tin oxide are readily apparent in cross sections of the glaze from a petrographic sample of a tile.

Fig. 278 (cat. no. 85). Cross tile, Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1370s. Fritware, overglaze painted (lampardine). Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (1. 4/67, 21)

19. Without the benefit of information provided by cross-section analysis, Tomoko Masuya suggested a different scenario for these tiles. In her proposed model a translucent glazing material was applied to the surface, where it dried. Then a colored glaze was applied in certain preselected areas of the design (a technique she refers to as "inglazing"). After the glaze dried, the tiles were fired, gilded, painted with overglaze enamels, and fired again. At this time the technique described has not been confirmed.
The range of colored glazes used for the Takht-i Sulaiman tiles is fairly restricted, mainly white, turquoise, and blue glazes. The white glaze contains only the opacifier, tin oxide. Colored glazes are produced by adding to the frit the usual range of metal oxides (blue/CoO; turquoise/CuO; brown, violet/MnO).

Examination of the Takht-i Sulaiman tile cross sections also helps explain the good fit of the glazes and the ceramic bodies. Adhesion of the glaze to the ceramic body is a serious concern in ceramic technology. Adhesion problems are often caused by differences in the thermal expansion characteristics of the glaze and the body when the glazed ceramic cools after firing. However, the fritware body and the alkaline glaze, being of similar composition, have similar coefficients of expansion and therefore “fit.” A firing of up to 950 degrees centigrade causes the glazing mixture to melt and evenly coat the ceramic surface; additionally, the alkali and the lead oxide (if present) react with the silica and alumina in the body to form an interface layer. It is the formation of this interface that effectively binds the glaze to the ceramic body. An interesting case of manipulation of the ceramic tile structure to assure better glaze-body fit is represented by the tile in figure 277. It can be seen from the cross section that a thin layer of quartz frit is sandwiched between the glaze and the ceramic body proper. In this case, the quartz frit layer provides a transition zone between the glass frit of the glaze and the clay of the ceramic body.

Finally, details of the firing process can also be guessed at from the microscopic appearance of the glazes: in the case of Takht-i Sulaiman, it seems that the firing was of long enough duration to allow the glazes to mature properly, that is, to form and solidify without excessive porosity. Whether or not the tiles were all bisque-fired prior to glazing has not yet been determined.

Production

Much information on the procedures used to manufacture the large numbers of glazed tiles at Takht-i Sulaiman has been gained from study of the structures and materials remaining at the site. The presence of a ceramic workshop in the palace and the discovery there of a number of molds confirm that tiles were mass-produced by molding at the site. The existence there of kilns, described and reconstructed by Rudolf Naumann,\(^1\) indicates that kiln firing was done on-site as well. This does not exclude the possibility that some of the tiles that once clad the buildings were manufactured elsewhere.

Since it is very likely that raw materials such as clay, quartz, and plant ash were procured locally, it would be of interest to establish a unique characterization of the local fritware. Such a characterization could be used to determine whether the tiles from the palace were actually manufactured locally or were imported from established ceramic centers such as Kashan and transported as finished products to Takht-i Sulaiman. The characterization would also be useful
for identifying single tiles and other objects now in museum and private collections as part of the Takht-i Sulaiman production.

Instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) has long been recognized as an analytical technique ideally suited to characterize ceramics by their trace element patterns. This technique was used to analyze twenty-five fritware samples extracted from tile fragments and museum objects. Although the number of samples analyzed is not yet large enough to allow statistically sound conclusions, it was observed that the majority of the samples constitute a relatively homogeneous compositional group. Clearly distinct from the group are two brown-colored tiles. Because of their considerably higher clay contents they were fully expected to have compositions different from those of the rest of the samples. Also deviant are a number of fritware objects not associated with Takht-i Sulaiman, one of them a vessel attributed to Kashan. This observation is significant because it demonstrates that local Takht-i Sulaiman products can be uniquely defined and that imports from established centers such as Kashan can readily be identified. Since the compositions of multicolored and luster-painted tiles, such as the Miho Museum frieze tile (fig. 98), are indistinguishable from those with simpler decoration, the tentative conclusion can be reached that even tiles with complex decorations were not imported but were manufactured locally.

Before the issue of local production versus importation can be fully addressed, it will be necessary to carry on additional trace element analyses on more material from Takht-i Sulaiman and other centers.

The Press-Molding Technique

Tiles were fabricated for the walls of the palace in a variety of shapes and sizes and with different types of glazes. The tiles were press-molded in gypsum plaster molds. Molds of gypsum plaster (calcium sulphate dihydrate) have been found at Takht-i Sulaiman; an example of a mold fragment from the site is cat. no. 92 (fig. 279).

Molds for some tiles were found at the pottery shop on the site. The study of extant tiles has confirmed that all the tiles were mold-made. Many tiles have identical designs, indicating their mass production in standard molds. Thanks to the comprehensive study by Tomoko Masuya, who has catalogued all the known tiles, many aspects of the tile decoration of the palace can now be reconstructed. Because molds corresponding to all the various tile types from the site are not extant, the exact shape and design of all the molds used remains uncertain.

The initial step in the manufacture of the tiles would have been to create “models,” or master tiles, to the exact dimensions desired. These positive forms were probably made of clay,
but since no original models have survived, this assumption cannot be verified. From the (positive) models, (negative) molds were cast in plaster. Numerous tiny bubbles and air pockets that formed in the plaster slurry during the mixing and casting process are visible on the surface of the mold in figure 279. Although molds for the tiles found at the site could have been made in a number of ways, probable methods for preparing both open and two-part press molds are proposed here.

Plain-faced tiles could have been made in a one-piece open mold. Such a mold was probably made by placing the model—coated with a release agent such as grease, soap, or wax to prevent plaster from sticking to it—face down in an enclosed form. Plaster slurry would have been poured on the tile, covering it. Because of the release agent, the model tile would detach easily from the hardened plaster mold. The plaster one-piece mold would then be used to create numerous identical tiles. The process could be repeated to make many molds, increasing the number of tiles that could be made at one time. A plain tile with no relief decoration would have been made by pressing soft clay into the mold, scraping the excess clay from the exposed surface, and allowing the press-molded tile to dry in the sun.

Tiles with relief decoration could have been made in two-piece molds. The master tile, coated with a release agent, would have been placed face down in a boxlike form. A bed of sand or sawdust, into which the relief face could be deeply pressed, may have been used to protect the tile face. Plaster slurry would have been poured over the tile, creating the back of the mold. When the plaster had dried, the mold and the tile would have been removed from the form as a unit, inverted, and placed again in the same form with the tile face up. The exposed plaster of the mold would then also be coated with a release agent and plaster slurry poured onto the face of the tile and the back of the mold to create the front of the mold. When dry, the two halves of the mold could be separated and the master tile removed.

To use the two-part mold, soft clay would first be pressed into the lower section, overfilling it; then the upper section with the relief design would be carefully pressed into the clay, imprinted it with the relief image. The mold sections might have been strapped together, squeezing out any excess clay, which could then be scraped away. When the clay had dried, the mold halves would be separated and the tile released from the mold.

Beveled edges are an unusual feature of many of the smaller non-rectangular tiles (star, cross, pentagonal, double pentagonal, or hexagonal shapes). Their side edges form an angle of less than 90 degrees with the decorated surface. Larger tiles, such as the frieze tiles, do not have this feature, even though they would have been placed on the same wall (for example, cat. no. 94, fig. 98). It is thought that these smaller beveled-edged tiles were designed to be self-grouting. During installation, tiles were placed into wet plaster. The inverted V shape formed by the abutted beveled edges of these tiles forced the wet plaster to ooze through the gap to the surface, where it was wiped away. Some of the original wall plaster into which the tiles were set still adheres to the back of the tiles. This method of
installation was labor-saving, since it eliminated the step of grouting the tiles after they were set in place.\textsuperscript{19}

The beveled edges of the tiles may have been made in any of a variety of ways, and the subject is under debate. It is possible that the plaster molds were cast from master tiles with edges beveled toward the back surface. It is also possible that wedges were placed in the mold to create a beveled edge on the tile as it was formed in the mold.\textsuperscript{19} The cutting of bevels by hand on each tile after the tile was removed from the mold is also a possibility. More molded tiles need to be carefully examined before definitive conclusions can be reached about that aspect of Takht-i Sulaiman tile manufacture. It is certain, however, that open-faced one-piece molds and two-piece molds were made and used to create tiles.

\section*{Glossary}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Bisque, bisquit:} Derived from the biscuitlike appearance of an unglazed body after firing, these terms are used to describe such a body, which is usually then coated with a glaze and subjected to a second ("ghost," or glaze) firing. The firing process of unglazed ware is known as bisque firing.
  \item \textbf{Calcine:} Heating a raw material or mixture of materials to eliminate combustible and volatile constituents and agglomerate the particles at a relatively low temperature, without the substantial formation of liquid.
  \item \textbf{Earthenware:} Ware that has a permeable or porous body after firing below 1,200 degrees centigrade, with 10 to 15 percent absorption of water. A clay body fired at a temperature between 600 and 1,200 degrees C makes a thudding sound when struck and is usually colored red, gray, brown, or buff. The impurities in the earthenware, which usually contains a substantial amount of alkali, lime, and iron oxide, allow a hard product to be created at this low temperature.
  \item \textbf{Enamel:} A fused vitreous nonhomogeneous superficial coating used on clayware, similar in its properties and use to glaze but differing in the uniform opacity of the fracture. Also: colored glass that fuses below 850 degrees C and is applied on a glass or glaze surface for decorative effect; the general term for a pigmented glass painted and fired on the surface of an underlying glaze as part of the decoration of porcelain or pottery.
  \item \textbf{Frit:} From the past participle of the French verb \textit{frire}, meaning to fry. A type of ground glass specifically prepared for one of the following purposes: 1, to act as a low-melting material to consolidate and initiate fusion of the components of fritware, i.e., quartz and clay; 2, to act as a homogeneous, low-melting material that can be applied in aqueous suspension onto a clay body and when fired result in a
\end{itemize}

\footnote{The self-grouting method stands in interesting contrast to the grouting procedure used with modern tiles. Modern tiles can be made truly flat, thin, and square-edged, so that the amount of grouting is highly controlled. Grouting is applied after the tiles are set, when it is spread over the entire surface to fill all gaps between them evenly. When the grout dries, the surface of the tiles must be cleaned to remove the excess grout. The beveled edges of the Takht-i Sulaiman tiles allowed for their placement directly in the plaster. Pressing the tile delivered some of the plaster to the surface as grout, the excess of which was immediately removed, or manipulated as a design feature; no further steps were required. Further study of these tiles will also focus on the plaster materials used to attach them. It is possible that the grout contained abrasives that might have scratched the tiles if the grout was applied after setting.}

\footnote{A tile with uneven beveled edges in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M. 2002.1.177) shows clear evidence of having been made in a simple open-faced mold with beveled edges integral to the mold walls. Although the tile is glazed, the edges have been left unfinished. A small rim of the excess clay that extended over and around the edges of the mold when the tile was pressed remains; it was not trimmed when the tile was removed from the mold. If the tile's edges had been cut into a bevel after being released from a square-sided mold, this edge of excess clay would have been removed at that time. These factors suggest a process in which the tile mold was taken from a master tile whose edges were beveled rather than one in which the edges of individual tiles were beveled after release from the mold.}
glaze on the ceramic. Frit may have different compositions; it is mostly silica (from quartz) and will contain alkali (for example, from potash) and alumina (from clay). It is prepared by mixing ground-up quartz, potash, and clay in predetermined ratios (sometimes with additional ingredients), then firing the mix until fused. The product is cooled, ground, and mixed, and fired again. This process is repeated until a homogenous powdered mass is obtained.

Glaze: A thin, generally homogeneous, completely fused silicate mixture on the surface of clayware. It is a form of glass, usually with a high alumina content, that has a lower thermal expansion than glassware or window glass. It is specifically selected and prepared to match the expansion coefficient of the ceramic onto which it is to be fused.
Historical writings, culminating with Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-tawarikh* (cat. nos. 6, 7), became popular with the Ilkhanids, in the interests of creating a permanent, written record of the Mongol role. The Persian author 'Ala' al-Din ʿAta Malik Juvaini (1276–1288), whose family from Khurasan had been accustomed to serve in the Mongol administration, was governor of Baghdad and Iraq from 1259 to 1282. On account of his literary aptitude he became one of the Ilkhanids' most influential administrators and wrote the *History of the World Conqueror*, his best-known historical work, while in office.

This copy was finished only seven years after Juvaini's death. The colophon gives the exact date of completion but unfortunately not the place of production; and the name of the patron once written on the first folio has been scratched off. Both Baghdad and Maraga have been suggested as the place of origin, on the basis of the style of the double-page frontispiece (fig. 201). This shows an open-air scene set in a Chinese-inspired landscape in which the author of the book sits and writes as if taking dictation from a princely Mongol figure, who stands before him in front of a horse and squatting groom. The traditional "author" and "enthroned patron" frontispieces—often present in pre-Illkanid painting—have been seemingly consolidated into one unconventional image in which the patron is also a sort of muse for the writer. The princely figure, therefore, might be identified as Hulegu (r. 1256–65) or Abaqa Khan (r. 1265–82). The page is also the first datable occurrence in an illustrated manuscript of the integration, however awkward, of Chinese elements in the landscape, from the oversized peonylike flowers blooming on the pomegranate tree on the left to the cloud with a "flaming pearl" growing from it on the right.

2. From a comparison with the Morgan *Manafi’-i hayawan* (cat. no. 2), Ettinghausen 1959, pp. 44–47, suggested that Maraga was the more likely, but the discovery of the Istanbul Manuscript has prompted Simpson 1983a, p. 115, and more recently Richard 1997, p. 41, no. 7, to opt for Baghdad.

2

*Manafi’-i hayawan*

**(On the Usefulness of Animals)**

Copy by 'Abd al-Hadi ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Ibrahim al-Maraghi for Shams al-Din ibn Ziya al-Din al-Zuhbi

Northwest Iran (Maraga), a.H. 697 or 699/a.d. ca. 1297–1300

Leather binding; 86 folios; ink, colors, and gold on paper

35.5 x 28 cm (14 x 11 in.)

The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MS M.150)

The text of the *Manafi’-i hayawan*, by Ibn Baktishu, (d. 1058), is a translation into Persian from the original Arabic made at the order of the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1344) after his accession to the throne. This manuscript, the pages of which were reduced in size and restored over the centuries, is almost complete except for two missing folios. Made for an otherwise unknown patron, it is probably a copy of the original royal codex created for Ghazan Khan. The text, ultimately derived from Aristotlean sources, is a treatise on animals, including man, dealing with their physical characteristics and describing the medical properties of their organs.

Of the 103 illustrations in the manuscript, which seem to be the work of at least three painters, a large number have been restored and overpainted, and some were even added by modern restorers shortly before the copy was acquired by J. P. Morgan in 1912. The style of the originals is eclectic, influenced by both preexisting traditions in the area and elements newly introduced from East Asia. In this book bears comparison with two other manuscripts of the period, a copy of the *†In al-madhlaq* in the British Library (cat. nos. 14–16) and the Edinburgh University *Kibb al-abhar al-baqiy* (cat. no. 4). On the basis of stylistic details, it has been postulated that the same painters illustrated all three manuscripts, a suggestion that needs to be further corrobated. There is no doubt, however, that these manuscripts testify to the changes that took place in Persian miniature painting at the end of the thirteenth century.

Pages that exemplify the inclusion of East Asian elements, especially in the landscape details, and that have not suffered much restoration, are the images of the simurgh, a mythical bird represented as a Chinese phoenix (fol. 155, fig. 169); the mare and stallion, with a gnarled tree trunk and recessed ground line (fol. 287); the mountain goat, with mushroomlike rocks and an unusual view of the leaping animal (fol. 372); and the mountains and clouds represented in the slightly retouched rendering of the mule (fol. 307).

3

*Kalila va Dimna* (Kalila and Dimna)

Copy by [Abu] al-Makarim Hasan, a.h. 707/a.d. 1307–8

Leather binding; 269 folios; ink, colors, and gold on paper

22 x 10 cm (8½ x 4 in.)

The British Library, London (Or. 13500)

*Kalila va Dimna*, a series of moralizing animal tales, many of them narrated by the two jackals named in the title, originated in India in the fourth century as a Sanskrit text. Two centuries later it was translated into Pahlavi, from which an Arabic version was made by Ibn al-Maqaffa in the mid-eighth century. The Arabic in turn was translated into Persian by Abu al-Ma‘ali Nasr Allah Munshi in the twelfth century, possibly for the Ghaznavid sultan Bahramshah (r. 1117–57). Manuscripts of this text with elaborate illustrated cycles were copied from Egypt to Central Asia for many centuries, making it perhaps the most popular illustrated book in the Islamic world. The British Library's copy of 1307–8 is one of the earliest in Persian to have survived, probably the third in date after manuscripts in Istanbul and Paris. Others are known from the Ilkhanid period, including an Arabic version possibly completed in Baghdad in the late thirteenth century.

The basic compositions and rather simple quality of the design place this small manuscript within the tradition of Seljuk painting. Its red backgrounds and pointed mountain peaks seem in some way to anticipate the style of painting that fully developed a few decades later in Inju-ruled southern Iran (see cat. nos. 11–13). The most appealing of its sixty-six illustrations are a crowded, vertically set double frontispiece showing a ruler and courtiers in a hunting area (fol. 24–37) and a number of small square images usually of two animals facing each other as the main characters in a story (fig. 266).

3. Royal Library, Rabat (MS 1953); See Barrand 1986.
Kitab al-athar al-baqiya 'an al-quran al-khaliya (Chronology of Ancient Nations)

Copied by Ibn al-Kubri
Northwestern Iran or northern Iraq,
A.H. 707/ A.D. 1307–8
179 folios: ink, colors, and gold on paper
31.1 x 19.1 cm (12 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.)
Edinburgh University Library (MS Arab 161)

This work by the polymath Abu al-Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048), one of the most outstanding literary and scientific figures of the medieval Islamic period, deals with calendrical systems and explores the customs and religions of different peoples. Known as the Chronology of Ancient Nations after the translation from the Arabic published by C. E. Sachau in 1879, its title translates literally as “Remnants of the Past Centuries.” The manuscript contains twenty-five paintings and represents one of only two illustrated copies of this text known to have survived, the second being a much later, exact copy of the Edinburgh codex. According to its colophon the manuscript was copied by a certain Ibn al-Kubri and finished in the year A.H. 707 (1307–8). It was illustrated by more than one anonymous painter, although its place of production remains unknown. The patron, most likely a wealthy Shi‘ite Muslim who wanted specific stories in the text to be illustrated and others ignored, is also unknown. It is possible, however, that the person responsible for the layout of the manuscript was himself one of the painters or that Ibn al-Kubri was copying it for his personal library and no outside patron was involved.

Robert Hillenbrand has shown that the choice and placement of illustrations throughout the text can be seen as creating a cycle of images that emphasizes the interest of the Ilkhanids in different religions and at the same time demonstrates the prominence of Islam at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The Shi‘ite inclination of the patron or whoever was responsible is most evident in the two concluding images, the largest and most accomplished in the manuscript, illustrating two episodes in the life of Muhammad with ‘Ali, Hasan, and Husayn as protagonists: The Day of Curiosity (fol. 161r, fig. 136) and The Invention of the Sword at Ghadir Khumm (fol. 162r, fig. 137). A total of five images represent Muhammad—the earliest such set in Persian painting—including the first miniature, in which the Prophet prohibits intercalation in the calendar (fol. 6v, fig. 170). Many illustrations in the sections on calendars and festivals depict specific episodes related to Manichaeism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Others indicate a keen interest both in historical events and in scientific subjects: The Birth of Caesar (fol. 167), for example, shows a rather realistic image of a cesarean birth. The style of the miniatures, a hybrid between that of the pre-Mongol period in the Mesopotamian area and the Chinese-type landscape introduced under the Mongols, is in keeping with that of manuscripts illustrated in the time of the sultans Ghazan and Öljeitū (together, r. 1295–1316).

1. Al-Biruni 1879.
5. The earliest extant representation of Muhammad in a Persian manuscript is in the Muraqama of 1294 (Archeologiae Museum Library, Istanbul, MS 216); see Simpson 1852b, fig. 49.

Kitab jami‘ al-tasani‘ al-rashidi (Collected Writings of Rashid al-Din)

Copied by Muhammad ibn Mahmad al-Baghdadi; illuminated by Muhammad ibn al-Asaf al-Kashi
Ibn al-Kubri (Tahir), A.H. 707–10/A.D. 1307–10
Leather binding; 375 folios: ink and colors on paper
53.5 x 38.5 cm (21 x 15 in.)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (MSS or Arab 2354)

The vizier Rashid al-Din (1247–1318) was a polymath learned not only in history but also in theology, philosophy, and science. His writings, including a large number of theological treatises, were collected in bulky manuscripts copied in either Arabic or Persian, some of which, following the installation of his atelier in Tabriz, were kept in the capital, while others were dispersed in libraries throughout the Ilkhanid kingdom. The text of this work (also known as Majmu‘ al-rashidiyya) was dedicated to the sultan Öljeitū (r. 1304–16). Only the Arabic version has been preserved. The present manuscript, in both calligraphy and illumination, compares well with Rashid al-Din’s most celebrated work, the roughly contemporary Jami‘ al-tawarikh (cat. nos. 6, 7), which was produced in the same atelier in the Rashid’s quarter in Tabriz and which has survived in two sections in Edinburgh and London. The same artists worked on many manuscripts in the scriptorium, as is apparent from two signatures that appear consistently throughout the manuscript. One is that of Muhammad al-Kashi, who also illuminated sections of the Jami‘ al-tawarikh and was most likely the painter of this codex; the other is that of Muhammad al-Baghdadi, who was well known as a rapid calligrapher and must have been its copyist. The illumination of the opening double-page frontispiece is one of the most refined among the manuscripts of royal quality, Korans in particular, created in Rashid al-Din’s atelier.


Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), the seventh ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty and the first to convert to Islam, commissioned his vizier, Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), to write the history of the Mongols. During the reign of Ghazan’s brother and successor, Öljeitū (r. 1304–16), this text developed into the earliest account of the world’s history and has since been known as the Jami‘ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles. An addendum to the vizier’s fifty-thousand-dinar endowment of his tomb complex in Tabriz stipulated that two copies of his work, one in Arabic and another in Persian, should be transcribed every year. The pages from the Arabic manuscript here are from the earliest-known copy of this chronicle, completed in 1315 and made under the author’s supervision.

This work initially comprised four volumes. The first, written for Ghazan, was an account of the Mongol rulers from Genghis Khan onward (see cat. nos. 17–19, 22–24, 27–31 for pages presumed to be from this volume). The second volume covered Öljeitū’s life up to the time of writing (1310), together with the history of the Eurasian people. Only the second half of the second volume survives, narrating the history of the ancient Iranian and Arabic kings, the prophet Muhammad and the caliphs, the Jews, the non-caliphate rulers of Iran and Asia Minor, the
The two together contain over 200 folios; interspersed at various points in the text are 110 illustrations, plus 80 portraits of Chinese emperors and their attendants. The paintings seem to draw upon a wide range of sources including—but not limited to—pre-Mongol Persian and Arabic texts (both pre-Islamic and Islamic manuscripts), Chinese scrolls and wood-block illustrations from books, Byzantine religious and historical manuscripts, and Crusader painting with its French Gothic style. Perhaps most significantly, non-Mongols are here recast in the guise of Mongols, with their characteristic features and costumes, thereby in a sense uniting all of world history with that of the Mongols. A case in point is the dramatic battle scene pictured in Mahommed of Ghazan’s Conquest of India (cat. no. 6, fig. 173), in which the tenth-century Turkic conqueror (at left of center) is portrayed as a Mongol warlord, clothed in a silk robe decorated with golden clouds.

Nearly every painting reflects one or more sources of influence. For example, the composition of The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad has been adapted from a Christian Nativity scene (cat. no. 6, fig. 130). Its tripartite arrangement is a formula well known from thirteenth-century manuscript illustration associated with Baghdad. In The Death of Moses (cat. no. 7, fig. 174), the prophet lies in state in a manner related to comparable scenes in Byzantine manuscript illustration, while the mountain setting of Mount Ieb, where Moses delivered his final sermon, is rendered as a series of spiky triangulations reminiscent of Chinese landscape conventions as used, for example, in textiles.

Chinese influence in the Jam‘ al-tawarih is perhaps most evident in the depiction of landscape, mountainous landscape in particular, which is the dominant theme of Mountains between India and Tibet. This painting (cat. no. 7, fig. 163), which illustrates the section on India, not only incorporates Chinese conventions for the mountains; it also draws on a variety of Asian sources in representing the two buildings (one based on a Nepalese, the other on a Chinese model) and the two figures, whose poses, costumes, and jewelry reflect Chinese, Tibetan, and Indian influences. In this way, the ingenious artists of the Jam‘ al-tawarih repeatedly transformed existing models, compositions, and figurative types to create new compositions that would recur in, or would influence, subsequent manuscript illustrations and drawings.

2. Blair 1995, p. 23. Volume 1 was a genealogy of ruling houses, volume 4 a geographical work.
5. In the Mongol period this type of composition was already present in the double frontispiece from the Rasa‘ il al-ikkhan al-asafir produced in Baghdad in 1287; see Eittinghausen 1962, pp. 98–101.
7. Ibid., p. 77.

8. Anthology of Divans
Copied by ‘Abd al-Mu‘min al-‘Alawi al-Kashi Iran (possibly Tabriz), A.H. 713/1314/A.D. 1314–15
Leather binding; 112 folios: ink, colors, and gold on paper
30.5 x 23.5 cm (12 x 9 in.)
The British Library, London (Manuscript 132)

This manuscript, a collection of poetic works, like other early-fourteenth-century Ilkhanid manuscripts was copied on large sheets of paper and is profusely illustrated, with 53 paintings dispersed among its 112 folios. Almost all of the illustrations have to do with a bearded, turban-clad poet offering a scroll, or reading from a scroll, to a Mongol prince, identifiable by his costume, features, and attendants. They would have done little to enhance the meaning of the text, but they do serve to underscore through repetition the idea of the Mongols as the new patrons of art and letters.

‘Abd al-Mu‘min al-‘Alawi al-Kashi, the scribe, dated his text in several places between 713/1314 and 714/1315. In terms of their style, the miniatures—essentially line drawings enlivened by washes of color, in which much of the horizontal pictorial surface has been left blank—are reminiscent of the Jam‘ al-tawarih illustrations of roughly the same date. Those in the anthology, however, can be characterized as a simplified or even provincial interpretation of the court style of Rashid al-Din’s great manuscript project (see cat. nos. 6, 7). Clearly the artist was not entirely conversant with every aspect of his subject matter, as the scrolls that are repeated in nearly all the illustrations often look more like sleeves or rolled napkins.


Copied by the author and compiler, Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jarjami Iran (Isfahan), finished in A.H. Ramadan 741/A.D. February–March 1341
Leather binding; 257 folios: ink, colors, and gold on paper
20.5 x 14.2 cm (8 x 5¾ in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1976 (57.51.75)

The six heavily illustrated folios that once formed the twenty-ninth chapter of Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jarjami’s Mu‘nis al-ahrar (cat. no. 9) are now dispersed in collections in the United States. They include a riddlilike illustrated poem in praise of the Seljuk sultan
Sulaimanshah written by Muhammad Ravandi (b. ca. 1565) and an astrological poem and a quatrains (ruhu') composed by Jajarmi himself.

Jajarmi's poem on lunar elections includes twelve quatrains and is illustrated by associated images of the twelve signs of the Zodiac in relation to the moon. It begins on the recto of this folio with Virgo, Libra, and Scorpio, and continues on the verso with Sagittarius, Capricorn, and Aquarius (fig. 236). The planet Moon, a crowned woman holding a crescent around her head, sits in front of each sign of the Zodiac, the entire scene set against a red background with tall plants. Following Islamic tradition, Sagittarius is rendered as an archer with a long snaky tail ending in a dragon's head, who is in the act of shooting an arrow into the dragon's mouth. Capricorn is shown as a mountain goat, and Aquarius as the dark-skinned planet Saturn drawing water from a well. A sample of the text is as follows:

When the Moon has come to Capricorn, hold entertainments.

Dig qanats and canals, if you are able.

Buy slaves and animals, if you have the money.

Toil to acquire learning; do not behave ignorantly.1

The source of these leaves is a dispersed copy of the Shahnama, of which about 150 folios (104 with illustrations) are known to exist in private and public collections. It is the only extant illustrated codex that carries the name of an Injuid patron and that can therefore confidently be assigned a Shirazi origin. Its colophon, in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. (Vever Collection, S86.0110, S86.0111), names the dedicatee as the vizier al-Hasan Qavam al-Daula wa al-Din, who died in Shiraz in 1331 and was one of the patrons of the celebrated Persian poet Hafiz (1315/26–1390). With this codex as a comparative point of reference, therefore, three other copies of the Shahnama (complete or dispersed) and two other codices can be attributed to Injuid-controlled southern Iran.2

The style associated with Injuid illustrations is an unusual one, even though it was clearly influenced in its later phase, in the 1340s and 1350s, by mainstream Ilkhanid painting. Uncomplicated compositions, scant attention to detail, and the use of flat red or yellow backgrounds without any indication of depth are compensated for by a certain liveliness and monumentality that make these illustrations both appealing and distinctive. Although often mentioned in studies of Persian painting, this small group of Injuid illustrated manuscripts has yet to be fully explored.

The shah Kaikhsrau sent Bizhan, one of his champions, to help the Armenians eliminate the wild boars—"in numbers numberless, with tusks like elephants', and big as hills"—that were wreaking havoc on crops and cattle. Single-handedly Bizhan freed the land of these dangerous animals, first with his bow and arrow, then with his sword.

The illustration is true to the narrative, which tells of Bizhan pursuing the boars until they charged him in the final moments of the fight. The Iranian champion looks powerful in his armor, his body as well as that of his horse driven forward as if in full motion. The oncoming boars, however, do not seem especially strong or menacing, diminishing the sense of Bizhan's daunting task as a heroic mission. Such naiveté is common in Injuid illustrations and distinguishes them from Ilkhanid painting.3

2. Swietochowski and Carboni 1994, pl. 76, fig. 22.

12

The Execution of Afrasiyab

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (W.673b)

New text only

Afrasiyab was the ruler of Turan, and the Shahnama devotes a large number of verses to his war with the Iranian ruler Kaikhsrau. The story ends with the capture of Afrasiyab and his brother Garsivaz, both of whom are to be beheaded. The illustration depicts the moment before Kaikhsrau executes Afrasiyab with his sword. Many representatives of the Iranian court witness the scene, while Garsivaz stands next to his brother awaiting his own fate.

In its composition and the relationship between the many characters illustrated, this scene is one of the most complex in the manuscript, although it is set against a flat background with no indication of vegetation. In particular, the physical and spiritual proximity of the two captive brothers, half-naked and about to be killed, reveals all the drama of the situation.


13

Bahram Gur in the Peasant’s House

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (W.672a)

Los Angeles only

Bahram Gur is one of the most celebrated rulers of the Sasanian dynasty in the Shahnama. The episode illustrated here concerns his stay in the house of a peasant while recovering from the poison of a dragon he had just slain. After the peasant’s wife, unaware of the guest’s identity, criticized the shah’s righteousness, Bahram Gur decided to play the role of tyrant. When the peasant’s wife tried to milk her cow to provide fresh milk for the guest, she realized that the animal was dry, a sure sign that the shah had become a tyrant. The episode ends with Bahram Gur repenting his anger and restoring the cow’s flow of milk, thereby demonstrating his humanity and ultimate rectitude.

The scene here is dominated by the true protagonist of the story, the peasant’s wife, in the act of milking the cow. Her husband and their two daughters are passive onlookers, while
the shah is hardly in disguise, since he wears a crown. The wife is shown in profile with her back to the visitor, perhaps highlighting the fact that she is unaware of his royal status.


14–16 Three Folios from a Copy of the Kitab ‘aja’ib al-makhluqat wa ghara’ib al-hayawanat (Book of the Wonders of Creation and the Peculiarities of Existing Things)

Iraq (possibly Mosul), ca. 1295–1310
Ink, colors, and gold on paper
Page: 31.2 x 19.8 cm (12 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.)
The British Library, London (Or. 14140)

This incomplete manuscript, unknown before the British Library acquired it in 1983, represents one of the earliest copies of the text by Zakariya ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Qazwini (d. 1283), which was compiled in the 1320s. The surviving 135 folios, about two-thirds of the original codex, are present unbound and individually matted after extensive restoration. There is no colophon, even though the last page of the manuscript includes the end of the text. As customary with scientific treatises, this copy of the Wonders of Creation is heavily illustrated; in its complete form it would have included some 570 miniatures.

A study of the 168 extant images reveals that the manuscript was illustrated around the turn of the fourteenth century in the Ilkhaniid period. At least three artistic styles seem to have worked on it, showing an unusual and lively combination of stylistic influences. One is related to thirteenth-century pre-Mongol painting centered in Baghdad; another can be linked to the city of Mosul in northern Iraq; yet another is characteristic of southeastern Anatolia. The East Asian influence that appears at the end of the thirteenth century under the Ilkhaniids is, however, predominant, making the manuscript stylistically comparable with the late-thirteenth-century Pierpont Morgan Library Manafi’i-i hayawan (cat. no. 2) and the Edinburgh al-Athar al-hayyatiyya of 1307–8 (cat. no. 4).


The Archangels Gabriel and Michael
(fol. 12r)
Images: 11.7 x 16.3 cm (4 1/2 x 6 1/8 in.); 12.1 x 16.3 cm (4 3/4 x 6 1/8 in.)
The twelfth chapter of the Wonders of Creation is devoted to the angels, the inhabitants of the heavens. It begins with the Bearers of the Throne of God (hamarl al-‘arsh) and continues with the Angel Ruh, the four Archangels, the Angels surrounding God (al-karawiyun), the Angels of the Seven Skies, and six other classes of angels. Gabriel (jabe’il) is the guardian of the revelation and the treasurer of holiness. Michael (mika’il) is in charge of the subsistence of bodies, of judgment, and of the knowledge of souls, and watches over the Flaming Sea of the Seventh Heaven. The two archangels, shown in royal garb and with elaborate halos, are described as powerful and immense entities with innumerable wings.

The painter conveyed a sense of energy and force by portraying Gabriel and Michael in left profile against a vivid red background, giving an impression of rapid movement to the left. Gabriel has long braids floating in the wind and a flaming "tail." Michael appears less powerful and seems to kneel over the Flaming Sea. Unfortunately, the faces of both archangels are damaged, as are large sections of the page, but the original vigor of these two illustrations is fully evident.


The Singer Ibrahim and the Jinn
(fol. 102v)
Image: 8 x 11.7 cm (3 1/2 x 4 5/8 in.)
The second chapter of the animal kingdom, following the first on Man, is devoted to the jinn, creatures that can assume diverse forms and live mostly in the underworld. Like humankind, jinn can be good and bad. Here, the scene illustrates the story of Ibrahim, who has been locked in the cellar by his master Muhammad al-‘Amin and is visited there by a jinn in the guise of an old man. The jinn offers him food and drink and is so impressed by Ibrahim’s melodious voice that he convinces Muhammad to free him and give him a reward.

The painter cleverly creates the sense of confinement in a cellar by framing Ibrahim and the jinn within a brick wall in a vaulted space. Ibrahim seems focused on his singing and lute playing while the jinn, whose beard is not the conventional white of old age, offers him a glass of wine. A very similar scene, perhaps copied from this or another, lost example of al-Qazwini’s text, is found in the Diez Albums in Berlin (see fig. 260). There, the illustration is truer to the text, since the jinn’s beard is white.

2. Ippolita 1984, pl. III, fig. 3, pp. 11–12, no. 16; Carbone 1993, pp. 428–29, pl. 13b.

17–32 Illustrations from the Diez Albums

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fols. 70–72)

Although the best-known and most spectacular Islamic albums are from Safavid Iran and Mughal India and comprise mainly sixteenth- to eighteenth-century material,1 the first albums date from fifteenth-century Iran, during the period of Timurid rule. Some albums, including the earliest examples, were compiled as a means of gathering together, often in seemingly random fashion, paintings, calligraphy, drawings, sketches, and designs. These provide important information for the history of the arts of the book and artistic practice in the late medieval Islamic world. Three albums in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul,2 and the so-called Diez Albums in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, incorporate material relevant to the Ilkhaniid period.3

The five Diez Albums (Diez A fols. 70–74) are known by the name of the man who compiled them: Heinrich Friedrich von Diez, a Prussian diplomat stationed in Istanbul between 1786 and 1790, who bequeathed them to the Königliche Bibliothek, Berlin, in 1817. They contain paintings, drawings, calligraphic works, and engravings that come from
a broad geographical area including China, Iran, Turkey, and Europe, and date from the late thirteenth to the late eighteenth century. Diez was an active collector of works of art, rare books, and coins, who acquired the material for his albums from various sources, among them albums in the Ottoman imperial palace, Istanbul, now the Topkapı Palace Museum. His first three albums (Diez A Fols. 70-72) contain Ilkhânid paintings and drawings, notably a series of illustrations from a dispersed or unfinished copy of the Jami‘-al-tawarikh.\textsuperscript{5}

1. For example, the well-known album in the Institute of Oriental Studies, Saint Petersburg: see St. Petersburg Monqqa’ 1996.
3. For the interrelationship among the Istanbul and Berlin albums, see Roxburgh 1996, pp. 651-54.
5. İpişoğlu 1964, pp. 1-34.

17

Elephant and Rider

(Diez A Fol. 71, S. 56)

Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century

Ink, colors, and gold on paper

23.5 x 18 cm (9 x 7 1/4 in.)

New York only

This painting is one of several from the Diez Albums that may have originally belonged to an unfinished or dispersed early-fourteenth-century copy of Rashid al-Din’s Jami‘ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles.\textsuperscript{1} The horizontal orientation of the painting, its limited use of color, and the largely unpainted background are all characteristic of the Jami‘ al-tawarikh pages (see cat. nos. 6, 7). Stylistic details also indicate a relationship: for example, the staggered grouping of figures at the right, which suggests a crowd and the rendition of the elephant, its wrinkled flesh and heavy feet, with articulated toes singled out for emphasis.\textsuperscript{2} The costumes, especially the headaddresses with owl feathers, are typically Mongol and are depicted in several illustrations from the Compendium of Chronicles.

Although the events connected to Mahmud of Ghazna’s conquest of India, as recounted in the Jami‘ al-tawarikh, would be an obvious place in the text for an illustration featuring an elephant, the entirely peacetime nature of this scene suggests that it belongs to a different part of the narrative.\textsuperscript{3}

1. İpişoğlu 1964, p. 71, no. 15.

18

Enthronement Scene

(Diez A fol. 70, S. 10)

Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century

Ink and colors on paper

32 x 30.8 cm (12 1/4 x 12 in.)

Los Angeles only

The monumental Jami‘ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles, written by the Ilkhânid historian and vizier Rashid al-Din, was initially commissioned as a history of the Mongols by Ghazan (r. 1295-1304). It was expanded into the first-known universal history under Ghazan’s brother and successor, Öljeytü (r. 1304-16). There is no extant complete illustrated version of the Jami‘ al-tawarikh from the Ilkhânid period, and only a few illustrated portions of the original multivolume work survive (see cat. nos. 6, 7). Albums in Istanbul,\textsuperscript{1} however, as well as the Diez Albums in Berlin contain detached paintings that may belong to the first volume on the Mongols — the Tarikh-i Ghazani, written for Ghazan.\textsuperscript{2} These paintings are in the form of single- and double-page compositions depicting the enthroned ruler and his consort surrounded by members of the court, both male and female, arranged in rows. The figures are generally portrayed in all their sartorial splendor, as in these two enthronement scenes from the Diez Albums,\textsuperscript{3} in which the men wear characteristic feathered hats and the women balance atop their heads tall conical bonnets surmounted by peacock feathers. This distinctive Mongol headdress, known as a baghnaq, was a sign of a woman’s special status as an official wife.\textsuperscript{4} Also known as a guguan, it was worn by noble ladies throughout the empire, for example, in the well-known pendant portrait of Chabi (fig. 77), consort of Kubilai Khan.\textsuperscript{5} Two other identically bonneted women are depicted in the lower right corner of a silk tapestry Yamantaka mandala from the fourteenth century (cat. no. 183, fig. 126). Similarly attired women are also represented on Ilkhânid metalwork. Such images appear to reflect the new, more powerful roles played by royal women in Mongol society.\textsuperscript{6}

1. Topkapi Palace Library, H. 2155; see Çalman, Tanind, and Rogers 1984, p. 69, nos. 43, 44. On the important albums in the Topkapi Palace Library, the most comprehensive work to date is Roxburgh 1996.
2. See Râhëndzî 1992, fig. 3, for an example of a double-page enthronement scene in the Diez Albums. See also Blair 1995, p. 94.
3. Cat. no. 183: İpişoğlu 1964, pl. VII, fig. 11, p. 117, no. 16; Blair 1995, p. 96, fig. 58.
4. For two incidents demonstrating the significance of the baghnaq, see Lambton 1988, p. 199.
5. See Fong and Watt 1996, pl. 137.

19

Enthronement Scene

(Diez A fol. 70, S. 21)

Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century

Ink, colors, and gold on paper

34.5 x 26.6 cm (13 7/8 x 10 1/2 in.)

Los Angeles only

\textsuperscript{1} See Râhëndzî 1992, fig. 3, for an example of a double-page enthronement scene in the Diez Albums. See also Blair 1995, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{2} Cat. no. 183: İpişoğlu 1964, pl. VII, fig. 11, p. 117, no. 16; Blair 1995, p. 96, fig. 58.
\textsuperscript{3} For two incidents demonstrating the significance of the baghnaq, see Lambton 1988, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{4} See Fong and Watt 1996, pl. 137.
\textsuperscript{5} On women in Mongol society, see Lambton 1988, pp. 132-96. See also Rosenthal 1979.

20

Mongol Archer on Horseback

(Diez A fol. 72, S. 11)

Signed (lower right): Muhammad ibn Mahmudshah al-Khayyam

Iran, early 14th century

Ink and gold on paper

23.7 x 30 cm (9 3/8 x 11 3/4 in.)

Los Angeles only

The first albums were assembled in Iran in the fifteenth century, gathering together a diverse body of paintings, calligraphy, sketches, designs, and pounces for transferring designs. In this way they helped to preserve visual resources dating back to the Ilkhânid period, which served as models and source material for later generations of artists. The drawing of a Mongol archer on horseback,\textsuperscript{4} signed by Muhammad ibn Mahmudshah al-Khayyam, can be dated to the early fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{5} It seems likely that the artist, who is known from a number of signed drawings, copied his composition from an earlier work. Although the drawing belongs to the Timurid period (1370-1409), its subject is not a contemporary one. For example, the rider’s costume, including his distinctive owl-feathered headdress, was no longer the fashion at the Timurid court, although the imagery must have appealed to a Timurid audience given the dynasty’s claims to Mongol ancestry (legitimate and otherwise). The overall composition can be broadly related to Ilkhânid paintings (e.g., cat. nos. 22, 23), suggesting that the artist followed his prototype fairly closely, but the subtle execution of the drawing and its more powerful flowing line are characteristic of a later age.\textsuperscript{3}

1. İpişoğlu 1964, pl. IV, fig. 81, p. 81, no. 48; Roxburgh 2003, pp. 59-61, fig. 10.
2. See Roxburgh 2003, pp. 75-76, no. 66, where Muhammad ibn Mahmudshah al-Khayyam’s activities are associated with the Timurid prince, calligrapher, and bibliophile Baqiyungur (1397-1424). For a different, late-fifteenth-century dating, see Rogers 1990, p. 12, fig. 1.
3. Roxburgh 2003, pp. 19-20, fig. 36, has proposed a closely related drawing in an Istanbul album, which he sees as a likely prototype.
Angel and Three Figures in a Landscape; Mongol Ruler and Consort (six scenes)

(Diez A fol. 71, S. 63, nos. 1–7)
Iran, early 14th century
Ink, colors, and gold on paper
14 x 21.8 cm (5 7/8 x 8 1/2 in.); 6 images, each approx. 6.6 x 6.6 cm (2 1/2 x 2 1/2 in.)
New York only

The idea of combining on an album page a manuscript illustration and six small images of the Mongol ruler and his consort belongs to an age later than that of the compositions themselves. There is, however, a logical basis for this assembly: all of the elements can be associated with Rashid al-Din’s Jami’ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles. The scene of three bearded men in a landscape, one of whom converses with an angel, was probably intended to illustrate a section of the text dealing with the history of the Jews or the life of the prophet Muhammad (see cat. nos. 6, 7). Furthermore, the horizontal format of the composition, the landscape elements, and the figures of the angel and the bearded men, including the ginghamlike lining of the latters’ robes, all relate the painting to illustrations from the two Arabic fragments of the text, suggesting a comparable date. The diminutive square or squarish paintings of a Mongol and his consort, each of whom wears a headdress announcing his or her elevated status, could have been intended for the first volume of the Compendium, which recounts the history of the Mongols, where they might have accompanied genealogical charts.

1. Işıкопlu 1964, pl. X, fig. 14. On the connections between some of the Diez Album paintings and the Jami’ al-tawarikh, see Rürhdanz 1997, p. 305. The illustration, from a dispersed or unfinished copy of Rashid al-Din’s Jami’ al-tawarikh, shows a prince on horseback followed by his retinue, one of whom holds a large parasol above the prince’s head, signaling his rank. Other signs of the exalted status of the central horseman are his headdress, with three long, curved eagle feathers, and the royal folding stool carried by the riderless horse in the foreground. The scene might be understood simply as one of a prince traveling in state except for an unusual element. The entourage is preceded by a bearded man wearing a fringed, pointed hat and a tasseled belt, holding a crook over his left shoulder and a roll in his raised right hand. This curious figure is very likely a royal envoy. Key to such an interpretation is the nature of the oval object pierced above the center and suspended from a cord worn around his neck. It has recently been identified as a paizan—a type of official tablet issued under the Mongols that served as a safe-conduct pass for its bearer. A few examples have survived from the period, indicating that they could take several forms (see cat. nos. 154, 197).

A Royal Procession

(Diez A fol. 71, S. 50)
Iran, early 14th century
Ink, colors, and gold on paper
23.3 x 17.5 cm (9 1/4 x 6 7/8 in.)
New York only

The illustration, from a dispersed or unfinished copy of Rashid al-Din’s Jami’ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles (see cat. nos. 18, 7, fig. 23–24). As is typical of such Diez Album images, it lacks any text and may have been cut down; in this instance the subject matter, a Mongol prince or official perhaps traveling in state, is insufficient on its own to suggest a specific connection to a scene or event from the Compendium. In terms of its composition and style, however, it appears to belong chronologically somewhere between the Arabic fragments of Rashid al-Din’s work, dating from about 1314–15, and the Great Mongol Shahnama, in the 1320s. For example, the way in which the horsemen move in and out of the pictorial space, the landscape suggested by tufts of grass among converging diagonal ground lines, the rendering of the small, long-necked horses, and the easy manner in which the central horseman and his companion to the left turn around in their saddles are closer to several of the illustrations from the Great Mongol Shahnama (e.g., cat. nos. 40, 45, 49) than to similar compositions from the Jami’ al-tawarikh of 1314–15 (see cat. nos. 6, 7).

The Conquest of Baghdad

(Diez A fol. 70, S. 7)
Iran, 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
38.3 x 30.3 cm (15 1/8 x 12 in.)
New York only

These two pages depict the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and are variations on the same composition, probably once forming a double-page illustration. The paintings are divided into four horizontal planes, with the river separating the city from a defensive wall. The foreground is an open space with catapults and soldiers, and in cat. no. 24 two generals are shown issuing commands to archers who stand armed and

Mongol Traveling

(Diez A fol. 71, S. 53)
Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
18.8 x 27.5 cm (7 3/8 x 10 7/8 in.)
Los Angeles only

This painting is one of several that may have come from an incomplete or dispersed early-fourteenth-century copy of Rashid al-Din’s Jami’ al-tawarikh, or Compendium of Chronicles (see cat. nos. 18, 23). As is typical of such Diez Album images, it lacks any text and may have been cut down; in this instance the subject matter, a Mongol prince or official perhaps traveling in state, is insufficient on its
posed to shoot. In the lower right foreground of cat. no. 25 is a group of three figures, the one in the center beating a flattened drum which is supported on cords slung around the necks of the other two; these are the only figures in the two paintings to be dressed clearly in Mongol costume and given distinctly Mongol features. In addition, the warriors are identifiable as Mongol by their lamellar armor worn under a tunic, as seen in illustrations of the jamšt al-tavašir.2 The helmets are familiar from other Ilkhanid paintings, but the plume is a feature not seen in earlier headgear.3 In the upper left of cat. no. 25 are three figures dressed in Arab fashion with loose robes, turbans, and full beards—the caliph and his attendants fleeing the city in a boat.

Various elements in the paintings have been simplified to create a decorative effect. The water, for example, both of the river and of the channel along the defensive wall, is rendered in a highly ornamental, Chinese-inspired manner. The broad, wavy patterns of the river and the tightly controlled, overlapping streams in the moat, though very different in appearance, equally convey a sense of the speed and force of the water. With their shapes and colors, the shields of the warriors placed regularly along the city walls are also reduced to a decorative element.

1. Cat. no. 24: Isphahān 1984, pl. V, fig. 9, p. 17, no. 1; Blair 1991, p. 77, fig. 61. Cat. no. 25: Blair 1991, p. 85, fig. 67.

26 Four Sleeping Kings
(Diez A fol. 72, S. 29)
Iran, 14th century
Ink, colors, and gold on paper
25.6 x 11 cm (10⅜ x 4⅜ in.)
Los Angeles only

The painting shows the figure of a king entering a vaulted space that is depicted in a horizontal cross-section view resembling a four-petalled flower.1 Each of the four chambers in the space features the reclining figure of a crowned king; from their bent knees and variously placed arms, all four men appear to be asleep. Near each bed are a ewer placed in a basin and a cup filled with liquid. A man wearing a turban appears in the upper left chamber. The scene has a narrative quality to it and seems to be part of an illustrated manuscript, perhaps an epic, heroic tale, or historical account, in which the accompanying text would have made its meaning clear. The distinctly decorative effect of the painting is due to the floral shape of the vaulted space and to the colors, which are deeper and more vibrant than in most of the other Diez Album pages.

1. Isphahān 1984, pl. XVIII, fig. 74, p. 40, no. 7.

27 Fig. 87
Funeral Scene
(Diez A fol. 72, S. 25)
Iran, early 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
29 x 14.3 cm (11⅜ x 5⅜ in.)
New York only

Scenes pertaining to the rituals of death and mouring occupy a prominent place among extant paintings from the Ilkhanid period, one that may reflect the ways in which the Mongols observed the passing of their leaders.3 There are two very similar paintings of a Funeral in the Diez Albums that come from a dispersed or unfinished version of the jamšt al-tavašir, possibly from the first volume (Tārikh-i ghāzemi), which deals with the history of the Mongols.4 In each instance the coffin rests on a throne-like dais, indicating the lofty status of the deceased. The dais is closely related to the thrones depicted in enthronement scenes also associated with the first volume of the jamšt al-tavašir (see cat. nos. 18, 19),3 a connection that coincides with the description of the burial rites of the great khan Mongke (r. 1251–59) given in Rashid al-Din's text, in which the coffin is said to have been placed on a throne.4

Reinforcing this royal association, the back of the dais in cat. no. 28 bears an almost entirely obliterated inscription that preserves the word "Sultan," written in a heavier hand. In both scenes the dais and the coffin are each surmounted by a lotus, a flower associated with Buddhist funerary rites.

The two paintings show groups of mourners symmetrically ranged around the dais. The women, in the upper right, appear somewhat more sedate than the bareheaded men, who beat their chests, knees, and tear their clothes and hair. Such figures are strikingly similar to those accompanying Isfandiyar’s hir in a page from the Great Mongol Shahnama (see cat. no. 42), which also incorporates Buddhist imagery associated with death. In the foreground of cat. no. 28 is a low table bearing a two-handled bowl with a constricted neck, probably a container for meat or koumiss (fermented mare’s milk). According to Mongol burial customs, mourners lament with loud wailing while koumiss and meat are placed on a table before the deceased, especially one of high rank. He would be buried with his yurt, a mare and her foal, and a horse with bridle and saddle. In this way, when the deceased arrived in the next world, he would have shelter, a mare to give him milk and to breed future herds, and a horse to ride.5


28 Fig. 122
Funeral Scene
(Diez A fol. 71, S. 55)
Iran, early 14th century
Ink, colors, and gold on paper
21.5 x 27.5 cm (8⅞ x 10⅜ in.)
New York only

Landscape
(Diez A fol. 71, S. 10)
Iran, 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
20.4 x 29 cm (8 x 11⅜ in.)
New York only

This landscape is from a jamšt al-tavašir manuscript rendered in the Rashidiyya style seen in cat. nos. 6 and 7.1 Rashid al-Din’s painters looked outside the Islamic tradition for models for his illustrated histories, using different types of Chinese handscrolls and woodblocks as well as various Byzantine manuscripts to provide new pictorial devices.2 Landscape painting is not a traditional Islamic genre, and in this illustration Chinese sources have been drawn on for the natural elements, which are rendered in a markedly linear style though ultimately somewhat removed from the Chinese original. The river is shown with a regular, rhythmic patterning of curling waves that terminate in crests; gnarled, leafless trees form a dense network in the background, and their placement evokes a sense of deep space. Stylized, organic rock formations in the Chinese tradition are colored with blue, olive green, and red washes to create a dramatic landscape.

1. Isphahān 1984, pl. XI, fig. 15, p. 11, no. 45.

29 Fig. 168
Preparations for a Banquet; An Encounter
(Diez A fol. 70, S. 18, nos. 1, 2)
Iran, 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
27.4 x 26.8 cm (10⅜ x 10⅜ in.); 12.8 x 26.4 cm (5 x 10⅜ in.)
Los Angeles only

Two independent illustrations of Rashid al-Din’s jamšt al-tavašir are pasted onto a single page,
both rendered in delicate lines and colored with washes. The upper scene, in a vertical format, is set before a white tent with decorative patterned bands in blue; its entrance curtains are knotted back to reveal the bare interior of the tent. Wearing a variety of Mongol headresses decorated with eagle feathers, several figures are shown involved in preparations for a festive occasion. Two men in the left foreground carry a table laden with dishes, while a third man in the group holds two bowls. In the center foreground is a figure turning his head toward a party of women approaching from the right. His hat, which is taller and more elaborate than those of the other men, and the staff in his hands suggest his relatively higher social position; he is perhaps the master of ceremonies or overseer of the event. Gesticulating hands, figural poses, and open mouths indicate conversation and interaction, and attest to the bustling activity.

The narrative content of the lower painting is more difficult to interpret, although gestures and poses imply one. Three mounted figures are shown emerging onto the scene from the left and approaching a woman, probably a servant or peasant from her attire, who is on foot and leading a horse behind her by its leading rein. The foremost horseman extends one hand as if engaging in conversation with the woman, while she holds her right hand to her mouth in a gesture of surprise or comprehension. The figures are set in an open landscape where different spatial planes are denoted by the placement of clustered flowering plants. A further sense of space is created by the truncation of the scene to left and right—two of the riders and their mounts and the woman’s horse are visible only in part—suggesting an extension of what is actually seen. Such a treatment is reminiscent of Chinese handscrolls, which are normally viewed piecemeal as they are unrolled. It first occurs in Persian painting in the illustrations of the Manafi’-i-baqiy of al-Biruni (cat. no. 4), notably in the picture of a mare followed by a stallion, where only the head of the stallion is visible.  

1. Ipiroglu 1984, p. 27, nos. 3, 14.

31

Tent Mosque; Birth Scene

(Diez A fol. 79, S. 8, nos. 1, 1)
Iran, 14th century
Ink and colors on paper
29.5 x 19.6 cm (11 3/8 x 7 5/8 in.); 13.5 x 17.3 cm (5 1/8 x 6 7/8 in.)

Los Angeles only

As in cat. no. 19, two unconnected illustrations of the same al-tawaskh have been pasted onto a single page. The upper image here, again in a vertical format, shows a large tent like the one in cat. no. 30, with the panels similarly knotted back to reveal the interior. Two men are seated inside, each reading the Koran from a copy supported on the nahal, or Koran stand, before him. The prayer caps on their heads, along with the open access to the tent and the inscriptions—above the entrance on the left, “All sovereignty belongs to God” (al-mulk illah), and on the two standards extending from the top, “Allah”—suggest that this may be a mobile mosque. The Mongols would have had a dedicated prayer space even as they traveled between palace residences, especially after the conversion of Ghazan Khan to Islam in 1295. The lower scene, a horizontal one, shows on the left a woman lying prone soon after giving birth, with the newborn baby by her side. She is attended by female servants and by three Mongol noblewomen (their status denoted by their headdress) seated nearby. Three bearded men clad in loose robes, wearing turbans and holding astrolabes, are grouped at the right. The presence of Arab astrologers at the birth to map the child’s astrological charts indicates the importance of the event, although there are no inscriptions on the painting to identify any of the figures. It is interesting to compare this birth scene with that of the cesarean delivery of Julius Caesar in the historical text al-Athar al-baqiy of al-Biruni (cat. no. 4). There, the painting shows the mother lying nude and lifeless while male surgeons draw out her baby. In the Diez Album painting the live mother lies fully clothed, covered by a sheet and with the infant beside her. The influence of accessible Byzantine illustrations of the Nativity probably contributed to this composition (see also cat. no. 6, fig. 150). The clinical quality of the al-Biruni image suggests that its prototype was taken from a scientific text or medical handbook, a context in which the representation of nudity was considered acceptable.

1. Ipiroglu 1984, pl. VIII, fig. 12, p. 26, nos. 30, 31.
2. Soucek 1973, pp. 109–10, fig. 3.

33–35 Three Folios from the First Small Shahnama (Book of Kings)

Northwestern Iran or Baghdad, ca. 1300–1330
Ink, colors, gold, and silver on paper
Page: approx. 19 x 13.2 cm (7 1/2 x 5 1/4 in.); written surface: 15.5 x 12.5 cm (6 1/4 x 4 3/4 in.)

The manuscript known as the First Small Shahnama is one of the few small-format copies of Ferdowski’s text to have survived from the Ilkhanid period, all of them in dispersed form. Given their fragmentary condition and the absence of colophons, various dates and places have been suggested for the production of these illustrated manuscripts, ranging mainly from about 1300 to 1340 and including Shiraz, Isfahan, Baghdad, and even India. One of the manuscripts, known as the Gutman Shahnama after its former owner, is stylistically distinct from the others and has recently been attributed to Isfahan in about 1335. A thorough investigation of the First and Second Small Shahnamas led Marianna Shreve Simpson to conclude that
they were probably produced in Baghdad in about 1300, an attribution that is accepted with some reservations by most scholars.

The lively compositions, bright colors, generous use of gold, and treatment of the landscape and details leave little doubt that these small manuscripts were made in the first half of the fourteenth century for a rich clientele, though not in response to specific commissions. In the absence of comparable dated copies, they seem most likely to have originated in northwestern Iran or possibly Baghdad in the early decades of the century.


33

Zal Visits Rudaba in Her Palace

The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
(Per 104.5)

The romance of the hero Zal, a valiant warrior in the court of Shah Manuchir of Iran, with Rudaba, daughter of the rival king of Kabul, is narrated early in the text of the Shahname (see cat. nos. 37, 38). The two hear high praise of the other’s appearance, charm, and character from King Mihrab of Kabul and fall in love before setting eyes on each other. Notwithstanding the political implications of their actions and using Rudaba’s maidens as intermediaries, the two arrange to meet one night in Rudaba’s pavilion, which is lavishly set up for the occasion.

Illustrated here is the actual encounter between Zal and Rudaba, less commonly depicted than the episode preceding it, when Zal climbs a rope to reach Rudaba’s chambers. The scene is placed in an interior, which according to the text the servants had “dressed with brocades from Ch’in [China]” and where they “set golden trays about as ornaments, then mingled wine with musk and ambergris. . . . Here were narcissus, violet, cercis-bloom and rose, there lily and the jasmine-spray.” Zal and Rudaba are shown seated in a close embrace against a backdrop of gold draperies, clearly enjoying each other’s company and being served food and wine by attendants dressed in Chinese-inspired attire.

1. Arberr et al. 1939, pp. 11–16, no. 104, pl. 4, b; Simpson 1979, pl. 8. The bulk of the First Small Shahname is in the possession of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, which owns 37 folios incorporating 82 illustrations.

36–61 Pages from the Great Mongol Shahname (Book of Kings)

Iran (probably Tabriz), 1330
Ink, colors, and gold on paper

One of the most elaborate and luxurious manuscripts of the Ilkhanid period, and of Persian painting in general, is a now-dispersed fourteenth-century copy of the Book of Kings: the so-called Great Mongol Shahname, more familiarly the Demotte Shahname after the dealer responsible for its dismemberment. It exists today in the form of 17 known illuminations and some text pages scattered among several public and private collections. Extensive study of the manuscript initiated by Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair and pursued by the latter has revealed that the original was probably a two-volume production of about 280 large folios with approximately 190 illuminations. The paper, now sometimes stained, is well polished and of good quality. In a fourteenth-century reproduction every folio was given an extended border using paper produced in an unidentified Russian paper mill in 1895.

The manuscript was taken apart by a dealer in Paris, Georges Demotte, between 1910 and 1915, and some folios with illuminations on both sides were split and the resulting two leaves sold individually. New text pages were commissioned to paste on the backs of the split leaves that were undamaged, and where they were damaged the salvaged image was pasted onto a newly commissioned folio. As a result, some paintings on the extant pages are unrelated to the accompanying text, and others have text that is incomplete.

The frontispiece and colophon that might have revealed information on the patron, the calligrapher, and the date and place of production are lost, and it is therefore not known where and when the manuscript was produced. Grabar and Blair have attributed it to the patronage of the vizier Ghiyath al-Din ibn Rashid al-Din in Tabriz between November 1335, when he organized the appointment of Arpa (r. 1335–36) as successor of Abu Sa’id, and Ghiyath al-Din’s death on May 3, 1336. A dating in the 1330s is widely accepted by most scholars.

1. A fifty-eighth illustration was destroyed in 1937 and is known only from a photograph. See Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. 88–89, no. 16.
4. Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. xi–xiii; Soudavar 1996, pp. 95–97, however, attributes the production of the manuscript to Abu Sa’id’s reign (1316–36).
Page of Text

This is one of the few extant pages of text and illumination that were left intact when the manuscript was broken up, and it demonstrates the minute calligraphy of the original and the quality of its illuminated cartouches. The text is written in six columns separated by gold rulings, with thirty-one lines in naskh cursive script to each full column. Chapter headings are in white thuluth calligraphy within illuminated panels that are simply but elegantly filled with vegetal scrolls in gold and other colors against a dark background.


37                      Fig. 90

Sindukht Becoming Aware of Rudaba’s Actions

Image: 14.8 x 19.7 cm (5% x 7¼ in.)
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (1986.107)

The story of Zal, son of Sam, a paladin of Shah Manuchir of Iran, and of his love for Rudaba, daughter of the rival king of Kabul, is told in the early chapters of the Shahnama (see cat. no. 33). After consulting his sages, Sam granted his son permission to marry Rudaba. On hearing of the approval, Zal sent word to his beloved by way of her maid, who was really rewarded and sent back to Zal with gifts. Rudaba’s mother, Sindukht, however, intercepted the messenger and questioned her. The maid began to lie about her activities, but Sindukht searched her and found the gifts. Angered and saddened by Rudaba’s secretiveness, Sindukht shut herself in the palace and summoned her daughter.

The subject of the painting is identified here by the title above it and shows Sindukht, her hand raised in admonition, with Rudaba and the maid. An elaborate necklace, almost identical to cat. no. 148, is prominently displayed in the foreground. This is a slight deviation from the text, which makes no mention of a necklace as part of the maid’s reward, and reports only that Rudaba generously gave her gold coins and clothing and sent a fine turban and a ring to Zal.


38                      Fig. 189

Zal Approaching Shah Manuchir

Image: 17.2 x 17.2 cm (6½ x 7/3 in.)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 111.4)

Infuriated upon hearing of Zal and Rudaba’s romance, Shah Manuchir sent Sam, Zal’s father, to wage war on Mihrab, ruler of Kabul, descendant of the evil king Zahak and father of Rudaba. Zal pleaded with his father to intercede with the king on his behalf and settle the matter peacefully. Armed with a letter from Sam, Zal made his way to Manuchir’s court to try to persuade the king not to wage war.

The illustration shows Zal, identifiable by his distinctive white beard (he was born with white hair), kissing Manuchir’s foot in a gesture of deference. The king raises his hand in acknowledgment, and courtiers stand at attention around the throne. In a two-storyd architectural extension on the left, a seated guard fills the doorway below and a woman looks down from the balcony above. Both figures become traditional staffage in Persian painting of the Timurid and Safavid periods (14th–17th centuries). The chapter heading above identifies the scene, but both the painting and the heading are pasted onto an irrelevant text page.


39                      Fig. 37, frontispiece.

Shah Zav Enthroned

Image: 21.1 x 29.7 cm (8½ x 11¼ in.)
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (1986.107)

The tyrannical king Naudar, son of Manuchir, ruled Iran oppressively for several years and was eventually beheaded in a campaign against the rival Turanians. Neither of Naudar’s two sons was considered fit to rule, and the throne remained vacant until Zav, a descendant of Faribun, one of the great rulers of Iran, was crowned on Zal’s advice. Zav was already an old man at the time of his coronation. He ruled for only five years, but his reign was marked with a prosperity and justice that ended upon his death.

The Shahnama includes a short section on Zav that speaks mainly of the prosperity he brought about. This painting shows his enthronement, when everyone, including Zal (the white-haired figure in the left foreground), came to worship him with praises and offerings. He is seen here seated on his throne with Zal at his side and surrounded by courtiers, one of them on his knees presenting a gift. The chapter heading incorporated into the painting refers to Zav’s brief, five-year reign.

Enthronement scenes are featured in thirteen of the fifty-seven extant paintings from the Great Mongol Shahnama (see also cat. nos. 46, 60). They largely follow a standard composition in which the central crowned figure is seated on an elaborately throne before an architectural setting and is surrounded by courtiers, soldiers, and officials.


40

Bahman Meeting Zal

Image: 21 x 27 cm (8½ x 7¾ in.)

The narrative continues with the lives of other kings, and several sections are devoted to Isfandiyar, one of the prince-heroes of the epic and son of Shah Gustasp of Iran. Isfandiyar had been promised the throne but his father refused to abdicate. Gustasp eventually agreed to do so, on condition that Isfandiyar bring before him in chains the great hero Rustam, who had affronted the king by not recognizing his authority. Isfandiyar thereupon sent his son Bahman as an emissary to persuade Rustam to pay homage to Gustasp.

The painting shows Bahman, seen from the back, greeted by Zal, Rustam’s father, who has sighted the approaching party from a watchtower and come to receive them. Bahman is richly dressed and wears a crown, following his father’s directives to make his royal status immediately known. Figures with their backs to the viewer reflect a Chinese influence on Persian painting (see also cat. nos. 53, 54, 61).


41                      Fig. 188

Rustam Shooting an Arrow into Isfandiyar’s Eye

Image: 20 x 29 cm (7½ x 11¼ in.)

Rustam agreed to accompany Isfandiyar to the court of Shah Gustasp, but the two quarreled and subsequently engaged in single combat to settle their dispute. Although severely wounded, Rustam managed to escape alive. On Zal’s advice, he sought help from the sminah, the miraculous bird that had reared his father.
The winds healed Rustam’s wounds and encouraged him to try conciliation as a means of settling the dispute. At the same time it gave him a double-pointed arrow that would kill the valiant Isfandiyar if shot into one of his eyes. After meeting his opponent and making a failed attempt at persuasion, Rustam resorted to use of the deadly arrow. The painting shows Rustam having discharged the arrow, while Isfandiyar, struck in the eye, falls forward on his horse.¹

42

Isfandiyar’s Funeral Procession

Image: 22 x 29 cm (8½ x 11¾ in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1933 (33.70)

With his dying breath, Isfandiyar entrusted Rustam with the guidance of his son, after declaring that his death was caused not by Rustam but by fate and his father’s ambitions. Rustam made arrangements to send Isfandiyar’s body back to Iran. He ordered a fine iron coffin smeared with pitch on the inside, draped with rich Chinese brocades, and sprinkled with musk and ambergis. He shrouded the body in brocade and placed it on Isfandiyar’s turquoise crown.

The details of the painting follow the text faithfully.¹ Members of the procession, with distinctly Mongol features, are shown wailing and tearing their hair in grief. As a sign of mourning, Isfandiyar’s horse has its mane and tail shorn, and the saddle, with Isfandiyar’s mace, quiver, and helmet hanging from it, is reversed. This illustration of a royal Mongol funeral procession is rendered with smooth calligraphic lines that derive from Chinese painting. The Chinese clouds above, with the three geese that in Buddhist belief were to bear the soul to heaven, also speak of the strong Chinese influences in the Ilkhanid period.

43

Rustam Slaying Shaghad

Image: 16 x 29 cm (6¼ x 11¾ in.)
The Trustees of the British Museum, London
(1948,12,11.025)

Shaghad, Rustam’s jealous half brother, plotted with the king of Kabul to destroy the hero, and they devised a scheme to trap him under the pretense of a hunting trip. Shaghad conspired to lure Rustam and his brother Zavara into a forest rich with game, which had been prepared with spear-lined pits deceptively covered with turf. Despite the protests of his faithful horse, Raksh, Rustam rode forward and fell into one of the pits. He managed to crawl out of it and with his dying breath asked Shaghad to string a bow so that he could ward off predatory animals. Then he used this one shot left to him to slay Shaghad.

This depiction of Rustam’s final act of courage and retribution shows him having just discharged the arrow, pinning Shaghad to the tree he had used as cover.¹ The figure of the elderly Rustam is framed by the arched branches of the tree, and the massive figure of Raksh impaled in the pit reinforces the tragedy of a hero’s death.


44

Rustam’s and Zavara’s Biers

Image: 16 x 29 cm (6¼ x 11¾ in.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Helen and Alice Colburn Fund and Seth K. Sweeney Fund (33.391)

In the exhibition

Faramurz, Rustam’s son, was sent to retrieve the bodies of his father and uncle from Kabul. The painting shows the funeral procession with mourners bearing standard sizes and incense, and the biers that passed from hand to hand on their way back to Zabulistan, Rustam’s kingdom.¹ The body of Raksh, mounted on the back of an elephant, follows its master in death.


45

Faramurz Pursuing the Kabulis

Image: 22 x 29 cm (8½ x 11¾ in.)
Musée du Louvre, Paris (20957)

Los Angeles only

At the end of the mourning period, Faramurz took an army to Kabul to avenge the deaths of his father and uncle. The intensity of the ensuing battle is described in the text, which speaks of the thongs of horses and warriors, and of the noise and action on the field. The painting captures much of that intensity, with the armies of Faramurz charging aggressively and driving the Kabulis into retreat.¹ Dismembered bodies, a Kabul horseman seen from the back in a twisted three-quarter pose with an upraised arm as if to ward off the attackers, and the swirling, Chinese-inspired clouds in the sky all enhance the drama of the event.


46

Iskandar Enthroned

Image: 29 x 20 cm (11½ x 7½ in.)
Musée du Louvre, Paris (20968)

New York only

Iskandar (Alexander the Great) was another of the popular hero-kings in the Persian epic, and according to the text was the son of the just king Darab and a princess of Rum (Byzantium). Several sections in the Shahnama are devoted to him, and interestingly, these stories are heavily represented in the Great Mongol Shahnama: twelve of the extant paintings belong to the Iskandar cycle. Many of the stories in the chapter on Iskandar recount his travels and adventures in strange and far-off lands. He ruled over Rum until he invaded Iran, defeated his half brother, and assumed power in Iran.

The painting shows a haloed Iskandar seated on his throne, framed by the niche behind him, and flanked by numerous attendants.¹ In front is a low partition. The heading above the miniature reads: “The beginning of the story,” while the subject of the miniature is identified in a panel above the throne.


47

King Kayd of Hind Recounting His Dream to Mihran

Image: 22 x 20 cm (8½ x 7½ in.)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
(Per 111.5)

Iskandar had set his sights on kingdoms far and wide. The wise King Kayd of Hind (India) had a recurring nightmare for ten days that neither he nor his ministers were able to interpret. He visited a famous sage, Mihran, who lived as a hermit in the wilderness, in order to seek an answer. Mihran interpreted the dreams as a premonition that Iskandar of Rum would invade Hind; and he advised the king to avoid destruction by offering Iskandar his four most prized possessions: his daughter, his sage, his magic cup, and his physician. Iskandar in his wisdom and justice, according to the hermit, would ask for no more and would pass through the land peacefully.

The miniature shows King Kayd on foot, dismounted from his horse and approaching the sage deferentially.¹ The king wears Iranian clothing, but his retinue and the sage are dressed in Indian attire, and several figures have a Central Asian physical appearance.

Iskandar accepted King Kayd’s offer of his four most prized possessions and left his lands unharmed. He then proceeded to the kingdom of Fur (Porous) and invited him to surrender. Fur refused, preferring to fight for supremacy. After Iskandar was advised by his spies that his troops would be no match for the fearsome army of Indian elephants, his sages designed a cavalry of iron riders and horses mounted on wheels, filled with naphtha and set aflame. The Indian army, despite its strength, turned back in retreat before Iskandar’s fire-spewing forces.

This painting is probably the most visually arresting of the manuscript. Its dynamic composition, together with its use of color and devices such as the swirling clouds in the sky, which are echoed in the flames emitted by the iron horses, effectively captures the drama of the moment. The truncated figures of the retreating Indian army create an illusion of space and underscore the impact of the illustration.


Iskandar’s Iron Cavalry

Iskandar Killing Fur of Hind

To avoid the bloodshed of battle, Iskandar and King Fur agreed to fight in single combat. Fur, a mighty and valiant warrior, proved a formidable opponent, and Iskandar began to fear for his life. However, a loud disturbance arose from the ranks and as the distracted Fur turned his head in that direction, Iskandar seized the opportunity to strike a fatal blow.

The painting, which follows the text closely, shows the two mounted combatants in action, with their armies behind them. As Fur of Hind, on the right, turns his head toward the noise, Iskandar charges forward, brandishing his sword. The decorated border around the illustration is unusual and does not appear on the other paintings from this manuscript.


50

Taynush before Iskandar and The Visit to the Brahmans

Moving westward from Hind, Iskandar went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and made his way to Andalusia in Spain, ruled by Queen Qaidafa. The queen entered into a pact with Iskandar and was left unharmed. Her son Taynush, however, who was the son-in-law of the slain Fur of Hind, was eager to seek retribution for Fur’s death. Qaidafa had also received Iskandar’s promise not to harm her son; yet wanting to test Taynush himself, Iskandar contrived an ambush and forced Taynush into a confrontation. When assured of the prince’s loyalty, Iskandar ordered a throne and banquet to be set up in the forest and celebrated with Taynush and his companions.

After leaving Andalusia, Iskandar proceeded to the country of the Brahmans in order to question them about the meaning of life and death. The Brahmins, world-renouncing hermits and ascetics, lived in the forest. They told Iskandar that greed and need were the two greatest evils in life, and that death was inevitable regardless of one’s worldly achievements.

The painting, which has no title or heading to identify the subject, appears to be a composite of the two narratives. In the right-hand side of the image is the feast prepared for Iskandar, who is seated beneath the boughs of a tree as described in the text, surrounded by Taynush and his companions. The remaining pictorial space is devoted to Iskandar’s visit to the Brahmins, who are framed by a generic architectural setting in the upper left corner and can be recognized by their long beards and naked torsos.

1. Grabar and Blair 1988, pp. 120–21, no. 32; Lowry 1988, pp. 84–85, no. 11.

51

Iskandar Emerging from the Gloom

On another adventure, Iskandar was returning from a visit to the angel of death in the land of darkness when a voice called out from the gloom announcing that whoever picked up a stone from the path would grieve and whoever did not would grieve even more. Puzzled by the cryptic message, some of Iskandar’s men collected stones from the path. On emerging into the light they saw that these were precious stones, and those who had picked up a few regretted not gathering more, while those who had picked up none were even sorrier.

The right side of the painting has been damaged. Early photographs show a blank space here; this is today filled with part of a text folio, the rest of which is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.


52

Iskandar Building the Iron Rampart

Iskandar subsequently came upon a mountain city plagued by the monstrous peoples of Yaju and Majuj (Gog and Magog), creatures with black faces and tongues and boarlike teeth, who wreaked havoc and terrorized the citizens. He ordered a wall made of fused iron, copper, sulfur, charcoal, and naphtha to be built across the mountain from its base to its crest to protect the inhabitants.

The painting shows blacksmiths and masons at work on the rampart. Their varied attire follows the description in the text, which speaks of craftsmen assembled from all over the world. In the background, the denizens of Yaju and Majuj are seen peering from behind the rocks.


53

Ardashir Battling Bahman, Son of Ardavan

The account of Iskandar ends with his death. The narrative moves next to the rule of Ardavan, last of the Parthian kings. Ardavan had heard of the prowess of a gifted and gallant youth, Ardashir, born of a local princess and a shepherd, and summoned him to the court to live with his sons. Ardashir fell out of favor when he surpassed the king’s sons at hunting, and he was banished to the stables. Subsequently, Ardavan was warned by his sages that one of his servants would soon overthrow him. Fearing for his life, Ardashir


50

Taynush before Iskandar and The Visit to the Brahmans

Image: 51.1 x 38.6 cm (6 x 11 1/2 in.)
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.105)

Los Angeles only

52

Iskandar Building the Iron Rampart

Image: 27 x 32 cm (10 1/2 x 12 1/2 in.)
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.104)

New York only

53

Ardashir Battling Bahman, Son of Ardavan

Image: 17 x 29 cm (6 1/4 x 11 3/4 in.)
Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, Edsel B. Ford Fund (35.54)
escaped from the court with his beloved, Gulnar, Ardavan’s favorite slave-girl, and the two were pursued by the king. Ardavan, however, was unable to catch up with the couple and ordered his son Bahram to continue the chase. Reaching his homeland, Ardashir gathered an army to face Bahram, and a fierce battle ensued. Finally, Ardashir charged at Bahram, who fled wounded.

The painting shows the combatants in the center with their armies at the sides. The charging Ardashir is depicted with his back to the viewer. Although the title above was originally inscribed “Ardashir battling Ardavan,” the text above describes the confrontation between Ardashir and Bahram, and the words “Bahram, son of” have been inserted before “Ardavan” in the title by a later hand.


54

**Ardavan Captured by Ardashir**

Image: 19.4 x 28.7 cm (7 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Purchase, Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (S1986.101)

Los Angeles only

Ardavan, learning of Bahram’s defeat and flight, marched upon Ardashir himself. The two fought intensely for forty days until Ardavan was wounded and taken captive. He was brought before Ardashir, who ordered the prisoner to be cleaved in two.

Pictured here is the moment when the defeated Ardavan stands before Ardashir and hears of his impending death. The composition is divided by the central figure in the foreground: a Mongol soldier seen from the back. His feet and mace extend beyond the border, a pictorial device often seen in the illustrations of the Jami’ al-tawarikh (cat. nos. 6, 7). It serves to focus the viewer’s attention and to emphasize the dramatic intensity of the scene.


55

**Bahram Gur Hunting Azada**

Image: 21 x 29 cm (8 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)


Ardashir was the first king of the Sasanian dynasty, and the Shahnama continues with accounts of the Sasanians. Bahram Gur (the sobriquet Gur, or onager, referred to his prowess at hunting), another popular hero, is featured in several sections of the text, and this fragmentary copy of the Shahnama includes seven paintings depicting his exploits. His father, the king Yazdigird, was a tyrant, and in order to preserve the prince Bahram from his evil influence, the sages persuaded him to send the child to be raised and educated by the Arabs.

The text recounts an episode in Bahram Gur’s life frequently represented in Persian art (see cat. nos. 97, 169). One day he went deer hunting with his favorite harp player, Azada. She challenged him to prove his skill by changing a buck into a doe, a doe into a buck, and then to shoot a deer so as to pin its foot to its ear. Despite his successful completion of these tasks, Azada taunted Bahram by saying that only the devil could shoot as he had done. This infuriated Bahram Gur, who flung her from the camel and trampled her to death.

The painting includes the entire episode in a single image: Bahram Gur is seen performing all three feats and at the same time trampling Azada under the hooves of his camel.

1. Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. 150–51, no. 43; Blair and Bloom 2001, fig. 2.

56

**Bahram Gur Slaying a Dragon**

Image: 20 x 29 cm (7 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Grace Rainey Rogers Fund (1943.658)

One day while hunting, Bahram Gur came across a fearsome dragon with hair to the ground and breasts like a woman’s. He shot arrows at the creature’s head and chest and dispatched it with his sword.

The greater part of this illustration is filled with the writhing body of the dragon pierced with arrows. Bahram Gur is seen from the back with sword in hand, having dismounted from his horse to deliver the fatal blow. The artist has vividly captured the description of the beast, with its flowing hair and its sharp teeth and claws. Its powerfully sinuous body, elaborately scaled and speckled, wraps around a tree trunk in an upward diagonal across the picture space. The mountains in the background and some of the landscape elements in the foreground are rendered in a Chinese-inspired style.


57

**Bahram Gur Hunting Onagers**

Image: 20 x 29 cm (7 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)


On another hunt, Bahram Gur astounded his companions with his skill by shooting at an onager so that the arrow entered the animal’s rump and came out of its breast, and then by cleaving another in half with a single stroke of the sword. Pleased with his success and as a gesture of generosity, Bahram ordered six hundred onagers to be earmarked with gold rings and another six hundred to be branded, all to be distributed among the people.

Like other such scenes (see cat. no. 53), this one illustrates different moments in the narrative. Bahram Gur is shown with an arrow at the ready, while another has already hit its mark in an onager’s rump. Other onagers are seen with brands on their rumps and gold rings in their ears. The lower right corner is damaged and repaired with blank paper.


58

**Bahram Gur Fighting a Wolf**

Image: 21 x 29 cm (8 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.)


Disguised as an envoy of the shah of Iran, Bahram Gur made his way to the court of Hind, ruled over by an unjust king, Shangul, to observe the kingdom and its troops. One evening after a sumptuous banquet, Bahram Gur mistakenly displayed his prowess and roused the suspicions of the king, who tried to trick Bahram into revealing his identity. When this ruse failed, Shangul decided to dispatch the hero by sending him to slay a fearsome horned wolf. Bahram Gur pierced the wolf with arrows and cut off its head with his sword.

Unlike other scenes of Bahram Gur’s hunting triumphs, this miniature does not show him in the act of slaying his prey. Instead, a relaxed, confident Bahram Gur is depicted after the deed, with mace in hand, a quiver full of arrows, and a sheathed sword. The still-writhing corpse of the wolf figures prominently in the foreground, a feature that is not specifically mentioned in the text.

Nushirvan Eating the Food Brought by the Sons of Mahbud (II)
Image: 21 x 29 cm (8 1/4 x 9 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1927 (27.10.2)

After Bahram Gur's peaceful death, the Shahnama continues with the history of his descendants, dwelling at length on episodes in the reign of Nushirvan the Just. Mahbud, one of Nushirvan's paladins, was entrusted with the daily duty of preparing the royal meals, which were cooked by Mahbud's wife and brought to the palace by his two sons. Mahbud's privileged position was the cause of much envy, and for none more than Zuran, an evil chamberlain, who conspired with a sorcerer to remove him. His sons were tricked into uncovering the tray of food on the pretext of checking it for freshness, at which point the sorcerer rendered the food poisonous by means of the evil eye. As Nushirvan sat to eat his meal, Zuran warned him that it might be poisoned and suggested that Mahbud's sons taste it first. The two youthos immediately succumbed. Angered by this apparent treachery, Nushirvan ordered Mahbud and his wife to be executed, and Zuran and the sorcerer became the king's most trusted advisers. Sometime later, however, Nushirvan uncovered the plot and had Zuran hanged.

The painting is unusual in that its subject is not easily identifiable. As Grabar and Blair have observed, the surrounding text deals with the construction of the gallows for Zuran, which is not depicted. The composition is divided into two architectural settings. On the right, behind two armed guards, is a palace facade; a young woman looks down from an upper story. On the left a crowned couple is seated in an interior. The man, who raises a goblet, must represent Nushirvan and the woman his queen, though the latter does not figure in the story.


Nushirvan Writing to the Khakan of China
Image: 19 x 29 cm (7 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per 1.1.7)

Finding himself in a confrontational situation with Nushirvan and in order to avoid bloodshed, the khakan of Ch'in (China) wrote to the shah proposing a peaceful alliance between their powerful kingdoms. Nushirvan, though initially surprised, recognized the wisdom in this and sent a response to the khakan, agreeing with him.

The painting, another of the enthronement scenes from this copy of the Shahnama, shows an interior architectural setting with Nushirvan in the center and a scribe in the right foreground writing at his dictation.1 The subject is identified in the title above.

61

Mihran Sitad Selecting a Chinese Princess
Image: 18 x 35 cm (7 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.)
Musuem of Fine Arts, Boston, Helen and Alice Colburn Fund and Sels K. Sweitzer Fund (22.2391)

Intimidated by reports of Nushirvan’s power and eager to seal their alliance, the khakan offered the shah one of his daughters in marriage. Nushirvan agreed and sent his trusted adviser Mihran Sitad to the Chinese court to select the most nobly born of the princesses. The khakan had several daughters, but his daughter by the queen was his dearest and did not want to lose her. So he ordered all her half sisters to be attired in the finest garments and jewels in the hope that the one plainly dressed maid would escape notice. Mihran Sitad immediately recognized the nobility and charm of the khakan’s favorite child and selected her as Nushirvan’s bride.

The illustration shows Mihran Sitad, with three lesser figures, behing a balustrade gazing at the Chinese princesses. According to the text of the Shahnama, the queen’s daughter was the simplest and least adorned of her sisters, but here she is dressed more elaborately than the others. She is seated in the center of the group, and her importance is further emphasized by the flame above her head. The architectural setting reflects markedly Chinese elements, especially in the roof.


62

Juz' 15 of a Thirty-Part Koran
Copied by Yaqut al-Mustasim (d. 1298) in Iraq (probably Baghdad), A.H. 681/A.D. 1282–83
Leather binding; 58 folios: ink, colors, and gold on paper; 5 lines of nushaqq script to the page 24.5 x 17 cm (9 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.)
The Nasir D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (QIR 29)

Yaqut al-Mustasim (d. 1298) was a master in all the principal scripts, but Korans copied by him in nushaqq are extremely rare, especially an example that still has its original illuminations. In addition to the present volume, three other sections of the manuscript—originally bound in thirty volumes, the most common method of subdivision in the Ilkhani period—have survived, two in Istanbul and one in Dublin.

Yaqut was such an important source of inspiration and imitation among calligraphers that his signature was often placed at the end of later Korans, thus making the identification of his original work uncertain. While his signature on the last folio of the present section may be a later addition, there is no doubt that the signature on juz' 8 of the same Koran (in Dublin) is authentic. The illuminations throughout are in the style current in the late thirteenth century, exemplified by the work of Muhammad ibn Aybak (see cat. nos. 63, 64), although they also seem to have been influenced by the work of Ibn al-Bawwab (10th–11th century) in Baghdad. In its four extant sections, this manuscript constitutes one of the most important survivals to document the style of calligraphy and illumination in Iraq at the end of the thirteenth century.

1. James 1993, pp. 66–67, no. 11. Juz' 2 and 12 are in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul (Elh126, 327); Juz' 8 is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (1452).

63, 64 Two Folios from the Anonymous Baghdad Koran
Copied by Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri; illuminated by Muhammad ibn Aybak ibn 'Abd Allah Iraq (Baghdad), A.H. 701–7/A.D. 1302–8
Ink, colors, and gold on paper; 5 lines of nushaqq script to the page 50 x 35 cm (19 1/4 x 13 1/2 in.)

The so-called Anonymous Baghdad Koran, now dispersed, is perhaps the most outstanding of all large-format manuscripts created for the Ilkhani rulers at the beginning of the fourteenth century (see also cat. no. 63). A few complete sections of this codex survive in Istanbul and Tehran, while isolated folios are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The extant sections give the names of the calligrapher and the illuminator, Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi (d. ca. 1320–31) and Muhammad ibn Aybak (active ca. 1290–1320), respectively, whose partnership was perhaps the most splendid ever seen in the production of luxury Korans. Unfortunately, however, the surviving portions do not reveal the names of their patrons. From the dates included in the colophons, these may be tentatively identified as the sultans Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) and Öljeitü (r. 1304–16).

2. Juz' 2, 4, and 13 are in the Topkapi Palace Library, Istanbul. Most of Juz' 10, 23, 26, and 28 are in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, although a few folios from these sections are in Dublin and New York.
Double-Page Frontispiece (right side)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (f. 1614, 2)

The master illuminator Muhammad ibn Aybak has created a geometric composition based on the repetition of larger blue octagons, smaller brown or gold octagons, and gold pentagons.1 Vegetal scrolls fill all the available spaces in a striking combination of gold, black, blue, red, and a distinctive chocolate brown. The expanding pattern is framed by a double band of gold-and-black strapwork inside a rich outer border that includes a medallion on the right; this would have been mirrored in the symmetrical illumination on the facing page. Each juz' of this thirty-part Koran would have included a similar lavishly illuminated double-page frontispiece but with a different geometric pattern and a different color scheme, making each one an exceptional work of art in itself.

1. Arberry 1967, pl. 40, no. 92 (reversed); James 1988, fig. 49. Another illuminated page from a different juz' of the same Koran in the Chester Beatty Library has the same accession number (f. 1614, fol. 1); see James 1980, p. 60, no. 43.

Fig. 158

Double-Page Colophon (left side)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1955 (55.44)

Perhaps the most important extant page of the Anonymous Baghdad Koran for documentary purposes, this half of the colophon of one of the last four sections reveals not only the names of both the calligrapher and the illuminator but also the date and place of the completion of the volume. The illuminator, Muhammad ibn Aybak, wrote in Kufic script inside the two illuminated bands: “Baghdad, may Allah the Exalted protect it, in the months of the year seven hundred and seven [1307–8] of the lunar calendar.” The three lines of superb muhaqqaq calligraphy read: “Ahmad ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri, praising Allah and blessing his prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions and committing [his cause to God].” Ibn al-Suhrawardi, a pupil of Yaqt (see cat. no. 61), was born in Baghdad and is credited with the copying of thirty-three Korans, many of which were owned by the vizier Bashshar al-Din.


Fig. 245

Two Folios from Ölejitu’s Mosul Koran
Copied by ibn Zaid al-Husaini Ali ibn Muhammad Iraq (Mosul), A.D. 1206–12
ink, colors, and gold on paper, 3 lines of muhaqqaq script to the page
44.6 x 30 cm (.175 x .117 ft.)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (f. 1613.1, 1613.2)

The copy known as Ölejitu’s Mosul Koran is one of the spectacular, large-size thirty-part manuscripts intended for the sultan’s mausoleum in Sultaniyah (see also cat. nos. 61, 64). According to the long genealogical sequence (innad) in his signature, the scribe, who was probably also the illuminator, was a direct descendant of the caliph ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661). The superb gold muhaqqaq calligraphy with black outlines demonstrates that Zaid al-Husaini, the otherwise unknown early-fourteenth-century scribe, was an outstanding master of this style in Mosul, where the Koran was commissioned. The colophons at the end of the extant parts (most of them in Turkey, with some in Iran, Britain, and Ireland) prove that he was a fast writer who was able to complete a single juz’ in less than a month. He probably stopped halfway, however, to execute the illuminations, and it took about six years, therefore, for the manuscript to be completed.1


Fig. 121, 116

Juz’ 10 and 14 of a Thirty-Part Koran
Iran (Shiraz), ca. 1336–75
Leather binding; 51 folios: ink, colors, and gold paper, 7 lines of muhaqqaq script to the page
44.6 x 31 cm (.175 x .125 ft.)
The Nasr D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (QUR 182)

Tashi Khutan and Fars Malik Khutan, the mother and sister respectively of the Injuid ruler Abu Isqah (r. 1343–53), were two prominent women of the Injuid dynasty who commissioned fine, lavishly illuminated Korans. The present manuscript includes, in a single binding, sections 10 and 14 of a codex that was probably commissioned by Fars Malik Khutan after 1356; it was not completed, however, until 1357, and parts of its illumination were probably executed as late as the 1370s.1 The text, in flowing gold muhaqqaq with black outlines and fillings, blue vocalization, and interlinear Persian translation in black nasîh, is likely to have been finished by the time of the patron’s death in 1344 or 1348. The illumination, however, was completed and nonconsecutive sections were bound together only under the patronage of the Muzaffarid Turanshah in the 1370s. Intended for placement at the head of Fars Malik’s tomb, the manuscript as a whole was therefore unfinished at the time of her death and never served its original purpose.


Fig. 269

Juz’ 11 of a Thirty-Part Koran
Copied by ‘Abdallah ibn Ahmad ibn Fa’dl Allah ibn ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Qadi al-Qarvini Iran (Maragha), A.D. 1319–30
Leather binding; 38 folios: ink, colors, and gold on paper, 5 lines of naskh script to the page
32.5 x 25 cm (.128 x .99 ft.)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (f. 1470)

The Koran from which this is taken is preserved almost in its entirety, with twenty-three of its original thirty parts now in the Ethnographic Museum in Ankara, two in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the present one in Dublin. The manuscript was compiled after the death of Abu Sa’id in 1335 and is therefore one of the few surviving Korans to be produced in a major Ilkhanid center during the period of turmoil that ensued. The choice of the naskh calligraphic style is unusual, especially when the average page contains only seven lines of rather small script (unlike the more common muhaqqaq and naskh), leaving ample white space between them. The effect of the spaced lines against the white polished paper, however, is perhaps the most appealing characteristic of this manuscript. The opening double page is elaborately illuminated and contains facing cartouches in white Kufic script with a dark and pale outer border that is typical of the period.1 The leather binding is original and is decorated with large, blind-tooled, lobed circles on the two covers as well as on the flap.2

2. Ethinghausen 1958, p. 139, fig. 111; James 1980, p. 66, no. 49.
TEXTILES

Textile with Winged Lions and Griffins

Central Asia, mid-11th century
Lampas weave (twill and tabby), silk and gold thread
142 x 48.8 cm (45/8 x 10/3 in.)

Silk textiles woven with gold-wrapped thread and especially textiles in which both the pattern and the ground were woven in gold on a silk foundation—so-called cloth of gold (nasīj)—seem to have had a special appeal for the Mongols. From the start of their Asian conquests in the early thirteenth century, they sought out skilled weavers in the subjugated territories, especially in Iran and Central Asia, and relocated them, the better to make use of their services. This magnificent cloth of gold, 1 decorated with rows of medallions enclosing pairs of addorsed winged lions, with similarly paired griffins in the interstices, represents the type of hybrid style that might be expected to emerge from the confluence of diverse transplanted artists and artistic traditions. In both concept and detail, the symmetrical paired animals can be linked to the Iranian world, while the cloudlike patterns on the lions’ wings and the floral designs that fill the background are derived from the artistic vocabulary of lands farther east. 2

1. Wardwell 1997, figs. 1–33; Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 142–43, fig. 55; Watt 1998, fig. 5.

70

Textile with Paired Rabbits

Probably Iran, 14th century
Lampas weave (satin and tabby), silk and gold thread
61.6 x 43.8 cm (24/5 x 17/8 in.)
Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Gift of John Pierpont Morgan (1902.1.162)
Los Angeles only

This handsome textile is one of a large group that combines Iranian, Chinese, Italian, and Syro-Egyptian decorative elements, thereby rendering the issue of provenance difficult and at times impossible to establish. 3 The design in this instance—a pair of rabbits contained by leafy medallions, the latter set within an overall pattern of ovals defined by scrolling vines with blossoms—seems more specifically Islamic in nature. Whether the textile was produced in Iran under Ilkhanid patronage or in Egypt or Syria under the Mamluk is an open question. Technical similarities with certain Mamluk textiles could be the result of practices brought with them by the weavers who emigrated to Iran from the Mamluk empire, either by choice or under compulsion. 4

2. Ibid., fig. 64.
3. See ibid., p. 115. Another piece in the cloth in the Aegae-Stiftung, Regensburg, has recently been attributed to Egypt; Otavsky and Salim 1995, pp. 214–17.
4. For the interrelationship of Chinese, Ilkhanid, and Mamluk art, see Stefano Carboni, chapter 8 above.

71

Textile with Paired Parrots and Dragons

Central Asia, first half of the 14th century
Lampas weave (twill and tabby), silk and gold thread
72.5 x 56 cm (28/5 x 14/4 in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstgewerbeuseum (1875.258)

This fragmentary silk and gold textile has a repeat pattern of addorsed parrots set within dodecagon, the interstices filled with East Asian–inspired dragons; on each bird’s wing is a medallion containing an Arabic inscription. 5 The composite nature of the design suggests a Central Asian, rather than an Iranian or Chinese, provenance. The text of the inscription further complicates the issue of the textile’s origins: “Glory to our lord the sultan the king the just the wise Nasir al-Din (7); at the center is the name Muhammad (7).” 6 This may refer to the Mamluk ruler of Egypt and Syria, Al-Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn Qalawun (r. 1293–1344, with interruptions). Such an attribution is substantiated by a frequently cited account by the historian Abu al-Fida. He noted that upon the conclusion of a peace treaty between the Ilkhanids and the Mamluks in 1273, the Ilkhan Abu Sa’id sent a substantial gift to the Mamluk sultan that included seven hundred silks, some inscribed with the sultan’s titles. 7 Perhaps this textile was a part of that largesse. 8

2. See ibid., pp. 317–18.
4. For the interrelationship of Chinese, Ilkhanid, and Mamluk art, see Stefano Carboni, chapter 8 above.

72

Tapestry Roundel

Iraq or Iran, first half of the 14th century
Tapestry weave, silk, gold thread wrapped around a cotton core
Diam. 69 cm (27/4 in.)
The David Collection, Copenhagen (30/1995)

This exceptional silk- and gilt-thread woven tapestry embodies the art of the Ilkhanid period, combining as it does Islamic, Iranian, Chinese, and Central Asian elements; 9 it also seems to draw upon the traditions of manuscript illustration and metalwork in Ilkhanid Iran. The main motif of the enthroned prince with attendants is well known in Iranian art both before and especially after the Mongol invasions (for the latter, see cat. nos. 18, 19,
Here the ruler is depicted in Mongol garb, as are the members of his entourage with the exception of the figure in the right foreground, who may be a Persian or Arab adviser. The composition is set in a dense landscape inhabited by animals and birds, a contrivance introduced into Iran from eastern Asia. Related compositions occur in contemporary manuscript illustration (see cat. no. 39)—the tapestry-weave technique can be compared to painting, using colored thread rather than pigment—and metalwork; analogies with the latter are especially pertinent, as medallions in this medium likewise enclose royal enthronements (see cat. nos. 159, 160).

In the foreground below the ruler is the motif of a fishpond, common in Iranian luster pottery of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.3

The central medallion is surrounded by a band of animals, both real and imaginary, pacing within a leafy arabesque. While the latter is a purely Islamic motif, the animals and their vegetal background are reminiscent of silk tapestries made in China and especially Central Asia in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries (e.g., cat. no. 183). Around this is a wider band with pacing animals amid large blossoms and leaves, interrupted by six small medallions each featuring an armed warrior. This band, too, recalls eleventh-to-thirteenth-century Chinese and Central Asian tapestries, while the use of small figural medallions is a common feature of Islamic decorative arts.4

Around the entire medallion is a narrow outer band inscribed in Arabic, in gold on a blue ground. The text repeats a series of good wishes of a type frequently found among the inscriptions on medieval Islamic objects: “Perpetual Glory, and Prosperity, and Perfect [sic], and Wealth, and Happiness, and Well-Being, and Ease.”5

These somewhat generic good wishes do not enhance our understanding of the original context of the roundel and its function. Its cotton-backed is said to be contemporary with the tapestry,6 which may have once formed part of a larger composition, possibly a spectacular wall-hanging, canopy, or tent panel.

2. For the motif in early-fourteenth-century manuscript illustration, see Fosch 1996, p. 117, n. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 87; see also Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 66–69, 80–81, nos. 14, 15, 19, 20.
4. The bands of animals within scrolling floral designs and the enthronement scene are reminiscent of similar imagery in a drawing that may be based on Ilkhaniid designs (see fig. 21), perhaps suggesting a common source for such themes.
6. Ibid., pp. 81, 87; the results of the carbon 14 test on the roundel produced a date in the fourteenth century.

Textile with Paired Felines

Western Iran, 1340–80
Lampas weave, silk
42 x 54 cm (161/2 x 21 in.)
Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, Gift of John Pierpont Morgan from the Miguel y Badía Collection (1902–1.215)
New York only

There are two interlocking patterns on this fragment: the larger design is of addorsed felines, probably cheetahs, enclosed within a circular medallion edged with vegetal motifs and framed by an eight-pointed star; the other is a floral motif set within a diamond-shaped frame at the center of a cross.6 The arrangement recalls the star-and-cross tile revetments, often bearing animal motifs, that were popular in Ilkhaniid architecture in Iran. The designs are woven in ivory and blue, creating a subtly shaded effect on the dark blue background.

The blue and white color scheme, often using two shades of blue, is seen in several Mamlluk silks. Its popularity was perhaps due to the widespread availability and relatively low cost of indigo.7 This fragment suggests that there may have been an exchange of influence between Mamlluk and Ilkhaniid textile producers despite their political antagonism. Luxury textiles were often used as diplomatic gifts, as is suggested by the eyewitness account of the historian Abu al-Fida cited in cat. no. 37.1 Furthermore, Mamlluk weavers are known to have worked in Iran in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and an exchange of skills and ideas with local craftsmen seems likely to have been the result.4

1. Wardwell 1988–89, p. 166, fig. 60. For another fragment from the same textile, see Suriano and Carboni 1999, pp. 47–44, fig. 10.
2. The authors are grateful to Louise Mackie, The Cleveland Museum of Art, for her comments on this textile.
3. Wardwell 1988–89, pp. 101–2. See also Stefano Carboni, chapter 8 above.
Striped Brocade

Iran, 14th century
Lampas weave (satin and tabby), silk and gold thread
Combined: 76 x 52 cm (29\% x 20\% in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunsthistorisches Museum (1835-259)

Following their first wave of conquests in the early thirteenth century, the Mongols established communities of resettled textile workers from eastern Iran and China along the southern boundaries of the Mongol homeland and in Central Asia. This striped brocade, now in two pieces, with its bands of lotus blossoms alternating with registers inscribed in Arabic, may be viewed as a later development of the amalgamation of artistic traditions and techniques that ensued, in which chinoiserie elements were combined with traditional pre-Mongol Islamic epigraphic ornament. Such striped polychrome textiles, woven with gold thread, are described in medieval European inventories, helping to date them to the fourteenth century. This particular striped cloth was evidently exported to Europe to be used for ecclesiastical vestments; it was formerly in the fourteenth-century Church of Saint Mary, the Marienkirche, Gdańsk (Danzig). Its Arabic inscription repeats the phrase "the sultan the wise."

1. Wilkens 1992, pp. 50-51, no. 82.
3. Wilkens 1997, p. 50. For vestments made from the same cloth, also from the Marienkirche, see Wardwell 1988-89, figs. 41, 42.

Textile with Lotus Blossoms

Greater Iran, 14th century
Lampas weave (twill and tabby), silk and gold thread
72 x 58 cm (28\% x 23\% in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunsthistorisches Museum (K6118)

Set against a coral red background, the decoration of this textile comprises staggered rows of golden lotus blossoms that are framed by scrolling vines. The dense pattern is an interesting combination of design concepts drawn from eastern and western Asia. A contemporary Chinese brocade, using the same color scheme and decorated with a related pattern of lotus blossoms within lotus-bud-shaped medallions, likewise shows a mixing of Chinese forms with an Islamic/Iranian emphasis on symmetry.

1. Wilkens 1992, p. 51, no. 82.

CERAMICS

79

Star Tile

Iran (Kashan), A.H. Ramadan 663/ A.D. June 1265
Fritware, overglaze luster-painted
Diam. 20.5 cm (8\% in.)
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B66P2034)

Shimmering luster tiles from Iran, such as this example, began to attract the attention of Western collectors, public and private, in the last decades of the nineteenth century. To satisfy the demand, entire buildings in Iran, such as the shrine complex of 'Abd al-Samad in Natanz, the Imamzada Yahya at Veramin, and the Imamzada Ja'far at Damghan, all dating to the Ilkhanid period, were virtually stripped of their luster tilework, which found its way into European and American collections (e.g., cat. nos. 107, 114-16). This eight-pointed star tile, which is inscribed with Koran verse 97 and dated 663 (1265), is one of a large group of over thirty luster examples of similar dimensions, all of which carry the identical date. In their geometric, floral, and vegetal designs these tiles are very similar to ones from Veramin, which are dated between October and December 1262, although these are significantly smaller.

2. On this phenomenon, see, e.g., Masuya 2000.
3. O. Watson 1985, App. III, p. 191, no. 51. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has one example,
80–82 Frieze Tiles with Calligraphy

Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze lustre-painted

80

29.7 x 30.1 cm (11 1/2 x 12 in.)
The Trustees of the British Museum, London

81

30 x 30 cm (11 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.)
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B60P1144)

82

28.6 x 27.9 cm (11 1/2 x 11 in.)
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B60P1146)

These frieze tiles, each of them inscribed, are part of a large group of over forty similar tiles, most of them not excavated, from the palace complex at Takht-i Sulaiman. Although none of the excavated examples was found in situ, the tiles were clearly intended to be set above panels of smaller tiles. Their inscriptions quote from the Iranian national epic, the Shahnama, or Book of Kings—the cat. no. 80 from the book of Bahram Gur, cat. nos. 81 and 82 from the book of Guhtasp—and were perhaps meant in a general sense to link the Ilkhani ruler with the ancient traditions of kingship in Iran. Inscriptions taken from the Shahnama are not unique to Takht-i Sulaiman, but their preponderance at this site does suggest some special significance and one that is perhaps in accord with other types of tile decoration from the complex (e.g., see cat. nos. 85, 93, 97). Their intended audience and precise interpretation, however, still have to be determined.


83–85 Star and Cross Tiles

83

Two Star Tiles and Two Cross Tiles

Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajasirdana) H. each 24.8 cm (9 7/8 in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Shinji Shumeikai Acquisition Fund (AC.1996.114.2–4)

84

Star Tile with Phoenix

Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajasirdana) Diam. 20 cm (7 7/8 in.)

85

Cross Tile

Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajasirdana) H. 21.5 cm (8 7/8 in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (L.4/63, 71)

One consequence of the Mongol invasions and subsequent establishment of Ilkhani rule in Iran was the introduction of new Chinese-inspired motifs such as the dragon and the phoenix. These motifs, which may have been brought westward via imported textiles (see cat. nos. 180, 181, 183), quickly became part of the new vocabulary of ornament that was reflected in the tile decoration of the royal residence at Takht-i Sulaiman.

Star and cross tiles such as the present examples were produced in molds, which accounts for the repetition and duplication of compositions. The method of manufacture also helps to identify nonexcavated tiles with Takht-i Sulaiman, as in the case of cat. nos. 83 and 84, which evidently shared the same molds with tiles uncovered at the site (cat. no. 85). Star tiles bearing a dragon or a phoenix, separated by cross tiles and arranged in alternate clusters of turquoise or cobalt blue, were found in the so-called North Octagon, part of a larger complex of a vaulted hall flanked by two octagonal chambers. Such brilliantly glazed and gilt revetment must have dazzled visitors to the palace.

86, 87 Two Hexagonal Tiles

Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajasirdana)

86

Hexagonal Tile with Dragon

18.5 x 18.5 cm (7 1/2 x 7 1/2 in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (L. 6/71c)

87

Hexagonal Tile with Recumbent Deer

19 x 21.3 cm (7 7/8 x 8 1/8 in.)
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin

Both of these tiles come from the so-called West Iwan complex at Takht-i Sulaiman, from a central room located behind the iwan. The two each formed groups with other types of hexagonal tile: the dragon tile with one featuring a phoenix; the deer with a lion tile and a vegetal composition. All five types were produced in cobalt blue and turquoise versions. From the location in which some tiles were found it appears that groups of a single color were clustered together, set on point, to form a densely patterned design. The combination of dragon and phoenix tiles was used elsewhere at this Ilkhani palace, in the nearby north octagonal chamber (see cat. nos. 83, 84).

The motifs in both groups of tiles were probably imported into Iran via East Asian textiles (see, e.g., cat. nos. 179–183). Even the patterns formed by the gold on blue (or turquoise) dragons and phoenixes are reminiscent of the decorative programs of the textiles. The little vignette of a recumbent deer in a landscape (with its sliver of a fuloon) is comparable to the reclining djanem amid vegetation in a gold-on-brocade cat. no. 179). Its companion vegetal tile finds a general parallel in a brocade decorated with a repeat pattern of floral designs enclosed within a lotus bud. The motif of the lion with a tufted tail on the third tile in this group has also been likened to such imagery in textiles. It is possible that the elaborate and colorful gilt tile revetments at Takht-i Sulaiman were meant to be reminiscent of the woven interior of the tents that formed such an important part of Mongol tradition (for an example of a gold and silk tent panel, see cat. no. 73).

2. See R. Naumann 1977, pp. 83–84, pls. 61, 64; Masuya 1997, pp. 316–322. See also Tomoko Masuya, chapter 4 above.
4. See, e.g., Crowe 1991, p. 157. See also Linda Komaroff's essay, chapter 7 above.

CATALOGUE: CERAMICS 263
Hexagonal and Double Pentagonal Tiles

88

Hexagonal Tile with Flying Bird
(l. 11/69, 1(c))
18.1 x 15.2 cm (7 1/2 x 6 in.)

89

Hexagonal Tile with Recumbent Deer
(l. 11/69, 1(d))
18.7 x 11.3 cm (7 1/2 x 4 3/8 in.)

90

Double Pentagonal Tile with Two Flying Geese
(l. 11/69, 1(e))
14.9 x 25.4 cm (5 3/4 x 10 in.)

91

Double Pentagonal Tile with Dragon
(l. 11/69, 1(f); l. 4/67, 8)
14.9 x 25.4 cm (5 3/4 x 10 in.)

These hexagons and double pentagons, along with six-pointed stars, formed part of an elaborate and colorful tile revetment on the lower walls of the West Iwan, a large vaulted chamber overlooking the central courtyard and the artificial lake within, at Taqht-i Sulaiman. The use of underglaze painted turquoise and cobalt blue conforms to the color scheme associated with other tiles from this site (see cat. nos. 83–87). Birds, recumbent deer, and especially the dragon, here set amid foliage or clouds, are recurrent motifs in the tile decoration of this palace complex.¹

1. See R. Naumann 1957, pp. 81–83, figs. 60 (a photograph of the tiles that were found in situ). See also Tomsico Manuya, chapter 4 above.


92

Mold for a Double Pentagonal Tile
(l. 4/67, 8)
17.8 x 13.3 cm (7 x 5 1/4 in.)

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin

This fragment of a gypsum mold for a double-pentagonal dragon tile (cat. no. 91) was discovered near the potter's workshop at Taqht-i Sulaiman, demonstrating that such tiles were produced at the site.¹

1. R. Naumann 1957, p. 103, fig. 86.

Double Pentagonal Tile with Dragon

Iran, late 13th–early 14th century
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajarudina)
15.4 x 24.4 cm (6 x 9 3/4 in.)
Keir Collection, England (196)

Tiles of this shape were used on wall surfaces with six-pointed star and hexagonal tiles (see cat. nos. 88–91). Cobalt blue and turquoise were evidently popular color combinations for such decoration. This cobalt blue tile is molded in relief with the long sinuous body of a dragon, its head turned backward, against a background of clouds outlined in red and highlighted with gold.¹ The dragon is outlined in gold, and details of its scaly body are picked out in red and white pigment. This tile is almost identical in shape and motif to cat. no. 91, except that the latter is not overglaze painted.¹ The dragon on both these double pentagonal tiles is very similar to those on frieze tiles of a quite different shape and decorative technique (cat. nos. 100, 101). Such resemblances attest to the widespread use of certain popular designs and even, in some instances, of the same tile molds.

2. Manuya 1957, p. 194, suggests that this tile was indeed produced at Taqht-i Sulaiman.

Frieze Tile

Iran (probably Taqht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze painted (lajarudina)
52.5 x 44.5 cm (20 3/4 x 17 3/4 in.)
Miho Museum, Shigaraki, Japan (SS1486)

As in other frieze tiles of the period, the molded relief decoration here is in three registers: a broad central zone between two narrower bands of unequal width that serve as borders.¹ In the upper register is a file of animals depicted in various states of activity: a running bull, a pacing lion, and a rabbit that has paused to look behind. The lower register is filled by a scrolling leaf vine with six-petaled rosettes. In the central zone is a pair of mounted hunters, one crowned and holding a hawk, the other accompanied by a cheetah seated on his horse's rump. The riders gallop to the left across a conceptualized landscape of tall, leafy, flowering plants, while a trio of birds flies above their heads.

Tiles evidently made from the same mold but decorated in the luster technique were excavated at Taqht-i Sulaiman.³ Assudullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani has related the central scene to two events described in the Shahnama (Book of Kings): Bizhan's hunt in Gurgan, and Bahram Gur's hunt with a hawk and a cheetah.³ Companion frieze tiles depicting mounted hunters shooting at birds were also excavated at Taqht-i Sulaiman and have likewise been associated with the Iranian national epic.⁴ Such tiles, along with others inscribed with verses from the Shahnama that were excavated at Taqht-i Sulaiman (see cat. nos. 80–82), may have been intended to link the founders of this palace with the traditions of Iranian kingship.

4. Such tiles, along with others inscribed with verses from the Shahnama that were excavated at Taqht-i Sulaiman (see cat. nos. 80–82), may have been intended to link the founders of this palace with the traditions of Iranian kingship.

Frieze Tile with Faridun and Two Attendants

Iran (Taqht-i Sulaiman), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze luster-painted
28 x 28 cm (11 x 11 in.)
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (48.1296)

Faridun is a heroic figure in the Iranian national epic, the Shahnama, who is destined to overthrow and succeed the evil ruler, Zahak (see cat. no. 164). As revealed to Zahak in a dream, the cause of his downfall would be a youth bearing an ox-headed mace. The scene in the central register of this tile shows Faridun, armed with his ox-headed mace and accompanied by two attendants, perhaps on his way to do battle with Zahak.¹ Faridun's humpbacked bovine mount is presumably Birmany, the miraculous cow whose milk had nourished him, although at this point in the narrative sequence Birmany had in fact already been slain by Zahak. The pair of Persian couples inscribed below this scene, in the lowest register of the tile, is from the Shahnama but from a part of the text unrelated to the Faridun story.

¹ Whether visual or verbal, imagery from the Shahnama, with its emphasis on kingship and legitimacy, was appropriate to a royal residence such as Taqht-i Sulaiman, even if the palace's chief occupant—the Ilkhan Abaka (r. 1266–87)—was himself less than familiar with the epic and its
symbolic connotations. Although this tile was not excavated at Takht-i Sulaivan, fragments of a tile produced in the same mold were uncovered at the site.1

1. Walters Art Gallery 1936, fig. 2; Guizil’ian 1949, pl. 4; Simpson 1984, fig. 15.
2. Guizil’ian 1949, pp. 37–38; also see Simpson 1984, p. 139.
3. The fragments were of a monochrome turquoise glazed tile rather than of one in luster; see R. Naumann and E. Naumann 1936, pp. 51–52; Masuya 1997, pp. 510–11. For another nonexcavated luster tile in Philadelphia, probably from the same mold, see Simpson 1985, fig. 16.

96

Fig. 109

Frieze Tile with Elephant and Rider

Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaivan), 1270s
Fritware, overglaze luster-painted
28 x 28.6 cm (11 x 11 1/4 in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Nasli M. Heeramanek Collection, Gift of Joan Palevsky (M.73.1.222)

Although the specific figurative scene was not found at the site, this tile is closely related in size and format to luster frieze tiles excavated at Takht-i Sulaivan2 and seems likely to have been intended for that complex. As in the frieze tiles specifically associated with Takht-i Sulaivan (cat. nos. 95, 97), the decoration, molded in relief, is in three registers. In the upper border is a tile of three spotted dogs (3). Below, in the main field, is an elephant mounted by a mahout and bearing a passenger seated in a palanquin; two male figures, one walking ahead and the other behind, form an escort. The figural imagery on tiles of this type is often associated with the Shahnama (e.g., cat. no. 95) and accompanied by inscriptions quoting from the text. The composition here may have to do with the story of Bahram Gur when he returned from India with his bride.1 The luster inscription in the lowest register is too fragmentary to be legible.

3. Ibid.

97, 98

Two Frieze Tiles

97

Fig. 108

Frieze Tile with Bahram Gur and Azada

Iran (Takht-i Sulaivan), ca. 1270–75
Fritware, overglaze luster-painted
31.4 x 32.3 cm (12 1/8 x 12 1/4 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1842–1876)

98

Fig. 50

Frieze Tile with Two Hunters

Iran (probably Takht-i Sulaivan), ca. 1270–75
Fritware, overglaze luster-painted
27.3 x 33.7 cm (10 1/2 x 13 3/8 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George Blumenthal, 1910 (10.9.1)

These two frieze tiles each have a figural subject in the main register, set against very similar densely vegetal backgrounds with birds in flight; in each case the narrow, almost identical border below is divided into small compartments that contain a highly stylized design. Both tiles have molded details accentuated in cobalt blue and turquoise pigment; owing to its volatile nature, the latter has spread in cat. no. 93, creating streaks on the surface of the tile.

Cat. no. 97 features two characters from the Shahnama (Book of Kings), Bahram Gur and his favorite harp player, Azada (see cat. nos. 55, 169).1 They are shown mounted on a camel, with Bahram Gur shooting at a deer while Azada plays her harp. In the upper register of the tile is a row of three running quadrupeds, two gazelles and a spixine, set against a floral background. Cat. no. 98 shows two horsemen, one approaching from the right and the other from the left, in the act of dispatching the deer trapped between them with their swords.2 The composition suggests a narrative allusion, but none has yet been identified. The upper register of this tile is missing, but it is likely to have resembled that of cat. no. 97 in showing a sequence of animals.

The only lilkhanid frieze tiles of known origin with pictorial representations come from Takht-i Sulaivan, and several examples of this type are in various collections.1 Images or text drawn from the Shahnama (see also cat. nos. 80–81, 95), such as the scene of Bahram Gur and Azada, were clearly deemed especially appropriate for this palace complex.

1. O. Watson 1985, pl. L.c.
2. Carboni and Masuya 1992, p. 73, no. 18.

99–101

Three Frieze Tiles

99

Fig. 79, 97

Frieze Tile with Phoenix

37.5 x 36.2 cm (14 1/4 x 14 1/4 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1912 (12.49.4)

100

Fig. 100

Frieze Tile with Dragon

35.7 x 36.1 cm (14 x 14 1/4 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (541–1900)

101

Fig. 59

Frieze Tile with Dragon

35.7 x 33.5 cm (14 x 13 1/4 in.)
The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (POT 790)

These three rectangular frieze tiles share a common decorative scheme.1 The upper register in each tile shows the same pattern of alternating blossoms and buds within a scrolling vine, and the lower register has a floral scroll with a six-petaled rosette. The central register is occupied in cat. no. 99 by a soaring phoenix with elaborate plumage; and in the other two tiles by an identical open-mouthed dragon, head turned back toward a flame or pearl. The backgrounds of all three tiles are filled with rounded cloud motifs that derive from the form of Chinese lobed clouds sometimes described as fungus-shaped or read as the magical fungus lingzhi.2 Tilings bearing the same motifs and presumably produced from the same molds, decorated in both the luster and layardina (e.g., cat. no. 102) techniques, were excavated at Takht-i Sulaivan.3 The phoenix and the dragon were popular subjects for imperial architectural decoration in China, and their use on tiles, though not traditionally common, became more widespread after the Mongol invasions, appearing on important buildings throughout the empire.4 It is likely that these associations caused the motifs to be seen as well suited to the decoration of Afaqa Khan’s palace in Iran.

2. Rawson 1984, p. 139.

102

Fig. 275

Fragmentary Frieze Tile with Dragon

Iran (Takht-i Sulaivan), 1270s
Fritware, underglaze and overglaze painted (layardina)
36.8 x 16.8 cm (14 x 6 3/4 in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (4/67, 39)

A number of frieze tiles featuring dragons, evidently made from the same molds and decorated
in both the luster and the *layardina* techniques, were excavated at Takht-i Sulaiman. As two fragmentary *layardina* tiles were found near the kiln in the potter’s workshop, it appears highly likely that the tiles in this technique were produced at the site. The excavated *layardina* tiles are the earliest datable instances of this overglaze process, and the range of colors and glazes among them, though not among later *layardina* tiles and ceramic vessels (e.g., cat. no. 131), suggests that a certain amount of experimentation with the process may have been undertaken at Takht-i Sulaiman. The brilliant and technically complicated juxtapositions of underglaze and overglaze painted colors, as in this fragmentary cobalt blue dragon modeled in relief against a turquoise background, do not seem to have been repeated elsewhere.

1. See Masuya 1997, pp. 110–14. The majority of extant luster wares were not excavated.
2. Ibid., p. 213.
3. See technical study 2 above.

### 103–105 Exterior Tiles

**Iran (Takht-i Sulaiman), 1270s**

High-clay fritware, unglazed and underglaze painted

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst

#### 103

**Hexagonal Tile with Phoenix**

(L. 1988.10)

18.7 x 13.1 cm (7¼ x 5½ in.)

**Tile Panel**

(L. 6/67, L. 6/71a–b)

Overall, unmounted: 94.6 x 64.8 cm (37¼ x 25½ in.)

**105**

**Hexagonal Tile Panel**

(L. 13/60)

Overall, unmounted: 49.5 x 55.9 cm (19½ x 22 in.)

#### 104

**Fig. 94**

As a royal summer palace built for the Ilkhanid ruler Abaka (r. 1265–82), the complex at Takht-i Sulaiman would have been lavishly decorated, as is demonstrated by the overglaze painted tiles found in or associated with the interior walls of the palace (see, e.g., cat. nos. 93–101). By contrast, the exterior tiles, which were subjected to the prevailing weather conditions, were fabricated from a thicker, red-bodied clay that was left unglazed, or decorated in a harder, underglaze technique, or rendered in a combination of the two. These tiles are nonetheless attractively decorated, frequently with geometric designs, and less commonly with a flying phoenix, as in cat. no. 103. The panel in cat. no. 104 was constructed in the manner of a mosaic, using turquoise- and glazed eight-pointed star tiles and larger, squareish tiles indented at one corner and incorporating bands in relief that define blue- and turquoise-glazed geometric motifs. In combination, these tiles form a complex pattern based on an eight-pointed star; four tiles plus one star tile are a single unit. In cat. no. 105, the overall pattern is composed of interlocking hexagonal tiles decorated with interwoven bands in relief defining irregular stars and hexagons, the latter glazed blue and turquoise. Hexagonal tiles with an unglazed dragon or phoenix depicted in relief against a turquoise glazed ground were probably used in combination with this pattern (e.g., cat. no. 103), as fragments of the two types of tile, geometric and figural, were found together. Here important royal motifs of Chinese inspiration—the dragon and the phoenix—represented among the interior tiles have been carried over to the exterior of the palace, which appears to have been decorated last.

1. Gierlich 1993, no. 38. For a summary of the different types of exterior tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman, see Masuya 1997, pp. 147–51.
2. *Museum für Islamische Kunst* 1986, pp. 24–75, no. 31. None of these tiles was found in situ; this panel represents a reconstruction. See R. Naumann 1977, pp. 91–92, fig. 77; lower; Masuya 1997, p. 261.
3. Unpublished. Tiles such as these may have been arranged in rows of ten, framed by rectangular border tiles. See Masuya 1997, pp. 251–53.
5. On the overall significance of the decorative scheme of the palace, see Tomoko Masuya, chapter 4 above.

#### 106

**Fig. 38 Two Star Tiles**

Iran (Kashan), second half of the 13th century

Fritware, overglaze luster-painted

Diam. each 20.1 cm (7¾ in.)

The Trustees of the British Museum, London

(OAG 1987.112, 113)

These tiles, one portraying a man, the other a horse, may best be understood as genre scenes rather than representations of a particular story. The horse, depicted with the spots that Kashan potters seem to have been so fond of, is shown with a typical Mongol saddle and saddlecloth (see cat. nos. 1, 47), while the seated male figure, relaxing with his cup, is clad in a richly decorated robe and owl-plumed headdress characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. Although he is identifiable as a Mongol by his costume, this figure conforms to standards of beauty that predate the Mongol invasions. The formula of prominent eyebrows, long, narrow eyes, and moon face crowned by thick locks presents an ideal type that evidently suited both the Turkic Seljuqs and their Mongol successors.

2. Ibid., p. 47.

107

**Fig. 2 Star and Cross Tiles**

Iran (Kashan), later 13th century

Fritware, overglaze luster-painted

Diam. each 20.1 cm (7¾ in.)

The Trustees of the British Museum, London

(OAG 1983.212, 213)

Decorated in the overglaze technique known as luster painting, alternating star and cross tiles served as a sparkling, ornamental skin covering the mundane brick interiors of secular and religious structures in Iran, beginning around 1200. Output at the kilns of Kashan, the main center for the manufacture of tiles, was slowed but not stopped by the Mongol invasions of the early thirteenth century. Large-scale production resumed in the 1260s, the period to which these star and cross tiles probably belong. In fact, these tiles are believed to have formed part of a larger group that once decorated the interior of a Shi’ite shrine, the Imamzade Jafar, in Damghan, dated 1265. Like the luster star and cross tiles known to have come from Damghan, these examples are decorated with the lively spotted animals typically associated with Kashan (here hares, cheetahs, foxes, and hounds [?]) and with Persian verses inscribed around the borders of the stars. These verses suggest that the tiles were perhaps not originally intended for a religious monument.

Rendered in naskh script, the poetic inscriptions are from the *Shahnama*, the national epic that recounts the tales of the kings of ancient Iran and was regarded as a book on secular authority. As such, quotations from this text were considered appropriate for the decoration of a palace. Hence it seems likely these tiles were originally intended to adorn a royal residence but were instead used or reused in the shrine at Damghan.

5. Excerpts from the Shahnama were part of a traditional decorative program for palace architecture in Iran, see Masuya 1997, pp. 611–12. While “love” poetry inscribed on tiles may have been acceptable in the planned decoration of religious monuments of this period on account of its Sufi undertones (see Porter 1995, p. 36), the intentional use of Shahnama verses seems unlikely in this context. For other instances in which evidently secular tiles, probably from the palace complex at Takht-i Sulaiman, were reused in a religious monument, see Masuya 2000, pp. 49–50.

108–110 Three Star Tiles
Iran (Kashan)
Fritware, overglaze lustre-painted
Diam. each approx. 21 cm (8 1/2 in.)
The David Collection, Copenhagen

108 Star Tile with Bull
Fig. 113

t(1361/6)
A.H. 689/A.D. 1290–91

109 Star Tile with Elephants
(14/61)
A.H. 689/A.D. 1290–91

110 Star Tile with Horse
(17/68)
A.H. Muharram 689/A.D. January 14–February 13, 1290

Kashan, located about 150 miles south of Tehran, was the main center for ceramic production in Iran, both before and after the Mongol invasions. Among the best-known and most numerous products from the Kashan kilns are lustreware tiles, including tile revetment (see cat. no. 112 for a lustre tile specifically related by its inscription to Kashan). Lustre star tiles were produced for both secular and religious edifices. While it is generally held that tiles with figural decoration were made only for secular buildings such as palaces, they were evidently reused in religious monuments. This trio of tiles belongs to a comparatively large group bearing dated inscriptions from the 680s A.H., which has not as yet been associated with a specific building. There are a number of such extant star tiles decorated with lively, sometimes humorously depicted animals and birds set in a landscape (see also cat. nos. 112, 117, 118). As is typical of the Kashan style, the animals here are spotted, regardless of their natural appearance. All four of them seem to be moving within and beyond their pictorial space. The three tiles can be compared to illustrations from the slightly later manuscript of the Manafr-i hayuan (cat. no. 2); this is especially true of cat. no. 109, with its caparisoned elephants. Figural tiles are often accompanied by inscribed borders quoting lines from seemingly unrelated Persian poetry. Here, for example, cat. nos. 109 and 110 respectively are framed by the following verses, in each case with the date of the tile added:

"Oh you for whose love all those satiated ones are hungry
[For whom] all the brave ones are afraid of separation from you
[With eyes like yours the deer have nothing to offer]
Oh you whose hair tides the feet of the lion-like heroes.
Do you know, Oh my admired one, why
My two oppressed eyes are full of tears
[My eyes] draw forth from the desire of your lips
Water from the mouth of my pupils."

So popular was the second of these verses that it was much repeated as an inscription on tiles and other ceramics (see cat. nos. 111, 117, 118, 128).

1. For the history of the lustre industry in Kashan, see O. Watson 1985.
5. Read and translated in 1999 by Manijeh Bayani, who interprets the date as 681/1282–83. The inscriptions on cat. no. 108 have not as yet been deciphered.
6. This verse is by Shaikh Majid al-Din al-Baghdadi (d. 1204 or 1214–20); see Ghoshani 1997, p. 35. Ghoshani notes, however, that some sources ascribe it to Razi al-Din Nishahuti (d. 1201–2). The reading here follows, with some variation, that of O. Watson 1985, p. 151. On Shaikh Majid al-Din, see Browne 1928, vol. 1, pp. 494–95.
7. On its popularity, see O. Watson 1985, pp. 131–32. It may be that the tilemakers made use of the poetry they were most familiar with rather than that most relevant to the decoration or context of the tiles; see Ghoshani 1997, pp. 101–02.

112, 113 Star and Cross Tiles

112 Star Tiles with Phoenixes
Iran, late 13th–early 14th century
Fritware, underglaze and overglaze lustre-painted
Diam. each 20.1 cm (8 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1893.2.1893)

113 Cross Tiles
Iran, late 13th–early 14th century
Fritware, underglaze painted
Each 21.2 x 21 cm (8 1/2 x 8 1/2 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (146.1900)

The eight-pointed star tiles (cat. no. 112) each show a lustre-painted, molded relief pattern of a phoenix in flight amid foliage in the center with an inscription from the Koran around the border. The inscription appears in white against a blue background; the cobalt blue pigment is somewhat volatile and tends to run, and the letters are outlined in lustre paint so that they remain clearly legible. Koranic inscriptions are unusual on this type of tile when it is decorated with bird or animal motifs, and appear more frequently on similar tiles with floral decoration.
The cross tiles (cat. no. 113) have a vegetal pattern in molded relief and are covered with a turquoise glaze. Star and cross tiles were frequently combined in an alternating arrangement for dado panels or to cover tomb structures.

1. O. Watson 1984, pp. 121, 142, 146, pl. n.

114, 115  Frieze Tiles from Natanz

114

Fig. 149

Iran (Kashan), ca. 1308

Fritware, overglaze luster-painted

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Emile Rey, 1912 (11.42.4)

At Natanz in central Iran, the grave of ‘Abd al-Samad (d. 1299), a leading Suhrawardi shahid, was transformed into a major shrine complex by one of his disciples, Zain al-Din Mastur (d. 1313), a lieutenant of Sa’id al-Din Sivaji, chief vizier under Sultan Öljécitü. Such monuments attest to the growing popularity and legitimization of Sufi, or mystical, orders in the Ilkhanid period.

The interior of the tomb was once richly adorned with luster tiles: a wall dado of star and cross tiles surmounted by a frieze. Some twenty components of the frieze survive, these two tiles among them. In each the main register carries part of an inscription in molded relief against a painted background of dense foliage inhabited by birds. In cat. no. 114 this inscription gives the last part of the date “Shawwal 707,” or March–April 1308; in cat. no. 115 the inscription quotes from the Koran, sura 76, verse 9. The upper border of the tiles is a band of paired birds against a vegetal background. The narrow lower border is divided into square compartments with an abstract design.

The heads of the birds on both tiles, as on all the other surviving tiles of the frieze, have been chipped off, presumably by iconoclasts who believed that representational imagery had no place in a religious context. The presence of birds as part of the design may have been an allusion to the popular tradition that “the souls of martyrs are like green birds who will eat the fruits of paradise.”

116

Fig. 237

Tile Panel

Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Babvaih

Iran (Kashan), early 14th century (probably 1310)

Fritware, overglaze luster-painted

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1969 (69.187)

This set of three molded luster tiles comes from the tomb of ‘Abd al-Samad in Natanz (see also cat. nos. 114, 115). The tiles form a panel representing a mahbrāb (or niche indicating the direction of prayer) composed of colonnettes supporting a trilobed arch from which hangs a mosque lamp. The end of Koran verse 2:136 ("And God will sufice you against them and He is the Listener, the Omniscient") forms the arch itself and fills part of the archway. The arch is made from the compound word fasayyikhrīḥum ("And He will sufice you against them"). Another verse, Koran 2:255, frames the arch and fills the space between the colonnettes.

An inscription in the spandrels identifies the panel as the work of Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Babvaih, a tile maker from Kashan, who was responsible for the decoration of the interior of the tomb at Natanz. The outermost band of inscription includes short passages from Koran suras 1, 97, 106, and 112–14; the date, most likely Shawwal 707 (March–April 1310); and the signature of the scribe who "wrote" the inscription: ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Fadh Allah.

2. Ettinghausen 1974, p. 116, fig. 9; Welch 1979, pp. 120–22, pl. 45; O. Watson 1985, p. 140, pl. 119.
3. For the text of the inscription, see cat. nos. 110, 111.

Evans Fund and Gift of Edward Jackson Holmes (31.729)

The study and identification of the Persian verses inscribed on Iranian ceramics are still in an early stage. It is often unclear if and how the choice of a particular verse was related to the subject matter of the decoration. The repetition of certain verses, regardless of the context, may indicate that some poetry had a particular significance for those who used or viewed the object on which it was inscribed.

There is, for example, no apparent connection between the horse on this star tile and the verse invoking the woes of love that is inscribed along the border. The verse, by the poet Shāh Mard al-Dīn ibn al-Baghdādī, is found on other ceramics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Indeed, it appears here on another star tile depicting a spotted horse (cat. no. 110), two other star tiles (cat. nos. 111, 118), and a luster dish (cat. no. 128).

It has been suggested that the presence of the Persian script may have been more important in itself than what is actually said. Perhaps the poets copied and recopied verses from a single source if none was specified by the patron. This is an issue, however, that deserves further attention.

2. Ettinghausen 1974, p. 116, fig. 9; Welch 1979, pp. 120–22, pl. 45; O. Watson 1985, p. 140, pl. 119.
3. For the text of the inscription, see cat. nos. 110, 111.

Evans Fund and Gift of Edward Jackson Holmes (31.729)

Star Tile with Camel

Iran, early 14th century

Fritware, overglaze luster-painted

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Martin Brimmer (66.1896)

A camel wearing a saddlecloth and bridle stands as though waiting either for its rider or for the cargo that it will carry on a journey. While it is common for images on tiles to appear to be unrelated to the inscriptions that frame them, this figure of a camel ready to embark is suggestive of one of the verses inscribed along the tile’s border:

When my friend to journey intends,
For me all happiness of heart ends.
My heart said in envy that the soul could
In excitement escape?

The rest of the inscription repeats a verse by Shāh Mard al-Dīn al-Baghdādī frequently
found on tiles and other ceramics (see cat. nos. 111, 111, 117, 128). 1

1. Welch 1979, p. 122, pl. 46.
2. This is followed by a fragment: "now all thou hast".
3. For the verse, see cat. nos. 110, 111. On the poet and the
   popularity of this verse, see cat. nos. 108–110, notes 6, 7.

119, 120 Pair of Tiles from the Shrine of the Footprint of ʿAli
Iran, A.H. 711/A.D. 1311–17
Fritware, illustrated lustre-painted
Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres

119 Fig. 55 Tile with Imprint of Camel’s Hoof
(MNC 26901)
Diam. 32.8 cm (12 1/4 in.)

120 Fig. 56 Tile with Imprint of Horse’s Hoof
(MNC 21688)
Diam. 28.5 cm (11 1/4 in.)

The two tiles function like facing pages of an open book. Together they served as foundation plaques for the Shrine of the Footprint of ʿAli, a commemorative structure northwest of the city of Kishan, where they were presumably made. Like an illustrated book the tiles convey in words and image the story of how the shrine was founded.

In summary, the Persian text recounts that on 1 Shawwal 711 (Thursday, February 10, 1312) a certain Sayyid Fakhr al-Din Hasan Tabari dreamed that he was in a garden beyond one of Kishan’s gateways. A large number of people were gathered around a tent, in front of which were a horse, a camel, and a lance between them. Invited into the tent by a young man, the sayyid found himself in the presence of ʿAli, the Prophet’s son-in-law and the first imam recognized by Shiʿite Muslims. ʿAli indicated that he and the young man who had issued the invitation—the Mahdi, or twelfth and final imam—were going to India to convert the nonbelievers. For those who could not travel to India to see him, ʿAli suggested a shrine be built on that spot as an alternate site of pilgrimage. When the sayyid awoke, he went to the garden and marked the place where he had seen the imam and marked as well the hoofprints of the horse and camel. The imam appeared to several pious individuals and asked them to convey to a certain Haidar Faris that he should build a mosque there, which Haidar Faris undertook that very day. 2

Each of these unique tiles bears the form of the hoofprint of the camel and horse respectively, the sayyid’s tangible proof of the reality of his dream. Along with the shrine itself, the tiles attest to the prevalence of Shiʿite practice in the region of Kishan and the increasing reverence for ʿAli among Sunnis in the Ilkhanid period. 3

2. For the full text, see Adle 1997, pp. 283–85; for an English translation, see Alexander 1996, vol. 2, p. 178. A summary is also given by O. Watson 1932, pp. 146.

119, 120 Fig. 55, 56

121, 122 Tiles from ʿOljeytu’s Mausoleum

121 Section of a Tile Frieze
Iran (Sultaniyya), 1502–15
Earthenware, glazed, cut and assembled as a mosaic
18.1 x 27.6 cm (7 1/4 x 10 1/2 in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Madina Collection of Islamic Art, Gift of Camilla Chandler Frost (M.2001.1.348)

122 Quadrangular Tile
Iran (Sultaniyya), 1502–15
Earthenware, underglaze painted
8.6 x 11.4 cm (3 3/8 x 4 3/4 in.)
Private collection

Of the four principal capitals of the Ilkhanids—Maragha, Tabriz, Sultaniyya, and Baghdad—only Sultaniyya retains a major royal monument, in this case the greatest extant building of the period, the mausoleum of ʿOljeytu. Sultan ʿOljeytu (r. 1394–16) transferred his capital to this former summer residence, known as Sultaniyya, or Imperial, where he built an extensive complex around his own tomb. The mausoleum is the only part of this complex that survives. It takes the form of an enormous octagon with a rectangular chamber on the south side. Both exterior and interior were once extensively decorated. The interior decoration, comprising a wide variety of designs rendered in brick, carved stucco, and tile, was completed in 1313, the year that the building was dedicated. The interior was then entirely covered with painted plaster sometime between 1313 and 1516, when ʿOljeytu died.

These two tiles belong to the initial phase of decoration, reflecting its predominant color scheme of cobalt blue and turquoise, often on a white ground. Elements of the mosaic frieze are still in situ in the lower section of the southern rectangular chamber, while the lotus-blossom motif used in cat. no. 122 is found on other tiles from the mausoleum. 1

3. See Pickett 1997, fig. 48 (for cat. no. 121), fig. 49 (for cat. no. 122).

123 Star Tile with Two Men Fighting
Iran (Kashan), early 14th century
Fritware, overglaze lustre-painted
Diam. 10.5 cm (4 1/16 in.)
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (48.1288)

The inscription on a tile often has little obvious connection to the image that decorates it. Such is apparently the case here. 1 The inscription, quoting from a passage in the Shahnama having to do with the hero Rustam’s preparations for the hunt, accompanies an unusual scene of two men brawling. 2 The combatants are poised in perfect equilibrium as one grabs for the beard of the other, who in turn swings a club as he grapples his antagonist’s hair. The depiction of this somewhat undignified duo may relate to a particular event or illustrate a story with special meaning for a medieval audience. The scene is remarkable not only for its level of realism but also because it is shown on a star tile, whose eight-pointed shape the composition perfectly echoes.

2. On the inscriptions, see O. Watson 1981, p. 146. See also Welch 1979, p. 118, where the inscription is translated; Welch suggests that the scene on the tile alludes the hand-to-hand fight to the death that occurs later in the story of Rustam. For another tile, also in Baltimore, depicting two wrestlers, see Guest and Ettinghausen 1961, fig. 71.

124 Fig. 55f

Mihrab Tile
Attributed to ʿAli ibn Ahmad ibn ʿAli Abi al-Husain
Iran (Kashan), early 14th century
Fritware, overglaze lustre-painted
62 x 42 cm (24 3/8 x 16 1/2 in.)

Single-tile mihrabs are among the largest objects created by the lustre potters of Kashan. Although none remains in situ—meaning that their function as directional niches set into the qibla wall cannot be established with certainty—1 it is likely that they were used in sets of two, since two pairs survive that have very similar dimensions and
decorative programs. The present tile is one of a pair now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.1 Date and patron are not identified in either case, and only the other tile is signed by the artist Ali ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Ali Abi al-Husain, presumed to be the maker of the pair.3

A total of fourteen single-tile mihrabs has been recorded, five of which are dated from 668 (1269–70) to 707 (1307–08).4 Single-tile mihrabs are true miniature versions of multiple-tile niches, containing some or all of the same elements: the outer calligraphic frieze, the arch resting on two slender columns, the hanging lamp, a rich vegetal background, and omnipresent Koranic inscriptions. Here the text, copied in cursive script, is almost entirely from the Koran (sura 12.12 along the outer border and sura 1, verse 75, inside the arch).

1. O. Watson 1982, p. 142, suggests that they might have been used as tombstones set on either side, or at either end, of a cenotaph.
2. A. A. Pope and Ackerman 1935–37, pl. 176A, Lane 1960, p. 4, pl. 12; O. Watson 1982, pl. N.

125

Tile from a Mihrab

Iran, a.h. 722/4.d. 1322–23
Fritware, underglaze painted
69.5 x 66 cm (27 5/16 x 26 in.)

This large tile,5 fired in a single piece, most likely represents the top of a tall, slender, three-tile mihrab similar to the complete luster-painted niche (cat. no. 116), also in the Metropolitan Museum. The best parallel is provided by a damaged, underglaze-painted mihrab in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, which is made up of three large tiles of slightly smaller dimensions.6 Underglaze-painted niches—the so-called Sultanabad type of pottery (see cat. nos. 133–135)—are much less common than luster-painted examples (e.g., cat. no. 174) in the Ilkhanid period.

A peculiarity of this tile is that the pointed arch actually forms the upper frame of the mihrab, making it a pentagonal object, instead of being contained within a rectangular tile (as in cat. no. 116). Closely following stucco and stone models, the decoration is calligraphic on the outer band, whereas the inner field is filled with vegetal patterns. As in the Cairo mihrab, the central tile would probably have been more elaborate with recessed niches. The inscription is from the Koran, 111:14: “In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Keep up prayer in the two parts of the day and in the first hours of the night. Surely good deeds take away evil deeds. This is a reminder to the mindful.” This verse is followed by the year 722 written in Arabic numerals (January 20, 1322–January 16, 1323).

2. Approximately 54 x 63 cm (21 1/2 x 24 7/8 in.), with a height of 160 cm (63 in.). See Wiet 1993, pp. 124–25, fig. 179, pl. II. The mihrab is dated 719/1319–20 and was ordered by a certain ‘Ali ibn Ali Tahl ibn Ali Nair.

126

Star Tile with Seated Man and Attendant

Iran (Kashan), a.h. 739/4.d. 1338–39
Fritware, underglaze luster-painted
Diam. 21.5 cm (8 1/8 in.)
The Trustees of the British Museum, London (OA P. 1123)

This eight-pointed star tile is important evidence for the continuity of luster pottery production at Kashan well into the fourteenth century.7 The inscription along the border of the star contains verses of a love poem (not fully deciphered), the date 739 written out, and the words “In the place Kashan, May God the exalted protect it from accidents of time.” Two figures clad in typical Mongol garb are depicted on the star: one stands holding a flask; the other is seated and appears to be on the verge of enjoying the fruit set before him in a tripod vessel. The heads of two servants peek out from the corner spandrels.

A number of features link this tile to Kashan workmanship of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: the minute, delicately drawn design in which no space is left undecorated, the plump, baluster bird in flight (in the upper center), and the dense background pattern of dots and commas.8 It comes at the end of the long history of luster tile production in medieval Kashan, making the prayer inscribed on it seem all the more poignant.

1. Ettinghausen 1936, fig. 15; Ars of Islam 1976, p. 217, no. 383; O. Watson 1982, pl. 121; Porter 1995, fig. 35.
2. The inscriptions are partly in Persian, partly in Arabic. The base of the star contains the beginning of a verse from the Shamsun and is apparently a replacement of the original tile where this was broken. See Ettinghausen 1936, p. 59. Porter 1995, p. 45, closely follows Ettinghausen’s reading.
3. O. Watson 1982, p. 142; see also p. 196.

127

Square Tile

Golden Horde (Southern Russia, New Saray), 14th century
Fritware, underglaze painted
24.7 x 24.7 cm (9 3/4 x 9 3/4 in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GÉ SAR 1491)

This isolated, intact find demonstrates that buildings in the second Golden Horde capital of New Saray (Saray al-Jadidi) were decorated with tile panels following models that were widespread in Ilkhanid Iran.9 Confirming this influence is the Persian text that frames the outer border of the tile, copied in a hurried naskh script and thus far not translated. The tile has, however, no close parallels either in shape (small tiles in Iran were usually square or cross-shaped) or in design and color. The concentric pattern—a decorated square, with dense, stylized leaf designs, inside an undecorated band—and the use of cobalt blue as the only color against the white slip of the ceramic body represent a distinctive taste that seems to have been specific to the Golden Horde potteries of the fourteenth century. The colorless glaze has now turned brownish, but the original contrast of blue and white must have been a striking one.


128

Luster-Painted Dish

Iran (Kashan), a.h. 667/4.d. 1268–69
Fritware, underglaze luster-painted
Diam. 28.5 cm (11 1/8 in.)
The David Collection, Copenhagen (bl. 95)

Although the Mongol invasions disrupted the production of luster-painted tiles and pottery in Iran, they did not extinguish this important industry. There is ample testimony to the resumption of luster tile production on a grand scale in the 1360s and 1370s, for the decorative revetment of religious edifices and of palatial monuments such as Tahk i Sulaiman (e.g., cat. nos. 79–81).10 The production of luster-painted pottery also resumed but not at the same level as in the pre-Mongol period. New shapes were introduced, probably under the influence of imported Chinese wares, as is evident from this imposing dish with a strongly articulated rim.11 The decoration skillfully combines medieval Islamic and Far Eastern elements. For instance, the compartmentalization of the decoration within a geometric pattern is frequently found on earlier and contemporaneous Iranian metalwork,12 while the floral motifs of plum blossoms and buds have been related to the Chinese rendition of the prunus—a flowering tree with six-petaled blossoms.13 The exterior of the rim is inscribed with Persian poetry that has not been fully deciphered,14 followed by the date.

1. For a star-and-crescent tile panel from the Imamzada ‘Irīn, in Daghman, now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris,
Jar with Molded Decoration

Iran, A.H. 681/ A.D. 1282–83
Friteware, monochrome glaze
H. 34.6 cm (13 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Horace Havemeyer, 1936 (56.153.1)

Even if this handsome jar did not carry an inscription dating it, its decoration clearly belongs to the period of Mongol rule in Iran, while the Persian verse that it carries seems to suit the uncertainty of the times as well. The vessel is circumscribed by a large central register filled with a dense, lush landscape inhabited by antelope, rabbits, and other animals; on the neck is a narrow band of geese or swans in flight amid tall, leafy plants. While decorative bands of animals predate the Ilkhanid period in Iran, the greater naturalism with which the animals move and the detailed landscape settings are new. Closely related bands of animals are used as subsidiary decoration on frieze tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman (e.g., cat. nos. 94–98) and on silk tapestries ascribed to Central Asia. The motif of birds in flight among foliage is also found on earlier Chinese silk tapestries and silk and gold brocades. Imported textiles perhaps served to introduce these motifs to Ilkhanid Iran. The band of paneling around the base of the jar can be related to the lotus-petal molding common on certain Chinese wares, including celadons.

The inscription on the shoulder of the vessel reads in translation: "Fruitful air and boiling earth. Joyous is he whose heart is happy. Drink!"

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Plate with Fishes

Iran, late 13th–early 14th century
Friteware, overglaze painted (lapizlazuli)
H. 6.8 cm (2 1/2 in.); diam. 25.7 cm (10 in.)
Musée du Louvre, Paris (64.56)

A large, handsome plate such as this should be viewed as a luxury item not only on account of its size and aesthetic appeal but also because its elaborate decoration required at least two firings. The turquoise was applied and fired first; then the white and black were applied, as well as the gold leaf, and the dish was fired a second time. The overglaze painting technique known as lapizlazuli (after the Persian word lapis, meaning lapis lazuli), was probably an offshoot of the so-called mina'i wares developed in the late twelfth century, which seem to have ceased production with the Mongol invasions.

The outermost band of pseudocalligraphy, punctuated by four relief medallions bearing rosettes, and the inner inscriptional frieze, presenting a series of good wishes in Arabic, are derived from the general repertoire of medieval Islamic art. As is typical of Ilkhanid art, however, Islamic motifs well known in the Iranian world are here combined with designs introduced from China, such as the radiating petal pattern in the second band from the outside and the central motif with fishes, which may have been inspired by imported celadons. For another Ilkhanid ceramic vessel, this one with three fishes circling the interior, that clearly imitates Chinese celadon ware, see cat. no. 152.

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Storage Jar (Albarello)

Iran, late 13th–14th century
Friteware, overglaze painted (lapizlazuli)
H. with cover 37.5 cm (14 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Henry G. Leberthong Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Wallace Chauncey, 1952 (52.61.124 a, b)

This type of storage jar with concave sides, which allow it to be more easily handled when ranged with a number of similarly shaped jars, is known in the West as an albarello, reflecting its use in Italy from the fifteenth century onward. The shape, however, was originally an import from the Islamic world, where such ceramic vessels were produced over a wide area, including Spain, Egypt and Syria, and Iran. This albarello, which is exceptional in still having its lid, is decorated in lapizlazuli, the opulent overglaze painting technique that was practiced only in Ilkhanid Iran. Its ornament, an all-over design of golden quatrefoils enclosed by lobed medallions, is somewhat reminiscent of the patterning of the silk and gold textiles that were so highly prized by the Mongols.

For an Ilkhanid albarello of the so-called Sultanabad type, see cat. no. 135.

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Bowl with Three Fishes

Iran, first half of the 14th century
Friteware, monochrome glazed
H. 11.8 cm (3 5/8 in.); diam. 25.7 cm (10 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer, in memory of her husband, Horace Havemeyer, 1939 (59.40)

One of the clearest examples of direct Chinese influence on the Islamic arts of the Ilkhanid period is a virtually straightforward imitation of celadon wares produced from the Song period (960–1279) through the Yuan. The typical green glaze, a color otherwise seldom employed by Iranian potters, was imitated with varying degrees of success, the present bowl being one of the more outstanding. In a dynamic composition three fish with curved bodies are shown swimming in a circle, their heads pointing to the center of the bowl as if they were about to be swallowed up by the vortex in the middle. A parallel in shape and decoration among Chinese models is a bowl in the Metropolitan Museum with two fish in applied relief on the inside, which was created in the kilns of Lung Ch'uan in the Song period. The fish, an almost universal symbol of good omen, was used as a decorative motif on drinking vessels and water containers in western Asia before the advent of the Ilkhanids and became especially popular on Syrian gilded and enameled glass of the thirteenth century.

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   1. For the silk tapestries, see Wart and Wardwell 1993, pp. 69, 70, 81, 82, nos. 14, 19.
   1. Idem, pp. 81–84 and pp. 112–13 respectively.
   1. See Allan 1991, p. 34–45. For a similarly decorated cobalt blue jar, dated 681/1281–84 (Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C.), see Alr 1991, pp. 68–69, no. 77, where it is suggested that the two jars came from the same workshop. Certain large, mold-made celadons of the Yuan dynasty, datable to the fourteenth century, incorporate similar designs such as a bird flying amid dense foliage, representing the shared decorative
133, 134  Bowls with Phoenixes
Iran, 14th century
Fritware, underglaze painted

133
Bowl with Three Phoenixes
23.4 x 21 cm (10 x 8 1/8 in.)
Musée du Louvre, Paris (8177)

134
Bowl with Four Phoenixes
21.5 x 10.2 cm (8 1/2 x 4 in.)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
The Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Joan Palevsky (M.73.5-215)

These bowls belong to a general category of Persian ceramics known as Sultanabad ware, after the western Iranian city (between Hamadan and Isfahan) where many of the objects were found, although there is no proof that any of them were actually made there. Sultanabad vessels decorated with phoenixes set amid a floral background were probably produced in the first half of the fourteenth century. Their hemispheric shape, exterior decoration of radiating petal-like designs, and muted gray-green color scheme have frequently led to the hypothesis that this pottery was inspired by imported Chinese celadon (see cat. nos. 132, 194). The phoenix motif, in which the mythical birds are depicted in pairs or groups of three (cat. no. 133) or four (cat. no. 134), typically arranged in the form of a revolving design emphasized by the birds’ long, curving tail feathers, may also represent a Chinese import. For example, the same vibrant motif occurs on a small, carved lacquer tray from the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) (cat. no. 203). Textiles, for instance, an embroidered Yuan canopy (cat. no. 184), also carried this design and may have helped to transmit it to Iran, where the two varieties of elaborate plumage found among the Chinese versions have been reduced to a single, simplified type of tail feather.

2. See Lane 1957, p. 10. For a recent study of Sultanabad ware, see P. Morgan 1995.

METALWORK

136  Fig. 7
Saber
Iran, 13th–mid-14th century
Steel, iron
96.5 x 8.9 cm (38 x 3 1/2 in.)
Lent by Oliver S. Pinchot

This sword, unique so far as is known, provides a crucial missing link between the protosabers used by Eurasian steppe nomads in the sixth to the twelfth century and the fully developed western Asian forms of the later fifteenth century.1 It was probably made for a nomadic horseman, possibly in northeastern Iran during the reign of the Ilkhans (1256–1353). Its long, curved, single-edged blade serves to augment the natural action of the swordsman’s arm when swung from horseback, although the sharp back edge of the blade also made it an effective thrusting weapon. Its tang, the extension of the blade that was once covered by grips (now lost) made of horn or wood, is oriented slightly toward the cutting edge and is set with three large iron studs. These studs had the dual purpose of securing the grips and improving the user’s hold on the weapon.2 Consonant with other steppe examples, the sword would originally have had a small, cylindrical metal cap or pommel that protected the end of the grip.

The guard, which was designed to protect the wielder’s hand and is a separate piece that fits over the tang, is cruciform in shape with a central ridge on either side. Highly unusual in its configuration, it has the flattened-oval form (with or without a central ridge) found on nomadic Turkic sabers of the ninth to the thirteenth century excavated in the regions of Kurgan and Kiev in Ukraine.3 It differs from the guards of the Ukrainian finds, however, in two important respects. First, the pair of langets (narrow projections set on either side of the guard to fix this firmly to the grips and also to allow the blade to fit snugly in the scabbard) give it a cruciform shape: one langet points upward toward the grip and the other down toward the blade. Langets appear on one thirteenth-to-fourteenth century sword by the Jochids (Golden Horde) and excavated in the Kuban region,4 but they are considerably more diminutive than those in the present example, suggesting that the form was just beginning among the Horde nomads and was therefore probably borrowed from Iran. Langets become more common on the guards of fourteenth-century steppe swords found in modern Turkmenistan. Second, the cruciform central ridge on either side of this guard begins to appear more uniformly in the Near East after about 1400.

1. The owner, Oliver S. Pinchot, expects to publish this sword himself in 2001. In the meantime, we are grateful to him for sharing the information presented here and for his collaboration on this entry. For a late-fifteenth-century example, see Yucel 2001, p. 128, no. 83. 2. Tangs oriented toward the cutting edge with similar grip studs appear on tenth- to twelfth-century sabers excavated in modern Kirghizistan. See Khudiakov 1986, p. 61, figs. 111, 113.
4. Ibid., p. 668, fig. 703.

137, 138 Saddle Arches and Fittings

137
Saddle Arches and Fittings
Mongol empire, first half of the 13th century
Gold, worked in repoussé, remains of iron rivets
29.7 x 30.5 cm (11 1/2 x 12 in.); 24.7 x 34 cm (9 5/8 x 13 1/4 in.)
The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (MTW 794)

138
Saddle Arches
Mongol empire, first half of the 13th century
Silver gilt, worked in repoussé
22.5 x 22.5 cm (8 1/8 x 8 1/8 in.); 18.5 x 27.5 cm (7 7/8 x 10 3/4 in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ChM 1199, 1200)

Saddle arches such as these would have been mounted along with other plates or fittings on lightweight wooden frames supporting short stirrups. The tradition of covering a hard saddle with plates of gold or silver may have been
introduced from North China, where it was perhaps first used under the Liao (907–1125). The general form of these saddles, with the pomell higher and narrower than the cantle, may also have been initiated in North China during the Liao dynasty, to judge from a mid-eleventh-century tomb painting in which a horse is depicted with a saddle of the same shape. Saddles of this type, which are represented in Ilkhani manuscript illustrations (see cat. nos. 40, 56) and in Yuan painting, may have been standard issue among the various branches of the Mongol dynasty. Gold saddle plates would probably have been reserved for the exclusive use of the ruler and his family, Mongols of lesser rank qualifying for versions in silver. The ample application of gold, which would have covered the entire saddle except for the seat itself, the Khalili arches (cat. no. 137) are likely to have been made for an important member of the royal family. The elaborately worked silver-gilt facings for the pomell and cantle of a saddle, decorated with a pair of horses and rabbits respectively (cat. no. 138) were found in 1845 in a disturbed burial site near a village along the Molochanaya River in southern Ukraine.

Given the importance of the horse in Mongol society, it is not surprising that horse trappings were produced in precious metals, perhaps not for military purposes but rather for hunting and parade. Decorated fittings of precious metal or gilt base metal were also used en suite to embellish leather saddle and bridle straps (see, e.g., cat. nos. 141, 152).

1. See Kramarovsky 1996, p. 40, where the Khalili saddle (cat. no. 135) is dated to the thirteenth century. For examples from an early-eleventh-century Liao tomb, that of the princess of Chen, see Treasures of Gauland 2000, pp. 116–19.

In its simple and refined design, the use of gold as its only material, and its large size, this drinking cup is one of the most memorable objects attributable to metalworkers, goldsmiths in particular, of the branch of the Mongol dynasty known as the Golden Horde. Dragon- and fish-shaped handles were common in the repertoire of the Chinese-influenced Mongols of the Golden Horde, representing symbols of good omen especially for drinking vessels (see cat. no. 155). Here, the contrast between the elaborately sculpted repoussé handles and the plain gold surface of the cup makes for a remarkable work of art that has miraculously survived destruction or melting down for reuse. An Arabic inscription, thus far unread, is engraved underneath the base.

The cup was found in 1845 at the archaeological site of New Saray (Saray al-Jadid), or modern Tarzawa Gorodische, the second capital of the Golden Horde along the lower course of the Volga. New Saray was founded in the 1350s and flourished in the fourteenth century until the arrival of Timur’s army, although this cup may have been brought from the old capital as a family heirloom.

2. See also the discussion on the symbolism of the fish at cat. no. 137.
3. A short history of New Saray is included in Allen 1999, p. 41. See also James Watt’s essay, chapter 3 above.

140

Two Belt Ornaments

Iran or Southern Russia, late 12th–14th century
Gold, pierced, chased, and worked in repoussé
Each 6 x 7.5 cm (1½ x 3 in.)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst (1889)

The popularity of gold and silver belt fittings among the Mongols is attested by the objects themselves (see cat. nos. 142, 143, 150, 151) and by their depiction in manuscript illustrations in Ilkhani Iran, most notably in the Great Mongol Shahnama (see cat. nos. 38–40, 46, 51, 53, 54, 56–58).

From the paintings, belts with gold ornaments, like the sumptuous silk robes decorated with gold designs, seem to have been an essential element of Mongol sartorial splendor. Paired griffins and rabbits combined with a foliate or floral design that functions as a central axis, as in these two belt ornaments, are also common decorative devices on silk textiles woven with gold-wrapped thread produced in an area covering Italy, Syria and Egypt, Iran and Central Asia (cat. nos. 69, 70), and China (cat. no. 182). While it is tempting to suggest that belt ornaments and robes were produced as similarly decorated sets, concrete support for this possibility is still lacking.

1. Museum für Islamische Kunst 1986, pp. 21–23, no. 36, ascribed to Azerbaijan, late thirteenth century; Gladis 1998, pp. 135–38, no. 74, ascribed to Anatolia or the Caucasus, thirteenth century, and said to have been found in Tbilisi, in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia.
3. See Gladis 1998, p. 127. However, James Watt (chapter 3 above) notes that officers attached to the Jin emperor wore the symbol of the deer on their uniforms and accoutrements.

141

Horse Trappings

Probably Greater Iran, 13th–14th century
Silver gilt, worked in repoussé, chased, and incised
Individual pieces range from 7.2 x 7.2 cm (37/8 x 37/8 in.) to 2 x 2.5 cm (1 x 1 in.)
The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (MTW 795)

Although horse straps and buckles have a long history in the decorative arts of Iran, the set of horse trappings in the Khalili Collection, which clearly demonstrate East Asian influence, are perhaps more closely related to Eastern traditions. These ornamental elements, mainly in the form of stylized lotuslike blossoms, would have been attached to the bridle and the straps, presumably made of leather, across the horse’s chest, sides, and rump. Each of them has a series of five lugs for attachment, while in some cases their silver washers are preserved. Part of a seventy-seven-piece group, they are said to have been found with the gold saddle plates also in the Khalili Collection (cat. no. 137).

In both Ilkhani manuscript illustration and Yuan painting the well-equipped horse is frequently depicted wearing gold trappings (see cat. nos. 40, 49, 50, 51, 53, 54, 56–58).

2. Ibid., p. 48.

142

Set of Belt Fittings

Mongol empire, 13th century
Silver gilt
L. fittings: 2.3–3 cm (9/16–1¼ in.); remains of belt: 50 cm (19½ in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ZO-761)

Ornamental belts, in which gold or silver garnitures and buckles were attached to leather or cloth, had a long and varied history among the Chinese and the seminomadic peoples who lived along their northern and western borders. The Mongols had evidently adopted this
tradition by the time of Genghis Khan, when dragons came to be used on military officers' belts and belt buckles almost like a heraldic device. It has in fact been suggested that the motif was consciously selected as an emblem for the officer corps.\(^1\)

Decorated with dragons, the fittings in this set consist of a buckle, a belt head, twenty-five crescent-shaped pieces, a small sliding girdle, and two girdles with looped ends for carrying the sword sheath. Like many belt ornaments of the period, they were found in the lower Volga region; exceptionally, a fragment of the original leather belt had survived as well.

3. Ibid., pp. 69, 71–6, 77, 86.

143

**Figs. 37, 62**

### Set of Belt Fittings

**Golden Horde (Southern Russia) and China, 14th century**

Gold sheet, engraved, stamped, chased, and punched, worked in repoussé

Largest element: 5.4 x 3.6 cm (2/3 × 1 1/2 in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

(KUB-705–721)

Nomadic peoples used belts not only as articles of wear but also as symbols of social distinction. This set of gold belt fittings, decorated in high relief with artistically accomplished images of deer amid foliage, was clearly meant for an officer of the highest rank. He has been identified as belonging to the family of Batu (r. 1227–55), the founder of the Golden Horde, on the basis of a small charm found with the set, which shows the tamgha (a kind of heraldic device) of the house of Batu. The fittings were discovered in 1890 in a mound near Gashun Uta, in the region of Stavropol. The motifs of the deer and the lotus flower—the latter is present in the center of an almond-shaped element—became popular throughout Asia in the Mongol period, as is demonstrated by a number of works in this catalogue.\(^2\)

The elements in the set, which seems to be incomplete, were originally attached to a leather strap that has not survived. They include a buckle, three rectangular elements (two of them with a hook at the bottom for the attachment of the sword sheath typical of Asian belts), an almond-shaped piece (also with a hook, perhaps where the charm mentioned above was once fastened), and an elongated component that was attached to the end section of the belt. Smaller parts include five semicircular openwork elements, a lobed piece, and four loops.

2. The design on the belt is paralleled in the silver and gold belt plaques in the Khalili Collection (cat. nos. 129a, 129b). Also see James Watt's chapter 3, page 87 and note 11, where the author discusses the use of this motif as an emblem by officers in the Jin army and relates these belt fittings to Jin workmanship.

144

**Combs and Sheaths**

**Golden Horde (Southern Russia), 14th–15th century**

Silver gilt, engraved, chased, punched, and inlaid with a black compound

Comb: 14 x 7.8 cm (5/2 × 3 in.);
Sheath: 14 x 7.3 cm (5/2 × 2 3/4 in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (TB-433, b)

Everyday objects of toilettry rarely survive the test of time, so this silver comb was a particularly interesting find when it surfaced in 1876 near Belorechensk, Russia, in the northern Caucasus.\(^1\)

It is also remarkable that it was found with its sheath, which is likewise made of silver gilt and is decorated with engraved vegetal scrolls, palmettes, and geometric patterns on both sides. The motif is mirrored in the simple band that frames the teeth of the comb, which is inlaid with a black substance similar to niello. Both objects have a ring attached at one end for suspension from a belt or some other item of clothing.

1. Golden Horde 2000, pp. 89, 238–37, no. 81.

145

**Pendant**

**Mongol empire, mid-13th century**

Gold sheet, worked in repoussé, engraved, filigree, granulation, set with rock crystal

H. 12 cm (4 3/4 in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SA-8091)

In 1902 a fabulous hoard was discovered by chance in Shahri Sabz, near Samarkand, and this remarkable pendant, or perhaps horse pectoral, was among the treasures found there.\(^2\) In addition to the central rock crystal, small pearls once formed part of its decoration.

In both technique and style the piece can be related to pre-Mongol goldwork from China. On the obverse the fine spiral filigree work, in which gold wire has been transformed into different decorative configurations, has been compared to openwork filigree on jewelry of the Song dynasty (960–1279), which may have served as a prototype. On the reverse are delicately chased floral designs of Chinese inspiration, perhaps by way of northern China.\(^3\) Three loops on the reverse suggest that the piece was once intended for attachment, although its precise function is unclear. However it was meant to be worn, the Mongols clearly had a taste not only for precious materials but also for fine workmanship.


146

**Amulet Case**

**Golden Horde (Southern Russia), 14th century**

Gold, worked in repoussé, engraved, set with jasper

9 x 5.8 cm (3 1/2 × 2 1/2 in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ChM-978)

This finely worked case for prayer texts was discovered in the Crimea in a clay vessel along with a large number of other objects and almost 500 coins that allow for a fourteenth-century, Golden Horde dating.\(^1\) The find was made in 1886 on the right bank of the river Zuya, about 12 ½ miles northeast of Simferopol. A very similar amulet case, now in Moscow, formed part of the Simferopol Treasure, together with a large group of gold belt fittings, buckles, bracelets, and earrings, some of which are of Syrian or Egyptian workmanship; this hoard is datable to the first half of the fourteenth century.\(^2\) It is possible that such phylacteries were also made in Mamluk Egypt or Syria and sent as trade items or gifts to the Mongols of the Golden Horde.\(^3\) Wherever the cases were made, jewelry of this type seems to have been popular in the Iranian world; similarly shaped examples, strung from elaborate necklaces, are depicted in Persian manuscript illustrations of the fourteenth to the sixteenth century (see cat. no. 37).\(^4\)

4. Ibid., figs. 39, 10.

147

**Bracelet**

**Golden Horde (Southern Russia), early 14th century**

Gold sheet and wire, engraved, stamped, chased, and punched, with a black compound

Diam. 6.3 cm (2 1/2 in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ZO-717)
This piece of jewelry, together with two other identical bracelets and numerous gold coins, was found in 1924 buried in a cache at Djuke-tau (Chistopol) on the left bank of the river Kama in modern Tatarstan. The coins included some minted in 741 (1340-41) in the name of the sultan of Delhi, Muhammad Shah ibn Tughluq Shah (r. 1325-51) and others in the name of the Abbasid caliph in Cairo, Abu Rabi’u al-Mustaqq (r. 1302-40). The eclectic range of the coins and the presence of a similar bracelet in the treasure found at Sinferopol (Crimea) make it difficult to determine the provenance of the present object, although there is no doubt that it can be dated to the first decades of the fourteenth century. Both the Crimea and the Middle East, possibly Anatolia, have been proposed as its source. The Persian verse that the bracelet incorporates and the decoration, which has several Golden Horde features, suggest instead a northwestern Iranian (Azerbaijan) or western Caspian Sea origin. The verse—“May the Creator protect the owner of this [bracelet] wherever he may be”—follows a well-established formula in the Islamic world.

The bracelet is made of two halves connected by a hinge at the back and a central plaque that includes a lobed medallion filled with vegetal motifs; two rings are attached to the plaque, one above and one below it. The decoration, executed in rather high relief, is finely crafted and gives this piece of jewelry a sculptural appeal.

2. The Abbasid caliphate ended with the Mongol capture of Baghdad in 1258, though the imagery nominally continued in Mamluk Egypt from 1259.

148

Necklace

Iran, possibly 14th century
Gold sheet, chased and set with turquoise, gray chalcoped, and glass
Medallion 7.3 x 6.9 cm (2 7/8 x 2 3/4 in.);
halo medallions: 4.5 x 6.9 cm (1 3/4 x 2 3/4 in.);
cartouches: 1.9 x 1.3 cm (5/8 x 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Rogers Fund, 1989 (1989.879-1)

Relatively few examples of jewelry have survived from Ilkhanid Iran (see cat. nos. 145-47). As a result, their dating often depends upon sources external to the medium, such as manuscript illustrations and drawings. Necklaces similar to this one, composed of a large medallion and a series of cartouches that form a kind of chain, are depicted in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Persian manuscripts (the half-medallion was likely worn at the back and so would not appear in an illustration). This example is very similar to a necklace represented in the Great Mongol Shahnama, of the 1330s (cat. no. 37). Additional evidence for dating the necklace is provided by the embossed scenes on the back of the two main elements, depicting a gazelle amid foliage and a lion attacking a gazelle, set among branches with blossoms. Both the figurative style and the rendition of the floral motifs suggest a date in the fourteenth century, by comparison with drawings of related designs. Similar designs also occur on gilt-bronze plaques that have been ascribed to the Ilkhanid period (see cat. no. 157).

1. See, e.g., Keene and M. Jenkins 1981–82.
2. Ibid., pp. 153-56, fig. 246, b; Golombek 1991.
3. Ibid., p. 64, noted a similarity between the lion and gazelle group and closely related figural compositions in a drawing in one of the Istanbul albums (Topkapı Palace Library, H. 2151), which she dates to the fifteenth century. It seems more likely, however, that the drawing in question may represent a later fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century copy of an Ilkhanid original; see Linda Komaroff’s essay, chapter 7 above.

150, 151 Belt Fittings

150

Belt Plate

Central Asia, 13th century
Silver, repoussé, chased and engraved decoration
With ring: 8.4 x 1.1 cm (3 x 3/8 in.)
The Nasser D. Khali Collection of Islamic Art,
London (JYI 1872)

151

Three Belt Plates

Southern Russia or Central Asia, 13th century
Gold, repoussé, chased and engraved, granulation
With ring: 4.4 x 2.9 cm (1 3/4 x 1 1/4 in.); 2.8 x 2.8 cm (1 1/8 x 1 in.); 2.3 x 3.7 cm (7/8 x 1 1/4 in.)
The Nasser D. Khali Collection of Islamic Art,
London (JYI 1101, 1876)

To judge by the number of extant examples, many preserved through burial with the deceased, belts and belt ornaments of gold and silver seem to have been among the luxury goods especially prized by the Mongols. In addition to their obvious value as status symbols, there is a well-known story from the Secret History of the Mongols of how belts taken from the enemy were exchanged between Genghis Khan, then Temujin, and his early ally Jamuka as a means of renewing their alliance after the defeat of the Merkits. In fact, the exchange of belts and horses seems to have been a means of concluding alliances among the peoples of the Mongolian steppes.

The three square gold ornaments (cat. no. 151), each decorated with a pair of deer set within dense vegetation, are very similar to several related belt fittings in the Hermitage (see cat. no. 143), especially in the figures of the reclining deer, with heads turned backward and gracefully arched necks. The silver plaque (cat. no. 150) features a single recumbent deer, its head turned back, in a bicket of spiraling vegetal motifs; a small hare forms part of the scene. The image of one or more deer set amid vegetation was a common one in the art of the Mongol empire. It was perhaps introduced...
through contact with the art or artists of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), when the motif was a standard decoration among officers in the emperor’s entourage.²

1. Kramarovsky 1900, p. 104.
4. Ibid., p. 50, no. 3.
5. See James Watt’s chapter 3, above.

152

Two Plaques

Iran, 14th century
Gilt bronze, worked in repoussé, chased, punched, and engraved, attached to metal base
15.5 x 14.4 cm (6 5/16 x 5 5/16 in.); 11 x 16 cm (4 1/4 x 10 3/8 in.)
The Nasir D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London (JLF 130)

These plaques, both of which have less well preserved mates, were made from a decorated sheet of gilt bronze attached by rivets to a thicker base of cast metal.¹ The medallion-like hinged plaque shows a deer grazing, surrounded by vegetation in the form of oversize floral motifs. The elongated plaque, decorated with similar motifs, has at each end a recumbent deer, its head turned backward, framed by a lobed cartouche. Stylistically, the animals can be related to those on a necklace (cat. no. 148), as well as to drawings that may represent early-fifteenth-century copies of fourteenth-century designs (see chapter 7).²

It is unclear how these plaques were originally used. Although their forms are similar to those of a set of gold plaques from a necklace or garland in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto,³ the hinge on the smaller plaque and the considerable size of the elongated one suggest some other function, perhaps as saddle or belt ornaments or as attachments to a box or chest.⁴

1. Alexander 1997, pp. 53–54, no. 16. On the basis of numerous points of comparison with examples of Iranian art, an attribution to Iran seems far more likely than the Anatolian provenance proposed by Alexander.
2. Both the animal and the floral and vegetal motifs are reminiscent of numerous drawings in the Diet Altwanger, although in most instances the metal versions seem earlier in date on account of their stiffer, less fluid line. For the drawings, see Lents and Lowry 1985, pp. 145, 147–48, nos. 73, 78, 90, 94. On the possible use of drawings for the transmission of designs in Ilkhanid Iran, see chapter 2 above.
4. Alexander 1991, p. 14; suggests that the hinged plaques may have been used to decorate the front of belt pouches.

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Covered Goblet with Bird Finial

Probably Iran, late 13th–early 14th century
Silver, punched, engraved, chased.
H. 19 cm (7 1/2 in.); diam. 12 cm (4 3/4 in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (KH.364)

Silver had a long history in Iran in both Islamic and pre-Islamic times, when it was highly prized at court and among the military aristocracy, especially for drinking vessels.¹ It continued as a popular material for tableware in the Ilkhanid period, when there was perhaps a convergence of indigenous Iranian and transplant Mongol taste for objects fashioned of precious metal. This silver goblet was presumably used for wine,² whose flavor could be enhanced by aromatic herbs inserted between the two pierced disks on the cover, which served as a mixer and filter.

Both the bird-shaped finial of the cover and the overall scrolling floral and leaf designs help to locate this vessel within the Iranian world, although it was found near Belarachenskaya, in the Kuban region of Ukraine, in 1906. Similar three-dimensional birds, with prominent eyes, are well known in earlier metalwork of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.³ Closely related scrolling foliate designs, in which the leaves and blooms are marked by curved lines, often in pairs, and set against a cross-hatched background, became a standard means of decorating copper and brass metalwork later in the fourteenth century and especially in the fifteenth.⁴

4. For the fifteenth-century examples, see Komaroff 1991, pp. 92ff.

154

Paiza (Passport)

Golden Horde (Southern Russia), ca. 1362–69
Engraved silver, inlaid with gold
28 x 9 cm (11 3/8 x 3 ½ in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (ZG-295)

In order to regulate communications and encourage the exchange of ideas in the largest empire ever created, one of the innovations of the Mongol administrators was the distribution of inscribed metal plaques that were used either as patents of office or as passports. Only about a dozen examples are known to have survived.

This paiza, a surface find near modern Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine) in 1845, is a rectangular one with a hole near the top that would have allowed it to be attached to a belt or worn suspended from the neck for convenience and visibility.¹ It is made of silver sheet inlaid with gold inscriptions. The script is Uyghur, which was employed in the Mongolian areas of western Asia. The text reads: "With the force of eternal heaven, [with the] grace of majesty and might, those who do not submit to Abdullah’s order will be guilty and die."² The ruler named has been tentatively identified as Özbeg Abdullah, who had control of the Golden Horde intermittently in a period of unrest between 1362 and 1369.

It is noteworthy that this paiza is inscribed in terms similar to those found on a Chinese circular example (cat. no. 197), proclaiming "guilty" those who do not honor it. Also shared with the Chinese paiza is the stylized lion mask at the top, indicating that these objects were based on certain models familiar in different areas of the Mongol empire. In this case, however, the design has an obvious Central Asian, nomadic inspiration.

2. For another rectangular paiza, see above, fig. 70.
3. For an early-fourteenth-century illustration in which a figure has been identified as a royal envoy armed with a paiza, see cat. no. 73.

155

Dragon-Handled Cup

Golden Horde (Southern Russia), second half of the 13th century
Gold
4.7 x 13 cm (1 7/8 x 4 3/4 in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (SAR-1625)

Dragon-handled cups in both gold and silver formed part of the portable wealth of the Mongol elite. Such shallow drinking vessels were meant to be worn suspended from the belt by the loop in the dragon’s mouth. Most were found among grave goods in the territories of the Golden Horde, which occupied an area encompassing parts of the Caucasus, the Crimea, and the vast steppe region north of the Caspian Sea.¹ None is exactly alike or has the same interior decoration. This example was sent to Saint Petersburg in 1727, as part of Peter the Great’s so-called Siberian collection; presumably the cup was found in Siberia.²

The prototype for such vessels perhaps comes from northern China, under the Liao (907–1125), and to some extent already represents a synthesis of Chinese and non-Chinese forms.³ It has been suggested that the dragon motif, as on these cups and on related belts, was specifically adopted in the early thirteenth century as a unifying symbol for Genghis Khan’s newly formed officer corps and continued in use among the Golden Horde.⁴

2. For another rectangular paiza, see above, fig. 70.
3. For an early-fourteenth-century illustration in which a figure has been identified as a royal envoy armed with a paiza, see cat. no. 73.
7. For the fifteenth-century examples, see Komaroff 1991, pp. 92ff.
10. For the fifteenth-century examples, see Komaroff 1991, pp. 92ff.
156, 157 Footed Vessels

156

Footed Cup

Greater Iran or Golden Horde (Southern Russia), late 14th–early 15th century
Silver gilt, punched and incised
5 ½ x 11.4 cm (1 x 4½ in.)
The David Collection, Copenhagen (47/1979)

157

Footed Bowl

Golden Horde (Southern Russia), early 14th century
Silver gilt, worked in repoussé, punched, engraved, and chased
12 ½ x 27 cm (4 ¾ x 10½ in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Z0-741)

Footed cups and bowls in silver gilt as well as gold were evidently produced in the greater Iranian world prior to the Mongol invasions. However, such luxury vessels seem to have had a special place in Mongol society, particularly among the Golden Horde, in whose extensive territory many such objects have been discovered. The bowl in the Hermitage (cat. no. 157), which was found in 1957 in the central Urals near Ivel, is decorated with medallions engraved on its twelve lobes, eight of which are filled with animals, both real and imaginary, such as the sphinx. The latter motif, probably derived from Islamic art, occurs in other media in the Mongol period. The vegetal decoration and punched ground on the David Collection vessel (cat. no. 156) suggest but do not dictate a Golden Horde provenance. Like the prized “cloth of gold” that the Mongol ruling elite so coveted, silver-gilt and gold vessels and accoutrements were no doubt viewed as articles of prestige and power.

1. For a contemporary brocaded silk robe from a tomb in Inner Mongolia also decorated with sphinxes, see Knauer 1954, ff. 104.
2. For related designs on a punched ground on Golden Horde material, see Golden Horde 2000, pp. 70, 76, 212, 223, nos. 41, 47.
3. Ibid.
4. For a contemporary brocaded silk robe from a tomb in Inner Mongolia also decorated with sphinxes, see Knauer 1954, ff. 104.
5. Foschini 1990, no. 134. For related designs on a punched ground on Golden Horde material, see Golden Horde 2000, pp. 70, 76, 212, 223, nos. 41, 47.

158

Pen Case

Muhammad ibn Sunqur
Iran, a.H. 1281-1282
Brass, inlaid with silver and gold
L. 19.7 cm (7½ in.)
The Trustees of the British Museum, London (OA 91 6-23-5)

This small brass box, elaborately inlaid within and without in silver and gold, was meant to hold writing paraphernalia, including reed pens and an inkwell (now missing). Given the importance of calligraphy in the Islamic world, it is not surprising that a pen case would be produced as a luxury item or bear the signature of its maker. Here the name Muhammad ibn Sunqur and the date 681 are inscribed on the hasp, which would be hidden from view when the lid was closed.

In style and decoration the pen case reflects metalwork prior to the Mongol invasions, from both the eastern and western Iranian world. Astrological symbols were popular subjects for representation, and here select zodiacal signs are combined with images associated with the liturgical themes of hazm-az-rasm, or "feasting and fighting," connected with the princely cycle. On the inside of the lid, the seven planetary figures depicted are (from left): the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Contained within a roundel on the exterior of the lid, the four astrological signs shown with their planetary lords are (from the top and reading clockwise): Mercury in Virgo (two men holding ears of corn), the Sun in Leo (the sun rising above a lion), Mars in Scorpio (a warrior grasping two scorpions by their tails), and Venus in Libra (a woman playing a harp under a pair of scales). The interior of the box shows dancers and musicians, and the base two pairs of horsemen jousting and hunting.

1. Barrett 1969, p. xvii, pls. 37, 38; Atif 1981, p. 61; Ward 1993, pp. 90-91, pls. 69-70; 2. The figures of the planets on the interior of the lid are reminiscent of metalwork from Mosul, dating to the first half of the thirteenth century, while the interlaced animal-headed arabeques and the combat scenes on the base reflect the style of late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century Khurasan. This combination of styles from two opposite ends of the Iranian world may have come about as a result of the massive displacement of craftsmen caused by the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century; see Ward 1993, p. 88.

Candlestick

Iran, a.H. 1308/A.H. 1308-9
Bronze, inlaid with silver
32 x 46 cm (12½ x 18½ in.)
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Boston (Gift of Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes 35.106)

The practice of endowing religious shrines with means of lighting was viewed as a meritorious one in Iran even before the advent of Islam. The silver inlaid mahkâq inscription on the base of this candlestick, which has lost its shaft and socket, announces the name of its donor, the shrine to which it was given, and the date: "The guilty servant [or slave], Karim [al-Din al-] Shughani, dedicated to the blessed mausoleum of the Sultan of Spiritual Masters, Sultan Abu Yazid, may God sanctify his soul and illuminate his sarcophagus. In one of the months of the year seven hundred and eight of the hijra."

Objects of this type, along with the construction or renovation of the buildings for which they were intended, illustrate the growing acceptance and legitimation of Sufi, or mystical
orders, in Ilkhaniid society. This exceptionally large candlestick was undoubtedly an impressive and costly gift, befitting the status of the donor, vizier of Sultan Ŭleqš, and the tomb of the Sufi saint Abū-Yazīd al-Bastami, at Bastam. It is perhaps worth noting that Kārim al-Din al-Shughlān, along with four other lieutenants of the sultan’s chief vizier, Sa’īd al-Dīn Savāji, was executed in 1312 on the charge of embezzlement of state funds. 1

1. A. U. Pope and Ackerman 1938–39, pl. 135; Melikyan-Chviriani 1987, pp. 121–26, fig. 7–11.
3. Ibid., pp. 124–75. See also Blair 1986a, pp. 6–7.

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Bucket

Muhammad Shah al-Shirazi

Iran (probably Shiraz), A.H. 735/A.D. 1332–33

Brass, inlaid with gold and silver

H. 48.7 cm (19⅝ in.)

State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

(IR-1484)

The Arabic and Persian inscriptions on this bucket, 1 whose entire surface was once richly ornamented with gold and silver designs, make it one of the most important surviving examples of fourteenth-century Iranian metalwork. Around the upper rim is written:

On the order of the master, the great possessor, honor and order of Iran, ornament of the state, peace and faith, Amir Slayvsh al-Rīda’ī [may God] strengthen his following and his rule. Work of the free slave Muhammad Shah al-Shirazi the least among slaves of the great amir, Khusraw of the horizons, Amir Shāfī al-Dīn Mahdūm Inju [may God] increase his justice in the year 73.3

May the world comply with your wishes and heaven be your friend.

May the Creator of the world be your protector.

Inscribed in cartouches around the middle section is the following text:

In the days of the rule of the greatest sultan, master of the necks of nations, lord of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, inheritor of the kingdom of Solomon, the Alexander of his time, supported by heaven in his victories over enemies, God’s shadow on earth, suppressor of faithlessness and paganism [may God] preserve his kingdom and perpetuate his rule, his well-being, and his sultanate. 2

From these inscriptions we learn that the bucket was made in 733 (1332–33) on the order of a certain Amir Slayvsh by Muhammad Shah al-

Shirazi, who refers to himself as the servant of the great amir—Amir Shāfī al-Dīn Mahdūm Inju, or Mahdūm Shah, as he is generally known. Under the Ilkhaniid Mahmūd Shah became the viceroy of the southern Iranian province of Fars in 1304–5. In 1325 he broke away from his Ilkhaniid overlords and briefly established his own independent dynasty, which lasted until 1357. 3 It is thus likely that the bucket, dating from 1332–33, was made in Fars, probably in its capital, Shiraz. 4

The bucket is one of several inlaid metal objects made for a member of the Injū dynasty. For a candlestick inscribed in the name of Mahmūd Shah’s son, Jamal al-Dīn Abu Ishaq, who became ruler of Fars in 1343, see cat. no. 162.

2. For a complete transcription and translation of the inscriptions, see Islamic Art in the Hermitage Museum 1990, pp. 21–27, no. 51. The inscriptions were first read by Gisal’s 1965.
3. On the Injū dynasty, see Boyle 1978.
4. Muhammad al-Shirazi’s signature, with its use of the nisba (‘al-Shirazi,’ of Shiraz), suggests that he was in some way attached to Mahmūd Shah’s court. On the significance of the title ‘inheritor of the kingdom of Solomon’ applied to Mahmūd Shah, see Melikyan-Chviriani 1991b. See also Komaroff 1994, p. 9, n. 79.

Candlestick

Sa’d ibn ‘Abd Allah

Iran (Fars province), 1343–53

Brass, inlaid with silver and gold

H. 34.2 cm (13⅜ in.); diam. 28.2 cm (11⅔ in.)

Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar

Encircling the base of this remarkable candlestick are four large enameled scenes enclosed by medallions. 1 Two of the scenes depict the ruler seated on a throne supported by lions and attended by members of his entourage. In one, he wears an elaborate Mongol headdress composed of rounded owl feathers and other, spikier plumage—probably eagle feathers; the identical type of headdress is worn by a Mongol ruler in the frontispiece of the Mu’īnis al-‘unbār, dated 1341 (cat. no. 9). A third medallion shows a ruler and his consort sharing a platformlike throne, as in enameled scenes associated with the Jami’ al-tawarikh (cat. nos. 18, 19); the consort wears the conical headdress reserved for Mongol noblewomen and known as a hughaq. 2 In the fourth medallion the consort, again wearing the hughaq, is depicted alone on her throne, as in a related drawing in the Diez Albums, Berlin, of an enthroned consort framed by a medallion (see fig. 223). The existence of this drawing, taken together with similarities between the other enameled scenes on the candlestick and those found in manuscript illustrations, suggests that metalworkers and manuscript illuminators alike may have been able to refer for their models to a common iconographic source in the form of drawings. 3

Arabic inscriptions set in cartouches on the base are especially significant as they give the name and titles of a member of the Injū dynasty, Abu Ishaq (r. 1343–53), 4 who succeeded his father, Mahmūd Shah, as ruler of Fars (see cat. 161). Although it is tempting to regard the enameled scenes as some form of visual accompaniment to the inscriptions, it is impossible at this time to identify them with specific historical figures or events. 5 At the base of the socket is a diminutive inscription providing other important information. It reads: ‘made by the free slave Sa’d ibn ‘Abd Allah.’

2. As in the Mu’īnis al-‘unbār frontispiece, the woman sits to the right of the man and has a handkerchief in her right hand; here, however, an attendant stands beside her holding a parasol above her head, emphasizing her elevated status.
3. See Komaroff 1994, pp. 28–31. See also chapter 7 above.
4. For a transcription and translation of the inscriptions, see Art from the World of Islam 1987, p. 100, no. 168.
5. Allan 2002, pp. 37–38, suggests that the candlestick was made for Abu Ishaq.

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Bowl

Iran, A.H. 748/A.D. 1347–48

Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold

Diam. 18.2 cm (7⅝ in.)

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (E 442–21)

Among the most complex compositions rendered in inlaid metalwork is the one on this bowl, which must have been spectacular when its precious metals were still intact. 1 Set within a single uninterrupted band that encircles the vessel is a frieze of powerfully conceived and commanding huntsmen and warriors. The underside of the bowl is inscribed with the date 748 (1347–48). Another, somewhat better preserved bowl in Florence (fig. 232) includes the same figures but arranged in a different order. 2 In fact, the outlines of certain figures, which indicate the original placement of the inlay, are exactly alike on each bowl. Details carried by the inlay may have varied, just as the sequence of figures diverges, producing two related but not duplicate works of art.

Some of the figures are strikingly similar in concept and pose to those in contemporary manuscript illustration. For example, the hunter mounted on a twisting, rearing horse can be compared to the figure of Iskandar in a scene from the Great Mongol Shahnameh (see fig. 234). 3

1. A.H. 748/A.D. 1347–48

Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold

Diam. 18.2 cm (7⅝ in.)

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon (E 442–21)
Perhaps both metalworker and manuscript painter worked in a related fashion, using drawings and possibly design books, or else directly copying from earlier works or models.

2. Curta 1991, no. 152. The bowl in Florence is slightly smaller than the one in Lyon—17 cm (6 ⅞ in.) in diameter.
3. For another similar composition, see cat. no. 166.

**Bowl**

Turanoshah

Iran (perhaps Fars), A.H. 757/A.D. 1355–56

Raised brass, inlaid with silver, gold, and black compound; engraved champlévé technique

H. 11.9 cm (4 ⅜ in.); diam. 21.7 cm (8 ⅞ in.)

Victoria and Albert Museum, London (760–1889)

Signed and dated inlaid metalwork objects from the first half of the fourteenth century are usually assigned a southern Iranian origin by comparison with a bowl in the Galleria Estense, Modena, and another in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg. These are dated 1305 and 1313 respectively and are associated directly with Shiraz, the capital city of Fars. By extension, a number of other bowls depicting sequences of figural images and/or bearing specific epigraphic formulas, such as this bowl, dated to 1351–52, have been attributed to the same metalworking school. The attribution has recently been challenged on the grounds of insufficient evidence, although an alternative origin within the Ilkhani-controlled areas has not as yet been established. The bowl is signed by an otherwise unknown artist, who names himself Turanoshah, a short form that gives no hint of his origins. The owner of the bowl and presumably the patron who commissioned it was a certain Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Jurjani, whose family originally came from the Gorgan area east of the Caspian Sea. The sequence of horsemen around the main band shows certain scenes that clearly derive from the Shahnama, such as a depiction of Faridun and Zahhak, although the general composition seems to be rather free interpretation of popular epic and courtly themes. Assadollah Sourian Melikian-Chirvani has identified six independent scenes with multiple characters arranged in two cycles of three scenes each. Whether it was made for an Ilkhani or an Injuid patron, this bowl is an excellent example of the masterful art of Persian metalworkers.

![Fig. 270](image)

**Polygonal Box**

Iran (probably Fars), first half of the 14th century

Brass inlaid with silver and gold

H. 14.2 cm (5 ⅞ in.); diam. 28.9 cm (11 ⅜ in.)

Musée du Louvre, Paris (1355)

This twelve-sided box with a domed cover, whose distinctive shape is probably based on an architectural form, is lavishly ornamented with inscriptive bands and medallions arranged according to a well-established formula. Enclosed within the medallions are armed and mounted warriors and huntsmen, the latter wearing typically Mongol wide-brimmed hats. The Arabic inscriptions offer a series of good wishes, some lines of verse, and a series of royal titles and eulogistic phrases, all of which help to link this object to the province of Fars, in southern Iran. Furthermore, the organization of the decoration, the particular subsidiary motifs (e.g., an interlocking "z" pattern), and the figural and epigraphic styles are all comparable to inlaid metalwork datable to the first half of the fourteenth century and specifically associated with Fars.

2. See Melikian-Chirvani 1974, pp. 189–90, figs. 17, 18, for a transcription of the inscriptions.

**Candlestick**

Iran, early 14th century

Brass, originally inlaid with silver and gold

H. 20.3 cm (8 in.); diam. 30.5 cm (12 in.)


This candlestick, one only of which survives, belongs to a group of inlaid brass objects whose energetic and vividly rendered figural compositions often suggest some connection between metalwork and the arts of the book, possibly through the intermediary of drawings. A case in point here is the figure of a huntsman mounted on a rearing horse and striking downward with his sword at a lion. This is related to the mounted huntsman in a small medallion on another candlestick and on a bowl dated 1347 (cat. nos. 162, 163); and all three instances in metal are echoed in an illustration from the Great Mongol Shahnama (fig. 234). It is perhaps because most of the inlays have been lost that the strength of the line beneath is revealed in the figural decoration on the candlestick, which helps to relate the gracefully twisting combatant animals, for example, to the medium of drawing (see figs. 225, 226). In fact, the decoration of the central portion of the candlestick base is a cornucopia of seemingly unrelated designs of animals, both real and imaginary, and mounted huntsmen that are also found in fourteenth- to fifteenth-century drawings.

1. Bae 1983, pp. 151–53; figs. 159, 190, 194.
2. The same figural composition occurs on an unpublished candlestick base in the Georgian State Museum, Tbilisi (A86). See also Komaroff 1994, p. 37, n. 43.
3. The precious-metal inlays generally carried all the details, such as the features and the elements of costume. Once the inlays were lost, what remains are the outlines of the composition, not unlike, perhaps, the preliminary underdrawing of a manuscript illustration; see, e.g., Lente and Lowry 1989, pp. 347–43, no. 64.
4. See above, chapter 7.

**Talismanic Plaque**

Iran, 14th century

Bronze

5.8 x 5.7 cm (2 ⅜ x 2 ⅝ in.)

The David Collection, Copenhagen (7/1996)

The inscription, which constitutes the sole ornament on this plaque, is written in reverse in a decorative script known as square Kufic. Beginning at the center and proceeding concentrically, the text reads: "Abu Ihsan the Shahik, the Guide. May God sanctify his soul." Shahik Abu Ihsan (965–1033) was the founder of a Sufi order in Kazaran, his birthplace in southern Iran. The Kazaruni order spread eastward by sea to India and China, and is known to have offered protection to sea travelers through the sale of the shahik’s baraka (blessing) and of soil from his grave. A traveler would pledge a certain amount of money, payable to the agents of the order upon the traveler’s safe arrival at a distant port. This activity was formalized in the early fourteenth century, and it may be that the plaque—possibly a seal or stamp, given its diminutive scale and the fact that the inscription is written in retrograde—was somehow connected with it.

2. See Algar 1938.

**Footed Cup**

Iran, first half of the 14th century

High tin bronze, inlaid with silver and gold

H. 12.7 cm (5 in.)

The Trustees of the British Museum, London (OA 1891.6–23.4)

Footed cups, produced in precious metals in the Mongol period (e.g., cat. nos. 153, 156, 157), were also fabricated of base metal in Ilkhani Iran. This example, richly embossed with
silver and gold inlays, depicts celebrities, singly and in pairs, enjoying the good life while drinking from cups not unlike the one they decorate. These figures, along with sphinxes and hares, are set against a lush floral background of East Asian inspiration. At the foot of the cup an Arabic inscription offering good wishes to the unnamed owner continues a long tradition in medieval Islamic metalwork. Along with the Chinese-inspired floral decoration, however, the Persian poem inscribed below the rim links this vessel to post-Mongol Iran, when poetry in Persian that makes some reference to the function of the object on which it appears began to supplant Arabic good wishes, or du’āʾ:1

O sweet beverage of our pleasures
O transparent Fount of Mirth
If Alexander had not seen you
O world-revealing bowl of Man’s
How could his mind have conceived
The notion of the Fount of Life?2

These lines, which are found on several other vessels,3 can be understood on one level as alluding to the wine that might be drunk from such a cup. At the same time they have a mystical sense that relates to Alexander’s search for the Fountain of Life.4

1. On vessels of this type dating to the Ilkhanid period, see Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 146, 187–90.
2. Ward 1993, pp. 95, 100, fig. 73.
4. Melikian-Chirvani 1985, p. 188, where the Persian text is also transcribed.
5. For other cups inscribed with the same verses, see ibid.

Basin
Western Iran, early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver, gold, and black compound; engraved champlevé technique
H. 16 cm (6 1/2 in.); diam. 37.2 cm (14 1/2 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (246-1905)

Examples of the large hand basin with a crenelated rim called in Persian taqī or lagan are rare in Iranian metalwork,1 and their production seems to have been limited to the Ilkhanid period. Of the few such basins to survive, this is the most accomplished,2 together with one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.3

The decoration inside the basin is mostly figural. On the bottom is a large central roundel showing a stylized pool with fish and birds swimming in it. Around this, six smaller roundels are arranged in two sets of three, symmetrically depicting a dragon, a zimīugh (both of Chinese inspiration), and a figure mounted on a dromedary. The two mounted figures depict different characters: one a woman in a howdah, the other Bahram Gur hunting with the harpist Azada, a popular scene from the Shahnama (see cat. nos. 55, 97). On the lower interior walls are twenty small panels each depicting a wild animal—gazelle, bear, cheetah, and so on. Above these panels is a row of figural scenes illustrating court life under the Ilkhanids, exemplified by their Mongol robes and headdresses. Well-wishing inscriptions in našī and thulūth are legible between the panels.

The decorative program may perhaps be read as a series of scenes related to the life of Bahram Gur.4 It may also be seen more simply, however, as a splendid cross section of royal, literary, and symbolic images that circulated widely in the Ilkhanid period, especially through manuscript illustrations, and that became popular with skilled metalworkers. Despite the present condition of the basin, it has lost most of its gold and silver inlay, it remains one of the most memorable inlaid brasses made under the patronage of the Ilkhanids.

1. An illustration in the Mu’tūs al-sharḥ of 1344 (cat. no. 9) depicts this type of basin, the associated verse describes it as a taqī; whereas a lagan is illustrated as a candlestick, perhaps an error on the part of the painter. Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 762, calls the present example a lagan.
3. Acc. no. 91.1.371; see Islamic World 1989, p. 6. For other examples, see Melikian-Chirvani 1982, pp. 265–6, n. 2.
4. Such is the interpretation by Melikian-Chirvani 1982, p. 763.

Incense Burner
Iran, early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver and gold
H. 21.5 cm (8 1/2 in.)
The David Collection, Copenhagen (47/1967)
Perfuming the body with the aromatic smoke of burning incense was a common practice in the medieval Islamic world, and numerous bronze and brass incense burners of various types have survived. As the scented fumes rose, the user wafted them by hand in his or her direction.1 In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the most prevalent form of incense burner was of the type shown here, a cylindrical container mounted on three tall feet with a pierced, dome-shaped cover surmounted by a round knobbled finial.2 While this particular shape was better known in Syria and Egypt, some versions, such as this one, can be ascribed to Iran on the basis of their decoration. The convivial, cup-bearing seated figures enclosed by medallions wear typical Mongol costume; these alternate with medallions showing waterfowl, lotuses, and other aquatic motifs of Far Eastern inspiration that belong to the artistic idiom of Ilkhanid Iran.

1. See Baer 1983, p. 43.

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Fig. 145

Element from a Window Grille
Western Iran, early 14th century
Brass, inlaid with silver, gold, and black compound
H. 13 cm (1/2 in.); diam. 9.7 cm (3/4 in.)
Keir Collection, England (132)

Artistic metalwork production is usually associated with portable vessels, water containers, and basins, but it can also involve door fittings and other types of architecturally related elements. In the decorative program of important buildings erected under the Ilkhanids, richly inlaid metalwork in the shape of ball joints was used to embellish large window grilles. The individual globular elements, with socket extensions above and below and pierced on either side, were suspended at regular intervals along horizontal bars threaded through them and connected vertically by means of rods inserted into the sockets that locked the bars in place. The construction was simple and effective. Unfortunately, owing to the destruction or deterioration of many buildings and to the relative lack of interest in collecting such elements, only a few ball joints are known to have survived. One bears the name of the Ilkhanid Sultan Öljeitü (r. 1304–16) and was probably made for his mausoleum at Sultaninya.1

Although the absence of inscriptions makes it impossible to suggest that the present ball joint was also used at Sultaninya, its early-fourteenth-century date is evident from the background decoration full of peonies and from the Mongol-looking falconer inside two large roundels on the most visible sides.2 The rider is seen in profile holding the reins in one hand and his bird of prey in the other, while the object of the hunt is indicated by the antelope running between the horse’s legs. Surrounding ball joints in the grille would probably have shown other courtly activities, thus providing a complex scene of royal entertainment.

1. Formerly in the Harari Collection, it is now in the Islamic Art Museum in Cairo. Its decoration, unlike that of cat. no. 171, is vegetal and epigraphic, but the dimensions are the same. See Wiet 1933, pp. 43–44, pl. 7; A. U. Pope and Ackerman 1938–39, pl. 155/J.
2. Another ball joint, without inscriptions, is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M73.1.124).
3. Feherári 1976, pp. 110–11, no. 137, pl. J. Such window grilles are depicted in Ilkhanid paintings; see an illustration from the Great Mongol Shahnama in Grabar and Blair 1986, p. 143, no. 43.
COINS

172–174 Three Gold Coins

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Dinar of Abesh Khatun

Iran (Shiraz), A.H. 673/A.D. 1274–75
Gold, 9.8 g
Art and History Trust Collection

173

Dinar of Geikhatu

Iran (Tabriz), A.H. 691/A.D. 1291–92
Gold, 4.17 g
Art and History Trust Collection

174

Double Dinar of Öljjetü

Iran (Shiraz), A.H. 714/A.D. 1314–15
Gold, 8.84 g
Art and History Trust Collection

The coinage and other currency issued by the Ilkhanids reflect in large degree the enormous social and economic changes under way in Iran during this period. Under the Mongols women, at least members of the ruling elite, often occupied positions of power and influence. Such is the case with Abesh Khatun (r. 1265–86/87, with interruption), hereditary ruler of Fars in southwestern Iran, who married into the Ilkhanid family to help preserve her own sovereignty and the independence of her kingdom. She is one of the very few women in the history of the Islamic world to strike coins in her own name, as in the gold dinar issued in 1274–75 in her capital, Shiraz (cat. no. 172).1

In order to replenish the state’s empty treasury, paper money was issued for the first time in Iran during the reign of Geikhatu (1291–93), as a stopgap measure, based on the Chinese model of the chao (see cat. no. 198). The plan was disastrous for the economy and had to be rescinded.2 Gold dinars were, however, issued in Geikhatu’s name prior to his ill-fated monetary reform. This example (cat. no. 173) was struck in the capital, Tabriz, in the first year of his reign.3

Geikhatu’s reign and especially that of his successor Baidu (1295) were short-lived. The brilliant ruler and reformer Ghazan, who established Islam as the official religion of the realm and reorganized Iran’s monetary system, followed them. The standard gold coinage issued under Ghazan continued during the reign of his brother, Öljjetü (r. 1304–16), whose coins not only reflect the newly enacted monetary reforms but also his own changing religious beliefs. In 1308 Öljjetü converted from Sunni to Shi’ite Islam, and the double dinar (cat. no. 174) struck in 1314–15 illustrates his new persuasion.4 It is inscribed on the obverse with the expanded Shi’ite proclamation of faith: “There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God. ‘Ali is the friend of God.”

2. Soudavar 1997, p. 37, no. 4. Abesh Khatun’s daughter was appointed governor of Fars during the reign of the Ilkhanid Abu Sa’id (1316–33); see ibid., p. 37, n. 17.
3. See John 1970. See also Charles Melville’s essay, chapter 2 above.
5. Ibid., p. 33, no. 8.
6. See Blair 1984; Soudavar 1997, p. 31. See also Sheila Blair’s essay, chapter 4 above.

WOODWORK

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Koran Box

Al-Hasan ibn Qutlumak ibn Fakhr al-Din
Northwestern Iran, shortly after A.H. mid-Rajab 745/A.D. November 1344
Carved, painted, and assembled wood boards, bronze hinges
25 x 43.2 x 43.2 cm (9 7/8 x 17 x 17 in.)
The al-Sahab Collection, Dar al-Askar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait National Museum (LNS 35W)

This large box, constructed to hold a multi-volume Koran manuscript endowed by a certain ‘Izz al-Din Malik ibn Nasir Allah Muhammad, was made for the tomb of the deceased Fakhr al-Din by his own grandson.’ The box, a rare survival from this early period, is elaborately carved on its four sides as well as on the lid with calligraphic inscriptions set against a vegetal background, revealing much information about its patronage and dating. Thus we learn that the late Fakhr al-Din, the last element of whose name as inscribed seems to read “Choban,” passed away in mid-Rajab of the Muslim year 745 (late November 1344) and that the box with its contents must be placed in his mausoleum for eternity. The connection between the deceased and the patron of this Koran and of its box, ‘Izz al-Din, is not indicated, although their names do not suggest that they were related. The craftsman, on the other hand, states that he was the dead man’s grandson, naming himself “Hasan, the son of Qutlumak, the son of the late Fakhr al-Din.”

The historical information is provided in the medallion on the lid and in the rectangular compartments and the square corners around its perimeter. The larger and more refined calligraphy in thuluth on the sides, which are mitered or dovetailed, includes the Koran’s sura 3, verses 18 and 19. The entire box was once painted with bright colors, residues of which are still visible. The interior is divided into five compartments, a central square surrounded by four rectangular sections that would have contained the Koran volumes.

2. The Choban family had an important historical role during and soon after the period of the Ilkhanid ruler Abu Sa’id. Amir Choban was one of the most powerful figures during the first ten years of Abu Sa’id’s reign, and family members ruled over parts of Azerbaijan, Anatolia, and Iraq until the death of Choban’s grandson, Malik Asfar, in 1357. See Melville and Zaryab 1992.

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Koran Stand

Hassan ibn Sulaiman al-Isfahani
Iran or Central Asia, A.H. Dhu al-Hijja 761/A.D. October–November 1360
Wood, carved and inlaid 13.3 x 41 cm (5 1/4 x 16 1/4 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1920 (10.218)

Perhaps because of the relative scarcity of wood in large parts of the Islamic world, Muslim woodcarvers with highly developed skills achieved special renown, and it was not uncommon for them to sign their work, as is the case with this Koran stand, or tabla.1 The signature of its maker, Hassan ibn Sulaiman al-Isfahani, includes a type of geographic suffix known as a nafs that suggests he came from the Iranian city of Isfahan, although the stand itself may have been made elsewhere in Iran or even Central Asia.2 Other inscriptions on the stand provide additional information, namely its date and the name of the patron who had it made for a madrasa, or theological college. Although the inscriptions do not indicate where this was located, it may well have been a Shi’ite school, since the richly carved calligraphy within a niche above the cypress tree that decorates each side calls for blessings upon the Prophet and the Twelve Imams.3 The upper sections of the stand are decorated with the word “Allah” repeated four times so that the initial letters alf interlock to create a X-shaped design, this is set against a deeply carved arabesque ground.

Koran stands were a common furnishing in mosques and other places of worship, in fact, two are depicted in use in an Ilkhanid painting of the early fourteenth century (cat. no. 31).

1. Lentz and Lowry 1989, p. 130, no. 9; Crowe 1997, pp. 174–76, fig. 7. See also Mayer 1988, pp. 11–19, 40.
Works from China and Mongolia

Six Horses

China, late 11th or early 12th century and 14th century
Handscrew ink and color on paper
47 x 167 cm (18 1/2 x 65 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Bequest of John M. Crawford Jr., 1988 (1989.263.5)

The first half (right side) of this extensive handscrew dates to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, a period when China was ruled by the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), nomadic tribesmen from Manchuria.1 By an unidentified artist, the painting sympathetically presents three nomads and their horses in a simple landscape; the three are perhaps harking from the hunt, as the central figure has a falcon on his arm. The second half (left side) of the scroll, painted as though it were part of a continuous composition, is the work of a later artist of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), also unidentified.2 It depicts in a bold, more penetrating fashion two horses grazing beside a tree and a Mongol mounted bareback; the latter seems to play with an archer’s ring on his thumb in a distracted manner, again suggestive of a break from the hunt. Although there was a long tradition of depicting horses, in sculpture and especially in painting, in China prior to the Mongol period, the horse as celebrated in this handscrew was essential to the success of the Mongol army and of previous invading nomadic forces. The easy familiarity with which the rider sits astride his mount, looking back toward the other two horses, suggests the indispensable and intimate nature of the Mongol relationship with horses.

2. Ibid.

Textile with Djeyran in a Landscape

China, Jin dynasty (1115–1234)
Tabby, brocaded; silk and gold thread
19.8 x 38.5 cm (7 1/2 x 15 in.)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund (1991.41)

The compact image of a gold-brocaded recumbent djeyran (a Central Asian antelope, shown here with wings) set in a dense floral landscape, its head turned back and gazing up at a full moon amid clouds, is repeated on this textile in staggered rows with alternating orientations.1 The scene has been identified as one from popular Chinese literature, although the composition of the recumbent djeyran, gazing back and up (see cat. no. 195), may have ultimately been derived from similar motifs in silver, from the Iranian world.2 A closely related motif, with a deer instead of an antelope, was introduced into that world in the Mongol period, as is indicated by decorated tiles from the palace at Takht-i Sulaiman (cat. nos. 87, 89). Jin textiles such as this may have served as the intermediary. They may also have inspired the general color scheme of the tiles (gold on dark blue or turquoise) and the idea of using such a gold-figured pattern on a solid ground to cover a large surface.3 That textiles incorporating the motif were known in Iran, either as imports or copies, is demonstrated in a scene from the Great Mongol Shahnameh (cat. no. 53); the protagonist, Bahram Gur, wears a robe with a gold design showing a recumbent deer, its head turned back, set amid foliage.4

3. For another silk fragment of the same type in the collection of the late Krishna Riboud, see Riboud 1995, p. 95.

Textile with Phoenixes Soaring amid Clouds

China, Jin dynasty (1115–1234)
Tabby, brocaded; silk and gold thread
6.7 x 62.1 cm (2 1/2 x 24 1/2 in.)

The soaring bird with lavish tail feathers, brocaded in gold and repeated in staggered rows alternately oriented on this textile, is probably to be identified as the Chinese mythical bird, the fenghuang, which has come to be associated with the phoenix of Western legend.5 Introduced into Iran under the Ilkhanids, the motif was reproduced in a variety of media, especially in ceramics (see cat. nos. 133, 134). Textiles such as this, which were probably exported to Iran, may have helped to effect the transmission westward. Certain tiles from Takht-i Sulaiman decorated with the image of the phoenix bear close comparison with this textile in terms of style and the gold-on-blue color scheme (see cat. nos. 83, 84).6

3. For another silk fragment of the same type in the collection of the late Krishna Riboud, see Riboud 1995, p. 95.
Textile with Coiled Dragons

China, Jin Dynasty (1115–1234)
Tably, brocaded; silk and gold thread 74.5 x 43.2 cm (29 5/8 x 17 1/8 in.)

Prizing the productions of Central Asian and Islamic weavers, the Mongols developed at least three settlements of textile workers at the beginning of their rule.1 This resulted in a fruitful exchange of motifs and techniques among Central Asian, Muslim, Uyghur, and Chinese craftsmen.

The gold-brocaded motif of a coiled dragon chasing a pearl, repeated on this textile in staggered rows against a red background,2 dates from the early Jin dynasty. The dragon with the pearl, probably of Central Asian origin, has been associated with Chinese literature of the Han period (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) and appeared on objects in the Tang dynasty (618–907).3 Typical of Jin textiles, the design here has no borders; the selvage is preserved on the left side, where the motif appears to be interrupted. Textiles such as this may have helped to transmit the motif of the dragon to the Iranian world in the second half of the thirteenth century, when it began to make its appearance there in a variety of media.

3. Ibid., p. 116.

Textile with Griffins

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Lampas weave, silk 118 x 204 cm (46 1/4 x 80 in.)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

The Mongols went to great lengths to acquire luxury textiles and to control their sources. Under Genghis Khan (d. 1227) and his son and successor Ögedei (r. 1229–41), three centers of textile production were established along the southern perimeter of the Mongol homeland through the forced relocation of workers. Many of these were conscripted from eastern Iranian cities such as Herat, in Khurasan, which had been renowned for its silk and gold cloth.1 The resulting blend of motifs and styles is documented by textiles such as this remarkable panel, which was part of a hoard discovered in 1976 in a large ceramic jar, along with seven other silks, at the site of the Yuan city Jingning, in Inner Mongolia.2

The main decoration is a repeat design of lobed medallions enclosing a pair of rampant addorsed griffins with heads turned back to face one another. The medallions are set against a pattern of hexagons each bearing a rosette formed from seven circles. While the griffin is a motif better known in West rather than East Asian art, here the creatures have been given curvaceous, scroll-like wings and tails that suggest an influence east of the Iranian world.3 The hexagon-patterned ground is particularly significant, as such hexagons and especially rosettes constituted one of the hallmarks of late-twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century inlaid metalwork from Khurasan and possibly Herat, up to the Mongol invasions.4 The borders, which were woven in one piece with the main pattern, are decorated with a scrolling peony design and are more in keeping with East Asian artistic tradition.

2. Treasures on Gandan 2000, p. 156. We are grateful to Nobuko Kajitani, Conservator in Charge, Textile Conservation Department, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, for her help with technical information on this textile.
3. For paired griffins on a silk and gold cloth in the Metropolitan Museum, which has been attributed to the eastern Iranian world, see Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 156–57, no. 44. These griffins are depicted in a stiffly symmetrical manner in contrast to the sinuous and more gracefully rendered creatures on the Hohhot textile. Related motifs also occur in Mamluk textiles; see, e.g., Museum für Islamische Kunst 1980, pp. 88–81, no. 34.
4. As on certain large candlesticks, in which the hexagons are worked in reverse. See, e.g., Atil, Chase, and Jett 1985, figs. 36–38.
5. Takht-i Sulaiman (see cat. nos. 83, 84, 99–101) which in concept and design may have been derived from imported Chinese textiles.6

2. For a cloud collar fabricated of cloth in a very similar but not identical structure, using the same pattern but in gold on a red ground, see Watt and Wardwell 1997, p. 157, fig. 52.
4. See Tomoko Masui’s essay, chapter 4 above.

Canopy with Phoenixes

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Embroidery, silk and gold thread 143 x 135 cm (56 1/4 x 53 1/8 in.)
New York only

The lavish use of gold in this embroidery, further enhanced by the especially thick paper substrate for the gold threads, which gives the areas in which they are used a relieflike effect, no doubt reflects the Mongol taste for luxury textiles.1 At the center of the canopy, distinguished by their different sets of tail feathers, is a pair of phoenixes in flight toward one another. The birds’ curved wings and elaborate plumage create a dynamic radial composition, which was evidently popular under the Yuan dynasty as it was rendered in more than one medium. The same motif, framed by a lobed medallion, was carved in relief on a Yuan-period stone slab found at Dadu (Beijing), while similar figures occur in more portable form: on a small carved lacquer tray (cat. no. 203) dated to the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279); and on two blue- and-white Chinese porcelain dishes,2 said to date to the fourteenth century, from the Ardabil Shrine, Iran. The same type of design is found in early-fourteenth-century Iran among the so-called Sultanabad wares (see cat. nos. 133, 114), where it seems likely to have been derived from the Chinese motif, with textiles such as this embroidered canopy serving as a means of transmission.

1. Rawson 1984, figs. 81, 82; see also J. A. Pope 1981, pls. 17, 21. Watt and Wardwell 1997, p. 195, view this composition as an innovation of the Yuan period and suggest that the phoenixes represent two different “species,” although they note the presence of the design in an early-twelfth-century illustrated Song encyclopedia, work on architecture and architectural decoration, Yingiao fahuo. For a different interpretation of the two phoenixes, as male and female, including examples that are said to predate the Yuan period, see Rawson 1984, p. 120.
Mandala with Imperial Portraits  
China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1330–32  
Silk tapestry (kesi)  
245.5 x 309 cm (96⅞ x 121⅛ in.)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1992  
(1992.54)  
New York only

The mandala,1 following Buddhist conventions, represents the cosmic and sacred realm where the deity at the center (here-Yamantaka, also known as Vajrabhairava, the ultimate subject of meditation, is surrounded by symbols of the spiritual stages that the devotee must pass through in order to reach the center or attain enlightenment. The overall decoration of the mandala is detailed and complex. The donors are represented in the lower corners and can be identified by the Tibetan inscriptions above their portraits: (at left) Yuan emperor Togh Temür (r. 1328–33), who was the great-great-grandson of Khubilai Khan and reigned as Emperor Wenzong, and his brother Khoshila (reigned briefly in 1329); (at right) Budashiri and Babusha, their respective consorts.

Kesi, or silk tapestry, was used for various purposes under the different Chinese dynasties—as covers for handscroll paintings, furnishings, clothing, footwear, and headgear. The Southern Song period (1127–1279) was, for instance, renowned for kesi that reproduced contemporary court paintings. In the Yuan period woven images were thought to exhibit greater skill than painted ones, and from 1294 onward imperial portraits were commissioned as paintings so that they could be converted into woven silk. Orders were also given for the painting and weaving of imperial portraits as part of mandalas under the supervision of the Superintendancy for Buddhist Icons. These would have been placed in the portrait hall of a temple complex where portraits of an emperor and his consort were housed and where religious rites honoring the deceased emperor and empress were conducted. The image of Togh Temür in this mandala appears to be based on a silk portrait of him in the Collection of the National Museum, Taipei. While more than one copy of the kesi was made, cat. no. 185 is the only complete example from the Mongol empire of this distinctive type of imperial commission.

1. Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 95–100, no. 25. For more detail on the iconography of the mandala, see ibid., p. 100.
2. Ibid., pp. 60–61.

Textile with Paired Parrots  
China or Mongolia, 13th–14th century  
Tabby, brocaded, silk and gold thread  
61.2 x 54 cm (24⅜ x 21⅝ in.)  
Los Angeles only

Brocaded in gold against a light green ground, the design of this sumptuous textile consists of paired confronted parrots enclosed by lobed medallions that alternate with smaller four-lobed cartouches each bearing a stylized flower. The meandering-cloud motif that fills the background adds to the richness of the pattern.

This brocade demonstrates a fusion in textile art and its technology that came about as a direct consequence of the Mongol invasions of eastern and western Asia and the subsequent relocation of textile workers from both the Iranian world and China.2 On technical grounds, the textile can be associated with a group of tabby-weave silks brocaded with gold and silk ascribed to twelfth- and thirteenth-century China (cat. nos. 179–181). The eclectic nature of the decoration, however, suggests a dating in the Mongol period (see cat. no. 182). The overall density of the decoration indicates Islamic influence, as do specific design elements such as the vegetal device between the confronted parrots, which in Islamic art, including textiles and ceramics, is often a transformation of the birds' wattles into a stylized tree (see cat. no. 73, where the paired roosters are similarly separated). Other sections of the pattern reflect East Asian forms, the cloud bands, for example, and the four-lobed cartouches; the latter are reminiscent of designs on thirteenth-to-fourteenth-century goldwork (see cat. nos. 137, 201).

1. This is one of three unpublished fragments from the same piece of cloth. Another fragment is in the Brooklyn Museum of Art (1992.81), while another belonged to the late Krishna Riboud. We are grateful to Francesca Gallawy for this information.

187  
Textile with Phoenixes on a Field of Flowers  
Eastern Central Asia, 13th century  
Silk tapestry (kesi); silk and gold thread  
55.9 x 33 cm (22 x 13 in.)  
Textile Traces Collection, Los Angeles (T-0592)

Kesi, or tapestry-woven textiles, make up an important class of luxury fabrics that represents a developing area of research in the field of Asian textiles. This fragment, depicting brilliantly colored phoenixes (perhaps male and female) against a background of flowers, may belong to a recently defined group of kesi that have been associated with Central Asia. Many of these textiles are characterized by the representation of real and mythical animals and birds on a varied floral ground of unevenly sized and spaced elements and by a boldly imaginative color scheme.3 It has been suggested that these kesi may have been used originally as garments of the type woven by the Uyghur, as described in a twelfth-century Southern Song source.4 Designs depicted on the Central Asian kesi, including the soaring phoenix with elaborate tail feathers, found their way into the arts of western Asia in the aftermath of the Mongol invasions (see, e.g., cat. nos. 99, 103, 133, 134), and perhaps textiles such as this played some role in the transmission process.5

3. Most, like cat. no. 183, are relatively small, rectangular fragments, evidently cut down from larger pieces of cloth; Watt and Wardwell 1997, pp. 55–54. Compare this example with fig. 211 above.
5. See Linda Komorek's essay, chapter 7 above.

188–190 Three Architectural Elements  
China (Inner Mongolia), Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)  
Glazed earthenware  
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

188  
Roof Tile  
21.5 x 10 cm (8⅛ x 4 in.)

189  
Two Roundels  
Diam. each: 1 cm (⅜ in.)

190  
Dragon Mask  
H. 29 cm (11¼ in.)

Tiles were elements of traditional Chinese architecture as early as the Zhou dynasty (1122–256 B.C.). The triangular-shaped roof tile, dishui (cat. no. 188), found in Jiningfu, was placed at the end of a row of flat roof tiles at the eaves, where it served a functional purpose as a channel for rainwater; the largely decorative roundel, or gaozou (cat. no. 189), was inserted,
again at the eaves, at the end of a row of hemispherical roof tiles. This roof tile and the two roundels are decorated with a dragon motif molded in relief and are glazed in three colors (saraei) with green, yellow, and cream glazes. Additional sculptural elements adorned the ridge ends of the roof. Typically, a group of running animal figures on the descending ridges was flanked at either end by two animal masks such as the dragon mask (cat. no. 190), placed on the corner rafter and on the ridge. These masks served as auspicious or guardian symbols, and their number on the roof corners also denoted the owner’s social rank.

Dragon and phoenix motifs on dishui and goutou became popular in China after the Yuan dynasty, although some examples are known from the pre-Mongol periods of the Liao (907-1125) and Jin (1115-1234), continuing through the Ming and Qing dynasties (together, 1368-1911). The dragon motif was especially common on tiles produced during the Yuan period, and examples have been excavated in various Mongol cities such as Dadu, Khara Korum, and Shangdu.

2. Both unpublished.

192 Stem Cup with Dragon
China, Yuan dynasty (1271-1368)
Porcelain, underglaze painted
H. 11.8 cm (4 3/4 in.); diam. 11.3 cm (4 1/2 in.)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Severance and Greta Millikin Collection (1964.169)

The appearance of the stem cup among Chinese ceramics may coincide with the introduction of blue-and-white porcelain to the second quarter of the fourteenth century. This kind of small vessel, possibly an imported shape, seems to have been made for domestic use rather than for the export market in blue-and-white porcelain (see, e.g., cat. no. 193). The inside of such cups is typically decorated with a floral spray; in the present example this takes the form of a stylized six-petaled flower. The exterior of the stem cup characteristically bears a vigorously painted dragon chasing after a flaming pearl. The latter motif is also found in Ilkhanid art, particularly among the decorated tiles associated with the palace complex at Takht-i-Sulaiman (see cat. nos. 91, 93, 100-102).

2. Lee and W. Ho 1968, no. 120; Medley 1986, fig. 139.

193 Wine Jar with Lion-Head Handles
China, Yuan dynasty (1271-1368)
Porcelain, underglaze painted
39.4 x 37.5 cm (15 x 14 3/4 in.)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund (1967.154)

Underglaze painted porcelain used cobalt as a blue colorant and is generally believed to be the great innovation of the Yuan period. Kashan, the most important Iranian center of ceramic production in the Middle Ages, is one likely source for the ore, which was probably exported to China by Persian merchants via sea routes. In fact, it is generally held that the introduction and rise of cobalt-blue-decorated porcelain in China around the second quarter of the fourteenth century was due to the import of foreign tastes and goods and to the profitability of the export market. Such objects as this wine jar were evidently made for the overseas market, including Iran. Their main impact on Persian art postdates the Mongol era, belonging instead primarily to the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Such Yuan blue-and-white wares are relevant nonetheless to the history of Ilkhanid art not only because they indicate that there was also a west–east avenue for the transmission of artistic ideas and techniques, but also because they demonstrate a shared artistic vocabulary. Examples here are the cloud-collar motif, disengaged into quarters on the shoulder of the jar, and the band of soaring phoenixes, each set against a floral ground, that circles the body (see cat. nos. 112, 133, 134).

1. See Medley 1974, pp. 73-74; Fong and Watt 1996, p. 431.
2. Lee and W. Ho 1968, no. 150; Medley 1974, p. 31, pl. 48. For the same or similar types of closed shapes and related decoration, see J. A. Pope 1976, pls. 25-28.

194 Vase
China, Yuan dynasty (1271-1368)
Stoneware, molded decoration, Longquan celadon ware
H. 50.4 cm (19 3/4 in.)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

This large, robust vessel, which was unearthed near Hohhot, can be ascribed to the Yuan dynasty on the basis in part of numerous formal and stylistic analogies with a well-known vase dated 1327 in the Percival David Foundation Collection, London. Both vases are decorated with bold floral motifs on the neck and scrolling blossoms on the body, and each has a distinctive, wide, trumpetlike mouth, which is said to be particular to so-called Longquan celadons in this period. The term Longquan is used to describe a type of celadon ware produced in the Longquan district, in what is now the modern province of Chekiang, in southern China. Under the Yuan Longquan wares were widely exported throughout Asia, and their distinctive gray-green coloring and petal-like molding, as on the base of this vase, were frequently imitated in Ilkhanid Iran (see cat. nos. 132-134).


195 Mirror Stand
China, Song, Jin, or Yuan dynasty, 12th–14th century
Gilt bronze
L. 27 cm (10 1/4 in.)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M. 237-1910)

The motif of the djeiran (a Central Asian antelope) seen in profile so that its two horns appear as one became popular in China on the back of bronze mirrors in the Jin period (1115–1234) and survived well into the Yuan. The seventh-century origins of the motif, however, can be traced back to Sogdian Central Asia, whence it traveled east. In China the antelope, originally

CATALOGUE: WORKS FROM CHINA AND MONGOLIA
reclining amid foliage, became associated with the sun or moon supported by clouds, a composition that is generally known as a *sinu* gazing at the moon,' the *sinu* being a rhinoceros. This may well have been the original Central Asian meaning of the image. In Islamic bestiaries and cosmographies, the rhinoceros is one of several creatures with a single horn; these include gazelle- or antelope-like animals with their heads seen in profile—two horns becoming one—such as the *harsh* and the *shah-dara*. Such antecedents probably contributed to the lore and myth of the unicorn that later developed in Europe.

This exquisite gilt-bronze mirror portrays the *dywan* in its customary reclining position, though the figure is rendered in a more dynamic manner than usual, with a bent foreleg and the head turned backward, showing a single horn. The spray of clouds on its back once provided the base for the circular mirror, now lost, which symbolized the sun or the moon, thus completing the poetic image of the *sinu* gazing at the moon.

2. For an important study of the unicorn in Islamic iconography, see Ethington 1950. Al-Qasimi in his *Wonders of Creation* (cat. nos. 14–16) includes three other wild animals with a single horn in addition to the *harsh* and the *shah-dara*: the rhinoceros (karkalma), a type of bactra called *nīqaj*, and the narwhal (*qayj*). See Carboni 1997, pp. 137–38, 351–55.

197

**Paizu (Passport)**

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), late 13th century
Cast iron, inlaid with silver
H. 18.1 cm (7 1/4 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1993 (93.5.16)

Developed as early as the reign of Genghis Khan (1206–29), the paizu was made in different shapes, though mostly circular or rectangular (see cat. no. 154), and in different metals, mainly gold, iron, or silver. The recent discovery of a gold paizu from the Liao period (907–1122) has shown that this article was known before the Mongols made ubiquitous use of it.

The present example, probably issued during the reign of Kublai Khan (1260–94), is made of iron with inscriptions inlaid on both sides in silver. The characters are in the so-called Phagspa script, which was developed by the eponymous Tibetan monk (1235–1280), an adviser to Kublai. In translation, the inscriptions read: "By the strength of Eternal heaven, an edict of the Emperor [Khan]. He who has no respect shall be guilty." A Mongol on an official mission or an important foreign diplomat or visitor would have carried this type of safe-conduct pass throughout Asia. Although the cast iron makes it rather heavy, the ring on top allowed it to be attached to a belt or suspended on a cord around the neck (see cat. no. 13). The only artistic invention is in the transitional section between the medallion and the ring in the form of a lobed handle; this shows a Tibetan-style frontal lion's head probably derived from the Indian *kirtimukha* (lion mask).

1. See James Watt's chapter 3 above.
2. Leidy, Sui, and Watt 1997, p. 93; see also a similar example in Golden Horde 2000, p. 211, no. 10.

198

**Paper Bill**

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Ink on paper
30 x 21.6 cm (11 1/2 x 8 1/8 in.)
State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE KF 3027)

The Mongol experiment with a type of paper currency, the earliest ever attempted on such a pan-Asian scale, was short-lived. Paper currency had a long tradition in China and the Mongols were quick to adopt it, although its widespread use did not begin in Yuan China until the reign of Kublai (1260–94). Chinese paper money was introduced in Iran in 1294 by Geikhatu, and while various reasons for issuing bills are given in different sources, the need to replenish the treasury with precious metals and the bankruptcy of Geikhatu's regime owing to extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement appear to have been key factors.

One of the rare survivors of that experiment, given the functional use of such bills and the fragile nature of the medium, is this note preserved in the Hermitage. Though printed in the pre-Yuan period from a wood or bronze block, it was used as legal tender in Yuan China. According to the inscriptions in both Chinese and Phagspa, it was worth "two bundles" (two thousand coins), making it the highest value of such notes.

4. For another example of the Phagspa script, see the Chinese *paizu*, cat. no. 197.
5. They were issued in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 300, 500, 1,000, and 2,000. See Allen 2001, p. 178.

199

**Covered Box**

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Gold, pierced, chased, and worked in repoussé
H. 8.5 cm (3 in.)
Art and History Trust Collection

The main decoration on this delicate box is pierced and finely worked in repoussé, set against a plain background. On top of the cover a central medallion encloses a pair of birds among peonies, while on the sides is a wide band of lappets that bear alternately flowers or birds; the band of lappets is repeated on the base. The openwork bird and floral motifs have been related to silverwork of the Yuan period. Similar designs occur on a large Yuan underglaze blue and red porcelain jar in the Percival David Foundation Collection, London, which is decorated around its wide center with four openwork panels with blossoms and leaves applied in relief. The box also compares closely with a similarly shaped, small covered box carved in ivory, which has been dated to the Yuan period.

2. See ibid. For a closely related silver gilt jar, see ibid., lot 128. See also Medley 1974, p. 57. Related decoration
200, 201  Personal Ornaments
China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

200

Two Hairpins
Gold, worked in repoussé and chased
H. 14 cm (5 1/2 in.); w. 2 cm (4 1/2 in.)

201

Five Headaddress Ornaments
Gold, worked in repoussé
Largest: 9 x 2.4 x 2 cm (3 1/2 x 1 1/2 in.)

Personal adornment was one means by which the Mongols were able to express their new positions of power and wealth. Under the Yuan, the woman’s hairpin, which had a long history in China, became bolder and more elaborate in its decoration. This included flowers and birds, occasionally dragons, rendered in deep repoussé with finely chased details, as in the two examples from Hohhot (cat. no. 200), which were excavated in 1957 at Qahar Youyi Khanqi, Inner Mongolia. Mongol noblewomen also expressed their status through a distinctive type of conical headaddress, known as a baghtaq or yaguan. This could be embellished with a variety of decorations, including perhaps such ornaments as the five from Hohhot (cat. no. 201), which were found in Aohanji, Inner Mongolia, in 1999. Images of noblewomen wearing the baghtaq indicate that gold ornaments were placed around its narrow crown. See, for example, the royal women in Ilkhanid enthronement scenes (cat. nos. 18, 19), and the two royal women depicted in the lower right corner of a silk-tapestry Yamantaka mandala (cat. no. 183).

203

Lacquer Tray with Phoenixes
China, Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279)
Red, yellow, and black lacquer on wood
4.8 x 37.4 cm (1 1/2 x 12 13/16 in.)

In China lacquer made from the sap of a tree was applied to a variety of objects fabricated in ephemerally materials such as wood, bamboo, or textiles, giving them a more resilient surface that was suitable for a broad range of time-consuming and elaborate decorative techniques. Carved lacquers, for example, could require the application of hundreds of layers of lacquer and take over a year to complete. Objects produced from this seemingly humble material were in fact luxury goods, often demanding the highest level of artistic skill. Such is the case with this precisely carved lacquer tray, decorated with opposed phoenixes in flight, set among flowers representing each of the four seasons (winter plum blossoms, spring peonies, summer lotus, and autumn chrysanthemums). Paired phoenixes, each with different tail feathers and arranged in a circular configuration, became a common theme under the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in a variety of media (e.g., cat. no. 184), as well as in Ilkhanid Iran (e.g., cat. nos. 133, 134).


204

Dragon Protome
China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), second half of the 13th century
White marble
31.5 x 33.5 x 79 cm (12 1/2 x 13 1/4 x 31 1/2 in.)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

In 1258 Kubilai Khan completed the second Mongol capital (the first was Khara Khorum); named Kaiping, it was renamed Shangdu, or "Upper Capital," five years later. Located some 160 miles north of Beijing in the modern province of Inner Mongolia, Shangdu functioned as the summer capital after Dadu (present-day Beijing) became the official capital of the Yuan dynasty. In Shangdu the inner Imperial City lay within the Palace City, and this in turn was surrounded by the Outer City, a plan that can be viewed as a sequence of concentric squares.

Excavations at Shangdu revealed an extensive use of stone, particularly white marble, to sculpt figures in the round, such as two large, now headless statues, one perhaps representing Kubilai Khan himself, as well as architectural elements that decorated the city walls. Among the latter was this impressive dragon protome, or forepart, which together with many similar elements protruded from a wall, where it served as both a decorative and a protective figure. The L-shaped, roughly carved rear section of the stone was set into the wall, leaving the finely carved head of a hornless dragon (chi) visible in order to impress visitors and residents alike. This type of architectural decoration became popular throughout the Mongol empire in Asia, as indicated by similar pieces found in western Siberia in the territories of the Golden Horde.

1. See a brief history of the hairpin in China, see White and Bunker 1994, pp. 15–27.
2. Ibid., nos. 103, 104.
3. Information from the records of the Inner Mongolia Museum.
4. For two events demonstrating the importance of the baghtaq in Mongol society, see Lambton 1988, p. 393.
5. Information from the records of the Inner Mongolia Museum.

202

Torque
China, probably Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)
Silver, worked in repoussé
Diam. approx. 17 cm (6 1/2 in.)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

Paired dragons already formed part of the traditional vocabulary of Chinese art in the eleventh century under the Liao dynasty.1 Arranged within a square or a circular frame, they are usually seen as if chasing each other in a circle amidst clouds. The dragons on this torque or choker,2 one of the finest examples of medieval Chinese silver jewelry, represent a variation in which the designer cleverly adapted this auspicious iconography to the required shape. Following the curve of the neck, each of the long, snake-bodied dragons forms a semicircle, from back to front, where their rather ferocious heads are confronted in the center. The symmetrical composition that results is reminiscent of the large-scale architectural dragons carved at Vitai, north-central Iran, discussed earlier in this volume.3 The bodies of the torque dragons were formerly each punctuated by two semiprecious stones (now missing), and most likely a larger stone or pearl was once set in the front between their fangs.

The craftsmanship of this object, worked in repoussé, wire, chasing, and punching, is remarkable, as is its state of preservation, only the stones having been lost. Like the gold hairpins and headdress ornaments (cat. nos. 200, 201), this silver torque clearly belonged to a high-ranking woman of the Yuan period.

1. See, e.g., Rawson 1984, p. 98, fig. 75.
3. See Sheila Blair’s essay, chapter 5 above.

1. For a brief history of the hairpin in China, see White and Bunker 1994, pp. 15–27.
2. Ibid., nos. 103, 104.
3. Information from the records of the Inner Mongolia Museum.
4. For two events demonstrating the importance of the baghtaq in Mongol society, see Lambton 1988, p. 393.
5. Information from the records of the Inner Mongolia Museum.

Cenotaph

China, Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), 14th century
Stone
65 x 45 x 165 cm (25 1/2 x 17 1/2 x 65 in.)
Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot

This cenotaph, found near the city of Chifeng in Inner Mongolia, represents one of the most interesting discoveries to demonstrate the presence of Muslims among the higher echelons of the population under the Yuan dynasty. The relief carving includes the typical repertoire of the late Yuan period. Dramatic clouds and large peonies fill the larger bands on the sides, vegetal scrolls with peonies and lotuses are carved inside narrower bands below, and lotus or peony flowers seen from above are shown in the vertical bands at both ends of the cenotaph. The top is also decorated with dense vegetal patterns.

The decoration at the head of the cenotaph makes it clear that the latter was once placed above the tomb of a Muslim. Below a lobed arch with a lotus flower at its apex is the incised Arabic inscription: la ilah illa allah muhammad rasul allah (There is no God but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah). This is the shahada, or profession of faith, the first of the so-called Five Pillars (arkan) of Islam. The inscription was drawn by a calligrapher familiar with the styles current in that period in the Islamic world, though it has a distinctive slender, vertical thrust that links it to the Chinese Islamic calligraphic style.

Another cenotaph found in Inner Mongolia, now also in the Inner Mongolia Museum, Hohhot, shows a similar decorative program. The vegetal background is less complex, however, and a reclining deer is carved on either side of the stone. The figural element may imply that this cenotaph was not meant for a Muslim tomb. The Arabic inscription on cat. no. 105 was engraved—not carved in relief, like the rest of the decoration—inside an area left empty at its head. It is possible, therefore, that it was originally meant for an affluent Mongol or Chinese customer and subsequently turned into a Muslim cenotaph on request.

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