

**LANDMARKS OF THE PERSIAN RENAISSANCE:
MONUMENTAL FUNERARY ARCHITECTURE IN IRAN AND CENTRAL
ASIA IN THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES**

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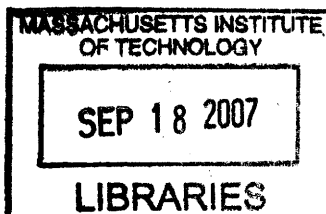
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the sudden proliferation of mausolea in Iran and Central Asia in the tenth and eleventh centuries and how their patrons, who were secular rulers of Iranian descent, drew on the pre-Islamic past in new ways specific to each region. Mausolea constructed in the tenth and eleventh centuries have a wide geographical spread across modern Iran and the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics. However, the monuments take two different forms: the tomb tower and the domed square. There are formal and functional differences and a different geographical distribution, with the earliest tomb towers concentrated in the inaccessible Alborz Mountains in northern Iran. This remote region had a very different historical trajectory from that of Central Asia, where the earliest extant domed square mausolea are located. Historians of architecture have often noted that certain features seen in these mausolea have some vague connection with the pre-Islamic past, but this connection has never been precisely defined or explained; I argue that the cultural dynamics which resulted in particular architectural forms were very different in these two regions, so that pre-Islamic Iranian traditions were selectively continued in the Caspian region of northern Iran, whereas other elements of the Iranian past were consciously revived in Central Asia. Two of the mausolea that I analyze, the Samanid mausoleum and the Gunbad-i Qabus, are well-known monuments which appear in virtually every survey of Islamic art, whereas most of the others are almost completely unknown. This dissertation situates these buildings in their historical context for the first time and examines them in a new way as an expression of the Persian Renaissance, a term borrowed from literary historians which describes the florescence of Iranian high culture which occurred at this time. Since this group of mausolea was influential not only in the development of funerary architecture, but also in the development of Islamic architecture as a whole, understanding their origins and formation is important for the history of Islamic architecture.

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Introduction

In the center of Bokhara in modern Uzbekistan, in a park near the citadel, sits a small domed brick building known as the Samanid mausoleum (fig. 1). When I visited the site in the spring of 2005, it was a hive of activity, with bulldozers and dump trucks removing earth in order to enlarge the paved plaza around the building, while battalions of schoolboys with shovels manually assisted this project to one side. As three of the four entrances were closed with metal grilles, with the rusted metal imitating the star and cross shapes of Mongol-era tiles, I entered through the one open entrance to find a bored female caretaker sitting on a chair in one corner. Entrance was free, but she did ask what I was doing, not when I began photographing the building, but when I produced a notebook and a compass. A group of French tourists arrived, admired the basket-like brickwork, took a few photographs, and quickly left. Meanwhile my companion waited outside, chatting to an amiable older gentleman who explained to him that the mausoleum is a symbol of Tajik rather than Uzbek identity, since the Samanids spoke Persian. Later I returned to photograph the building in the evening shadows, without the movement and dust of the bulldozers. The caretaker was gone, and the building was locked. A busload of teenagers arrived, talking excitedly in Uzbek. They grew quiet as they approached the building, and knelt down before the locked metal grate, silently mouthing prayers. Several touched the brick wall reverently, while others craned their necks to get a glimpse of the cenotaph inside, while others traced the name of Isma'il the Samanid on the plaque to the left of the doorway.

Back in Tashkent, at the archives of the Committee for the Preservation of Monuments, I perused faded photographs which hinted at other meanings the building

has held for other users. Just as now, only one entrance was open; on three sides of the mausoleum, the cenotaphs of those who for centuries had clamored to be buried near Isma'il abutted directly against the walls and the sealed doors. The open entrance was accessed through a long corridor of shoulder-high cenotaphs, and above the door was a set of ram's horns, indicating the type of popular religious practices still current today at shrines throughout Central Asia. The local worshippers lined the corridor, looking suspiciously into the camera, perhaps suspecting that their shrine was about to be transformed into a monument. Other photographs show local workers stripping away the accoutrements of centuries to expose the Samanid core, with detailed images of otherwise inaccessible areas of the building such as the corner domes and the arcaded gallery. Archival documents by Zaspikin and Viatkin speak enthusiastically of progress, scientific restoration, and the expansion of knowledge.

Royal tomb, shrine, archaeological site, tourist attraction, and object of scholarly inquiry: the Samanid mausoleum has had multiple layers of meaning during its thousand-odd years of existence. To those concerned with its restoration and its status as a monument, it has signified Soviet progress, Uzbek identity, and Tajik identity. It even appears on the largest banknote of Tajikistan, a currency appropriately named "samani." For the many Soviet scholars who studied the building, it represented the culmination of the pre-Islamic architectural traditions of Central Asia. For Western scholars, it signifies the beginning of a long trajectory of domed Islamic mausolea. It is a familiar building which appears in every survey of Islamic art and architecture, just as reliably as it appears in every Uzbek tourism brochure.

Equally familiar is the Gunbad-i Qabus (fig. 2), which inevitably follows the Samanid mausoleum in the surveys. Soaring 61 meters above the flat plain outside Gurgan, in northeastern Iran, this building has attracted the notice of travelers from Samʿani in the twelfth century to Robert Byron in the twentieth. Byron described it as a building which “ranks with the great buildings of the world.”¹ Today it receives few visitors, due to its distance from the concentration of brilliantly colored Safavid monuments in Isfahan, Iran’s main tourist attraction, and the small number of individuals willing to travel to Iran at all at present. Yet to students of Islamic art and architecture it is well-known as another fully formed, sophisticated and imposing mausoleum, which seemingly springs out of nowhere in the early 11th century to inaugurate a whole series of tomb towers constructed in the Saljuq and Mongol periods.

In the standard historiographical narrative of the development of Islamic architecture, these two buildings are among the earliest extant examples of funerary architecture in the Islamic world after the 9th century Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya, termed the first Islamic mausoleum. Dated to the 10th and 11th centuries respectively, the Samanid mausoleum and the Gunbad-i Qabus therefore show through their chronological position in the canon of Islamic art that funerary architecture was expressly forbidden in the earliest centuries of Islam and only gradually gained in popularity. Their location on the relative fringe of the Islamic world is cited to show that the honoring of fighters for the faith is a likely explanation for this transgression, particularly since another 11th century group of mausolea exists in Aswan, also on the periphery.² Since Aswan was ruled by the Shiʿite Fatimids in the 11th century, and since Iran has been a Shiʿite country since the

¹ Byron 1937, p. 202.

² Grabar 1966, pp. 41-2.

advent of the Safavids in 1501, Shi·ism is also cited as an initial justification for the transgressive behavior of constructing mausolea. Plucked from all but the most rudimentary historical context, the two buildings perform a useful function in the linear trajectory of Islamic funerary architecture.

Bending the rules of logic has scarcely been an obstacle in many of the interpretations and significations of these two buildings. The designers of Tajik banknotes have seemingly failed to notice that Bokhara is not in Tajikistan, just as the promoters of tourism and state-building who term the building an Uzbek monument have overlooked the fact that the Uzbeks arrived in Bokhara over five centuries after the construction of the Samanid mausoleum. Likewise, Western scholarship has generally failed to note that, since the royal patrons of the Samanid mausoleum and the Gunbad-i Qabus were Sunni, that Shi·ism can hardly be cited as a justification for their construction. Furthermore, although the Samanids did expand their northern borders at the expense of the Turks, neither they nor Qabus b. Vushmgir, the patron of the Gunbad-i Qabus, can be classified as *ghazi* warriors of the type for whom the Aswan mausolea were purportedly built. The Gunbad-i Qabus has also been assimilated into the group of Turco-Mongol tomb towers which followed it, so that it has been compared to Central Asian nomadic tents despite the fact that its patron was a sophisticated Persian urbanite. Although the Samanid mausoleum has been the subject of scholarly studies in the former Soviet Union, neither building has ever garnered attention in its own right in the West, and both have instead have found a place only in the sweeping narratives of Islamic art as a whole or in more focused but still exceedingly broad and sweeping studies of Islamic

epigraphy and funerary architecture. Consequently the interpretation of both buildings is constructed solely from their position in the trajectory of such narratives.

These broad narratives are particularly prone to two problems: first, the essentializing of Islamic beliefs and practices, exemplified here by the anachronistic backwards projection of Shi'ism to all of Iran in the 10-11th centuries; and secondly, the propensity to make these sweeping statements from the point of view of the center, at the expense of ever understanding the periphery. Hence sources composed in the 'Abbasid capital, Baghdad, are privileged over local histories, which are deemed provincial and less relevant for the grand narrative. This results in a mistaken emphasis on *jihad* as well as a tendency to characterize anything seen as remotely unorthodox as emanating from the depths of Central Asia. As a peripheral region, Central Asia can be incorporated when useful, categorized as a provincial extension of Iran or simply ignored at will. Buildings on the periphery are rarely the subject of sustained scholarly interest, mainly because their importance is derived from their position in the narrative of the center.

Annabel Wharton has noted a similar phenomenon in earlier scholarship on Dura Europos, which “almost inevitably represent[s] the site as a remote desert outpost, located not only on the periphery of the Roman Empire but at the boundary of civilization itself.”³ She goes on to show that the city was actually at the nexus of important trading routes and that its surviving monuments have complex layers of meaning which can only be understood by making it an object of historical inquiry in its own right. By changing the perception of the site, from a marginal area which is only important in the search for origins and influences relevant to the mainstream of the art historical narrative to an artistically vital and historically interesting center, she offers an analysis which

³ Wharton, p. 17.

challenges the concept of core and periphery as well as illuminating the unique culture of Dura Europos itself.

My aim here is a similar one, as both the Samanid mausoleum and the Gunbad-i Qabus merit a detailed historical study in their own right. They are not the only mausolea of the 10-11th centuries to be found in Iran and Central Asia, and I will set them in their architectural as well as their historical context. In particular I will focus on the uses of the Persian past in the royal mausolea of this era. Historians of architecture have often noted that certain features of these mausolea have some vague connection with the pre-Islamic past, but this connection has never been precisely defined or explained; in the periodization of architectural history, the boundary between the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods is one that is seldom crossed. Moreover, the Zoroastrian practice of exposure rather than burial of bodies has led most scholars to dismiss any overt pre-Islamic Iranian influence on Islamic funerary architecture. I argue, however, that such influences were manifestly present, as aspects of the local funerary architecture became part of the invented traditions associated with the formation of a new Iranian identity.

This new identity was both Muslim and Persian, and it emerged in the 10-11th centuries, the era when mausolea proliferated in both Iran and Central Asia. The florescence of Persian culture at this time has been termed the “Persian Renaissance,” a designation describing a resurgence of Iranian high culture which occurred primarily in Central Asia. I will contrast the mausolea of Central Asia with those of Tabaristan, the mountainous region to the south of the Caspian Sea. The cultural dynamics of the Persian Renaissance were very different in these two regions, so that pre-Islamic Iranian traditions were selectively continued in the Caspian region of northern Iran, whereas

other elements of the Iranian past were consciously revived in Central Asia, the realm of the Sogdian city-states in the pre-Islamic period.

I am basing the contrast between Central Asia and Tabaristan not just on historical differences between the two regions, but also on differences in both the form and the function of the mausolea. Like the Samanid mausoleum, all the Central Asian examples of the 10-11th centuries took the form of the domed square, whereas the funerary monuments of Tabaristan, like the Gunbad-i Qabus, are towers. The formal difference lies not only in the ratio of height to width, but also in the interiors of the buildings and their siting in the landscape. The domed squares are easy to access, in terms of both their location and in their architecture, and their interiors are light and are adorned with decorative brickwork and/or stucco. The tomb towers, on the other hand, are in remote locations and are designed to discourage entry with high, single entrances. Their interiors are dark and undecorated, and lack the cenotaphs which in the domed squares indicate the location of the burial underneath. Indeed, when the Gunbad-i Qabus was excavated by a Russian team in the late 19th century, they found that it did not even contain a burial. Likewise, the other mausolea in Tabaristan do not contain bodies, so that the function of the tomb towers was clearly different from that of the domed squares.

The lack of bodies raises the question of how to classify a building as a mausoleum. In the case of the tomb towers, their inscriptions clearly indicate that they did serve a funerary function. Most of the domed squares also have or once had such inscriptions, although not all have been preserved. Many in the former Soviet Union have been excavated, revealing the presence of bodies underneath and removing any doubt about the function of the buildings. Cenotaphs also indicate the presence of

burials, but are not found in all mausolea. The dome itself has been associated with the mausoleum in the Islamic world, to the extent that the words for dome, *qubba* and *gunbad* in Arabic and Persian respectively, have frequently been used to refer to mausolea in both inscriptions and texts. Almost all Islamic mausolea are domed, but not all domed buildings are mausolea. There is therefore occasionally room for doubt as to whether a building functioned as a mausoleum or as a mosque. The mihrab, which is always found in a mosque, can also be seen in some mausolea, even during the period under consideration here. In the absence of inscriptions or excavations, differentiating between a small mosque and a mausoleum can be difficult. Khmel'nitskii, for example, categorizes all buildings with mihrabs as mosques, including the central building at Uzgend, which is widely accepted as a mausoleum. Few others would be so categorical, and the buildings where some debate persists are discussed here on a case by case basis. I have included as mausolea those buildings which have inscriptions indicating their function, evidence of burials, a cemetery location, or a form similar enough to other mausolea for this to function to be a reasonable inference.

My focus on the uses of the Persian past in the mausolea of the 10-11th centuries leads in turn to an emphasis on royal mausolea. Any analysis of mausolea inevitably focuses on the upper echelons of society, as monumental structures are not constructed to commemorate the average person. In the period and the region under consideration here, mausolea were built for the religiously and the politically significant, and funded by the latter. Hence an analysis of the conscious choices made by patrons implies a concentration on the Iranian potentates who proliferated as the power of the 'Abbasid dynasty waned. Including the lesser known and badly preserved buildings illuminates the

choices available to the Iranian dynasts who constructed the Gunbad-i Qabus and the Samanid mausoleum. The first of the truly independent Iranian dynasties, the Samanids, began to rule in 874; as I will argue that the dynastic mausoleum was constructed by the founder of the dynasty, Isma'il, who died in 907, it follows that the earliest of the royal mausolea under consideration here may well have been built in the late 9th century. Of course neither architectural styles nor political regimes will normally coincide with even division into centuries, and so I consider the Samanids as belonging to a long 10th century. The policies established by Isma'il set the tone for the century to follow, and ushered in the Persian Renaissance.

Deciding on a cutoff date is more complicated, since the era of the Persian Renaissance was followed by invasions of Turkic peoples, effectively ending the rule of Iranian dynasties throughout Central Asia and most of Iran. This did not happen in one fell swoop, however. In Afghanistan, the Ghaznavids began ruling as Samanid governors in 977. Samanid rule in Central Asia was terminated in 1000 by the Qarakhanids; the Oxus became the boundary between their empire and that of the now independent Ghaznavids. By 1055, the Saljuqs had taken most of Iran and Iraq, although in the inaccessible reaches of Tabaristan the Iranian Bavandid dynasty remained in power. For the Iranian tomb towers, the cutoff date is inconsistent but easy to establish: the tomb towers constructed by Iranian dynasts form a coherent group in one part of the country, then the form changes substantially and almost immediately with the arrival of the Saljuqs. Hence I will analyze the pre-Saljuq tomb towers, although this entails the inclusion of one 12th century Bavandid tower from the region the Saljuqs never managed to conquer, as this building clearly belongs in the Bavandid group. I have also included

the one pre-Saljuq tower which is not in the northern part of the country, but which was built for a local dynast with strong connections to the north.

The Central Asian picture is substantially more difficult, however. There are many more of the domed square mausolea than the tomb towers, and not all of them have royal incumbents. The buildings are found across an enormous geographical area, are often not clearly dated through inscriptions, and never show any abrupt changes in the evolution of their form or decoration. Hence it is almost impossible to distinguish the Samanid from the Qarakhanid, and the Qarakhanid or Ghaznavid from the Saljuq. My selection of buildings is consequently rather arbitrary. I have aimed to include all the mausolea which might possibly be dated to the Samanid era as well as 11th century mausolea with royal Qarakhanid associations; a few monuments which may or may not be early Saljuq are also included. Although the Qarakhanids are clearly not an Iranian dynasty, continuity with the Samanid era makes for a particularly interesting discussion about the Turkish adoption of Persian court culture (albeit treated very briefly here as it is not the main focus of this dissertation). Furthermore, including the Qarakhanids, and the Ghaznavids to the extent possible, makes the advent of the Saljuqs roughly the cut-off date for both Central Asia and Iran. I have, however, excluded the later royal Qarakhanid monuments of the 12th century, as these are too far removed from the main body of material I am considering. For the same reason, I have also excluded the bulk of the 11th century mausolea in modern Turkmenistan, apart from a few which could arguably belong to the 10th century and one which may be the tomb of the last Samanid ruler. These Turkmen examples form a fairly coherent group which seems to be connected to Saljuq power and the status of Merv as a Saljuq capital.

The region which is at the center of this dissertation is one which is very much on the periphery of the area considered to be the Islamic heartland by the discipline of art history. It was, however, a major center in the 10-11th centuries, and the locus of much scientific, literary and artistic activity. Bokhara under the Samanids was an especially lively city, located at the nexus of several trading routes of worldwide importance. The famous Silk Route passed through the city, and although the heyday of this trading route was several centuries earlier, when Bokhara was under the rule of the local Sogdians and China was enjoying a golden age during the early Tang Dynasty, it was still an important avenue for the exchange of goods and ideas between east and west. Of course, multiple routes were possible, but from Bokhara the main route went to the southeast, across the Oxus, through Khorasan and then across Iran, passing through Damghan, where two of the tomb towers included here are located. Light, portable and valuable textiles constituted one of the primary commodities traded along this route, although it was far from being the only one. Expensive and relatively fragile luxury goods were also popular for those who could afford them, and Chinese pottery always found a ready market in the courts of the Islamic world, just as Islamic metalwork and glass were exotic curiosities which appealed to the upper echelons in China.

Under the Samanids and the Iranian dynasties of Tabaristan, metalwork was still produced in the style of Sasanian Iran, and these products found a market not only in China but also in northern and eastern Europe. Productive silver mines were found in Samanid territory, and both their coinage and their Sasanian style dishes have been found in great quantity in Scandinavia, European Russia and the Ukraine. This is indicative of trade along the lesser known Fur Route: from Bokhara, silver was exported through the

realms of the Khorezmshah, a Samanid vassal, to the Caspian Sea and then through the steppes of southern Russia, ruled by the Jewish Khazar dynasty, ultimately reaching eastern Europe and Scandinavia. In return, furs and Slavic slaves were imported back to Bokhara, and from there to the rest of the Islamic world. Bokhara was the most important emporium for slaves, not only from Slavic lands but also from the Turkish tribes of the Central Asian steppe. Valued for their martial abilities, Turkish slaves formed the core of most Islamic armies of the period, including those of the 'Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad and Samarra and of the Samanids themselves. Taxation on the slave trade was a source of enormous wealth for the Samanids.

Acknowledging Bokhara as the most important center in the area under consideration here entails not only the inclusion of Central Asian buildings overlooked in the construction of the canon of Islamic architectural history, but also the use of different source materials. Just as scholars who viewed Baghdad as the center have primarily used the historians who worked in or near Baghdad, I will privilege the local histories and the geographers who either worked for Iranian or Central Asian patrons or who traveled to the region. Viewed from Baghdad, events in Central Asia and Tabaristan only attained importance when they impacted directly upon the center, and it was all too easy to dismiss Iranians by labeling them as apostates when their views differed from those of caliphal circles. The image of Central Asia as distant and peripheral is strongly reinforced by reading Tabari (ironically a historian who, as his nisba indicates, was connected to a peripheral region through familial origin) and Ibn al-Athir. Moreover, sweeping and exaggerated claims are frequently made as to the extent of caliphal power, or that of caliphal vassals, which leads to misunderstandings and inaccuracies. The viewpoint of

Narshakhi's *Tarikh-i Bokhara* is entirely different, placing Bokhara at the center. This inevitably creates other peripheries, namely the marches of the Samanid realm, ruled by vassal dynasties descended from pre-Islamic rulers. However, it is still the most detailed and reliable source for the history of western Central Asia in the Samanid period.

Likewise, the *Tarikh-i Tabaristan* of Ibn Isfandiyyar, which uses the lost *Bavandnama* as a source, is the main (indeed, virtually the only) source of information for the Bavandid dynasty, who ruled an area considered peripheral by almost any definition.

In analyzing this material, I draw on the work of scholars of modern nationalism, whose analytical concepts can be applied to the new emphasis on the Iranian cultural repertory in the Persian Renaissance. In particular, the idea of invented traditions promulgated by Hobsbawm and Ranger in their seminal essay is a useful tool which fits the Samanid case especially well. This does revise the concept of invented traditions, which was envisioned as a phenomenon of the modern nation state and the modern West, impacting on non-Western areas only in the colonial context.⁴ My application of these ideas to the Samanid context shows that the idea of tradition is neither specifically modern nor specifically Western, and is patently present in the cultural milieu of the Persian Renaissance.

The term "Persian Renaissance" is one which I am borrowing from literary historians, who use it to refer to the literature in New Persian which first emerged under Samanid tutelage.⁵ New Persian was not a straightforward revival of the language of the Sasanian court; it was written in the Arabic script and incorporated loan words from both

⁴ Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, pp. 4-13. In engaging Hobsbawm & Ranger, Richard Handler asserted that the concept of tradition is a uniquely Western one: see Handler 1984, p. 1026. Others have applied the idea of invented traditions to non-Western societies, but only in a post-colonial context: see Hanson 1989, pp. 890-902; Hanson in Mauzé, ed., 1997, pp. 195-232; Briggs 1996, pp. 435-69.

⁵ Browne 1902, pp. 352, 375-6, 465; Browne 1906, pp. 1-4.

Arabic and Sogdian. As this in many ways parallels the Samanid use of the Persian past in architecture, it is a term I am adopting. Just as the Italian Renaissance was not a straightforward rebirth of the antique past but was instead a new and creative phenomenon firmly rooted in the *quattrocento*, so the Persian Renaissance was firmly a product of the Samanid milieu.

If “Renaissance” is a relatively straightforward term, “Persian” is potentially much more confusing. Literally it is the adjective corresponding to the province of Fars, the homeland of the Sasanians. Hence the classification of the Samanids as a “Persian” dynasty, often seen in surveys of Islamic art and architecture, is incorrect. The Samanids ruled much of western Central Asia and the Iranian province of Khorasan, an area geographically distant from Fars and populated by Sogdians (although the Samanids themselves originally came from the Termez-Balkh area, and were hence probably Bactrian). Persian, the language promoted by the Samanids for literature and for government, was one Iranian language commonly spoken at that time; others included Sogdian, Bactrian, Khorezmian, and Tabari. “Iranian” is in the philological sense a term which corresponds to “Germanic,” referring to a group of related languages and not to the territory of the modern nation-state of Iran. Hence the Samanids were Iranian, but not Persian, and the territory they ruled should not be viewed as a periphery of the area which now comprises Iran, just as the UK is not most accurately viewed as a distant German province just because its inhabitants speak a language linguistically related to German. The Samanids were Iranian Central Asians who adopted the Persian language for their own political purposes. I will use “Iranian” in its broad philological sense, and “Persian” to refer specifically to the language of Fars and of the Sasanian court and to cultural

elements associated with that region and with perceptions of the Sasanian past. However, when I have used “Iran” as a noun specifically referring to a geographic area in contrast to Central Asia, I am implying a correlation with the modern country, or more broadly, with the former Sasanian empire.

“Central Asia” is another vague and potentially confusing geographical designation. In the wide sense it encompasses the region between Iran and China, including the enormous steppe inhabited in this period by Turkish and Mongol nomadic tribes. I do not include the steppe, or eastern Central Asia (modern Xinjiang province in China). Although some Turkish tribes had converted to Islam by the 10th century, they were still nomadic and did not construct monumental mausolea until they conquered the settled lands to their south. Eastern Central Asia was at this time ruled primarily by the Qarakhanids; however, to my knowledge the scions of this dynasty did not construct monumental mausolea until after they conquered the Samanid realm. Admittedly scholarship on this region is somewhat inaccessible due to its location in modern China, and discussing the antiquity of the Muslim presence in Xinjiang is hardly a Chinese priority at present. Investigating eastern Central Asia, which after all was comprised of Iranian-speaking city states for much of its pre-Islamic history, would be an interesting avenue for future research, but in this dissertation “Central Asia” refers to the southwestern part of the region, comprised of settled, Iranian-speaking cities and located in the former Soviet Union.

Since the process of elevating Persian language and culture made it possible to be avowedly Persian while still being considered a good Muslim, and thereby effected the transformation of Islam from a religion specifically tied to Arab ethnicity to a world

religion, I have at times used “Arab” versus “Islamic” to make this distinction clearer. I refer to the enormous land mass ruled by the Umayyads and the early ‘Abbasids as an Arab rather than an Islamic empire in order to differentiate this stage of Islamic history, when political power was held by Arabs and Arabic was the sole language of government and of literary production, from the period of the Persian Renaissance which followed. This elevation of Persian did not imply a denigration of Arabic; indeed, literary and scientific production in Arabic continued unabated in the eastern Islamic world during this period, sponsored by the same potentates who sponsored literary production in Persian. However, this era did see the entrenchment of a more inclusive view of Islam and marked a stage in the evolution of the religion as a whole.

Given that my dissertation is concerned with the Persian Renaissance, I have elected not to force Persian words into an Arabic mold and I have adopted a transliteration system based upon that used by the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, albeit in a simplified version. I am eliminating the diacritics, which I find to be cumbersome without any tangible benefit, since they are not needed by those who speak the language in question and incomprehensible to those who do not. This also entails abandoning the concept used by the *Encyclopedia Iranica* of having each Persian letter represented by a single letter: hence I will use *zh* for ژ, *ch* for چ, and *kh* for خ. I will also use the system for Russian transliteration used by the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, which is convenient enough and does not attempt to impose single letters for each Cyrillic letter. For words which are commonly used in English, I will use the English version.

In the first chapter I will discuss the historiography of Islamic funerary architecture and will then present the buildings which are the focus of the dissertation.

Since an understanding of the Persian past and the conversion process to Islam is essential in order to understand the phenomenon of the Persian Renaissance, the second chapter will briefly cover the political, religious and artistic situation of both Iran and Central Asia in the immediate pre-Islamic and the early Islamic periods. The third chapter then deals with the Persian Renaissance, giving the necessary background for the analysis in the chapters which follow. In the fourth chapter, I analyze the domed square mausolea and argue that the Samanid mausoleum was constructed by Isma'il, the founder of the dynasty, for particular political purposes connected with the establishment of Samanid power in Bokhara. The tomb towers are the subject of the final chapter; I argue that their form and the lack of burials inside them can be explained by the Bavandid perception of the Sasanian past and their need to draw upon this past for dynastic legitimacy in the context of the unique culture which flourished in Tabaristan, the region south of the Caspian Sea.

Chapter I: The Buildings and their Historiography

General Historiographical Background

Since the hadiths prohibited many pre-Islamic funerary customs including wailing and lamentation and the erection of tents or other structures over graves, many scholars have taken this to mean a blanket prohibition on funerary architecture in Islam, and have viewed the construction of mausolea as a breaking of the rules. Scholars of architectural history, therefore, have generally followed Creswell, who posited that the originally strict prohibition on any sort of burial apart from being wrapped in a simple shroud was eventually abandoned after the initial transgression, the construction of open canopy mausolea beginning in the mid-9th century.⁶ Surveys of Islamic art and architecture have explained Islamic funerary architecture in these terms, and have used selections of the extant buildings to trace a linear trajectory: the earliest extant mausoleum, the 9th century Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya at Samarra, is taken to be the first Islamic mausoleum, with the form then proliferating on the fringes of the Islamic world in the 10-11th centuries, the date of the next extant examples. Gradually the mausoleum comes to be accepted over most of the Islamic world, its form evolves and its decoration becomes increasingly colorful with the advent of glazed tile.

Scholars who have delved further into the genre of funerary architecture have still viewed its emergence, after a supposed lacuna during the earliest two centuries of Islam, as an Islam-wide phenomenon. Diez, for example, stressed that the Shi'ites were the first to transgress, since many early examples are from Iran and Central Asia as well as from Fatimid Egypt (despite the fact that Iran and Central Asia were mostly Sunni at this

⁶ Creswell MAE, vol. I, pp. 110-3; see also Creswell, EMA, vol. II, p.371.

time).⁷ Oleg Grabar also noted the existence of early mausolea in Central Asia and in upper Egypt, and he posited that the location along the frontiers of the Islamic world was responsible for this transgression; he attributed this to a *jihad* mentality amongst *ghazi* warriors fighting for the faith, and suggested that their martyrdom allotted them a special place deserving of an otherwise forbidden mausoleum.⁸

Yusuf Raghīb challenged this approach of looking only at extant buildings, and he reviewed the literary sources and concluded that mausolea were built from the very earliest Islamic period, particularly for the Prophet (whose house burial was later enclosed in the mosque of Walid I), Companions of the Prophet, descendents of the Prophet ('Alids in particular), Quranic/Biblical figures, martyrs and caliphs, so that these religiously significant people were considered exceptional enough to warrant a mausoleum.⁹ Michael Rogers has concurred with Raghīb's approach, stressing that the earliest historically attested mausolea were mostly in Syria and Mesopotamia, so that this is not a transgression arising first on the frontiers as Grabar had argued.¹⁰

In addition to the pitfalls of examining only extant buildings, Grabar's approach also highlights another problem of seeking broad explanations valid over the entire Islamic world: the establishment of a center/periphery dichotomy rooted more in the history of Western scholarship than in that of the societies it studies. This approach has relegated Central Asia in particular to the fringes as an area where sedentary Iranian populations met the realm of Turkic nomads, who converted to Islam rather late and hence can easily be viewed with suspicion as not properly Muslim or at least not as

⁷ Diez 1918, p. 89.

⁸ Grabar 1966, pp. 41-2. See also Hillenbrand 1973, p. 41; Hillenbrand FFM, p. 264.

⁹ Raghīb 1970, pp. 3-36.

¹⁰ Rogers 1976, p. 129.

orthodox as their Arabic-speaking co-religionists. The fact that Central Asia, unlike the Arab lands, was not colonized by a Western European power, and has been inaccessible to Western scholarship virtually up until the present, has exacerbated this tendency. The fact that it was the Russians who colonized the region and have dominated its study, with their difficult language and Cold War isolation, has exacerbated it even more. Hence it has been a continual temptation for Western scholars to ignore the region more or less entirely, considering it as a provincial extension of Iran and as a useful place of origin for anything suspiciously un-Islamic, such as the construction of mausolea.

For Soviet scholars, on the other hand, Central Asia was very central indeed, and considered to be a region in its own right. The politicization of Soviet archaeology, however, meant that scholars were called upon to justify not only the boundaries of the Soviet Union but also of each individual republic, so that the image of a “Kirghiz” and a “Tajik” architecture had to be maintained, as well as emphasizing the separateness of Central Asia as a whole from the rest of the Islamic world, including Iran. Much of the immense body of Soviet scholarship on Central Asia shows that, from about the 1960s onwards, Soviet scholars were as unaware of Western scholarship on Islamic architecture as Westerners were of theirs. Before the Cold War, however, their isolation was not so absolute, and Creswell has also made a significant impact there: his scenario for the early development of funerary architecture in Islam is a trope as often-repeated in Soviet publications as it is in the West, despite the fact that it sits rather oddly with their general downplaying of religion as a useful category for historical inquiry.

Robert Hillenbrand is the scholar who has probably written more on Islamic funerary architecture as a whole than anyone else on either side of the former Iron

Curtain. He nuanced Creswell's scenario on the evolution of funerary architecture by postulating that the first transgressions of the rules for a simple burial were the use of decorated shrouds and elaborate coffins, followed by tombstones, and then by mausolea for a few religiously important individuals.¹¹ Hillenbrand has focused on the Saljuq tomb towers of Iran, and in so doing has defined a broad typology of Iranian mausolea, dividing them into tomb towers and domed squares. For him, the major difference between the two is the ratio of width to height: in the tomb towers, this ranges from 1:3.5 to 1:5.5, whereas in the domed squares it rarely exceeds 1:2.¹² For the period under consideration here, the differences go much further than these measurements, and include geography, position in the landscape, language of inscriptions, elaboration of interiors, funerary practice, and diversity of patronage. Since I have found this typological division to be a particularly useful one due to functional as well as formal differences, I have adopted it for this dissertation.

The historiography of the two types is also very different, since most of the domed squares considered here, but none of the tomb towers, are located on former Soviet territory. I will first outline the historiography of the tomb towers in general, and then that of the domed squares. In this and in the more detailed discussion of individual buildings to follow, I will generally maintain a division between Soviet and Western scholarship, as the two have followed different trajectories and have seldom overlapped.

The pre-Saljuq tomb towers are found, apart from one exception, in the north of Iran, mostly in the far reaches of the Alborz Mountains. Apart from the Gunbad-i Qabus, which was excavated by a Russian team in the late 19th century, these towers were almost

¹¹ Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 253-4.

¹² Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 282-3.

completely unknown to Soviet scholars. In most Western scholarship, too, they are remote and peripheral, and hence relatively unknown. They are discussed mostly in terms of the architectural origins of the tomb tower genre which flourished later under the Saljuqs and Mongols: in the formation of a history of Islamic architecture, it is easy to see what the tomb towers became, but much less clear to discern what their origins were.

Because of their remote and inaccessible location, the earliest group of tomb towers has largely escaped scholarly attention, and very few have actually visited Lajim, Resget and Radkan West. Hence scholarly opinions about them often conflate them with the later, much more accessible and well-known Saljuq tomb towers which stretch across Central Asia, Iran and Anatolia. The Saljuq tomb towers, of brick in Iran & Central Asia but translated into stone in Anatolia, have quite different proportions, with a balance between their conical roofs, their round or polyhedral bodies, and their crypts, which extend above ground and do actually contain bodies. They also have much more lavish decoration and a much wider base of patronage, including many women in Anatolia in particular. Much of what is said about the origins of the Iranian tomb towers shows that that it is these Saljuq examples which the author had in mind.

It was Diez who first tackled the origin of the tomb towers: in several publications, including *Survey of Persian Art*, he argued that this genre was inspired by nomadic tents.¹³ He used descriptions of Mongol tents by William of Rubruck to support his thesis, showing once again the common approach amongst Western scholars of attributing anything remotely mysterious to Central Asian origin. Since the region is not well-known by most who cannot read the Russian literature it is a strategy which usually

¹³ Diez 1915, p. 73; Diez 1923, pp. 51-5; Diez SPA, pp. 926-7: here he also describes the legend of Qabus b. Vushmgir, who according to al-Jannabi was placed in a glass coffin which was suspended by a chain from the dome inside the Gunbad-i Qabus. Diez incorrectly attributes this to Avestan practice.

works, as not many scholars can disprove or even argue accurately against such suppositions. One part of this trend is the essentializing of all Central Asian nomads, who according to western scholarship were timeless and un-evolving, as well as having nothing to contribute to the sedentary civilizations they often conquered. Hence Diez could use a description of Mongol tents to argue for much earlier Turkish influence on the form of the tomb towers. He knew that the Gunbad-i Qabus pre-dated the Saljuqs, and so he postulated that earlier nomadic settlers had moved to the region (with no evidence to support this thesis and none felt to be needed).

David Talbot Rice, in the 1965 Penguin survey of Islamic art, followed Diez' argument exactly, including the references to Rubruck.¹⁴ Otto-Dorn, who like Diez was a student of Strzygowski,¹⁵ also argued that the towers were derived from tents, and compared their decoration to fringes and other textiles elements of which tents are composed.¹⁶ Clearly she had the Saljuq towers in mind, as the Gunbad-i Qabus and its contemporaries do not have the decoration she was describing, and she stated that the form arrived with the Saljuqs. Guitty Azarpay has also argued for the influence of tents, citing traditions of nomadic tent burial among various Turkic and Mongol groups. She also maintained that Armenian influence accounted for the conical roofs, although this is apparent only in the Saljuq towers.¹⁷ Emel Esin argued that the towers were derived from tents but from a highly nationalistic viewpoint: tents are Turkish in her view and she set out to prove Turkish influence and Turkish continuity with examples ranging over a

¹⁴ Talbot Rice 1965, pp. 61-3.

¹⁵ For a study on the influence of the Vienna School on subsequent Islamic architectural history, see Oya Pancaroğlu 2007.

¹⁶ Otto-Dorn 1964, pp. 137-40.

¹⁷ Azarpay, in Daneshvari, ed., 1981, pp. 9-12.

millennium and all over Central Asia (including illustrations from sedentary Iranian-speaking cities in eastern Central Asia).¹⁸

Khatchatrian argued against direct Armenian influence but contended that the plan of the Gunbad-i Qabus is linked to that of the Shepherd Church at Ani, only in reverse (a star in a circle vs. a circle in a star). Through a mosque lamp in Qairouan, he argued that this broad area was subject to the influence of antique geometry and of antique mausolea.¹⁹

Chahriyar Adle and Assadouleh Melikian-Chirvani, in their article on the tomb towers of Damghan (Pir-i 'Alamdar, Chehel Dukhtaran and Mihmandust), argued against the influence of tents, correctly contending that the earliest towers pre-dated the Saljuq invasion and that the Caspian area was noted for its sedentary population which held conservatively to its Iranian traditions. They attributed the form of the tomb towers to two factors: climate, since the region receives as much rainfall as the south of England; and Zoroastrian influence, which they based on their readings of the *Shahnama* and the *Zend-Avesta*.²⁰

Hillenbrand, who wrote his dissertation at Oxford on the Saljuq tomb towers of Iran, contended in 1973 that the towers could not have descended from any Sasanian inspiration because of the Zoroastrian practice of exposure, stating categorically that “such a creed could scarcely have given rise to a mausoleum cult.”²¹ He attributed them instead to some vague Central Asian influence. He noted that some Sogdian ossuaries had domed lids and that a painting of a mourning scene from Panjikent shows a body in a

¹⁸ Esin 1967, pp. 281-313.

¹⁹ Khatchatrian 1955, pp. 137-44.

²⁰ Adle & Melikian-Chirvani 1972, pp. 285-90.

²¹ Hillenbrand 1973, p. 42. This idea was repeated in his later work, even though it contradicted other statements which seemed to allow for some type of Zoroastrian influence: see FFM, pp. 254, 274.

domed building (although this interpretation of the scene is not universally accepted, as the structure in question could also be a textile). Hillenbrand conceded that the early Central Asian examples are domed squares, not towers, but he still contended that Central Asia was somehow responsible.²² The fact that such a vague argument has never been challenged in print shows the pervasiveness of this attitude towards the region in western scholarship. By 1994, Hillenbrand had revised his argument somewhat to allow that some vague, ill-defined Zoroastrian influence may be present due to the Pahlavi inscriptions & calendar. He simultaneously argued for the influence of Turkish tents while admitting that the early examples were built by pre-Saljuq princes “of Iranian rather than Turkish stock.”²³ Grabar has also argued for both Turkish and Zoroastrian influence in the Cambridge History and in his survey with Ettinghausen.²⁴

Abbas Daneshvari, who studied under Otto-Dorn at UCLA, has addressed the origin of the tomb towers from the point of view of that group of scholars seeking endogenous, intra-Islamic explanations and Sufi meanings, namely Ardalan, Burckhardt, and Critchlow. He argued that Arabs as well as Turks had tent burials, and so the tomb towers must have been derived from Arab tents (he does not explain how Arab nomads are supposed to have moved into this region where Arab armies were unable to penetrate). He alone addressed their meaning; whereas his western counterparts were all concerned with formalistic evolution, Daneshvari sought to apply Sufi principles to the tomb towers to discern the meanings behind the form. He saw them as Paradise symbols, and used both their height and numerical symbolism (based on the number of sides of the

²² Hillenbrand 1973, p. 43.

²³ Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 275-6.

²⁴ Grabar CHI, p. 342; Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 221-2; Ettinghausen, Grabar & Jenkins-Madina 2001, pp. 113-4.

polyhedral examples) to justify his argument. He saw the conical roofs as resembling comets and contended that astral symbolism was also present. He also analysed the wall paintings in the Kharaqan towers (the earliest of the Saljuq towers and the only ones with wall paintings), in particular the presence of trees and peacocks, as paradise symbols.²⁵ Like his Sufi colleagues, he lacked the historical specificity valued by western scholarship and makes sweeping generalizations which contribute to the Orientalist trope of Islamic culture as timeless and unevolving. Consequently he has not managed to create much of a debate about these buildings seen as marginal by most scholars anyway.

The only Soviet scholar to have addressed the origin of the tomb towers is Galina Pugachenkova, a student of M.E. Masson and one of the most prolific scholars of the last century. Pugachenkova argued against the idea of tents translated into brick propagated by Diez, and pointed instead to permanent funerary structures in the Central Asian steppe.²⁶ Despite her formidable knowledge of Central Asia, however, her argument still posits that the tower form was brought to Iran by the Saljuqs, which is historically incorrect. Moreover, her illustrations could be divided into three categories: beehive-shaped structures; squat buildings with conical domes, which seemed to be closer to the domed square type; and just one building, Begim-munara in northern Kyrgyzstan, which bears some morphological similarity to the Gunbad-i Qabus. This intriguing building, however, lacks inscriptions and is dated to the 11th century based only upon its slight resemblance to the famous tomb tower and to the nearby minaret of Burana.

²⁵ Daneshvari 1986, pp. 9-64.

²⁶ Pugachenkova 1949, pp. 57-77.

Of the scholars discussed here, only Adle and Melikian-Chirvani really sought to place these buildings in their own historical contexts. Annabel Wharton has shown how western scholars searching for origins and influences relevant to their own interests have consequently misunderstood the buildings of Dura Europos, seeing the city as on the periphery (of the area they are interested in) when actually it was sited on major trade routes and would be seen entirely differently if placed in its own context. The same could be said of the tomb towers. Adle and Melikian-Chirvani have approached these buildings from the point of view of Islamicists, so that their venture into Zoroastrian text consisted of the 10th century Iranian epic, the Shahnama, and the notoriously vague, difficult and badly translated Zend-Avesta. This led them to conflate various aspects of Zoroastrian funerary practice, such as exposure and the subsequent disposal of bones, and their arguments are consequently incorrect in many ways. An understanding of the Zoroastrian past is one of the issues which is necessary in order to really place the buildings in context, together with a thorough understanding of the 11th century milieu in which the tomb towers were constructed. So far this has not happened, as previous scholarship has sought to explain the buildings either solely on the basis of form or on the basis of vague and sweeping, and often historically incorrect, ideas.

Scholarship concerning the domed square type of mausoleum in the 10-11th centuries, on the other hand, has been very different, being predominantly Soviet. The Soviets were concerned much less with making sweeping statements about the genre as a whole and instead with documenting, excavating, and dating the buildings. Their enormous body of work is rooted in an intimate knowledge of the architecture and archaeology of Central Asia, backed up by Soviet work in related fields such as

numismatics. The power of the Soviet state enabled the archaeologists in Central Asia to do work which would have been inconceivable in Iran, namely excavating the mausolea. The vast amount of data which has been gathered as a result, combined with the lack of dated foundation inscriptions on many of the buildings, resulted in a very detail-oriented approach and made the establishment of construction dates a major focus of Soviet scholarship. Like their colleagues in the West, the Soviets were engaged in the categorization of their material: cataloguing, describing, dating, and then creating typologies and linear trajectories of evolution. Due to the immensity of that task in Central Asia and to their Cold War isolation, they did not move beyond this and embrace the theoretical changes which have affected architectural history in the West. Post-independence scholarship has still continued in the Soviet mold, but with infinitely smaller resources and possibly even greater political interference.

Therefore, whereas scholarship on the Iranian tomb towers has been rather scanty on detailed information on each particular building and has mostly consisted of sweeping statements on the tomb tower genre as a whole, scholarship on the domed square mausolea of Central Asia has been just the opposite: rich in detail, with relatively little speculation about the genre as a whole. In Western scholarship, the domed squares are generally considered to have descended from the Iranian fire temple, or *chahar taq*, as well as from classical martyria: Hillenbrand has been a major proponent of these ideas.²⁷ Ettinghausen and Grabar added the idea of royal secular architecture as a precursor to this type of mausoleum.²⁸ Soviet scholars, on the other hand, with their much greater knowledge of Central Asia, have not echoed these suggestions. They have acknowledged

²⁷ Hillenbrand 1973, p. 43; Hillenbrand FFM, p. 281.

²⁸ Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 218-20.

the morphological similarity of the *chahar taq* and some Central Asian mausolea by adopting this term for the type of square domed building with four entrances, but have pointed out that this is characteristic of the fire temples of Iran, not of Central Asia. They have stressed the similarities in building technology but also the many architectural differences between the 10-11th century mausolea and the substantial remains of both pre-Islamic and Islamic palatial buildings in Central Asia. When they have offered opinions on the origins of the domed square mausoleum, this has been firmly rooted in their own archaeological work in Central Asia. Litvinskii, for example, based upon his excavations at Kafirnigan, has postulated that Buddhist temples substantially influenced the Islamic mausolea.²⁹ Rtveldze pointed to the buildings which housed ossuaries in Bactria-Tokharistan and Chaganian as potential precursors.³⁰

The typologies developed by the Soviets to categorize the Central Asian mausolea were considerably more nuanced than simply terming the entire group “domed squares.” In all Soviet scholarship, the *chahar taq* is differentiated from the mausolea with a single entrance defined by the high protrusion known as a *pishtaq*: these are often referred to as “portal” mausolea. Some scholars have gone further: Man’kovskaya, for example, divided all Central Asian mausolea into categories according to region and plan.³¹ Her regions consisted of Maverannahr, Khorezm, Northern Khorasan, and Northern Turkestan. Her typology consisted of two main categories, single-roomed and multi-roomed, each of which was further subdivided. Single-roomed mausolea were divided into centralized composition, façade-oriented composition, and portal mausolea; multi-roomed mausolea were divided into conglomerates, suites, linear-axial complexes and

²⁹ Litvinskii 1979, pp. 65-70.

³⁰ Rtveldze 1982, pp. 33-5.

³¹ Man’kovskaya, in *Khudozhestvennaya kul'tura*, 1983, pp. 30-49.

cross-axial complexes. Khmel'nitskii used different typologies according to the time period under consideration: for his volume on Samanid architecture, he divided mausolea into centralized and single-entrance types;³² for his volume covering the 11th century up to the Mongol invasion, his categories consisted of centralized, façade-oriented, portal mausolea, and a category of "other" which subsumed octagonal plans, double-domed mausolea and complexes.³³

In the two sections which follow, I will present the buildings under consideration here, divided into the two main types, domed square mausolea and tomb towers. I will briefly describe each building and the previous scholarship which concerns it. For the domed squares, the dating of the buildings which lack such information in their inscriptions will be a major concern, reflecting both the priorities of earlier, mostly Soviet, scholarship and the need to establish that the buildings do belong in this dissertation.

Domed Squares

Samanid Mausoleum

One of the earliest and most celebrated extant monuments of Islamic architecture, the Samanid mausoleum is situated in a park in the western part of the city of Bokhara. The park was formerly an *intra muros* cemetery,³⁴ and the Qarakhanid era city walls are still visible on its western edge. The building is a domed cube measuring nearly 10 m per side, with slightly battered walls. It is offset from the cardinal directions and has an

³² Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 119-78.

³³ Khmel'nitskii 1996, pp. 152-259.

³⁴ See Sukhareva 1954, p. 27.

entrance on each side, giving it the shape of the Zoroastrian fire temples of Sasanian Iran. It is composed of baked bricks measuring 23x23x3 cm and 24x24x3.5 cm, and these bricks are not only the material of construction but also the primary material of decoration, arranged in such a way as to give a basket-weave texture and appearance to the surface of the building.

The corners of the building are defined by engaged columns, which nearly, but not exactly, correspond to four small domes which surround the main dome. Between the columns and the domes there is an arcaded gallery which encircles the building but is not accessible anywhere from it. The colonettes of the arcade are one of the few points of the building decorated with a stucco revetment (fig. 3). Above the arcade is a decorative band of brick pearls, and each of the four doorways is also framed by a pearl band. Within these bands, each of the four doorways is an identical pointed arch delineated by engaged columns in its lower section. Above the point of each arch is a triangular motif enclosing wings or leaves, and in the spandrel of each arch is a geometric motif comprising a square pearl band enclosing a diamond which in turn encloses another square with a circle in the center (fig. 4). The bricks of the spandrels are all turned to point outwards, giving this section of the building a very different texture and appearance to the rest.

The entrance of the building is slightly off the ground, and in its current state 3 steps lead up towards the door on the eastern side, with a slight downward step into the mausoleum.³⁵ A modern cenotaph lies off centre and towards the door. The interior walls are built with a similar basket-weave brick pattern in the lower part and another

³⁵ The Soviet excavators and restorers decided in the 1930s that the eastern entrance had always been the main one, hence its use as the sole entrance today. See M.S. Bulatov, "Restavratsiya Mavzoleya Samanidov," 1967, p. 16.

very textured pattern comprised of squares and diamonds in the upper section. The interior doorways are framed in pearl bands like their exterior counterparts, but without the geometric motifs in the spandrels. Inside the upper part of the arch the bricks are arranged as diamonds and triangles, with the east and west doors having a slightly different scheme than those of north and south. Diamonds are also used in a band which rings the base of the dome, with a pearl band below (fig. 5).

The dome is connected with the cube below it by means of squinches which form an eight-sided zone of transition. The squinches are divided by a band down the middle, giving two triangular sections (fig. 6), an idea which would later give rise to the multitudinous divisions known as muqarnas. Each of the triangular sections is lined with a scrolling vine motif in stucco, and each has a window which allows light to enter the building from the gallery. Light also enters through the brick lattice which fills the arches in the four flat sections of the zone of transition. These flat sections are divided from the squinches by engaged colonettes. The spandrels of each of the eight arches in the zone of transition are decorated with a round stucco disk, and each panel is surmounted by a band of diamonds. The entire zone is surmounted by another sixteen-sided transitional zone decorated with a continuous band of quatrefoils.

One of the most unusual aspects of this mausoleum is its almost total lack of inscriptions; the only piece of writing associated with the building is a wooden lintel found over the eastern doorway during excavations in the 1930s. The Soviet Arabist V.I. Belyaev read this inscription as Nasr b. Ahmad b. Isma'il, and hence the building is commonly dated to the reign of the Samanid ruler Nasr II (ruled 914-43).³⁶ However,

³⁶ Denike 1939, p. 8.

Blair has cast doubt on this reading, asserting that the inscription is illegible,³⁷ and so an earlier date during the reign of Ismaʿil (ruled 873-914) is also possible. Popular memory attributes the building to Ismaʿil, and Zasiḡkin and other Soviet scholars have long pointed to the existence of a 16th century copy of a 10th century waqf document, which mentions that Ismaʿil endowed land in the cemetery of Naukanda for the grave of his father Ahmad,³⁸ as evidence for an attribution to the reign of Ismaʿil. Since the excavations in the 1920s unearthed three male bodies, it is possible that Ismaʿil was the patron, and that the wooden lintel was inscribed with the name of Nasr II at the time of his death and burial (assuming that Belyaev’s reading was correct and that the condition of the plaque had simply deteriorated between the time of his reading and that of Blair over 60 years later). Given the sophisticated nature of the building and its decoration, the existence of the wooden inscription, and the excellent fit between the location of the building and the description of the Naukanda cemetery in the waqf document and other texts, its attribution as the dynastic mausoleum of the Samanids is secure; in Chapter 4, I will argue that it was constructed by Ismaʿil.

The building was first published and attributed to Ismaʿil by Olufsen in 1911;³⁹ since then it has been widely acknowledged as a masterpiece of Islamic architecture and has appeared in every major survey of Islamic art and architecture.⁴⁰ It has also been (and still is) an important pilgrimage site for the people of Bokhara and the surrounding regions, as legends have accrued around the figure of Ismaʿil and he has become a saint

³⁷ Blair 1992, p. 25.

³⁸ Zasiḡkin 1959 arkhiv, p. 1; Masson 1979, pp. 26-33. Narshakhi also mentions that Ahmad b. Ismaʿil was interred in Naukanda cemetery: see Narshakhi, p. 129; Frye trans., p. 95. Blair, in spite of calling the legibility of the wooden inscription plaque into question, still believes that the mausoleum was built by Nasr II; see Blair 1992, p. 27.

³⁹ Olufsen 1911, p. 412.

⁴⁰ Veimarn 1940, pp. 25-8; Ettinghausen & Grabar, pp. 217-220; Talbot Rice, pp. 48-9; Hillenbrand, p. 101; Hillenbrand FFM pp. 275-6, 288-90; Rosintal & Schroeder, SPA, p. 1235.

of popular religion.⁴¹ Hence graves began to accumulate around and up against the mausoleum early on, so that the entire bottom part of the building was obscured on each side by the early twentieth century, with only one door accessible. The inside walls had been partially plastered over at some point, and the dome had collapsed. The Soviet government very quickly set about repairing and investigating the building as well as transforming it from a shrine into a monument. The dome was rebuilt in 1922-3. The small corner domes had survived, but according to Zasiipkin, they had been altered in the 11th or 12th century and so neither they nor the large dome currently reflect their original form in the Samanid period.⁴² The rest of the building fared much better, with the brick patterns well preserved beneath the plaster on the interior and the graves which abutted the lower part of the exterior. The existence of four well-preserved doors allowed the restorers to reliably reconstruct the small areas of damage around each one, as archival photos show.⁴³

Shortly after the first phase of restoration, the building was excavated in 1926-8 by a team led by V.L. Viatkin. This team discovered three bodies buried in the mausoleum and the wooden inscription plaque. Further restoration work was carried out in 1937-9 under the direction of Zasiipkin, and at this time the graves around the building were cleared to make it the centre of a plaza, free from encumbrances and easily viewed from every angle. The medieval cemetery was transformed into a park, with only trees and grass between the Samanid mausoleum and the nearby shrine known as Chashma Ayub. There have not been any major restoration projects since that of Zasiipkin, but

⁴¹ See Sukhareva 1976, pp. 132-3; see also Olufsen, pp. 412-3.

⁴² Zasiipkin 1959 arkhiv, p. 3.

⁴³ The worst areas of damage had occurred on the southern side of the building: see Bulatov 1967, p. 20.

minor changes have occurred, such as the grilles which now fill three of the four doors, and the expansion of the brick plaza and addition of a pool in the spring of 2005.

Western scholarship, while always paying tribute to the quality and importance of the building, has actually devoted very little attention to it. Most Western scholars of Islamic architecture are not familiar with the Soviet literature on the building, apart from the 1936 article by Rempel in English.⁴⁴ Hence the surveys all include and illustrate the building, but with little more than a few perfunctory remarks about the quality of the brickwork and the importance of the monument for the development of the squinch and of domed mausolea in the Iranian world. The fullest treatment, which is still perfunctory, is given in the survey of Ettinghausen and Grabar, with a lengthy description of the architecture and the following inconclusive statement on its origins:

Although individual themes or motifs of the Bokhara mausoleum may be related to aspects of pre-Islamic art, the reason for their congregation here at this time is unclear. The plan, though akin to some, is not exactly like that of any known fire-temple – in any case an unlikely model for a mausoleum. It might of course derive from late antique martyria, but it is difficult to explain how such Mediterranean forms could have reached central Asia. Nor is it altogether in the tradition of later Iranian mausoleums. Since it was a princely foundation, its plan and decoration may well have derived from secular building.⁴⁵

In addition to the surveys, the mausoleum is also covered in various catalogues, such as Leisten's catalog of funerary architecture⁴⁶ and Blair's on early Islamic inscriptions in Iran and Central Asia,⁴⁷ and also in general articles on Iranian architecture and on funerary monuments.⁴⁸ However, in spite of this broad exposure and the building's familiarity to any student of Islamic art, it has never received any in-depth treatment in Western scholarship. It merits only a brief celebration as a monument which "looks

⁴⁴ Rempel 1936.

⁴⁵ Ettinghausen & Grabar, pp. 219-20.

⁴⁶ Leisten p. 141-2.

⁴⁷ Blair 1992 pp. 25-9.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Grabar 1966, p. 17; Hillenbrand, "The Islamic Architecture of Persia," *Arts of Persia*, pp. 83-4; Leisten in Kalter & Pavaloi, pp. 81-3.

backward as well as forward” and is usually termed, as Hillenbrand so succinctly put it, “a fire temple in Islamic dress.”⁴⁹ Only Blair puts the building in any sort of historical context, in her analysis of the inscription on the wooden lintel, in order to argue that it must have been built during the reign of Nasr II as this was the cultural “golden age” of the Samanids.⁵⁰

In Soviet scholarship, on the other hand, the building received a great deal of attention. The main emphasis has been technical: establishing a date of construction, identifying a patron, excavating, and restoring. Bulatov, who wrote a dissertation on the Samanid mausoleum for the Moscow Architectural Institute in 1965, summed up the priorities of Soviet scholarship vis-à-vis the building as follows:

...attribution and dating of the monument; [its] general historical-architectural character; the genesis of its architectural form and analogies; the architectural proportions of the building.⁵¹

As mentioned above, the connection with Isma‘il had already been made by Olufsen of the Royal Danish Geographical Society on the basis of local legends. M. Saidzhanov was the first to identify the waqf document which lent a concrete historical basis to the attribution.⁵² Rempel also attributed the building to Isma‘il, and hence to the late 9th century, in his 1936 article which was translated and published in the Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art & Archaeology, introducing the building to Western scholarship and the canon of Islamic architecture.⁵³ After the discovery of the wooden plaque during the Viatkin excavations, however, Denike argued that the mausoleum was

⁴⁹ Hillenbrand 1989, p. 83; see also FFM, pp. 289-90. Creswell was probably the first to connect the mausoleum with the plan of Sasanian fire temples: see EMA, p. 371.

⁵⁰ Blair 1992, pp. 26-9.

⁵¹ Bulatov, Zhemchuzhina, 1976, p. 12.

⁵² Saidzhanov, 1927, p. 54.

⁵³ Rempel 1936, p. 199; see also Shishkin 1936, p. 32; Bulatov 1976, p. 13; Zahidov 1996, p. 92.

constructed during the reign of Nasr II (914-43).⁵⁴ Nil'sen, while avoiding the issue of the specific patron, termed the building the "best example of 10th century 'Islamic' architecture anywhere".⁵⁵ Like Nil'sen, most Soviet scholars declined to name a specific patron and hedged their bets, dating the building to the late 9th – early 10th centuries.⁵⁶

The architectural proportions of the building, like many others in Central Asia, became the subject of multiple geometric diagrams and analyses: one example can be seen in Rempel's seminal 1936 article.⁵⁷ Bulatov made such a geometrical analysis the subject of his dissertation: after a lengthy mathematical presentation, he then argued that the geometry of the building, which demonstrates the harmony of architecture and nature, meshed with the neo-Aristotelian philosophy of Ibn Sina, proving that mathematics, architecture, poetry and philosophy are all intricately linked.⁵⁸

In his later monograph on the mausoleum, Bulatov moved away from such metaphysical speculations and addressed what he had identified as another major concern of Soviet scholarship, the architectural origins of the building. Soviet scholars, foreshadowing the comments of Hillenbrand, have long termed this building as one which looks backward as well as forward.⁵⁹ However, they have tended to characterize it as the apex of pre-Islamic Central Asian architecture rather than as one of the first masterpieces of Islamic architecture,⁶⁰ as their Western counterparts have done. In this way they have accentuated a separate identity for Central Asia, with the Samanid

⁵⁴ Denike 1939, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Nil'sen 1956, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Masson 1979, p. 29; Zaskipkin 1948, p. 38; Voronina, 1985, p. 191; Pugachenkova 1964, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Rempel 1936, p. 206, fig. 11. See also Pugachekova & Rempel, 1958, p. 66; Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 132-3.

⁵⁸ Bulatov 1965.

⁵⁹ Rempel, 1936, p. 199; Zaskipkin 1948, p. 38; Pugachekova & Rempel, 1958, p. 67; Pasport 3.4-4.2.1, arkhiv.

⁶⁰ Zaskipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 6; Bulatov 1964, p. 39.

mausoleum as a key link in the historical trajectory of the architecture of that region. The considerable attention which has been devoted to the building has resulted in an array of explanations for its historical antecedents, much richer than the suggestions we have already seen of fire temple, classical martyria, and secular princely architecture.

Denike, in his book on Central Asian ornament, pointed out the Sasanian antecedents of some of the decorative motifs, such as the circle or “pearl.”⁶¹ Rempel found textual evidence of a government building, with a plan similar to that of the Samanid mausoleum, at Merv in the 8th century. However, he also pointed out that the arcaded gallery was widely used in the Buddhist architecture of Afghanistan and eastern Central Asia.⁶² Litvinskii took this idea further, arguing that Buddhist temple architecture was the direct predecessor of the Samanid mausoleum and all other Central Asian mausolea with the *chahar taq* plan, citing his excavations of the temple of Qalai-Kafirnigan as evidence.⁶³ Zasiipkin noted that the colonettes in the corners of the zone of transition in the interior are strikingly similar to pre-Islamic wooden examples excavated in Central Asia.⁶⁴ In an unpublished manuscript, he also asserted (unfortunately without any supporting evidence) that he believed the Samanid mausoleum was built upon an earlier Zoroastrian cultic site.⁶⁵ He saw it as having the form of a fire temple, with the arcade mimicking those seen on some Sogdian ossuaries. He compared the building with those seen on a silver dish from Khorezm and a wall-painting (which he characterized as

⁶¹ Denike, 1939, p. 9.

⁶² Rempel, 1936, pp. 203-4.

⁶³ Litvinskii 1979, pp. 65-70.

⁶⁴ Zasiipkin 1948, p. 41; see also Zasiipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 5; Pugachenkova & Rempel, 1958, pp. 66, 68; Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 135-6 points towards not only the colonettes but also other motifs deriving from Sogdian wooden architecture.

⁶⁵ Zasiipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 1.

the mourning of Siyavush) from Panjikent.⁶⁶ Voronina also stressed the similarities between the form of the Samanid mausoleum and the Zoroastrian fire temples of Iran (not of Central Asia), and she linked this form to both the kiosk mosque of Iran (a form posited by Andre Godard and now discredited) and the *chahar taq* mausolea of Khorasan (specifically the region around Merv).⁶⁷ These mausolea had been first published by Pugachenkova,⁶⁸ who also wrote about the Samanid mausoleum numerous times. In her opinion, virtually every single element of the architecture of the building can be seen in the wooden and unbaked brick architecture of the Sogdians, so that the mausoleum was “organically connected” with monumental Sogdian architecture, but with significant new innovations such as some of the decorative details and the use of baked brick.⁶⁹ She also connected the building with the mourning scene from the wall painting discovered at Panjikent.⁷⁰

In his dissertation, Bulatov asserted that the mausoleum is connected to Sogdian houses and cultic buildings, to the architecture of Sasanian Iran and that of 9th century Samarra.⁷¹ However, in an article in 1964 and in his later monograph, he put forward a novel idea: that the architecture of the Samanid mausoleum is derived from that of the Sabian temple. He cited textual evidence that astral temples existed in the early Islamic period in Isfahan, Balkh, Ferghana, and China. From the writings of Dimeshki he reconstructed a model of the Sabian temple, and then postulated that the apertures and the gallery in the Samanid mausoleum, although not precisely constructed for astronomical

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Voronina 1985, p. 191.

⁶⁸ Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 175-8.

⁶⁹ Pugachenkova 1961, pp. 124-6; see also Pugachenkova 1964, pp. 10-11; Pugachenkova, Bokhara, 1999, p. 141.

⁷⁰ Pugachenkova 1963, pp. 70-73.

⁷¹ Bulatov 1965.

observation, were modeled upon sun temples which were used in such a way.⁷²

Khmel'nitskii later stated that the gallery of the mausoleum was definitely descended from the pre-Islamic temples of Central Asia, although he did not see any evidence at all to support Bulatov's link with the Sabian temple. He asserted that the mausoleum was, more than anything else, modeled upon domestic architecture, such as the kiosk of the Umayyad palace at Amman and the building seen in the silver dish from Khorezm (which he interpreted as a palatial pavilion rather than a temple).⁷³

Arab Ata

The small mausoleum known as Arab Ata is located near the remote village of Tim, in the Zerafshan hills, south of the road from Bokhara to Samarqand (fig. 7). The foundation inscription dates the building to October-November 977,⁷⁴ and gives the title of a patron corresponding with the titulature used for the Samanid rulers: hence Nuh b. Mansur (ruled 976-997) ordered the construction of the tomb for an unknown incumbent, since the middle part of the inscription is no longer extant.⁷⁵

This north northeast-facing building is composed of baked brick on a stone foundation, and it is nearly square, measuring 8 x 8.7 m, with a square interior measuring 5.6 m. The corners of the building are delineated by angular engaged columns. In the front is the earliest dated example of a pishtaq, which completely obscures the low dome behind it. The floriated Kufic inscription frames the pishtaq between two bands of brick. The recessed doorway is topped by a pointed arch resting on two engaged columns, and

⁷² Bulatov 1964, pp. 39-45; Bulatov 1976, pp. 73-83.

⁷³ Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 136-8.

⁷⁴ Rabi` I 367; see Blair 1992 p. 47.

⁷⁵ Passport 3.4-4.5.9, arkhiv.

the hood of the arch is decorated with an interlacing star pattern in stucco. The arch is surmounted by three niches decorated with geometric patterns in stucco, with deeply carved stucco in the hoods of the niches reminiscent of elaborate stucco mihrabs such as that seen at Nayin (fig. 8). As at the Samanid mausoleum, brick provides both the construction material and the main medium of decoration, although here the design is exceedingly plain in comparison, with only some areas of S-shaped swirls in the mortar to provide more texture.

The interior walls are also very simply decorated, with a thin plaster coating over the bricks. Deep ridges in the plaster define the areas between bricks and form a geometric pattern. Brick itself is used decoratively in the band of triangular protruding bricks just below the dome. The zone of transition forms the main focal point of the interior, with the earliest dated example of muqarnas. This is formed by a trilobed squinch subdivided into parts: a framed squinch spanning the corners, a half squinch to either side, and another arch surmounting these parts and resting on the half squinches (fig. 9). In the flat areas between the squinches are shallow niches echoing this trilobed shape. The corners between the niches and the squinches are defined by engaged colonettes which extend only down to the level of the top of the half squinches. The bases and the points of the half squinches extend slightly out beyond the brick ledge which forms the base of the zone of transition, into empty space.

Like the Samanid mausoleum, the tomb of Arab Ata has entered the canon of Islamic architecture, and is consequently covered briefly in most surveys of Islamic art and architecture, if only to mention it as the earliest dated example of both the pishtaq

and muqarnas.⁷⁶ Its omission from the earlier surveys is due to its fairly recent discovery, in the late 1950s. Since then, it has been given wide but never deep coverage by Western scholarship, but on the Soviet side it became the subject of a monograph by Pugachenkova.

The building was first published in 1960 in *Sovietskaya Arkheologiya* by N. Leonov, who had discovered it just two years earlier. A geographer, Leonov did not have much to say about the mausoleum, but did bring it to the attention of local scholars and, with the help of Masson, published the date from the inscription.⁷⁷ As the photographs both in his article and the archives show, the top section of the pishtaq had crumbled away, the upper part of the doorway niche had been damaged, and the rear of the building was supported by a massive buttress (added by a local shaykh in 1910⁷⁸ and since removed); otherwise, it was in a good state of preservation. A cemetery has grown up around the mausoleum, and some shards indicating a small settlement contemporary with the mausoleum have been found nearby,⁷⁹ but the location is extremely remote and difficult to access. Nevertheless, in a note added after Leonov's article, Belenitskii proposed that Tim could be the village of the same name mentioned as a Sogdian settlement in Yaqut, quoting the 10th century geographer Ibn al-Faqih.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ettinghausen & Grabar, pp. 220-1; Hillenbrand in Ferrier 1989, pp. 83-4; Leisten in Kalter & Pavaloi 1997, p. 83; Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 290-1. See also Grabar 1966, p. 19; Leisten, pp. 272-3; Blair 1992 pp. 47-8.

⁷⁷ Leonov, 1960, pp. 186-90.

⁷⁸ Pugachenkova 1963, p. 25.

⁷⁹ Pugachenkova 1963, p. 9. Timurid shards also were found on site.

⁸⁰ Leonov 1960, p. 190. See also Pugachenkova 1963, p. 8: she thought that the evidence was insufficient for an attribution. In an archival document connected with the restoration of the mausoleum, the restoration team agreed with Belenitskii that Tim was located on trade routes in the 10th century: see Mavzolei Arab Ata, arkhiv, 1979, p. 1.

Because of its remote location, the building never became a major pilgrimage site, and the locals do not know who “Arab Ata,” or “Father of the Arabs,” was.⁸¹ Pugachenkova argues that the architecture of the building derives directly from local pre-Islamic building traditions, particularly palatial building. She points out the use of the squinch, the pointed arch, and decorative niches in various pre-Islamic palaces such as those seen at Termez and Merv,⁸² and draws analogies between the stucco decoration in the niches at Arab Ata and the stucco panels from the Samanid palace at Afrasiab.⁸³ She contends that the pishtaq descends from the architecture of the Zoroastrian *naus*, pointing to several small domed ossuaries from Merv to support her argument.⁸⁴ So in her view, this mausoleum descends directly from that of the Samanids, with both being embedded firmly within the architectural tradition of Central Asia.⁸⁵ As for the Samanids themselves, they “based their politics not on the authority of the caliphate, but operated as Central Asian feudal lords.”⁸⁶

Tomb of al-Hakim al-Termezi

The complex of Hakim al-Termezi was built on the banks of the Amu Darya, just outside the citadel of Termez, for Abu Abdallah Muhammad b. Ali b. Husayn al-Hakim Termezi, the founder of the Hakimiyya Sufi order. He died in 869 according to the

⁸¹ Pugachenkova 1963, p. 11.

⁸² Pugachenkova 1963, pp. 30–42. She argues that the pointed arch is a Central Asian invention, seen in palatial architecture from the 6-7th century onwards (p. 31).

⁸³ Ibid, pp. 42-5. Although she admits that analogous decoration can be seen in other parts of the Islamic world, e.g. Samarra, Qasr al-Hayr, Nishapur and Rayy, Pugachenkova argues that this decoration also descends directly from local Sogdian models, such as the palace at Varakhsha.

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 82-3. The ossuary she illustrates, however, has a projecting cornice of stepped merlons at the front, not really the same thing as the pishtaq at Arab Ata.

⁸⁵ Khmel'nitskii echoed and agreed with this argument: 1992, p. 164.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 99.

inscription on his Timurid-era tombstone, but in 898 according to most historians.⁸⁷ The complex is multi-layered and has been built upon for many centuries, including the present one. It contains three mausolea, a mosque and a khangah. The part which is of relevance here is the oldest tomb chamber, where Hakim al-Termezi was buried, located in the southwestern corner of the complex (fig. 10). It opens to a nine-domed mosque on the north, to another tomb chamber on the east, and to the outside through the southern wall. From the mausoleum to the mosque, the ground drops by about five feet (fig. 11); hence the tomb can only be entered from the outside or from the adjoining mausoleum. The building measures 5.1 x 4.7 m; the complex as a whole is 28 x 29 m. The dome rests on pendentives rather than squinches (fig. 12), a feature which is unusual in the eastern Islamic world but which can be seen at this time in Surkhandariya and in Khorasan. The pendentives are now covered by stucco muqarnas, but their structure can be seen in archival photos and drawings.

The entire interior has an elaborate stucco revetment, heavily restored and painted in bright white, yellow and black. The domed ceiling is patterned with roundels containing interlacing star motifs around smaller roundels with “Allah” in a thick Kufic script (fig. 13). These roundels alternate with cartouches containing scrolling palmettes which spill out of the boundaries of the cartouches and fill the interstitial spaces as well. Around the base of the dome is an inscription in Kufic script. A cursive inscription band forms a dado and frames the large arch which opens into the mosque and the doorways leading to the adjoining mausoleum and the exterior (fig. 14); this is one of the earliest

⁸⁷ Pugachenkova 1976, p. 31; Arshavskysya, Rtveladze & Khakimov, 1982, p. 101.

foundation inscriptions to appear in a cursive script,⁸⁸ and it gives the title of the Qarakhanid ruler Abu'l Muzaffar Ahmad Tigha-tekín (the title of Ahmad b. Hizr, who ruled 1082-95). The walls are decorated with six-pointed leaves containing S-shaped motifs. The soffits of the arches are decorated with hexagons and rhomboids filled with S-shaped motifs and triangles filled with dots. In the centre of the mausoleum is the beautifully carved marble Timurid tombstone.

For the most part, this complex has escaped the attention of western scholars,⁸⁹ apart from its appearance in Grabar's article on funerary architecture and the catalogues of Leisten and Blair (on funerary architecture and eastern Islamic inscriptions, respectively). Grabar expressed unease with the attribution of the mausoleum, because "the general evidence about mausoleums over tombs of holy men shows that these were rare before the 11th century."⁹⁰ He also felt that the 9th century date given by both Denike and Veimarn on the basis of stylistic analysis of the stucco decoration was incorrect. Both Leisten and Blair dated the mausoleum to the late 11th century on the basis of the cursive foundation inscription.⁹¹

The complex was first published in 1879 by Bykov, a captain in the tsarist army who was sent to the area on a reconnaissance mission.⁹² A popular pilgrimage site, the complex attracted the attention of several artists of the tsarist era as well, but did not receive serious scholarly attention until the 1926-7 expedition of the Museum of Eastern

⁸⁸ Blair 1992, p. 169. Her reading was based on the photographs in Pugachenkova 1976; the entire inscription, however, was published in Masson 1960, pp. 44-80.

⁸⁹ This neglect is hardly surprising given the building's location at Termez, directly on the Amu Darya with clear views of Afghanistan. Clearly this was off-limits to foreigners during the Soviet era, and now special permission from the Uzbek government is required for the whole province of Surkhandariya, for Uzbeks and foreigners alike. Once there, vigilant imams prevent both the faithful and the curious from entering the actual mausoleum of the saint.

⁹⁰ Grabar 1966, p. 16.

⁹¹ Leisten, pp. 273-4; Blair 1992, pp. 168-9.

⁹² Bykov 1879, p. 15.

Culture in Moscow, led by Denike. Denike uncovered the oldest layer of stucco, and based on the resemblance of the six-pointed leaves to stucco motifs seen at Samarra, dated the mausoleum to the 9th century.⁹³ Zasipkin agreed with him,⁹⁴ and Veimarn also followed this dating in his survey of Central Asian art.⁹⁵ Masson, who led the 1936 TAKE expedition to Termez, recorded the foundation inscription which dated the stucco revetment to the reign of Ahmad b. Hizr (1081-95). Based upon this inscription and an argument similar to Grabar's, that a mausoleum for a holy man would be unlikely as early as the 9th century, he dated the mausoleum to the 11th century.⁹⁶

Another archaeological expedition was launched in 1955, led by Filimonov and Shakhurin; this time a number of trenches were dug in the complex itself. Coins were found dating back to the Hellenistic and Kushan eras, and the excavators found that the mosque had an older core of unbaked brick. Based upon this and the much lower floor level of the mosque, they concluded that it had been a holy site dating back to "deepest antiquity" which was later transformed into a mosque.⁹⁷ They argued that the tomb of Hakim al-Termezi was appended to this earlier complex, which was rebuilt in the 10-11th century and given a stucco revetment in the late 11th century, at the same time that the mausoleum was decorated. They stated that it was quite clear that the mausoleum itself was older than the stucco which adorns it, although they did not hypothesize a date any more specific than the 10-11th century.⁹⁸ They also argued, though, that the stucco was added in two stages, as the consistency was clearly of two different types, one granulated

⁹³ Denike 1939, pp. 36-8.

⁹⁴ Zasipkin 1928, p. 71.

⁹⁵ Veimarn 1940, p. 29.

⁹⁶ Masson 1960, p. 67.

⁹⁷ Filimonov 1957, arkhiv, pp. 167-70.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 19-29.

and one clean.⁹⁹ They dated the second mausoleum, built sometime after the decoration of the first, to the 13-14th centuries.¹⁰⁰

A later archival document by Filimonov addressed the restoration of the complex, and in this he argued that enough of the stucco had remained to reconstruct the overall patterns (and from the photos it does appear that he was right, at least for the mausoleum).¹⁰¹ He also argued that the mosque of the complex was the Friday mosque of Termez, based upon the fact that it was a pre-Islamic religious site and upon the descriptions of both Muqaddasi and Istakhri of the Friday mosque being located near the gate of the citadel.¹⁰²

Other Soviet scholars have also declined to assign any definitive date to the mausoleum, and so it remains an open question.¹⁰³ Given the evidence of Filimonov's excavation, however, a *terminus ad quem* of the mid-11th century is acceptable.

Mazar Shir Kabir

This building is no longer extant, but used to stand in a cemetery known as "Mashhad" near the ruined settlement of Mestorian, also known as Dehistan, in a remote desert region in southwestern Turkmenistan. It was a domed square measuring 8.5 m per side, composed of unbaked brick. The entrance was off-centre on the northern side of the

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 171.

¹⁰¹ Filimonov 1984, arkhiv, pp. 42-58.

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 120-1. Interestingly, his argument shows no awareness of the existence of 9 domed mosques outside the boundaries of the former Soviet Union and Afghanistan, or of any of the Western scholarship concerning this type of mosque. None of the nine-domed mosques functioned as congregational mosques, but were instead associated with prominent individuals, as is the case here. Moreover, Muqaddasi describes the Friday Mosque of Termez as being located within the city walls (p. 258).

¹⁰³ See Pugachenkova 1976, pp. 31-5; Arshavskaya, Rtveldze & Khakimov 1982, pp. 101-2; Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 174; Nekrasova 2001, pp. 16-7.

building; this side had a later, probably 12th century, baked brick revetment.¹⁰⁴ The building was originally part of a larger structure or complex, with additional rooms or attached structures on the northern side.

The interior was structured in a very similar way to that of the oldest mausoleum of the Sultan Saodat complex (discussed below), with three pointed arched niches in each side, and large simple squinches interspersed with arched niches in the zone of transition. Here, however, the central niche in the southern wall was a mihrab, decorated with elaborately carved stucco analogous to that seen at Nayin or at the mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo (fig. 15). The rest of the interior had a plain stucco revetment, apart from the niches in the zone of transition, which were decorated with single palmettes pointing upwards.

In spite of the existence of the mihrab, the building is almost always categorized as a mausoleum, and it appears as such in the catalogues of both Grabar and Leisten. Grabar, who dated the building to approximately the late 10th century on the basis of photographs, argued that pilgrimage to the site showed that it did have commemorative significance even if the actual building was a prayer hall attached to a mausoleum rather than being a place of burial itself.¹⁰⁵ Leisten basically agreed with this assessment and was not definitive about either the function or the date;¹⁰⁶ Blair termed the building a tomb and dated it to 960-85 based upon the style of the epigraphy.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Pugachenkova 1953, p. 194.

¹⁰⁵ Grabar 1966, pp. 21-2.

¹⁰⁶ Leisten, pp. 150-1.

¹⁰⁷ Blair 1992, pp. 56-7.

Denike characterized the building as a mosque and dated it to the 10th century on the basis of the similarities between its mihrab and the one at Nayin.¹⁰⁸ Krachkovskaya later analyzed the style of the Kufic inscription of the mihrab and dated the building to the 11th century.¹⁰⁹ Pugachenkova, however, who conducted the most extensive on-site study of the monument for YuTAKE, dated the building slightly earlier, to the 9-10th centuries, on similar stylistic grounds, comparing it to Nayin, Samarra, and the mosque of Ibn Tulun. Based on references to the town of Dehistan in both Muqaddasi and Hodud al-‘Alam, she concluded that the building was a pilgrimage site referred to in both texts and hence a mausoleum.¹¹⁰ She also viewed this building, made of unbaked brick and closely connected with the local pre-Islamic building tradition, as the predecessor of the later domed chambers of the Saljuq mosques of Iran, such as Isfahan, Ardistan, and Gulpaygan.¹¹¹ Khmel’nitskii concurred with this conclusion, although he dated the monument even earlier, to the 9th century, and categorized it as a mosque in his catalog of Samanid-era architecture.¹¹² As the building unfortunately no longer exists, dating can only now be based on photographs and previous scholarship, but on balance a 9-10th century date is the most plausible.

Chahar Jui

This small mausoleum is located 250 m southwest of the southern gate of the medieval town of Amul, also known as Chahar Jui, about 40 miles from Bokhara on the

¹⁰⁸ Denike 1939, p. 42. The similarity with Nayin, “as close as brothers,” was first noted by G.I. Kotov in a paper given at the Third International Congress of Iranian Art & Archaeology in Leningrad in 1935: see Pugachenkova 1953, p. 197. See also E. Atagariev 1986, p. 87.

¹⁰⁹ Krachkovskaya EV, 1949, vol. 3, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Pugachenkova 1953, pp. 193-202; Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 167-74. In the 1953 text, she refers to the building solely as a mausoleum; in 1958, she calls it a “mazar” and a “mosque-mausoleum.”

¹¹¹ Pugachenkova 1958, p. 172.

¹¹² Khmel’nitskii 1992, p. 89.

Turkmenistan side of the Amu Darya. It is a small domed building, measuring 6.2 m per side, composed of baked brick (fig. 16). The plan is basically a *chahar taq*, although the southwestern wall has a mihrab rather than an opening. The main façade, on the northeastern side, has two heavy brick pilasters to either side of the door, forming a rudimentary pishtaq. This very simple building has no decorative revetment and no inscriptions.

The building was discovered by the archaeologists of YuTAKE and first published by Pugachenkova, who dated it to probably the late 10th century, or the early 11th at the latest.¹¹³ At that time it was nearly covered by the accumulation of later graves, since removed. Masson concurred with the late 10th century date,¹¹⁴ and in his study of the medieval trade routes of Turkmenistan he discussed the textual sources mentioning Amul as a caravan stop on the route from Merv to Bokhara, indicating that it was a reasonably sized town of some importance in the 10th century.¹¹⁵ The building also appears in the catalogues of Grabar and Leisten, neither of whom quibbles with Pugachenkova's dating or her categorization of the building as a mausoleum.¹¹⁶ Khmel'nitskii, however, while agreeing with the 10th century date, classified it as a mosque because of the presence of the mihrab.

The mihrab alone, however, is not enough to justify classifying the building as a mosque; whereas the form of the Mazar Shir Kabir bears much in common with the domed chambers of Saljuq mosques, allowing for some reasonable doubt as to its function, the form of the Chahar Jui mausoleum is very much in accord with the corpus

¹¹³ Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 177-8.

¹¹⁴ Masson 1966, p. 151.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 138-9.

¹¹⁶ Grabar 1966, p. 21; Leisten, p. 102.

of Central Asian mausolea. Moreover, its small size, *extra muros* location, and the accumulation of graves all around it all point to it being a mausoleum rather than a mosque. The mihrab does make an early appearance in the mausolea of Central Asia, and can be seen in other contemporary examples which undoubtedly contain burials, such as Aq Astana Baba, which will be discussed below.

Qiz Bibi

This mausoleum, which is now in ruins, is situated to the east of Sultan Qala, the citadel of medieval Merv. Composed of unbaked brick, it measures approximately 7 m per side.¹¹⁷ It has a single entrance facing east, which leads to a cruciform-shaped chamber with a cenotaph towards the western side (fig. 17). The deep niches on each side almost form a *chahar taq* plan, except that three sides are closed. The squinches are an archaic type composed of ten concentric pointed arches forming a cone.

The building was first published in the tsarist era by V.A. Zhukovskii, who described the building as nearly intact. Based on local legends and the feminine local name for the building (which translates roughly as “girl-grandma”), he suggested that it was the tomb of Turkan Khatun, the consort of Sultan Sanjar.¹¹⁸ This seems most unlikely given the rough construction of the building, and the suggestion was dismissed by Pugachenkova, who dated the building much earlier to the 9-10th centuries based on the material and the building techniques, which compared closely with several *kushks*, or

¹¹⁷ In Trudi YuTAKE, Pugachenkova gave a measurement of 7.5 m per side (Pugachenkova 1958, p. 175); Grabar and Leisten both used this measurement (Grabar 1966, p. 21; Leisten, p. 200). However, in a later publication, Pugachenkova gave a measurement of 6.8 m square (Pugachenkova, *Khorasanskiye Mavzolei*, 1983, p. 15). Khmel'nitskii reported a measurement close to this: 6.6 m square, with the interior chamber measuring 4.4 m square (Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 122). The interior measurement is almost the same as that given by Pugachenkova in Trudi YuTAKE, 4.5 m (Pugachenkova 1958, p. 175).

¹¹⁸ See Pugachenkova 1958, p. 175.

pre-Islamic manor houses, of that era found in the vicinity. She did not dismiss entirely, however, the possibility of a female incumbent. She saw the building as an important early example of what she termed the “Khorasan school” of domed square mausolea.¹¹⁹

The building has a brief entry in the catalogues of both Grabar and Leisten, both of whom date it slightly later than Pugachenkova: Grabar dates it to the late 10th century, and Leisten gives a late 10th – early 11th century date.¹²⁰ Khmel’nitskii, on the other hand, argues for an earlier date, firmly in the 9th century. He compares the squinch to those seen at Lesser Qiz-Qala, which Pugachenkova dated to the 6-7th centuries. He points out that this type of squinch, resting on massively thick unbaked brick walls, is thoroughly pre-Islamic, is typical of the 6-8th centuries, and is no longer seen in the 10th century. The dome is also built using a pre-Islamic technique, so that its diameter is slightly larger than its octagonal base. He therefore views this as an archaic 9th century building and possibly the earliest mausoleum in Khorasan.¹²¹

Tomb in Imam Baba Cemetery

This building was photographed by Zhukovskii in 1890 but no longer exists today.¹²² It was located in the cemetery of Imam Baba, south of Merv. Composed of baked brick, it had a *chahar taq* plan, with four pointed arch openings (fig. 18). This small building measured about 5 m per side, and the dome had already collapsed when

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 175-6.

¹²⁰ Grabar 1966, p. 21; Leisten, pp. 200-1. Both cite Pugachenkova, and neither gives any explanation for dating the building later than her. Given that neither had visited the building and only a plan is provided in Trudi YuTAKE, it is difficult to see what the basis for this shift could have been.

¹²¹ Khmel’nitskii 1992, p. 123.

¹²² The photograph is reproduced in Pugachenkova 1958, p. 176.

Zhukovskii photographed it. Two entrances are visible in the photograph, and they appear to be identical.

In Trudi YuTAKE, Pugachenkova did not date the building, but did find it to be very similar to the mausoleum at Chahar Jui.¹²³ In a later publication, however, she dated it to the late 10th – early 11th centuries.¹²⁴ Grabar dated it to the late 10th century, asserting that the *chahar taq* plan was an archaic feature;¹²⁵ Leisten reiterated Pugachenkova's dating.¹²⁶ Khmel'nitskii, lamenting the difficulties in dating a non-extant building from a single photograph, thought that this mausoleum and the nearby tomb of Ahmad were probably from the 9-10th centuries, but certainly no later than the early 11th century.¹²⁷

Tomb of Ahmad

This mausoleum is also known from only one 19th century photograph, and no longer exists today (fig. 19). The photograph, preserved in the Komarov collection in St. Petersburg, was unmarked, but Pugachenkova discerned that it was taken in the cemetery of Baba Gamber, to the south of Imam Baba.¹²⁸ It was a small square building, about 5.5 m per side, composed of baked brick. The low dome was still intact when the photograph was taken. Only two pointed arch entrances, very similar to the entrances of the Imam Baba mausoleum, are visible in the photograph, but Pugachenkova believed it to be a *chahar taq* plan.¹²⁹ To either side of the door was an arched niche. A fragmentary Kufic

¹²³ Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 176-7.

¹²⁴ Pugachenkova 1983, p. 15.

¹²⁵ Grabar 1966, p. 21.

¹²⁶ Leisten, p. 200.

¹²⁷ Khmel'nitskii, p. 125.

¹²⁸ Pugachenkova 1958, p. 178.

¹²⁹ Pugachenkova 1958, p. 178; Pugachenkova 1983, p. 15.

foundation inscription, from which the mausoleum gets its name, ran across the top of the façade in cut bricks.¹³⁰ Unlike the Imam Baba tomb, the bricks were arranged in pairs in the manner typical of Khorasan.

According to Pugachenkova in Trudi YuTAKE, the style of the Kufic inscription was very similar to that of the wooden plaque found at the Samanid mausoleum and a later inscription on a minaret dated 1010-11 from Konya Urgench; from this she dated the building to the second half of the 10th century or the early 11th century.¹³¹ Later she modified this to the 10th century.¹³² Grabar stated that a late 10th century date was “not improbable,”¹³³ whereas Leisten erroneously stated that Pugachenkova had dated the building to the 9-10th century, and then argued for a 10-11th century date based on the brickwork.¹³⁴ Blair, comparing the inscription and its location to that at the Samanid mausoleum, proposed a date in the second half of the 10th century,¹³⁵ which seems altogether plausible. The inscription here is prominently displayed, but has not yet found its characteristic position around a pishtaq, as is seen at the mausoleum of Arab Ata.

Tilla Halaji

This mausoleum is located in the village of Aivaj, in southern Tajikistan next to the Afghan border. Although it is in a ruinous state, it was still possible for Khmel’nitskii, the only scholar to have published the building, to discern that it had the same *chahar taq* plan and the same measurements (10.5 m square on the outside, 7 m

¹³⁰ Pugachenkova read the name in the inscription as “Ahmad,” but Blair has suggested that “Mohammad” would be a better reading; see Blair 1992, p. 75.

¹³¹ Pugachenkova 1958, p. 178. She had earlier dated it to the early 11th century: see Pugachenkova 1953, p. 243.

¹³² Pugachenkova 1983, p. 15.

¹³³ Grabar 1966, p. 21.

¹³⁴ Leisten, p. 110.

¹³⁵ Blair 1992, p. 75.

square on the inside) as the Samanid mausoleum, albeit in unbaked brick and without any elaborate decoration (fig. 20). Each entrance was through a deep, arched niche, as at Aq Astana Baba. Wooden rods were inserted in several directions and at various heights into the fabric of the building, an anti-seismic technique. Based upon the size of the bricks, Khmel'nitskii dated the building to the 9-10th centuries.¹³⁶

Khaja Bulhak

This is another ruined, unbaked brick mausoleum which has only been published by Khmel'nitskii, although the location is more accessible, in the village of Charku, in the Isfara region of Tajikistan. This building has two entrances, on the eastern and western sides, without any interior or exterior niches (fig. 21). The bricks are laid in alternate vertical and horizontal rows, the main decorative effect as well as the method of construction. Based upon this technique and the structure of the doors, Khmel'nitskii dated the building to the 9-10th centuries.¹³⁷

Khaja Mashhad

This complex is located in the village of Sayat, in the Kafirnigan hills in southwestern Tajikistan. At the southern end of this four-ivan madrasa or khangah are two baked brick domed buildings connected by an ivan, an unusual arrangement also seen at the Sultan Saodat complex in Termez (fig. 22). The plans of the buildings are almost identical, the main difference being that that the eastern one opens onto the ivan on its western side and has another entrance on its eastern side, while the western one has

¹³⁶ Khmel'nitskii 1972, pp. 102-14; Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 143.

¹³⁷ Khmel'nitskii 1972, pp. 109-14; Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 146.

a mihrab on its western side and opens onto the ivan on its eastern side. Both measure approximately 10.5 m per side, and the bricks are laid in the double bond which is typical of Khorasan and Transoxiana. In the mausoleum on the east, which contains multiple burials, the zone of transition is comprised of large squinches and intervening arches set into rectangular frames of protruding bricks, further accentuated by an additional band of triangular protruding bricks at the top of each frame and a dado of diagonally laid bricks which separates this octagonal zone from the walls below. Rows of diagonal bricks also divide the upper interior of each squinch, with a band down the middle dividing the squinch into two in a manner very reminiscent of the Samanid mausoleum (fig. 23). The intervening arches between the squinches are decorated with a diamond pattern. Small squinches sit atop this octagonal zone, making a sixteen-sided zone which further eases the transition to the dome above. This dome has an oculus with a diameter of 165 cm at the top.

The exterior was also decorated with rows of diagonally laid bricks, as well as a row of diamond-shaped brick similar to that seen in the interior of the Samanid mausoleum. The vault of the ivan has a zigzag pattern very similar in appearance to that seen inside the mausoleum at Sangbast, but here composed of actual brick rather than stucco. The southern exterior walls of both buildings have an applied brick decoration, which may not be original to the building, composed of cartouches enclosing elongated shapes made from strips of terracotta.¹³⁸

Belenitskii was the first to publish the buildings, following the Sogdian-Tajik archaeological expedition in 1947. Since he found the decoration of the eastern mausoleum to be more archaic than that of the western, he dated the former to the 10th

¹³⁸ Grabar asserts that this decoration is “certainly later” than the buildings it adorns: Grabar 1966, p. 30.

century and the latter, as well as the ivan, to the 11-12th centuries.¹³⁹ Nemtseva excavated at the site in 1965, and was firmly convinced that the mausolea and their connecting ivan, as well as the complex as a whole, were built at the same time, although she placed that time considerably later than Belenitskii, in the late 12th – early 13th centuries. This was based on ceramic findings at the site as well as the decoration of the southern façade. She also pointed out that restorations had taken place in the 15th century, probably during the reign of Ulughbeg since many of his coins were found.¹⁴⁰ She believed the whole complex to have been a khangah, as opposed to Khmel'nitskii, who thought it had been a madrasa. She was convinced that the eastern building had always been a mausoleum and that the extant cenotaph was original, whereas she believed the western of the two to have served as the *ziyaratkhana*. Together the buildings formed the main focal point of the complex and greatly overshadowed the two unbaked brick domed square rooms at the opposite end of the courtyard.

Khmel'nitskii had accompanied her as the architect on this archaeological expedition; while he agreed with her that the complex as a whole was a single architectural conception, he disagreed on just about everything else. He believed that the complex as a whole functioned as a madrasa rather than a khangah, and that it was hence one of the oldest madrasas in existence. He argued that this madrasa was built in the 11th, or possibly the early 12th, century around the pre-existing eastern mausoleum, which he dated to the 9th century.¹⁴¹ According to Khmel'nitskii, this mausoleum is the only monumental baked brick building of the Islamic period where the diameter of the dome is

¹³⁹ Belenitskii 1950, p. 209. At the time of Belenitskii's visit to the site in 1947, the rest of the complex was not visible apart from the partial remains of the unbaked brick domed square rooms.

¹⁴⁰ Nemtseva 1969, pp. 171-85.

¹⁴¹ Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 146-7.

slightly larger than that of its octagonal base (Qiz Bibi, which he also dates to the 9th century, is an example in unbaked brick); already in the early Islamic period this technique was outdated and rare.¹⁴² The use of the eight small squinches to form a sixteen-sided zone is another pre-Islamic technique seen at Khaja Mashhad which was largely forgotten by the 10th century, and these squinches themselves have an archaic appearance with their rows of receding arches. Khmel'nitskii argues convincingly that both the form and the techniques seen at Khaja Mashhad are more archaic than the Samanid mausoleum, and hence it should be dated earlier.¹⁴³

Khalifa Rajab

This mausoleum is located in the necropolis of Mizdakhan, a remote site about 15 km west of Nukus in the Qarakalpak Autonomous Region of Uzbekistan. Burials have accumulated in this cemetery since the Kushan era, and new mausolea are still being constructed today. The Savitsky Museum in Nukus contains a rich collection of ossuaries which have been found at Mizdakhan. The site consists of a dusty hill covered in graves, some of which have been opened by archaeologists and now lay bare. Small wooden ladders lay across others to warn of unstable ground. Crumbling mausolea stand next to less monumental constructions, including the smaller mausolea, or *naus*, which once held some of the Zoroastrian ossuaries. One 13-14th century shrine, that of Maslam Khan Slu, has been restored, while the rest disintegrate into the dust from which they are made. Qarakalpaks consider the site to be especially holy, and perform ziyarat to the shrines of

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 153.

¹⁴³ The only western scholars to have mentioned Khaja Mashhad were unaware of Khmel'nitskii's work on the building: Grabar simply says that both the eastern and western buildings were undated (Grabar 1966, p. 30), whilst Leisten accepts Nemtseva's dating (Leisten, p. 266).

Maslam Khan Slu and Nabi Shamun; outside the other mausolea, ancient bricks are stacked vertically as a local expression of piety.

The mausoleum known as Khalifa Rajab stands at the top of the hill, 200 m from the shrine of Maslam Khan Slu, with clear views to the fortress of Gyaur-Qala about 2 km away and beyond into Turkmenistan. It measures approximately 12 x 9 m. Three walls still stand, but the dome and the façade have collapsed (fig. 24). The building is composed of unbaked brick interspersed with reeds and covered with a baked brick revetment (fig. 25); fragments from inscriptions, stucco decoration and monochrome glazed decoration from the façade have been found in front of the building, but in its current state it is impossible to know whether these were original or added some time after construction. The single entrance faced southwest, leading to a simple square chamber void of decoration apart from the remnants of a plain stucco revetment. The massive squinches are composed in three concentric layers; the flat areas between the squinches are perfectly flat, not filled with the decorative arches seen in most of the other mausolea.

The building is virtually unknown in the West, appearing only in Grabar's catalog in a small entry filled with errors.¹⁴⁴ Amongst the Soviet scholars who studied the site, however, a lively debate ensued over how to date this mausoleum. The first to examine it was Yakubovskii in 1929-30, when a small portion of the dome still remained; he dated the building to the 13-14th centuries.¹⁴⁵ The whole site was surveyed in 1948 by Tolstoi as part of the Khorezm Archaeological Ethnographic Expedition. Detailed excavations

¹⁴⁴ Grabar 1966, p. 22. The name of the site is misspelled as Mizdakhaneh, its location was incorrectly given as Kirghizia, and the only (incorrect) citation was a Tajik publication not available to Grabar. He gave a date of 10th – early 11th centuries, but clearly without much on which to base the dating.

¹⁴⁵ Mavzolei Khalifa Radzhab, arkhiv, 1989, p. 25, p. 277.

headed by Yagodin took place from 1962 to 1965 by the Qarakalpak Filial of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences; Yagodin found evidence that Zoroastrian type burials, in ossuaries, were still occurring as late as the 9th century.¹⁴⁶ He dated the mausoleum of Khalifa Rajab to the 11th century. Zasiplin dated it even earlier, to the 10-11th centuries, whereas Grazhdanskaya dated it to the 13th and Pilyavski to the 13-14th centuries.¹⁴⁷

Further excavations in 1985 led to the deposition of an enormous volume in the archives of the Ministry of Culture, in which the excavators argue amongst themselves. One unsigned section argued cogently for an early 11th century date, with the mausoleum exhibiting some of the earliest monochrome glazed decoration in Central Asia.¹⁴⁸ A section by Pugachenkova declined to give a date. Bakhtiyar Babajanov, the epigraphist with the expedition, dated the mausoleum to the Golden Horde period on the bases of the fragmentary inscriptions found in front of the building, comparing the style of the script to that seen at the mausoleum of Fakhr al-Din Razi, just over the Turkmen border in Konya Urgench.¹⁴⁹ A. Voskovskii and Kh. Khadzhiniyazov dated the building to the 12-14th centuries because of the ceramics excavated at the site.¹⁵⁰ Yusupov, the architect in charge, dated the building to the 11th century based on both stylistic criteria and building technology (the insertion of reeds into the mud brick to help weather-proof the building, for example, is a technique seen in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic layers of nearby Gyaur-Qala). The other architects, R.R. Salikhov, Sh. Zairov, and S. Akhmedov, all agreed with him.¹⁵¹ An insert by Kryukov tried to make peace, pointing out that the

¹⁴⁶ Yagodin 1968, p. 197.

¹⁴⁷ Mavzolei arkhiv, p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Mavzolei, p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ Mavzolei, pp. 192-200.

¹⁵⁰ Mavzolei, p. 253.

¹⁵¹ Mavzolei, p. 5, p. 214.

architects generally preferred an 11-12th century date whereas the archaeologists defended a 13-14th century date. He surmised that the correct answer should lie between the two, hence the second half of the 12th or the early 13th century.¹⁵²

Confusion about the date of this building can even be seen in the publications of one scholar, Khmel'nitskii. In his catalog of early Islamic Central Asian architecture, he included Khalifa Rajab as a 10-11th century mausoleum, surmising that it could be even earlier and comparing the squinches to the less controversial Khaja Roshan, dated variously in the 10-12th centuries.¹⁵³ Then he also included it in his catalog of post-Samanid architecture, dating it to the second half of the 12th century on the basis of the 1985 excavations (presumably thinking of Kryukov's compromise date).¹⁵⁴

Given the fact that the inscriptions and glazed decoration were found in the collapsed material, it is impossible now to ascertain whether this decoration was added after the construction of the building. Such a scenario would provide a much better compromise between the excavators than simply choosing a date in the middle; the most logical answer seems to be that the building was constructed in the 10-11th centuries and given a new decorative façade in the 13-14th centuries. The fact that the site has consistently been a holy one for the past two millennia, with remains from every era, means that continuous investment and refurbishment took place as more burials were

¹⁵² Mavzolei, p. 2 (insert). The disagreements in this document also extend to the proposals for reconstructing the monument, which give an interesting insight into Soviet attitudes towards historical preservation. Three models were proposed for rebuilding the façade: plans 1 & 2 would have made the building resemble the 12-13th century Fakhr al-Din Razi, with either a conical or rounded dome, whereas plan 3 would have given it a simpler façade to fit into the corpus of 11-12th century monuments. Some of the participants argued to simply preserve what remained without rebuilding the façade. Proponents of rebuilding wished to make the site of Mizdakhan into a tourist attraction to lure visitors to this remote outpost and aid development in Karakalpakstan (see pp. 286-340).

¹⁵³ Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 176.

¹⁵⁴ Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 181. Yusupov also later changed his mind about the dating of the building: see Yusupov 1987, pp. 12-14, where he dated it to the late 11th – early 12th centuries in order to find a date compatible with the architecture and the fragments of glazed monochrome decoration.

added. Several anonymous mausolea similar to Khalifa Rajab, in varying degrees of preservation, can also be found at Mizdakhan; these too are undated but would seem to fit well into the corpus of 10-11th century mausolea.

Aq-Astana-Baba

Located in a cemetery near the remote village of Telpak Chinar, in Sariassiskii Raion in Surkhandariya, this mausoleum is composed of baked brick and measures 9 x 8.7 m (fig. 26). It has recently been restored by the imam who lives next to it, who fortunately was concerned for the historic fabric of the building and covered it rather than destroying it. The interior is now coated with a thin stucco revetment which clearly shows the structure of the building underneath; a few sections have been left uncovered to reveal the brickwork, which corresponds with archival photos and has not been changed (fig. 27). The exterior now has an additional brick revetment, with gaps left to avoid covering the two unique decorative roundels on the entrance façade (fig. 28).

Archival photos show that the exterior once had engaged corner columns, and a low makeshift building which was appended to the front of the mausoleum.¹⁵⁵ The roundels were set in the upper right hand corner of the otherwise plain brick façade. One contains a seven-pointed star in terracotta strapwork with a stucco spiral in the centre; the other contains two interlaced seven-pointed stars, with a stucco spiral in the center and stucco plant buds in the interstices of the star pattern.

Inside the building are deep niches, with pointed arches flanked by engaged columns, on each side; the entrance, which faces southeast, leads through one of these

¹⁵⁵ The attached building served as a mosque; it was built in the mid-20th century to replace an older appendage which had burned: see Borodina 1972, p. 164.

niches. The niches on the northeast and southwestern sides have windows; the niche in the northwestern wall is currently used as a mihrab in spite of its incorrect orientation (fig. 29). Inside this niche, a pointed arrow in relief brickwork points upwards. A modern cenotaph lies in the centre of the mausoleum.¹⁵⁶ The corners of the interior are defined by rectangular indentations which stretch almost from one niche to the next, just above the engaged columns. The zone of transition is also richly textured with geometric shapes: in between the simple squinches are recessed, stepped merlons inside recessed, stepped rectangular frames; the corners between the squinches and the intervening flat panels are defined by rectangular engaged colonnettes which reach about three-quarters of the way to the bottom of the transition zone; and the entire zone of transition itself protrudes outwards into the room, with the triangular bases of the squinches protruding still further (fig. 30). Khmel'nitskii terms this building a provincial interpretation of a Samanid-style mausoleum, but notes that the overall effect is aesthetically pleasing and a testament to the high level of artistic achievement during the Samanid era.¹⁵⁷ The incumbent is unfortunately unknown, and the building bears no inscriptions (although local legend calls it a *qadamja*, or footprint location, of Abu Hureira, a Companion of the Prophet).

According to Pugachenkova, the southeastern façade of the building was altered during the Timurid era, with a new brick cladding and the engaged corner columns being

¹⁵⁶ Between the cenotaph and the mihrab was an assembly of objects which are extremely interesting for the study of Central Asian folk religion, namely a wooden pole with a white cloth tied to it and several metal and stone objects suspended from another piece of wood protruding horizontally. One of these objects was a hand of Fatima, which is not known as such locally and instead represents the five pillars of Islam, according to the imam. On the floor was a pestle and mortar and several smooth rocks. Similar objects, together with a collection of animal horns, can be seen in another Astana Baba shrine of indeterminate date in a village nearby, believed by the locals to be the tomb of Sultan Sanjar. Here two wooden pillars with white flags attached also marked the outside of the shrine. In other regions, I have seen such pillars outside of shrines, but not inside.

¹⁵⁷ Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 143.

added at that time to enhance stability. The dome was restored during the 19th century, under the auspices of a local builder named Usta Khodai-Berdi.¹⁵⁸ Litvinskii was the first Soviet scholar who saw the building; he compared the building with Mir Said Bahram and dated both to the second half of the 10th or the early 11th century.¹⁵⁹ Pugachenkova was the first to carry out a detailed study of the building, and she agreed with Litvinskii's dating. Considering the local association of the building with Abu Hureira, who was buried elsewhere, she proposed that it was not originally a mausoleum but a commemorative mosque instead, and that the original entrance had been on the northeastern side, so that the niche on the southwestern side had served as a mihrab.¹⁶⁰ This idea has not received further consideration by scholars who have subsequently examined the building, as they all term it a mausoleum.

Borodina was the next to conduct a major study of the building; she felt that a 10-11th century date was consistent with the architecture but that the internal decoration pointed towards the 11th century.¹⁶¹ Khmel'nitskii argued for an earlier date, in the early 10th century.¹⁶² An archival document by Akimenko states that researchers have dated the mausoleum to the 12th century, perhaps a typographical error since no other source suggests such a late date.¹⁶³ The official archival record of the building, composed by Rteveladze, dates it to the 10-11th centuries.¹⁶⁴ Khakimov, who excavated in and around the building in 1969, dated it to the late 10th century based upon his findings.¹⁶⁵ Grabar

¹⁵⁸ Pugachenkova 1960, p. 324.

¹⁵⁹ B.A. Litvinskii, "Arkhitekturnii Kompleks Khodzha Nakhshran," 1953, p. 134.

¹⁶⁰ Pugachenkova 1960, pp. 326-7.

¹⁶¹ Borodina 1972, p. 168.

¹⁶² Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 141.

¹⁶³ Akimenko arkhiv, 1976, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Pasport 3.4-4.6.6, arkhiv, 1978.

¹⁶⁵ Khakimov 1983, in *Khudozhestvennaya Kul'tura*, pp. 156-7. See also Arshavskaya, Rteveladze & Khakimov, 1982, p. 73.

did not know of its existence when he composed his catalog of early funerary architecture; Leisten knew only of Pugachenkova's study but dated the building to the 11-12th centuries.¹⁶⁶ Pugachenkova's dating has become the most widely accepted, and is now used in Uzbek scholarship. Recent studies of the building have concentrated on its religious rather than its architectural significance: Arapov, Bulatov & Tychieva focused on the stucco roundels on the entrance façade, interpreting them as Isma'ili cosmograms, while Zhuraeva gave an account of ziyarat practices and the building's connection with Abu Hureira.¹⁶⁷

Alamberdar

This mausoleum is situated 12 km southwest of the town of Kerki, near Chahar Jui. Composed of baked brick, it measures 10.35 m per side (fig. 31). It has two entrances: the main entrance is through a deep, projecting pishtaq on the eastern side, while another entrance is off-centre on the southern side. A cenotaph lies just inside the main entrance, slightly off-centre. A mihrab was added to the building later, as were two rounded corner buttresses to shore up the rear of the building.¹⁶⁸ The front corners are defined by angular engaged columns. Each façade apart from the eastern one is divided into three parts by three arched niches, each of which is decorated with a geometric brickwork pattern. The bricks are laid in the double manner typical of Khorasan, and terracotta brick plugs are used as decorative accents. The dome sits on a high octagonal drum, and the squinches in this zone of transition are filled with angular brickwork. The

¹⁶⁶ Leisten, p. 272.

¹⁶⁷ Arapov, Bulatov & Tychieva 2000, pp. 12-15; Zhuraeva 2004, pp. 228-31.

¹⁶⁸ Pugachenkova 1958, p. 269.

upper corners of the octagon are filled with brick pendentives which further smooth the transition to the dome. The interior is otherwise devoid of any decoration.

The building was first noted in 1910 by B. Litvinov, an artist in the Russian army. The first archaeologist to survey the area was A.A. Marushchenko in 1931; he identified the site as the town of Zemm referred to by 10th century geographers, and photographed the mausoleum.¹⁶⁹ Further study of the building was undertaken in 1948 by the members of YuTAKE. The building was referred to as “Alamberdar” by the local populace, who believed that a companion of ‘Ali was buried there. It was not, however, a place of pilgrimage: local ziyarat was focused on a less ancient mausoleum 3 km away, known as “Astana Baba.”

Pugachenkova argued that Alamberdar was actually the mausoleum of Muntasir, the last Samanid ruler, who was killed nearby in 1005. Stylistically, the building fits the time period: she compared the structure with Shir Kabir, the oldest mausoleum at Sultan Saodat, and the mid-11th century mausoleum of Abu Said at Meana. She compared the engaged columns to those at Mir Said Bahram and the use of brick plug decoration to the tomb towers at Lajim and Resget. Given the account of Muntasir’s death in al-Utbi, she argued that such a lavish mausoleum in that location should have belonged to him, and may have been funded by Mahmud of Ghazna to commemorate his previous sovereign.¹⁷⁰

The building has not been addressed by many other Soviet scholars, and is virtually unknown in the West. Khmel’nitskii agreed with Pugachenkova that

¹⁶⁹ See Pugachenkova 1958, p. 268.

¹⁷⁰ Pugachenkova 1958, pp. 272-4. She also repeated this attribution in a later publication; see Pugachenkova 1983, p. 19.

Alamberdar is the mausoleum of Muntasir;¹⁷¹ Pribytkova was much less certain, saying that the evidence is insufficient for a definitive attribution;¹⁷² Leisten agreed with her.¹⁷³ Grabar did not even comment on Pugachenkova's argument (although he made reference to her text, as well as that of Pribytkova), calling the building "another instance of an anonymous mausoleum."¹⁷⁴ Hillenbrand mentioned the building in passing while discussing the general evolution of Iranian mausolea, calling it "the mausoleum of Muntasir at Astana Baba," hence implicitly accepting the attribution.¹⁷⁵ It is possible that Muntasir is the incumbent at Alamberdar, but in the absence of any inscriptions it is impossible to be certain.

Uzgend

This group of three connected mausolea is located in the eastern Ferghana Valley, in the town of Uzgend in modern Kirghizstan. Although all three are associated with the Qarakhanid rulers, I will focus here only on the central one, as the north and south mausolea are too far outside the time frame covered here. There is general agreement that the central mausoleum in this well-known trio is older than the other two, dated 1152 and 1186-7, but how much earlier is not known with any certainty. The central mausoleum was much less well-preserved than the other two, and all that remains of its inscriptions is the phrase "afa Allah." Archival photos show that not only the dome but also much of the façade had collapsed by the early part of the 20th century.

¹⁷¹ Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 193.

¹⁷² Pribytkova 1955, p. 65.

¹⁷³ Leisten, p. 104.

¹⁷⁴ Grabar 1966, p. 31.

¹⁷⁵ Hillenbrand FFM, p. 294.

Nevertheless, enough remained to ascertain the basic structure of the building and some of its decoration. The building is composed of baked brick, and the plan is square, 12.5 m per side, with three openings (on the northeast, southwest, and southeastern sides) and a deep niche on the northwestern side.¹⁷⁶ Each of the four corners was accentuated with an engaged column, as were the entrances on the southeastern and southwestern sides. Inside, the zone of transition was comprised of simple squinches with a single rib down the middle, very reminiscent of the Samanid mausoleum, interspersed with pointed arched niches on the flat portions of the octagon (fig. 32). The corners between the niches and squinches were softened with engaged colonnettes of brick. Below one of the squinches, a band of stucco decoration remained: a row of rounded arches with lobed band enclosing a smaller arch filled with spiral motifs. The corner was bridged with a small stucco squinch, much like a single muqarnas element. The walls below were decorated with a thin stucco revetment, with stepped lines to accentuate the geometry of the bricks underneath, in a manner reminiscent of Arab Ata. This same decoration filled the niche in the northwestern wall, which consequently did not have the appearance of a mihrab (and would not be in the correct direction for a mihrab anyway). Some of the original exterior decoration was preserved on the southwestern door due to its enclosure in the neighboring mausoleum: an interlacing star pattern of brick strapwork can be seen, as well as swirled stucco motifs between some of the bricks and areas of cross-shaped brick plug decoration.

The two mausolea flanking this building were not only dated through inscriptions but also much better preserved, and consequently the group as a whole is fairly well-

¹⁷⁶ This niche may originally have been an opening; see Goryacheva 1983, p. 81. This would mean that the original plan was a *chahar taq*.

known in Western scholarship. It appears in the survey of Ettinghausen and Grabar as an example of the growing importance of the pishtaq in Iran and Central Asia.¹⁷⁷ The decoration of the three facades show a clear evolution in the techniques of brick and glazed terracotta ornament, and so the group has been used to illustrate the growing use of color in Iranian architectural ornament during the Saljuq period (in spite of the fact that the three are located in one of the Qarakhanid capitals and were built by Qarakhanid patrons).¹⁷⁸ The flanking mausolea can be clearly linked to royal patrons through their inscriptions; Cohn-Wiener first suggested that the central mausoleum was also built by a Qarakhanid ruler, Nasser b. ‘Ali, and hence datable to 1012-3.¹⁷⁹ This attribution has been accepted by Hillenbrand,¹⁸⁰ but rejected by Grabar, who believed the mausoleum to be later due to its “large gate and extensive decoration.”¹⁸¹ Leisten did not completely dismiss Cohn-Wiener’s dating but pointed out that the building bore similarities with other mausolea of the 11-12th centuries in the Termez and Bokhara regions.¹⁸²

Denike compared the brick decoration of the building to that on the pishtaq of the Ribat-i Malik, also of the 11th century, and consequently argued for an 11th century date.¹⁸³ Bernshtam agreed with Cohn-Wiener that the building should be dated to the early 11th century, based on stylistic criteria which placed it between the Samanid mausoleum and that of Sultan Sanjar: analogies between the squinch and that of the Samanid mausoleum; remnants of the Central Asian tradition of wooden decoration in

¹⁷⁷ Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, p. 284.

¹⁷⁸ See Donald Wilber 1939, pp. 16-47; see also Robert Hillenbrand 1976, pp. 545-54.

¹⁷⁹ Cohn-Wiener, “A Turanic Monument of the Twelfth Century A.D.,” *Ars Islamica* VI, 1968, pp. 90-91. The first westerner to note the existence of the complex was the Russian geographer A.P. Fedchenko in 1871; see V.D. Goryacheva 1983, p. 69. Goryacheva also points out that Cohn-Wiener never actually visited Uzgend (p. 71).

¹⁸⁰ Hillenbrand FFM, p. 294, fig. 204.

¹⁸¹ Grabar 1966, p. 31.

¹⁸² Leisten, pp. 277-8.

¹⁸³ Denike 1939, p. 16.

some of the brickwork, such as the engaged colonnettes; and the massive engaged corner columns.¹⁸⁴ He dismissed the local legend that the mother of the incumbent of the northern mausoleum was buried in the central tomb,¹⁸⁵ but did not specifically advocate Cohn-Wiener's alternative either. He saw the development of domed mausolea in general as a Turkic contribution, connecting the dome with the shape of the yurt. The pishtaq he saw as an influence from the architecture of the Tien Shan region.¹⁸⁶

Zasipkin saw the middle mausoleum in a direct line of evolution from the Samanid mausoleum, through the tomb of Mir Sayyid Bahram, and leading to the north and south mausolea which flank it.¹⁸⁷ He saw the building as more of a centralized type of mausoleum than a portal type, but a crucial link between the two types, and he dated it to the first half of the 11th century (he saw the development of the pishtaq as a specifically Turkic contribution to Islamic architecture). He pointed out that the incumbent of the central mausoleum had to be someone tremendously respected by the later Qarakhanids who built their own tombs right up against the building, and he suggested that perhaps the incumbent of the central mausoleum was a religious figure, pointing out that his excavations at the site showed that more mausolea built around the 12th century had originally stood nearby. He thought that the central mausoleum must have already been in ruins when the two later buildings were constructed against it, due to the way one of the corner columns was incorporated into the fabric of the southern

¹⁸⁴ Bernshtam arkhiv, 1945, pp. 58-61; see also Bernshtam 1950, pp. 46-9.

¹⁸⁵ Bernshtam arkhiv, 1945, p. 63. He also related an interesting local legend, which claims that Kilich Burkhan-khan, a Herculean-type hero, was buried with his parents in the central mausoleum. See also Bernshtam 1950, pp. 57-9.

¹⁸⁶ Bernshtam 1950, pp. 129-36.

¹⁸⁷ Zasipkin arkhiv, 1959, pp. 25-8. In another archival document, Zasipkin strongly criticized the restorations at Uzgend: see Zasipkin arkhiv, 1954.

mausoleum.¹⁸⁸ He also pointed out that only two facades of the building, the southwestern and southeastern, were richly decorated, while the other two facades remained quite plain. The two decorated facades were visible from the Qaradarya River and from the citadel, respectively.¹⁸⁹

Zasipkin, involved in both the excavation and restoration of the complex, has remained an authoritative voice. Nusov, for example, who was also involved in the restoration projects at Uzgend in the 1940s, later echoed Zasipkin's findings, calling the Uzgend cemetery a necropolis along the lines of the Shah-i Zinda. He also saw the central mausoleum with its two decorated portals as forming an important link in the transition from the centralized type of mausoleum to the portal type, and hence extremely important in the history of Central Asian architecture. He dated the building to the 11th century.¹⁹⁰

Further archaeological excavations were undertaken at Uzgend in 1962-3 and 1970-2 by E.Z. Zaurova and V.D. Goryacheva. Numerous burials were uncovered in each mausoleum: 28 in the central, 20 in the northern, and 12 in the southern, ranging in date from the 11th to the 14th century. A great deal of Qarakhanid era ceramic material was found in the vicinity.¹⁹¹ Goryacheva suggested that the existence of only two decorated facades and the ruinous state of the central mausoleum when the other two were appended to it could be explained by an earthquake before the building was completed.¹⁹² However, she rejected Cohn-Wiener's suggestion that Nasser b. 'Ali was

¹⁸⁸ Zasipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 32. Elsewhere, in a work not available to me, he lent support to Cohn-Wiener's idea that the mausoleum was constructed for Nasser b. 'Ali: see Goryacheva 1983, p. 71.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁹⁰ Nusov 1971, pp. 18-21.

¹⁹¹ Goryacheva 1983, pp. 74-5, p. 83.

¹⁹² Goryacheva 1983, p. 81.

buried there, dating the mausoleum over a century later and arguing that it was the tomb of Hasan b. 'Ali (d. 1131-2), the father of the ruler buried in the northern tomb.¹⁹³

Khmel'nitskii suggested that perhaps the external decoration was applied in the 11th century but the building was actually constructed in the 10th century. He believed it to be a mosque rather than a mausoleum, seeing the niche in the northwestern side as a badly oriented mihrab.¹⁹⁴ He points out that other mihrabs in Central Asia were incorrectly aligned due south or due west instead of to the southwest, but to the northwest seems too much of a stretch. Furthermore, the excavators and restorers have all believed the decoration to be contemporary with the construction of the building.

In my opinion, the early 11th century dating of Bernshtam and Zasiipkin seems much more plausible. Zasiipkin's observation that someone highly valued by the 12th century Qarakhanid rulers must have been buried in the central mausoleum is also a point well-taken, although it is difficult to say whether this would have been one of their predecessors or a religious figure they admired.

Sultan Saodat

This heavily restored complex a few miles north of Termez is centered around the family tombs of the "sayyids," a group of local notables who were both secular and religious leaders in the Termez region in the 11th century. Scholars agree that the two tombs on the westernmost side of the complex, connected by an ivan, are the oldest (fig. 33); about the exact dating of these mausolea, however, there is much disagreement. The only inscriptions are a later tile revetment (13th - early 14th century according to

¹⁹³ Goryacheva 1983, p. 95.

¹⁹⁴ Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 95-6.

Masson¹⁹⁵) on the pishtaq of the ivan; this inscription relates the building to an Amir Hasan, who arrived in Termez in 860 from Balkh.

The arrangement of the two oldest mausolea is highly unusual, with only one comparable building to be found in Central Asia: Khaja Mashhad, at Sayat in Tajikistan, discussed above.¹⁹⁶ Both have entrances which are off-centre, towards the front of the ivan (fig. 34). The ivan itself has three small domes, although all the domes in the complex were reconstructed in the 20th century. The northern mausoleum is the larger of the two, measuring 10.15 x 10.25 m, while the southern one measures 9 x 9.05 m. The northern one, like most of the buildings in the complex, is packed with restored cenotaphs. One towards the northwest corner has been reconstructed to be much larger than the others, and this one is a focal point of local pilgrimage. Later mausolea abut directly onto both of the earliest ones; the northern building is connected to the adjoining one to its east through a door in the centre of its eastern side.

In the northern mausoleum, the squinches are large and simple (fig. 35). Between the squinches are shallow niches which echo the shape of the squinches; smaller niches bridge the squinches and arches in the sixteen-sided zone above. Below the zone of transition, the walls are divided into three arched niches on each side, with the arches resting on engaged columns. Bricks are the primary medium of decoration, arranged in geometric patterns in the squinches and in the arched niches. The columns have additional decoration composed of terracotta brick plugs used to make rings of circles and diamond-shaped lozenges. All but a few of these columns are new.

¹⁹⁵ Masson 1959, arkhiv, p. 171.

¹⁹⁶ Shvab 1966, arkhiv, p. 3; Filimonov 1983, arkhiv, p. 65.

The southern mausoleum has a similar arrangement in the zone of transition, except that the proportions of the squinches and intervening arches are squat by comparison, and the arches above are tri-lobed. Below the zone of transition, the walls have a plain brick revetment. On the outside of both mausolea to either side of the pishtaq of the ivan, there are arched niches which are now halfway obliterated by the later mausolea appended to the original construction. Mausolea continued to be added to the complex up to about the 18th century.

The whole complex was in a poor state of repair when it first garnered the attention of Russian scholars during the tsarist era, and restoration began in 1913 when Semenov cleared the complex of accumulated rubbish and restored the roofing of the ivan. In 1934, the domes of the earlier mausolea were rebuilt, and in the 1960s many of the later mausolea were rebuilt more or less entirely. In the archival document connected with the 1960s restorations, Shvab stated that the original covering of the ivan has been entirely lost, as well as the form and height of the central arch, and the decoration of the corner columns.¹⁹⁷ The brick decoration inside the northern mausoleum fared better, and archival photos show that at least some columns remained with the decorative patterns now applied to all the internal columns. Another document connected with excavations in 1978 contains extensive drawings which show the areas of original cladding on the western exterior façade.¹⁹⁸ These documents are particularly valuable given the extensive renovations which have occurred since independence, including the addition of a new tile revetment on the façade of the pishtaq.

¹⁹⁷ Shvab 1965, arkhiv, pp. 3-8.

¹⁹⁸ Arkhiv 1980.

Like the mausoleum complex of Hakim al-Termezi, the Sultan Saodat complex has received very little attention by western scholarship, appearing only in Grabar and Leisten's accounts of funerary architecture. Hillenbrand also briefly alluded to the complex without mentioning it specifically in his account of shrine architecture.¹⁹⁹ Grabar, based on the photographs in Denike, dated the northern mausoleum to the late 11th century; he states that this was the only source available to him.²⁰⁰ Leisten suggested a slightly earlier, 10-11th century date.²⁰¹

Denike's 1926-7 expedition to Termez sparked interest in the complex amongst Soviet scholars, leading Zasiipkin to first attempt to establish a chronology: he dated the oldest mausoleum to the 11th century, with the southern mausoleum built shortly after the first and connected by the ivan from the beginning (although he believed the decoration of the ivan to be much later, from the 15th century). He elaborated and expanded his study two decades later in an unpublished archival document.²⁰² Masson agreed that the second mausoleum was built shortly after the first, no earlier than the mid-11th century, but believed the connecting ivan to be a later addition, from the 13-14th century (the date he also assigned to the inscription on the pishtaq, based on stylistic analysis of the script).²⁰³ Khakimov and Shvab concurred with the 11th century date for the two oldest mausolea, but also dated the ivan to the 11th century.²⁰⁴ Shvab pointed out that the 11th century date, established on stylistic grounds, also accords well with historic sources, since the local Sayyid dynasty were at the height of their power and influence in the 11th

¹⁹⁹ Hillenbrand, FFM, pp. 266, 268.

²⁰⁰ Grabar 1966, p. 31. For Denike's illustrations and dating, see Denike 1939, pp. 12-14.

²⁰¹ Leisten, p. 275.

²⁰² Zasiipkin 1927-8; Zasiipkin 1959 arkhiv. Much discussion has also taken place about the later additions to the complex, but I am dealing here only with the two oldest mausolea and the connecting ivan.

²⁰³ Masson 1959, arkhiv, p. 117; see also Masson 1941, p. 63.

²⁰⁴ Khakimov & Shvab 1969, p. 31. Khakimov has elsewhere argued on his own for a 10-11th century date; see Arshavskaya, Rtveldze & Khakimov 1982, p. 93.

century.²⁰⁵ According to Pugachenkova, however, the role of the descendants of Hasan al-Amir (mentioned in the later foundation inscription) grew increasingly important in the 10th century, but their influence declined under Ghaznavid domination in the 11th century. She consequently gave an earlier date, 10-11th century, and argued that the ivan was an integral part of the earliest 2-mausoleum complex.²⁰⁶

Following his excavation of the complex with Nekrasova in 1978, Filimonov argued in his excavation report that not only were the two mausolea and the ivan built at the same time, but also that this was concurrent with the tiled decoration.²⁰⁷ Since they found a great deal of pottery and other material from the 12-13th centuries, albeit together with green-glazed pottery (made from pre-Islamic times through the Saljuq period and hence very difficult to date, particularly in fragments), he dated the earliest parts of the complex to the 12-13th centuries. He thought the most likely patron to be the sayyid ‘Ala al-Mulk Imad al-Din Termezi (ruled 1216-7), with the completion of this first stage of the complex occurring in the immediate aftermath of Genghis Khan’s destruction of Termez in 1220. He therefore believed the original core of the shrine to be a “post-Mongol, Shi‘ite shrine on the territory of the sayyids,” built in an archaic style but with very fashionable decoration.²⁰⁸ His colleague Nekrasova has dated these earliest buildings even later, to the late 13th – early 14th centuries.²⁰⁹ Khmel’nitskii, in his recent publication, has rebuffed Filimonov & Nekrasova and argued for an 11-12th century date for the earliest buildings.²¹⁰ Given the balance of the historical and stylistic arguments,

²⁰⁵ Shvab 1965, arkhiv, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ Pugachenkova 1976, pp. 41-4.

²⁰⁷ Filimonov 1983, arkhiv, p. 8.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, pp, 67-71.

²⁰⁹ Nekrasova 2001, p. 22.

²¹⁰ Khmel’nitskii 1996, p. 248.

an 11th century date seems the most probable. Filimonov's attempt to bring together the very different styles of the architecture and the tiled decoration of the pishtaq, resulting in a construction date 2-5 years after Genghis Khan's devastation of the entire region, seems very unlikely indeed.

Sangbast

This baked brick mausoleum is located on a flat plain 30 km southeast of Mashhad, in Iranian Khorasan (fig. 36). A tall circular minaret, which may have once been attached to the mausoleum,²¹¹ stands next to it. Both were restored in the 1970s, and the mausoleum now has a well-defined octagonal zone of transition. Earlier publications show, however, that this was not originally the case, and Schroeder believed that a gallery may have originally encircled this section, as at the Samanid mausoleum and the tomb of Sultan Sanjar at Merv, obscuring the original asymmetry of the construction, with its two rounded corners.²¹² The building has a *chahar taq* plan, with arched windows in the zone of transition placed above the four arched entrances. The dome rests on simple squinches which are filled with raised brick squares resembling a Greek key pattern. Both the squinches and the intervening arched windows have square frames composed of raised brick. A square Kufic inscription in brick encircles the base of the dome. The dome itself is composed of tiers of bricks decoratively arranged in a chevron pattern. All four walls are covered in a stucco revetment incised with stepped lines, giving an overall zigzag pattern.

²¹¹ Schroeder 1936, pp. 137-8. He surmises that there may originally have been a second minaret on the other side, giving the building the type of symmetrical monumental gateway seen centuries later in Iranian architecture; this seems unlikely.

²¹² Schroeder 1936, pp. 136-7 and fig. 1.

The building was first published by Diez, who attributed it to the Ghaznavid governor of Tus, Arslan Jazib, resulting in a date of 1028.²¹³ This attribution has been generally accepted, and determines the building's place in the surveys, where it frequently appears not as a major monument but as a link in the chain of the evolution of Iranian funerary architecture. In Ettinghausen and Grabar, for example, it is discussed in conjunction with the evolution of the squinch.²¹⁴ In Hillenbrand's larger survey, the building represents a stage in the development of the exterior of Iranian mausolea, albeit an early one where the interior is much more lavishly decorated than the exterior.²¹⁵ In Grabar's catalog of mausolea, he mentions the lack of a definitive attribution, but still labels the building as the "mausoleum of Arslan Jazib, dated 419/1028."²¹⁶ Sourdél and Sourdél-Thomine noted that Diez had derived the attribution from a passage in the *Tarikh-i Yamini*, but that there was no concrete evidence to support it.²¹⁷ They analysed the inscriptions and found that, although the incumbent was not named, the inscriptions consisted of Quranic verses which were consistent with the building's function as a mausoleum. They argued that the style of the inscriptions in the building and on the minaret belonged to the 12th century, although they did not preclude the possibility that these could have been applied to an earlier building.²¹⁸ Leisten suggested a date prior to the 12th century, also based on a stylistic analysis of the inscriptions and comparing them to manuscripts of the period.²¹⁹

²¹³ Diez, *Churasanische Baudenkmäler*, Berlin, 1918, vol. I, pp. 52-5. Arslan Jazib served Mahmud of Ghazna, whose reign ended in 1028.

²¹⁴ Ettinghausen & Grabar, p. 279.

²¹⁵ Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 292-3.

²¹⁶ Grabar 1966, p. 24. He argued that the building stylistically fits the date even if the attribution is not secure.

²¹⁷ Sourdél & Sourdél-Thomine 1979, p. 110, note 8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 111-4.

²¹⁹ Leisten, p. 259.

Davazdah Imam

Located in the center of Yazd, this baked brick building still retains much of its original interior painted stucco decoration, including an inscription which dates the building to 1038 and shows that the patrons were two amirs of the Kakuwayhid dynasty. The entrance faces northeast, with a mihrab on the southwestern side and shallow arched niches on the other two sides. The entrance, the mihrab and the niches are each flanked by arched niches in rectangular frames set almost into the corners of the building. In the tympanum above the doorway, the Kufic foundation inscription was painted in a reddish brown on a white background, framed by floral scrolls. In the spandrels of the central arches on the north and east walls are white floral scrolls on a reddish brown painted background, with white Kufic inscriptions at the top of the rectangular recessed frame of the arch. The mihrab has painted decoration in similar colors in its tympanum, with a scrolling motif reminiscent of the beveled style from Samarra (fig. 37). Near the base of the walls are a few fragmentary remains of deeply carved stucco decoration, also reminiscent of Samarra and similar to that seen at Nayin and at the mosque of Hajji Piyada in Balkh.

The zone of transition consists of trilobed squinches interspersed with arched niches; a small, deeply recessed window sits inside each niche (fig. 38). Just above this zone, a Kufic inscription painted in deep blue on a white background wraps around the base of the dome. Fragmentary traces of blue and red paint remain in the dome; in the early part of the 20th century this decoration was much better preserved and a starburst pattern was clearly discernible.

The building was first published by Pope in 1934,²²⁰ and since then it has appeared in several of the general surveys, cited as an important monument due to its having the earliest muqarnas squinch in central Iran,²²¹ as well as being emblematic of a growing emphasis on both the exterior elevations of domed square mausolea and the elaboration of their zones of transition.²²² The foundation inscription was first read in full by Holod,²²³ Blair later elaborated on this reading with translations of the Quranic inscriptions as well. In her view, the building was not constructed as a mausoleum *per se*, but instead as a Shi'ite shrine dedicated to the Twelve Imams.²²⁴

Mir Sayyid Bahram

This small baked brick building is located at Kermana, a town on the main road from Bokhara to Samarqand. It is now surrounded by a park, but this was a cemetery prior to Soviet restoration of the building in 1973-4 and the removal of the surrounding graves. A prayer hall and another subsidiary room which had been attached to the front of the mausoleum were also removed. The pishtaq was rebuilt to its presumed original height; the dome had already been repaired in the 19th century.²²⁵

The building is nearly square, and measures 6.06 x 6.1 m. The bricks are laid in the double bond typical of the region, and form the decoration as well as the structure. The pishtaq rests upon engaged columns at the corners of the building, and is framed with a band of raised bricked forming an interlaced Greek key pattern (fig. 39). The pointed

²²⁰ Pope 1934, pp. 28-30.

²²¹ Schroeder, SPA, pp. 1001-4; Ettinghausen & Grabar, p. 282; see also Grabar 1966, p. 24.

²²² Hillenbrand FFM pp. 291-4.

²²³ Holod 1974, pp. 285-8.

²²⁴ Blair 1992, pp. 103-7.

²²⁵ Passport 3.4-4.2.9, arkhiv. The restoration of the pishtaq was based on the drawing which Nil'sen published in 1950 (p. 55); Zasiipkin argued that the accuracy of this drawing was doubtful and particularly questioned the way the architrave rests upon the engaged columns: see Zasiipkin 1959, arkhiv, p. 26.

arched doorway niche is framed by an inscription in raised brick; this inscription has recently been published by Rtveladze, who used it to date the building to the second quarter of the 11th century.²²⁶

The south-facing entrance is about 3 feet off the ground and, in its current restored state, the building lacks steps. The small interior lacks a clearly articulated zone of transition; the squinches and the intervening arches both rest on engaged columns which carry all the way down to the floor (fig. 40). The squinches and arches are surrounded by rectangular frames of raised bricks and also framed by narrow bands of swirled stucco decoration around their edges. The overall textured effect is highly effective in the small space. A restored cenotaph lies to the right of the entrance and occupies a substantial portion of the floor space.

The building first came to the attention of Soviet scholars in 1934 during an archaeological expedition in the Zerafshan region, and it was first published by Pisarchik.²²⁷ Nil'sen was the first to read the inscriptions, but at that time the prayer hall was still attached to the façade and only part of the inscription, containing the *bismillah*, was visible.²²⁸ He supported Zasiipkin's dating of the building to the late 10th – early 11th centuries, comparing its use of brick as a medium of both structure and decoration to the Samanid mausoleum, but noting that the presence of the pishtaq indicated a later date than that building.²²⁹ Pugachenkova also supported the late 10th – early 11th century date,²³⁰ as did both Litvinskii and Rempel,²³¹ and this is the date entered into the official

²²⁶ Rtveladze 1999, p.37.

²²⁷ Pisarchik 1945.

²²⁸ Nil'sen 1950, p. 54; see also Nil'sen 1956, p. 41.

²²⁹ Nil'sen 1950, p. 56; see also Nil'sen 1956, pp. 43-4.

²³⁰ Pugachenkova 1963, p. 101.

²³¹ Litvinskii 1953, pp. 134-5; Rempel 1961, p. 152.

archival record of the building.²³² Khmel'nitskii opted for a mid-10th century date, arguing that the building fits into the corpus of Samanid architecture.²³³ The few Western scholars to take note of the building have argued for a later date on stylistic grounds: Grabar argued that the developed pishtaq points towards a later date without specifying how much later,²³⁴ while Blair argued specifically for a date of c. 1106 by comparing the epigraphy of the published part of the inscription to that seen at the mausoleum of 'Abdallah b. Burayda at Vakil Bazar, dated 1106.²³⁵ Leisten also suggested an early 12th century date based upon the muqarnas frieze of the pishtaq.²³⁶

Rtveladze's recent publication of the previously hidden part of the inscription, revealed during the restoration of the building and the removal of the attached prayer hall in the 1970s, shows that the Soviets were closer to the actual date of the building and narrows the possible patrons down to two. He read "al-Jala[l] Baha," which he interpreted as part of the *laqab* al-Jalal Baha al-Dawla.²³⁷ Unfortunately the history and titulature of the Qarakhanid dynasty is still somewhat obscure, and two possibilities exist based upon the work of Soviet numismatists: Fedorov argued that Baha al-Dawla was the *laqab* of Mansur b. 'Ali, of the 'Alid branch of the Qarakhanids,²³⁸ whilst Konchev argued that this *laqab* refers to 'Ali b. Hasan of the Hasanid branch.²³⁹ Either way, Rtveladze's reading dates the building to the second quarter of the 11th century and shows it to be a very interesting example of a royal Qarakhanid mausoleum.

²³² Pasport 3.4-4.2.9, arkhiv.

²³³ Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 173.

²³⁴ Grabar 1966, p. 25.

²³⁵ Blair 1992, p. 206.

²³⁶ Leisten, p. 192. The basis of his argument is invalid, however, as the upper part of the pishtaq was restored, without much evidence as to its former appearance.

²³⁷ Rtveladze 1999, p. 37.

²³⁸ Fedorov 1972, p. 144.

²³⁹ Konchev 1979, pp. 120-38.

Babaji Khatun

This mausoleum is located 16 km southwest of Taraz (also known as Talas, Jambul, and Aulia-Ata) in southeastern Kazakhstan, on the road from Bishkek to Shimkent. Excavations show this to have been a thriving and sophisticated city in medieval times,²⁴⁰ and historical sources confirm that it was one of the capitals of the Qarakhanids.²⁴¹ A fragmentary inscription gives the name “Babaji Khatun,” and hence this is the only mausoleum in the group under consideration here which is definitively linked with a female incumbent (although Qiz Bibi, Aisha Bibi, the central mausoleum at Uzgend, and the mausoleum of the daughter of Iskhak Ata also house females according to local legends and folk memory).

The building is square, measuring 6.9 m per side, with entrances on three sides (the western side has always been closed). It is composed of baked brick, and has a double dome system with a low rounded dome topped by a tall conical one. It has been much restored, with a rebuilt conical dome, but archival photographs of the exterior show its appearance before the restorations (fig. 41). The external decoration, which was the same on all three entrance façades, was simple: the doorways were formed by two recessed arches and were flanked by arched niches. Above each arched niche was a brick roundel. The whole composition was given a square frame of recessed bricks. Above this frame, along the top of each façade, was a band of triangular protruding bricks. The

²⁴⁰ For an account of the excavations, see Senigova 1972.

²⁴¹ In a park in the center of Taraz lies another mausoleum which, according to popular legend, belonged to the founder of the Qarakhanid dynasty. Unfortunately, it was torn down and completely rebuilt in a different style in 1920. Judging from the old photographs, however, the mausoleum appears to be later, probably early 12th century, and hence falls outside the scope of this study, although it may well be a royal Qarakhanid foundation judging from the rich brick revetment on the façade. See Grabar 1966, p. 32; Khmel'nitskii 1996, pp. 184-5; Goryacheva & Peregudova 1995, p. 63 (where they date the monument to the 9-10th centuries).

base of the dome was treated differently on the different façades: on the western side (and presumably the eastern side as well) was a section of triangular zigzags (basically the same idea as the band of triangular protruding bricks, but writ large) topped by another band of triangular protruding bricks. On the northern side, which must have formed the main entrance, the remnants of a portal rose above the façade, with the fragmentary inscription interspersed with deeply carved terracotta plaques which may not be original to this building, given the haphazard way they were placed. The inscription gives the name of Babaji Khatun, and a portion which is no longer extant named the builder, Mohammad.²⁴²

Grabar dated this building to the early 11th century, with the following qualification:

The date is hypothetical and especially difficult to establish on stylistic grounds for so remote a region. Its justification resides mainly in the fact that the second half of the century witnessed modifications in decorative techniques and esthetic values which are not apparent here. But, of course, arguments of that order can only be used with caution in dealing with provincial centers.²⁴³

This statement is typical of the attitudes of western Islamicists towards Central Asia, a region on the periphery of the Islamic world and hence considered as a provincial frontier outpost. Taraz, however, was not only located on major trade routes but was also one of the capitals of the Qarakhanids, one of the largest empires in Asia at that time. Soviet scholars, with a more accurate idea of the region's history, mostly interpreted the building's decorative simplicity as evidence for a 10th century date, when the area was under the hegemony of the Samanids.²⁴⁴ Only Khmel'nitskii demurred, dating the building to the 11th century and comparing its conical dome to the 12th century Fakhr al-

²⁴² Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 187.

²⁴³ Grabar 1966, pp. 26-7.

²⁴⁴ Goryacheva & Peregudova 1995, p. 65. They also cite Zasiipkin & Bernshtam as arguing for a 10th century date.

Din Razi at Konya Urgench.²⁴⁵ The shape of the building does somewhat resemble the tomb towers of the Saljuq era, but without the raised crypt which characterizes those buildings, making it a very interesting early example of that genre of mausolea.

Aisha Bibi

This building is located just next to the mausoleum of Babaji Khatun; all but the façade has collapsed. This façade, however, is very richly decorated with bricks and deeply carved terracotta plaques (fig. 42). The lower portion of the wall and the engaged corner columns have cross-shapes inside double squares; the upper part of the walls, the decorative bands on the engaged corner columns, and the engaged columns of the portal have a star and cross pattern containing rosettes reminiscent of those seen in deeply carved stucco in Sogdian palaces such as Varakhsha. The spandrels and hood of the entrance portal have star shapes; this spandrel decoration was enclosed in a band of diamonds, now only fragmentary. This elaborate façade, which was probably higher than the dome behind it, once led into a square chamber approximately 7 m per side with a *chahar taq* plan. No inscriptions remain to reveal the identity of the incumbent, nor does it appear that there ever were any inscriptions on the densely decorated façade. Locals have termed the mausoleum “Aisha Bibi,” perhaps retaining some folk memory of a female incumbent buried next to Babaji Khatun.

Denike dated the building to the late 12th – early 13th centuries, although he compared it with the group at Uzgend.²⁴⁶ Grabar compared the ornament to that of the

²⁴⁵ Khmel'nitskii 1996, pp. 185-8.

²⁴⁶ Denike 1939, pp. 100-102.

Samanids, albeit in a different technique, and dated it to the 11th century.²⁴⁷ Goryacheva and Peregodova dated it even earlier, to the 10-11th centuries.²⁴⁸ Khmel'nitskii opted for a later date of 11-12th centuries.²⁴⁹ Clearly the date is difficult to determine with the unique decoration and fragmentary condition of this building, but the comparisons with Samanid and Qarakhanid architecture are most apt, and hence an 11th century date would seem to be the most reasonable hypothesis.

Iskhak Ata

This mausoleum is situated in the complex of Khusam Ata, in the village of Fudina near Qarshi, although the building itself is older than the 11-12th century mausoleum of Khusam Ata. The complex, with buildings dated from the 10th to the 20th centuries, consists of seven mausolea, the latest of which date to the Mongol era, a *ziyaratkhana*, a nine-domed mosque, and two monumental gates. One of these gates, dating to the 16-17th centuries, was built upon the ruins of a 10-11th century building.²⁵⁰

The mausoleum known locally as the grave of Iskhak Ata sits close to, but is not attached to, two other mausolea. Composed of baked brick and measuring 7 m per side, it has a *chahar taq* plan, but one entrance, on the southwestern side, is accentuated with a small *pishtaq* (fig. 43). The corners are buttressed with massive engaged pilasters. Inside, the zone of transition consists of simple squinches with intervening arches; these arches are filled with diamond-patterned brickwork. At the corners between the squinches and arches are small brick pendentives. At the base of the dome, there are two

²⁴⁷ Grabar 1966, p. 30.

²⁴⁸ Goryacheva & Peregodova 1995, p. 64.

²⁴⁹ Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 157.

²⁵⁰ Man'kovskaya 1971, p. 38.

rows of diagonally laid bricks forming what the Russian sources like to describe as a “spruce” pattern.

The building was first published by Abdurasulev and Rempel’, but they did not date it.²⁵¹ Man’kovskaya dated it to the 10th century, calling it one of the oldest mausolea in Central Asia and suggesting that it was contemporary with the Samanid mausoleum and the mausoleum of ‘Arab Ata.²⁵² Pugachenkova, however, dated it to the 11th century.²⁵³ The official archival record of the building dates it to the 10-11th centuries.²⁵⁴ Khmel’nitskii is also equivocal, saying that there is not enough published information to be more specific than the 10-11th centuries.²⁵⁵ Zohidov concurs with this dating as well in his recent catalog.²⁵⁶

Daughter of Iskhak Ata

This building is situated in the same complex, immediately to the northwest of the mausoleum of Iskhak Ata. It is a smaller building, measuring only 6 m per side, and is also composed of baked brick (fig. 44). It has a single entrance which is defined by a small pishtaq. Inside the building are two arched niches flanking the entrance and three niches on the other three sides, with a small window on the western side. Any brick decoration inside the building has been obscured by a new plaster revetment applied by the local population before the first visits of Soviet scholars in 1967. The building houses two cenotaphs.

²⁵¹ Abdurasulev & Rempel’ 1962, pp. 26-30.

²⁵² Man’kovskaya 1979, p. 79.

²⁵³ Pugachenkova, *Srednyaya Aziya: Pamyatniki iskusstva Sovetskogo Soyuz*, p. 412.

²⁵⁴ Pasport 3.4.28-4.3.6, arkhiv.

²⁵⁵ Khmel’nitskii 1992, p. 175.

²⁵⁶ Zohidov 1996, p. 93.

Like the adjoining mausoleum, this one was first published by Abdurasulev and Rempel', but without any dating.²⁵⁷ The official archival record places the building in the 10-11th centuries;²⁵⁸ Khmel'nitskii also dates it to the late 10th or early 11th century.²⁵⁹

Baba Hatem

This mausoleum is located 35 km west of Balkh; it is composed of baked brick laid in a double bond and measures 9.5 m per side (fig. 45). The exterior is delineated by engaged corner columns with vertical rows of bricks alternating with horizontal rows. The large dome towers above the somewhat narrow and low façade, which frames the doorway with an elaborate inscription in knotted Kufic script. Another inscription is situated directly above the arched niche of the doorway, with its spandrels decorated in a geometric cross-hatch motif.

Like the mausoleum of Shah Fazl at Safid Boland, the interior of Baba Hatem still retains much of its lavish original stucco decoration. The walls are covered in a geometric pattern which imitates brick decoration typical of the Saljuq era. In the center of each wall is an arched niche framed by an inscription band in knotted Kufic. Near the top of each arch is a roundel containing an interlaced star pattern. The zone of transition consists of trilobed squinches, very similar in appearance to those of Davazdah Imam at Yazd, interspersed with trilobed arches. The spaces between the upper portion of the arches and those of the squinches are filled with pentagons, which contain a beveled design in deeply incised stucco; this same design fills the lateral divisions of the squinches. Around the base of the zone of transition and outlining each arch is another

²⁵⁷ Abdurasulev & Rempel' 1962, p. 30.

²⁵⁸ Pasport 3.4.28/u-4.3.6, arkhiv.

²⁵⁹ Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 161.

inscription band; yet another band of knotted Kufic script runs around the base of the dome. The inscriptions, which have been read by Melikian-Chirvani, contain the name of the builder, Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Mahmud, and the name of one of the incumbents, Salar Khalil. Judging from the grammar of the foundation inscription, the mausoleum contains at least two burials, but probably three.²⁶⁰

The building was first published by Melikian-Chirvani, who argued for an early 11th century date based upon the architecture and the decoration as well as the epigraphy. He pointed out the similarities between the squinches of Baba Hatem and those of Davazdah Imam, dated 1038, for example, and brought multiple examples of parallels for the decorative motifs in the stucco of the building as well as its epigraphy in ceramics and metalwork as well as in architecture.²⁶¹ Other scholars did not concur with this dating: Sourdel-Thomine dated the building to the mid-12th century based upon her stylistic analysis of the epigraphy,²⁶² and Pugachenkova,²⁶³ and Khmel'nitskii basically agreed with her.²⁶⁴ I am inclined to agree with Sourdel-Thomine, who, unlike Melikian-Chirvani, actually visited this remote site, and so I am not including the building as one of the few examples of extant mausolea of the Ghaznavid era.

Baba Roshan

This building, now in a ruinous state, is located just to the southwest of Balkh, near the medieval city wall. It is composed of baked brick and measures 12.3 m per side

²⁶⁰ Melikian-Chirvani 1972, pp. 111-21.

²⁶¹ Melikian-Chirvani 1968, pp. 59-93.

²⁶² Sourdel-Thomine 1972, pp. 319-20.

²⁶³ Pugachenkova 1983, p. 19. She argued for a slightly earlier date than Sourdel-Thomine on general stylistic grounds, asserting that the building could not post-date the Ghuzz invasion of 1152.

²⁶⁴ Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 191.

(fig. 46). It has two off-centre entrances, one on the northern and one on the western side. The zone of transition is comprised of large squinches interspersed with large pointed arches, decorated with bricks placed in a zigzag pattern reminiscent of the mausolea at Sangbast and at the Sultan Saodat complex in Termez.

The building is very little known and Pugachenkova appears to have been the only scholar to have visited it. She found that there were several burials inside, although the incumbents are unknown. The building appears to have been restored in the Timurid era, and fragments of tile mosaic and stucco epigraphy survive from the 15th century. She dated the building to the early 11th century,²⁶⁵ a date which other scholars have also accepted.²⁶⁶

Abu Hureira Gunbad

This ruined mausoleum lies near the town of Zadian in Afghanistan. According to local legend, it is the burial place of Abu Hureira, a Companion of the Prophet and compiler of hadiths who died in 678 and never traveled to Khorasan or Transoxiana (although, as discussed above, local legend also claims that he visited the site of Aq Astana Baba).²⁶⁷ The building is composed of a mixture of pakhsa and unbaked brick, with several rows of one alternating with several rows of the other, and a revetment of unbaked brick (fig. 47). There are two entrances: one off-centre on the northern side, and another centre on the southern side. The southern entrance leads into a rectangular chamber, and this chamber can also be entered through an off-centre ivan on its southern

²⁶⁵ Pugachenkova 1983, p. 16; see also Pugachenkova 1987, p. 130; Pugachenkova 1975, pp. 30-31.

²⁶⁶ Khmelnit'skii 1996, p. 237; Leisten, p. 140. Leisten, however, does seem to have conflated this building with the similarly named, and also very remote, Khaja Roshnai in Surkhandariya, as several of the references he gives refer to that building and not to Baba Roshan.

²⁶⁷ See Robson, EI2, p. 129.

side. The domed burial chamber has a zone of transition very similar in form to other Khorasanian examples, with large squinches interspersed with large pointed arches. Here, however, each of the corners is surmounted with another, smaller arch, further easing the transition to the dome.

Like the preceding building, this one was first published in 1975 by Pugachenkova,²⁶⁸ and it seems that no scholar has been able to visit it since. She dated it to the first half of the 11th century, comparing it with Baba Roshan and Sangbast. She argued that the complex was a khangah and that the burial chamber housed a Sufi shaykh.²⁶⁹ As with Baba Roshan, the few scholars to have taken notice of the building at all have concurred with her analysis.²⁷⁰

Shah Fazl

This mausoleum is located at Safid Boland, also known as Gulistan, a village in a remote area in the Ferghana Valley 50 km northeast of Kasan, in modern Kirgizstan. Composed of baked brick, the nearly square building measures 11.1 x 11.17 m (fig. 48). The dome rests on a high octagonal zone of transition composed of large squinches interspersed with arched niches, like many Central Asian mausolea. What is extraordinary about this building, however, is its lavish stucco revetment (fig. 49); although this is in a poor condition today, a substantial portion still survived intact when Cohn-Wiener visited the building in the 1920s.

Ornate inscription bands in Kufic script run around the building at the top and the bottom of the zone of transition; inscriptions which survive contain several verses from

²⁶⁸ Pugachenkova 1975, pp. 28-30.

²⁶⁹ Pugachenkova 1987, p. 132; see also Pugachenkova 1983, p. 22.

²⁷⁰ Khmel'nitskii 1996, pp. 238-9; Leisten, p. 282.

the Quran²⁷¹ and a Persian foundation inscription which contains the titles of the Qarakhanid ruler Muhammad b. Nasser (ruled 1020-56) and his son, Mu'izz al-Daula 'Abbas, who was ousted from power in 1060. The building, therefore, can be dated to 1055-60.²⁷² Blair describes the virtuosity of the inscriptions as follows:

...the inscriptions also confirm the advanced state of epigraphy in the eastern Iran [sic] world, for they show a range of styles...Altogether, the decoration is a tour-de-force of stucco carving, and the building provides an important dated monument showing the sophisticated and precocious work done in this little-known area in the mid 5th/11th century.²⁷³

Between the two inscription bands, the zone of transition is decorated with roundels inside the squinches and arches as well as in their interstices; these roundels contain Kufic inscription bands enclosing various geometric motifs. The form of the arches and squinches is accentuated with a band of lobed decoration on each. On the walls below the zone of transition, a dado of lobed and pointed roundels encircles the building underneath the inscription band; like the roundels above, these enclose bands of Kufic inscription which in turn enclose deeply carved geometric patterns. Below the dado is another inscription band, and underneath this is a band of knots enclosing spirals. Beneath this band are decorative lobed arches carved in stucco, with spiral patterns in their spandrels. In between the arches, which Cohn-Wiener described as giving the impression of supporting the walls above,²⁷⁴ are vertical bands of knotted decoration enclosing spirals.

Cohn-Wiener dated the building to the 12th century on stylistic grounds,²⁷⁵ and Soviet scholars at first followed suit: Denike dated it to the 12th – early 13th century,²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Verses 45:35-37; 9:33; and 59:24. See Blair 1992, p. 128.

²⁷² Nastich & Kochnev, 1988, p. 70.

²⁷³ Blair 1992, p. 129.

²⁷⁴ Cohn-Wiener 1939, p. 84.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 91.

and Zasiipkin at first thought it to be 13th century then later decided on the late 12th – early 13th centuries. Following further study of the building and excavations in the village of Safid Buland, however, he decided that the mausoleum should be dated to the first half of the 11th century.²⁷⁷ This turned out to be nearly correct once the inscriptions were analysed by Nastich and Kochnev, dating the building to 1055-60.²⁷⁸ Hence it has turned out to be a very interesting example of a royal Qarakhanid mausoleum.

Khaja Roshan

This very little known mausoleum is located outside the village of Angor in Surkhandariya. It appears in just a few publications, which are now the only record of its original form, since it was entirely rebuilt in 2003 by the local imam without the knowledge or consent of the Uzbek authorities.²⁷⁹ Before this rebuilding, it was composed of unbaked brick with a baked brick dome. In addition to two side entrances, it had an entrance facing east through an ivan leading to a narrow passageway and ramp, a unique arrangement in the group of mausolea considered here (fig. 50). It also had several structural peculiarities inside: a single, wide niche in the northwestern corner, and an unusual zone of transition with short squinches and intervening arches which did not extend for the full height of the octagonal zone.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ Denike 1939, p. 70.

²⁷⁷ See Goryacheva 1983, p. 107.

²⁷⁸ Nastich & Kochnev, p. 70. Prior to the reading of the inscriptions, there was much confusion over not only the date but also the function of the building: Goryacheva had termed it a *khangah*, while Khmel'nitskii believed it to be a mosque: see Khmel'nitskii 1996, vol. I, p. 115.

²⁷⁹ The changes which the imam told me he made to the building include the following: the use of baked rather than unbaked brick; the replacement of the entrance ramp with a short staircase; moving the cenotaph from the northwestern corner to the centre of the building to make the practice of *tawaf* easier; the addition of several windows; the use of cement; and, once funds permit, the addition of a marble dado. The new building bears no resemblance to the old except for its measurements.

²⁸⁰ Khmel'nitskii, p. 207.

The building was first published by Nil'sen, who dated it to the 11th century based on its constructional similarities with other buildings of that era in Turkmenistan.²⁸¹ Since then it has only appeared in a few catalogs,²⁸² and is entirely unknown in the West. Nil'sen's dating has never been questioned.

Ataulla Said Vakkos

This mausoleum is also located near the village of Angor, in a cemetery on the road to Sherabad. Like Khaja Roshan, it has been recently rebuilt and now bears no trace of its original form. The official Soviet archival record of the building, compiled by Rtveladze, unfortunately has neither an illustration nor a plan. Rtveladze dated the building to the 10-11th centuries, and described it as an unbaked brick mausoleum with a squinch arrangement typical for that period and a decorative scheme consisting of three horizontal bands of diagonally laid bricks. The interior measurement was 6.5 x 6.9 m; the exterior measurement was not given. The interior had no trace of a stucco revetment.²⁸³ Local inhabitants attribute the building to a Companion of the Prophet.

The building has only appeared in two publications: the first, which has been unavailable to me, dates from the tsarist era;²⁸⁴ the second is a recent study of *ziyarat* at the many sites in Surkhandariya claiming to be the burial place of Ataulla Said Vakkos, and this mausoleum is mentioned only in passing and not illustrated.²⁸⁵ I am including it here to represent what must have been a very popular genre of building in Surkhandariya

²⁸¹ Nil'sen 1962, pp. 105-7.

²⁸² Arshavskaya, Rtveladze & Khakimov 1982, pp. 108-9; Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 207-8; Zohidov 1996, p. 124.

²⁸³ Passport 3.4-4.6.8, arkhiv.

²⁸⁴ Mayev 1899, pp. 156-67.

²⁸⁵ Zhuraeva 2005, p. 52.

in the 10-11th centuries, for in spite of the unlikelihood of small buildings of unbaked brick surviving for ten centuries, particularly in a region which was utterly devastated by Genghis Khan, many still did exist in the earlier part of the 20th century which are lost to us now (and these are undoubtedly a mere fraction of what was actually built). An article published in 1945 by Bachinski described a number of such buildings, which he classified as domestic architecture but which Nil'sen has argued should be seen as mausolea,²⁸⁶ and indeed many do fit into the corpus of buildings described here, with *chahar taq* plans, single entrances but four niches as at Aq-Astana-Baba, and dual entrances as at Khaja Bulkhak. Records of others, such as Akhtama Sakhoba, near Sherabad, can be found in the archives.²⁸⁷ Others which are not published anywhere can be found crumbling in the village cemeteries of Surkhandariya, giving a mere hint at the popularity of the mausoleum as a building form in the Samanid, Ghaznavid and Qarakhanid eras.

Tomb Towers

Gunbad-i Qabus

The Gunbad-i Qabus is the earliest of the extant tomb towers, with a foundation inscription dating it to 1006-7 and stating that it was built during the lifetime of the patron, the Ziyarid ruler Qabus b. Vushmgir. It is located on a flat plain near Gurgan, towering over the surrounding countryside at a height of 51 metres, further accentuated by its placement on a 10 meter high artificial mound (fig. 2). It is composed of baked

²⁸⁶ Bachinskii 1945, pp. 196-225; Nil'sen 1962, p. 101.

²⁸⁷ Pasport 3.4-4.6.8, arkhiv, 1978.

brick, and the only decoration consists of two inscription bands which encircle the building, one just under the conical dome and one above the doorway, each repeating the same foundation inscription in Kufic script composed of cut bricks. The building is delineated with 10 flanges which extend from the enlarged base of the tower all the way up to the base of the dome. There is a single entrance facing east-southeast, and a single small window in the dome facing east. The interior is a single dark chamber which extends all the way up to the inner dome; there is no decoration and no trace of any plaster revetment.

The building is exceedingly well-preserved, having sustained damage only at the base due to the depredations of local builders over the centuries; this damage was restored in the mid-20th century. In 1899, a Russian team excavated the building, and found that the foundations extended all the way to the bottom of the artificial mound, and that there was no body buried in it. According to legend, Qabus was placed in a glass or crystal coffin, which was suspended from the roof by chains.

Like the Samanid mausoleum, this building has entered into the canon of Islamic architecture as an early masterpiece of the funerary genre. It was first published by Diez in 1918,²⁸⁸ and since then has appeared in every major survey of Islamic and Persian art and architecture,²⁸⁹ as well as the catalogs of funerary architecture and eastern Islamic inscriptions.²⁹⁰ As the building is clearly dated, it has not been the subject of any of the extended debates which characterize the historiography of most of the Central Asian domed square mausolea. Indeed, in spite of the universal admiration for the building (no

²⁸⁸ Diez, *Churasanische Baudenkmäler*, 1918, pp. 39-43.

²⁸⁹ Godard, SPA, pp. 970-74, pl. 337-8; Godard 1949, p. 330; Talbot Rice 1965, p. 61; Hutt, in Michell, ed., 1978, p. 253; Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 221-2; Hillenbrand, in Ferrier, ed., 1989, p. 84; Hillenbrand FFM 1994, pp. 28, 269, 276, 280, 283; Hillenbrand 1999, pp. 101, 105.

²⁹⁰ Grabar 1966, p. 22; Blair 1992, pp. 63-5; Leisten, pp. 169-70.

doubt greatly enhanced by the frequent comparisons of its dramatic simplicity to that of modern architecture), it has received little more than the superficial treatment typical of the surveys. And in the surveys in particular, enthusiastic descriptions of the building's aesthetic qualities have generally far outweighed any concern with historical accuracy: in the volume edited by Michell, for example, Hutt describes it as "one of the first buildings in Iran that can be associated with the advent of the Central Asian Turks,"²⁹¹ while Dickie described it as embodying the "sense of power [which] is the first impression to be conveyed by a Seljuq building,"²⁹² despite the fact that Qabus was a member of the Iranian Ziyarid dynasty and died several decades before the first arrival of the Saljuqs in Iran. Others, however, have noted that the building is a very Iranian one, with dates given in both the Arabic lunar and the Persian solar calendars; this fact, combined with the legend of the glass coffin, led Ettinghausen and Grabar to assert the following:

... we may very tentatively suggest that its background may be sought in some Mazdean commemorative monument or in the transformation into permanent architecture of a transitory building such as a tent.²⁹³

Hillenbrand, although he summarily rejected the idea in his earlier work, has in recent years also hinted at possible Zoroastrian associations due to the glass coffin legend, which he implicitly accepts.²⁹⁴

The most thorough descriptions of the building, which also number among the very few to put it into any historical context, are Godard's entry in the *Survey of Persian Art*, Blair's analysis of the foundation inscription and an article by Barthold.²⁹⁵ Although Barthold did introduce the building to Soviet scholarship, however, his compatriots only

²⁹¹ Hutt, in Michell ed., p. 253.

²⁹² Dickie, in Michell ed., p. 39.

²⁹³ Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 221-2.

²⁹⁴ Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 269, 276; Hillenbrand 1999, p. 105, fig. 78.

²⁹⁵ Barthold, *Sochineniya* vol. IV, 1966, pp. 262-6.

very rarely took any notice of its existence, undoubtedly because of its dissimilarity to any of the architecture found on Soviet territory. Both Barthold and Blair emphasized the significance of the word *qasr* in the inscription, an issue which will be dealt with here in depth later on.

Mil-i Radkan

This mausoleum was constructed in 1016-21 as the tomb of Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Vandin Bavand, a prince of the Bavandid dynasty. Like the Gunbad-i Qabus, the inscription reveals that it was built during the lifetime of the patron. The tower is located on a low hill in an isolated valley in the Alburz Mountains (fig. 51). It is 35 metres high and is cylindrical with a conical roof. It is made of baked brick laid in a single bond. It has a fragmentary terracotta inscription plaque framed with a star border over the doorway (fig. 52), a band of terracotta trefoils set into arched niches just below the roof, and an inscription band with the same text repeated in both Arabic and Pahlavi just below that decorative band. The single entrance, which is approximately 5 feet off the ground, leads to the dark and undecorated interior chamber, which reaches all the way to the inner dome.

Like the Gunbad-i Qabus, this building was first published by Diez, but it has not received much attention since and barely makes an appearance in a few of the surveys.²⁹⁶ It merits brief entries in the catalogs of Grabar and Leisten,²⁹⁷ the most extensive

²⁹⁶ SPA, p. 1723, pl. 340C; Hillenbrand FFM p. 283, fig. 5.22.

²⁹⁷ Grabar 1966, p. 24; Leisten, p. 238.

treatment is in Blair's catalog, where she analyses the inscriptions, with particular emphasis on the titulature and the terms used for the building, *mashhad* and *qasr*.²⁹⁸

Lajim

The Lajim tower was constructed in 1022-23 for Abu'l Favaris Shahriyar b. 'Abbas b. Shahriyar, who calls himself a great prince but is unknown in the historical sources. The patron was not the prince himself but his mother, Chihrazadh; this is the first recorded instance of a female patron in the eastern Islamic world.²⁹⁹ The name of the builder, al-Husayn b. 'Ali, is also given.

Lajim is a remote and isolated village in the central Alburz Mountains, and the tower is located near the village on top of a hill surrounded by deep ravines (fig. 53). It is composed of baked brick laid in a single bond and widely spaced with mortar, and it is circular with an interior dome and an exterior conical roof. Its decoration consists of a recessed doorway with a tympanum filled with small blind arches, a band of blind niches just under the roof, and two inscription bands in Arabic and Pahlavi just below. In Arabic the building is referred to as *qubbah* and *qabr*; in Pahlavi it is called a *gunbad*. The east-facing single entrance to the dark interior chamber is approximately 6 feet off the ground (fig. 54). In its current state the building does contain a cenotaph, that of an 18th century caretaker of the building who is now the object of local veneration; the villagers refer to the tower as "Imamzada 'Abdallah" in his honor. Restorations of the

²⁹⁸ Blair 1992, pp. 85-7.

²⁹⁹ Blair 1992, p. 89.

building in the 1950s and 1970s have shown, however, that there was no body buried inside.³⁰⁰

André Godard visited the building in 1933 and was the first to publish it, although based upon his notes and photographs, Herzfeld published both the Pahlavi and the Arabic inscriptions at around the same time.³⁰¹ Blair has amplified and corrected their readings, and the building is also listed by Grabar and Leisten.³⁰² Overall, however, the building has attracted even less scholarly attention than the little devoted to the Mil-i Radkan.

Pir-i 'Alamdār

The tower known as Pir-i 'Alamdār is located in Damghan, to the south of the Alburz Mountains in the fertile region which lies between the mountains and the central plain. Damghan lies on the main east-west trade route, but at the time the tomb tower was built, in 1026-7, the area was ruled by the Ziyarids. The building was constructed for Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Ibrahim, the governor of the region, after his death by his son Bakhtiyar. The name of the builder was 'Ali b. Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. Shah.

The building is composed of baked brick; it is a cylindrical tower 16 metres high topped by an ogival dome (fig. 55). Below the dome is a brick cornice, below that are several bands of brick decoration: a band containing the foundation inscription in an elongated Kufic script is bracketed by narrow bands of interlaced S-shapes, which are in turn bracketed by large bands containing an interlaced Greek key pattern in raised brick.

³⁰⁰ R. Soleiman, *Vezerat-i Farhang*, personal communication, July 2003.

³⁰¹ Godard 1936, pp. 109-21; SPA, p. 339; Herzfeld, 1933 pp. 146-7; Herzfeld 1936, pp. 78-81; see also RCEA VI, pp. 178-9, no. 2331.

³⁰² Blair 1992, pp. 88-90; Grabar 1966, p. 24; Leisten, pp. 192-4.

Below this is a band of terracotta trefoils bracketed by bands of diagonally laid bricks in the “spruce” pattern. The inscription is in Arabic only and refers to the building as a *qubbah* and a *qasr*. The recessed doorway, which faces southwest, is framed by a pointed arch resting on engaged columns; this arch is decorated with terracotta diamond shapes. Its spandrels and the upper part of the tympanum are filled with a diamond pattern executed in stucco, whilst the lower part of the tympanum contains a stucco band of inscription in Kufic script framed by bands of diamonds. Inside the tower, just below the dome, is another epigraphic band of with Quranic inscriptions in a knotted Kufic script, painted in black on the white plaster (fig. 56); this is the only tomb tower under consideration here which has any form of internal decoration. The building has had some restoration around the doorway, and a small window has been added approximately halfway between the door and the base of the dome. Walls have also been added so that it is now impossible to circumnavigate the building.

As Damghan is an accessible location, in contrast to the remote siting of the towers in the Alborz Mountains, this tower has received much more scholarly attention than the previous two, although it has still not achieved the canonical status of the Gunbad-i Qabus. It was first published in 1825 by J.B. Fraser, who described the journey he undertook in 1821-2.³⁰³ Sarre was the first to photograph the building, and based upon his photographs, Herzfeld translated the exterior inscriptions.³⁰⁴ Pope published the interior inscription, which he saw as important for stylistic reasons only because of its Quranic content.³⁰⁵ The building has appeared briefly in several surveys,³⁰⁶ as well as in

³⁰³ Fraser 1825, pp. 313-9.

³⁰⁴ Sarre 1901, p. 113, fig. 153; Herzfeld 1921, p. 167.

³⁰⁵ Pope 1936, pp. 139-41.

³⁰⁶ SPA, p. 1723, pl. 339B; Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 267-8.

the usual catalogs.³⁰⁷ It has been treated most extensively by Adle and Melikian-Chirvani in their article on the 11th century monuments of Damghan, the purpose of which was given as follows: to describe the monuments and their historiography; to analyze the inscriptions; to identify the builders, date the two minarets, and identify the origin of the tomb towers of Damghan in particular and Iran in general.³⁰⁸ Their contribution to the study of tomb towers in general has been described at the beginning of this chapter; the Damghan towers fit into the further evolution of the genre by being the first examples built outside of the mountain strongholds of the Caspian dynasties in a site where they would easily be seen by travelers, given the position of Damghan on east-west trading routes. From Damghan this building type spread to Rayy, and then to Abarquh, and then throughout the realm of the Saljuqs.³⁰⁹

Chehel Dokhtaran

This tower is also located at Damghan, a mere 700 m away from the Pir-i ‘Alamdar, which was clearly the model. It was constructed in 1054-5 for Abu Shuja ‘Asfar and his sons, during the lifetime of the former. Adle and Melikian-Chirvani have contended that this was a friend of the Ziyarid ruler Manuchihr who later ruled the Damghan region on behalf of the Saljuqs.³¹⁰ It is circular with a conical roof; its height is 14.8 metres (fig. 57). It also has a cornice below the roof, but a more elaborate one than its predecessor. Its decorative bands are also larger than those of Pir-i ‘Alamdar: these consist of a band just under the cornice containing an interlaced Greek key motif, and

³⁰⁷ Grabar 1966, p. 24; Blair 1992, pp. 93-5; Leisten, pp. 147-8.

³⁰⁸ Adle & Melikian-Chirvani 1972, p. 230.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³¹⁰ Adle & Melikian-Chirvani 1972, pp. 282-3; see also Blair 1992, p. 124.

three bands below this consisting of a foundation inscription in a very elongated Kufic script sandwiched between two bands of Maltese crosses and swastikas. The southeast-facing doorway is recessed with engaged columns and a carved stucco inscription which again mentions the name of the patron; the tympanum of the doorway has a zigzag pattern carved in stucco, very similar to that seen at Sangbast. This tower has undergone more restoration than its predecessor, which made the foundation inscription more difficult to decipher.³¹¹

As this tower is so close to the Pir-i ‘Alamdar in distance and style, its historiography is virtually identical to that of its neighbor, as they have almost always been published together.³¹²

Gunbad-i ‘Ali

This tower near Abarquh, in the province of Fars, was constructed in 1056-7 for ‘Amid al-Din Shams al-Daula Abu ‘Ali Hazarasp and his wife, Naz bt. Kashmir,³¹³ by their son, Firuzan. This is the only pre-Saljuq tomb tower to be built outside of the Caspian region, and its presence can be explained by the connections of these scions of the local Firuzanid dynasty to the Buyids and Ziyarids of northern Iran. This tower is exceptional in another way, being the only building under consideration here to be constructed of stone rubble rather than brick (fig. 58). In spite of this anomaly, however, it is clearly modeled upon the northern Iranian tomb towers. It is perched on a hill outside the town, and sits on a plinth which echoes its octagonal shape. The single

³¹¹ Blair 1992, p. 123.

³¹² See SPA, pl. 340A; Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 267-8; Grabar 1966, p. 27; Blair 1992, pp. 123-5; Leisten, pp. 148-9; Adle & Melikian-Chirvani 1972, pp. 228-97.

³¹³ The reading of “Kashmir” for the name of Naz’s father is not certain: see Blair 1992, pp. 126-7.

entrance, which is several feet off the ground, faces east and leads into a single dark and windowless chamber. The building is devoid of decoration apart from a muqarnas cornice just under the dome and the foundation inscription in raised brick, which forms a band just under the cornice. Although the building once had a double dome, the outer shell is now gone.

The building was first published by Godard in 1936; both he and Herzfeld transcribed and translated the inscriptions.³¹⁴ It has appeared briefly in only a few surveys, as well as the usual catalogs;³¹⁵ otherwise it has never garnered much scholarly interest.

Resget

This tower is located approximately one mile away from that of Lajim, on top of a hill from which the nearest village, Resget, is just visible in the distance. The Arabic foundation inscription, part of which is repeated in Pahlavi, reveals this to be the tomb of Hurmuzdyar and Habusyar, the sons of Masdara.³¹⁶ Although these individuals are not known from any sources, the area was still under the control of the Bavandids until the early 13th century (and for another century and a half after that as vassals of the Mongols). Unlike the other tomb towers described here, this foundation inscription is not well-preserved enough to give a date of construction.

The building is very similar in appearance to the Lajim tower, but with considerably more elaborate decoration in the bands just under the dome (fig. 59). Like

³¹⁴ Godard 1936, pp. 49-54; Herzfeld 1936, p. 82.

³¹⁵ SPA, pl. 335-6; Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 277-8; Afshar, vol. I, p. 216; Grabar 1966, p. 27; Blair 1992, pp. 126-7; Leisten, pp. 99-101.

³¹⁶ The vowelings of "Habusyar" and "Masdara" is uncertain as these are otherwise unattested Iranian names: see Blair, pp. 208-9.

the Lajim tower, it sits perched on a steep hill (although neither is on the highest possible point in the area). The single entrance, which faces southeast, is approximately 5 feet off the ground, without any steps (nor do any appear in the pre-restoration photographs). The interior chamber is dark, windowless, and undecorated. Like the Lajim tower, the bricks are laid in a single bond with large spaces of mortar in between; holes for scaffolding can be seen near the top. At the base of the dome are two rows of brick muqarnas, and nestled in between each muqarnas unit are stucco antefixes protruding upwards from a band of elongated ovals interspersed with circles (fig. 60). These antefixes have delicately carved stucco motifs comprised of leafy scrolls, palmettes, and small six-pointed stars surrounded by six hexagons and surmounted by palmettes; traces of a brick-red paint still survive. Beneath this is another stucco band of leafy scrolls, and beneath this is a floriated Kufic inscription band bearing a Quranic text (verses 21:36, 3:185 and 29:57); traces of a brilliant blue painted background remain. Underneath the inscription is a small stucco band containing a chain pattern. The foundation inscription, also in a floriated Kufic script, is situated in a stucco panel over the doorway.

Due to the building's similarities to and its proximity to the Lajim tower, its historiography is virtually identical: Godard was the first scholar to visit, photograph and publish the building, and it has not been the focus of much scholarship since. Godard dated the building to c. 1009 (400 AH) because of the word "*arbaḥ*" in the inscription.³¹⁷ Grabar accepted this date in his catalog.³¹⁸ However, Bivar, who visited the building in 1965, argued that this was not a date and referred to the number of people buried in the building; he dated it a century later based upon stylistic comparisons of the stucco

³¹⁷ Godard 1936, pp. 120-1.

³¹⁸ Grabar 1966, p. 22.

decoration with the Ribat-i Sharaf in Khorasan and the Gunbad-i 'Alawiyan in Hamadan.³¹⁹ Bivar's dating has been accepted by both Blair and Leisten.³²⁰ On one point, however, he was mistaken: the incumbents of the tower were not actually buried inside it, as no bodies have been found during the restorations.³²¹

Other Mausolea

Another group of mausolea are those which are known to have existed or which still exist in some form today, but little can be said of their original form. One such category are dynastic tombs, attested in historical sources but with very little surviving from the buildings themselves. From the Buyid tombs in Rayy, described by al-Muqaddasi,³²² nothing remains. According to Herzfeld, a wooden door has survived from the tomb of 'Adud al-Dawla at Najaf.³²³ From the tomb of Mahmud of Ghazna, both the wooden doors and the cenotaph survived.³²⁴ This cenotaph, with its Arabic inscription in Kufic script on a background of scrolling palmettes, and its deeply carved, beveled decoration, is reminiscent of the decoration seen on many of the mausolea discussed above.

Another category consists of shrines which have been sufficiently venerated over the centuries to attract a great deal of high level patronage, which has entailed both

³¹⁹ Bivar, pp. 21-3. At the time of his visit in 1965, a road had not yet been built anywhere in the vicinity of Resget, a good indication of the isolation of this building and the tower at Lajim. Both were accessible only on foot or on horseback; now it is possible to reach these sites with a four-wheel drive vehicle, albeit with difficulty, and horses are still the preferred mode of transport for the locals.

³²⁰ Blair 1992, pp. 208-9; Leisten, p. 246.

³²¹ R. Soleiman, Vezarat-i Farhang, personal communication, July 2003.

³²² Muqaddasi, p. 210.

³²³ Herzfeld 1955, p. 157, n. 1.

³²⁴ Sourdel-Thomine in *Essays*, ed. Daneshvari, pp. 127-35.

additions and rebuilding. The great Shi'ite shrines fall into this category, such as the Iraqi shrines at Najaf and Karbala, and the Iranian shrines at Qom and Mashhad. As these shrines do not even allow non-Muslims to enter, and are still exceedingly careful and protective vis-à-vis Muslim scholars, archaeology has not been possible at these sites. The shrines which fell on Soviet territory have, of course, not had the option of refusing the incursions of archaeologists, and so in many cases something is known of the historical development of these sites. These shrines include the following: the tomb of Qutham b. 'Abbas at the Shah-i Zinda complex in Samarqand; the Chahar Bakr complex at Sumitan, near Bokhara; the Takht-i Suleiman at Osh, in the Ferghana Valley in Kirghizstan; the shrine of Chashma Ayyub, near Bokhara; the Complex of Isma'il Bukhari, in Samarqand oblast; and the complexes of Khusam Ata, Khaja Karlik, Hazrat Imam Main, and Sultan Mir Haidar, all in Kashkadarya province.

Out of all these, the mausoleum of Qutham b. 'Abbas at the Shah-i Zinda complex has been studied the most, the subject of several archaeological excavations and multiple restorations (including the current ongoing restoration, which is destroying much of the historic fabric and archaeological material). The mausoleum, together with an adjoining mosque and minaret, formed the earliest core of the complex. According to Filimonov, the mausoleum was a domed square with a pishtaq entrance, while the adjoining mosque had a nine-bay plan similar to that seen at Balkh, Termez and throughout the wider Islamic world; he argued that this part of the complex was constructed in the 10-11th centuries, whilst the *ziyaratkhana* immediately adjacent to the mausoleum was added in the 14th century.³²⁵ Pletnev and Shvab agreed with this dating of the mausoleum,³²⁶ but

³²⁵ Filimonov 1962, pp. 276-7.

³²⁶ Pletnev & Shvab 1967, p. 44.

Nemtseva and Shvab, writing together over a decade later, dated the core of the complex slightly later, to the 11-12th centuries, and argued that the *ziyaratkhana* was contemporary with the mausoleum.³²⁷ In her dissertation, Roya Marefat accepted the dating of Nemtseva and Shvab.³²⁸ The exact appearance of the original mausoleum, however, is now a matter of conjecture.

From the number of mausolea discussed in this chapter, it is evident that more than a few isolated examples have survived and that there is a considerable corpus of early Islamic funerary architecture in northern Iran and Central Asia. In the chapters which follow, we will first examine the historical context of these buildings and then discuss in detail the royal mausolea of the Persian Renaissance.

³²⁷ Nemtseva & Shvab 1979, p. 30.

³²⁸ Marefat, unpublished dissertation, pp. 85-6.

Chapter II: Sasanians, Sogdians and Conversion to Islam

Before discussing the re-interpretation of pre-Islamic traditions during the Persian Renaissance, it is first necessary to briefly summarize what those traditions were and how the conversion to Islam occurred in Iran and Central Asia. As this chapter will make clear, not only are the political and cultural traditions of pre-Islamic Iran different from those of Central Asia, but also the Arab conquest and the subsequent conversion process were very different in the two regions. These differences must be understood in order to explore the different ways in which the Samanids and the Caspian dynasts utilized the past in the 10-11th centuries.

For over four centuries before the Arab invasion, the Sasanian dynasty ruled Iran. The dynasty was founded in 224 when Ardashir overthrew the Parthians, a nomadic tribe from Central Asia who had ruled Iran from the late 3rd century BCE. Although the details of Ardashir's origins are obscure,³²⁹ he was a native Persian from a humble background. His descendants ruled an empire which covered an expanse of territory which included modern Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Armenia, parts of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, and a strip along the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula. They also controlled client states in Yemen and in the border region between Iraq and Syria. The Sasanians were one of the major powers of late antiquity, and were the chief rivals first of the Roman Empire and then of its Byzantine successor. Their trading connections extended from China to northern Europe: Sasanian silver and glass have been found as far afield as Japan, while Sasanian textiles were preserved in the churches of medieval Europe, in both cases as highly treasured luxury products.

³²⁹ See Richard Frye, "The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran," *Iranica Antiqua* 6, 1964, pp. 45-9; see also Frye, *CHI* vol. 3(1), 1983, pp. 116-7.

Sasanian government was highly centralized, and society was both organized and hierarchical. Land was held by an aristocracy known as the *dihqans*, who administered their fiefdoms and collected taxes on behalf of the central government. At the apex of society was the *shahanshah*, or king of kings, both the religious head of the Zoroastrian state church and the undisputed political leader of the empire. He led a remote and ceremonial existence in his enormous palace at Ctesiphon, with rituals designed to impress those granted a royal audience, such as the ambassadors of the rival Byzantines, with the awesomeness of his power. This power was also advertised in the rock reliefs which can be found in western Iran, depicting the shahs in their moments of glory, achieving military victories and receiving their investiture from the gods themselves (Fig. 61).

One such moment of glory was the defeat of the Roman Emperor Valerian by Shapur I in 260, resulting in the ignominious capture of the emperor himself. However, the high point of the territorial expansion of the dynasty was in the late 6th and early 7th centuries, when Khosrau I Anushirvan expanded Sasanian authority into Central Asia and his successor, Khosrau II, captured Byzantine territory as far as Egypt. The reign of Khosrau I Anushirvan (531-79) was later celebrated as a golden age, and his fame for justice resonated in New Persian literature centuries later. Other shahs whose exploits were immortalized by later generations include Bahram V, (420-39), known as Bahram Gur and famed for his hunting prowess as well as his fondness for women and wine.³³⁰

³³⁰ Many of the stories relating to Bahram Gur are recorded in the Iranian epic poem, the *Shahnama*, composed in the late 10th century by Firdausi; despite its literary nature, this is a major source of information on the Sasanian dynasty. For a discussion on the available source material, see Widengren, CHI vol. 3(2), pp. 1269-83.

By the time the last Sasanian shah, Yazdgerd III, ascended the throne in 632, the dynasty was already in decline, weakened by internal rebellions and decades of war with Byzantium. The Persians suffered their first defeat by the Arabs at the Battle of Qadisiyya in 634, and a mere 17 years later, in 651, the mighty Sasanian Empire fell. In a scene eerily reminiscent of the downfall of the Achaemenid Empire to Alexander in 330 BC, Yazdgerd, who had fled the pursuing invaders with a mere fragment of his retinue, was slain by one of his own subjects in Merv, on the northeastern fringe of his territory, alone and defenseless.³³¹

The territory to the northeast of the Sasanian Empire, encompassing much of modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, was occupied by the Sogdian city-states in the centuries before the arrival of the Arab armies. The Sogdians spoke an Iranian language, albeit one that differed considerably from the Middle Persian spoken in the Sasanian realm. The Sogdian language was also related to various Iranian languages spoken in the oasis city states ringing the Taklamakan Desert, the forbidding region separating Sogdiana from China (now the Chinese province of Xinjiang). The Sogdians used their strategic location, their ethnic and linguistic affiliations, and their generally friendly relations with the powerful Turkish nomads to their north to dominate trade along the Silk Route. They had trading colonies throughout northern China, and their own market in the Chinese capital, Xian. Sogdian became the *lingua franca* of the Silk Route, and the Sogdians served as cultural as well as economic go-betweens among the many peoples they encountered.

³³¹ For an interesting exposition of the similarities of the Arab conquest of Iran to that of Alexander, see Frye 1984, pp. 81-88.

The Sogdian homeland was not a unified state like Iran or China, but was instead composed of small city-states, each with its own ruler.³³² The countryside was controlled by a landed aristocracy known as *dihqans*, who lived in fortified castles. The *dihqans* have frequently been compared to the feudal lords of Western Europe, but in actuality they did not have the same obligations towards or control over the peasants who farmed their lands; in Sogdia, the peasants were not tied to the land. Likewise, inside the cities the rulers were not all-powerful, but were closer instead to being first-among-equals. The merchants took great personal risks traversing the hazardous terrain of the Silk Route, but in return were rewarded with handsome profits. Unlike the Persians, the Sogdians did not have a firm class structure, and so these wealthy merchants were able to wield considerable influence at home, at times electing their leaders.³³³

With their decentralized political structure and their considerable wealth, the Sogdians were tempting targets for the Sasanians to the south and the Turks to the north, but although they occasionally swore allegiance to these foreigners and frequently paid them tribute, they largely managed to maintain their independence and always maintained their own unique culture. The high point of Turkish political influence occurred in the 6th century, when most of Central Asia was incorporated into a vast nomadic empire; this kaghanate lasted from approximately 552 to 630. However, the 6-7th centuries were also the high point of Sogdian cultural influence, not only along the Silk Route but also deep

³³² The lack of political unity is shown even in the terminology used for rulers: the ruler of Samarqand was known as the *Ikshid*, that of Ustrushana was called the *Afshin*, and the ruler of Bukhara was called the *Bukhar Khoda*. These rulers were first among equals vis-à-vis the other *dihqans*, not monarchs in the Sasanian sense. See Barthold 1928, p. 180; Frye 1962, pp. 245-6; Zeimal, CHI vol. 3(1), 1983, pp. 254-9; Frye 1996, p. 185.

³³³ Boris Marshak & N.Negmatov, "Sogdiana," *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, Vol. III*, ed. B.A. Litvinsky, Paris 1996, p. 242.

into Turkish territory, where Sogdian trading colonies were established as far north as Balasagun (in modern Kirghizstan).³³⁴

Other settled Iranian peoples in western Central Asia included the Khorezmians, in what is now eastern Uzbekistan and northern Turkmenistan, and the Bactrians, who inhabited much of modern Afghanistan. In eastern Central Asia, the oases ringing the Taklamakan desert were also inhabited by Iranians with their own unique languages and cultures, although these city-states were under the political domination of Tang China in the period immediately preceding the arrival of the Arabs in Central Asia (the area was then contested by the Chinese, Tibetans and Uighurs). The eastern Central Asians were predominantly Buddhist, and Buddhism was also widely practiced in Bactria, whereas the Khorezmians, Sogdians and Sasanians were mostly adherents of Zoroastrianism. Since this religion shaped pre-Islamic culture in general in Iran and Central Asia and funerary practice in particular, it is necessary to review its basic tenets as well as its prescriptions for the disposal of corpses in order to put later developments in funerary architecture into a proper perspective.

Zoroastrianism is a dualistic religion, and its adherents believe that this world contains the creations of both good and evil. Originally the two principles were separated, but evil became aware of good and coveted it. To defeat evil, the good god Ahura Mazda created this world as a battleground; the evil Ahriman responded by attacking it and placing his own evil creations in the world. The creations of Ahura Mazda include mankind, dogs, and birds; those of Ahriman include reptiles, insects and all dead matter. Everything is seen as a battle between the two forces, and the duty of each Zoroastrian is to do good, both to save his or her own soul and to contribute to the

³³⁴ Barthold 1964, p. 466.

ultimate victory of good over evil. Death is seen as a time when the forces of evil are particularly strong, and so the correct observance of the funerary rituals is essential.

For the Sasanians, Zoroastrianism was a state religion, and believers of other faiths were at times tolerated but often persecuted. Rock reliefs clearly show how the kings were seen to be favored by the gods themselves, receiving the ring of investiture from either a mounted rider or a winged figure, both thought to represent Ahura Mazda.³³⁵ The reliefs at Sar Mashhad, Naqsh-i Rostam, Naqsh-i Rajab and the Ka'ba-yi Zardosht have inscriptions by Kartir, the chief priest from the latter part of the reign of Shapur I (240-70), and through the reigns of Hormazd I (270-1), Bahram I (271-4) and Bahram II (274-93). These reliefs tell of Kartir's persecutions of adherents of rival religions, including Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, and Manichaeans. This example shows how powerful the priesthood was during much of the Sasanian era, with the chief priest being an exceedingly influential member of the court under most of the shahs. The priesthood was both hierarchical and highly organized, with priests at all levels wielding influence in the lives of their parishioners. Zoroastrianism, like Judaism and Islam, concerns itself with every aspect of the lives of believers, and so an official priesthood had the capability to be meddling in the extreme.

Zoroastrianism was practiced quite differently by the Sogdians than by their neighbors in Sasanian Iran. The Sogdians, not having a centralized state, also did not have a state religion. They seem to have been generally tolerant of other faiths, both at home and abroad; many Sogdian translations of Buddhist texts, for example, have been found in eastern Central Asia. Their brand of Zoroastrianism reflects this tolerance and

³³⁵ The mounted horseman giving the ring of investiture to Ardashir I at Naqsh-i Rostam is identified by an inscription as Ahura Mazda: see Georgina Hermann, "The Art of the Sasanians," in R. Ferrier, ed., 1989, pp. 63-66.

openness as well as their own indigenous traditions, so that the Sogdian pantheon differs considerably from that of Sasanian Iran. The most popular Sogdian deity appears to have been Nana, a four-armed goddess showing influence from both India and Mesopotamia, further evidence of the Sogdians' wide trading and cultural connections. Worship seems to have been a private as well as a communal affair, with domestic shrines as well as public temples discovered during archaeological excavations. These shrines and temples are completely different from the temples of Sasanian Iran, as will be discussed further below. Funerary practice was another area of some divergence.

Most of the information regarding Zoroastrian funerary requirements can be found in the Videvdad, a prescriptive text concerned with pollution and purification. This book was written in Middle Persian in the centuries following the Muslim conquest of Iran and therefore reflects the ideal of Iranian practice. The book may not have been known in Sogdiana, and would not have been understood without translation. However, these practices, which had to be recorded once the Zoroastrian religion was under threat, would have been handed down orally amongst the priestly class for centuries, and the archaeological record of Sogdiana does appear to reflect the recommendations of the Videvdad to a large degree.

The information which can be gleaned from the Videvdad gives the following picture of Zoroastrian funerary practice: when death is approaching, evil demons gather in strength, especially for a Zoroastrian. The Zoroastrian is at the apex of Ahura Mazda's creation, and so when he dies and his soul leaves his body,³³⁶ what remains is the most

³³⁶ This soul will remain on the earth for three days and rise up to be judged on the fourth. Grave goods are not allowed which may influence the judgement process; only perishable offerings to the *fravashi*, or guardian angel of the soul. See Frantz Grenet, *Les Pratiques Funeraires dans l'Asie centrale sedentaire de la Conquête grecque a l'Islamisation*, Paris, 1984, p. 38-9.

evil and corrupting substance possible. The room in which he died must be purified,³³⁷ and the utmost care must be taken to avoid any contact between the corpse and the good creations of earth, fire and water. The corpse should be carried as soon as possible³³⁸ by two men (who must avoid contact with it to the extent possible)³³⁹ to a place of exposure, which should be high, dry and far from human habitation (although exactly how far is not prescribed). Here the polluting flesh can be disposed of by vultures or dogs; after excarnation and time in the sun, the bones are rendered cleaner and can be collected and stored so that rain does not fall on them.³⁴⁰ Burial and cremation defile the earth and the fire respectively and are among the greatest of sins.³⁴¹ Likewise, anyone who digs up the bodies of men or dogs or destroys tombs is helping the earth.³⁴²

The Videvdad prescribes specific mourning periods according to the relation of the deceased to the mourner,³⁴³ but the Avesta in numerous places (Videvdad, Denkart, Menoy Xrad, and Arda Viraz Namag) prohibits mourning with tears and loud wailing.³⁴⁴ This prohibition was clearly not observed in Central Asia; from Khorezm to Qizil there are illustrations of elaborate mourning rituals, with tears, wailing, self-flagellation and self-mutilation. The Sogdians were certainly no exception to this, and one of the most

³³⁷ Prods Oktor Skjærvø, *Zoroastrian Texts*, Cambridge MA, 2002, p. 104, V.5.39-42.

³³⁸ If it is raining, snowing or dark at the time of death, the body must be temporarily stored until the rite of exposure is possible. Each town should have a building for this purpose. See Skjærvø, p. 102, V.5.10-13.

³³⁹ Skjærvø, p. 99, V.3.14.

³⁴⁰ Skjærvø, p. 106-7, V.6.44-51. There is some ambiguity about the cleanliness of the bones, since in V.8.33-4, it appears that there is no more pollution one year after exposure (see Tehmurasp Rustamji Sethna, *Vendidad: The Law of Zarathustra to Turn Away from Evil*, Karachi, 1977, p. 66-67) and yet in V.6.50 instructions seem to be given to protect them from rain water, implying some remnant of pollution. V.6.51 contradicts this again by allowing bones to be stored "in full view of the sun."

³⁴¹ The penalty for burial for six months is 500 lashes of the whip and 500 strokes of the bastinado; for burial for one year the penalty is doubled, and after two years the sin becomes inexpiable. See Skjærvø, p. 100-101, V.3.36-39. In this case, it takes 50 years before the burial site can be considered free from pollution (Skjærvø, p. 108, V.7.47-48). Cremation was simply an inexpiable sin (Skjærvø, p. 94, V.1.16).

³⁴² Skjærvø, p. 99, V.3.12-13.

³⁴³ Sethna, pp. 100-102, V.12.

³⁴⁴ Grenet, pp. 40-41.

famous of all Sogdian wall-paintings depicts just such a scene. This painting, from Temple II at Panjikent, shows a body in either a domed building or a canopy, surrounded by mourners beating their heads and cutting their earlobes. Three of the mourners are right next to the body; there is none of the aversion to dead matter prescribed by the Videvdad. On the left are three larger figures who are probably deities; one has four arms and may be the goddess Nana. Interpretations of the scene vary widely, from a realistic depiction of Sogdian mourning rituals to lamentation for the epic hero Siyavush to a cult ritual for local deities or ancestors.³⁴⁵

Whether or not this scene depicts an actual funeral or a myth or legend, mourning scenes on ossuaries show that this type of lamentation was not exceptional. A number of ossuaries have crude applied figurines with faces contorted with grief or arms upraised. Others have more elaborate painted scenes showing a corpse surrounded by mourners engaged in self-flagellation. As in the painting at Panjikent, there is no abhorrence of the dead body; instead, the raw emotion of grief is paramount. Many ossuaries show dancers, and it is possible that this was also an integral part of the Sogdian funerary ritual and a way of expressing grief.³⁴⁶

Excessive mourning was clearly forbidden by the Avesta but was just as clearly practiced anyway. In other areas, both the prescriptions of the Avesta and the actual practice are more difficult to discern and most likely changed over time. A good example of this is the *dakhma*, the place of exposure. The origin of this word comes from the old Indo-European word meaning “to bury,” indicating that this was the original practice of

³⁴⁵ Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art*, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1981, pp. 127-32.

³⁴⁶ Grenet, p. 261.

the ancient Indo-Europeans.³⁴⁷ In parts of the Videvdad, the word *dakhma* seems to indicate mausolea and the text advocates their destruction; in later sections, *dakhma* clearly refers to the place of exposure.³⁴⁸ It is still unclear, however, whether this place is man-made or natural. In verses 6.44-45, for example, believers are ordered to deposit bodies on high places where they will garner the attention of carnivorous birds or dogs,³⁴⁹ neither the word *dakhma* nor any architectural structure is mentioned. In verses 7.45-50, the *dakhma* is mentioned as the place of exposure and is contrasted with places of burial and places where the body lies directly on the earth, “with the lights (of heaven) as their (only) covering.”³⁵⁰ This would seem to imply that the *dakhma* is a built structure, and verse 7.54 explicitly refers to it as such: “In these *dakhmas*, ... the structures that are built up all over this earth, in which dead men are deposited...”³⁵¹ In verse 8.10, the place of exposure is referred to as “that land of either bricks made of clay, or stone or mortar.”³⁵² One possibility which would explain this confusion is that the *dakhma* was originally a natural place when Zoroastrianism was the main religion and exposure was the dominant practice. After the Muslim takeover of Zoroastrian lands, when Zoroastrianism had lost its pre-eminent position and many of its followers had converted to Islam, the practice of exposure, which the majority now found abhorrent, had to be concealed. Hence the *dakhmas* began to be built structures.³⁵³ This hypothesis conforms with the history of the Avesta, as the Videvdad was written several centuries after the Muslim conquest, as mentioned above.

³⁴⁷ Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, Volume I*, Leiden, 1975, p.109. See also Grenet, p. 35.

³⁴⁸ Boyce, p. 326.

³⁴⁹ Skjærvø, p. 106.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 108-9.

³⁵¹ Ibid, p. 109.

³⁵² Sethna, p. 62.

³⁵³ Boyce, p. 328.

The archaeological evidence is difficult to categorize precisely, both because of uncertainty about whether the *dakhma* was a man-made structure before Islam, and because the *dakhma* was not the only structure associated with Zoroastrian funerary practice. As mentioned above, the Videvdad enjoins believers to build structures for the temporary storage of bodies in case the timing or weather does not allow for immediate exposure; these structures are usually referred to as *katas*. Another type of structure is called the *naus*; the purpose of this building was to store ossuaries, and so it can be thought of as analogous to a mausoleum. It is not always clear which purpose an excavated building served, and it is also likely that some served the dual purpose of excarnation and storage of bones. This particularly appears to have been the case in Semirechiye, a northern outpost of Sogdiana in close proximity to Turkic nomads, who practiced burial.³⁵⁴

So there are very few buildings which can be classified as *dakhmas* with reasonable certainty. This determination is based on a combination of factors: the lack of any ossuaries, the presence of disarticulated skeletons, and/or an open platform, which would eliminate the possibility of a structure being used as a *kata* since the whole purpose of the *kata* was to keep the body sheltered from the elements until exposure was possible. Classification is further complicated by the co-existence of religions in Central Asia. For example, an ossuary vase with painted Zoroastrian scenes was found at Merv containing Buddhist scriptures. At Aq-beshim, in Semirechiye, archaeologists found a 6-

³⁵⁴ See V.D. Goryacheva, "Les *Naus* de Sémiréchié," *Cultes et monuments religieux dans l'Asie centrale préislamique*, ed. Frantz Grenet, Paris, 1987, pp. 73-79.

7th century *dakhma* with a brick platform near a Nestorian church and a Buddhist sanctuary. Nearby were ossuaries, pits containing disarticulated skeletons, and burials.³⁵⁵

A few Central Asian buildings have been classified as *dakhmas*, such as at Merv, Chil'pyk in Khorezm, Erkurgan in Sogdiana, Chach in the Ferghana Valley, and Aq-beshim. These are all dated to the pre-Islamic period, with the Erkurgan site having the earliest date, 3rd-2nd century BC. The buildings are mostly constructed from the materials mentioned in the Videvdad (baked brick, stone and mortar), with some use of unbaked brick. They are high, sometimes take advantage of natural outcroppings of rock for the exposure platform (Chil'pyk), and are accessed by monumental staircases.³⁵⁶ The remains of bones show a variety of practice: some bones showed evidence of canine gnawing, whereas others did not,³⁵⁷ meaning that excarnation either happened slowly and naturally or with the help of carnivorous birds, which tend to eat carefully and not leave markings on the bones.³⁵⁸ Some bones were left in the original position, others were placed in pits, and others were deposited in ossuaries. All of these practices, with the exception of the use of unbaked brick, are in accordance with the prescriptions of the Videvdad discussed above. Unfortunately, the archaeological record is too limited and scattered, and the dating both too widespread and too uncertain, to draw conclusions yet about regional practices or chronological developments. What is clear is that in Central Asia at least, the *dakhma* did take an architectural form before the advent of Islam.

³⁵⁵ Grenet, pp. 184-86.

³⁵⁶ This is in contrast to modern *dakhmas* noted by travellers to Iran from the 18th century onwards, which had no staircases and were accessed by ladders.

³⁵⁷ Grenet, p. 228.

³⁵⁸ St. John Simpson, lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2 March 2000.

Examples of *katas* are rarer than *dakhmas* and identified with more uncertainty; only two buildings, one in Khorezm and one in Sogdiana, both dating to the 7-8th century, have been tentatively placed in this category.³⁵⁹ Both had benches and pits which could have been used for the temporary storage of bodies, and the Khorezmian building also contained the materials recommended by the Videvdad for using in the *kata* to contain the impurity: ash, cow-dung, and brick.³⁶⁰ The Sogdian example, at Panjikent, appears to have been used later as a *naus*, or mausoleum for bones.³⁶¹

The *naus* is of course much easier to identify due to the presence of bones, and there are several examples showing a variety of practice. Some contain ossuaries, often lined up against the walls on their undecorated sides, while others contain disarticulated skeletons in pits, and a few contain both. Unlike the identified *dakhmas*, of which the earliest, Erkurgan, dates to the 3rd-2nd century BC, the *naus* appears to be a relatively late development. The earliest one identified so far is at Merv and dates to the Parthian era, but none have been identified in Sogdiana before the 7th century.³⁶² The largest group is at Panjikent, where 80 have been found in the necropolis outside the city.³⁶³ They are on high ground and have small entrances; most are square with vaulted roofs and have benches along the walls for the placement of ossuaries. They are built of either baked or unbaked brick. Similar constructions without benches can be seen in the group of *nauses* at Krasnorechenskoe in Semirechiye. Another group, dated from 7-8th centuries, is located at Angren, near Tashkent: these 11 buildings are made of stone and each consists of a single, rounded chamber approximately 8m in diameter approached through a long

³⁵⁹ Grenet, pp. 226-7.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 155.

³⁶¹ Ibid, p. 164.

³⁶² Ibid, p. 238.

³⁶³ See Staviskii et al, pp. 64-98.

narrow passageway.³⁶⁴ This type of naus, very different in form and material from those at Panjikent, resembles the kurgans in which the nomads of the Central Asian steppe were buried. A similar group was found at Bit-tepe in southern Tajikistan, only composed of unbaked brick rather than stone.³⁶⁵ The Bit-tepe group also had deep arched niches on three sides; with the passageway, this makes for a cruciform plan not unlike that of a *chahar taq*. This group was dated to the late 7th or early 8th century from coins found on the site; other groups have mostly been dated from the style of the ossuaries they contain.

Ossuaries were not always stored in a naus; they could also be placed directly in the ground and were sometimes found in earlier mausolea and kurgans.³⁶⁶ Most Sogdian ossuaries were composed of terracotta; Khorezmian examples were also composed of stone and alabaster. Although some are completely plain, most have decoration of some sort. The artistry of this decoration varies widely, showing that ossuaries were produced for different levels of society. Most were made by building up layers of terracotta in the desired shape and then adding either applied figures or impressed, incised or painted decoration. The use of moulds for impressed decoration shows that the ossuaries were produced on a large scale. Enough have survived, mostly from the 5-8th centuries, to show regional and temporal developments in shape and decoration.³⁶⁷

Although some ossuary jars have been found, in Semirechiye, at Merv and in the Bukhara oasis,³⁶⁸ most Sogdian examples are rectangular or oval (with the exception of

³⁶⁴ See Agzamkhodzhaev 1962, pp. 71-9; Agzamkhodzhaev 1966, pp. 104-11.

³⁶⁵ Rtveldze 1982, pp. 33-5.

³⁶⁶ Grenet, pp. 237-8.

³⁶⁷ For an outline of such developments, see L.V. Pavchinskaia, "Sogdian Ossuaries," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 1994, pp. 209-25. The chronology is based on the dates of the excavated sites.

³⁶⁸ Although the jars of Semirechiye and especially of Merv have been well-published, those of the Bukhara oasis are not: see Obel'chenko 1959, pp. 94-108.

one ossuary in the shape of a horse).³⁶⁹ Lids are triangular, ovoid or pyramidal, sometimes with anthropomorphic handles; a few lids rest on the front rather than the top of the ossuary as though they were doors. In fact many ossuaries have the appearance of architecture, with the container resembling a building and its lid representing the roof. Some scholars have used the forms of the ossuaries to postulate actual architectural forms; Rempel' even went so far as to suggest that the ossuaries served a dual purpose, both containers for bones and practical models for builders and architects of funerary structures such as those mentioned above.³⁷⁰ Others, such as Pugachenkova, maintain that these are not actual models but rather "approximate reproductions" of contemporary architecture.³⁷¹ This position seems by far the more reasonable, as even Rempel's own illustrations show. In Plate LIII, he shows three 16th century cemetery markers from Bukhara as proof of a continuing tradition of a close link between funerary sculpture in architectural shapes and actual funerary architecture,³⁷² but these "models" bear only a loose resemblance at best to actual mausolea. The proportions between base, zone of transition and dome are wrong; they lack pishtaqs; one has heavily tapering walls; one has a pointed dome; and one has a high keel arch. All of these characteristics are at odds with the architecture which Rempel' claims they represent; in all likelihood, Sogdian ossuaries bore a similar relationship with contemporary architecture. Those from

³⁶⁹ Other shapes seen in other parts of Central Asia include jars with handles from Merv and anthropomorphic shapes from Khorezm.

³⁷⁰ L.I. Rempel', "La maquette architecturale dans le culte et la construction de l'Asie centrale préislamique," *Cultes et monuments religieux dans l'Asie centrale préislamique*, ed. Frantz Grenet, Paris, 1987, pp. 81-88.

³⁷¹ Galina Pugachenkova, "The Form and Style of Sogdian Ossuaries," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 1994, p. 227.

³⁷² Rempel', p. 86 and figs. 16-18.

Semirechiye, close to areas inhabited by Turkic nomads, have been compared to nomadic tents rather than buildings,³⁷³ and here the actual resemblance may be closer.

Decoration on Sogdian ossuaries varies from geometric and floral motifs to elaborate figural compositions. The figural decoration in particular has been the subject of much scholarly discussion; on some ossuaries, such as those with lamentation scenes discussed above, the meaning of the scenes depicted or the emotions of single applied figures are clear. Other types of scenes include religious rituals, dancing, music, and rows of figures in arched niches holding various attributes. There has been considerable disagreement on whether these types of scenes represent the life of the deceased, funerary rituals, or deities (and if so, which ones). Music and dancing, for example, could be seen as a pleasurable pastime enjoyed during the lifetime of the deceased, part of a (non-canonical) mourning ritual,³⁷⁴ or the activities of heavenly spirits. Rituals performed by priests at fire altars, such as those depicted on the ossuary from Mulla Kurgan (fig. 62), could be seen as the lifetime activity of a deceased priest or as a funerary ritual, such as the sacrifice to the *fravashi* of the deceased. On the lid of the Mulla Kurgan ossuary are two female figures who may represent deities, such as the beautiful woman who will come to meet a good soul after its judgement and escort it into heaven.³⁷⁵ A fragment from another ossuary shows that this is a plausible interpretation; it clearly shows the weighing of the deeds of the deceased,³⁷⁶ showing that such scenes of the afterlife were depicted on ossuaries.

³⁷³ Pugachenkova 1994, p. 228.

³⁷⁴ Frantz Grenet, "L'Art Zoroastrien en Sogdiane: Études d'iconographie funéraires," *Mesopotamia*, 1986, p. 103.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁷⁶ The Zoroastrian religion realistically allows for some sin; what was important was that the good deeds of a believer outweigh the bad deeds at the end of his life in order to gain entry into paradise. The bad deeds, however, would not go unpunished, since at the end of time everyone would have to walk through a

Both figures on this fragment wear crowns, and crowns are also used to ascribe heavenly status to the figures standing in arched niches on ossuaries from Biya-Naiman, Ishtikhan (fig. 63) and Durmantepe. None of these figures have multiple arms, an attribute often used to indicate divine status in Sogdian painting and metalwork. Grenet has identified six different figures which appear as a whole set, a partial set, or a set with a few extra figures (due to the impressive technique described above) on this set of ossuaries. He believes that these are the children of Ahura Mazda, the Amesha Spentas, or Life-giving Immortals:³⁷⁷ Good Thought, Best Order, and Choice Command, who are responsible for the heavenly creation (or world of thought), and Life-giving Humility, Wholeness and Undyingness, their counterparts responsible for earth (or the world of bony existence). Marshak sees these figures as more directly related to the death of a believer; he believes they represent the deities who will resurrect the bodies at the end of the world in order to submit them to their last trial, walking through the river of molten metal, as evil is finally vanquished.³⁷⁸ This would seem to be a more relevant subject for an ossuary.

Regardless of the interpretations of the scenes depicted on ossuaries, their role in Sogdian funerary practice is clear; wherever they are present, they prove that the Avestan dictates of exposure were followed. With great care and piety, bones were stored in containers which ensured that any remaining impurity would not affect earth, fire or water. The lavishly detailed decoration on many ossuaries shows both a keen sense of the loss of the deceased and hope for the afterlife. This contrasts greatly with the

river of molten metal. Those with few sins would feel this as warm milk, while each sin committed would increase the discomfort, causing agony to those who had accumulated many.

³⁷⁷ Grenet 1986, pp. 97-131.

³⁷⁸ Boris Marshak, "On the Iconography of Ossuaries from Biya-Naiman," *Silk Road Art & Archaeology*, 1995-6, p. 308.

horrified descriptions given of the practice of exposure by those who came into contact with Zoroastrians over the centuries. Those who practice burial have tended to view exposure of the dead with disgust and alarm, so that wherever Zoroastrians have been a minority, they have had to hide or modify this practice.³⁷⁹

A good example of this can be seen in the Sogdian communities in China, where the usual local practice was burial in underground chambers with grave goods reflecting what was needed for the afterlife. There is evidence that Sogdians did continue to practice exposure in China: one Chinese commentator, Wei Jie, wrote that the Sogdians placed the corpses of their kinsmen in courtyards filled with dogs outside the town.³⁸⁰ This would have satisfied the Avestan requirement of keeping dead matter away from inhabited areas while also keeping the practice of excarnation away from (most) prying eyes. Several ossuaries dating to the 6-7th centuries have been found in China. One which has been published has an architectural shape which appears to be a synthesis of Central Asian and Chinese styles.³⁸¹ Made of earthenware, this ossuary is decorated with cross-legged figures sitting in niches, looking very much like Buddha figures without the *ushnisha* on top of the head.

Recently, however, a number of tombs have been excavated in north-western China belonging to high-ranking Sogdian officials; these tombs show how a compromise was achieved between religious necessity and local practice. Most of the occupants held the rank of *sabao* during their lifetime; this title refers to the official in charge of local

³⁷⁹ This is still true even today: Zoroastrian communities in India are required to bury their dead, but line the graves with cement to protect the earth.

³⁸⁰ Jiang Boqin, "Zoroastrian Art of Sogdians in China," *China Art & Archaeology Digest*, Dec. 2000, p. 63.

³⁸¹ Shi Anchang, "A Study on a Stone Carving from the Tomb of a Sogdian Aristocrat of the Northern Qi: A Preliminary Study of an Ossuary in the Collection of the Palace Museum," *China Art & Archaeology Digest*, Dec. 2000, p. 81.

Sogdian communities. In most of the tombs, his wife was buried as well, reflecting Chinese practice.³⁸² The tombs were composed of an underground chamber (although there is one family tomb with multiple chambers) reached by a ramp and fastened shut with a stone door, in typical Chinese aristocratic fashion. However, one Sogdian tomb, that of An Qie, was lined with brick; this is the only known Northern Zhou tomb to have received this treatment.³⁸³ Brick would have contained the pollution, protected the earth, and lessened the sin of burial. The bodies were placed on either benches or stone couches; this kept the dead matter off the floor of the funerary chamber and gave further protection to the earth. Some of the tombs contained grave goods; for example, that of Yu Hong, a *sabao* who died in 593, had about 80 items, including coins, ceramics and pottery figurines typical of Sui China.³⁸⁴

One tomb contained a body which was not placed on the funerary couch designed for it. Part of the skeleton of An Qie, another *sabao*, who died in 579, was found by the excavators on the floor, just in front of the door. There were marks of burning on one femur, and it appeared that fires had been set just inside and just outside the door of the tomb chamber at the time that it was sealed. The door had not been opened since. The funerary couch was intact; the fire had gone out quickly. The excavators had no explanation for this anomaly.³⁸⁵ It does seem very odd indeed that fire should have been allowed so close to dead matter; to place the body in or near a fire would have been completely anathema. The transgression is less serious since only part of the skeleton

³⁸² Luo Feng, "Sogdians in Northwest China," *Monks & Merchants*, ed. Annette Juliano and Judith Lerner, New York, 2001, p. 242.

³⁸³ Li Ming, "Notes on the Excavation of the Tomb of An Qie," *China Art & Archaeology Digest*, Dec. 2000, pp. 17.

³⁸⁴ Zhang Qingjie et al., "Brief Reports on the Stone Sarcophagus of Yu Hong," *China Art & Archaeology Digest*, Dec. 2000, p. 30.

³⁸⁵ Li Ming, "Notes on the Excavation of the Tomb of An Qie," *China Art & Archaeology Digest*, Dec. 2000, pp. 17-18.

was present, indicating that exposure had taken place prior to burial and the cleaned bones were being placed inside the tomb. Marshak has suggested that perhaps the corpse bearers were unsatisfied with their remittance and failed to carry out their job properly; since family members did not participate in this part of the funerary ritual due to purity laws, no one would have been present to supervise the corpse bearers and their lackadaisical attitude would never have been known.³⁸⁶ It is also possible that non-Zoroastrians were hired as corpse bearers, and hence had little regard for the finer points of the religious requirements. Regardless of the explanation, the importance of the tomb of An Qie is that it clearly demonstrates that there were instances of exposure prior to burial. Some of the bones found in other tombs also indicate such a practice, since they were found closely tied together.³⁸⁷

For these Sogdian tombs in China, the name (which also reveals the city of origin), rank, and date of death were all provided in true Chinese fashion. The decoration of the tombs, however, reflects Sogdian themes. Like the Sogdian ossuaries, it is not clear whether the scenes depicted on the carved, painted and gilded couches represent the life of the deceased or rituals connected with his death. The scenes clearly relate to the context in which they were found; the people depicted are mostly Sogdians whereas the architectural settings are Chinese.

At the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, there are two panels from a Sogdian funerary couch dating to the Northern Qi dynasty (550-577).³⁸⁸ This is the earliest known funerary couch, but its decoration is characteristic of the genre. Each panel is divided into 3 sections, with a procession on horseback taking place in the middle section

³⁸⁶ Boris Marshak, lecture at Yale University, 21 April 2002.

³⁸⁷ Luo Feng, p. 243.

³⁸⁸ Accession numbers 12.588 and 12.589.

(Figs. 64-65). The flanking scenes depict drinking sessions, both in architectural settings and in vineyards, at the top, with musicians in the middle and a pavilion on a platform with double doors at the bottom. These pavilions all have a figure in the doorway with his back turned. Other figures escorting a saddled but riderless horse flank the pavilion or sit or stand on its steps. In one of these pavilion scenes, one figure rests his hand on the shoulder of another in what appears to be a gesture of consolation. A similar gesture appears in one of the drinking scenes. Most of the figures have Sogdian costumes and features, but one drinking scene has a Sogdian host and guests who are probably Chinese, as they are wearing flowing robes and Chinese headdresses.

These scenes could well represent the aftermath of the death of the tomb's occupant.³⁸⁹ The scenes with the raised pavilion probably represent the sacrifice for the soul of the deceased, with the horse intended for the sacrifice.³⁹⁰ The riderless horse is seen on other funerary couches as well. A panel from a couch in the Miho Museum shows another part of the funerary ritual, the *sagdid*; this same scene shows mourners engaged in self-mutilation. Scenes of feasting and music such as those depicted on the MFA panels are also common themes, and may represent events from the life of the deceased or depictions of the various kingdoms of the world. The subjects chosen for these funerary couches accord well with those seen in both Sogdian painting and on Sogdian ossuaries, although the execution, carried out by Chinese artisans, shows varying degrees of Chinese influence.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ The identity of the occupant is unfortunately unknown because this couch was removed from its tomb chamber, dismantled, and sold in the early 20th century. Its other panels are now in the Musée Guimet in Paris, the Freer Gallery in Washington, and the Ostasiatische Museum in Cologne.

³⁹⁰ Boris Marshak, "La Thématique sogdienne dans l'Art de la Chine de la seconde moitié du VI^e siècle," 2002, p. 5.

³⁹¹ Ibid, p. 39.

So the Sogdian tombs in China reflect an adaptation of their funerary practice, at least for the officials employed by the Chinese, to the expectations of the majority. Even here, the Zoroastrian elements are clear, both from the scenes depicted on the funerary couches and from the measures taken to protect the earth from impurity to the greatest extent possible. In essence, the Sogdian practices seen in China are similar to those seen in Semirechiye, another region where Zoroastrians came into close contact with those who practiced burial. In both places, two practices co-existed: external exposure with bones placed in mausoleum-like structures afterwards, and interior exposure with bodies placed on couches or benches inside these structures.

In Sogdiana proper, funerary practice was largely in accordance with the prescriptions of the Videvdad. Exposure was clearly the norm, as attested by the large number of surviving ossuaries. The architectural remains also demonstrate the care that was taken to protect the creations of Ahura Mazda from the corruption of death, the domain of Ahriman. There is evidence of other practices such as burial in Central Asia, but this is easily explained by the tolerance of the Sogdians and by the fact that they were periodically subjected to nomadic incursions. As far as they themselves were concerned, their main deviation from Zoroastrian funerary requirements was their propensity for excessive mourning. As this did not involve polluting the good creations, it was a relatively mild transgression. Regardless of their differences with the Sasanians in terms of deities and the manner of their worship, with funerary practice the requirements laid down in Pahlavi accords well with the actual deeds of the Sogdians.

The evidence for the funerary practices of Sasanian Iran are not as rich as that for Central Asia, and no examples of the architecture of death, the *dakhma*, the *kata*, and the

naus, have been found in excavations. Hence their use can only be surmised, and the *dakhma* in particular may have been a suitable natural spot, such as an outcropping of rock, rather than a building as long as Zoroastrianism was the state religion of Iran. No decorated ossuaries such as those of Sogdiana have been found in Iran; simple clay jars containing disarticulated skeletons have been found instead. So exposure was definitely practiced, although there is evidence of exceptions, other than the religiously sanctioned ones of leaving fallen soldiers where they lay on the battlefield and allowing non-believers to bury their dead.³⁹²

The most prominent exceptions are the tombs of the shahs themselves, as in spite of their position at the apex of the religious hierarchy of Iran, the bodies of the shahs were consistently preserved rather than exposed. The tombs of the Achaemenids, the first dynasty to adopt Zoroastrianism, still exist: the tomb of Cyrus and the Zendan-i Sulaiman at Pasargadae, and the tombs cut high into the rock face at Naqsh-e Rostam. The Achaemenids were not only Zoroastrian, but they were also heirs to the traditions of Mesopotamian kingship, with emphasis on preserving the body of the king so that he could intercede on behalf of his former subjects with the spirits in the other world.

The compromise that was made to reconcile these competing objectives can be seen in the tomb of Cyrus. It was a single chamber composed of stone and raised high on a plinth of 6 receding stone tiers. It had a gabled roof composed of two layers of thick stone and a thick double-leaved stone door. Alexander opened the tomb when he came to Pasargadae, and his historians record that the body was enclosed in a golden coffin

³⁹² This latter exception was very much subject to politics, so that Christians were generally allowed to bury when relations with Byzantium were reasonably good, and forbidden during times of war: see O. L'vov-Basirov, *The Evolution of the Zoroastrian Funerary Cult in Western Iran*, unpublished PhD thesis, SOAS, 1995, pp. 111-32.

resting on a platform with golden legs. The chamber was filled with a rich selection of grave goods befitting the status of its occupant. According to the ancient historians, the body would have been embalmed with wax, musk, ambergris, aloe and camphor. So we see that the Achaemenids went to great lengths to preserve the body of the king but also to ensure that the body did not pollute the good creations of earth, fire and water. Metal is impermeable to such pollution, so the golden coffin contained the contamination. Raising the coffin off the floor, with metal legs for the platform as a further precaution, also isolated the pollution. Then the whole structure was of impermeable stone and raised up high on a stone plinth, meeting some of the requirements of a *dakhma*. It was also situated at a good distance from the palace. The double stone roof would ensure that any bird landing on the structure would not in any way be subject to pollution.

The Zendan-i Sulaiman (Fig. 66), also at Pasargadae and built during the reign of Cyrus, was probably a family mausoleum for the queens and princes.³⁹³ It was closer to the palace, but its 29 steps up to the burial chamber ensured the proper distance for avoiding contamination. It also had a single windowless chamber (although black stone on the exterior gave it the appearance of having windows) and a double roof, and like Cyrus' tomb, the only decoration was the rosette, a kingly symbol. In the reign of Darius, two similar structures were built near Naqsh-e Rostam: the Ka'ba-yi Zardosht, virtually a copy of the Zendan except for having only a single very thick roof and 39 steps, and the Takht-e Rostam, which was never completed and was probably intended for Darius before he decided on his rock cut tomb.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. II*, Leiden, 1982, pp. 58-60.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 112. The names of these sites are relatively recent and reflect a propensity for associating ancient sites with legendary figures.

The rock cut tombs at Naqsh-i Rostam, which served as family mausolea for Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius II, also fit the main Zoroastrian criteria, being high off the ground and of impermeable rock (Fig. 67). The bodies were placed inside cists with stone roofs and were probably also inside golden coffins, further avoiding any possible contamination. It is likely that Darius had seen similar structures, presumably tombs, cut into rock faces in the territory of ancient Urartu (now in modern Turkey) and had decided that this was another effective way of compromising religion with royal tradition.³⁹⁵

Other ways were found in Lycia, where the Persian ruling class found themselves in a Greek cultural milieu. Three famous monuments in the British Museum, the Harpy Tomb, the Nereid Monument, and the Tomb of Payava, were constructed for Persian notables by Greek craftsmen. In spite of their Greek appearance, these mausolea fit the main Zoroastrian criteria by being composed of thick stone, raised on plinths off the ground, and having single windowless chambers (the Harpy Tomb and Tomb of Payava, like the Zendan-i Sulaiman, have false windows). The Persian governing family had an *ostodan*, or mausoleum for ossuaries, also built by Greek craftsmen. Its small burial cists and inscription leave no doubt as to its usage.

Literary sources tell us that the successors of the Achaemenids, the Parthians and then the Sasanians, followed their example in embalming the body of the king and preserving it in mausolea, although unfortunately none of these structures have survived, nor have any been excavated. Burials of ordinary people have been found, though, for all three periods. Although their number seems to have gradually decreased over time from

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 111. See also Charles Burney, "Urartian Funerary Customs," *The Archaeology of Death in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Stuart Campbell & Anthony Green, Oxford, 1995, pp. 205-8.

the Achaemenid to the Sasanian period, some people were still practicing burial even in the orthodox Sasanian era, and judging from the grave goods, these were not members of the Christian or Jewish minorities.³⁹⁶ Sasanian cemeteries have been found throughout the empire; some examples are found in Merv, Gilan, and the Bushire peninsula.

Not only did Zoroastrian practice vary in the Parthian and Sasanian eras, with changes over time and different practices seen in different parts of the empire, but also the non-Zoroastrians were still carrying out their own funeral practices. In Iraq, Mesopotamian traditions were still strong and burial was widely practiced, often with specific local traditions such as placing a clay jar across the chest of the deceased.³⁹⁷ In the Gulf, there are Nestorian burials,³⁹⁸ burials reflecting another, pre-Christian tradition such as camel sacrifice,³⁹⁹ and, on Kharg Island, Palmyran style tombs.⁴⁰⁰ What is not seen on the Arabian side of the Gulf, despite the long duration of the Sasanian presence there (from the conquests of Ardashir to the advent of Islam), is any evidence of the practice of exposure during the Sasanian era.⁴⁰¹ This diversity was echoed in Central Asia, where Turks, Christians and Jews practiced burial and Buddhists practiced both burial and cremation.⁴⁰² However, a comparison of the two regions suggests that,

³⁹⁶ L'vov-Basirov, pp. 285-303.

³⁹⁷ St. John Simpson, lecture at SOAS, 20 March, 2000.

³⁹⁸ See, for example, R. Ghirshman, *The Island of Kharg*, Tehrān, 1960 and G.R.D. King, "A Nestorian Monastic Settlement on the Island of Sīr Banī Yās, Abu Dhabi: A Preliminary Report," *BSOAS*, 1997, pp. 221-35.

³⁹⁹ D.T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity, Vol. II*, Oxford, 1990, p. 278-9.

⁴⁰⁰ See R. Ghirshman, *op. cit.* and E. Haerinck, "Quelques monuments funéraires de l'île de Kharg dans le Golfe persique," *Iranica Antiqua*, 1975, pp. 134-67. See also D.T. Potts, *op. cit.* for historical background on the Palmyran presence in the Persian Gulf. Palmyran tower tombs had some similarities to the earlier Achaemenid tombs, such as stone construction on a plinth of receding stone tiers. The Palmyran tombs, however, had windows, as well as the sculptures of the deceased, features not seen in Achaemenid tombs.

⁴⁰¹ G.R.D. King, personal communication, 25 July 2000. Disarticulated reburial was practiced in the Gulf in earlier times, c. 2500-2000 B.C. by the Umm An-Nar culture. See Karen Frifelt, *The Island of Umm An-Nar, Vol. 1: Third Millennium Graves*, Aarhus, 1991.

⁴⁰² There is evidence that the Buddhists were occasionally coerced into practicing burial rather than cremation because the majority Zoroastrians found this less reprehensible: see Bulatova 1965, pp. 139-46.

although Zoroastrians practiced exposure in both Iran and Central Asia, this was more consistently adhered to in Central Asia.

In Chapters IV and V, we will see how these pre-Islamic funerary practices impacted upon those of the subsequent period and shaped choices in the architecture of the mausolea of secular Muslim rulers. But now we will examine the architecture and the arts of the Sogdians and Sasanians.

Architecture

Despite many differences in form which reflect the differences in Iranian and Central Asian societies, there are also many similarities in the pre-Islamic architecture of Iran and Central Asia, particularly in building materials and techniques. Neither area had any quantity of fine stone suitable for buildings, and so the main building materials were brick (mostly unbaked) and rubble and mortar, both of which could be coated with a layer of fine white plaster. The use of rubble and mortar was generally concentrated in the south and west of Iran, with unbaked brick being the primary material elsewhere. The use of brick necessitated the construction of thick and heavy piers, which gives the buildings a dark and heavy effect, although this would have been mitigated by the plaster coating the walls. Decoration included wall paintings and elaborate stucco revetments with floral, vegetal, geometric, and figural motifs.

Throughout both regions, the squinch was used as the method of supporting a dome on a square base. It is not known precisely where the squinch was first developed, but the earliest extant examples may be those of the early Sasanian era, such as that seen in the audience chamber at the palace of Ardashir at Firuzabad. These pre-Islamic

squinches in Iran and Central Asia had a very simple form composed of concentric rings forming a cone (Fig. 68); it was only in Islamic architecture that the squinch was further developed and elaborated. Still, for several centuries this simple squinch provided a means of constructing domes to lend monumentality to important buildings such as palaces and temples.

The other characteristically Iranian form which has lasted up until the present is the ivan, or barrel vault enclosed on three sides. The ivan was first developed under the Parthians, and has been widely used in both Iran and Central Asia ever since. It can be found in relatively modest domestic settings, but also in truly monumental constructions such as the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon, the enormous palace located in the Sasanian capital. Flanked on either side by massive walls with six “stories” of blind arcades, this ivan comprised the audience hall of the *shahanshah*. This ivan opened onto a large courtyard, where another monumental ivan was situated opposite. The four-ivan plan based around a courtyard, which later became so characteristic of the Islamic architecture of Iran and Central Asia, can also be found before the advent of Islam, at the Buddhist monastery of Ajina-Tepe in Tajikistan.

Ctesiphon (in modern Iraq), which was probably constructed in the 6th century, is not only the largest and most evocative of the Sasanian palaces but also one of the best preserved. Unbaked brick unfortunately does not stand the test of time very well, and archaeology in Iran has not been as extensive or as well-published as that of Central Asia, hence relatively little is known of Sasanian architecture.⁴⁰³ Other palaces which are reasonably well-preserved include the early Sasanian palaces of Ardashir at Firuzabad

⁴⁰³ Lionel Bier has pointed out that many of the line drawings now accepted as evidence for the architecture of Sasanian palaces were incomplete and conjectural at best: see Bier 1993, pp. 57-66.

and the palace of Shapur at Bishapur. At Firuzabad, two ivans face each other across a courtyard, with one ivan leading to a series of three interconnected domed rooms. The Bishapur complex contains a large cruciform-shaped domed room, a possible fire temple,⁴⁰⁴ and an ivan decorated with mosaics; much more remains to be excavated. What these palaces all have in common is the architectural vocabulary of the dome and the squinch, and their use in creating monumental spaces to serve as audience halls.

Aside from palaces, the other major category of extant Sasanian architecture is the fire temple. Although a few religious complexes dating to the Sasanian era follow earlier types of plans dating back to the Parthians and even the Achaemenids,⁴⁰⁵ the vast majority of Sasanian religious buildings take the form of the *chahar taq* (Fig. 69). These domes resting on four corner piers, open on all four sides, are found mostly in Fars, with 19 recorded examples. There are 10 in the western Iranian provinces bordering Iraq, 6 in Kerman, and just 6 more throughout the rest of modern Iran.⁴⁰⁶ Even allowing for accidents of survival and the enormous amount of destruction wrought by the Mongols in Khorasan and Sistan, it is still clear that Fars was the stronghold both of Sasanian power and of their brand of Zoroastrianism. However, the usage of these structures is still poorly understood. The architecture does reflect the daily rituals which would have taken place inside it; just as these rituals have cosmic symbolism, so the structure of the *chahar taq* can be seen as a mandala or a microcosm of the universe.⁴⁰⁷ But the *chahar taq* has also been seen as a way of propagating the official version of Zoroastrianism, by opening

⁴⁰⁴ Richard Frye has argued that the building normally interpreted as a fire temple was actually a place for the royal family to escape from the summer heat, since the building is partially underground: see Frye 1976, pp. 93-99.

⁴⁰⁵ One example is Kuh-i Khaja, where the plan of an earlier Parthian sanctuary was preserved and rebuilt: see Schippman 1971, p. 357.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 358.

⁴⁰⁷ Wright 1976, p. 337.

the temple so that the sacred fire would be visible to everyone, even at a distance.⁴⁰⁸

However, Huff has argued that the archaeological evidence for these structures has not been properly utilized, and that they are understood solely on the basis of their current open appearance when in actuality most of the structures show evidence of having been enclosed by a surrounding corridor.⁴⁰⁹ Moreover, he also suggests that some of the buildings classified as Sasanian *chahar taqs* are actually post-Sasanian, and that while some may still have been built as fire temples, others may well be early Islamic mausolea, a point which will be discussed further in Chapter IV.⁴¹⁰

The *chahar taqs* do not display any remnants of elaborately carved stucco, which seems to have been reserved for secular decoration, mainly of palaces but also of aristocratic homes. Stucco was used both to accentuate architectural features such as the barrel vault of an ivan and to cover and enliven plain wall surfaces. Motifs were extremely varied and ranged from repeating geometric shapes, such as the round “pearl” or the Greek key pattern, to realistic figures. Figural motifs could be homogenized busts used purely for decoration, busts of kings with identifiable crowns, or narrative scenes depicting such themes as hunting and riding which are also seen in other media (hunting scenes can also be seen carved into walls of the stone ivan at Taq-i Bustan, giving some idea of the overall original effect of the now fragmentary stucco from other locations). Floral and vegetal motifs ranged from abstract, almost geometric rosettes to quite realistic (albeit overly symmetrical) depictions of pomegranates or other vegetation. Other forms of architectural decoration included wall paintings, of which there are very few remains, and mosaic, seen at Bishapur in particular and reflecting Roman influence.

⁴⁰⁸ Godard 1938, p. 14; Schippman, p. 357.

⁴⁰⁹ Huff 1975, pp. 245-6.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 247-8.

The same vocabulary of unbaked brick, squinches, ivans, and stucco decoration was used in architecture of the Sogdian city-states, with some differences: the Central Asians utilized wood to a much greater extent than their Persian neighbors, and the rubble and mortar construction seen in Fars is not found in Sogdiana. The types of buildings, however, reflect the less hierarchical social structure of the Sogdians, and buildings have survived which were used by a wider spectrum of society than the elite who used the extant palaces of Sasanian Iran.

In Sogdian cities, the residential neighborhoods were composed of narrow, twisting streets, with two-story mud brick and wooden houses with overhanging jetties blocking out most of the sunlight. With this dense urban fabric, some chose to build against the city walls.⁴¹¹ Larger houses frequently had shops for rent on the ground floor, with openings to the street but not to the house itself. These grand houses also had large columned halls lavishly decorated with wood, stucco and frescoes. The wall paintings of Samarqand, Varaksha and Panjikent form much of the corpus of existing Sogdian art. Popular themes included banqueting, epic stories and fables (including many which were later incorporated into the *Shahnama*, such as the Rostam stories), and scenes of local gods and goddesses. It is likely that these themes reflect the uses of the rooms the paintings adorn, and that banqueting as well as regular religious observances took place there.

In keeping with the Sogdian social structure, the palaces were not significantly grander than the most lavish of the merchants' houses, but the frescoes did reflect the official functions of the building. At Samarqand, for example, the paintings in the main

⁴¹¹ Galina Shishkina, "Ancient Samarkand," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 1994, p. 93. On the houses of Panjikent, see Marshak 2002, pp. 17-19.

reception room depict one of the rulers, Varhuman, receiving envoys from various parts of Asia and worshipping at a shrine. The procession is composed of ethnically differentiated individuals bearing lavish gifts; scholars have attempted to label the nationalities and have posited that some of the envoys came from as far as Korea, although only one, from another Sogdian city-state, Chaghanian, still bears an identifying inscription.⁴¹² Rather than battling their neighbors, these frescoes show that the Sogdians of Samarqand preferred trade and diplomacy.

The exact role of the temple in Sogdian society is unclear, since Zoroastrianism was not a state religion and since many people had shrines in their homes and presumably worshipped there as well.⁴¹³ The best preserved temple has been excavated at Panjikent; it contained several buildings, one of which would have held the sacred fire in a rectangular room at the far end of a columned hall. This building was surrounded by a portico on three sides, probably used for circumambulation.⁴¹⁴ The main hall of the temple contained figural sculptures of deities placed into niches; the sculptures themselves have unfortunately not survived.⁴¹⁵ The Arabs recorded the later destruction of houses in order to build a mosque on the site of the temple at Samarqand,⁴¹⁶ and so it would seem that that particular temple was located within the dense fabric of the residential neighborhoods and did not have a clear space around it to provide for views or much exterior representation. The Panjikent temple also appears to have had structures

⁴¹² Al'baum 1975; see also Akhunbabaev 1987, pp. 10-21; Marshak 1994, pp. 5-20.

⁴¹³ For more on the domestic shrines, see Akhunbabaev 1987, pp. 10-21; see also Marshak 2002, pp. 17-19.

⁴¹⁴ A. Isakov, *Ancient Panjikent*, Dushanbe, 1982, p. 85. Also Marshak & Negmatov, p. 245. According to Pugachenkova, this was the main type of fire temple in the Samarkand region as well: G. Pugachenkova, "Les Fondements Préislamiques de l'architecture médiévale du Mavarannahr," *Histoire et Cultes de l'Asie centrale préislamiques: Sources écrites et documents archéologiques*, ed. Frantz Grenet & Paul Bernard, Paris, 1991, p. 215.

⁴¹⁵ Shkoda 1996, pp. 195-99.

⁴¹⁶ G. Shishkina & L. Pavchinskaya, "D'Afrasiab à Samarcande," *Terres Secrètes de Samarcande: Ceramiques du VIIIe au XIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1992, p. 16.

abutting it on at least the southern side. Not all Sogdian temples took the same form, however, and another type has been found at Varakhsha and in the Tashkent region, with a single entrance in a corner, usually the southwest corner, leading to a hall supported by four pillars and surrounded by an ambulatory.⁴¹⁷

In Khorezm, most of the extant pre-Islamic architecture is comprised of palaces and forts, composed of mud brick with particular local features such as the form of the arrow slits and the use of horizontal reeds in the walls. The palace of Toprak Qala was richly decorated with wall paintings, in a style distinct from, yet related to, those of Sogdiana.⁴¹⁸ Temples have not been found in the region, although funerary practices were clearly Zoroastrian, with a large number of ossuaries discovered at Koi Krylgan Qala, Erkurgan and Mizdakhan.⁴¹⁹

In Bactria, on the other hand, Buddhism was clearly the dominant religion, and a number of stupas and monasteries have been found.⁴²⁰ These buildings were composed of unbaked brick and decorated with deeply carved stucco and wall paintings, often showing Hellenistic influence and strong links with the Buddhist art of eastern Central Asia (the frieze from Airtam and wall paintings from Fayoz Tepe, both now in the History Museum in Tashkent, are two excellent examples). Unusually for Central Asia, stone was used for some of the smaller Buddhist statuary, such as that from Fayoz Tepe, although larger Buddhist figures, such as the reclining Buddha from Ajina Tepe, were executed in clay and covered in painted stucco. There are fewer Buddhist remains in Sogdiana, but several temples have been found as far north as the Ferghana Valley.

⁴¹⁷ Filanovich 1987, pp. 148-56.

⁴¹⁸ See Tolstov; CHI pp. 1134-41.

⁴¹⁹ On the excavations in Khorezm, see Tolstov 1952-9; Yagodin & Khodzhaev 1970.

⁴²⁰ See Pugachenkova 1976; see also Litvinskii 1971; Rtveladze 1978; Pugachenkova 1989.

Material remains, but no actual buildings, have survived in western Central Asia from the other religions which were practiced in the region: Judaism, Christianity and Manichaeism (although the cultic buildings of the latter two have survived in eastern Central Asia).

Arts

The most prominent and widely studied art forms of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia are those which have already been mentioned above, wall paintings in Central Asia and rock reliefs in Sasanian Iran. As Belenitskii has observed, the rock reliefs were meant to be viewed by the public, whereas the wall paintings of Sogdiana could be viewed only inside private homes and palaces.⁴²¹ The wall paintings, in keeping with their broad base of patronage, depict a multitude of themes, including feasting, ritual acts, myths, legends, and ceremonies. The Sasanian rock reliefs, on the other hand, reflect their royal patronage, depicting investitures, battles, and hunts, all of which glorified the *shahanshah*. Other artistic media followed suit, so that the arts of Sasanian Iran are primarily royal, serving as propaganda tools, whereas the arts of Central Asia served a more diverse clientele.⁴²²

Sasanian silver is an excellent case in point: Harper has argued that the production of silver plates and vessels was brought under state control by Shapur II (309-79), with size, weight and design all controlled by a chief craftsman appointed by the

⁴²¹ Belenitskii, *Vith International Congress...*, p. 275. Some of the Sasanian rock reliefs are actually located in places which are difficult to reach, which makes their purpose harder to understand, but most were readily accessible.

⁴²² Marshak 2002, pp. 14-22, p. 160.

shah.⁴²³ Hunting motifs predominate, with lavishly dressed shahs with their distinctly identifiable crowns sitting astride richly caparisoned horses, slaying threatening animals such as lions and wild boar. Other motifs, seen on less official vessels such as ewers and oval drinking bowls, include ceremonies and dancing girls. The techniques used to produce these designs in relief, such as punching and ring matting, were influential on metalsmiths all the way to China, and later formed the basic repertory of Islamic metalworking techniques. Design elements such as fluttering ribbons also influenced the art of Central Asia and China, where the Sasanian vessels were highly prized. Like the Chinese, Sogdian silversmiths to a large extent imitated the Sasanian examples, but without the backing of a centralized state as a patron, the quality of Sogdian silver never reached that of Iran.⁴²⁴ Motifs were simpler and lacked royal connotations: single animals, such as bears or horses, centered on a plate were popular. Shapes were also different, with ring-handled cups used to hold liquid instead of oval drinking bowls.

In textiles, the Sogdians were better able to compete with the Sasanians, and their wall paintings depict beautiful fabrics with motifs very similar to those of Iran, namely pairs of confronted or addorsed animals or birds in roundels, often with pearl borders. Mythological beasts such as the *senmurv* and griffin were also popular in both regions. The same fluttering scarves seen worn by the shahs in the silver dishes often decorated the necks or feet of these animals, while birds frequently carry pearl necklaces in their beaks. The Sasanians are credited with advances in drawloom technology, whilst the

⁴²³ Harper 1981, p. 17-18; see also Harper 1978, p. 16.

⁴²⁴ There has been much confusion over the corpus of Sasanian silver, with the term applied to Central Asian and to early Islamic production. Grabar outlined the methodological challenges inherent in establishing chronologies and centers of production in the absence of reliable archaeological evidence from Iran: see Grabar 1967, pp. 19-84. Marshak was the first to attempt to establish a Sogdian corpus, separating the Central Asian shapes and motifs from the Sasanian: see Marshak 1971; see also Darkevich 1976.

Sogdians then imitated both this technique and popular Sasanian designs in places such as Zandana.⁴²⁵ The influence of Sasanian designs extended much further than Central Asia, however, and these silks were also imitated in Tang China, whilst actual Sasanian silks have been found from the treasuries of medieval Europe all the way to Japan.

The Arab Conquest

There is general agreement amongst historians that the Arabs never actually set out to eradicate the Sasanian empire, having only the acquisition of territory in Iraq inhabited mostly by Arabs as their goal.⁴²⁶ When these incursions into Sasanian territory brought them into inevitable conflict with Sasanian troops, however, decisive Arab victories at Qadisiyya in 634 and Nihavand in 642 effectively brought an end to Sasanian power. The Arabs met substantial resistance in Fars, the heavily fortified Sasanian heartland, but weakness brought about by decades of war with Byzantium as well as internal struggles hastened the end of the Sasanian empire. In 651, Yazdgerd III fled the onward advance of Arab armies with a small entourage, only to be murdered by one of his own subjects at Merv. Given the centralized nature of his empire, the death of Yazdgerd brought an end to the Sasanian dynasty. His heir, Firuz III, escaped to China, where a Sasanian court in exile existed for several generations, but Sasanian military opposition to the Arabs effectively ended. Arab garrisons were established at Merv, Gurgan, Qazvin, Rayy, and Isfahan, as well as in the newly built Iraqi cities of Basra and

⁴²⁵ Scott 1993, pp. 52-7. Differences in technique and in details of style can be used, however, to distinguish Sogdian from Sasanian silks: see Watt & Wardwell 1997, pp. 21-3.

⁴²⁶ For a summary of the historiography of the Arab invasion, see Donner 1981 pp. 3-9. Donner attributes the Arab expansion to a need to integrate Arabian tribesmen into the new Islamic state; expansion, aided by religious fervor and by the weakness of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, provided booty for the tribesmen and a means to settle them. See also Kennedy 1986, p. 68.

Kufa.⁴²⁷ Arab settlement was limited to these few urban enclaves, however, and the countryside remained in the control of the *dihqans*, who now delivered the taxes they collected to the Arabs rather than to the Sasanian monarchy as before. So, although little changed for the majority of the populace, almost all of the former Sasanian realm was now part of the Arab empire; only the mountainous regions south of the Caspian remained outside of Arab rule.

The subsequent conquest of Central Asia was also not planned or foreseen from the start. Since Merv was on the northeastern edge of the nascent Arab empire, large numbers of Arab tribesmen were sent to transform it into a garrison city. Soon they started launching raids across the Oxus into Sogdian territory, more to gain booty than to gain converts or land. Gradually, though, these raids evolved into a serious conquest, and then the Sogdians fought hard against the invaders.⁴²⁸ The defeat of Sogdia was quite a different matter from the relatively easy Arab victory over the Sasanians; each Sogdian city-state had to be conquered separately, and while some rulers collaborated with the Arabs against fellow Sogdian rivals, most fought long and hard. Occasionally they were helped by Turkish or Chinese armies, as well as Persian refugees. Just as Alexander's troops had experienced great difficulties in this region, so did the Arabs. And just as in the time of Alexander, conquered city-states were not subdued, but continued to rebel.

⁴²⁷ There is disagreement on which cities in Iran served as garrison cities. Bulliet, for example, lists Nishapur as a garrison city: see Bulliet, in Levtzion 1979, p. 32. Pourshariati, however, argues that Nishapur did not have a heavy concentration of Arab settlers, due to the lack of specific information about them in the *Tarikh-i Nishapur*. Such information is to be found in the *Tarikh-i Jurjan* and the *Tarikh-i Qum*, and so she contends that these were Arab garrison towns: see Pourshariati 1998, pp. 41-81. Bulliet, also looking at the *Tarikh-i Jurjan*, concluded that the Arab contingent there was extremely small: see Bulliet 1994, p. 74.

⁴²⁸ Frye 1996, pp. 201-3; see also Jalilov 1996, pp. 456-62.

Samarqand is an excellent case in point: the city was besieged by an Arab force led by Qutayba b. Muslim in 712, and surrendered after one month.⁴²⁹ A representation of this siege, depicting soldiers operating a mangonel, survived in a wall painting uncovered in the citadel at Mount Mugh, where Devashtich, the ruler of Panjikent, had taken refuge with his army.⁴³⁰ Ten years after Samarkand was taken, the fortress at Mount Mugh also fell, and Devashtich was crucified. Many of the documents he left behind have been uncovered by archaeologists, and provide a glimpse into the intense regional diplomacy that was taking place at this time.⁴³¹ The Sogdians were able to call upon Turkish and Chinese allies, aided by Persian and Sogdian refugees, for help in battling the Arabs and regaining lost cities: both Chach and Ferghana, for example, also conquered by Qutayba b. Muslim, were held only briefly. Over the following decades this process repeated itself several times. In 721, the Sogdians, with Turkish help, managed to retake Samarqand, and the Arabs only regained it after a vicious battle. Another attempt was made in 728, but the Sogdians and Turks were repulsed. In each battle, many Sogdians fled and many thousands more were killed. At the same time that the Sogdian population was declining, Arabs and Muslim Persians were beginning to settle in cities such as Samarqand, which ultimately was to lead to a substantial demographic shift and the decline of Sogdian language and culture, to be replaced by Persian.⁴³²

⁴²⁹ al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari, Vol. XXIII*, trans. Martin Hinds, New York, 1990, p. 190.

⁴³⁰ al-Tabari described Arab use of the mangonel during the siege, Vol. XXIII, pp. 192-3.

⁴³¹ See, for example, Frantz Grenet, "Les 'Huns' dans les documents sogdiens du Mont Mugh," *Études irano-aryennes offertes à Gilbert Lazard*, Paris, 1989, pp. 165-84 and Frantz Grenet and Étienne de la Vaissière, "The Last Days of Panjikent," *Silk Road Art & Archaeology*, VIII, 2002, pp. 155-62.

⁴³² This phenomenon has been treated most extensively by Richard Frye: see Frye 1975, pp. 79-81, pp. 94-100; Frye 1979, IX, pp. 1-7; Frye 1996, pp. 201-17.

Conversion to Islam

The conversion process was given short shrift by Muslim historians more interested in the expansion of territory owing allegiance to the caliph, and is hence exceedingly difficult to quantify. The most detailed attempt to do so has been undertaken by Richard Bulliet, who analyzed the genealogies in biographical dictionaries to estimate the dates of individual conversions and compile graphs for various regions.⁴³³ The accuracy of his methodology, which relies on converts choosing Muslim names for their offspring, has been questioned,⁴³⁴ but the broad outlines of his results have been generally accepted as according well with what little information is available in the primary sources. And there is information to be gleaned from the primary sources: tenth century geographers, for example, still referred to Zoroastrian communities, particularly in the northern part of Iran, showing that the conversion process was one that occurred over a number of centuries.⁴³⁵ The Muslim historians' lack of interest in the issue of conversion also echoes the opinion of most present historians that conversion was not the primary aim of Arab expansion.⁴³⁶ Indeed, even today, substantial non-Muslim

⁴³³ Bulliet 1979.

⁴³⁴ Yohanan Friedmann pointed out that the genealogies in Muslim biographical dictionaries do often contain the names of ancestors prior to conversion, and also that such genealogies at times skip generations, making the calculation of a precise date of conversion unreliable: Friedmann 1980, pp. 81-90. Frye argued that the Biblical names which are assumed by Bulliet to be Muslim could also be Jewish: see Frye, 1974, pp. 81-88. Robert Schick pointed out that names containing "Allah" are historically attested for Arabic-speaking Christians both before and after the Islamic conquests: see Schick 1995, pp. 139-40. Jamsheed Choksy argued that Bulliet's data is only relevant for the urban elites, and hence presents a speedier conversion process than that which actually took place: see Choksy 1997, p. 83. According to Choksy, who used Zoroastrian texts as well as extant mosques and remains of fire temples to chart the conversion process, most urban dwellers in Iran and Central Asia were Muslim by 990, whereas most villagers became Muslim by 1250 (pp. 140-1).

⁴³⁵ Istakhri, pp. 100, 118; Ibn Hawqal, pp. 189-190; Mas'udi, vol. iv, 86; vol. viii, 279; vol. ix, 4-5].

⁴³⁶ Shaban, for example, contends that Arabs neither encouraged nor discouraged conversion, which was very slow as a result: see Shaban, "Early Conversion to Islam," in Levzion 1979, pp. 24-30. See also Levzion in Lorenzen 1981, pp. 19-20; Choksy 1997, pp. 70-83. On the invasion of Central Asia, Richard Frye has asserted that the Arabs wished to tap into the wealth of the Sogdians rather than convert them; see Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia*, London, 1975, p. 95.

communities remain in the Arab-speaking countries in particular but also, to a lesser degree, in Iran. The question, then, is when the Muslims became a majority in Iran and Central Asia.

Bulliet does not treat the two regions separately; Central Asia is not mentioned at all in his quantitative analysis but seems to be included under the rubric of “eastern Iran.” In his graph on conversion in Iran, which presumably includes Central Asia as well, he calculated that Muslims became the majority in the first half of the 9th century and that “full” conversion, meaning about 80% of the populace, was achieved by the late 10th century.⁴³⁷ He makes several generalizations about conversion which would apply equally to both regions: that people do not change their religion unless they can improve their social status (or hold on to it);⁴³⁸ and that conversion to Islam would have first occurred in the cities, where Arab garrisons were stationed and interaction between them and the conquered peoples would have occurred.⁴³⁹ This means that the first converts were either already living in cities, or could easily move (such as artisans, as opposed to farmers).

The level of urbanization before the Arab conquests would therefore indicate differences in the rate of conversion in Iran as opposed to Central Asia. Iran was overwhelmingly rural in the Sasanian period, with an agrarian economy based upon maintenance of the *qanat* system. For much of the Iranian population, little changed with the fall of the Sasanians, as the *dihqans* continued in their previous role, maintaining the *qanats* and collecting taxes. Earlier scholars have assumed that economic motives were paramount in conversion, as the newly conquered subjects wished to avoid the land tax

⁴³⁷ Bulliet 1979, p. 44.

⁴³⁸ Bulliet in Levtzion 1979, p. 33.

⁴³⁹ Bulliet 1979, p. 53; see also Choksy 1997, pp. 86-7.

(*kharaj*) and the poll tax (*jizya*). Dennett, however, has shown that these concepts were not uniform throughout the Arab empire in the early years, and that in the case of Iran in particular, the old Sasanian taxes were simply renamed without any substantive changes, as in many cases treaties of submission merely stipulated a lump sum to be handed over to the Arabs without specifying how this was to be collected.⁴⁴⁰ Under this system, a rural convert to Islam could even be taxed more than his Zoroastrian neighbors, providing economic incentive to move to one of the garrison cities. Bulliet argued that social ostracism would have also pushed converts to move, so that urbanization proceeded along with conversion in Iran.⁴⁴¹

Central Asia, however, was already substantially urbanized, with an economy that relied much more on trade than on agriculture. The long wars of conquest also necessitated the influx of greater numbers of Muslim soldiers than in any part of Iran apart from the boundary region of Khorasan.⁴⁴² Therefore, in the Sogdian cities such as Samarqand and Bukhara, contact between the conquerors and the defeated was much greater than in Iran. Moreover, the immigration of Persian converts, both soldiers who had converted early on as prisoners of war and joined the Arab armies, and newer Persian converts who wished to move to an urban area, began to alter the balance in the Sogdian cities; this also meant that the pressure to convert was felt much earlier by the Sogdians than by the majority of Iranians.

Although it is virtually impossible to reconstruct the individual motives for conversion in all but a handful of cases, it is possible that monetary advantage did play an

⁴⁴⁰ Dennett 1950, p. 12, pp. 117-28. See also Levzion 1979, p. 2 for a description of the problems inherent in later historical accounts of the *kharaj* and *jizya* of the early years.

⁴⁴¹ Bulliet 1979, p. 53.

⁴⁴² On the settlement of Arab troops in Khorasan, see Pourshariati 1998.

important role in the conversion of many Sogdians. There is evidence that many of the initial conversions were superficial at best: the Umayyads recognized this by levying the *kharaj* and *jizya* on the new converts in spite of the fact that Muslims were supposed to be exempt from these taxes,⁴⁴³ an act which not only fed the fires of Sogdian rebellion but also created a wider controversy about the status of the *mawali* in Islam.⁴⁴⁴ And on the Sogdian side, the newly Islamicised *Bukhar Khoda* had to resort to paying his newly converted Sogdian flock to attend Friday prayers.⁴⁴⁵ Regardless of the sincerity of the initial converts, however, the eventual outcome of this early rush to conversion was the early attainment of a Muslim majority in the Sogdian cities. As scholars of religious conversion have pointed out, insincerity quickly dissipates over just a few generations as the children of converts are raised in the milieu of the new religion.⁴⁴⁶

So in the Sogdian cities conversion was proceeding quickly even in the late Umayyad period, albeit concomitantly with apostasy and rebellion. The cities of Iran grew as Muslim centers slightly later, in the early Abbasid period, in conjunction with large scale urbanization.⁴⁴⁷ The countryside in both regions stayed mostly Zoroastrian for much longer.⁴⁴⁸ In the mountainous regions of the north of Iran, however, conversion occurred even later. These were the remote areas which had mostly managed to evade

⁴⁴³ The taxes were lifted during the brief reign of the pious Umayyad Caliph Umar II (717-21), but then reimposed.

⁴⁴⁴ The Murji'a took up the cause of the Sogdians and advocated equality of all Muslims. From 734-46 al-Harith b. Surayj and a group of Murji'ite supporters rebelled against Umayyads; although this ultimately failed, the Hanafi school of law, which espoused the equality of converts and excused them from thorough knowledge of the Qur'an, took root in areas where he had recruited, such as Balkh: see Madelung 1988, pp. 13-24.

⁴⁴⁵ Narshakhi, p. 67; Frye trans., p. 48; see also Frye 1975, p. 101.

⁴⁴⁶ Lorezen 1981, p. 10; see also Bentley 1993, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁴⁷ Bulliet 1979, pp. 53-4.

⁴⁴⁸ Fars in particular, as the Sasanian heartland, remained steadfastly Zoroastrian for centuries: see Bier 1986, pp. 65-6; Choksy 1997, pp. 34-40.

Arab rule: an attempt had been made to take Gurgan⁴⁴⁹ between 644 and 656, but ultimately failed due to the nature of the terrain. Gurgan was finally taken in 716-7, but despite numerous attempts from 650 onwards, the neighbouring province of Tabaristan remained independent.⁴⁵⁰ It was mostly ruled by a dynasty called the Dabuyids, although there were also two dynasties with the Zoroastrian title of Masmughan, one in Damavand and the other in Miyandurud. The Dabuyids paid tribute to the late Umayyads and early Abbasids but were not conquered until 761, with Damavand falling to the Muslims not long after.

The Muslims made Amul, near the Caspian Sea, the capital of the region, but they still did not control the mountainous interior of Tabaristan. The eastern mountains were controlled by the Bavandids, the central and western mountains by the Qarinvands. All of these northern dynasts were Zoroastrians who claimed descent from the Sasanians and who used Ispahbad, a Sasanian military title, as one of their distinguishing designations. The Bavandids and Qarinvands were at times relatively friendly with the Muslims, but at times fought them, in alliance with each other and with the Masmughan of Miyandurud. It was not until c. 820 that a Qarinvand, Mazyar b. Qarin, converted to Islam; the first Bavandid to convert was Qarin b. Shahriyar in 842. It was only then that Islam began to make any headway in the mountains of Tabaristan, a full two centuries after its introduction into the rest of Iran.

⁴⁴⁹ Gurgan is the historical name of a province which corresponds to the northeastern part of the modern province of Mazanderan, as well as the name of the main town of that region.

⁴⁵⁰ Tabaristan is roughly equivalent to the modern province of Mazanderan minus Gurgan, although part of the Alborz Mountains, historically Tabaristan, are now in the administrative district of Tehran. In medieval times the area between Tabaristan and Gilan was referred to as Dailaman, which no longer exists as a separate province. Its former territory is now divided between Mazanderan and Gilan. For an account of fighting in the region and the repression of Muslims by Zoroastrian rulers in the 8th century, see Choksy 1997, pp. 40-41.

Scholars of religious conversion have pointed out that in any process of societal conversion, it is usual to have a period of syncretism, which can last for several centuries, followed by a movement towards increasing orthodoxy.⁴⁵¹ In Iran, the period immediately following the ‘Abbasid revolution was one characterized by a series of religiously syncretic, socially revolutionary uprisings which sought to overthrow the Muslim status quo without reverting back to the orthodox Zoroastrianism of the Sasanian era. Bihafarid, Sunbadh, Ustadsis, al-Muqanna and Babak all fall into this category; each led a movement originating in the north of Iran, from Khorasan to Azerbaijan. They were equally opposed by the Zoroastrian priesthood and Muslim rulers (albeit at times only at the instigation of the former), and were violently suppressed. The elevation of Abu Muslim into a religiously revered figure in the aftermath of the ‘Abbasid revolution also bears elements of this same phenomenon.

The later movement towards orthodoxy, entailing the establishment of standard practices which are then projected back to the time of the Prophet to gain legitimacy, has obscured the rich diversity of actual practice in the early centuries.⁴⁵² The orthodox Muslim burial consists of a ritual cleansing, followed by wrapping the body in a plain white shroud and placing it to face Mecca in the grave, so that it will be ready on the Day of Judgment.⁴⁵³ Plenty of variation existed and still exists: in the placement of the body, specifically whether the head or the right side should face Mecca; in regional and local details of the mourning process and funeral procession; and in how to mark the grave,

⁴⁵¹ Levztion 1979, pp. 21-23; Lorenzen 1981, pp. 10-12; Bentley 1993, pp. 15-17.

⁴⁵² Richard Bulliet discusses this lost diversity in terms of hadiths: see Bulliet 1994, pp. 80-86. Accounts of Islamic eschatology offer only generalized accounts; see Eklund 1941 and Smith & Haddad 2002, where the only differentiation is between “classical” and “modern” viewpoints.

⁴⁵³ For a description of the proper Muslim burial in the hadiths, see Imām Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, trans. ‘Abdul Hamīd Siddīqī, Lahore, 1972, pp. 437-60.

with anything ranging from a plain tombstone to an elaborate mausoleum. Exegetical literature shows that debate over the proper Muslim burial, and particularly over the issue of the appropriateness of building a mausoleum, definitely occurred,⁴⁵⁴ but such literature by its very nature does not show the existence of syncretic practices which were not deemed to be orthodox, and hence we must rely on archaeology for evidence of actual practice in the early centuries.

There is archaeological evidence of syncretic funerary practices at Siraf, where 40 monumental tombs were found dating to the 9th to 10th centuries in a cemetery which also contained simple burials with Islamic tombstones. Ten of the mausolea were excavated; nine of these were collective tombs. They were all constructed of mortared rubble, with openings above floor level and plastered interiors with vaulted compartments. Some of the monuments were multi-storied. In all of them, corpses were placed directly on the floor, without coffins, with all ages and sexes mixed together. Grave goods included jewellery, pottery, glass, Sasanian seals, one Sasanian coin used as a pendant, and three rings dated to the 10th century on the basis of their floriated Kufic script.⁴⁵⁵ This is obviously not an orthodox Zoroastrian way of disposing of the dead, nor is it a proper Muslim burial. Instead it reflects other instances where the Zoroastrian culture of exposure has clashed with a culture of burial, such as at the Sogdian tombs in China or the tombs in Semirechiye, on the fringes of the nomadic steppe and the lands settled by the Sogdians. And, as I will argue in Chapter 4, it most likely reflects the practices which would have occurred in Tabaristan under the Ziyarids and Bavandids. But first it is necessary to delve further into the historical and cultural milieu of these Caspian

⁴⁵⁴ Leisten 1990, pp. 12-22.

⁴⁵⁵ David Whitehouse, "Excavations at Sirāf: Sixth Interim Report," *Iran*, 1974, pp. 23-30.

dynasties and their Central Asian contemporaries: the dynasties of the Persian Renaissance.

Chapter III: The Persian Renaissance

"In the time of the Samanids, Bokhara was the meeting place of all nobility, the centre of all authority, the place where the outstanding people of the age congregated, the rising place of the stars of the learned scholars of all the earth and the place of pilgrimage for all the brilliant men of the time."

Al-Tha'alibi (translation by C.E. Bosworth)

The Precursors: Tahirids and Saffarids

Although the Tahirids and the Saffarids are usually considered to be the first of the independent Persian dynasties, the Tahirids were actually loyal governors of the Abbasids from 821 to 873. They were the descendants of a *mawla* of an Umayyad governor of Sistan, and the family had risen to prominence after supporting the 'Abbasid revolution. In the civil war which followed the death of Harun al-Rashid, Tahir b. Husayn supported al-Ma'mun against his brother al-Amin, and was instrumental in the victory of al-Ma'mun, who then rewarded him with the governorship of Khorasan. Apart from a brief interlude in 821-2 just before the death of Tahir, when he began omitting the name of the caliph from his coinage, Tahir and his descendants were loyal defenders of the caliphate, and their influence extended well beyond their large and prosperous province.⁴⁵⁶

The Tahirids were Persians, but patronized poetry in Arabic and were indeed known to be writers of elegant Arabic prose and poetry themselves. They were also famed for their just rule, and the tomb of 'Abdallah b. Tahir in particular became a place of pilgrimage in the Tahirid capital, Nishapur.⁴⁵⁷ The importance of the Tahirids rests on the fact that they established a hereditary governorship for the first time, with the 'Abbasid caliphs confirming the succession. This was in some cases because of the

⁴⁵⁶ The territory which they governed directly also extended well beyond the boundaries of Khorasan proper, encompassing all of Iran south of the Alborz, apart from the westernmost provinces which were held by them only briefly.

⁴⁵⁷ Nizam al-Mulk, p. 47.

closeness of the Tahirid family to the caliphs, and in other cases because of the weakness of the caliphate, but the succession of Tahirid governors continued until their ouster by the Saffarids.

Unlike the aristocratic Tahirids, the Saffarids were popular leaders who rose from a humble background to forge an empire through military force. The province of Sistan had long been the refuge for Kharijite dissidents, and the unrest and disorder caused by their presence resulted in the emergence of armed bands called *'ayyar*, who strove to maintain some semblance of order in the main cities, Zarang and Bust. Yaqub b. al-Laith, a coppersmith (*saffar*, hence the name of the dynasty), first rose to prominence in Bust as an *'ayyar* leader in the 850s. His band overthrew the local Tahirid governor, and by 867 Yaqub was ruling the province of Sistan, having defeated both his *'ayyar* rivals and the Kharijites, both of whom he incorporated into his growing army. He then turned his attention eastwards to Afghanistan, where he launched raids deep into Buddhist territory. He continued to expand to the north and west as well, taking over the Tahirid capital Nishapur in 873, effectively ending the Tahirid dynasty. By 875 he had taken Fars, and in 876 was narrowly prevented from taking Baghdad itself, being defeated by a caliphal army just south of the city.

When Yaqub died in 879, he was succeeded by his brother 'Amr, who had been with him since his *'ayyar* days and was also a capable military leader. 'Amr continued the policies of his brother but had to continuously struggle to defend the Saffarid empire from both internal rebellions and external rivals. He was taken prisoner while battling against the Samanids near Balkh in 900, and was taken in captivity to Baghdad, where he was put to death. In their home province of Sistan, however, the Saffarid family

remained exceedingly popular, and scions of the dynasty remained a thorn in the side of the Samanids and then the Ghaznavids. Saffarid rule continued intermittently in Sistan all the way up to 1495.

Whereas the Tahirids had been loyal to the ‘Abbasids and conspicuously partook in Arabic Islamic culture, the Saffarids spurned both. They did at times send tribute to Baghdad to placate the caliph, most famously the golden and silver idols captured by Yaqub in Afghanistan, and they were happy to accept caliphal approval when it came in the form of investiture documents, but they did not rely upon the caliphs for their legitimacy. The caliphs, likewise, did not trust the Saffarids and only tolerated them for limited periods while dealing with other threats, such as the Zanj rebellion and Tulunid insubordination. They battled the Saffarids directly at times, and indirectly at other times by withdrawing investiture documents or by issuing multiple investiture documents for the same territory to the Saffarids and their rivals, spurring them to fight each other. And the Saffarids were a serious threat; as Bosworth points out, their empire represented the first splintering of the ‘Abbasid caliphate.⁴⁵⁸

According to Bosworth, neither Yaqub nor ‘Amr seems to have had any strong religious feelings,⁴⁵⁹ being concerned much more with temporal power. They were virulently anti-‘Abbasid and proud of their Persian ethnicity,⁴⁶⁰ but this did not translate into being anti-Islamic. Indeed, even their strongest detractors accused them only of supporting minority sects such as the ‘Alids and the Kharijites, never of apostasy. By

⁴⁵⁸ Bosworth 1994, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁹ Bosworth, CHI, vol. 4, p. 107.

⁴⁶⁰ The poem which was composed when Ya’qub attacked Iraq is a case in point: purporting to be addressed directly from Ya’qub to the caliph, the poem contains lines such as, “Return to the Hijaz to eat lizards and graze your sheep, For I shall mount on the throne of the kings!” See Stern, in Bosworth, ed., 1971, pp. 541-2. The *Tarikh-i Sistan* also reports that Yaqub frequently railed against the ‘Abbasids for their treachery, citing cases such as that of Abu Muslim and the Barmakid family, where the caliphs turned on their Persian supporters: see *Tarikh-i Sistan*, pp. 267-8.

this stage, Islam was a fact of life which could be taken for granted, and revivals of past Sasanian practices such as the style of army inspections did not pose a threat. Yaqub and ‘Amr were not only staunchly Persian but also from an uneducated working class background, so that neither ever learned to speak Arabic. It is this fact which ostensibly led to the composition of poetry in New Persian; after ousting the Tahirids from Herat, Yaqub complained about the poetic eulogies he received in Arabic, and requested to hear poetry which he could understand.⁴⁶¹ Hence this dynasty of ruffians gave an early boost to the use of New Persian as a literary language, a process which would continue under the rule of their northern rivals, the Samanids.

The Major Players: Samanids and Buyids

The Samanids were descended from a noble Central Asian family, probably originating in the area of Termez and Balkh.⁴⁶² Saman converted to Islam in the 720s, while the Umayyads were still struggling to expand into Transoxiana; he subsequently named his son Assad after the Umayyad governor of Khorasan. Assad’s four sons were later appointed by the Abbasid governor of Khorasan to rule over Samarqand, Ferghana, Shash (modern Tashkent), and Herat, around 819. Rule over Transoxiana was later consolidated into the hands of Nasr and Isma‘il, two of the sons of Ahmad b. Assad, who had been appointed over Ferghana. Nasr was awarded caliphal investiture in 875, in large part to incite fighting between the Samanids and the Saffarids. When he died in 892, Isma‘il was already the de facto ruler, although caliphal recognition did not come until after his defeat of ‘Amr b. al-Laith around 900.

⁴⁶¹ Tarikh-i Sistan, p. 260.

⁴⁶² Frye, CHI, vol. 4, p. 136.

Isma'īl was a strong ruler who expanded the Samanid domains in all directions, directly ruling an area which encompassed the provinces of Khorasan and Transoxiana and indirectly controlling an even larger part of Central Asia through the vassalage of local dynasties. He established Bokhara as his capital, filling the power vacuum left in that city by the fall of the Tahirids and using it to build his own power base to oppose his brother Nasr, who ruled from Samarqand. The city flourished and expanded under his rule, as his court became a magnet for scholars and literati as well as traders and craftsmen. The security of his reign enabled the Bokharans to allow the inner and outer walls protecting their oasis from nomadic incursions to fall into disrepair, encouraging further expansion of the urban fabric. Isma'īl became known to both contemporaries and subsequent generations as the epitome of a just ruler,⁴⁶³ and even today Uzbeks pay homage to him at the Samanid mausoleum.

After Isma'īl died in 907, he was succeeded by his son Ahmad, who ruled for only 7 years before being killed by a contingent of his own slaves. Rule then passed to his son Nasr, who was only 8 years old at the time; the Samanid domains were controlled by his mother and his vizier until he reached maturity. The long reign of Nasr II (914-943) is considered the golden age of the Samanid dynasty, not just due to the qualities of Nasr himself, but also his talented viziers, in particular Jaihani and Bal'ami.⁴⁶⁴ Despite several revolts in Transoxiana and the usual disturbances in the outlying provinces, his reign was characterized by relative security and prosperity, as well as an unparalleled cultural flowering in Bokhara itself. His rule ended in controversy, however, as many in his entourage became increasingly alienated by his support for Isma'īli missionaries, and

⁴⁶³ See, for example, Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnama*, pp. 14-22, 61.

⁴⁶⁴ Frye, *CHI*, vol. 4, p. 142.

even suspected his conversion. Faced with an assassination plot, he abdicated in favor of his son, Nuh, and died shortly thereafter.

Nuh's reign (943-954) was marked by a serious internal revolt by one of his uncles, with support from the Buyids and a rebellious governor of Khorasan. He was forced to temporarily retreat to Ferghana in 946, but then regained his throne and made peace with the governor of Khorasan, who fought against the Buyids for several years before changing sides once again. After the death of Nuh in 954, the decline of the Samanids began in earnest, with a series of short reigns marred by succession disputes, rebellions in the provinces (Khorasan in particular), and fighting with rivals on the periphery, namely the Buyids to the southwest and the Qarakhanids, who were gaining increasing power to the northeast. It was the Qarakhanids who ultimately conquered the Samanid heartland and put an end to the dynasty with the death of the last Samanid amir near Chahar Jui in 1005.

The Samanids are considered to be the dynasty of the Persian Renaissance *par excellence*. Unlike the Saffarids, they were from an aristocratic family, and they accentuated this status further by claiming descent from Bahram Chubin,⁴⁶⁵ a general of the Sasanian shah Hurmazd IV (579-590) famed for his victories against the Hephthalites near Balkh. Bahram Chubin in turn claimed descent from the Parthians, and after Khusrau II Parviz ascended the throne in 590 (his father having been deposed by the Sasanian aristocracy), the general overthrew the shah and claimed the throne for himself. Khusrau II Parviz reclaimed his throne a year later with help from the Byzantines, and Bahram Chubin fled to Ferghana, where he lived until he was assassinated by agents of the shah. Hence the Samanid claim of descent from the marriage of Bahram Chubin to a

⁴⁶⁵ Tarikh-i Gardizi, p. 9.

Turkish wife in Ferghana gave them a plausible link to the Sasanian aristocracy without negating their Central Asian roots.

The Samanids also had impeccable Muslim credentials, with the early conversion of Saman at a time when many of his countrymen were still fighting the Arabs. Apart from Nasr II's brief flirtation with Isma'ilism, they were staunch Sunnis of the Hanafite school, and their expansion into Turkish territory to the north, albeit motivated by the profitable slave trade, enhanced their reputation as warriors for the faith. Their relations with the 'Abbasid caliphs were almost always good, with the exception of the overthrow of Nuh b. Nasr, when the caliph endorsed his rival. Apart from this brief interlude, the Samanids did not claim an official title higher than "amir."⁴⁶⁶ They acknowledged the caliph on their coins and in the *khutba*, and sent annual gifts to Baghdad.

Like the Tahirids, the Samanids were elegant aristocrats with a good knowledge of Arabic, and they patronized literature as well as scientific and religious works in that language. However, they also consciously promoted the use of Persian, and it is under their tutelage that New Persian really came into its own as a literary language. Interestingly, they did not choose to promote Sogdian, which many people in Transoxiana still spoke at home. Instead, they firmly identified themselves with Persian, and patronized poets such as Rudaki, Daqiqi, and Firdausi, who composed verses in New Persian using Arabic metre. Isma'il began the practice of using Persian as the language of government, and his son Ahmad's attempt to revert to the use of Arabic is cited as one

⁴⁶⁶ Luke Treadwell points out that Nuh did arrogate the title of "al-malik al-mu'ayyad" to himself during this period as a way to assert his own legitimacy over that of his uncle; this title appeared on coinage minted in Ferghana during the interregnum, and on coins minted near the Buyid borders afterwards. See Treadwell, pp. 324-7.

of the main reasons he was killed by his slaves.⁴⁶⁷ The Samanids also commissioned translations of both scientific and religious works from Arabic to Persian, the first time religious works had ever been written in a language other than Arabic. This promotion of Persian had several important effects: it helped to effect the transformation of Islam from an Arab religion to a universal one; it helped the spread of Islam in Central Asia, where the inhabitants spoke Iranian languages such as Sogdian, Khorezmian, and Bactrian; and it also helped to speed the demise of those languages in favor of Persian.

So the court of the Samanids was a cosmopolitan one, filled with luminaries in all fields of endeavor. It was wealthy and prosperous, with a substantial portion of this wealth derived from high taxation on the slave trade. Both Turkish and Slavic slaves were imported into the Samanid realms, with many subsequently sold on to Baghdad. Samanid trade relations were far-flung, and substantial hoards of Samanid silver dirhams have been found throughout eastern Europe and Scandinavia.⁴⁶⁸ However, while the urban areas prospered, agriculture was neglected, which further accentuated the movement of much of the rural populace to the cities and led to the decline of the rural aristocracy.⁴⁶⁹

Samanid reliance on the slave trade also had another far-reaching effect: the beginning of the Turkification of Central Asia, which started long before the Qarakhanids toppled the last Samanid amir. The Samanids were not the first to rely on Turkish slave soldiers, nor were they the first to suffer as a result: one has only to think of the Samarra period of the 'Abbasid caliphate. Even before this, Sogdian traders used Turkish slaves to guard their homes and possessions during their long trading voyages to China. Yet the

⁴⁶⁷ Frye, CHI, vol. 4, p. 141.

⁴⁶⁸ For a distribution of the finds and an analysis of this trade, see Lewicki 1974, pp. 219-33.

⁴⁶⁹ Frye, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 152-3.

Samanid interaction with the Turks was different, not because of the enormous numbers imported or the positions of influence they were given, but because of the missionaries and dervishes who followed in the wake of the slave traders and began converting the Turks to Islam on their home territory. Hence when the Qarakhanids besieged Samarqand and Bokhara, the religious establishment saw no cause to resist, a decision which hastened the decline of Samanid rule. This marked the beginning of Turkish rule in Central Asia, but of Turks who identified with the Persian Islamic culture which the Samanids had promoted.

The Buyids were the main rivals of the Samanids in the west, and at their height amassed an empire which stretched from the Samanid frontier all the way to Syria. They came from Dailam, in the western part of the Elborz mountain range. Since ancient times the area had been known for its warriors, tough infantrymen who fought with swords, shields, axes, bows and arrows, and a type of two-pronged spear which was characteristic of the region.⁴⁷⁰ Like the Saffarids, their origin was humble rather than aristocratic: Buya, the father of the three mercenaries who founded the dynasty, was a fisherman. His eldest son, 'Ali, started his mercenary career in the service of Nasr b. Ahmad, and later served in the army of Mardavij b. Ziyar. As governor of Karaj, he began to amass territory of his own in defiance of Mardavij, a process which accelerated after the Ziyarid's murder at the hands of his own slaves. With the help of his brothers, Hasan and Ahmad, an empire was established which even encompassed Baghdad, taken by Ahmad in 945.

For the next century, the caliphs were beholden to the Buyids, with little power outside their palace walls. The first request of the Buyid brothers was for caliphal

⁴⁷⁰ Bosworth 1965, p. 149.

investiture and titles, hence 'Ali, Hasan and Ahmad became 'Imad al-Daula, Rukn al-Daula, and Mu'izz al-Daula, respectively. Their empire was not a united one but was instead ruled from three separate centers: 'Imad al-Daula, the senior amir (*amir al-umara*) from Shiraz; Rukn al-Daula from Rayy, and Mu'izz al-Daula from Baghdad. This dispersal of power, combined with the lack of a clear mechanism for the succession, was to be the cause of much struggle between their descendants and ultimately contributed to the downfall of the dynasty.

'Imad al-Daula died childless in 949, and was succeeded in Shiraz by his nephew, 'Adud al-Daula. After the death of his father, Rukn al-Daula, 'Adud al-Daula became the *amir al-umara*', and his reign is considered to be the high point of the dynasty.⁴⁷¹ Buyid territorial expansion was at its height, and the heartland province of Fars was secure and peaceful despite continual disturbances on the frontiers. 'Adud al-Daula was not only a capable ruler, but was also assisted by capable viziers, and managed to unify the Buyid empire. This unity was fleeting, however, and quickly dissolved after his death in 983, as his sons fought one another for the succession. From that time forwards, the three capitals of Shiraz, Rayy and Baghdad were occupied by Buyids who each claimed seniority and hence sovereignty over the whole, but were unable to force the acknowledgement of such claims for any length of time. The Rayy branch was eliminated by the Ghaznavids in 1029, while the Saljuqs dealt the *coup de grace* to the Baghdad branch in 1055, with the Shiraz branch continuing as Saljuq vassals until 1062.

The Buyids were first and foremost a military dynasty, intent on conquest. They supplemented their Dailami infantry with Turkish cavalry, and tension between these two military branches was a constant source of problems. Whilst the Turks and most Muslim

⁴⁷¹ Busse, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 272-3.

subjects of the Buyids were Sunni, the Buyids themselves were Shi'ite, and it was during their rule of Baghdad that these sects were codified and sectarian tensions came to the fore.⁴⁷² They themselves, however, were religiously tolerant, and sternly punished sectarian violence, including Muslim attacks on Zoroastrians in Fars. Despite controlling the caliphate for over a century, they never attempted to abolish the 'Abbasid line and install an 'Alid, which may be partly due to political expediency but also fits well with their general relaxed attitude towards religious matters. They continued to mention the caliph in the *khutba* and to include his name on their coins. However, many of their fellow Dailamis were still Zoroastrian, as Shi'ite preachers had only started to operate in their mountain homeland. Buya was probably the first in his family to convert.⁴⁷³

The first generation of Buyid rulers spoke little or no Arabic and were known to be rude and uncultured military men, but 'Adud al-Daula and his successors were raised in an Islamic courtly milieu and patronized Arabic as well as Persian poetry, literature and science.⁴⁷⁴ Ibn Sina, for example, finished his illustrious career at a Buyid court. Al-Mutanabbi was patronized by 'Adud al-Daula, and Firdausi by Baha al-Daula. The Buyids were interested in Persian culture, but mostly in the culture of their ancestors rather than the new Persian Islamic culture which was emerging in Bokhara. They claimed descent from Bahram Gur, connecting themselves to the Sasanian royal line in this way.⁴⁷⁵ 'Adud al-Daula infused his investiture ceremony with elements drawn from

⁴⁷² Kennedy 1986, pp. 227-31.

⁴⁷³ Busse, CHI, vol. 4, p. 274.

⁴⁷⁴ The court of 'Adud al-Daula also had one poet who composed in the Tabari dialect rather than in New Persian; see Richter-Bernburg 1980, pp. 89-90. Sahib Isma'il b. 'Abbad, who served Fakhr al-Daula at Rayy as vizier, was known as a generous patron of Persian poetry.

⁴⁷⁵ However, another genealogy was concocted for them as well which connected them to a South Arabian tribe, in an attempt to give them legitimacy in Arab circles as well as Persian. The Arab genealogy was reported in al-Sabi, Mas'udi, Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, whereas the Persian genealogy was given by Hamza al-Isfahani and al-Biruni: see Bosworth 1973, pp. 54-7. The Buyids were not the only Iranians to claim

the crowning of the Sasanian shahs, such as entering the caliph's presence on horseback and having the caliph adjust his hair in the new crown.⁴⁷⁶ His father had revived the Sasanian title of *shahanshah*, although he only used it in a limited way on a commemorative medal in 962. This medal depicted Rukn al-Daula as a Sasanian monarch, with an inscription composed in Pahlavi. Subsequent generations of Buyids were less discriminating, and used the title of *shahanshah* freely to bolster their competing claims to the senior amirate.⁴⁷⁷ As Frye observes, this title had no legal significance; he attributes its use to "a sentimental attachment to the past."⁴⁷⁸ However, it clearly had a propaganda value as well, given the way it was used by rival claimants in the late Buyid period. In the time of Rukn al-Daula, the propaganda message seems to have been vividly received by the Samanids; Mansur b. Nuh responded by coining his own commemorative medal in 968-9, with the same Pahlavi inscription but combined with a portrait drawing upon Sogdian prototypes.⁴⁷⁹

Another example of the Buyids' desire for continuity with the past, and with pre-Islamic Persian monarchs in particular, is 'Adud al-Daula's visit to Persepolis in 955. Accompanied by a Zoroastrian priest and a Muslim scribe, he had the Sasanian inscriptions at the Achaemenid royal site read to him; these inscriptions had been engraved in the stone by a Sasanian governor and prince during the reign of Shapur II

descent from Bahram Gur; the rulers of Khuttal, a vassal state of the Samanids, also claimed him an ancestor: see Barthold, p. 234.

⁴⁷⁶ According to Mottahedeh, this episode is illustrative of 'Adud al-Daula's political philosophy and his desire to establish a separation between religious authority and a monarchy, much as would happen in practice later under the Saljuqs: Busse, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 276-8. See also Richter-Bernburg 1980, p. 91.

⁴⁷⁷ 'Adud al-Daula was the first to start using the title on his coinage, after his assumption of the senior amirate upon his father's death. He also minted a gold commemorative medal in 969 modeled on that of his father.

⁴⁷⁸ Frye, *Golden Age*, p. 210.

⁴⁷⁹ Treadwell, p. 329. He suggests that Mansur b. Nuh even hired the same craftsman who designed Rukn al-Daula's medal.

(310-79), followed by another set of inscriptions several decades later, bestowing blessings on both the Achaemenids and their Sasanian descendants as well as recording the details of the visits. 'Adud al-Daula followed suit with his Arabic inscriptions, thereby placing himself in the line of successive Persian kings.⁴⁸⁰ In the inscription he is called by his given name, Fanakhusrau, rather than his *laqab*, although this is combined with his Arabic title, *al-amir al-jalil*.⁴⁸¹ He also used his Persian given name for his new urban developments close to Shiraz, Kard-i Fanakhusrau and Fanakhusrau-khorra, again imitating Sasanian precedent in a region where many districts and cities were founded and named after kings.⁴⁸²

Frye contrasted Samanid creativity in the forging of a new, Persian Islamic culture with the Buyids, who "revived the past as it existed in the Caspian provinces, frozen and little changed from Sasanian times, hence ultimately doomed to failure."⁴⁸³ I would argue that they attempted to fuse the Persian culture which they knew with the religion and culture which they came to embrace, seeking legitimacy in both the world of their Dailami followers and the world of the areas which they conquered. Rather than being less creative, it is a process typical of new converts, and a process which can also be seen in the other Caspian dynasties, the Ziyarids and the Bavandids.

The Caspian Dynasties: Ziyarids and Bavandids

⁴⁸⁰ He was not the last Persian king to inscribe the Achaemenid monuments; Injuid, Muzaffarid and Timurid princes later followed suit.

⁴⁸¹ Richter-Bernburg 1980, p. 87. Richter-Bernburg ascertains that the inscriptions do not imply that 'Adud al-Daula considered himself to be an actual descendant of the Sasanians at this stage, as the genealogy claiming descent from Bahram Gur was fabricated later.

⁴⁸² Richter-Bernburg 1980, p. 89.

⁴⁸³ Frye, *Golden Age*, p. 211.

The post-Sasanian successor states in Tabaristan, the Dabuyids, the Masmughans, the Bavandids and the Qarinvands, were able to successfully repulse Arab armies time and again and maintain their small Zoroastrian kingdoms in the mountains. This began to break down, however, once the Tahirids came to power. Other powerful governors of Khorasan prior to the Tahirids had been given caliphal investiture to rule over Tabaristan, but were consistently unable to enforce this and were only able to exercise their rule in the coastal cities. But with the advent of Persian rule in Khorasan, the petty dynasts of Tabaristan became increasingly tempted to involve the larger outside powers in their squabbles with one another.

The first to do so was a Qarinvand, Mazyar b. Qarin, who was overthrown by a Bavandid and in 822 sought help from the caliph to regain his throne, agreeing to convert to Islam in the process. Help was provided, but Mazyar then clashed with 'Abdallah b. Tahir; he was taken prisoner in 839 and killed one year later. As a reward for helping the Tahirids, the Bavandid Qarin b. Shahriyar, newly converted to Islam, was then restored to his throne in 842. The politics of the region became complicated still further when several of the coastal cities revolted against the Tahirids in 864; they invited an 'Alid, al-Hasan b. Zaid, to lead them. Under Tahirid pressure he fled into the mountains of Dailam, where he was given shelter by a ruler of the Justanid dynasty, and there founded a Shi'ite dynasty of his own. Whilst Dailam remained the stronghold of this dynasty, the Zaidi Shi'ite rulers also meddled in the politics of Tabaristan, at times exacting tribute from the Qarinvands and Bavandids.

Weakened by internecine squabbles and by clashes with the Samanids in the 920s, the Zaidi regime was brought to an end in the 930s by the Buyids and by other

adventurers from the mountains of Tabaristan and Dailam. Among these was Mardavij b. Ziyar, who had previously served in the Samanid army. His uncle had been killed by the Da'i, as the Zaidi rulers were called, and he was able to avenge this by in turn killing the Da'i in a battle at Amul in 928. The successors of the Da'i were later neutralized by being given minor positions by the Ziyarids at Amul and the Buyids at Rayy.

After their victory over the Da'i, Mardavij turned upon his fellow adventurers, Asfar b. Shiruya and Makan b. Kaki. In 930-32, he defeated both, killing Asfar, and amassing an enormous amount of territory which included Tabaristan, Gurgan, Rayy, Qazvin, Qumm, Hamadan and Isfahan. He appointed 'Ali b. Buya as governor of Karaj, and then quickly suppressed 'Ali's rebellion, forcing him to swear his allegiance once again in 934. One year later, he was killed by his own Turkish slaves.

Mardavij b. Ziyar b. Vardanshah was from a royal family in the Dakhil region of Gilan.⁴⁸⁴ By all accounts, he modeled his court upon that of the Sasanians during his brief reign, seating himself on a Sasanian style golden throne with a Sasanian type crown.⁴⁸⁵ Like other Persian dynasts, he claimed descent from pre-Islamic royalty, in this case from Arghush Farhadan, a ruler of Gilan. However, his reverence for the past was quite different from that of either the Buyids or the Samanids, and he wished to achieve an actual restoration of Persian, and perhaps also Zoroastrian, rule. Buoyed by his military success in Iran, he was planning to expand into Iraq, overthrow the caliphate, and rule from the Sasanian palace at Ctesiphon.⁴⁸⁶ Whether he was a Muslim or not at this stage in his life is a matter of dispute; several sources indicate that earlier in his

⁴⁸⁴ Madelung, CHI, vol. 4, p. 212.

⁴⁸⁵ Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab*, IX, pp. 19-30; Ibn al-Athir, VIII, pp. 144-5. 226. See also Minorsky, *Domination*, pp. 10, 18.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibn al-Athir, VIII, p. 145.

military career he was converted to Isma'ilism by missionaries operating in Gilan and Tabaristan.⁴⁸⁷ He later turned on the Isma'ilis and subjected them to violent persecution. He was widely accused of being an apostate at the time of his grandiose plans, although the charge was levied by hostile sources.⁴⁸⁸ However, he was defeated by his own harshness towards his followers before he could act on his plans: his slaves killed him not in defense of Islam, but to avenge their own mistreatment.

He was succeeded by his brother Vushmgir, who was unable to hold on to the conquered territory due to simultaneous Buyid advances from the south and Samanid advances from the northeast, as well as rebellion from a Zaidite in Tabaristan. He took refuge first with the Bavandids and then at the court of Nuh b. Nasr, where he acknowledged Samanid suzerainty. With the help of a Samanid army, he was able to quash the Zaidite, repulse the Buyids and regain Tabaristan and Gurgan in 947. Struggles with the Buyids continued, however, until his death on a boar hunt in 967.

The succession was contended by his two sons, with the eldest, Bisutun, receiving Buyid support and the youngest, Qabus, receiving Samanid endorsement. Bisutun triumphed, and then married a daughter of 'Adud al-Daula. When Bisutun died in 977, however, the Buyids supported Qabus over Bisutun's son. At Buyid bidding, Qabus received caliphal endorsement and the title of Shams al-Ma'ali. But this alliance did not last long, as Qabus incurred the anger of 'Adud al-Daula in 980 by offering refuge to his brother, Fakhr al-Daula. Both Fakhr al-Daula and Qabus fled before the Buyid armies, and as the Samanids were unable to restore Qabus to his throne, he remained in exile in

⁴⁸⁷ Stern 1960, p. 66; see also Khan 1977, p. 268. Stern rightly points out that report of "conversion" of a leader to Isma'ilism must always be treated with skepticism, as this may mean nothing more than sheltering and listening to a missionary (p. 63).

⁴⁸⁸ He was also accused by al-Suli of plotting with the Qarmatians; see Stern 1960, p. 66.

Khorasan until 998. He finally regained his territory not through Samanid intervention but from rebellion against Buyid rule in Tabaristan. He ruled until 1012, when he was overthrown by his army in favor of his son, Manuchihr, and left outside to freeze to death.

Although Vushmgir's religious beliefs are not known, Qabus' mother was a daughter of the Bavandid ruler Sharvin, and hence was probably Shi'ite. Qabus himself, however, perhaps influenced by his time in Khorasan and his enmity towards the Buyids, was staunchly Sunni and persecuted Shi'ites in his realm after regaining his throne. His court was a cultured one which attracted such stars as Ibn Sina and al-Biruni. He patronized poetry in both Arabic and Persian, and composed his own verses in both languages. His rule was the high point of the Ziyarid dynasty both culturally and economically, and Ziyarid coins have been found in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia.⁴⁸⁹

After Qabus, the power of the dynasty waned, and his successors only maintained their rule by paying tribute and swearing fealty to outside powers: Manuchihr acknowledged the overlordship of the Ghaznavids and married a daughter of Mahmud. His son Anushirvan, who succeeded him in 1028, continued this alliance with the Ghaznavids until the Saljuq invasion; the dynasty continued as Saljuq governors until 1090.

In contrast to the Ziyarids, who controlled land beyond the Alborz Mountains and hence entered the wider stage of Iranian politics, the Bavandids remained in the mountains and consequently are not nearly so well-known. Even the chronology of rulers and their relations with one another are in many cases not firmly established. The Bavandids, however, are one of the longest running dynasties in Iranian history; they

⁴⁸⁹ Bosworth 1964, pp. 25-6.

came to power shortly after the downfall of the Sasanians, in 665, and maintained their position until 1349, albeit as vassals of the Mongols for the last century of their rule. Their stronghold, where their coins were minted, was Firim or Firuzkuh, in the eastern part of the Alborz range and the centre of Tabaristan. These coins show that, in the 10th century, the rulers were Shi'ite.⁴⁹⁰

Sharvin b. Rustam b. Qarin ruled from approximately 895-930; his grandfather had been the first Bavandid to convert to Islam. Sharvin's reign is most notable for his opposition to the Da'i, who defeated him and forced him to pay tribute. He married a daughter off to Vushmgir, who then in 943 sought refuge at the Bavandid court, during the reign of Shahriyar b. Sharvin. Shahriyar was forced to submit and pay tribute to the Buyids, and included their name on his coins along with that of the caliph. He was overthrown at an unknown date by his brother, Rustam, who continued to acknowledge the overlordship of the Buyids. Rustam was succeeded by his son, Marzuban, by 981 according to the coinage. However, it was Rustam's daughter, Shirin, who was to become the most famous Bavandid and the only one to rule outside of Tabaristan. Shirin was married off to Fakhr al-Daula, the Buyid ruler of Rayy, and after his early death she ruled as regent queen until her young son, Majd al-Daula, came of age.⁴⁹¹

Marzuban was briefly overthrown in 998 by his nephew, Shahriyar b. Dara b. Rustam, with the help of Qabus b. Vushmgir, but Marzuban then allied with Qabus and regained his throne. Shahriyar then died in exile in Rayy. After this, the Bavandids are not mentioned even in the histories of the region until 1016-7, when an unnamed Bavandid ruler helped Shirin and Majd al-Daula defeat a rebellion; Madelung has

⁴⁹⁰ Miles, in Bosworth, ed., 1971, pp. 444-5. See also Casanova 1922, pp. 117-26.

⁴⁹¹ Ibn Miskawayh asserted that women were the equal of men amongst the Dailamites: see *Eclipse*, III, p. 313.

suggested that this must be Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Vandin, the builder of the Mil-i Radkan in 1016-20.⁴⁹²

The coins of the Bavandids indicate that they were Shi'ites, as the Shi'ite profession “‘*Ali wali Allah*” appears on the coins of Rustam b. Sharvin, albeit in conjunction with recognition of the ‘Abbasid caliph.⁴⁹³ This phrase shows that the Bavandids probably favored Imami Shi'ism; Stern suggested that they may have been followers of the Zaidis,⁴⁹⁴ but this seems very unlikely given their military opposition to the Da'i.

From the little that is known about them, Marzuban appears to have been the most culturally illustrious of the Bavandids. Al-Biruni visited his court, and he himself authored a collection of stories of pre-Islamic Persian kings in the Tabari dialect, the *Marzuban-nama*. This is one indication of the Bavandids' interest in their past heritage; another is their use of the Sasanian military title *Ispahbad*. Like other Iranian dynasts, they claimed descent from the Sasanians; in their case, given that their rule dates back to 665, there is some plausibility to the claim that the founder of the dynasty, Bav, was a great-grandson of the Sasanian shah Kavadh who took refuge in Tabaristan when Yazdgerd fled from the Arabs. As Bosworth puts it, the Ziyarids were “parvenu Dailami adventurers” in comparison with the Bavandids.⁴⁹⁵ However, with so little information available for the 11th century in particular, the tomb towers themselves are one of the main sources of information about this dynasty. The Lajim tower, constructed in 1022-

⁴⁹² Madelung, CHI, vol. 4, p. 218.

⁴⁹³ Casanova 1922, p. 125.

⁴⁹⁴ Stern 1960, p. 64.

⁴⁹⁵ Bosworth 1964, p. 31. Bosworth postulates that Ba Kalijar, a maternal uncle of the Ziyarid ruler Anushirvan b. Manuchihr, must have been a Bavandid because he was able to oust the Ziyarid with considerable popular support, which Bosworth attributes to the elevated heritage of the Bavandid family.

23 for Abu'l Favaris Shahriyar b. 'Abbas b. Shahriyar, must have housed an otherwise unknown grandson of Shahriyar b. Dara. The incumbents of Resget, Hurmuzdiar b. Masdara and his brother Habusiar, are likewise unknown in either the chronicles or the coinage.

The same remoteness which means that the Bavandids have left so few traces in the chronicles also protected them; the Saljuqs, like the Arabs before them, were unable to conquer the mountainous interior of Tabaristan and so the Bavandids were able to continue to rule unmolested and without acknowledging Saljuq overlordship. With the Mongols, however, not even so remote a region was safe, and the Bavandids duly became Mongol vassals.

The Successors: Ghaznavids and Qarakhanids

A brief summary of the early Ghaznavids and Qarakhanids is necessary for two reasons: first, because their rule coincided with that of the Ziyarids and Bavandids of the 11th century, and as the major regional powers, the politics of the Ghaznavids in particular often intersected with that of those of their Caspian neighbors. Second, as the immediate successors of the Samanids, it is often difficult to ascribe Central Asian mausolea to the Samanid period as opposed to the Qarakhanid or Ghaznavid. Third, although they were ethnic Turks, both dynasties patronized Persian as a literary language and hence contributed to the Persian Renaissance; indeed, the same prominent figures often migrated from one court to another.

Samanid reliance on Turkish slave soldiers has been mentioned above, as well as the consequences of this during the reign of the weak amirs of the late Samanid period.

One of the Turks instrumental in the succession struggles after the death of 'Abd al-Malik b. Nuh in 961 was the general Alp-Tegin. His candidate failed, and so he was sent to the fringes of the Samanid realm, where he conquered Ghazna and governed the region on behalf of the Samanids. After his death, one of his slaves, Sebuk-Tegin, rose to power and ruled as a Samanid governor for 20 years, from 977 to 997. Sebuk-Tegin expanded his realm and his power base with raids into India, which provided rich grounds for plunder. When he was called upon to help Nuh b. Mansur repel a Qarakhanid advance in 992, he duly complied and came to the amir's aid with his son, Mahmud. Following their victory, Mahmud was awarded with the governorate of Khorasan.

After the death of Sebuk-Tegin, Mahmud combined Khorasan with the former realm of his father after defeating his brother Isma'il in battle. The Samanid dynasty fell to the Qarakhanids in 1005, and the Oxus became the border between the two Turkish amirates. Mahmud continued raids into India as his father had done, but also expanded farther into Iran at the expense of the Buyids and the Saffarids. A Sunni of the Hanafi school like his Samanid predecessors, Mahmud received caliphal approval for his wars against both the infidel Indians and the Shi'ite Buyids. He had good relations with the Ziyarids, and gave one of his daughters in marriage to Manuchihr b. Qabus, who recognized his overlordship. Mahmud died in 1030 and was succeeded by his son Mas'ud after he defeated his brother Muhammad in battle. Mas'ud lost Khorasan and Rayy to the Saljuqs, but maintained his position in Afghanistan.

The Ghaznavids became thoroughly absorbed into the Persian Islamic milieu in which they rose to power and which they inherited after the demise of the Samanids. Persian remained the language of both government and high culture, although the native

language of the Ghaznavids themselves was Turkish (Sebuk-Tegin, captured near Issiq-kul, was probably a Qarluq.)⁴⁹⁶ Prominent poets such as ‘Unsuri, Daqiqi, and Firdausi came to the Ghaznavid court; it was here that Firdausi completed the Iranian epic poem, the *Shahnama*. The Ghaznavids even emulated the Persian dynasties by concocting a genealogy which linked them to the Sasanians: they claimed descent from Yadgerd III, the last Sasanian emperor, through intermarriage between one of his daughters and a Turk after their fall from power.⁴⁹⁷

Unlike the Ghaznavids with their humble slave origins, the Qarakhanids were from a royal Turkish clan. Deciphering their exact history, however, is exceedingly difficult due to the shifting alliances and confederations on the steppe and also the movements of tribes, all of which were imperfectly understood by sedentary historians.⁴⁹⁸ They were probably associated with the Yaghma, a group in the Qarluq tribal confederation.⁴⁹⁹ Following Isma‘il Samani’s takeover of Taraz in 893 and the subsequent conversion of large numbers of Turks, a Qarakhanid prince named Satuk was converted by a preacher from Bokhara.⁵⁰⁰ It was Satuk’s grandson, Harun Bughra Khan, who first attacked the Samanids, briefly taking Bokhara in 992. He fell ill, withdrew, and died on the way home. His nephew, Nasser Ilek Khan, then took the city again in 999, with little resistance as the Samanid dynasty had more or less imploded by this time.

⁴⁹⁶ Bosworth, CHI, vol. 4, p. 165.

⁴⁹⁷ Bosworth 1973, p. 61; see also Bosworth, CHI, vol. 4, p. 165.

⁴⁹⁸ This is further complicated by the Turkic system of titulature, whereby the title is attached to the position rather than to its holder. The name “Qarakhanid” is one invented by Western historians for this dynasty, due to the frequency of the title Qara Khagan in the coinage; they are sometimes called the “Ilek Khans,” after another frequently used title, instead. The name the dynasty gave itself was “Al-i Afrasiab,” thereby connecting themselves with the region of Turan in the *Shahnama*.

⁴⁹⁹ Golden, in Sinor ed., pp. 354-5.

⁵⁰⁰ Golden, p. 357.

The Qarakhanids ruled in Transoxiana until 1212, when their western lands were taken by the Khwarezmshah.⁵⁰¹ Their rule was marked by a great deal of infighting, and the precise chronology of rulers has yet to be firmly established. True to Turkic tradition, rule was invested in the family as a whole rather than an individual, and with constant internal struggles between family members, individuals frequently shifted position within the hierarchy. At its height, the Qarakhanid realm stretched from Bokhara to Kashgar, but from 1032 was ruled as an eastern and western kaghanate; the western capital was Bokhara, whereas the eastern capital was Balasagun.⁵⁰² In the western kaghanate, much of the Samanid structure of government was taken over and absorbed. The Qarakhanid court was able to attract literati, although Arabic poetry was not patronized. Persian was by this time considered to be the language of high culture as well as government in the region, and so the khans supported Persian poets and scholars. However, they were also interested in the elevation of Turkish, and commissioned the first literary works and histories in that language.⁵⁰³

Religion

In the 10-11th centuries, most Sunni Muslims in Iran belonged to either the Hanafi or the Shafi'i school.⁵⁰⁴ The Hanafi school became popular in Khorasan in particular in the 8th century, due to its association with the Murji'ite doctrine of equality of faith, implying equality among converts to Islam regardless of background. By the 9th century,

⁵⁰¹ Originally an Iranian dynasty, the rule of Khwarezm was taken by a Turk, Altuntash, with Ghaznavid help in 1017; from that time until the Mongol invasion in 1220, the Khwarezmshah was Turkish.

⁵⁰² Although it was a Turkic tradition to divide khaqanates into eastern and western portions, the khan of one would always be subservient to the other. The Qarakhanids were unique in allocating an equal status to the two parts of their realm; see Karaev 1983, p. 261.

⁵⁰³ Frye 1965, in Makdisi ed., p. 231; Frye 1967, pp. 69-74.

⁵⁰⁴ Madelung 1988, p. 26. There were, however, many Hanbalis in Gilan: see Khan 1977, pp. 267-8.

Hanafism was dominant in Transoxiana as well, and the Samanids adhered strictly to this school. The Turks who first encountered Islam at this time also became Hanafis, and this school became thoroughly associated with Turks and with Central Asia.

In western Iran, on the other hand, Shafi'ism became dominant in the late 9th century.⁵⁰⁵ By the 11th century, the differences between the two legal schools had become further exacerbated by the association of each with different schools of theology: the Hanafis with Mu'tazilism, and the Shafi'is with Ash'arism. The divisions were of course not absolute, and there was geographical overlap as well, so that Rayy became a major centre of Mu'tazilism under the Buyids, while the association between Ash'arism and Shafi'ism first arose in Nishapur.⁵⁰⁶ In some areas, in particular Nishapur, these sectarian divisions exacerbated economic and other intercommunal tensions and led to outbreaks of violence beginning in the early 10th century.⁵⁰⁷

Although the majority of Muslims in Iran at this time were Sunni, Shi'ism had also enjoyed a following in Iran since the earliest days of Islamic rule, when Shi'ite Arabs settled in Qom. This early Shi'ite tradition was Imami, or Twelver Shi'ism, which found adherents among several of the Caspian dynasties, such as the Buyids and the Bavandids. It was under Buyid patronage that the tenets of Twelver Shi'ism were codified in Baghdad, a process which exacerbated sectarian conflict in that city.⁵⁰⁸ Qom, however, remained the primary center of Twelver Shi'ism; small communities also existed in the major cities of Khorasan and in Samarqand. Zaidi and Isma'ili Shi'ism

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Madelung 1988, pp. 28-30.

⁵⁰⁷ Bulliet, in Richards, ed., pp. 73-4. See also Bulliet 1992, pp. 75-81.

⁵⁰⁸ Kennedy 1986, pp. 227-31.

were also present in Iran and Central Asia, in the Caspian region in particular, due to the efforts of missionaries.

Zaidi Shi'ism was political as well as religious, and its exponents managed to establish a state in Dailam in 867, as outlined above. The Caspian region had long served as a place of shelter for religious dissidents and rebels; Sunbadh, for example, had found refuge with one of the Ispahbads. Hence the Zaidi leaders, who were the subjects of persecution elsewhere, found it an ideal place to establish a base from which to expand their political power and propagate their views. Their stronghold was in the area of Ruyan and Chalus, where in the early 10th century conversion of the populace began in earnest and mosques and madrasas were constructed.⁵⁰⁹ There were two branches of Zaidis, both of whom preached in Dailam and Tabaristan; in 893 the branch of al-Qasim had established a Zaidi state in Yemen, which for a while maintained strong links with the Caspian region, especially Gilan. The Da'is continued some form of rule until the 12th century, although their power and their territory were greatly circumscribed by the Ziyarids and the Buyids.

Isma'ili preachers were also active in the region, and according to Qazvini, they managed to convert both Mardavij b. Ziyar and his comrade-in-arms Asfar b. Shiruya.⁵¹⁰ According to Madelung, Isma'ilism first arose in Iran, and its major centre was Ahvaz.⁵¹¹ Schism with the Fatimids occurred early, as most Iranian Isma'ilis did not recognize the Fatimids as imams. This branch of Isma'ilis established the Qarmatian state in Bahrain (899-1077). The excesses of the Qarmatians are well known, but it is worth mentioning

⁵⁰⁹ Khan 1977, p. 261. A Shi'ite source states that Muhammad b. Zaid, who became Da'i in 884, was the first to construct mausolea over the graves of 'Ali at Najaf and Husayn at Karbala; see Khan, p. 265. This cannot have been the case as structures were already destroyed by the caliph al-Mutawakil.

⁵¹⁰ Khan 1977, p. 268. Al-Mas'udi, however, maintained that Asfar b. Shiruya was not a convert (IX, 8).

⁵¹¹ Madelung 1988, p. 94.

here an episode which occurred in 931, when the Qarmatian ruler Abu Tahir abdicated in favor of an unknown Persian from Isfahan, claiming he was the Mahdi. This “Mahdi” then repudiated Isma‘ilism, and announced the restoration of Persian rule and of Zoroastrianism; his rule lasted 80 days before he was killed.

In the late 11th century, Nizari Isma‘ilism arose in Dailam, where Hasan-i Sabah established a stronghold at the Justanid fortress of Alamut and proceeded to launch his campaign of assassinations.⁵¹² However, despite the associations of Isma‘ilism with these revolutionary movements, before the rise of the Nizaris Isma‘ilism was a viable Shi‘ite alternative which was at times in the 10th century tolerated in ruling circles. In fact, Stern argues that, whereas elsewhere they sought popular allegiance which would lead to an overthrow of the status quo, the missionaries in Iran and Central Asia specifically targeted the ruling class.⁵¹³ Mardavij b. Ziyar was not the only ruler to flirt with Isma‘ilism; the Samanid Nasr II also welcomed Isma‘ili missionaries and may have converted at the end of his life, together with other high-ranking members of his government. Ahmad b. ‘Ali, governor of Rayy from 919-24, was another convert. The Musafarids of Dailam also adhered to Isma‘ilism in this period, as their coinage attests.⁵¹⁴ The tide could easily turn, however: Mardavij later persecuted Isma‘ilis, as did Nuh b. Nasr after his father’s abdication.

Asceticism also enjoyed some popularity, and the first Sufi order in Islam was established in Kazerun in the late 10th century by Shaykh-i Murshid, who often sparked

⁵¹² Madelung points out that the Nizari Isma‘ilis were the direct heirs of the Persian traditions of Mazdak and the Khurammiyya, but that by this time revolutionary religious fervor could only be Islamic: see Madelung 1988, pp. 104-5.

⁵¹³ Stern 1960, p. 81.

⁵¹⁴ Stern 1960, pp. 70-74.

violent clashes with the local Zoroastrians.⁵¹⁵ The Sufis were preceded by the ascetic Karramiyya, established by Ibn Karram in the 9th century in Nishapur. Ibn Karram was a popular preacher who targeted lower class, non-Muslims, offering an alternative which was neither Sunni nor Shi'ite. The piety of Ibn Karram and his successors also won over some members of the ruling class, including the Ghaznavid amir Sebuktegin.⁵¹⁶ Many followers lived in khangahs, which may have begun with the Karramiyya. Nishapur remained the center of the sect, but it was popular throughout Khorasan, northern Iran, and the Ferghana Valley.⁵¹⁷

Not only was there a rich tapestry of Islamic beliefs in Iran and Central Asia at this time, but also other religions as well. According to Bulliet's calculations, Muslims first reached a majority in Iran in the first half of the 9th century. By the early 10th century, his conversion graph shows Iran as more than 90% Muslim.⁵¹⁸ However, as Bulliet himself admits,⁵¹⁹ the biographical dictionaries he uses as sources are products of urban culture. Given that Islamization and urbanization went hand in hand in Iran,⁵²⁰ this would tend to substantially skew the data. Additionally, the acceptance of Persian culture as something not incompatible with Islam brought Persian names back into fashion among Persian Muslims. The Buyids are a case in point: Buya named his sons 'Ali, Hasan and Ahmad, but the next generation received Persian given names. In Tabaristan, Persian names were the rule; the Bavandids, for example, rarely used Arab names even after their conversion to Islam. Choksy, looking at post-conquest Zoroastrian literature as

⁵¹⁵ Madelung 1988, p. 48; see also Bier 1986, p. 66.

⁵¹⁶ Bosworth 1960, p. 8.

⁵¹⁷ Madelung 1988, pp. 40-45.

⁵¹⁸ Bulliet 1979, p. 23.

⁵¹⁹ Bulliet, in Levtzion, ed., 1979, pp. 32-3.

⁵²⁰ Frye 1975, pp. 107-9; see also Bulliet 1979, pp. 53-4.

well as Arabic sources, estimated a much slower process of conversion, with urban areas becoming increasingly Muslim from the 8th to the 10th centuries, and rural areas converting between the 10th and 13th centuries.⁵²¹

There is much in the sources to support Choksy's assertion that Zoroastrians were still numerous in parts of Iran in the 10-11th centuries, particularly in Tabaristan and in Fars. Tabaristan, as outlined in Chapter II, remained isolated both politically and culturally, so that conversion of the ruling class only began in the 9th century. Al-Muqaddasi, who visited the region in the 10th century, described the local population as partly Shi'ite and partly Zoroastrian; he went on to detail particular marriage customs he had not seen elsewhere in the Islamic world.⁵²² Al-Mas'udi states that there were isolated areas in the mountains beyond the reach of the Shi'ite preachers where the inhabitants remained polytheists.⁵²³ Fars, as the stronghold of the Sasanians, also remained heavily Zoroastrian at this time; al-Istakhri, writing in the mid-10th century, asserted that they were still a majority in the region.⁵²⁴ Other contemporary geographers also mention a number of functioning fire temples in Fars;⁵²⁵ fire temples are also mentioned at Takht-i Suleiman,⁵²⁶ Nishapur and other areas in Khorasan,⁵²⁷ villages in the vicinity of Merv,⁵²⁸ in the province of Jibal,⁵²⁹ and at Karkuya in Sistan.⁵³⁰

⁵²¹ Choksy 1997, p. 108.

⁵²² Al-Muqaddasi, pp. 320-4. Some of al-Muqaddasi's account is corroborated by the Hodud al-'Alam, Minorsky translation, p. 136. The Hodud al-'Alam (p. 135) also asserts that most of the inhabitants of the Bavandid realm were Zoroastrian; see also Ibn Hauqal, p. 366.

⁵²³ Al-Mas'udi, IX, 5.

⁵²⁴ Al-Istakhri, p. 139.

⁵²⁵ Hodud al-'Alam, pp. 126-9; Ibn al-Faqih, p. 247; Ibn Rusta, p. 153; al-Mas'udi, Muruj al-Dhahab, pp. 72-100, although he also alludes to fire temples in Iraq, Kerman, Sistan, and beyond; al-Muqaddasi, who also speaks of the dominance of Zoroastrians in the region, p. 374; al-Qazvini, pp. 99, 121, 162. Bier has convincingly argued that the ruins at Sarvistan are the remains of a fire temple newly built in the 9th century: see Bier 1986, pp. 64-7.

⁵²⁶ Ibn Khordadbeh, p. 119; Ibn al-Faqih, p. 247; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, quoting Abu Dulaf, vol. 3, p. 355.

However, despite substantial numbers in parts of Iran, the Zoroastrians were at this time a community in decline in most areas, with emigration to India as well as conversion taking place. From his analysis of contemporary Zoroastrian sources, Choksy outlines their situation: fire temples were increasingly demolished or transformed into mosques, while repairs were often not permitted.⁵³¹ Increasing poverty and declining numbers meant that priestly schools were being closed, and the distinctions between different types of priest were fading.⁵³² The Zoroastrians were fighting back as best they could, and in areas of strength could still prevent the construction of mosques, as happened in the intercommunal struggles in Kazerun under the Buyids (where the Buyid governor was himself a Zoroastrian). They also began recording their oral traditions at this time, leading to a flowering of Zoroastrian literature from the 9th to the 12th centuries. They passed decrees which, when they could be enforced, were designed to discourage conversion: converts lost inheritance rights, with their families suffering other penalties. All female relatives of converts, for example, were banned from the position of chief wife.⁵³³ Other decrees limited physical contact with Muslims in order to preserve ritual purity; Muslims retaliated with similar laws. Inevitably, though, contact did occur, with business partnerships being relatively common and intercommunal marriage occasionally happening as well.⁵³⁴ And with contact, conversion also occurred.

⁵²⁷ Ibn al-Faqih, p. 247; al-Muqaddasi refers to substantial numbers of Zoroastrians in Khorasan in general, pp. 284-5.

⁵²⁸ Hodud al-‘Alam, p. 105.

⁵²⁹ Ibn Hawqal, p. 357; al-Muqaddasi, p. 394.

⁵³⁰ Yaqut, vol. 4, p. 263; al-Qazvini, pp. 163-4.

⁵³¹ Choksy 1997, pp. 97-9.

⁵³² Kreyenbroek 1987, p. 156; see also Choksy 1997, p. 98; de Menasce, CHI, vol. 4, p. 549.

⁵³³ Choksy 1997, p. 122.

⁵³⁴ Choksy 1997, pp. 123-35.

Other religions were also still present in the 10-11th centuries, albeit in fewer numbers than the Zoroastrians. Christians and Jews are mentioned as being second only to Zoroastrians in Fars,⁵³⁵ and also numerous in Khorasan and al-Jibal.⁵³⁶ In Transoxiana, a small number of Manicheans remained, despite persecution over the centuries. Al-Biruni, al-Nadim and the Hodud al-'Alam mention a community in Samarqand; al-Nadim mentions several other Central Asian cities as well.⁵³⁷ Buddhism, while still flourishing in much of the territory ruled by the Ghaznavids, had almost certainly died out in the realm of the Samanids. Bulliet has suggested that Buddhism retained some residual influence in Transoxiana and northern Iran at the time of the Barmakids,⁵³⁸ but there is no mention of extant Buddhist communities in either area at the time of the Persian Renaissance, except on the far eastern borders of Transoxiana.⁵³⁹

Literature

Literature is the art most connected to the Persian Renaissance, and it was literary scholars who first coined the term in order to describe the seemingly sudden emergence of New Persian as a literary language in the 9th century, after several centuries when Arabic dominated. Of course, New Persian did not arise in a vacuum, and in this section I will explore both its emergence and its subsequent association with a pride in Persian identity.

⁵³⁵ See note 45 above.

⁵³⁶ Al-Muqaddasi, pp. 284-5.

⁵³⁷ Hodud al-'Alam, p. 113; Al-Biruni, p. 191; al-Nadim, p. 803. The other locations mentioned by al-Nadim were Rustaq, Soghd, and Tunkath (in the region of Tashkent).

⁵³⁸ Bulliet 1979, p. 145.

⁵³⁹ The Hodud al-'Alam mentions what is probably a Buddhist temple (*but-khana*) in Khamdadh, a town in Vakhān, at the remote eastern edge of Transoxiana (p. 121).

Goldziher has shown how, following their conquests, at least some segments of the Arab population were imbued with a sense of superiority due to tribal affiliations and the value they placed on elaborate genealogies, both of which were lacking amongst the settled peoples they had conquered.⁵⁴⁰ The very success of the conquests and the inclusion of new converts to Islam only as inferior *mawali* exacerbated this, and eventually led to a backlash amongst the Persians in particular. Beginning in the 8th century, educated Persians, namely the scribal class in Baghdad, began to strike back through the medium of literary polemics. Known as the Shu'ubiyya, this movement argued for the equality of all people under Islam but also went further and engaged in ridicule of Arabs for their Bedouin ancestry, lack of cultivation and refinement, and their status as relative newcomers to positions of power. At the same time, the superiority of Persian ethnicity was promoted as embodying everything which the Arabs were not: the heirs of long traditions of empire and many centuries of sophisticated urbanism.⁵⁴¹ Although based on serious theological arguments of equality within Islam as expounded by the Murji'ites and Kharijites, the arguments of the Shu'ubiyya writers often degenerated into the mere flinging of insults, with trivial matters such as the eating of lizards appearing as a favorite theme. Arab partisans responded in kind, and the Zoroastrian tradition of next-of-kin marriage was their riposte of choice.

An excellent example of Shu'ubiyya literature is the poem composed by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Mamshadh for Yaqub b. al-Laith. Addressed from Yaqub to the caliph al-Mu'tamid, it was written at the time when Yaqub had invaded Iraq and his army was

⁵⁴⁰ Goldziher, MS, pp. 98-136.

⁵⁴¹ The main scholarly works on the Shu'ubiyya movement are Goldziher, MS, pp. 137-98; Gibb 1962, pp. 105-14; Mottahedeh 1976, pp. 161-82.

menacing Baghdad itself. Given its high level of patronage and the typical Shu'ubiyya themes contained in this poem, it is worth quoting it at length:

I am the son of the noble descendants of Jam, and the inheritance of the kings of Persia
has fallen to my lot.
I am reviving their glory which has been lost & effaced by the length of time.
Before the eyes of the world, I am seeking revenge for them – though men have closed
their eyes and neglected the rights of those kings, yet I do not do so.
Men are thinking about their pleasures, but I am busy with directing my aspirations,
To matters of high import, of far-reaching consequence, of lofty nature.
I hope that the Highest will grant that I may reach my goal through the best of men.
With me is the banner of Kabi, through which I hope to rule the nations.
Say then to all sons of Hashim:
Abdicate quickly, before you will have reason to be sorry.
We have conquered you by force, by the thrusts of our spears & the blows of our sharp
swords.
Our fathers gave you your kingdom, but you showed no gratitude for our benefactions.
Return to your country in the Hijaz, to eat lizards & to graze your sheep;
For I shall mount on the throne of the kings, by the help of the edge of my sword & the
point of my pen!⁵⁴²

The most surprising aspect of this poem is the strident and disrespectful tone in which Yaqub addresses the caliph; the Saffarids were unusual in this respect, as only the most extreme Persian partisans wished to actually overthrow the caliphate. Several statements in the *Tarikh-i Sistan* show that Yaqub intensely disliked the 'Abbasids, and often referred to the Persians who had supported them, from Abu Muslim to the vizierate dynasties such as the Barmakids and Sahlids, all of whom eventually fell from grace and met a nasty end.⁵⁴³ The poem also refers to continuity from the past, and Yaqub's descent, both real and metaphorical, from pre-Islamic Persian kings. Mottahedeh has argued that, whereas Arab ethnicity was at this time tied to a verifiable genealogical heritage, Persian ethnicity was defined by language and by ties to the land, both of which implied a loosely shared genealogical history.⁵⁴⁴ It is in this sense that Yaqub could claim descent from a mythical Persian king, despite his well-documented humble origins.

⁵⁴² Translation by Stern, in Bosworth, ed., pp. 541-2.

⁵⁴³ See note 5, above.

⁵⁴⁴ Mottahedeh 1976, pp. 161-82.

By all accounts he was not at all ashamed of his plebian roots, and based his legitimacy upon force, which is also alluded to in the poem. By forcibly returning a good part of the former Sasanian empire to Persian rule, he could claim to be heir to that dynasty, and hence refers to the Sasanian military banner which was lost at the battle of Qadisiyya. Persians in this poem are diametrically opposed to Arabs, who are inevitably mocked for the culinary habits of their Bedouin ancestors.

It is worth remembering that the polemics of the Shu'ubiyya were restricted to a small elite, and that even amongst that elite the notion of ethnic superiority was not universal. Not all Arabs agreed with the denigration of other ethnicities within Islam, and the earliest Kharijites, as well as many of the Murji'ites, were Arab. Moreover, in the parts of Iran where significant numbers of Arabs had settled, namely Khorasan, they became culturally assimilated, and by this time were virtually indistinguishable from the Persian Muslims. Muslim Persians, and particularly those living in Baghdad, were likewise thoroughly a part of Islamic culture, so much so that they used Arabic as their primary written language. It is telling that the Shu'ubiyya literature is all in Arabic, not Persian.

During the early centuries of Islam, Persians made significant contributions to Arabic literature, which they used as fluently as the native speakers. Some of these Persians, such as the 8th century poets Isma'il b. Yasar and Bashshar b. Burd, were Shu'ubiyya partisans, whereas others, such as Ibn Qutaiba (d. 889-90), were pro-Arab. Ibn Qutaiba was known for his elegant prose, and indeed, Persians excelled in every field of Arabic literary endeavor, including history, science, Arabic grammar, and theology.⁵⁴⁵ Khorasan in particular was a great theological centre, where most of the definitive

⁵⁴⁵ See Danner, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 566-84.

collections of hadiths were compiled in the 9th century by Persians such as al-Bukhari, Muslim b. Hajjaj, and al-Tirmidhi. The scribal class of Baghdad, which included such luminaries as Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 757) and al-Fadl b. Sahl, also contributed to the corpus of Arabic literature, particularly in their translations from Middle Persian to Arabic.⁵⁴⁶

Persian governors also engaged in Arabic literary pursuits: as mentioned above, 'Abdallah b. Tahir was famous for his elegant style.

This trend continued beyond the era of the Shu'ubiyya and into the period of the Persian Renaissance; indeed, the same dynasties who sponsored the emergent Persian literature also sponsored continuing literary production in Arabic. Many of the poets of the time were themselves bilingual, composing Arabic and Persian poetry with equal facility; Khusravi and Qumri, who composed panegyrics for Qabus b. Vushmgir, are two examples. And many of the Persian-speaking rulers themselves also continued to be known as elegant writers of Arabic poetry and prose, namely Qabus b. Vushmgir (who composed in both languages, like his panegyricists) and 'Adud al-Daula. It was under the Buyids that Arabic literature thrived the most, and the luminaries whom they and their viziers patronized include Ibn Miskawayh, al-Tabari and Ibn Sina. Not surprisingly, Shi'ite poetry flourished; one example is Mihyar al-Dailami, a Zoroastrian scribe who converted to Islam and skillfully composed Shi'ite poetry in Arabic.⁵⁴⁷ However, the Buyids were not alone in supporting Arabic literature, science and history, and the *Yatimat al-dahr* of al-Tha'alibi contains many works composed under Samanid tutelage.

⁵⁴⁶ The example of al-Fadl b. Sahl, who was known for his elegant Arabic before his conversion to Islam in 805, shows that mastery of the Arabic language was not the exclusive province of Muslims.

⁵⁴⁷ See Danner, CHI, vol. 4, p. 587; Browne 1956, vol. I, p. 448; Browne 1956, vol. II, pp. 113-4.

Although the language and forms of this poetry are Arabic, the themes are those of the cultured cities of the *dar al-Islam*, and hence not specifically Arab.⁵⁴⁸

In spite of continuing interest in Arabic, the Persian Renaissance is defined by the resurgence of Persian as a literary language. As mentioned above, Persian poetry is said to have first emerged when Yaqub b. Laith complained about his inability to understand the Arabic panegyrics which poets addressed to him. However, as Frye points out, the earliest known Persian poems, which do date to this era, are already so developed that clearly an experimental phase had already taken place.⁵⁴⁹ He sees this as a process of amalgamation of the Sasanian and Arabic poetic traditions, both in terms of technique and themes, although the techniques are predominantly Arabic and the themes predominantly Persian.

Before the advent of Islam, Middle Persian was the official written language of the Sasanian empire, and various dialects were spoken in different regions, with *dari*, the language of the court, being the most widespread. Popular poetry was sung by minstrels rather than recited, and probably had a syllabic rhythm but did not have a rhyming system. This poetry in all likelihood continued after the fall of the Sasanians, being patronized by the *dihqan* class.⁵⁵⁰ It also entered into Islamic culture through translations into Arabic, a work accomplished primarily in Baghdad by bilingual Persians such as al-Fadl b. Sahl.

In the early centuries of Islam, although most literary output by Persians was in Arabic, *dari* increasingly became the lingua franca of the Iranian world. With the migration of Persian Muslims into Central Asia which occurred concomitantly with

⁵⁴⁸ Danner, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 591-3.

⁵⁴⁹ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 616.

⁵⁵⁰ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 605.

Muslim conquests in the region, Iranian peoples were mixing as never before, and *dari*, the dialect of Fars and hence truly Persian, gained in popularity at the expense of local dialects and other Iranian languages. New Persian reflects these changes by its absorption of not only Arabic loan words but also a substantial number of Sogdian words, clearly indicating the region of its origin. Frye hypothesized that the earliest Persian poetry was probably written not for Yaqub but slightly earlier in a minor court in Central Asia, such as those in Chaghanian or Ustrushana, for a local potentate who did not understand Arabic.⁵⁵¹

Not only did New Persian arise as a poetic language in Central Asia, but it also received its first substantial boost in the region, with Samanid patronage. Bosworth, following the opinion of Browne, attributed this taste for New Persian at the Samanid court to distance from Baghdad, as well as the lack of a Middle Persian literature in the region.⁵⁵² However, distance did not preclude their patronage of Arabic literature, as discussed above. They also could have chosen to promote Sogdian alongside Arabic, but chose Persian instead, so distance and a lack of Middle Persian literature are not sufficient to explain Samanid interest. Persian poets at the Samanid court were magnanimously rewarded to an extent which became legendary among subsequent generations.⁵⁵³ Clearly the emergence of this new type of literature dovetailed with the agenda of the Samanid rulers and their viziers, a subject which will be dealt with further in Chapter IV.

Of all the poets of this period, the best known is Rudaki (d. 940), the court poet of Nasr II. Born in the small village of Rudak near Samarqand, Rudaki was a singer and

⁵⁵¹ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 608.

⁵⁵² Bosworth, Iran VII, 1969, p. 106; see also Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 608-9; Browne 1956, vol. I, p. 465.

⁵⁵³ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 617.

musician as well as a poet. Only a small fragment of his output remains, including just a few lines from his versification of the *Kalila wa Dimna* tales and from his *Sindbadnama*. Some of his work is religious and mystical, and Isma'ili sympathies have been attributed to him,⁵⁵⁴ which accords well with the supposed Isma'ili leanings of his patron. His most famous poem was composed in order to lure Nasr II to return to Bokhara after a long visit to Herat:

The scent of the Mulian canal is coming
The memory of the kind beloved is coming
The sand of the Oxus and its coarseness
Are like silk under our feet
The waters of the Oxus, out of longing for the face of the beloved,
Swirl up to the flanks of our horses
Oh Bokhara! Be happy and live long!
A prince is coming to you as a guest
The prince is the moon and Bokhara the sky
The moon is coming towards the sky
The prince is the cypress tree and Bokhara the garden
The cypress is coming towards the garden

Although lyric poetry was also found in Arabic, and indeed many of the poets of this period were bilingual, epic poetry was a genre found in Persian alone.⁵⁵⁵ The Persian epic began as the Middle Persian *Khodae-namag* of the Sasanian era, a collection of stories and legends about Persian kings. This was translated into Arabic in the 8th century by Ibn al-Muqaffa', and Persian prose versions began to be produced under the Samanids. At least one prose version, that of Abu'l Mu'ayyad, was composed for Nuh II (976-97), whereas another was compiled by several Zoroastrians in 957 for the governor of Tus.⁵⁵⁶ The *Shahnama* first began to be versified in the early 10th century by Mas'udi of Marv, but little remains of his poem. The next to try his hand was Daqiqi, a poet at the courts of Mansur b. Nuh, then Nuh II, and finally the amir of Chaghaniyan, Abu'l

⁵⁵⁴ Browne 1956, vol. I, pp. 455-6.

⁵⁵⁵ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 615.

⁵⁵⁶ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 624-5.

Muzaffar. Daqiqi was probably a Zoroastrian, judging from the last lines of one of his poems:

Of all that's good or evil in the world
Four things suffice to meet Daqiqi's need
The ruby-colored lip, the harp's lament,
The blood-red wine, and Zoroaster's creed.⁵⁵⁷

Daqiqi was murdered by one of his slaves after composing only around 1000 lines, but the section he wrote, dealing with the prophet Zoroaster, was incorporated into the *Shahnama* of Firdausi. Firdausi (c. 935-1020-1) was a *dihqan* of Shi'ite persuasion from Tus, and began work on his great epic with patronage from his fellow *dihqans*.⁵⁵⁸ Upon its completion in 1010, he presented it to Mahmud of Ghazna, but disappointed with the recompense he received, he then moved to the court of the Bavandid Ispahbad Shahriyar b. Sharvin. According to Ibn Isfandiyar, he told the Ispahbad, "I will dedicate this *Shahnama* to thee instead of to Sultan Mahmud, since this book deals wholly with the legends and deeds of thy forebears."⁵⁵⁹ Firdausi combined the anecdotes and legends of Persian kings contained in the Middle Persian and New Persian prose versions of the *Shahnama* with the stories of the epic hero Rustam; these stories were formerly believed to have come from Sistan, but archaeological discoveries in Uzbekistan have shown the popularity of the Rustam stories in Sogdiana.⁵⁶⁰ Because of its subject matter and its conscious minimizing of Arabic loan words, the *Shahnama* has often been called the last literary work of pre-Islamic Iran. The *dihqan* class in particular maintained the values and traditions of the past, and these values were embodied in the *Shahnama*, albeit with a

⁵⁵⁷ Browne 1956, vol. I, p. 459.

⁵⁵⁸ Lazard, *CHI*, vol. 4, p. 627.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibn Isfandiyar, translated and quoted in Browne 1956, vol. II, p. 135; see also Nöldeke 1930, pp. 47-8.

⁵⁶⁰ See Marshak 2002.

softening of emphasis on Zoroastrianism.⁵⁶¹ The poem has, of course, enjoyed enormous popularity in Persianate circles ever since, and is seen as the embodiment not just of the pre-Islamic culture of Iran but also of Iranian national awareness.

Like Persian poetry, Persian prose also gained its start under Samanid auspices: Mansur b. Nuh in particular is known to have commissioned a translation of Tabari's history and Qur'an commentary as well as several medical texts, apparently because he did not know Arabic very well.⁵⁶² Nuh II also commissioned a Hanafi religious treatise, and several Qur'an commentaries of anonymous authorship exist from this period. The Samanids, who also used Persian as an administrative language, gave the biggest boost to utilitarian Persian prose, but other dynasties also followed suit. Ibn Sina wrote several scientific works in Persian for his Kakuyid patron, 'Ala al-Daula, and the anonymous geographical text *Hodud all-'alam* was composed for the amir of Juzjan, a Samanid vassal state.

Although it was in this era that New Persian poetry enjoyed its first brilliant flowering, literary output in Middle Persian and in other Iranian dialects did not cease altogether. In Fars, Zoroastrian literature had its heyday in the 9-10th centuries, as the Zoroastrian community sought to engage Muslims (as well as Christians, Jews, and Manichaeans) in religious polemic and to commit to writing all the traditions which were in danger of ultimately being lost. Religious texts compiled during this period include the *Denkart* and the *Bundahisn*. Other texts, such as the *Datistan-i Denik* and the *Rivayats*, took the form of questions posed to the chief *mobads* of Fars and their replies; these reveal a great deal about the changing circumstances of Zoroastrians vis-à-vis

⁵⁶¹ Bosworth 1968, Iran VI, p. 40; see also Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 627-8.

⁵⁶² Browne 1956, vol. I, pp. 368-9.

Muslims. For example, these texts show that Zoroastrian family laws were still in force for their community up through the 10th century, even when these traditions directly contradicted Muslim family law, as in the case of next-of-kin marriage and the funerary rite of exposure.⁵⁶³ The main point of interest in these texts is the information they contain rather than their literary merit,⁵⁶⁴ but they also show that Middle Persian overlapped with New Persian for several centuries in Fars.⁵⁶⁵ In fact, it was the continuing dominance of Middle Persian as the literary language in this region which contributed to the relative lack of interest in New Persian poetry at the Buyid courts.

Dailami, the dialect of the Buyids, did however attract their patronage: ‘Ali Piruza, the panegyricist of ‘Adud al-Daula, wrote in the native dialect of the Buyids. Other northern dialects were also used to compose prose and poetry at this time. In Tabaristan, literary output in Tabari flourished, with the main literary figure being Marzuban b. Rostam b. Sharvin, the Bavandid author of the *Marzuban-nama* and a book of poetry called the *Niki-nama*. Other Tabari writers received support at the court of Qabus b. Vushmgir.⁵⁶⁶ In Jibal, there was a genre of poetry known as *fahlawiyyat*, composed in a local language descended from Parthian.

These examples show that the linguistic picture in Iran and Central Asia in the 10-11th centuries was a complicated one, with a plethora of local dialects alongside the Persian spoken in the main cities. In Central Asia, Sogdian and Khwarezmian were still spoken, as well as the dialects of Ustrushana, Gharchistan and Ghur. In Iran, in addition to the idioms of the Caspian region, Khuzistan, Azerbaijan, Jibal, Gurgan and Kerman all

⁵⁶³ De Menasce, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 545-8, 552.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 544.

⁵⁶⁵ Not all Zoroastrian literature, however, was in Middle Persian: the *Zartusht-nama* of Kai Ka’us of Rayy, composed around 978, is the first extant *mathnavi* in New Persian.

⁵⁶⁶ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, p. 610.

had distinct dialects.⁵⁶⁷ However, it was Persian which was increasingly dominant, replacing local dialects as a spoken language and Arabic as a literary language.

Arts

Of all art forms, textiles exhibited the most continuity from the pre-Islamic period. Despite the addition of Arabic *tiraz* bands on robes of honor and some technical innovations, such as the introduction of lampas in the Buyid realm, the designs popular in Sasanian and Sogdian textiles remained so.⁵⁶⁸ Animals, mythical creatures, birds, and occasionally people confront one another in roundels, the borders of which are defined with pearls, hearts, or sometimes inscriptions. Exterior borders contain inscriptions or rows of animals, while floral motifs fill the interstices. Fabrics display a wondrous variety, with silk, wool and cotton used alone or in combination, accented by bright dyes and metallic coated threads. Contemporary sources describe local specialties and design variations with an astounding detail of terms which are for the most part lost to modern scholars looking at the few extant pieces of fabric.⁵⁶⁹

Textiles were enormously important in medieval society, not only for their practical uses for clothing and furnishings but also as status symbols and as a key item of trade. Light, portable, and beautiful, luxury textiles were a natural trade commodity, and Sasanian or Sogdian-style textiles from the 10-11th centuries have been found from China to Western Europe. Samanid Bokhara was one of the most important textile emporia in

⁵⁶⁷ Lazard, CHI, vol. 4, pp. 599-600.

⁵⁶⁸ Ettinghausen and Grabar ascribe this style to the Sasanians (Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, p. 243), while others argue for the enduring popularity of Sasanian-influenced Sogdian textiles, and a continuity of manufacture from the pre-Islamic era through at least the 9th century in places such as Zandana, near Bokhara: see Allgrove McDowell in Ferrier, ed., p. 155; Watt & Wardwell 1997, pp. 21-52 .

⁵⁶⁹ See Serjeant 1972.

the world, with its key location on the Silk Road as well as other trade routes stretching to northern and eastern Europe. Buyid Rayy was another great textile market, while Tabaristan was the most important region in terms of sericulture.⁵⁷⁰

Leaving aside the Buyid textiles found in commercial excavations at Rayy in the 1920s, the authenticity of which has been hotly debated ever since, only a few textiles from this era with a secure provenance in Iran and Central Asia remain. One is the shroud of St. Josse, found in a church treasury in France but originally made for Qa'id Abu Mansur Bakhtegin, a Turkish official in Khorasan who was killed by the Samanids in 961. This brightly colored piece lacks the customary roundels, but has pairs of confronted elephants in symmetrical rectangles with heart-filled borders. The exterior border contains Bactrian camels tied to one another as if in a caravan, with their Sasanian-style scarves fluttering behind them. Another Samanid fragment, a silk twill with confronted lions in roundels with pearl borders, has a hand-written inscription attributing its manufacture to Zandana, near Bokhara.

One silk, with fragments in multiple collections, can be securely attributed to Tabaristan, as its inscription states that it was made for the Ispahbad, although precisely which Bavandid ruler it refers to is not known. It has been dated to the 10th century on stylistic grounds.⁵⁷¹ This triple cloth silk, with motifs composed of twill, is a highly sophisticated and technically difficult piece which shows that the region's reputation for weaving was well-deserved. Two mounted falconers flanking a tree confront one another in an octagon defined by interlaced scroll borders. The surrounding octagons contain confronted pairs of rabbits and stylized floral motifs. The falcons wear Sasanian-style

⁵⁷⁰ Allgrove McDowell, in Ferrier, ed., pp. 154-8.

⁵⁷¹ Ettinghausen, Grabar & Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 126; see also Mackie & Rowe 1976, p. 12.

beaded necklaces, while their owners wear Central Asian style tunics over trousers.

Confronted felines crouch at the horses' feet. This piece is particularly interesting for the insight it gives into Bavandid taste, with its themes and motifs so clearly linked to the Sasanian past.

Up through the 9th century, metalwork also showed a strong continuity with the pre-Islamic past, aided no doubt by the popularity of wares in the royal Sasanian style at the Umayyad and 'Abbasid courts. Tabaristan was a centre for the production of such wares, as seen in an 8th century example in the British Museum (fig. 70).⁵⁷² This gilded silver plate depicts a banqueting scene in relief: a bearded man lounges on a sofa drinking wine from a bowl, with a woman kneeling by his side. They are serenaded by two musicians, while a Zoroastrian priest stands nearby. The scene is framed by a curling vine, with the accoutrements of the feast scattered in the lower register. A Middle Persian inscription is engraved near the man's head. The language of the inscription, the presence of the priest, and the banqueting theme all recall the royal production of the Sasanian era. In addition to silver dishes such as these, production of high tin bronze vessels in Sasanian shapes also continued in the early Islamic period, as did Sogdian style vessels in Central Asia.

By the 10th century, however, the metalwork of the Islamic east no longer looked solely to the past, and connections with western regions such as Egypt can be seen as a particular Islamic style began to be forged. Connections with Central Asian nomads can also be seen in military and equestrian accoutrements,⁵⁷³ a reflection of the influx of Turkish slave soldiers and the wealth and prominence of their leaders. The belongings of

⁵⁷² Ward 1993, pp. 44-5.

⁵⁷³ Allan in Soucek, ed., 1988, pp. 1-7.

one such military man, Abu Shuja' Injutegin, were found buried in an 11th century hoard at Nihavand. Amongst his silver gilt horse trappings and weapon attachments was a small gold bowl decorated with a pair of confronted ducks flanking a roundel containing a quatrefoil palmette motif. Around the rim is inscribed a poem in Kufic script which leaves no doubt that the bowl was intended for wine. Clearly the Islamic prohibition on alcohol had as much effect on the wealthy elite as the prohibition on consumption from vessels made from silver and gold.

Another extant gold object, which probably held wine as well, is the jug now at the Freer Gallery made for 'Izz al-Daula, who ruled the Iraqi part of the Buyid realm 967-78. This finely worked piece is decorated with quadripeds enclosed in roundels on the body, and birds enclosed in roundels on the rim, with split palmettes filling the interstices, in a pattern reminiscent of contemporary textiles harking back to Sasanian motifs. The dedicatory inscription in Kufic script around the rim is similar in style to that on the Nihavand bowl.

Two silver hoards found in northern Iran also give an insight into the luxurious lifestyle of the elite. One consists of a group of tableware made c. 1000 for Amir Abu al-'Abbas Valkin b. Harun, who is named on the nielloed inscriptions on each piece but is unfortunately not known in any sources. The group consists of a large tray, three bowls, a jug and two tankards.⁵⁷⁴ Another hoard contained silver horse trappings with niello decoration and a set of luxury objects decorated with both niello and gilding: rose-water sprinklers, incense burners, caskets, jugs, and a bowl and spoon.⁵⁷⁵ Lacking inscriptions, this set has been dated to the 11-12th century on stylistic grounds.

⁵⁷⁴ See SPA, p. 2500, pl. 1345-6.

⁵⁷⁵ See SPA, p. 2501, p. 1349-52.

Ownership of such objects depended not only on wealth and taste but also local factors, and such hoards have not been found in areas with a luxury pottery industry, such as Nishapur. Metalworking skills were generally high throughout northern Iran and Transoxiana, where the techniques of sheet metal hammering and repoussé decoration were used to great effect from the pre-Islamic period throughout the medieval period.⁵⁷⁶ The region was a great source of metal, with gold particles found in the Amu Darya and gold and copper mines in the Ferghana Valley, and silver mines in the Talas Valley, the Pamirs, and the region around Balkh. In the 10th century, Bokhara was the main centre for bronzework, while Samarqand and Merv were famed for their copper, and Rabinjan and Hamadan for their high-tin bronze. In the 11th century, Balkh and Ghazna were the main centres for silverworking, while Paikand and Shargh gained fame for their copper.⁵⁷⁷ The Samanid state supervised and taxed all mining operations within their realm, and both the state mints and the main markets for finely worked vessels were located at Bokhara and Balkh.⁵⁷⁸

Such vessels were not only traded locally but also exported, and a number of Samanid silver pieces have been found in Russia.⁵⁷⁹ One such piece is an octagonal silver tray decorated with gilding, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. A senmurv in a roundel dominates the centre of the tray, and is surrounded with roundels filled with senmurvs alternating with stylized flowers. More mythical beasts chase each other around the rim. Both the motifs and the raised texture of the vessel resemble

⁵⁷⁶ Allan, in Ferrier ed., pp. 178-9. Under the Ghaznavids, strong local traditions of sheet metalworking combined with silver shortages would lead to arguably the most glorious innovation of Islamic metalwork, that of inlaying thinly hammered vessels composed of cheap alloys with gold, silver and copper.

⁵⁷⁷ Allan, in Ferrier, ed., p. 176; see also Ward 1993, p. 57.

⁵⁷⁸ von Gladiss, in Kalter & Pavaloi, eds., 1997, p. 124.

⁵⁷⁹ von Gladiss, pp. 124-5.

contemporary textiles in a Sogdian or Sasanian style. Another silver piece excavated in Russia and now in the Hermitage is a flask with a dedicatory inscription to Shaykh al-‘Amid Abu ‘Ali Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Shazan, the vizier of Balkh 1030-50. Apart from the inscriptions and small decorative roundels containing a rosette disk and a pair of felines, this vessel has a background which is absolutely plain, an aesthetic which is unusual in Islamic art but which is also seen in several other 11-12th century pieces of Khorasanian and Transoxanian silver.

One such piece, now in a private collection, is a silver dish which is completely plain in the centre and decorated only by a dedicatory Arabic inscription on the rim in Kufic script, naming the patron as the Bavandid ruler Shahriyar b. Qarin (r. 1074-1110). The technique of the inscription is quite unique, with engraved outlines inset with gold granules. Allan pointed out that the artisan must have been a jeweler, and that the dish could certainly not have been used much due to its fragile decoration. He compared the style of the inscription to widely spaced architectural examples in Alexandria, Anatolia, and Iran (Ardistan and Sujas).⁵⁸⁰

A similar aesthetic can be seen in the epigraphic pottery produced in the Samanid realm, primarily at Samarqand and Nishapur. These dishes are coated in a thick white slip, with Kufic inscriptions painted in a dark brownish-black around the rim (fig. 71). The inscriptions, which are all in Arabic or pseudo-Arabic, usually consist of aphorisms such as, “Planning before work protects you from regret; patience is the key to comfort.”⁵⁸¹ Many of the dishes have a dot, a bird or a single word such as “*baraka*” or

⁵⁸⁰ Allan 1981, p. 19.

⁵⁸¹ Brooklyn Museum, L56.9.

“*ahmad*” in the centre, but are otherwise devoid of decoration.⁵⁸² Variations are seen in black dishes with white inscriptions, and the use of a brick red slip in addition to or instead of the brownish black. The most famous examples of the epigraphic ware, which grace most major Western museums, are large plates with wide rims, but the most common shape is actually the steep-sided bowl.⁵⁸³ Jugs have also been found, and this shape may have been produced more widely than the surviving fragments would indicate since it is prone to breakage. Quality varies widely, from crudely potted and painted wares to some of the finest examples of Islamic pottery of any period. Kilns and wasters have been found at both Samarqand and Nishapur, but local imitations of the epigraphic ware have been also been excavated at Termez, Tashkent, Ghazna, Lashkari Bazaar, and as far afield as Sind. Its popularity, however, did not extend to the west of the Samanid domains.⁵⁸⁴ The style probably derived from 8-9th century pottery made at Basra, with Kufic inscriptions, often “*baraka*”, painted in cobalt blue in the centre of white plates.⁵⁸⁵

Another ware is associated specifically with Nishapur, although isolated finds indicate that related wares were made at other sites in Khorasan, Afghanistan, and Transoxiana. Although produced concurrently with the epigraphic ware, this type embodies a completely different aesthetic, consisting of buff-colored clay painted in green, bright yellow and black with densely crowded designs (fig. 72). Motifs consist of human figures, animals (real, mythological and composite), birds, flowers, pearl roundels, and the occasional Kufic inscription such as “*baraka*” or “Allah” (or a pseudo-

⁵⁸² “*Baraka*” is more commonly seen on examples from Samarqand and Merv, whereas “*ahmad*” is characteristic of Nishapur: see Wilkinson 1968, p. 245.

⁵⁸³ Watson 2004, p. 206.

⁵⁸⁴ Williamson, in Allan & Roberts, ed., 1987, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁸⁵ Imports of this ware and Iraqi luster ware were found in the excavations at Nishapur: see Wilkinson 1973, pp. 179-81.

Kufic approximation). The depiction of mounted warriors and hunters, as well as drinkers, is clearly drawn from the Sasanian silver repertory, but the style is much closer to that of pre-Islamic painting than pre-Islamic metalwork. The figures share their thick black outlines and elaborately patterned clothing with those seen in Sogdian wall-painting, although they are much more static and schematic. Figural pottery was produced in Khorasan since the 5-6th century, but the earlier examples were excavated at Merv, and the Nishapur finds have a distinct style all their own. Contemporary examples from Samarqand (fig. 73) and Maimana (in modern Afghanistan)⁵⁸⁶ have more finely-drawn figures, but the Nishapur ware has an undeniable charm. Although often characterized as “crude” or “folksy”,⁵⁸⁷ quality varies and the best pieces are quite impressive. Bowls are the most common shape, and vary from large serving bowls to smaller sizes more suited to individual portions.

Other contemporary wares include sgraffiato, which bears incised decoration on a lead-glazed body with colors reminiscent of Tang funerary wares; imitations of Iraqi luster ware, with brownish and yellow glazes; unglazed wares, an insufficiently studied genre with a wide variety of decorative motifs; and “Sari” ware, inspired by Nishapur buff ware but with a decorative repertory limited mostly to birds.⁵⁸⁸ Knowledge of all types has suffered enormously from commercial excavations in Iran, so that very few pieces have a secure provenance or a known stratigraphy which would allow for a greater understanding of manufacture or chronology. The situation in Transoxiana is much

⁵⁸⁶ Al-Sabah collection, cat. Gf.1.

⁵⁸⁷ Lane, for example, described the decoration of such pieces as “primitive” and an “anxious but uncoordinated attempt to appease the horror of empty space.” Lane 1947, p. 19.

⁵⁸⁸ Most examples of Sari ware with a known provenance were excavated at Gurgan: see Rogers, in Ferrier, ed., p. 259; see also Watson 2004, p. 243; Kiani, Iran XI, 1973, p. 196, pl. VIIIa.

better in this respect, yet relatively little attention has been paid to Soviet excavations by Western art historians.

These same art historians differ in opinions as to who used the various wares produced in the 10-11th centuries, judging mainly, it seems, from their own ideas of relative quality. Sari ware is routinely dismissed as crude and lower-class, while the “folksy” Nishapur buff ware is usually characterized as middle-class at best.⁵⁸⁹ Epigraphic ware, which appeals very much to modern taste with its use of void space, is placed at the top of the hierarchy (although Kalter surmises that it was used by the outer circles of the Samanid court and not by the rulers themselves, who would have had access to both silver dishes and imported Chinese porcelain).⁵⁹⁰ However, the seeming contradiction of the epigraphic ware, with its celebration of the Arabic language and script, with Samanid patronage has often been noted.⁵⁹¹ Richard Bulliet has made the most detailed attempt to place the usage of epigraphic and buff wares at Nishapur: he contends that earlier converts to Islam formed an elite who preferred the Arabic inscriptions of the epigraphic ware,⁵⁹² a ware which Lane had earlier described as embodying the very essence of Islam.⁵⁹³ Later converts, according to Bulliet, were *dihqans* who wished to preserve their own elite status by stressing their Persian heritage; these new Muslims preferred the Persian imagery of the buff ware. He also linked this argument to the foods which were consumed, so that the early converts ate Arab-style

⁵⁸⁹ See Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, pp. 227, 232; Rogers, in Ferrier, ed., p. 259.

⁵⁹⁰ Kalter 1997, p. 140. According to Ettinghausen & Grabar, “they must have been made for a discriminating, educated clientele, probably the urban well-to-do such as wealthy merchants.” See Ettinghausen & Grabar 1987, p. 230. Lane also describes epigraphic ware as having “a beauty of the highest intellectual order: see Lane 1947, p. 18.

⁵⁹¹ Volov 1966, p. 108. Grabar suggested to her that the epigraphic ware was produced either for an Arab aristocracy in the Samanid domains or for *ghazi* warriors (see note 2).

⁵⁹² Bulliet 1992, pp. 75-82.

⁵⁹³ Lane 1947, p. 18.

kebabs off the large epigraphic ware platters, while the later converts preferred Persian stews in the buff ware bowls.

One problem with this argument is the variety of shapes found in both the buff and the epigraphic wares. The large platters which Bulliet associates with epigraphic ware may be the most commonly displayed shape in Western museums, but the most common shape found in excavations is the steep-sided bowl, of a similar size to the most common shape of the buff ware but with a less rounded silhouette. Large buff ware platters are not unknown, albeit without the cavetto which characterizes the epigraphic ware platters. Large serving bowls are also seen in the buff ware, which could conceivably have been used for serving stew.

However, sources such as Ibn al-Warraq indicate that the foods consumed in the 10th century were considerably different from those consumed in Iran and the Arab countries today, and no mention is made of either kebab or the type of stews currently eaten in Iran.⁵⁹⁴ The *haute cuisine* of Baghdad defined fashionable eating throughout the Islamic world, and this cuisine was based upon that of the Sasanian shahs. Hence it is reasonable to assume that both early and late converts in Iran would aspire to eat such food, which would emulate both trendy Baghdad and the cuisine of their ancestors. And there is no reason to assume that Iranians would have eaten differently from one another based upon their date of conversion. Some of the anecdotes of Ibn al-Warraq indicate that at least some of the dishes of the court could also be procured in the market, and so the court cuisine did percolate downwards into lower layers of society. In all likelihood, the cuisine of 10-11th century Iran, particularly that of anyone defining themselves as members of an elite, was very similar to that of Baghdad.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibn al-Warraq, *Kitab al-Tabikh*.

This cuisine would have necessitated both bowls and platters. Dishes such as *basmavord*, which betrays its Sasanian origin through its name, consisted of various vegetables rolled up in a flatbread, and would have been served on a platter. Whole fish would also have needed a platter. Elaborate stews, which differ entirely from the modern *ash* in their ingredients, would have required bowls. Small bowls would have held the various condiments and side dishes. In short, bowls and platters of various sizes would have been needed for any feast, and the cuisine was definitely elaborate enough to require this diversity of serving dishes. Any self-respecting bourgeois inhabitant of a large and wealthy city such as Nishapur would have owned the full range of shapes, regardless of his sectarian affiliations.

Another problem with Bulliet's argument is the range in quality in both the epigraphic and the buff ware: both range from finely potted examples with highly thought-out decoration to crudely and quickly manufactured wares destined for the lower classes. Clearly both types were owned by a range of people, and not geared solely to one class or one niche market. Niche markets did exist for various types of decoration, as the existence of buff ware bowls with Nestorian crosses and Syriac inscriptions attests. The buff ware bowls with Persian motifs have been ascribed to Manichaean and Zoroastrian minorities,⁵⁹⁵ whereas Bulliet sees them as destined for new Muslim converts. However, there is nothing specifically Muslim or un-Muslim about them, apart from the inscriptions on a few examples. The motifs are clearly Persian, but this must have appealed to a wide range of people given the variations in quality. Bulliet assumes that each type of pottery had a single niche in terms of both class and sectarian affiliation, but there is no reason why one single individual at the higher end of the income scale

⁵⁹⁵ Watson 2004, p. 247.

should not have owned both epigraphic and buff wares, alternating their use according to the occasion or the guests, or even mixing and matching for a large feast. Far from being contradictory, this would fit the pattern of literary patronage of the period, when even the Samanids and Ziyarids patronized Arabic alongside Persian.

The clearest clue is provided by the silver dish of Shahriyar b. Qarin. Unlike the pottery, which does not contain dedicatory inscriptions, this dish states the name of its patron. The design of the dish is very similar to the epigraphic ware, with its plain centre and Kufic inscription around the wide rim. And yet the Bavandids were the most Persian of the Persian dynasties, the only ones actually descended from the Sasanians, and the most recently converted to Islam. If the Bavandid rulers owned such a dish, made of a precious material and decorated using an elaborate and unusual (and inevitably expensive) technique, then clearly the epigraphic ware could appeal to even the most ardent Persian partisans. If there was no contradiction between being Persian and Muslim, there was also no contradiction between enjoying both epigraphic and buff ware.

Architecture

Although the funerary architecture of the 10-11th centuries has already been described in Chapter I, it is also necessary to briefly describe other genres in order to give a full picture of the era of the Persian Renaissance. In many ways, there was a general continuity from the architecture of the pre-Islamic period: brick was still the main medium of construction for the region as a whole, with rubble and mortar still seen in areas such as Fars and wooden columns still in use in Transoxiana. Stucco was still used as a revetment and was still lavishly carved to decorate buildings of importance. The

ivan and the dome resting on squinches were still basic elements of design. However, the most important public buildings were a new type, the mosque.

When the Arabs invaded Iran and Central Asia, they needed places to pray, and at first the same makeshift arrangements which are well-documented in Iraq, Syria and Egypt must have occurred in the east as well. Some scholars, namely Grabar, have dismissed the idea that the transformation of *chahar taqs* into mosques occurred with any frequency,⁵⁹⁶ yet there are a number of examples where this can be shown to be the case, and contrary to Grabar's claims, Yazdikhast is not unique in this regard. In Transoxiana, excavations at Samarqand and Rabinjan have shown that fire temples were converted into mosques.⁵⁹⁷ In Iran, remains of fire temples can be clearly seen inside the mosques of Saveh and Bam. Shokoohy has shown that the Masjid-i Birun at Abarquh and the Friday Mosque at 'Aqda are converted fire temples.⁵⁹⁸ Literary sources provide further evidence: local histories such as the *Tarikh-i Bokhara* and the *Tarikh-i Qumm* describe the conversion of fire temples into mosques,⁵⁹⁹ and Zoroastrians of the 9-10th centuries complained about the increasing level of Muslim encroachment on their places of worship.⁶⁰⁰ This shows that, although fire temples such as that of Samarqand were converted in the immediate aftermath of conquest, no doubt for symbolic as much as practical reasons, such conversion also occurred gradually over the centuries as Muslims gained in numbers and was still occurring in some regions during the Persian Renaissance.

⁵⁹⁶ Grabar, CHI vol. 4, p. 334.

⁵⁹⁷ On Samarqand, see Grenet & Rapin 1998, pp. 392-3. On Rabinjan, see Buryakov & Rostovtsev 1984, p. 158.

⁵⁹⁸ Shokoohy 1985, pp. 545-72.

⁵⁹⁹ Narshakhi, pp. 30 (Frye trans., p. 21), 67 (Frye trans., p. 48). Narshakhi also mentions the transformation of a Christian church in Bokhara into a mosque by Qutaiba (p. 73; Frye trans., p. 53). On the *Tarikh-i Qumm*, see Lapidus, in Udovitch, ed., 1981, p. 193.

⁶⁰⁰ Choksy 1997, pp. 97-8.

The fire temple, which was not at all designed for large crowds, was particularly ill-suited for use as a mosque. This architectural inconvenience, combined with the fact that many fire temples in Fars were transformed around the 10th century, when local Muslims clearly had the resources to construct their own buildings, shows that it was done mainly for ideological reasons. However, it may have been this absorption of the form of the *chahar taq* into the mosque which accounts for the prevalence of domed chambers in the mosques of western Iran during the Saljuq era.⁶⁰¹

Most of the extant pre-Saljuq mosques of Iran and Central Asia took the hypostyle form, imported from the former Byzantine realms to the west but reinterpreted using the building materials and techniques of the east. The Tarik Khana in Damghan, which probably dates to the 8th century, is an excellent example, with its thick, heavy piers and Sasanian-style barrel vaults constructed of baked brick and covered with a layer of plaster. Aisles perpendicular to the qibla are typical of most early Iranian hypostyle mosques, with the central aisle slightly higher than the rest, as can be seen at Damghan and Nayin. The 10th century mosque at Nayin also has lavishly carved stucco decoration on both pillars and the mihrab; other contemporary examples include the portal of the Jurjir Mosque in Isfahan and the mihrab at Iskodar (in modern Tajikistan). Designs in the stucco at Nayin are related to those seen at Samarra, with stylized vegetation in lobed cartouches. However, the extant mihrabs at Iskodar and Asht, in Tajikistan, do not exhibit any Samarra influence and instead reflect local traditions and Sogdian motifs.

⁶⁰¹ According to Sauvaget, such chambers served as *maqsura*, similar to the domed chamber in the Great Mosque of Cordoba: see Grabar CHI, vol. 4, p. 338. Godard posited the existence of the *mosquée-kiosque*, or mosque based upon the domed chamber, to explain the existence of older domed chambers in a number of mosques, with later additions to accommodate greater numbers of worshippers: see Godard 1936, pp. 187-210. Although the idea of the *mosquée-kiosque* has been widely discredited, the presence of so many domed chambers in Iranian mosques of this period is still an interesting problem.

Contemporary wooden columns found in this region also show continuity from the Sogdian past, whereas those at the Friday Mosque of Khiva dating to the 10-11th centuries show Samarran influence and hence contact with the wider Islamic world.

Aside from the large congregational mosques, there are extant examples of a smaller type of mosque found across the Islamic world, the nine-domed mosque. The most well-known is the 9th-century mosque at Balkh, with its elaborately carved pillars bearing motifs similar to those at Nayin. King has compiled a catalog of such mosques stretching from Spain to Tanzania to Central Asia, but always interpreted in local building materials and techniques. He has posited that they were an honorary type of building consistently associated with prominent local persons, and probably deriving from a lost prototype in Baghdad.⁶⁰² His list included three mosques in Central Asia: the mosque of Hajji Piyada in Balkh; the Digaran Mosque at Hazara, and the mosque attached to the shrine of Hakim al-Termezi. Other Central Asian examples include the Chahar Sutun mosque at Termez, the mosque at the shrine of Khusam Ata near Qarshi, the mosque attached to the shrine of Astana Baba in southeastern Turkmenistan,⁶⁰³ the original mosque at the shrine of Qusam b. 'Abbas (Shah-i Zinda) at Samarqand,⁶⁰⁴ and the upper story of a building at Takhmaladzh in Turkmenistan.⁶⁰⁵ The Maghok-i Attari Mosque in Bokhara originally had a related 9-bay plan, although with only 3 domes.⁶⁰⁶

Although all the extant early mosques of Iran and Central Asia are composed of baked brick, the majority may have been originally constructed from unbaked brick.

⁶⁰² King 1989, pp. 332-90.

⁶⁰³ See Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 98.

⁶⁰⁴ See Filimonov 1962, p. 276.

⁶⁰⁵ Masson 1966, p. 118.

⁶⁰⁶ Khmel'nitskii summarizes the arguments in favor of this interpretation: see Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 78-81.

Narshakhi mentions the use of baked brick as something exceptional, even in mosques, and often it was only used for part of a building rather than the whole.⁶⁰⁷ This would explain the poor survival rate of mosques in comparison to the western Islamic world; it also shows how important the baked brick mausolea were considered to be at the time.

The earliest extant minarets were also made of unbaked brick, although some were later given a baked brick revetment. A number of such minarets have survived in southern Turkmenistan: Kushmelkhan, just to the north of Merv, is one example.⁶⁰⁸ These early minarets already took the slender, rounded shape typical of the eastern Islamic world. Several unbaked brick minarets without a later baked brick cladding have survived in Tajikistan, at Zahmatabad, Rarz, and Fatmev, all dated to the 9-10th centuries by Khmel'nitskii on the basis of their brick sizes.⁶⁰⁹ Baked brick seems to have become the norm by the 11th century, and two dated baked brick minarets survived from this era: at Mestorian, dated 1004-5, and at Termez, dated 1032 (now unfortunately destroyed).

Domestic buildings were all constructed of unbaked brick, and an amazing number have survived in the oasis of Merv and in Khwarezm.⁶¹⁰ Even the elaborate palace of Qirk Qiz, to the north of Termez, was built of unbaked brick; some scholars have asserted that this was the summer palace of the Samanids, whereas others dispute the date and function and argue that it is a 14th century caravanserai.⁶¹¹ That such a disagreement is possible shows the conservatism in the domestic architecture of this

⁶⁰⁷ See Narshakhi, pp. 35, 70, 71, 72 (Frye trans., pp. 25, 51, 53).

⁶⁰⁸ Masson 1966, p. 106.

⁶⁰⁹ Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 103-4.

⁶¹⁰ These buildings are catalogued in Hermann 1999; see also Pugachenkova 1958.

⁶¹¹ Zaspikin argued for an early Islamic date, not specifically associating the building with a particular dynasty: see Zaspikin arkhiv 1959, pp. 6-10. Masson believed it to be pre-Islamic, dating it somewhere between the 3rd and 8th centuries: see Masson arkhiv 1959, p. 121. Pugachenkova argued that the building was the Samanid summer palace: see Pugachenkova 1976, p. 26. Filimonov specifically denied any association with the Samanids: see Filimonov arkhiv 1983, p. 74. Nekrasova argued that the building was a 14th century caravanserai: see Nekrasova 2001.

region, particularly in the medium of unbaked brick. Qirk Qiz, like many other buildings of various date and function, has four ivans ranged around a courtyard, with corridors and rooms opening off the ivans. One room is more elaborate than the others, with a dome resting on squinches. Since the argument that it was a 14th century building constructed in an archaic style rests solely on the absence of early coins, I believe that it is an earlier building, quite possibly from the Samanid era. The evidence for it being an actual palace of the Samanids is, however, insufficient.

The best documented palace of this era is the Ghaznavid palace at Lashkari Bazaar. Actually there were several palaces in the complex, on a high bluff overlooking a river. Each palace exhibited the four-ivan plan, with ivans centered on each side of an enormous courtyard, and rooms ranging off the ivans. One audience hall bore wall paintings depicting a row of soldiers in attendance on each side; similar wall paintings also were found from the Qarakhanid era at Samarqand, a distant echo of the painting of ambassadorial retinues in the Sogdian palace on the same site. Royal palaces succeeded one another on this site up until the destruction of the city during the Mongol invasion, and from the Samanid era archaeologists have recovered several large panels of carved stucco bearing geometric designs which once served as decorative wall revetments. Like wall paintings, elaborately carved stucco revetments had also decorated Sogdian palaces. However, Yuri Karev has shown how the architecture of the palace changed after the Arab invasion, so that Sasanian rather than Sogdian plans began to be emulated.⁶¹²

Like the palace, the caravanserai was built to accommodate a large number of people, and the four-ivan plan is also found in this building type in the 10-11th centuries. Very few caravanserais have survived from this era, when thousands undoubtedly lined

⁶¹² Karev, unpublished PhD dissertation.

the major trade routes connecting Iran and Central Asia to China, Europe, and the western Islamic world. Most would have been made of mud brick, so that they mostly survived only as long as they were well-maintained. A few mud brick examples have survived, however, mostly in southern Turkmenistan, showing an interesting diversity in plans.⁶¹³ A more standard plan can be seen at Paikend, near Bokhara, where the 9-10th century mud brick caravanserai has two ivans, small rooms ranged around a large courtyard, and rounded towers at the corners. A contemporary mud brick caravanserai with four ivans has been found far to the east at Chaldivar, high in the Tien Shan mountains near the Chinese border in modern Kirghizstan, an area which had not even been Islamicized at that time. The four-ivan caravanserai of Daya Khatun, which is usually dated to the Saljuq period, has a core of mud brick with a revetment of baked brick; Khmel'nitskii has argued that this is a 9-10th century building with later modifications.⁶¹⁴ The well-known Ribat-i Malik, built for the Qarakhanid Shams al-Mulk in 1078-9, is composed of baked brick, showing the high status of this particular building. The engaged columns, topped by concentric blind niches, on the front of the building recall the fortress architecture of Khorezm, and indeed a caravanserai such as this one, located on a major trading route but away from any town or settlement, needed its strong walls and corner watch-towers to protect against incursion by bandits.

So despite local particularities, the architecture of this time showed strong regional connections. The four-ivan plan, which would later characterize the mosques of Iran and Central Asia, was at this time still used in the secular palaces and caravanserais, while most mosques still reflected a local version of the imported hypostyle plan or the

⁶¹³ See Pugachenkova 1958, Masson 1966.

⁶¹⁴ Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 185-7.

nine-dome plan. Mud brick was still the primary material of choice, and although baked brick was increasingly used, it was still an indication of high importance. Such buildings were also given lavishly decorated interiors, through the use of brick, stucco or wall paintings. Viewed within this context, the importance of the mausolea for the rulers who built them is clear, and in the next two chapters we will examine the motivations of these rulers more closely.

Chapter IV: The Domed Square Mausolea

[Ismā'il] was sick there [in Zarman] for some time until he died in a certain garden under a large tree in 907. His corpse was carried to Bokhara and buried and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage for the people of the city. May God show mercy on him, for in his time Bokhara became the seat of government. After him all the amirs of the house of Saman held court in Bokhara. None of the amirs of Khorasan before him had lived in Bokhara. He considered his residence in Bokhara as fortunate, and he did not find satisfaction in any district save Bokhara. Wherever he was he used to say that his city, Bokhara, had such and such.

Narshakhi (translation by Richard Frye)

The Ninth Century Mausolea

Looking at the mausolea described in Chapter I, it quickly becomes clear that something is amiss in the standard narrative of the development of Islamic funerary architecture as developed by Creswell and echoed by his successors, both Western and Soviet. According to Creswell's scenario, the Prophet's original prohibition on funerary architecture was relaxed with the construction of the first Islamic mausoleum, the Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya, in 862. This was a dynastic mausoleum containing the bodies of three 'Abbasid caliphs, al-Muntasir, al-Mu'tazz, and al-Muhtadi; al-Muntasir had a Greek mother, which accounts for this flagrant violation of Islamic law. Later, in the 10-11th centuries, mausolea began to proliferate on the fringes of the Islamic world, a phenomenon associated, particularly by Grabar, with *jihad* perpetrated by *ghazi* warriors. Yet several of the Central Asian mausolea can be dated to the 9th century, and hence could conceivably pre-date the Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya. Even if they were constructed at about the same time or even slightly later, some are located in such remote areas that clearly there had to have already been a tradition of monumental funerary construction in the Islamic world for some considerable time.

Although none of these early mausolea have extant inscriptions, two have been dated to the 9th century on stylistic grounds: Kiz Bibi, in the Merv oasis, and Khaja

Mashhad, in southwestern Tajikistan. Three others have been dated to the 9-10th centuries, also on stylistic grounds: Shir Kabir, at Dehistan in western Turkmenistan; Tilla Halaji, in southwestern Tajikistan on the Afghan border; and Khaja Bulkhak, near Isfara, in the Ferghana Valley (northern Tajikistan). Kiz Bibi could potentially even be dated earlier: as Khmel'nitskii points out, its architecture, and particularly its squinches and the proportions of the dome, were already archaic in the 9th century, and the closest analogy to the building is the nearby Lesser Qiz Qala, dated to the 6-7th centuries by Pugachenkova.⁶¹⁵ The Tajik mausolea also have archaic features more commonly found in the pre-Islamic architecture of their regions, while the Samarra-style stucco decoration of the Shir Kabir has parallels of the 9-10th centuries in Iran and also incorporates several Sasanian motifs.

The corpus of 9th century, or even slightly earlier, mausolea was undoubtedly substantial, given that there are many remains of unbaked brick mausolea in Central Asia.⁶¹⁶ Though difficult or sometimes impossible to date accurately in their current state, brick sizes and, in some regions, archaic local building techniques date many to the Samanid period and earlier. The function can be ascertained by the size of the buildings, their plans, their presence in cemeteries, and in some cases by their status as places of pilgrimage. Given the relative lack of durability of unbaked brick, extant buildings and fragments of buildings are undoubtedly a small fraction of what once existed. Hence it is safe to say that the mausoleum as a building type became popular throughout Central Asia not very long after the Muslim conquest of the region, and much earlier than the generally accepted narrative would allow. In Iran as well, Huff has pointed out the

⁶¹⁵ Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 123.

⁶¹⁶ Bachinski 1945, pp. 196-225; see also Khmel'nitskii 1996, pp. 204-5.

possibility that many of the *chahar taqs* in the southern provinces may well be Islamic mausolea rather than Zoroastrian fire temples.⁶¹⁷ This also correlates with the findings of Raghīb, who lists 17 monumental funerary constructions, known from literary sources, which pre-date the Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya.⁶¹⁸ These buildings stretch from Cairo to Khorasan and constitute prototypes from the Islamic heartland for a type of building which was new to Central Asia.

Monumental funerary architecture *per se* was of course not new to Central Asia, as discussed in Chapter II. However the *naus*, built to hold ossuaries, was a type of miniature mausoleum, usually not more than 5 or 6 feet high. So the scale of the Islamic mausoleum was something entirely new, as was the level of individual glorification which it often entailed (seen, for example, in royal mausolea such as that of Qabus b. Vushmgir, which lauds its intended incumbent through its dramatic form as well as its inscriptions). The *naus* not only held multiple ossuaries, but the names of the incumbents were not recorded on the ossuaries themselves or on the building, even though local inhabitants must have been aware that particular buildings housed particular families. Soviet excavations of mausolea have shown that, while some did contain multiple burials, many housed single individuals. This was a significant break from the pre-Islamic funerary tradition, as of course was the act of burial itself.

Contrary to Grabar's assertions, *ghazi* activity seems an unlikely explanation for this new phenomenon of building mausolea. Looking at the five earliest extant mausolea in Central Asia, only two, Shir Kabir and Khaja Bulkhak, were on the edges of the Islamic world, in areas where Grabar argues that such activity would have taken place.

⁶¹⁷ Huff 1975, pp. 243-54.

⁶¹⁸ Raghīb 1970, pp. 21-36.

Shir Kabir is located in Dehistan, which the *Hodud al-‘Alam* tells us was a frontier post subject to constant attacks by the Ghuzz, and the location of a ribat with a minbar and the tomb of ‘Ali b. Sukhari.⁶¹⁹ It is possible that this ‘Ali b. Sukhari was the incumbent of the Shir Kabir, which later became part of a larger complex with facilities for pilgrims. Khaja Bulkhak is located in the Ferghana Valley, which had long been a border region between the Sogdians and the Turks and was still at this time on the fringes of the Islamic world, with Qarluq tribes surrounding the valley on three sides. The *Hodud al-‘Alam* describes the region as a major emporium for Turkish slaves,⁶²⁰ but does not describe the incessant fighting which characterized regions bordering the Ghuzz. Kiz Bibi was located in the Merv oasis, an area which was not anywhere remotely near the frontier by the mid-8th century. Tilla Halaji and Khaja Mashhad are both located in a mountainous region in southwestern Tajikistan near the Afghan border. This remote area was ruled even throughout the Samanid period by local dynasties who had converted to Islam but who were periodically accused of apostasy. Muslims were still a minority amongst the population, which would have been composed of Zoroastrians and Buddhists (the 8th century Buddhist monastery at Azhina-Tepe is in this region). This area was firmly within the sphere of Iranian-speaking peoples, as it has remained down to the present. One forbidding mountain range is located next to the other; this is decidedly not the type of landscape where Turkish nomads could graze their flocks, and it was never a region of ribats and jihad. The remnants of ruined unbaked brick mausolea are also spread widely in a variety of locations, and many are not in areas where fighting with Turkish tribes occurred. The early mausolea listed by Raghīb are also not on the frontiers, but in central

⁶¹⁹ *Hodud al-‘Alam*, p. 133.

⁶²⁰ *Hodud al-‘Alam*, pp. 115-6.

locations such as Medina, Cairo, Najaf, Karbala and Samarra, where religiously significant individuals were interred.

The presence of early mausolea in both central, important locations and remote areas which were not fully Islamicised and had not previously known burial or the memorialization of the individual dead indicates that there is something inherently Islamic about the mausoleum, despite the often-noted disapproval of it in the hadith. As Leisten has pointed out, objections to funerary architecture in the hadith and commentaries were by no means absolute. The hadith prohibiting funerary architecture are not found in the compilation of al-Bokhari, or in the early Shi'ite collections. Abu Hanifa did not condemn the construction of mausolea, and the three other main schools only considered this as *makruh*, not as *haram*. A debate took place in the commentaries, with some theologians arguing that mausolea were allowed because the Prophet himself was buried inside a built structure. Even those who disagreed with the building of mausolea in principle did not challenge the right of others to do so on their own private land.⁶²¹ So the legal position of mausolea in the early centuries can best be described as ambivalent and contested, rather than universally condemned. As Leisten points out, there was a pre-Islamic Arabian tradition of constructing mausolea, and this continued into the Islamic period despite theological ambivalence.⁶²² Mausolea were constructed in the Islamic heartland right from the beginning. Their incumbents, real or imagined, were mostly holy figures, a status acquired through Old Testament and Quranic associations and through association with or descent from the Prophet.

⁶²¹ Leisten 1990, pp. 12-22.

⁶²² Leisten 1990, p. 14; Raghīb

Not only the construction of mausolea, but every aspect of funerary practice was open to discussion and debate in the early centuries. Even in the Arabian peninsula there had been a diversity of funerary practice, with Medinans digging a differently shaped grave than Meccans, an issue leading to the first disputes.⁶²³ Later, every possible aspect of grave construction was debated, with the different schools developing their own positions. Areas of disagreement included the depth of graves, their dimensions, the materials used to line the grave pit, whether the surface should be level or rounded, and the type of markers permitted.⁶²⁴ The positions of the main schools, of course, reflect a long process of debate and consolidation, so that actual practice in the early centuries is bound to have been much more diverse than textual sources would suggest.

This diversity becomes enormously richer and more complicated when the process of conversion and the influence of earlier practices is taken into account. A broad-ranging archaeological study of funerary practices in ancient western Asia by Campbell and Green concluded that these practices are particularly resistant to change, lasting over a much longer period of time in the archaeological record than would be otherwise expected in times of cultural transformation.⁶²⁵ Unfortunately relatively few Muslim graves have been excavated due to the belief that the body must remain undisturbed in order to be ready for the Day of Judgment. Those from the early Islamic centuries that have been excavated show unequivocally that pre-Islamic customs persisted and that syncretic practices also occurred. On the Arabian peninsula, burials with camel sacrifices and grave goods have been found in a clearly Islamic context.⁶²⁶ At

⁶²³ Raghib 1992, pp. 393-5.

⁶²⁴ Raghib 1992, pp. 395-402.

⁶²⁵ Campbell & Green 1995, pp. 240-51.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid*; see also Yule 1993, pp. 141-53.

Siraf, above-ground charnel houses containing multiple bodies and grave goods have been found in a 9th century context, as described in Chapter II.

However, by far the largest number of excavated Muslim graves is to be found in the former Soviet Union. Summarizing the findings of Soviet archaeologists, Pilipko pointed out that the need to face Mecca for the Day of Judgment has been variously interpreted, so that Sunnis generally orient the body north to south, with the head pointing north and facing east or west as appropriate, while Shi'ites generally prefer an east-west orientation (with some Isma'ili groups orienting north-south with the head pointing south). However, he cautions against such gross generalizations, since the archaeological record in Central Asia shows that practices are extremely diverse, can be very localized, and often change over time in each locality.⁶²⁷ In an excavated 10-11th century necropolis at Kuva in the Ferghana Valley, for example, the bodies were loosely oriented northwest-southeast with the faces turned to the southwest. Graves were lined with unbaked brick, and some had been reopened for the interment of additional bodies, with the bodies of small children being particularly likely to be combined in this way, either with other children or with adults.⁶²⁸ Neither the orientation nor the subsequent interments fit with what is seen as standard Muslim practice, and the suitability of unbaked brick has been a matter of dispute.

Earlier burials at Kuva consisted of disarticulated skeletons placed in large jars, a variation of Zoroastrian practice more commonly seen in Iran than in Central Asia, where ossuaries were generally preferred. Hence this is one site where a change in funerary practice can be charted; Merv and Mizdakhān are two other examples. Mizdakhān is

⁶²⁷ Pilipko 1969, p. 225.

⁶²⁸ Bulatova 1965, pp. 139-46.

especially interesting given that it has served as a necropolis from the Kushan period (around the 2nd century BC) up until the present. A large number of ossuaries have been discovered at the site with a wide variety of shapes and designs, dating from the Kushan period through the 8th century. Underground *nauses* composed of unbaked brick have also been excavated from the 7-8th centuries; these were replaced by unbaked brick mausolea at the site by the 10th century at the latest.⁶²⁹

Given that the *naus* and the ossuary were still common in Central Asia through the 8th century, and the earliest extant Islamic mausolea date to the 9th century, it is inevitable that some overlap of exposure and burial practices occurred. The inability to practice exposure openly once the Arab invasion was complete by the mid-8th century would also have encouraged the development of syncretic practices. Textual sources provide evidence of this: Narshakhi tells of the death of Tughshada, who ruled Bokhara from 707 to 739 as a client of Qutaiba b. Muslim and converted to Islam. Tughshada was murdered by two of his own nobles, also converts to Islam, in front of Nasser b. Sayyar in Samarqand. His servants stripped the flesh from his body and carried his bones back to Bokhara.⁶³⁰ Presumably a proper exposure of the body would not have been possible because of Tughshada's status as a convert (albeit one suspected of insincerity), and yet the idea of a Muslim burial had not yet gained acceptance, leading to this gruesome solution. The *Hodud al-'Alam* tells of a domed mausoleum (*gonbad-i gurkhana*) at Paikand where the dead of Bokhara were brought;⁶³¹ it is difficult to know exactly what this entailed, other than the fact that it was a communal structure, possibly a charnel house such as those excavated at Siraf.

⁶²⁹ Yagodin & Khodzhaev 1970, pp. 9-17, *et passim*.

⁶³⁰ Narshakhi, p. 85 (Frye trans., pp. 61-2).

⁶³¹ *Hodud al-'Alam*, p. 113.

Textual and archaeological evidence both indicate that it took a considerable amount of time for the idea of burial to gain full acceptance amongst Zoroastrian converts to Islam. I would suggest that this is what accounts for the early popularity of the mausoleum in Central Asia. In describing the early debates over the proper structure of a Muslim grave, including the necessary depth, Raghīb cites instances where bodies in shallow graves were partially uncovered by erosion, floods, or wild animals (obviously these instances were cited by the proponents of deeper graves to support their case).⁶³² One can imagine the particular horror this would represent for those imbued with Zoroastrian traditions, and how natural the desire would be to cover and contain a burial. Cleaned bones had previously been placed in ossuaries which were in turn placed inside a *naus*, so the idea of containment in a built structure was already present. The mausoleum itself, much larger than the *naus*, was an available model from the most central lands of Islam, and its use there for the holiest of individuals gave it an undeniable stamp of legitimacy. Even though theologians debated this legitimacy, this was a time of openness and debate, when Islamic traditions were still being formed. The disapproval of some did not prevent many Central Asians from embracing the mausoleum.

It is unfortunate that we do not know more about the form of the earliest mausolea, but it is safe to assume that they were domed. Domed structures had long been associated with the mausoleum, and plenty of examples of classical and Byzantine martyria were still extant in the Umayyad heartland. The Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya took the form of a domed octagon, echoing the Dome of the Rock, which was itself based upon classical prototypes. All of the earliest Central Asian mausolea were domed squares; no

⁶³² Raghīb 1992, pp. 395-6. It was the Malikites who recommended the shallowest graves, a mere 60 cm, while the Shafi'ites and Twelver Shi'ites argued for the deepest graves of around 2.5 m.

octagons are known from this region. But beyond having a square shape topped by a dome supported by squinches, there is a great deal of diversity in these buildings.

One of the early mausolea, Tilla Halaji, took the form of a *chahar taq*, so the precedent was already set in Central Asia when the *chahar taq* was later used for the Samanid mausoleum. Kiz Bibi had only one entrance, but a deep niche on each side, forming a plan similar to that of a *chahar taq* with three of its sides closed. This plan had previously been seen in Central Asia in the *naus* group at Bit-tepe; it would also continue to be used for mausolea in the 10-11th centuries. The Shir Kabir has a single, off-center entrance and three shallow niches on each side, one of which is a mihrab. Khaja Bulkhak has two entrances, centred on the eastern and western sides of the building. Khaja Mashhad has the same plan, but the eastern entrance opens into an ivan which connects the mausoleum to another domed square; the only other extant example of such an arrangement is the 11th century core of the Sultan Saodat complex, nearby at Termez. Khaja Mashhad was the only one of this early group to be constructed of baked brick; the others are all made of the unbaked brick which was the usual building material at that time. The baked brick of Khaja Mashhad was used decoratively in ways simpler than, but definitely foreshadowing, the later Samanid mausoleum. Shir Kabir is also notable for its decoration, in this case the elaborate stucco mihrab; no stucco decoration remains on any of the others.

Kiz Bibi, Tilla Halaji and Khaja Bulkhak all contained single burials; it is not known whether this was the case at Shir Kabir and Khaja Mashhad, as they have not been excavated. Both Shir Kabir and Khaja Mashhad functioned as part of larger complexes appended to them several centuries later. At Khaja Mashhad these appendages were

constructed of unbaked brick in the 11-12th centuries and probably served as a madrasa. Across from the mausoleum and its *ziyaratkhana*, two other domed rooms connected by an ivan were built; small rooms around the courtyard and two additional ivans on the eastern and western sides gave the complex a typical 4-ivan plan. At Shir Kabir, the complex has been destroyed and its form cannot be ascertained, but a later baked brick revetment on the northern side of the building appears to be of the 12th century, as described in Chapter I.

Both Khaja Mashhad and Shir Kabir, given their status as pilgrimage sites, their more elaborate decoration, and in the case of Khaja Mashhad, its construction of baked brick, must have contained the graves of holy figures. It is impossible to say who the incumbents of Kiz Bibi, Tilla Halaji, Khaja Bulhak, and the many ruined unbaked brick mausolea would have been.⁶³³ However, given their numbers and widespread locations, they were not all holy figures or *ghazi* warriors. They drew on local traditions in their building materials and techniques, as well as in the plan with 4 deep niches. Other plans, as well as the idea of the mausoleum itself, were imported as funerary practices gradually changed and conversions grew. These early mausolea show that these changes had occurred, and that precedents had been set, by the time the Samanid mausoleum was constructed.

Mausolea of the Samanid Era

It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to delineate a definitive corpus of funerary architecture from the Samanid era. There is no abrupt change in building

⁶³³ If there is any factual basis to the name “Kiz Bibi,” then this may well be the earliest Islamic mausoleum constructed to contain the body of a woman.

techniques and materials or in architectural and decorative styles from the pre-Samanid to the Samanid era and from the Samanid to the Qarakhanid era; instead, the architecture of Central Asia evolved gradually, and the changes which occurred did not coincide with any change of dynasty. Only the Samanid mausoleum itself, which was intimately connected with the dynasty and its construction of a new identity, and the mausoleum of Arab Ata, which is dated to 977, can be attributed to the Samanid period with absolute certainty. All the other buildings which will be discussed below could also be dated to the early 11th century, after the Samanids had ceded power to the Qarakhanids. Likewise, the buildings discussed above could arguably be dated to the late 9th century, after Nasser b. Ahmad had received his caliphal investiture (in 875). As we saw in Chapter I, scholars have vociferously disagreed about the dates of many of the buildings, arguments which are further complicated by the stylistic analysis of inscriptions and decoration, which is sometimes at odds with the evidence of the architecture and could have been added post-construction. And just as dynastic labels are inevitably imprecise, so are chronological typologies divided into centuries, as stylistic evolution only rarely coincides in any convenient way with the calendar. Hence my divisions of the mausolea in this chapter into 9th century, Samanid and Qarakhanid are not meant to be absolute. After reviewing all the literature and the evidence of the buildings themselves, I have concluded that the mausolea in the preceding section are probably 9th century and probably pre-Samanid, while the ones which I am about to discuss probably date to the Samanid era. I am estimating in this imprecise way in order to examine the context in which the Samanid mausoleum was constructed. Contrary to the impression given by surveys of Islamic art and architecture, it did not exist in a vacuum, and some of its precursors and

contemporary constructions have survived. Even if subsequent research proves that a few of the buildings are dated incorrectly here, the corpus of extant mausolea in Central Asia is still sufficient to support the conclusions of this chapter, and it must always be remembered that the extant buildings are in any case only a small fraction of what must have once existed.

A sizable proportion of 10th century mausolea in Central Asia contained the bodies of holy figures. The mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi definitely housed the remains of a religiously esteemed individual; those of Arab Ata, Ataulla Said Vakkos, Iskhak Ata, Khalifa Rajab, Aq Astana Baba and Khoja Roshan were almost certainly in this group as well. All of these were buried as individuals; later burials may have clustered round them, but these were contained within their own separate graves or mausolea. All became sites of at least local pilgrimage and veneration; the shrine of Hakim al-Termezi is still a major focus of local piety (which only lacks pilgrims from afar because of its location in a militarily sensitive area).

Hakim al-Termezi is the *kunya* and *nisbah* of Abu ‘Abdallah Muhammad b. ‘Ali b. al-Husayn, a Sufi shaykh who was born in Termez in the early 9th century. In his late twenties he left Termez to go on the *haji* and then studied hadith in Basra. He later returned to Termez, where he wrote and preached his own brand of mysticism. He believed in esoteric knowledge, and his thought contained strands of neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, as well as Shi‘ite themes, while in some ways he also foreshadowed Ash‘arism. This type of mysticism, difficult to characterize in the terms of categories which solidified later, was typical of this formative period.⁶³⁴ His writings did cause some degree of scandal, however, and around 874 he was summoned to a court in Balkh,

⁶³⁴ Marquet, EI2, pp. 544-6.

accused of claiming prophethood. He was eventually acquitted and again returned to Termez. The exact date of his death is a matter of dispute, although 898 is most commonly accepted.⁶³⁵

Hakim al-Termezi and Qutham b. ‘Abbas (ostensibly the first burial at the Shah-i Zinda complex) are the only historically attested religious figures with early mausolea in Central Asia.⁶³⁶ Ataulla Said Vakkos is known locally as a Companion of the Prophet, although this name does not appear in the standard accounts of the Companions such as that of Tabari. The mausoleum was already in a poor state and lacking any inscriptions when it was rebuilt in the early 21st century, and so there is no indication of who the original incumbent may have been.

Likewise, the specific identities of the incumbents of the mausolea of Arab Ata, Iskhak Ata, Khalifa Rajab, Aq Astana Baba and Khoja Roshan are not known, but the local names for these buildings and their status as sites of local *ziyarat* indicate that they might have been constructed for holy figures of some type. It is also possible that such a designation could have been acquired at a later date, as happened at the tomb tower at Lajim, which is known locally as the shrine of Imamzada ‘Abdallah. However, not only do the inscriptions at Lajim indicate that the tower was constructed to house the remains of a Bavandid prince, but also the locals are aware that Imamzada ‘Abdallah was an 18th century caretaker, and not the original incumbent of the building. The Central Asian sites in question are all known to the locals as ancient sites of religiously significant burials,

⁶³⁵ See n. 80, Chapter I.

⁶³⁶ According to Tabari, Qutham b. ‘Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet, died in Samarqand in 699-700 during one of the early Arab raids. As he was old enough to wash the body of his father in 652-3, and in some sources is also said to have washed the body of the Prophet, his participation in raids of Samarqand and his death there are almost certainly later embellishments to explain his eponymous burial place in that city. See Tabari, vol. XXXIX, trans. Landau-Tasseran, p. 25, 75, n. 113.

and there is nothing in the remnants of their inscriptions or in what the literary sources describe as the burial sites of rulers to contradict this assumption. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, local folk memory of religious significance is not to be dismissed entirely; as these buildings were clearly intended for incumbents of some importance, they had to be either local notables or religious figures, and probably were the latter.

I have included the mausoleum of Iskhak Ata in this group because of its presence in a religious complex; however, it may not be the original core of the complex. Iskhak Ata is the oldest extant mausoleum in the complex of Khusam Ata; it is possible that this was an earlier necropolis or holy site, but so far it has not been excavated. The complex consists of a long passageway punctuated by three domed gatehouses leading to a nine-domed mosque with a *ziyaratkhana*, two mausolea and another domed room attached. Across from this group is the oldest extant part of the complex, consisting of the mausoleum of Iskhak Ata, the obliquely attached mausoleum of his daughter, and another two-domed mausoleum attached to Iskhak Ata at the opposite (eastern) corner. To the north is another, free-standing mausoleum. The complex dates from the 10th to the 18th centuries and is similar in many ways to the Shah-i Zinda, where a succession of mausolea clustered around the supposed grave of a Companion of the Prophet and his associated nine-domed mosque. The presence of a nine-domed mosque indicates the association of the complex with an important individual,⁶³⁷ and the cluster of mausolea undoubtedly arose to absorb the *baraka* exuded by a holy figure, real or imagined. As at the Shah-i Zinda, the oldest part of the complex was probably in close proximity to the nine-domed mosque, but only archaeological excavations could determine the chronology

⁶³⁷ King 1989, pp. 332-90.

with any certainty. The attribution of the earliest standing mausoleum, which contains two cenotaphs, to Iskhak Ata and his wife is taken from local lore; the actual incumbents are unknown.⁶³⁸ Likewise, the locals have attributed the attached mausoleum to their daughter.

One feature of these buildings which differentiates them from the royal dynastic mausolea of Central Asia is that, apart from Iskhak Ata, they all appear to have been built to contain single burials, judging from their small sizes and single cenotaphs. Later burials may have encroached around the mausolea and at times inside them in order to absorb the *baraka* which these figures exuded, but the original intention seems to have been to honor the religiously significant with a monumental tomb of their own, commemorating the individual rather than accentuating a dynastic line of descent.

Beyond the characteristic of individual burial, these mausolea form a diverse group. Two of the tombs, Hakim al-Termezi and Iskhak Ata, are part of larger complexes, both of which pre-date the earliest complexes discussed in surveys of Islamic architecture. Khalifa Rajab is part of a necropolis which has also been a focus of local piety and *ziyarat*, whereas Attaulla Said Vakkos, Aq Astana Baba, Arab Ata and Khoja Roshan stand alone. Hakim al-Termezi, Iskhak Ata and the adjoining mausoleum attributed to his daughter, Arab Ata and Aq Astana Baba are all made of baked brick, a sure indication of importance and extra expense at this period. Khoja Roshan was made of unbaked brick with a dome of baked brick, a combination typical of the period and still denoting importance. Khalifa Rajab is made of unbaked brick interspersed with reeds, a

⁶³⁸ The joint burial of a couple, who were presumably married, is one of the variations which has a long tradition amongst the nomads of Central Asia: see Rudenko 1970, p. 33 *et passim*; Davis-Kimball 1995, pp. 37, 53, 69. Hence the attribution may well reflect the perceptions of later Uzbek migrants into the region.

technique unique to Khorezm; this is covered by a baked brick revetment. Only Ataulla Said Vakkos was constructed wholly of unbaked brick.

Structurally, the mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi is the most unusual: not only is it appended to a pre-existing shrine, so that it sits about 5 feet higher than the current mosque, with a low arched opening visually connecting the two, but also its dome rests on pendentives rather than squinches. This mausoleum also has the most lavish decoration in this group, although this dates to the Qarakhanid period and it is now impossible to determine the original decorative scheme, apart from the fact that it did not involve a stucco revetment.⁶³⁹ The decoration of Arab Ata, Iskhak Ata, and Aq Astana Baba are simpler but nevertheless effective, involving decorative brickwork with a few areas of carved stucco as an accent. The geometric shapes formed by areas of raised brick at Aq Astana Baba are a dramatic exaggeration of a decorative effect seen to a lesser extent elsewhere: the palmettes in the zone of transition, for example, are similar to those seen in stucco at Shir Kabir. The original decoration of Khoja Roshan, Khalifa Rajab, and Ataulla Said Vakkos are unfortunately lost and are not recorded or recoverable.

Apart from being all domed squares, the plans of this group of mausolea are varied. Iskhak Ata has a *chahar taq* plan, although one entrance is emphasized with a hint of a *pishtaq*. The *pishtaq* is pronounced in the neighboring mausoleum of the daughter of Iskhak Ata, and at Arab Ata, which is the earliest dated example of this feature which was to later become so prevalent in the eastern Islamic world. Both of these mausolea have a single entrance, as do the mausolea of Khalifa Rajab, Ataulla Said Vakkos, and Khoja Roshan. However, the entrance at Khoja Roshan was unique, with a

⁶³⁹ Filimonov 1957 arkhiv, p. 19.

long passageway and ramp leading down into the tomb chamber. This arrangement is reminiscent of the tombs of Central Asian nomads, indicating a possible Turkish connection for the incumbent, the patron or the builder.⁶⁴⁰ The plan of Hakim al-Termezi is also highly unusual, with a second opening towards the mosque but a drastic difference in floor level. Aq Astana Baba, with its deep niches, is analogous to Kiz Bibi, and can be seen as a variation on the *chahar taq* plan.

Patronage of this group is likely to have been at a high level: inscriptions in the mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi show that the building was refurbished by the Qarakhanid Ahmad b. Hizr (ruled 1082-95). Textual sources also show that rulers of this period built the mausolea of the religiously significant: the tomb of ‘Ali at Najaf, for example, was re-constructed by the Hamdanid governor Abu’l Hayja ‘Abdallah (ruled 906-29), while that of Husayn at Karbala was rebuilt by ‘Adud al-Dawla in 979.⁶⁴¹ Hence it is quite likely that the original construction of the mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi and the transformation of the existing pre-Islamic shrine into a significant Islamic one was carried out by one of the early Samanids. The family had a strong connection to the city of Termez, which was near the birthplace of their ancestor, Saman, the great-grandfather of Isma‘il. Moreover, Isma‘il in particular was known for his patronage of the religious classes.⁶⁴² None of the other buildings in this group housed the remains of so prominent a figure as Hakim al-Termezi, and yet the fact that they were, with the exception of Ataula Said Vakkos, composed either partly or wholly of baked brick indicates that these constructions were both important and expensive. As

⁶⁴⁰ On nomadic Central Asian tombs, see Rudenko 1970; Davis-Kimball 1995.

⁶⁴¹ Le Strange 1905, pp. 77-9.

⁶⁴² Barthold 1928, pp. 232-3; Frye 1965, p. 47. The pre-revolutionary Russian scholar B.N. Kastalski associated Hakim al-Termezi with Isma‘il Samani: see Masson 1959 arkhiv, p. 70.

few individuals could marshal the necessary resources, this inevitably indicates a prominent and wealthy patron.

Other baked brick mausolea from this period also exist, although since even local lore does not connect these buildings with holy figures, it is difficult to hazard a guess as to whether the incumbents of these tombs were religiously or politically important. That they were important and/or wealthy is a given. This group consists of Chahar Jui, the mausoleum in Imam Baba cemetery, the tomb of Ahmad, and Babaji Khatun. Both Imam Baba and Ahmad are located in the Merv oasis and have a *chahar taq* plan. Chahar Jui is found farther to the north at Amul, about 40 miles south of the Amu Darya; it is basically a *chahar taq* with the qibla side enclosed for use as a mihrab. Babaji Khatun is much farther to the north, at Taraz, a town which was captured from the Turks by Isma'il and represented the northernmost boundary of the Samanid realm. The building has a single entrance and a conical dome, an extremely interesting foreshadowing of the type of mausoleum which would later become widespread under the Saljuqs and hence possibly an early example of Turkic influence on this genre of architecture.

As noted earlier, there are many ruins of unbaked brick mausolea in Central Asia, indicating that the mausoleum did enjoy widespread popularity and that the construction of mausolea did extend below the very wealthiest members of society. It is difficult to establish a precise chronology, since only the tomb of Arab Ata is dated, and previous attempts at specificity based upon stylistic details have proven inaccurate more often than not when subsequent scholarship has established a reliable date based upon sounder

criteria.⁶⁴³ Hence I have roughly divided the Central Asian mausolea into pre-Samanid, Samanid and Qarakhanid in order to show that the dynastic mausoleum of the Samanids did have precursors as well as contemporaries, and did not arise in a vacuum.

The Samanid mausoleum was an outstanding building in the quality of its construction and decoration, but it does fit into the corpus of funerary architecture of that era. As we have seen, the *chahar taq* plan was used in the mausolea of Tilla Halaji, Imam Baba, Ahmad and Iskhak Ata; variations on this plan can be found at Chahar Jui, with a closed mihrab and three open sides, and in the plan with four niches seen at Kiz Bibi and Aq Astana Baba. These buildings are all found in Khorasan, Sogd (the modern Uzbek province of Kashkadarya), and the northernmost part of Bactria; in other words, to the south of Bokhara, in areas where Isma'īl campaigned whilst establishing Samanid power. In the midst of this region is Termez, the Samanid ancestral homeland. Most of these buildings are roughly contemporary with the Samanid mausoleum; Tilla Halaji and Kiz Bibi are undoubtedly earlier.

Tilla Halaji foreshadows the plan of the Samanid mausoleum, while the nearby Khoja Mashhad foreshadows some elements of its decoration, with a band of diamond shaped bricks below the exterior dome and another band of diagonally slanted bricks lending a rich texture to the façade. Brick is used decoratively to some extent in virtually all the mausolea. The simplest example is Khalifa Rajab, where the structure of unbaked brick and reeds is covered with a plain revetment of baked brick. Yet even here, the baked brick is in itself decorative more than structural; it did enhance the longevity of the

⁶⁴³ Blair, for example, dated the mausoleum of Mir Sayyid Bahram in Karmina to c. 1106 based upon the similarity of the Kufic script of the foundation inscription with that at Vakil Bazaar (see Blair 1992, p. 206); Rtveldadze, however, analyzing previously unpublished parts of the inscription, has shown that the building was constructed in the second half of the 11th century for one of two Qarakhanid rulers (see Rtveldadze 1999, p. 27).

building, but was not structurally necessary and undoubtedly made a statement of value and importance at the time when very few structures had any baked brick component. None of these mausolea, however, have decoration which even approaches the lavishness and complexity of that of the Samanid mausoleum, a fact which lends further credence to its royal attribution.

Ever since the discovery of the wooden plaque over the doorway in the 1930s, scholars have tended to attribute the mausoleum to Nasr II rather than Isma'īl. Blair reasons as follows:

The 'Alid shrines built in the last two decades of the 3rd/9th century were the immediate provocation for the Abbasid caliphs to establish dynastic shrines in nearby Baghdad in the first two decades of the 4th/10th century. Nasr II followed the Abbasid model in his capital at Bokhara when he built his dynasty's mausoleum in the 320s/930s... The construction of the Samanid mausoleum at Bokhara fits in with the generous patronage of the arts for which the later Samanids were noted. The quality of the baked brick and the richness of the decoration attest to the prosperity of the city and show that the tomb was not a first tentative experiment but rather presupposes a tradition of sophisticated builders and experienced masons.⁶⁴⁴

The last point she makes brooks no argument, as we have seen. However, this sophisticated tradition was already present during the reign of Isma'īl. The other points about Nasr II could equally be applied to Isma'īl. He also followed the model of the 'Abbasids in many ways, and he was the one who established the Samanid system of state administration, which was modeled upon that of Baghdad (which was in turn modeled upon that of Ctesiphon). Blair's argument rests upon her earlier dismissal of the Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya as an 'Abbasid dynastic mausoleum.⁶⁴⁵ However, her questioning of the function of this building is belied by the fact that three bodies were found buried inside it; the coincidence of the location with the area where three caliphs were buried together does lend credence to Herzfeld's original interpretation. In any case, the Qubbat

⁶⁴⁴ Blair 1992, pp. 28-9.

⁶⁴⁵ Blair 1983, pp. 84, 86-7.

al-Sulaibiyya and the later dynastic mausoleum at Rusafa were not the only available models: the genre of the mausoleum, and the specific form of the *chahar taq*, were already present in Central Asia.

Like Nasr II, Isma‘il was also noted as a generous patron of the arts, and it was under his rule that Bokhara was transformed into a center of culture to rival Baghdad.⁶⁴⁶ He was known to patronize architecture in particular, and Narshakhi tells us that Isma‘il constructed a ribat by the Samarqand gate in Bokhara, endowed through his purchase of the village of Shargh with his own money;⁶⁴⁷ courts and gardens at the Juy-i Mulian associated with the estates he purchased from the heirs of Tughshada;⁶⁴⁸ a Friday mosque in the Juy-i Mulian area, endowed with the proceeds of agricultural land he had purchased;⁶⁴⁹ and a mosque with a courtyard near the citadel of Bokhara.⁶⁵⁰ He also enlarged the Friday Mosque of Bokhara by one third.⁶⁵¹ His attachment to the city was famous: Narshakhi relates that he truly loved Bokhara and called it “my city.”⁶⁵² He moved to Bokhara from Ferghana in 874 when he was appointed governor and made the city his base until his death in 907. Even when his brother Nasr died in 892, he did not move to Samarqand, which had been the capital, but made Bokhara the main capital instead. The identity of Isma‘il was very much connected with Bokhara: he allowed the outer walls of the oasis, built to fend off the Turkic nomads to the north, to fall into disrepair, famously declaring, “While I live, I am the wall of the district of Bokhara.”⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁶ Frye 1965, pp. 42-3.

⁶⁴⁷ Narshakhi, p. 21 (Frye trans., p. 15).

⁶⁴⁸ Narshakhi, p. 39 (Frye trans., pp. 27-8).

⁶⁴⁹ Narshakhi, pp. 39-40 (Frye trans., p. 28).

⁶⁵⁰ Narshakhi, p. 71 (Frye trans., p. 52).

⁶⁵¹ Narshakhi, p. 69 (Frye trans., p. 50).

⁶⁵² Narshakhi, p. 128 (Frye trans., p. 94).

⁶⁵³ Narshakhi, p. 48 (Frye trans., p. 34).

Isma'īl was known to care for the denizens of the city, as well as its urban fabric. Nizam al-Mulk related how he would ride alone into the Registan on a weekly basis, regardless of the weather, in order to be more accessible to any subjects who might otherwise find difficulty in reaching him with their petitions.⁶⁵⁴ Even allowing for exaggeration on the part of Nizam al-Mulk, Isma'īl by all accounts was concerned with doing the right thing vis-à-vis his subjects. The list of his constructions enumerated above also shows the extent to which he utilised the institution of *waqf* for the benefit of those subjects. He also used *waqf* without associated buildings for charitable purposes and to provide for his own progeny: he purchased the village of Barkad and endowed the proceeds, with one third going to the descendants of 'Ali and Ja'far, one third to the poor, and one third to his descendants.⁶⁵⁵ Hence the 16th century *waqf* document which refers to his endowment of land in the cemetery of Naukanda for the tomb of his father should not be lightly dismissed.

On the one hand, it seems unlikely that Isma'īl would disinter his father's body and move the remains to Bokhara. Ahmad b. Asad, the eldest of four brothers, was given the governorship of Ferghana in 819 (Nuh was appointed to rule Samarqand, Yahya was given Shash, and Ilyas was given Herat). When Nuh died in 841-2, Ahmad also took over Samarqand. His eldest son, Nasr, was given the governorship of that city, and made it the capital after his father's death. From this we can infer that Ahmad was most likely to have been buried in Ferghana, which had remained the main seat of Samanid power during his lifetime. Disinterring and moving his remains a decade later would have been contrary to Islamic practice, but Isma'īl may have well have felt more pressing needs

⁶⁵⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnama*, pp. 21-2.

⁶⁵⁵ Narshakhi, p. 22 (Frye trans., p. 16).

than observing the niceties of religious law. Roy Mottahedeh has shown how political legitimacy in this period was based upon the establishment of contractual, personal bonds between a ruler and his subjects,⁶⁵⁶ and the establishment of a dynastic mausoleum in Bokhara would have visually symbolized the links between the dynasty and the city.

It is possible that Ahmad's remains were not moved, and that the mausoleum was only a symbolic grave until the death of Isma'il. Narshakhi relates that the grave of Afrasiab was located inside the city by the Ma'bad gate,⁶⁵⁷ while the tomb of Siyavush was next to the Ghuriyan gate;⁶⁵⁸ clearly these were symbolic graves only, as they belonged to legendary figures. The tomb of Siyavush was venerated by the Zoroastrians, who still at this time sacrificed roosters at the site on No Ruz, while Bokharans (not specifically Zoroastrians) also held lamentations at the site for the death of Siyavush.⁶⁵⁹ Afrasiab, in spite of being ostensibly buried in Bokhara, was associated more with Ramitan, a town in the oasis where the Bokhar Khodahs had previously had their winter residence. Siyavush, however, and specifically his eponymous burial site, was closely connected with Bokhara. It is my contention that Isma'il constructed the Samanid mausoleum as a new focus for the identity of Bokharans and their loyalty to the Samanid dynasty.

Mottahedeh, in his seminal study on loyalty and leadership in the Buyid realm, described the bonds between a ruler and his subject as formed of several types of individual ties with varying degrees of formality and permanence.⁶⁶⁰ The most formal was the *bai'ah*, or oath of loyalty, which the Buyids, the Samanids and their

⁶⁵⁶ Mottahedeh 1980, pp. 51-78.

⁶⁵⁷ Narshakhi, pp. 23-4 (Frye trans., p. 17).

⁶⁵⁸ Narshakhi, p. 32 (Frye trans., p. 23).

⁶⁵⁹ Narshakhi, p. 33 (Frye trans., p. 23).

⁶⁶⁰ Mottahedeh 1980, *passim*.

contemporaries adopted from the 'Abbasids. This was an individual contract between the ruler (and his descendants), the subject, and God. This could be direct, as in the case of the army, or more general, so that public works in fulfillment of a vow could also be seen in this light. Less permanent was the calculation of *ni·mah*, or benefit. In return for a ruler fulfilling his obligations towards his subjects, the subjects invoked God's blessing upon the ruler and generally acquiesced to his governance. This was a continual process, so that acquiescence could be withdrawn if the populace felt that they no longer received sufficient benefit (as occurred at the end of the Samanid period, when the loyalty of Bokhara was transferred to the Qarakhanids). Another type of bond was *istina'*, or patronage, which was also adopted from the 'Abbasids. The best example of *istina'* is the institution of slavery, whereby the owner became a virtual foster parent of the *ghulam*; however, the term can also be applied to the tiers of patronage amongst the clerical class.

Mottahedeh describes the composition of Buyid society as a multi-layered conglomerate of ties of loyalty. Beneath the level of the ruler and his subjects, a rich medley of overlapping, and at times conflicting, ties bound together a complex agglomeration of classes and interests. Formal institutions were few, so that a network of informal commitments determined an individual's place in society. The job of the ruler was to remain detached from all this rather than above it, so that he could ensure that each group (and by implication each individual) received what was appropriate, and that no single group imposed its own interests upon society as a whole. Kingship had its own interests, to be sure, but these were separate from those of the rest of the populace. The king was tied to the army, but the army was at this period also separate from the

populace, heavily reliant upon imported slaves and/or elite and racially distinct groups (such as the Dailamis in the case of the Buyids). The king and his military enforcers were outside the system, yet connected to it through ties of *ni'mah*. Hence the ruler was able to arbitrate amongst the different groups and factions; a ruler who performed this task with fairness and equanimity was said to be “just.”

Although Mottahedeh was primarily concerned with the Buyids, most of his analysis is applicable to the Samanids as well. After all, the Samanids were the neighbors and rivals of the Buyids, and participated in the same political and cultural milieu which accompanied the demise of the ‘Abbasids as a meaningful political force. This period between the decline of the caliphate and the emergence of the Saljuq empire was one of exceptional fluidity. Religious positions had not yet hardened and were still being debated. The proliferation of smaller courts in the eastern Islamic world also provided a unique opportunity for patronage, so that an architect, artist, poet, geographer, historian, etc. could move easily from one to the other, finding the most congenial position possible. Borders were also fluid, as ties of loyalty between the major regional powers and the smaller courts shifted and battles ensued. The notion of the separateness of kingship is a useful one for understanding how cultural and economic life could have flourished concomitantly with the bewildering array of military conflicts described in the chronicles.

The Buyids, particularly the branches which ruled from Baghdad and Shiraz, were clearly outsiders in these realms, even generations after their initial conquests. The Samanids were descendants of a noble Central Asian family (albeit Bactrian rather than Sogdian), and were therefore not outsiders to the same degree. They were, however,

outsiders in Bokhara. In the early 8th century, the Arabs had struggled to conquer and maintain their hold on the city, and only finally managed to do so after 737 by ruling in conjunction with the Bokhar Khodahs. In effect the oasis had a somewhat nominal Arab governor who reported to the governor of Khorasan, while de facto local power was still in the hands of the Bokhar Khodahs, who remained in their palace at Varakhsha. This is well-illustrated by the death of Tughshada in 739 at the hands of two of his nobles, who were angry over his expropriation of their property.⁶⁶¹ The murder occurred in front of the local Arab governor, Wasil b. 'Amr, and the governor of Khorasan, Nasser b. Sayyar. Nasser confirmed Qutaiba b. Tughshada as his successor. In the half century which followed, the Bokhar Khodahs enjoyed local autonomy provided they did not plot or rebel against the Arab regime; they (and at times the local Arab governor as well) were then executed for this and for siding with Shi'ites, Kharijites, and with the rebellion of Muqanna'. This last execution, in 782, ended the formal power of the Bokhar Khodahs, but the family continued to be locally and regionally prominent. In 836, for example, the Bokhar Khodah served as a commander in the army of the Afshin of Ustrushana against the rebel Babak.⁶⁶² In Bokhara the family still owned a great deal of property, and presumably still enjoyed prestige and influence as well. The city at this time had a unique status in Transoxiana; whereas other provinces were ruled by the Samanids under the aegis of the Tahirids, the administration of Bokhara came under direct Tahirid supervision.⁶⁶³ The fall of the Tahirids to Yaqub b. Laith and the rebellion of Rafi b. Harthama left the city adrift, without official ties to either the Saffarids or the Samanids.

⁶⁶¹ Narskhahi, pp. 61-2.

⁶⁶² Tabari, vol. XXXIII, trans. C.E. Bosworth, pp. 49; 56-64; 68-9.

⁶⁶³ Frye 1965, p. 30.

Hence Isma'īl was definitely an outsider when he entered Bokhara as governor in 874. Narshakhi relates that he was reluctant to enter the city without an army, and only did so once he was assured of his position, which he achieved by making the previous amir his deputy.⁶⁶⁴ The populace welcomed him rapturously, and he did not disappoint them. In addition to seeing off Husayn b. Tahir, who represented the last remnant of Tahirid power, he defeated a ring of thieves who were plaguing the city, and squelched a rebellion by the local nobles. By allowing the walls of the oasis to fall into disrepair, he not only freed the populace from the onerous burden of maintaining them, but he also identified himself as the protector of Bokhara in a very tangible way. Later, as the ruler of the entire Samanid realm, he embarked on campaigns to enlarge his kingdom and thereby further preserve the security of his capital: he defeated the Turkish ruler of Taraz in 893 and the Saffarid 'Amr b. Laith in 900. He skillfully balanced the multitude of vassal states on the fringes of his realm, and brought the Khorezmshahs into his purview. Safety along the northern borders in particular greatly enhanced the economy, which profited hugely from the slave trade. In economics, too, he was known for his fairness: he is said to have returned excess taxes in Rayy after problems with the weights were discovered, and archaeological excavations have uncovered weights guaranteed by his own personal seal of accuracy.⁶⁶⁵ He basically created the conditions for peace and prosperity, and fulfilled the obligations of the ideal ruler of the time as outlined by Mottahedeh. He mediated between different factions, kept each group in its place, and ensured that each group received its due. Narshakhi's description of his rule precisely embodies this ideal:

⁶⁶⁴ Narshakhi, p. 108 (Frye trans., p. 79). As soon as Isma'īl entered the city, he imprisoned this deputy, thereby ridding himself of this rival.

⁶⁶⁵ Frye, CHI, p. 140.

He made appear the results of justice and good conditions. He chastised whoever showed tyranny to his subjects. There was no one of the house of Saman more capable of governing than he, for he was like an ascetic and allowed no favoritism in affairs of state.⁶⁶⁶

The chastising of tyrants seems to have coincided with Isma'il's consolidation of his own position. He purchased the Juy-i Mulian estates of the family of the Bokhar Khodah, built palaces and gardens, and gave these as *waqf* to his own clients.⁶⁶⁷ He also expropriated the Bokhara property of Bunyat b. Tughshada, who was executed for his support of Muqanna', from his grandson. This was justified on the basis of Bunyat's conviction for apostasy, but Isma'il compensated the grandson with a stipend equal to the income from the estates.⁶⁶⁸ Therefore the most notable Sogdian family in the city did not lose financially, but did lose one of the main bases of their tie to Bokhara. Naturally the Sogdian aristocracy did not take kindly to this: as Narshakhi relates, "There was no respect in their eyes and their gathering together did not portend good for him."⁶⁶⁹ So Isma'il sent the Bokhar Khodah, together with other prominent Sogdian nobles, as emissaries to his brother Nasr, with whom he had been engaged in another power struggle. He wrote to Nasr asking him to imprison them, which Nasr did. Later, when Isma'il felt more secure in his position, he had Nasr release them, and upon their return to the city, he maintained their allegiance by "fulfilling their just dues."⁶⁷⁰

Isma'il's moves against the Bokhar Khodah family were not always so successful, however. He decided to transform the palace at Varakhsha into a mosque, and donated funds and material (in this case, wood) for the necessary modifications. The populace refused, ostensibly on the grounds that the mosque would inevitably be too grand for the

⁶⁶⁶ Narshakhi, p. 127 (Frye trans., p. 93).

⁶⁶⁷ Narshakhi, p. 39 (Frye trans., pp. 27-8).

⁶⁶⁸ Narshakhi, pp. 15-16 (Frye trans., pp. 11-12).

⁶⁶⁹ Narshakhi, p. 112 (Frye trans., p. 82).

⁶⁷⁰ Narshakhi, pp. 112-3 (Frye trans., p. 82).

small number of local inhabitants who would attend, and Isma'il's plans were abandoned; the palace stood intact until the reign of his great-great-grandson, Ahmad b. Nuh.⁶⁷¹ Generally, though, he did manage to decrease the standing of the old Sogdian aristocracy, and even his abandonment of the defenses of Bokhara can be seen at least in part as a populist move against these potential rivals. These walls of the oasis had been started around 775 at the behest of a group of Sogdian nobles; they were not completed until 830. Although the walls were necessary to protect the settled population of the oasis from nomadic incursions, the annual maintenance which was required took an enormous amount of both time and money, both levied from the populace.⁶⁷² Hence Isma'il's famous declaration, "As long as I live, I am the walls of Bokhara," can be seen as a rejection of the *ancien regime* as well as an assertion of his own strength and his identification with Bokhara.

This assertion embodied Isma'il's own identification with his adopted city, and underlines the personal nature of his rule and of the loyalty of Bokharans to him. Clearly they derived enormous benefit from the relationship from the moment he entered the city as governor. By refusing to move to Samarqand, long considered the leading city of Transoxiana, after the death of his brother Nasr, Isma'il not only cemented his own relationship with the city's inhabitants, but also began the process of linking the city with the Samanid dynasty as a whole. It was already an economic centre, thanks to his military and economic policies, and now it became a cultural centre as well, thanks to his patronage. Not only were literary men and other intellectuals beginning to migrate to the

⁶⁷¹ Narshakhi, pp. 24-5 (Frye trans., pp. 17-18).

⁶⁷² Narshakhi, p. 48 (Frye trans., p. 34).

Samanid court, but Isma'il also engaged in an enthusiastic building program, which included palatial buildings, mosques, a ribat, and the dynastic mausoleum.

We have already seen that his constructions at Juy-i Mulian were connected with the transferal of power and prestige from the family of the Bokhar Khodah to Isma'il; his subsequent transferal of many of these estates to his own allies, which can be seen as an early form of *iqta*' even though it was termed *waqf* by Narshakhi, would have further consolidated the ties of loyalty between Isma'il and these leading citizens. The fact that he built palaces and gardens on the land before giving away the use of it indicates the importance of these ties to Isma'il. His constructions for the public at large, including the ribat, the Friday mosque at Dashtak, the mosque near the citadel, and the enlargement of the Friday mosque of Bokhara can likewise be seen as cementing his ties of *ni'mah* with the population of the city. The dynastic mausoleum, also accessible to the public at large, made visible the grandeur of the dynasty and the close relationship between the dynasty and the city. This is the only one of Isma'il's constructions to have survived through the ages and we unfortunately do not know what the others looked like, as Narshakhi does not provide any descriptions. The mausoleum, however, visually embodies the new identity which Isma'il was constructing and the new traditions of the Samanid-sponsored Persian Renaissance.

Eric Hobsbawm, in his discussion of invented traditions, claims that this phenomenon happens most often during times of abrupt and rapid change:

..we should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which "old" traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷³ Hobsbawm 1983, pp. 4-5.

The aftermath of the Arab conquest of Transoxiana definitely fits this description. Not only did the political leadership change, but the prolonged fighting in every major city caused massive demographic upheavals, with many Sogdians fleeing or being killed in battle and both Arabs and Muslim Persians moving in. Central Asia went from being an assortment of fragmented city-states to being part of an enormous Arab empire. The language of government changed to Arabic, and the spoken language of the cities changed to Persian. The majority religion changed, at least in the cities, from Zoroastrianism to Islam, so that public ceremonies, feasts and holidays also changed. The old festivals were still present,⁶⁷⁴ but were directly relevant to a diminishing number of people. The topography of the cities changed, as properties were expropriated for the Muslim newcomers, as both fire temples and churches were transformed into mosques and new mosques were constructed. Both political and religiously inspired rebellions ensured that upheaval continued into the 9th century.

This loss of cultural identity paved the way for the creation of a new, Muslim Persian identity under the Samanids. The groundwork for this had already been laid by the Shu'ubiyya, with their pride in their Persian history and culture. Iranian dynasts such as the Saffarids had already begun promoting Persian poetry, as discussed in Chapter 3. Now the Samanids, beginning with Isma'īl, began promoting Persian in a much broader way, as a language of general use for the educated classes instead of Arabic. It was Isma'īl who decreed the use of Persian as the language of government; his son and heir, Ahmad, was assassinated for reverting to Arabic, so clearly this move had great

⁶⁷⁴ Narshakhi mentions the mourning of Siyavush, the slaughter of roosters at No Ruz at the grave of Siyavush (p. 33; Frye trans., p. 23), and the annual idol fair at the bazaar of Makh (pp. 29-30; Frye trans., pp. 20-1); of these, only the mourning of Siyavush was still celebrated by Bokharans generally rather than the Zoroastrian minority.

resonance with the populace. The Central Asians had chafed under Arab dominance from the beginning, as their multiple rebellions attest. Now they regained an identity of their own, but not the Sogdian identity of the past; instead, it was a newly forged identity with its own invented traditions, firmly Muslim but just as firmly Iranian. Isma'il, who had initially entered Bokhara as an outsider, in this way connected himself to the local populace and created a *raison d'être* for the dynasty he founded.

In his exposition of invented traditions, Hobsbawn particularly associated this phenomenon with the modern nation-state,⁶⁷⁵ and so it is necessary to clarify how this fits the Samanid context. No such entity as a "state" existed at this time; instead, leadership was personal and based upon personal ties forged between the leader and the led.⁶⁷⁶ Legitimacy for such leadership was divinely granted and was to some extent self-evident from the ongoing calculation of *ni'mah* and from the events of the battlefield. As Mottahedeh describes it,

...it was widely accepted that there would be continual new grants of sovereignty, and that – as became the common metaphor – the shirt of kingship would be forcibly removed from one man or dynasty and given to another in accord with some deeper divine wisdom.⁶⁷⁷

This concept of kingship had arisen in response to the realities of the period, when the 'Abbasid caliphs retained religious authority but had lost virtually all political power. Divine approbation was theoretically symbolized by caliphal investiture, but in reality this was a formality and the caliphs merely acknowledged the *de facto* situation. Ya'qub b. Laith made this clear when, in response to a query about his caliphal investiture, he drew his sword and claimed that this was the source of his legitimacy. The Samanids were never so brutally honest, and always maintained cordial relations with the caliphate.

⁶⁷⁵ Hobsbawn 1983, p. 13.

⁶⁷⁶ Mottahedeh 1980, pp. 61-2.

⁶⁷⁷ Mottahedeh 1980, p. 186.

The caliph's name was always mentioned in the *khutba*, tribute was sent to Baghdad in the form of textiles from the *tiraz* factories of Bokhara, and the early Samanids never arrogated a title to themselves higher than "amir." Narshakhi stresses how Isma'il was always "obedient" to the caliph;⁶⁷⁸ he received his patent of investiture in 893, one year after the death of his brother Nasr. After his defeat of 'Amr b. Laith in 901, he received an expanded patent for Transoxiana, Khorasan, Turkestan, Sind, Hind and Gurgan. Clearly he did not control the far reaches of Turkestan and Hind, an excellent example of how caliphal investiture often included an element of wishful thinking.

Since the caliph embodied religious authority, albeit remotely, the concept of kingship was necessarily secular. Mottahedeh has pointed out that virtually all the regimes of this period were based upon ethno-linguistic groupings.⁶⁷⁹ The concept of ethno-linguistic relations was in turn based primarily upon language.⁶⁸⁰ The process by which *dari* evolved into New Persian and became widespread throughout the cities of the Iranian-speaking world was discussed in Chapter 3; this enabled a much greater territory than Fars to be considered as *Iran-zamin*, the land of Iran. This was not at all synonymous with the territory of the former Sasanian empire, but was based instead upon the contemporary linguistic situation. Hence the cities of Transoxiana, where the Sasanians had never ruled, could be considered *Iran-zamin*, whereas the predominantly Arab-speaking cities of modern Iraq, where the Sasanian capital had been located, were not, as references to *Iraq-i 'arab* and *Iraq-i 'ajam* make clear. Although *Iran-zamin* was a specific territory where Persian and other Iranian languages were spoken, it was not considered important for it to be unified under a single ruler; security and the

⁶⁷⁸ Narshakhi, p. 127 (Frye trans., p. 93).

⁶⁷⁹ Mottahedeh 1980, pp. 167-8.

⁶⁸⁰ Mottahedeh 1976, pp. 172-4.

maintenance of harmony amongst conflicting groups in society were the main criteria of good government instead.⁶⁸¹

Although the Saffarids were the first of the independent Iranian dynasties, their reliance on force as a justification for their rule meant that they had no need for invented traditions. They did utilize the rhetoric of the *Shu'ubiyya*, as we saw in Chapter 3, but the emphasis on military force is clear. In other areas, remote from the reach of Baghdad due to geography or distance or both, the old traditions were strong and genuine continuity from the past was evident. Regions such as Tabaristan, Chaghaniyan, Ustrushana, and Guzgan fall into this category, and the rulers of these regions were literally descended from those of the pre-Islamic era. Ironically, Fars belongs to this category as well, in spite of its relative proximity to Baghdad and its early fall to Arab rule. This was the Sasanian homeland, and a region which held tightly to the past in spite of all obstacles. The inhabitants frequently revolted against the Arabs during the century after the conquest,⁶⁸² and the majority were still refusing to convert in the 10th century. This was the region where Zoroastrian literature in Middle Persian experienced its heyday, just at the time that New Persian literature was flourishing in Transoxiana. After their takeover of this region, the Buyids did engage in their own invention of tradition, but this was too heavily inflected by the actual past to be successful in the same way as the Samanids.

For the Samanids then, the concept of invented traditions is a useful one, although it occurred in the service of establishing loyalty to the personal rule of a dynasty rather than the edifice of a state. The Sogdian aristocracy of Bokhara was weakened when

⁶⁸¹ Mottahedeh 1976, pp. 181-2.

⁶⁸² Choksy, 1987, pp. 34-40.

Isma'īl came to power, and he took measures to reduce their influence still further. Isma'īl himself was of the *dihqan* class, but almost certainly of Bactrian rather than Sogdian stock. Unlike the Saffarids and Buyids, Isma'īl was believable as a descendant of the Sasanians (or more precisely of the rebellious Sasanian general Bahram Chubin),⁶⁸³ and he had impeccable Muslim credentials as well. Bokhara had undergone sufficient dislocation in the century and a half since the Arab conquest for this aristocratic outsider to begin the process of shaping its traditions anew, and he was just the person to achieve this. His promotion of Persian as a language of government was a rejection of the Sogdian past and of Arab dominance, and pointed the way forward towards a new cultural synthesis. His dynastic mausoleum visually embodied this new synthesis as well as the ties of the Samanids to the city.

In choosing to construct a mausoleum, Isma'īl opted for the funerary practice associated with prominent Muslims, and he ensured that the prominence of his own family was emphasized by selecting the best artisans and materials available. The building embodied Isma'īl's connection to Bokhara in the most dramatic way possible: not only was he conspicuously choosing to remain in Bokhara for all eternity, but by bringing his father he also established a dynastic presence in the city. This retrospective connection would have been another way of competing with the established aristocracy. It is quite likely that Isma'īl was also competing with the cult of Siyavush; since mourning at the grave of this legendary figure was a long-standing tradition of Bokhara, Isma'īl probably intended for this to be replaced by *ziyarat* to the dynastic mausoleum. As Narshakhi reported, he was successful, and the tomb did indeed become a focus of

⁶⁸³ Tarikh-i Gardizi, p. 9.

pilgrimage for Bokharans.⁶⁸⁴ It is possible that Isma'īl was emulating the dynastic mausoleum of the 'Abbasid caliphs, although the housing of the remains of a family in a single structure (the *naus*) was also a Central Asian tradition.

As we have seen, the *chahar taq* form had already been used for mausolea in Central Asia, but it was not the only available plan: Isma'īl could have selected the plan with four deep niches, which was the most reminiscent of a type of *naus*; the plan with a mausoleum and a *ziyaratkhana* connected by an ivan, which was characteristic of the region where the Samanid family had their origins; or the plan with two entrances, found in the region where Isma'īl was born and raised. In choosing the *chahar taq*, just as in choosing a language of government, he was opting for the Persian import rather than local, Central Asian traditions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the *chahar taq* was the form of the Zoroastrian temples of Iran, not of Central Asia. It was also similar to the form used for some Byzantine martyria, and subsequently for early Islamic mausolea (the tomb of 'Ali at Najaf, for example, was described by Ibn Hawqal as a *chahar taq*).⁶⁸⁵ Like the plan with the connecting ivan, the *chahar taq* as a mausoleum was also found in the area of the Samanid homeland, but unlike the ivan plan, it was not exclusively connected with this region. Instead it must have resonated as a Persian form: a substantial number of *chahar taqs* dot the landscape of Iran even today, and in the early 10th century, when Zoroastrians were still a majority in Fars, in Tabaristan, and in the countryside of Iran generally, there were still a large number of fire temples in use. As discussed in Chapter II, geographers at the time noted both operational fire temples and the important ruined temples of the past.

⁶⁸⁴ Narshakhi, Frye trans., p. 93.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibn Hawqal, p. 232.

Yuri Karev has argued that the 8th century palace at Samarqand took the form of a Sasanian rather than a Sogdian palace, evidence of a wave of Persian influence concomitant with the migration of Muslim Persians into Central Asia.⁶⁸⁶ The adoption of the mausoleum, and the clear change in funerary practices that this entailed, is also symptomatic of Muslim immigration as well as Central Asian conversion. But the choice of a Persian form in particular for the Samanid mausoleum instead of the other available models had to be a deliberate decision on the part of Isma'il. It corresponds to his promotion of the Persian language written in Arabic characters; this was not a straightforward revival of the language of the Sasanian court, but was instead a version of that language transformed with a new alphabet and enriched with loan words from both Arabic and Sogdian. The Samanid mausoleum is likewise not a "fire temple in Islamic dress," as it was termed by Hillenbrand.⁶⁸⁷ It is a version of the *chahar taq*, adapted for use as a mausoleum, incorporating local elements and local traditions in its design and decoration.

Although the Samanid mausoleum emulates the basic plan of the Persian fire temple, it is not identical. Extant examples in Iran are much more open than the mausoleum, as befitted their respective functions: in the fire temple, the fire was meant to be visible, so that wide arched openings were appropriate, whereas the mausoleum was meant to cover and contain the burials within it, and its comparatively narrow openings suit this purpose. Fire temples also had an ambulatory passage surrounding the *chahar taq* for the circulation of the faithful, whereas at the mausoleum the practice of *ziyarat* entailed entering the building. Because of this enclosing ambulatory passage and because

⁶⁸⁶ Karev 1999.

⁶⁸⁷ Hillenbrand, in Ferrier 1989, p. 83; see also FFM, pp. 289-90.

only the priest entered the actual chamber, the *chahar taq* chambers of fire temples were not given extra adornment, either inside or out. The Samanid mausoleum, however, was lavishly decorated both inside and out, so that the message of the building would be conveyed to passersby as well as those who entered. Moreover, the squinches of the mausoleum, with their ribs down the centre, firmly place the building in the 10th century; it is not a mere copy of a Sasanian *chahar taq*. The gallery and the corner domes are also unknown in the Sasanian examples.

The use of the fire temple form for a mausoleum also shows how disconnected this plan was from its Persian origins. Central Asian Zoroastrians had never known this as a fire temple plan, whereas Persian immigrants to Central Asia were Muslims. Central Asians who ventured south at this period would have seen *chahar taqs*, both ruined examples without their ambulatories and functioning ones which they were almost certainly not allowed to enter. Hence the *chahar taq* without an ambulatory would have evoked Persian associations without necessarily evoking Zoroastrian ones.

Most of the Sasanian *chahar taqs* were composed of rubble and mortar covered with a thin layer of stucco; only Takht-i Suleiman, which was still a functioning fire temple in the 10th century, was composed of baked brick. The Samanid mausoleum, therefore, was innovative in this respect as well. Baked brick denoted importance, and it was used to an unprecedented degree in this building. Previously, important buildings in this region (namely palaces and temples) had been constructed of unbaked brick and covered with a decorative revetment of stucco, a much cheaper option than baked brick yet still an aesthetically effective one. In the mausoleum, brick comprised both the building material and the decorative material. Tilla Halaji also was constructed in this

way, but there the decoration was relatively simple by comparison, even though some of the motifs are the same. But what really makes the Samanid mausoleum exceptional is not just the quality and quantity of the decoration, but the fact that brick imitates and replaces other materials which were cheaper and more readily available. The motifs around the doorways, the window grilles, the roundels in the spandrels of the arches of the zone of transition, and the bands of decoration at the base of the dome are some of the elements which would normally be composed of stucco. Soviet scholars have long noted the resemblance of the brick colonettes of the zone of transition to contemporary wooden columns, citing this as an example of a local tradition.⁶⁸⁸ But the local tradition was precisely to use *wooden* columns, as evidenced by the Friday Mosque at Khiva, by discoveries in mountainous regions in Tajikistan and by textual references to the use of wood.⁶⁸⁹ Both wood and stucco were used in the Samanid mausoleum to a very limited degree: the ribs of the squinches and the colonettes of the exterior arcade are accented with carved stucco, and the eastern entrance of the building has the wooden lintel with the carved inscription. The fact that wood in particular was not used to a greater degree may have been due to a lingering sensitivity over the use of organic material in a funerary monument. However, the relative lack of stucco as well indicates that the intention was also to luxuriate in the conspicuous use of that expensive and esteemed material, baked brick, as well as to differentiate the building from the prominent constructions of the past, especially the nearby palace of the Bokhar Khodahs at Varakhsha. This resulted in the creation of a monument fitting for the Samanid dynasty and for Bokhara, with its new status as a capital and as one of the most illustrious cities in the Islamic world.

⁶⁸⁸ Zasiipkin 1948, p. 41; see also Zasiipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 5; Pugachenkova & Rempel, 1958, pp. 66, 68; Khmel'nitskii 1992, pp. 135-6.

⁶⁸⁹ In Narshakhi, for example, see pp. 20, 24, 70-71 (Frye trans., pp. 14-15, 17-18, 50-1).

Rempel' saw the arcade on the exterior of the mausoleum as a reflection of the arcades depicted on some Sogdian ossuaries, such as those from Biya-Naiman.⁶⁹⁰ This does seem plausible, particularly since we have already seen that one of the plans popular for mausolea of this era, the plan with four deep niches, was likely derived from a type of *naus*. The Samanid mausoleum does reflect some vestiges of local pre-Islamic funerary practices, namely in its lack of inscriptions, which is exceedingly unusual in an Islamic building. The only inscription is the small and unimpressive one which names Nasr II, no doubt added at the time of his burial in 943; in its original conception, this elaborate construction did not have any inscriptions. Neither *nauses* nor ossuaries recorded the names of the deceased, and this tradition continued with the early Islamic mausolea of Central Asia. Some ossuaries were, however, given lavish decoration of high artistic quality; likewise, the Samanid mausoleum conveyed its intended messages through the quality of its material and the choice of decorative motifs.

Mehrdad Shokoohy has argued that the triangular motif over each door of the mausoleum is a simplified and stylized version of a Sasanian crown.⁶⁹¹ He points out that the scarf (or wings) and crescent, which form elements of most of the Sasanian crowns, can be found surmounting arches with royal associations, such as that at Taq-i Bustan. A more stylized version of the fluttering scarf surmounts arches carved on the walls of churches constructed by post-Sasanian Persian Christian emigrants in the south of India. This does indeed bear some resemblance to the even more stylized terracotta motif of the Samanid mausoleum. It not only surmounts the arch of each doorway, but also fills the interstices of the geometric designs in the spandrels of the arches. The greater stylization

⁶⁹⁰ Rempel 1936, pp. 203-4; see also Litvinskii 1979, pp. 65-70; Zasiipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 1.

⁶⁹¹ Shokoohy 1994, pp. 65-78. His main argument is that the Bahmani sultans in the 14th century Deccan used a similar motif on their mausolea to claim descent from the Sasanians.

was inevitable given the reinterpretation of the motif in terracotta rather than stucco. Its appearance on the exterior of the mausoleum above the entrance arches fits with the Samanid claim of descent from the Sasanians. The components of Sasanian crowns were well known in the early Islamic period, and were used as far west as Jerusalem in the Dome of the Rock. In Central Asia, Sasanian style silver dishes depicting the shahs with their crowns were produced throughout the 8th century and even later.⁶⁹² Even in the pre-Islamic era, elements of the crowns were emulated in Central Asian ossuary decoration and in the décor of Sogdian palaces, albeit removed from their Sasanian context.⁶⁹³ This context was understood, however, as some pre-Islamic Central Asian coinage closely emulated the Sasanian style.⁶⁹⁴ The early Islamic examples of coinage, silver dishes, and usage of the crown motifs in architecture show that the original context was understood.

The geometric motif in the spandrels of each doorway arch likewise recalls very similar motifs executed in stucco on the façade of the Parthian palace at Assur. The ruins of Assur were near Baghdad, close to the Taq-i Kisra at Ctesiphon. As these impressive ruins and their association with the Sasanians were well-known, it is possible that a Bokhara craftsman could have visited the site; it is also possible that the same motif occurred on Parthian ruins closer to home, in Khorasan. Although the Parthians ruled over a territory roughly similar to that ruled by the Sasanians, they were a Central Asian dynasty. However, whether the ruins of their palaces were known to be specifically Parthian is doubtful; it is much more likely that they were vaguely known to be

⁶⁹² See Darkevich, p. 1976, pp. 75-85; Marshak 1971, pp. 21-3.

⁶⁹³ At the Sogdian palace at Kesh, for example, a typical scarf and set of wings adorned a wall, but with the head of a goat emerging from the wings instead of a crescent moon or a sun. The horns of the goat do form reversed crescents, but clearly the original significance of the image was lost or, more probably, subverted here. See Rempel' 1961, p. 97, figs. 5 & 6.

⁶⁹⁴ The coins found at Panjikent, for example, are divided between a Sasanian style and a Chinese style: see Smirnova 1958, pp. 218-26.

associated with the kings who ruled Persia in the past. The motif would therefore be useful in recalling the glories of Persian kings past and associating the Samanids with them, and its prominence on the four sides of the mausoleum indicates its importance as a component of the building's message. Its reinterpretation in terracotta instead of stucco underlined the expense inherent in constructing wholly from baked brick.

The pearl motif likewise appears here in baked brick for the first time. It is used repeatedly: in the frames of the geometric motifs in the spandrels, in the frame around the exterior and interior doorways, in a band running around the building above the arcaded gallery, interspersed around each arch of the arcade, interspersed between segments of the arcade at the corners of the building, in bands running down the center of some of the semi-domes of the arcade, in bands down the center of two of the ribs which divide the squinches (the other two bear bands of diamonds), and in a band around the base of the interior of the dome. The small pearls framing the geometric motifs on the façade and those adorning the semi-domes of the arcade are solid, whereas the others are all hollow in the centre. Pearls were a very popular motif for centuries in both Iran and Central Asia; they can be seen on Sasanian silver, Sasanian and Sogdian textiles, stucco decoration from both regions, and the Nishapur-style pottery of the 10-11th centuries. Its presence in this style of pottery indicates that it was recognized as a motif linked to the Persian past. In the pottery, the pearls can be found in bands but also as an all-over scattered background motif. They are used in a similar fashion on the Samanid mausoleum, usually in framing bands but also scattered round the exterior arcade. The bands correspond to the pre-Islamic usage of this motif, whereas the scattered effect reflects a new aesthetic.

This new aesthetic can be readily seen by comparing the decoration of the Samanid mausoleum with that of the nearby palace of the Bokhar Khodah at Varakhsha. The pearl motif is used heavily at Varakhsha, both in stucco and in wall painting, but it is always found in framing bands. Few other motifs can be found in both buildings at all. One fragment of stucco from Varakhsha consists of a square frame subdivided into smaller squares, each filled with a quatrefoil;⁶⁹⁵ similar quatrefoils of terracotta are found in the tympana of the arches of the Samanid mausoleum. Most of the stucco at Varakhsha, however, is more realistic than this, depicting flowering trees, scrolling vines heavy with grapes, and acanthus leaves. Many of the floral motifs are somewhat stylized and are enclosed within pearl bands, and the 10th century stucco designs from the palace at Samarqand are clearly drawn from this element of the Varakhsha repertoire. The architect of the Samanid mausoleum just as clearly rejected this readily available model, as the few decorative elements found in common are also found in Sasanian art as well.

The decoration of the Samanid mausoleum is therefore composed of a few local elements interwoven with a majority of motifs associated in a non-specific way with the royal past of Persia. It is not the culmination of the pre-Islamic architectural tradition of Central Asia, nor is it a straightforward copy of an Iranian *chahar taq*. It is instead a clever synthesis of motifs reinterpreted in baked brick. This material had been used exclusively in some of the mausolea which preceded the Samanid mausoleum, but the extent of its use in this building for lavish decoration as well as construction was unprecedented. The richly textured surface of the building and its amalgamation of royal Persian motifs with hints of the local funerary tradition in a genre of architecture which was thoroughly Islamic embodied the invented traditions of Isma'il as he founded his

⁶⁹⁵ See Shishkin 1963, p. 178, fig. 94.

new dynasty and linked it to Bokhara. These new traditions were to have an immense effect on subsequent funerary architecture, as we will see with a brief discussion of the royal mausolea of the Qarakhanids.

Mausolea of the Qarakhanid Era

As mentioned above, it is exceedingly difficult to draw a strict line between the architecture of the Samanid and the Qarakhanid periods. The change in dynasty coincided with a change in century, but not with a change in architectural styles. Whereas in Iran there are few early Islamic monuments and clear differences between those of the pre-Saljuq and Saljuq periods, in Central Asia there is a comparatively large corpus of extant monuments and a smooth evolution from pre-Samanid to Samanid to Qarakhanid. One such building which could easily be classified as Samanid or Qarakhanid is 'Alamberdar, which Pugachenkova has termed the mausoleum of the last Samanid, Isma'il Muntasir. Her attribution is based upon the location of the building coinciding with the location of his death, although in the absence of any other evidence it is difficult to accept this with any degree of certainty. However, the building does indicate the direction of Central Asian funerary architecture in the 11th century.

'Alamberdar is constructed of baked brick with a decorative brick revetment bearing the diaper patterns and terracotta brick plugs which became popular in the 11th century. At this time, baked brick gradually became used more frequently than unbaked brick for mausolea, and of the buildings which are either dated or are most likely to have been constructed in the 11th century, only Abu Hureira Gunbad is composed of unbaked brick. Other extant buildings, such as mosques and caravanserais, are also constructed of

baked brick, but textual sources such as Narshakhi make it clear that unbaked brick and wood were still heavily used during this period for all but the most important constructions, and that these media were often mixed. This indicates the importance attached to the mausolea which have survived, and some of the incumbents are known. 'Alamberdar and the central mausoleum at Uzgend are thought to be royal mausolea; Mir Sayyid Bahram and Shah Fazl can be identified as Qarakhanid tombs through their inscriptions; Sultan Saodat is reliably identified as the dynastic complex of the local rulers of Termez; and Baba Hatem, on the other side of the Oxus, contains the remains of Salar Khalil, a Ghaznavid official. Other mausolea were constructed for unknown individuals, most likely holy figures or local notables.

The plan of 'Alamberdar is one with two entrances, also seen at Baba Roshan and Abu Khureira Gunbad. There was still diversity in plans in the 11th century. Sultan Saodat followed the model of Tilla Halaji, with two buildings connected by an ivan, a plan unknown outside northern Bactria. The *chahar taq* can still be seen at Sangbast and Aisha Bibi, widely separated geographically. Before the construction of the later Qarakhanid mausolea which flank it, the central mausoleum at Uzgend was, like the earlier Chahar Jui, a *chahar taq* with the qibla arch closed to serve as a mihrab. Both Baba Hatem and Shah Fazl have single entrances. Only Mir Sayyid Bahram has a prominent pishtaq; this was clearly not yet a common feature. One example of the plan with four niches has survived, but in the south of Iran rather than in Central Asia, at Davazdah Imam.

Decorative schemes were also diverse, with stucco becoming much more prevalent. Davazdah Imam has a thin interior revetment of stucco onto which not only

the decoration but also the foundation inscription was painted, a feature not seen in any of the Central Asian mausolea. Decorative stucco revetments can also be seen at Baba Hatem, and Shah Fazl is truly outstanding in this regard. Mir Sayyid Bahram, also a royal Qarakhanid mausoleum, stayed within the tradition of the Samanid mausoleum with a decorative revetment of baked brick. Although not anywhere as lavish as the earlier building, the deeply textured corner columns recall the Samanid example. Aisha Bibi, although not known to be a royal mausoleum and located a considerable distance from Bokhara, more closely emulated the Samanid mausoleum with a deeply textured baked brick revetment as well as a *chahar taq* plan.

The most important legacy of the Samanid mausoleum for the Qarakhanid mausolea which would follow is its embodiment of the new Perso-Islamic cultural synthesis promoted by Isma'il and his successors. Zasiipkin argued that the Qarakhanids brought their Turkish traditions to Central Asian architecture, and he credits them with introducing the *pishtaq*.⁶⁹⁶ However, he was writing before the discovery of the mausoleum at Tim, which is dated to the late Samanid period and proves that the *pishtaq* preceded the arrival of the Qarakhanids. The Qarakhanid mausolea follow smoothly upon those of the Samanid period, and are part of the evolution of that tradition: their forms, plans, and decoration all have clear antecedents. They do, however, exhibit two innovative and important contributions: the introduction of colored tiles, seen in the 12th century royal mausolea at Uzgend and therefore beyond the scope of this dissertation; and the earliest extant foundation inscription in Persian, at Shah Fazl.

At first glance it appears puzzling that a Turkish dynasty, and especially the Qarakhanids, would be responsible for the first Persian foundation inscription. The Turks

⁶⁹⁶ Zasiipkin arkhiv 1959, p. 27.

have often been dismissed as uncultured and uncouth, and therefore susceptible to the lure of the advanced Persian culture to their south. Even if this were true of the Saljuqs and Ghaznavids, it would definitely not apply to the Qarakhanids, who were an aristocratic clan and sought to promote Turkic literature once they came to power. So why did they not use Turkish in their foundation inscription? Shah Fazl, the mausoleum of Mu'izz al-Daula 'Abbas, is in the Ferghana Valley, for centuries an area where Turkic and Iranian populations mixed and mingled. It was far from Bokhara, the center of the new Persian Islamic culture, and presumably an excellent location for the introduction of Turkish inscriptions.

This can only be explained by the astounding success of Isma'il's enterprise. His promotion of the New Persian language and of a newly formed Islamic Persian identity, originally a way to consolidate his hold on Bokhara, grew to fruition during the reign of his grandson Nasr II, when the Samanid capital became a cultural center to rival Baghdad. This cultural fluorescence continued even into the late Samanid period, when political instability resulted in a quick succession of amirs and Samanid authority was on the wane. By the time the dynasty finally fell to the Qarakhanids, this new Persian language and culture was thoroughly identified with Bokhara in particular and the Samanid realm in general. Sogdian may still have been spoken in remote areas of the countryside and beyond the Samanids' northern boundaries in areas such as Balasaghun, and other Iranian languages such as Khorezmian and Bactrian may still have held sway in remote parts of the Samanid vassal states, but New Persian dominated in the cities. The urban descendants of Arabs, Persians, Sogdians, Bactrians, and Khorezmians not only spoke the language but also partook of the new cultural synthesis with which it was

associated. This was the culture of the urban Central Asian Muslim, a culture which transcended narrow ethnic definitions. It was a dynamic and inclusive culture, and so it naturally became the culture of all Central Asian converts to Islam, even as Turks joined what was already an eclectic ethnic mix.

When the Qarakhanids were threatening to invade Bokhara in 999, the city had undergone several years of instability and chaos, with four amirs ruling in as many years and constant fighting between the rulers and their rebellious Turkish army chiefs, including the now independent Ghaznavids. Although the Samanids were still nominally in control, the quick succession of amirs was entirely in the hands of their Turkish slaves. The current amir, ‘Abd al-Malik II, tried to convince the populace to resist the Qarakhanid incursions, but to no avail. The religious classes decreed that resistance was not an obligation since the Qarakhanids were good Muslims.⁶⁹⁷ The Bokharans allowed the invaders to enter without a struggle, glad for the promise of stability which they brought. Just as when Isma‘il had entered the city over a century earlier, an outsider was seen as the best chance for ending its internecine struggles and keeping its factions in balance. And just as the Bokhar Khodahs had remained a locally prominent force to reckon with long after the loss of their political power, the descendants of the Samanids continued to live in the vicinity of Bokhara and continued to be held in high regard despite their political fall from grace.⁶⁹⁸ As the city was so strongly connected with the Samanids, the Qarakhanids established their capitals elsewhere.

One of these capitals, Uzgend, was the location of the earliest extant royal Qarakhanid mausoleum. The building emulated the plan of Chahar Jui, and its brick

⁶⁹⁷ Frye, CHI, vol. 4, p. 159; see also Golden, p. 360.

⁶⁹⁸ Frye, CHI, vol. 4, p. 160. ‘Abd al-Malik II himself, however, was not allowed to remain in Bokhara, and was imprisoned at Uzgend.

construction and stucco decoration (or least the remnants of it) show no significant innovations. Several bodies were buried inside, just as at the Samanid mausoleum. The building is important for its later, flanking mausolea but also because it shows that the early Qarakhanids chose to be buried in the fashion of Central Asian Muslim rulers, not Turkish chieftains. In many respects, such as their titulature, their internal political organization, and their nomadic living arrangements, they did retain their Turkish traditions, but these are areas which can be characterized as the business of kings, with little relevance for the lives of their subjects. In their dealings with those subjects, including their relations with the ulama, their use of *iqta'*, and their architectural patronage, they followed the Islamic norms of the region.

The mausoleum known as Mir Sayyid Bahram, built for either Mansur b. 'Ali or 'Ali b. Hasan in the second quarter of the 11th century, also fits well with corpus of earlier mausolea. With its pishtaq and its framing inscription, it is very similar to Arab Ata, while its shallow interior niches reflect those of the contemporary mausoleum of Sultan Saodat, and its engaged exterior corner columns recall the Samanid mausoleum. In size and in decoration, however, it is a modest building, and a somewhat tentative incursion into the Bokhara region. Located far from the Qarakhanid capitals, in the small town of Kermana on the main road from Bokhara to Samarqand, it is not far from the near-contemporary caravanserai of Ribat al-Malik, another royal Qarakhanid foundation. Travellers, then, would seem to be the primary intended audience, and piety and modesty the primary message.

The tomb known as Shah Fazl, constructed in 1055-60 for Muhammad b. Nasser by his son, Mu'izz al-Daula 'Abbas (and containing the bodies of both), is anything but

modest. From the outside it appears to be a typical mausoleum of the period, but the inside is covered with an exquisitely carved stucco revetment bearing the aforementioned Persian foundation inscription. This shows how Qarakhanid patronage and artistic taste were by this time firmly absorbed into the Perso-Islamic culture of Central Asia, to the point of making a significant contribution of their own. The artistic quality of the inscription and the stucco decoration as a whole show that this region was not a remote backwater but a productive cultural center. Located off the beaten path in the Ferghana Valley, the mausoleum was not too far from Uzgend, and its location in an area with rich pasturage indicate that it was geared towards the Qarakhanids' nomadic constituency.

It was not only the Qarakhanids who were heirs to the Samanid tradition of mausolea, and similar 11th century constructions exist on the other side of Oxus, in the realm of the Ghaznavids, and even much farther south, in Yazd. Both Baba Roshan and Abu Hureira Gunbad exhibit a two-entrance plan, first seen at Khaja Bulkhak, then at Hakim al-Termezi, and later at 'Alamberdar. The *chahar taq* plan is still in evidence at Sangbast, which may be early Saljuq (if Diez' dating is correct) or Ghaznavid. The decoration at Sangbast is simple but effective, with geometric patterns carved into the stucco revetment; it is the only *chahar taq* to be adorned in this way. It is also the most southern of the *chahar taqs*, indicating that this form did not enjoy popularity in the former Sasanian lands, where it would have still resonated as a fire temple form. The very Central Asian plan with four niches, seen at Kiz Bibi and Aq Astana Baba, was copied as far south as Yazd, where the Kakuyids built the Shi'ite shrine known as Davazdah Imam. The niches are not nearly as deep as in the Central Asian examples, and the interior decoration is unlike anything seen in Transoxiana, with painted interior

inscriptions rather than carved stucco inscriptions. The importation of the form, however, can be seen as part of the spread of the new Perso-Islamic culture to the former Sasanian realms ruled by the Buyids and their allies.

The defining characteristic of the early Islamic Central Asian mausolea, also seen at Davazdah Imam, is emphasis on the interiors. From the earliest mausolea through the 11th century, the humblest and the grandest of the buildings were clearly intended to be entered. Some make a strong impression from the outside as well, whereas others appear relatively plain on the exterior and only reveal their elaborate decoration and inscriptions upon entering. All are relatively light on the inside, and all but the very simplest have (or had) some form of interior decoration. Their interiors are easily accessible, as are the buildings themselves; none are sited on a hill. This is entirely new in Central Asia, as the monumental burial places of the past, both the Zoroastrian *naus* and the nomadic kurgan, were accessible only to those who placed human remains inside them. This is also in marked contrast to the dark and claustrophobic tomb towers of Tabaristan, precariously perched atop hillsides and on the edge of steep ravines. We turn next to these buildings, constructed contemporaneously with the Qarakhanid, Ghaznavid and Kakuyid mausolea and yet far removed from the new Perso-Islamic culture promulgated by the Samanids.

Chapter V: The Tomb Towers

In ancient times Tabaristan was always the refuge and stronghold of the old kings and nobles, because of its natural strength, its independence of other countries for the necessities of life, and its fertility. Its only disadvantage, in short, is the moisture of its climate and the excessive rainfall, which result from its proximity to the sea.

Ibn Isfandiyar (translation E.G. Browne)

The seven tomb towers still extant today form a distinct sub-group in the corpus of early Islamic funerary architecture in Iran and Central Asia. Some of the features which characterize the buildings in this group (with the exception of the slightly anomalous Gunbad-i 'Ali) are shared with some of the domed square mausolea: all but one of the tomb towers are composed of baked brick; they are all constructed for secular rulers; they are not part of religious complexes; and they all have single entrances. As we have seen, each of these features can be found in the domed squares as well, but that group as a whole exhibits diversity in material, patronage, setting and plans. Taken as a unit, this set of characteristics begins to establish the tomb towers as a coherent group apart from the rest.

Geography also delimits the tomb towers: they are found in or very close to the Alborz Mountains in northern Iran, again with the exception of the Gunbad-i 'Ali, which is located at Abarquh in Fars. Mil-i Radkan, Lajim and Resget are found deep within the mountains, while the Gunbad-i Qabus is near Gorgan, on the coastal plain, and the Pir-i 'Alamdar and Chehel Dokhtaran are located in Damghan, on the plain just to the south of the mountains. The mountains not only provide a barrier separating the Caspian coast from the rest of Iran, but they also trap the moisture from the sea, creating a moist environment with high rainfall and lush greenery. The height of the mountains has also

made the region exceedingly difficult for armies to penetrate, so that the region is one which has been resistant to outside influences.

The mountains and the particular culture which flourished there are key to understanding this group of buildings. Although the earliest of the tomb towers is the Gunbad-i Qabus, constructed in 1006-7, this unusual masterpiece clearly did not emerge out of nowhere, and only accidents of survival can account for the lack of sufficient context. Mil-i Radkan, Lajim and Resget, all very similar to one another and all constructed for princes of the Bavandid dynasty, form the core of the tomb tower group, while the other four buildings represent extensions of this genre outside of the mountain fastness of the Alborz constructed by patrons with strong links to the Caspian region. The core group is extremely remote and difficult to access even today, in an area that was relatively unexplored by the 10th century geographers. Muqaddasi, who did visit some areas in the Alborz, describes the trade routes of his day as following much the same routes as the roads of today, and hence nowhere near the Bavandid tomb towers.⁶⁹⁹ The other four towers, however, are found on main roads: the Gunbad-i Qabus is on the road from Gurgan to Khorasan; Damghan, where both the Pir-i 'Alamdār and Chehel Dokhtaran are located, is on the main east-west road which formed part of the Silk Route; and the Gunbad-i 'Ali is near the road from Shiraz to Yazd.

With the exception of the Damghan monuments, all the tomb towers are located away from any centre of habitation and on inaccessible, high ground. Although a modern town has sprung up around it, the Gunbad-i Qabus was constructed several miles away from Gurgan, Qabus' capital city; as the landscape was flat, an artificial mound 10 meters high was constructed to give added height to the monument. Mil-i Radkan, which is far

⁶⁹⁹ Muqaddasi, pp. 310-13.

from the nearest village even today, was constructed atop a hill deep into the Alborz Mountains. The Lajim tower was built on a hill which falls steeply away into deep ravines on two sides; a village is near it today, but archaeological remains, possibly of a castle, at the far end of the village show that earlier habitation was approximately 1 kilometer from the mausoleum. The Resget tower is about 2 kilometers away from a modern village, and there are no signs of any earlier remains anywhere closer to it. It is perched on a hillside which is exceedingly steep on all sides. The Gunbad-i ‘Ali, although more accessible than the Alborz towers, is likewise perched on a steep and craggy hill outside the town of Abarquh. The Damghan towers, although subsumed within the town today, were well outside it on the road to Semnan when they were constructed (and even up until the early 20th century).⁷⁰⁰

Not only is the core group of tomb towers located on high ground in inaccessible mountain terrain, but they also have high entrances approximately 5 feet off the ground, effectively prohibiting entry to all but the most determined individuals.⁷⁰¹ The Gunbad-i ‘Ali was similarly inaccessible, whereas this feature was lost in the Gurgan and Damghan towers. Only the Gunbad-i Qabus had a window, located high up in the dome and essentially useless for admitting any light.⁷⁰² So upon entering one of the tomb towers, the visitor is confronted by a small, dark, undecorated, round chamber, devoid even of the symbolic sarcophagi which mark the location of the body underneath in the domed square mausolea. The only exception is the Pir-i ‘Alamdar, where the interior has a stucco coating with a floriated Kufic inscription painted round the room just under the base of the dome. Clearly the tomb towers, especially the core group, were not designed

⁷⁰⁰ Blair 1992, p. 123.

⁷⁰¹ A modern staircase now provides entry to the Lajim tower.

⁷⁰² A small window was later carved into the Pir-i ‘Alamdar, but this is not original.

to be frequently entered, and were never meant to function as sites of *ziyarat*. Instead the exteriors of these buildings carry the messages their patrons wished to convey.

For the core group of tomb towers, this was a bilingual message, with the Arabic foundation inscriptions repeated in Pahlavi. This use of Pahlavi in Islamic foundation inscriptions is entirely unique. The earliest extant New Persian foundation inscription, at Shah Fazl, also dates to the 11th century, but this is the language of the Persian Renaissance, and so the only surprising aspect of its sudden appearance is the fact that it was the Qarakhanids rather than the Samanids who first elected to use this language in architectural inscriptions. The Bavandids, on the other hand, eschewed both New Persian and the local vernacular, Tabari, in favor of the language of the Sasanians. The Sasanian connection is further underscored with the use of the calendar adopted in the reign of Yazdgerd III, the last Sasanian emperor; the Gunbad-i Qabus also uses this calendar, although its foundation inscription is in Arabic alone.

Another feature which distinguishes the tomb towers from the contemporary mausolea is of course their height. The Gunbad-i Qabus is by far the highest at 51 meters; next is the Mil-i Radkan at 35 meters, while the rest all measure between 14 and 16 meters high. The majority are therefore not actually any higher than most of the domed square mausolea; it is the ratio of their proportions which enables them to be categorized as towers. As mentioned earlier, Hillenbrand has calculated that their ratio of width to height ranges from 1:3.5 to 1:5.5, whereas in the domed squares it rarely exceeds 1:2.⁷⁰³ Combined with their dramatic settings in the landscape, this gives the tomb towers an appearance of height which the domed square mausolea entirely lack.

⁷⁰³ Hillenbrand FFM, pp. 282-3.

However, these differences are not merely formal but also indicate a difference in function. Whereas all of the domed square mausolea which have been excavated in the former Soviet Union have at least one body buried beneath the floor, the tomb towers do not actually contain any bodies. That these buildings were used for something other than burial is asserted by at least one medieval text: according to Jannabi, the body of the Ziyarid ruler Qabus b. Vushmgir was placed inside a crystal coffin and suspended by chains from the roof of the Gunbad-i Qabus. Diez took this story as evidence of lingering “Avestan” practices,⁷⁰⁴ although this in no way accords with Zoroastrian funerary practice, as such a coffin would serve to preserve the flesh contained within it and would hence be anathema in an orthodox Zoroastrian context. As Reuben Levy pointed out, the story mirrors that of the prophet Daniel suspended in a crystal coffin from a bridge at Susa, and is clearly apocryphal.⁷⁰⁵ It does, however, contain a memory of something different and unusual taking place in the Gunbad-i Qabus.

Grabar has suggested that perhaps the tower was never meant to function as a mausoleum per se, but is instead more of a victory symbol, akin to the Ghaznavid towers of indeterminate function farther to the east.⁷⁰⁶ The inscription refers to the building as a “lofty palace,” or *qasr al-‘ali*; it does not call the building a grave (*qabr*), or a dome (*qubba*), a term frequently used to refer to mausolea by their most distinguishing feature, or a *turba*, a term literally meaning “dust” which by this time had acquired the connotation of a funerary building.⁷⁰⁷ As Blair points out, the term *qasr* is an ambiguous

⁷⁰⁴ Diez, SPA, p. 927; see also Godard, SPA vol. II, pp. 970-1. Godard does not mention any Avestan associations, but does support Diez’ contention that the body was in a coffin suspended from the ceiling, as detailed by Jannabi.

⁷⁰⁵ Cited in Azarpay 1981, p. 12, n. 23.

⁷⁰⁶ Grabar 1966, p. 44.

⁷⁰⁷ On *turba*, see Leisten, EI2, pp. 673-5.

one which even in the Quran was used for mansions of Paradise as well as for secular buildings.⁷⁰⁸ Hence its use in the inscription could lend support to either interpretation of the tower's purpose. The inscription also reveals that the construction of the building was ordered by Qabus himself during his lifetime, which might seem to lend credence to Grabar's interpretation.

However, this exceedingly monumental tower has garnered attention long before its inclusion in the canon of Islamic architectural history, and its function as a mausoleum has always been taken as a given. Ibn Isfandiyar, the most authoritative source for the Caspian provinces, says that Qabus "was buried beneath a dome outside Gurgan on the road to Khorasan."⁷⁰⁹ This statement clearly indicates not only that the building was considered to be a mausoleum but also that an actual burial was assumed to be contained within it. Other medieval writers who took note of the building include Sam'ani.⁷¹⁰

The only way to understand this exceptional building is to examine it within the context of the core group of tomb towers, those of the Bavandids. As these buildings also lack the remains of bodies, we see that this is indicative of the function of the towers and not just an anomaly of the Gunbad-i Qabus.⁷¹¹ The inscriptions of these buildings, however, clearly state their funerary function. The Mil-i Radkan has two inscriptions: one, on a terracotta plaque over the doorway, not only refers to the building as a *qasr* but also echoes the position of the same attribution on the Gunbad-i Qabus; this inscription is in Arabic only. The second, positioned in a band underneath the dome and translated into

⁷⁰⁸ Blair 1992, p. 64.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 233.

⁷¹⁰ Diez enumerates the accounts of 19th and early 20th century travelers regarding the building: see Diez 1918, pp. 40-43.

⁷¹¹ As the restorations at the Damghan towers and the Gunbad-i 'Ali have been less extensive than at the Bavandid towers, it is not known whether these peripheral towers contain bodies or not.

Pahlavi, refers to the building as a *mashhad* in Arabic, but as a *gunbad* in Pahlavi. Taken together, these terms indicate unequivocally that the building had a funerary function. *Mashhad*, derived from the verb *s-h-d*, meaning “to witness,” is more commonly used for the burial place of a martyr (*shahid*), or more generally for that of a holy person. It does therefore carry with it the connotation of a site of *ziyarat*, and hence does seem somewhat anomalous for the mausoleum of a secular ruler built in a style and location designed to discourage entry. Perhaps some ambivalence towards the term is reflected in the fact that it was translated as *gunbad*, which would correspond with *qubba* rather than *mashhad*.

The inscription on the tower at Lajim, which runs in two bands under the dome, refers to the building as both a grave (*qabr*) and a dome (*qubba*), in ungrammatical Arabic; the Pahlavi translation calls it a *gunbad*. The *qubba/gunbad* combination clearly indicates a funerary monument, while the addition of *qabr* unambiguously refers to burial. The Resget inscription is equally clear: the band under the dome contains the Quranic verse 21:36, which refers to death and is frequently attested on funerary monuments.⁷¹² The foundation inscription, on a stucco plaque above the door, calls the building a *qubba*; the Pahlavi translation is unfortunately too damaged to read. However, all three of the Bavandid towers clearly state that they served a funerary function, with the use of *qasr* at Mil-i Radkan mirroring the use of that term at the Gunbad-i Qabus. In all likelihood, *qasr* was intended as a parallel to the Persian *kakh*, which was used in the *Shahnama* to refer to the mausoleum of Nushirvan; as will be discussed below, the description of this edifice is remarkably similar to the tomb towers.

⁷¹² The verse reads: Every soul shall taste of death, and We try you with evil and good for a testing, then unto Us you shall be returned. See Blair 1992, p. 208.

At the Pir-i ‘Alamdar, the grammatically correct Arabic inscription echoes that on the slightly earlier tomb tower at Lajim, but with *qasr* substituted for *qabr*, hence “This *qubba* is the *qasr*...”. The inscription on the second Damghan tower, Chehel Dokhtaran, again uses *qubba* but also introduces a term new to the tomb towers: *turba*. Again, the context is unambiguously funerary: “The exalted amir...ordered the construction of this *qubba*, preparing for his sleep a *turba* for himself and his sons...” At the Gunbad-i ‘Ali, *turba* appears again in conjunction with *qabr*. These towers, like the Gunbad-i Qabus, use only Arabic in their inscriptions, yet the terminology and phrasing show an awareness of that used in the bilingual Bavandid inscriptions.

So in the core group of tomb towers and the Gunbad-i Qabus, we have an interesting dichotomy: the inscriptions clearly indicate a funerary function for these monuments, and yet no bodies were buried within them. Symbolic tombs did exist elsewhere: in Bokhara, for example, where the eponymous tombs of legendary figures Afrasiab and Siyavush were the focus of local rituals, as discussed in Chapter 4. In Fatimid Egypt as well, mausolea were constructed for individuals who had lived and died in Arabia at the time of the Prophet; Caroline Williams has argued that this was an intentional programme on the part of the Fatimids, who were Shi·ite rulers in a region where most Muslims were Sunni, to inculcate loyalty to both their regime and their sect by constructing shrines to the *ahl al-bayt* which could serve as a focus for *ziyarat* and other expressions of popular piety.⁷¹³ Likewise, the Bavandids were Shi·ite rulers in a region where the majority of the population was Zoroastrian, so on the surface it seems as if their tomb towers could indeed have been symbolic graves. However, as we have seen, the architecture and the location of these buildings were both designed to discourage

⁷¹³ Williams 1985, pp. 39-60.

entry, and so they cannot have served the same purpose as the Fatimid mausolea. In order to ascertain both how these buildings were used and what sort of messages their patrons wished to convey, we must take a closer look at the aims and aspirations of those particular patrons.

Qabus b. Vushmgir, the builder of the earliest extant tomb tower, is a figure who features prominently in the regional sources. As outlined in Chapter 3, the Ziyarid dynasty was founded by Qabus' paternal uncle, Mardavij b. Ziyar, an adventurer from Dailam who claimed descent from Arghush Farhadan, a ruler of Gilan during the reign of the Sasanian king Kay-Khosrau.⁷¹⁴ Mardavij was an ardent Persian partisan who aimed to re-create the Sasanian empire, but was murdered by his slaves before he could attempt to achieve this ambition. He was succeeded by his brother, Vushmgir, who married a Bavandid princess, so that Qabus had a viable claim to Sasanian descent on both sides of his family.⁷¹⁵ Qabus gained the throne in 977 after the death of his elder brother; he advanced his claim over that of his nephew with help from the Buyid ruler 'Adud al-Daula and Qabus' maternal uncle, the Bavandid Ispahbad Rustam b. Sharvin. Following Buyid orders, the caliph bestowed the title "Shams al-Ma'ali" on Qabus. At that time the Ziyarid realm covered the Caspian coast of Tabaristan and the region around Gurgan, with Gurgan as the capital; Qabus would later add Gilan, Ruyan and Chalus to his realm.

When Fakhr al-Daula, the Buyid ruler of Rayy, fell out with his brothers in 980 and was attacked by them, he fled to Gurgan and was given refuge by Qabus. This enraged 'Adud al-Daula, who attacked Gurgan, forcing both Fakhr al-Daula and Qabus to

⁷¹⁴ This claim continued to be asserted by the Ziyarids, and is repeated by Qabus' grandson, Kay-Ka'us b. Iskandar, in the *Qabusnama*: see Levy 1951, p. 2.

⁷¹⁵ Although both the Ziyarids and Bavandids claimed descent from rulers who were vassals of the Sasanians, this gave them by extension a claim to Sasanian descent as well through intermarriage between the imperial family and the local rulers in the Caspian regions. See al-Biruni, pp. 47-8.

flee. The pair found refuge in Nishapur, which at that time was part of the Samanid realm. The Samanids, always eager to thwart the Buyids, attempted to restore Qabus to his throne, but failed. Fakhr al-Daula regained his throne after the death of his brother, Mu'ayyad al-Daula, in 984, but he then turned on Qabus, probably fearing a strong rival at Gurgan. So Qabus stayed in exile in Nishapur for a total of eighteen years, and only regained his throne in 998, long after the death of Fakhr al-Daula in 986, when his minor son Majd al-Daula inherited the throne at Rayy and his widow, the Bavandid princess Shirin, took over as queen regent.

Qabus ruled until 1012, when he was overthrown by a group of nobles who were exasperated by his harsh treatment of their class; the last straw was apparently his execution of his chamberlain, whom he had made governor of Astarabad, on charges of embezzlement. The rebels enlisted Qabus' son, Minuchihr, who feared losing his own right to the throne if he did not cooperate. Due to the participation of his son in the conspiracy, Qabus abdicated in his favor and retired to a castle at Janashk. The rebels, however, still feared him, and conspired to have him locked out of this castle in winter, so that he froze to death. Minuchihr did manage to retain the Ziyarid throne, but only by pledging allegiance to Mahmud of Ghazna and ruling as his vassal, a course of action his father had been strong enough to avoid. The Ziyarids ruled until the end of the 11th century, but only as vassals of the Ghaznavids and then the Saljuqs.

In addition to his political life, the sources also comment extensively on Qabus' character. Al-Biruni, for example, who dedicated his *Athar al-baqiya* to Qabus, compares his patron's character to that of the Prophet himself and then continues:

How wonderfully has he, whose name is to be exalted and extolled, combined with the glory of his noble extraction the graces of his generous character, with his valiant soul all laudable qualities, such as piety and righteousness, carefulness in defending and

observing the rites of religion, justice and equity, humility and beneficence, firmness and determination, liberality and gentleness, the talent for ruling and governing, for managing and deciding, and other qualities, which no fancy could comprehend, and no human being enumerate!⁷¹⁶

Al-Biruni clearly knew how to appeal to his patron's vanity, a quality noticeably absent from his list. A more balanced view is given by Ibn Isfandiyar, who wrote his *Tarikh-i Tabaristan* two centuries after the death of Qabus for a Bavandid patron, utilizing contemporary sources such as the *Bavandnama* and the *Ta'rikh-i Yamini* of al-'Utbi, the chronicler of Mahmud of Ghazna. Ibn Isfandiyar praises Qabus' positive attributes, such as his learning, piety, munificence, magnanimity, wisdom, prudence, and intelligence, but also tells us that Qabus was arrogant, harsh, and sometimes cruel.⁷¹⁷ He enumerates the fields in which Qabus particularly excelled as manly exercises (e.g. hunting, riding, archery and the like), philosophy, astronomy, astrology, and the Arabic language.⁷¹⁸

Qabus does seem to have been generally magnanimous in at least one respect: as far as we know, he gave shelter to whoever sought refuge at his court. In the case of Fakhr al-Daula, this cost him dearly, yet he never turned against his erstwhile ally. Another example is Ibn Sina, who left the court of the Khorezmshah and came to Gurgan in order to avoid being taken into the service of Mahmud of Ghazna; in taking him in, Qabus risked incurring the wrath of the formidable Ghaznavid. He also disregarded the opinion of the religious classes by sheltering the poet Divarvaz, who had been persecuted by them for staggering drunk past the shrine of the Zaidi imam Nasir-i Kabir in Amul.

⁷¹⁶ Al-Biruni, p. 2.

⁷¹⁷ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 232.

⁷¹⁸ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 92.

He seems to have particularly enjoyed the poem in Tabari which Divarvaz composed to relate his misadventures, and dubbed the poet “*Mastamard*.”⁷¹⁹

However, in one case he did turn against one of his asylum seekers, Muntasir, the last Samanid. Muntasir had been defeated by an alliance of the Qarakhanids and Ghaznavids and taken prisoner by the latter. He escaped and sought refuge with Qabus; this was naturally granted. He wished to regain his kingdom, but Qabus advised him that it would be impossible for him to defeat either the Qarakhanids or the Ghaznavids, and that a more realistic target would be Majd al-Daula at Rayy (no doubt he was also thinking of avenging the perfidy of Fakhr al-Daula). Muntasir duly set out for Rayy with two of Qabus’ sons, but was betrayed by members of his own entourage and hence was unable to carry out a siege. Muntasir, also abandoned by Qabus’ sons, decided to attempt to wrest Nishapur away from Mahmud. When this inevitably failed, Qabus prevented the Samanid from re-entering Gurgan, effectively sealing his fate. As Ibn Isfandiyar relates, even though his sympathies were with the Samanids, he “thenceforth concerned himself no further with the fortunes of the house of Saman.”⁷²⁰ Presumably allowing him entry into Gurgan would have obliged Qabus to shelter him, as he seems to have taken the Caspian tradition of hospitality as a serious obligation.⁷²¹ Understandably, Qabus could not have risked the ire of Mahmud on that occasion, as the Ghaznavid would inevitably have considered the sheltering of someone who had just attacked his realm (and no doubt

⁷¹⁹ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 89.

⁷²⁰ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 227-8.

⁷²¹ According to Caspian tradition, all guests should be welcomed without question for a period of three days, and only then could inquiries be made as to the purpose of the visit. See Muqaddasi, p. 324; Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 23. Concrete examples of Caspian hospitality include the 11th century Bavandid Ispahbad ‘Ali b. Shahriyar b. Qarin: those who were granted refuge at his court include a son of Masud of Ghazna, a nephew of Sultan Sanjar, Toghril Beg, several sons of the Khorezmshah, and the atabeg of Ardabil. See Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 58-60.

had every intention of doing so again) as a much greater provocation than accepting the services of a prominent scholar he had wanted for his own court.

In addition to Ibn Sina, al-Biruni and the poet Divarvaz, Qabus also patronized al-Tha'alibi, who composed his *Yatima al-Dahr* at the Ziyarid court in Gurgan. Other poets at Qabus' court included Abu'l Qasim Ziyad b. Muhammad al-Qumri and Abu Bakr Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Khusravi al-Sarakhsi; their panegyrics and al-Tha'alibi's dedication echo the type of lavish praise produced by al-Biruni, and hence reveal little about Qabus himself. Al-Sarakhsi composed verses in both Arabic and Persian, a skill which was common at that time and appealed to sophisticated patrons such as Qabus. Another such patron was the Sahib Isma'il b. 'Abbad, vizier to Mu'ayyad al-Daula and then Fakhr al-Daula. It was Isma'il b. 'Abbad rather than the rulers he served who attracted poets and scholars to the court at Rayy; al-Sarakhsi was one example who moved between Rayy and Gurgan. The Buyid vizier and Qabus each respected the learning and culture of the other, and engaged in an extended correspondence.⁷²²

Qabus was far more than an enlightened patron; he himself authored a treatise on the use of the astrolabe and composed poetry in both Arabic and Persian. His surviving works include love poems in both languages, as well as the following poem, translated from Arabic by Browne, in which he laments the misfortune of rulers:

Say to him who fain would taunt us with vicissitudes of Fate,
Warreth Fate or fighteth Fortune save against the high and great?
Seest thou not the putrid corpse which ocean to its surface flings,
While within its deep abysses lie the pearls desired of Kings?
Though the hands of Fate attack us, though her buffets us disarm,
Though her long-continued malice bring upon us hurt and harm,
In the sky are constellations none can count, yet of them all
On the Sun and Moon alone the dark Eclipse's shadows fall!⁷²³

⁷²² Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 92. Since Ibn Isfandiyar used a Bavandid library at Rayy, he may well have had access to this correspondence.

⁷²³ Browne, vol. 1, p. 470.

He was almost certainly thinking of his long period in exile when he composed the poem, and may well have written it in Nishapur. One of his Persian poems hints at other ways in which he passed his time in Khorasan:

The things of this world from end to end are the goal of desire and greed,
And I set before this heart of mine the things which I most do need,
But a score of things I have chosen out of the world's unnumbered throng,
That in quest of these I my soul may please and speed my life along.
Verse, and song, and minstrelsy, and wine full-flavoured and sweet,
Backgammon and chess, and the hunting ground, and the falcon and cheetah fleet,
Field and ball, and audience hall, and battle and banquet rare,
Horse and arms, and a generous hand, and praise of my Lord and prayer.⁷²⁴

Qabus enumerates here the standard pastimes associated with Persian kingship, and in all likelihood he did actually engage in many of them, particularly during his years of enforced leisure in Nishapur. His father, who was known to be an excellent rider, was killed on a boar hunt, a pastime frequently depicted (albeit more successfully) on Sasanian silver plates, and hence associated with the tropes of kingship. Through his poetry, Qabus appears to be keenly aware of his own position and of the long tradition of *javanmardi* associated with that position. To a much greater extent than any other Persian dynast, he had first-hand knowledge of the courts of his contemporaries, through his exile in the Samanid realm, through the time he spent with Fakhr al-Daula and his long correspondence with Isma'il b. 'Abbad, and through his many close connections with the Bavandids. Qabus therefore knew of the Persian Renaissance as promoted by the Samanids as well as the conservatism of his Caspian homeland. His kingdom was positioned between those two areas geographically, just as he himself culturally participated in both.

⁷²⁴ Browne, vol. 1, p. 471.

His Bavandid connections were both familial and political; as noted above, his mother was a Bavandid princess. It is somewhat difficult to discern her precise position in the Bavandid family, since her brother is referred to as the Ispahbad Rustam b. Sharvin Bavand by Ibn Isfandiyar,⁷²⁵ and yet elsewhere he is not named in the succession of Bavandid Ispahbads. Instead, Shahriyar b. Sharvin is named as the Ispahbad who ruled during the reign of Vushmgir, and he was succeeded by his son Dara and then by his son, Shahriyar.⁷²⁶ So Rustam b. Sharvin was the brother of Shahriyar b. Sharvin, and Vushmgir's bride was their sister, whom he had met while seeking refuge at Sharvin's court. Rustam would then have ruled a small area in the mountains, recognizing his brother as his overlord, as the senior member of the family. This type of system was a Caspian tradition which we know well since it was also practiced by the Buyids, with their three separate capitals at Shiraz, Rayy and Baghdad. It was a system which naturally led to disagreements over successions and over who precisely should be regarded as the senior family member; this is also well-attested in the Buyid realm.⁷²⁷ With his close ties to the Bavandids, Qabus was deeply involved in such struggles amongst them, just as they were also involved in the succession struggles of the Ziyarids.

When Qabus first came to power, it was with the support of his uncle, Rustam b. Sharvin, who pushed Qabus' claim over that of his nephew, supported by Rukn al-Daula (Qabus' elder brother Bihistun was presumably the son of a different mother and hence less closely connected with the Bavandids). Qabus later had a disagreement with his

⁷²⁵ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 92.

⁷²⁶ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 237-9.

⁷²⁷ Islamic Turkish rulers later practiced a similar system, although in the pre-Islamic period the Turkish division of power amongst a ruler and sub-rulers was different, with individuals changing position in an orderly fashion (albeit a confusing one, as titles changed with position) and the practice of a clear territorial division between east and western portions of a realm: see Frye 1996, pp. 206-7.

uncle, and Ibn Isfandiyar cites the resulting letter which Qabus wrote to Rustam,⁷²⁸ interestingly, this letter was composed in Arabic. It is not surprising that Qabus would choose this language to express himself, since his eloquence in Arabic was widely noted, and he may not have felt as comfortable composing in Tabari (although he certainly understood the language, as is attested by his appreciation of the poetry of Divarvaz). This shows that his Bavandid relative would also have understood and appreciated his eloquence in Arabic, and that New Persian was not the natural language of choice for Caspian rulers to use amongst themselves. The letter seems to have achieved its objective, as the two did not fall out to an extent which would have resulted in military conflict or in plotting against one another.

Another Bavandid relative who was close to Qabus was his second cousin Shahriyar b. Dara b. Shahriyar b. Sharvin, who willingly accompanied Qabus into exile in Nishapur. At that time, Shahriyar's grandfather was still the Ispahbad and head of the family. After regaining his kingdom, Qabus encouraged him to attack Rustam b. al-Marzuban, who was ruling the area of Shahriyar-kuh and is referred to as a maternal uncle of Majd al-Daula by Ibn Isfandiyar.⁷²⁹ Shahriyar succeeded, and the two cousins continued to expand their respective kingdoms in alliance with one another, fighting against Nasr b. Hasan b. Firuzan and Majd al-Daula; the former was defeated, and the latter had no choice but to make peace with Qabus and Shahriyar.

The exact relationships between these protagonists have so far not been fully ascertained, primarily because the few numismatists and historians to have dealt with the Bavandids (namely Miles and Madelung) have tried to establish a single line of rule to

⁷²⁸ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 92.

⁷²⁹ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 228.

correspond with both the numismatic and literary evidence. This approach has proven to be impossible, with too many discrepancies to reconcile. In my opinion, the Bavandids can only be understood in light of a similar system of rule as that of the Buyids, a system we know to have originated in the Caspian region. We know of two locations which served as strongholds of the dynasty: Shahriyar-kuh (so called because of the propensity of this family to name their sons “Shahriyar”) and Firim. Ibn Isfandiyyar makes a distinction in his descriptions of the Ispahbads: he tells of Rustam b. Sharvin Bavand, for example, and Marzuban b. Rustam b. Shirvin Parim. I am suggesting that at least two Bavandids ruled simultaneously, one at Shahriyar-kuh (the one designated as “Bavand”) and another at Firim (Ibn Isfandiyyar’s “Parim”), with the ruler of Shahriyar-kuh usually being regarded as the senior member of the family. This not only accords with the way the Buyids organized their affairs, but also enables much better sense to be made of the historical evidence.

According to Madelung, for example, Shirin, the wife of Fakhr al-Daula and mother of Majd al-Daula, was the daughter of Rustam b. Sharvin, Qabus’ favorite uncle; he relied on Hilal al-Sabi and Yaqt as sources.⁷³⁰ This would mean that Qabus attacked his first cousin both directly and indirectly (by encouraging the last Samanid, Muntasir) and yet maintained a close relationship with his uncle, which seems unlikely. Furthermore, Ibn Isfandiyyar refers repeatedly to Rustam b. al-Marzuban as the maternal uncle of Majd al-Daula, meaning that he was Shirin’s brother; the Qabusnama concurs with this.⁷³¹ Ibn Isfandiyyar used the *Bavandnama* as one of his sources, whereas the Qabusnama was composed by Qabus’ grandson, whose mother was a daughter of

⁷³⁰ Madelung, CHI, vol. 4, p. 217 and n. 2.

⁷³¹ Madelung inaccurately states that the Qabusnama asserts that Shirin was the *niece* of Rustam b. al-Marzuban; see Madelung, CHI, vol. 4, p. 217, n. 2.

Marzuban b. Rustam b. Shirvin Parim. Both of these Caspian sources, who were in a position to know Bavandid genealogy accurately, refer to Marzuban b. Rustam b. Shirvin *Parim*. Previous scholars have overlooked this differentiation made in the Caspian sources, when actually accepting that there were multiple branches of the Bavandid family allows us to reconcile literary evidence, numismatics, and the inscriptions on the tomb towers. Ibn Isfandiyar gives a clear line of descent for the main branch, the rulers of Shahriyar-kuh. Coins which have been discovered from al-Marzuban b. Sharvin, dated 981 and 984-5, and from Sharvan b. Rustam, minted in Firim in 985-6, do not correspond with this genealogy, and attempts to make them fit are inevitably clumsy and result in illogical conclusions (such as the grandmother of X not marrying until after the death of her grandson, or the brother of Y living several generations after his putative sibling).

It is much more logical to accept the Caspian sources, which infer that Shirin was the daughter of Marzuban b. Rustam b. Shirvin Parim, since Rustam b. al-Marzuban was her brother. Then the enmity of Qabus and his second cousin, Shahriyar b. Dara b. Shahriyar, towards Rustam and Shirin makes sense. Rustam had taken over Shahriyar-kuh while Shahriyar was in exile with Qabus in Nishapur; hence Shahriyar was re-asserting the right of his branch of the Bavandids to rule that region and head the family. Later, however, towards the end of Qabus' reign, Rustam attacked and defeated Shahriyar, after which the main Bavandid branch was deprived of power for several generations.⁷³² Shirin was not only Rustam's sister, but also the wife of Fakhr al-Daula, who had turned on Qabus after regaining his throne in 984. A coin exists minted at Firim

⁷³² Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 239.

in 986 by Shahriyar in which he pledges loyalty to Fakhr al-Daula,⁷³³ indicating that an alliance with Shahriyar continued after the Buyid left Nishapur; after Fakhr al-Daula died that year, the long struggle began which pitted Qabus and Shahriyar against Shirin, her son Majd al-Daula, and her brother Rustam.

Throughout both his reigns and his period in exile, during which he partook of the turmoil of not only Caspian politics but also the wider regional political stage, Qabus emerges as a man with strong familial loyalties but also as a shrewd manipulator. In all his political maneuvering, his greatest triumph was undoubtedly his ability to keep Mahmud of Ghazna at arm's length without becoming his vassal. He also managed to not only expand his realm to encompass Gilan, Ruyan and parts of Dailam, but also to hold firm to his capital, Gurgan, which neither his father nor his uncle had managed to do. Both Mardavij and Vushmgir had ruled from Gurgan only briefly, whereas Qabus succeeded in making the city his own during his second reign, and successfully repelled several sieges by his Caspian rivals.

Gurgan is located on the coastal plain and was bounded by the Alborz range on the west, the Caspian to the northwest, the frontier with the Ghuzz to the northeast, and Khorasan to the south and east. After the fall of the Sasanian empire, the city was captured relatively early by the Arabs (in 717) and was the site of an Arab garrison; by the time of Qabus, these Arabs had melded with the local population, just as in Khorasan. The culture of the city was much more akin to neighboring Khorasan than to the Caspian region, and like Khorasan, it had been a locus of much early Islamic intellectual activity. The city enjoyed both intellectual ties and trading connections with Yemen; Muqaddasi

⁷³³ Madelung, CHI vol. 4, p. 217; see also Blair 1992, p. 89. The coin indicates a date of 986-7, but since the date of Fakhr al-Daula's death falls in 986, it had to have been minted before then.

mentions that the silk for which Gurgan was famous was exported to Yemen in the form of veils.⁷³⁴ Ibn Hauqal states that the climate of Gurgan was perfect for silkworms, so that all the silk of Tabaristan was actually made from Gurgan worms.⁷³⁵ In addition to the trade with Yemen, the silk was also exported northwards, through the port of Abaskun on the Caspian, to the realm of the Khazars and beyond. The city of Gurgan was divided into two parts by a river, with the most populous areas on the eastern bank;⁷³⁶ Muqaddasi informs us that the population was comprised of Hanafis, Shi'ites, and dhimmis.⁷³⁷

Excavations at Gurgan have revealed much about the material culture of the city during the Ziyarid era. Fragments of architectural decoration have been found in a 10th century context consisting of stucco related to both Sasanian stucco and that of the mosque at Nayin.⁷³⁸ The pottery was closely related to that found in other major Iranian centres, so that in the 9th century green-glazed wares gave way to luster, Tang-style splashed wares and sgraffiato (an invention of the Caspian region).⁷³⁹ In the 10-11th centuries, these wares were mostly superseded by epigraphic ware, buff ware with figural, floral and animal decoration, and another style of earthenware, decorated almost exclusively with birds, which has been associated with Sari. Hence the ceramic production of Gurgan in the Ziyarid era overlapped with that of Sari, Nishapur, and Samarqand. The excavators also pointed out that the kilns themselves were also very

⁷³⁴ Muqaddasi, p. 322. Tha'alabi also mentioned that the city was famous for black cloth; see Tha'alabi, p. 131. On the scholarly connections between Gurgan and Yemen, see Bulliet 1994, p. 85.

⁷³⁵ Ibn Hauqal (Kramers & Wiet 1964), p. 372.

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Muqaddasi, pp. 320-2.

⁷³⁸ Kiani 1984, p. 34.

⁷³⁹ Ibid, pp. 40-50.

much like those of Amul, Sari, Samarqand and Nishapur.⁷⁴⁰ Aside from these ceramic vessels, terracotta figurines were also produced from the 10-13th centuries in animal and human shapes; many of the humans were seated and adorned with Sasanian-style crowns.⁷⁴¹ The purpose of these figures is unknown.

Gurgan clearly fell between Khorasan and the Caspian region politically and culturally as well as geographically, and its inhabitants participated in the artistic and intellectual trends of both areas. Qabus mirrored this, with his strong family ties to Tabaristan and his years in exile in Nishapur. His mausoleum, however, took the form of the towers of the Caspian region, rather than the domed squares popular in Khorasan and Transoxiana. Although it is the earliest extant tomb tower, it is highly unlikely to have been the first in the series, given the accomplishment of the building.⁷⁴² The Gunbad-i Qabus should rather be seen as an interpretation of the Alborz type of tower with the unmistakable stamp of Qabus himself. Blair has suggested that he was probably responsible for the design of the inscription;⁷⁴³ it is difficult to imagine that the enormous size and dramatic appearance of the building were not also due to his bidding. The inscription clearly states that it was designed during his lifetime, and the grandiosity of the building accords well with what the sources tell us about Qabus. This aesthetic, where form and quality are of the utmost importance and the only decoration is a severe yet well-executed Kufic script, recalls the epigraphic ware which was produced at Gurgan as well as at Nishapur and Samarqand. Hence the Gunbad-i Qabus is an enlarged

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 69.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid, p. 79.

⁷⁴² Diez referred to a pre-Islamic tomb tower composed of stone at Lartale; his line drawing of the building does indeed bear a strong morphological resemblance to the Bavandid towers, and he may well have found a Sasanian prototype for this genre. However, no photograph of this monument exists, and no other scholar has visited the site or mentioned it. Ascertaining whether it still exists and surveying this monument is an interesting future project which could shed further light on the tomb towers. See Diez 1923, p. 52.

⁷⁴³ Blair 1992, p. 65.

and majestic version of a Bavandid tomb tower with a decorative scheme reflecting that of the sophisticated pottery of the Samanid and Ziyarid realms.

At least in the Saljuq period, this aesthetic was not completely excluded from the Bavandid arts, in spite of their generally conservative adherence to Persian styles harking back to the past; as mentioned in Chapter 3, the silver dish of Shahriyar b. Qarin is a lavish version of epigraphic ware. However, the Bavandid tomb towers do not reflect this style. Not only are their bricks widely spaced with mortar, giving them a slightly woven appearance, but they also bear significantly more decoration than the Gunbad-i Qabus: their inscriptions are framed with bands of decoration and their doors are surmounted by either stucco inscription plaques, at Mil-i Radkan and Resget, or rows of blind niches echoing the band of decoration below the dome, at Lajim. They are also more modest constructions than the Gunbad-i Qabus, although still of a monumental size and visible from some distance. They are fitting memorials to the regional dynasts to whom they are dedicated.

None of the rulers named in the inscriptions are known in the sources, although Madelung has surmised that Mohammad b. Vandin Bavand, named in the inscription at Mil-i Radkan, was the Bavandid prince who helped his relative, Shirin, quash a rebellion.⁷⁴⁴ Whether this is the case or not, is it not so surprising that the three extant Bavandid monuments are for unknown individuals when one considers that the Bavandids ruled without interruption in their mountain stronghold for 700 years, a record nearly equal to that of the Ottomans. They did not, however, engage in the Ottoman practice of routinely killing all siblings who were potential rivals when a new sultan ascended to the throne. There must have inevitably been a sizable number of Bavandid

⁷⁴⁴ Madelung, CHI vol. 4, p. 218.

princelings, even if one assumes relatively endogamous marriage and some attrition through the inevitable internecine squabbling and resultant battles. With the Caspian system of several rulers answerable to a senior member of the family, represented by the genealogical line given by Ibn Isfandiyar, perhaps three or four Bavandid princes simultaneously ruled relatively small areas of territory in the Alborz Mountains. Moreover, Ibn Isfandiyar's genealogy has a long gap precisely during the years when the towers at Mil-i Radkan and Lajim were constructed; the fortunes of the main branch were apparently at an ebb from the time when Rustam b. al-Marzuban overthrew Shahriyar b. Dara until the main branch was restored by Qarin b. Surkhab, who died in 1093.⁷⁴⁵

Given the addition of "Bavand" to his name, Muhammad b. Vandin Bavand probably is one of the missing rulers of the main branch of the family. It is interesting that he was named "Muhammad," as prior to this only one Bavandid ruler had an Arabic name: Ja'far b. Shahriyar, who was so named because of his status as a hostage of Harun al-Rashid, even though his father was a Zoroastrian.⁷⁴⁶ Since Vandin is unknown in the sources, it is impossible to know his motive for naming his son, but religious devotion is an obvious explanation for choosing the name of the Prophet. After this, Arabic names became somewhat more common in the family, although traditional Persian names were still the rule even throughout the Mongol era.

Like Qabus, Muhammad b. Vandin constructed his own mausoleum, during his lifetime (the inscription reveals that it was built between 1016 and 1021). Hence like the Gunbad-i Qabus, the Mil-i Radkan gives some indication of the motivations and

⁷⁴⁵ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 239.

⁷⁴⁶ Shahriyar had requested the caliph's help with an internecine squabble; this was given on the condition that he send two of his sons to Baghdad as hostages to insure that he was acting in good faith. He was viewed by the caliph as a tributary ruler, even though his realm was beyond the *dar al-Islam*.

resources of its patron. At 35 metres, it is the tallest of the Bavandid towers, and it is dramatically sited to emphasize its height and be visible from afar. It is topped with a conical dome like that of the Gunbad-i Qabus, and it is quite likely that either Muhammad b. Vandin or his architect had seen the earlier building, particularly since the inscription on the terracotta plaque over the doorway echoes both the terminology of the Gunbad-i Qabus (referring to the building as a *qasr*) and the location of the word *qasr*. The Mil-i Radkan differs from the Gunbad-i Qabus, however, in its usage of stucco, its band of decoration under the dome, and its bilingual foundation inscription, features which it shares with the other Bavandid towers.

Unlike Qabus, Muhammad b. Vandin designates himself as “Client of the Commander of the Faithful,” indicating that caliphal investiture was at least one source of his legitimacy. During this era when the Buyids ruled Baghdad, such investiture was given at their bidding. Some Bavandid coins also express allegiance to the Buyids, indicating that the Buyids were at times active in settling Bavandid internecine squabbles in return for acknowledgement. The known struggle between Rustam b. al-Marzuban and Shahriyar b. Dara, supported by the Buyids and Qabus respectively, is a case in point. Although the coinage of Muhammad b. Vandin is not known, it is likely that he, too, would have acknowledged Buyid overlordship.

Shahriyar b. ‘Abbas b. Shahriyar, named in the inscription on the Lajim tower, is likewise designated as “Client of the Commander of the Faithful,” and hence was probably also supported by the Buyids. He was clearly a ruler of a subsidiary branch of the Bavandids, not the main branch. His mausoleum was built in 1022-23, just one year after the completion of the Mil-i Radkan, and so he must have ruled contemporaneously

with Muhammad b. Vandin. Since Shahriyar was not the patron, the tower was in all likelihood constructed after his death. He may have been a grandson of Shahriyar b. Dara, Qabus' cousin and ally, although given the frequency of the name "Shahriyar" in the Bavandid family, it is impossible to be sure of this. Since his mother was the patron, he probably died relatively young. Her name is given as Chihrazad bt. S[h]-l-i...[kh]-v-r, an unknown name which has been cobbled together by comparing the Pahlavi and the Arabic inscriptions.⁷⁴⁷ She is the only known female patron of a pre-Saljuq mausoleum; as we have already seen, several of the Central Asian mausolea are thought to have female incumbents, but it is not known who ordered them to be constructed. Chihrazad, characterized in the inscription as a "noble lady," clearly ordered the building of the tower at Lajim; the name of her architect, al-Husayn b. 'Ali, is also given. This is the earliest extant mausoleum of this region to name its builder in the inscription.

The Lajim tower is therefore an interesting indication of the status of the royal Bavandid women. For a dynasty so concerned with lineage and proven Sasanian descent, a linkage obtained through the marriage of one of their ancestors to a Sasanian princess, their women were important elements of the family genealogy and valuable tools in the forging of alliances. After all, anyone marrying a Bavandid princess would procure Sasanian descent for his offspring. Pride in such descent can be seen, for example, in the prologue to the *Qabusnama*, where Qabus' grandson traces his own lineage back to the Sasanians through his Bavandid mother and great-grandmother.⁷⁴⁸ In another example, Ibn Isfandiyyar tells of a potential succession crisis in the early 13th century which was averted when the childless ruler of the main branch married his sister off to another

⁷⁴⁷ Blair 1992, pp. 88-9. The Pahlavi inscription was read by Herzfeld from Godard's photographs.

⁷⁴⁸ *Qabusnama*, p. 5 (Levy trans., p. 3).

Ispahbad, probably one of the secondary rulers of the family, and their child inherited the rule of the entire family and a place in its primary lineage.⁷⁴⁹ However, the Lajim tower shows that the Bavandid women were more than just pawns in the power games played by their male relatives; Chihrazad was clearly eager to see that her son was properly commemorated, and had the resources and the authority to carry this out, just as Shirin was eager to promote her son, Majd al-Daula, and ruled as a vigorous queen regent in order to ensure his place in the Buyid hierarchy.

The third extant Bavandid tomb tower, at Resget, does not so explicitly name its patron, but by inference it may have been built by Masdara, the father of the named incumbents. There are two inscriptions: the one in the band under the dome, in Arabic only, cites Quran 112, whereas the one carved onto a stucco plaque above the doorway, in Arabic and Pahlavi, states that the tomb was constructed for Hormozdiyar b. Masdara and Habusiyar b. Masdara. No titles are given for either the sons or the father. One date is given, indicating that the two brothers died simultaneously or that it was planned that the second brother should join the first upon his demise. As mentioned in Chapter 1, not enough of the date has survived to enable it to be deciphered, but the building has been dated stylistically to the early 12th century, and is therefore an excellent example of the conservatism of this long-ruling dynasty.

It is my contention that the explanation for the form of the Bavandid tomb towers and the lack of bodies inside them lies in this conservatism and in the Bavandids' pride in their exalted lineage. Both are reflected in the Pahlavi inscriptions on the buildings and the use of the Sasanian calendar. The calendar of Yazdgerd was still in general use in much of Iran at that time, but Pahlavi was not; the local vernacular was Tabari, and so the

⁷⁴⁹ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 256-7.

use of the Sasanian language and script was a conscious effort to make visible the Bavandid link with the Sasanians. Their continued use of the Sasanian title *Ispahbad*, which they were indeed granted during that era, is another example. The arts of their realm, such as Sasanian-style silver dishes and textiles (including the example made for an *Ispahbad*), also exemplify their pride in the past and their desire for continuity.

The parts of Ibn Isfandiyar which are clearly based upon the lost *Bavandnama* likewise emphasize the continuity of the Bavandid lineage, without any sense of judgment upon the Zoroastrian past; this is particularly striking when the text describes without comment the slaughtering of Muslims by the Ispahbad Sharvin b. Surkhab and the Qarinvand Vandad-Hormozd in conjunction with fighting against the ‘Abbasids and the refusal of those two rulers to allow Muslims to be buried in their realms.⁷⁵⁰ The conversion of Qarin b. Shahriyar is likewise presented without comment,⁷⁵¹ so that the continuity of Bavandid rule is stressed over this momentous shift in religious belief. The text conveys a strong impression of an unbroken thread reaching back to the Sasanians and beyond. The early history of Tabaristan, prior to the advent of the Sasanians, overlaps strongly with the legends of the *Shahnama*, while the story of the beginning of the Bavandid dynasty reveals one of the long-lasting tropes of Persian kingship, whereby the rightful heir to the throne is endangered and raised by a lowly yet honest person until his true identity is revealed and he takes his rightful place on the throne.⁷⁵² In this case, Sohrab b. Bav was a baby when his father was murdered, and so he was hidden with a

⁷⁵⁰ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 126-40.

⁷⁵¹ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 157, 237.

⁷⁵² Richard Frye discusses this particular trope of kingship and its appearance in dynastic stories from the time of the Achaemenids through the Safavids; see Frye, 1964, pp. 36-54.

gardener and his family until he came of age and claimed his throne.⁷⁵³ With this type of tale from the beginning of their dynasty, the Bavandids placed themselves in the tradition of the Sasanians and even the Achaemenids.

Aside from the logical conclusion that the Bavandids wished to stress their ancient heritage and Sasanian connections in their funerary monuments, there is evidence that, for the rulers of northern Iran in the 11th century, the tower form was concretely associated with the royal mausolea of the Sasanian past. The Buyids of Rayy, whose desire to emulate the Sasanians was well-known, also constructed tomb towers, which have unfortunately not survived but which were praised by Muqaddasi for their beauty.⁷⁵⁴ In a later text, the *Siyasatnama* of Nizam al-Mulk, we see that such buildings were still associated with Zoroastrians:

They say that in the city of Rayy in the time of Fakhr al-Daula..there was a fire-worshipper, a rich man, who was called Bozorgomid Dizu. He had built an *ostodan* for himself on the hill of Tabarik, and it is still in existence today; now it is called the Generals' Lookout, and it is situated above the dome of Fakhr al-Daula. Bozorgomid took great pains and spent much money on completing this sepulcher with two domes on top of that hill...[He then recounts how the mausoleum was desecrated, so that it was not used by Bozorgomid, but was subsequently used by a group of men for recreation, which aroused the curiosity of Fakhr al-Daula]...A party of courtiers went and climbed the hill; they shouted at the foot of the tower because they could not get up. The men heard them and looked down...they let down ladders for the party to ascend.⁷⁵⁵

From this anecdote we learn not only that as late as the Saljuq era the tomb tower form was associated with prominent Zoroastrians, but also that its purpose was held to be the containment of bones, rather than burial. The text also indicates that the building should not have been reused in this way (at least not so soon after its construction) if the bones of its patron had actually been placed inside. The features of the tomb tower of Bozorgomid correspond with those of the Bavandids: location atop a hill, a double dome,

⁷⁵³ Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 98-9.

⁷⁵⁴ Muqaddasi, p. 210.

⁷⁵⁵ *Siyasatnama*, p. 167. It turned out that the men were unemployed scribes pretending to play chess and backgammon while composing letters of application to other courts.

and a high and inaccessible entrance. The Bavandids, however, had been Muslim ever since the conversion of Qarin b. Shahriyar in 841-2. They would have no reason to emulate a Zoroastrian form, but both they and a contemporary wealthy Zoroastrian would have reason to emulate a Sasanian form.

There are sources which reveal not only what late 10th and early 11th century Iranian Muslims believed Sasanian mausolea to look like, but also how they believed them to have been used. The foremost among these and the most detailed is the *Shahnama* of Firdausi. Although largely composed at the court of Mahmud of Ghazna, the *Shahnama* was carried by its author out of Ghazna in a huff at Mahmud's perceived lack of appreciation. Firdausi took refuge at the court of the Ispahbad Shahriyar b. Sharvin (Qabus' maternal grandfather), who soothed the author's ruffled feathers and ultimately convinced him to make peace with Mahmud; the Persian epic poem is therefore dedicated to the Bavandid ruler instead of the Ghaznavid. Several anecdotes in the epic poem illustrate what was understood in the era of Firdausi to be royal Sasanian funerary practice, but the most revealing is that of the death of Nushirvan, who made the following request on his deathbed:

When I have left this world, build me a tomb like a palace [*kakh*], in a place where few men go, and so high that the vultures cannot fly over it. Its entrance must be high in the vault, as high as ten lariats would reach, and over it must be written that this is my court, together with an account of my greatness, my wealth, and my armies. See that the chamber is spread with carpets and cushions, preserve my body with camphor, and sprinkle musk on my head for a crown. Bring five unused brocades of cloth of gold from my treasury, and wrap me in them according to the custom of the Kayanids and our ancestors. Construct an ivory couch and place it there, and over it suspend my crown. Then to its right and left set out all my gold dishes, goblets, and jewels: twenty goblets are to be filled with rosewater, wine and saffron, and two hundred with musk, camphor and ambergris. The blood must be drawn off from the trunk of my body, so that it dries, and then it must be filled with camphor and musk. Then close the door to the chamber, since no one must see the king. If the tomb is built in this manner, no one will be able to find his way to me.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁶ Firdausi, p. 1157; Davis trans., 2004, p. 351.

The tomb described sounds very much like the Bavandid tomb towers: it is tall and sited in a remote location, its entrance is high off the ground, and it has a foundation inscription. The words attributed to Nushirvan also explain clearly how such a structure was used, with the embalmed body of the king placed on a platform and the door subsequently closed off. The inaccessibility of the structure served to prevent entry and to protect the body, while its impressive exterior appearance and foundation inscription extolled the glory of the royal incumbent. Following the traditions of Persian kings from deepest antiquity was deemed to be important.

Although the description of Nushirvan's tomb is the clearest, elements of both the architecture of the tomb and the funerary practices which occurred within in it are echoed in Firdausi's account of the deaths of several other Sasanian shahs. The embalming of the body of Yazdgerd I is described in the poem in detail: his brain and vital organs were removed, the cavity was filled with musk and camphor, and the corpse was then wrapped in brocade to keep it dry. It was then placed in a golden coffin to be transported to Fars, where it was placed inside the tomb.⁷⁵⁷ Qobad was also embalmed with musk and camphor, wrapped in brocade, and placed on a golden platform inside his tomb, which was then sealed.⁷⁵⁸ After the death of Khosrau Parviz, his distraught wife Shirin eventually decided to commit suicide. She asked for his tomb to be opened, and she entered and placed her face next to his. Her clothes were already scented with camphor as she swallowed her poison, and when her death was discovered another tomb was constructed for her, and the tomb of Khosrau Parviz was sealed up again.⁷⁵⁹ The last Sasanian ruler, Yazdgerd III, was murdered at Merv and cast into a pond, but when his

⁷⁵⁷ Firdausi, p. 934; Davis trans., 2004, pp. 221-3.

⁷⁵⁸ Firdausi, p. 1035; Davis trans., 2004, p. 312.

⁷⁵⁹ Firdausi, p. 1337; Davis trans., 2004, p. 488.

body was discovered it was treated with camphor and wrapped in brocade, and a tomb “reaching up to the clouds” was constructed for him.⁷⁶⁰

These practices can be contrasted with those associated with other prominent deaths described in the *Shahnama*. When Alexander died, he was embalmed, wrapped in brocade, and placed in a golden coffin, but as a Greek his body was destined for an anachronistic Christian burial, and the bishops decided that this should occur in Alexandria.⁷⁶¹ Nushzad, a Sasanian shah whose mother was a Byzantine princess, converted to Christianity and on his deathbed asked for a Christian grave instead of a great tomb and the musk and camphor which are used to preserve kings.⁷⁶² And the body of the rebellious general Bahram Chubin was wrapped in brocade and placed in a narrow silver coffin with camphor poured over him;⁷⁶³ the treatment of this high-ranking individual thus has some of the elements of royal practice, but the ultimate destination of the silver coffin was not described, so he presumably was not thought to have been placed inside a mausoleum.

Apart from the *Shahnama*, another source which shows how the Bavandids would have perceived Sasanian funerary practice is the *Qabusnama*, the Caspian “mirror for princes” composed by a grandson of Qabus (and son of a Bavandid princess). An anecdote involving the mausoleum of the Sasanian shah Nushirvan goes as follows:

I have read in the annals of bygone Caliphs that the Caliph Ma'mun once visited the tomb of Nushirvan the Just and found his body reposing on a throne which had crumbled to dust. Round the wall of the building there was an inscription in gold ink written in the Pahlavi character. Ma'mun gave orders that scribes with a knowledge of Pahlavi should be summoned to translate the inscription into Arabic, which in its turn was made comprehensible in Persian.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁰ Firdausi, p. 1361; Davis trans., 2004, p. 510.

⁷⁶¹ Firdausi, pp. 849-51; Davis trans., 2004, pp. 114-8.

⁷⁶² Firdausi, pp. 1061-2; Davis trans., 2004, p. 321.

⁷⁶³ Firdausi, p. 1282; Davis trans., 2004, p. 450.

⁷⁶⁴ *Qabusnama*, p. 44.

Although the story itself is most likely apocryphal, it does echo the tradition enumerated in the *Shahnama* of placing the body of the monarch on a platform (the Persian *takht*, which could be translated as throne, couch, or platform). Interestingly, Pahlavi inscriptions are associated with the royal mausoleum, but on the interior rather than the exterior of the building. This may have been a narrative device to suit the trajectory of the anecdote, as the protagonists were already inside the building when they saw the body, but it may also reflect the author's perception of actual practice. None of the Bavandid tomb towers show any trace of interior inscriptions, but the Pir-i 'Alamdar at Damghan has an interior revetment of stucco with a painted inscription encircling the chamber beneath the dome. This inscription records Quran 39:54, which concerns the mercy of God and is also attested in later funerary contexts.⁷⁶⁵

So the *Qabusnama* and the *Shahnama* combine to give a detailed image of how royal Sasanian funerals were perceived in the 10-11th centuries. The royal corpse was embalmed, wrapped in brocade and placed on a platform composed of some precious material (gold or ivory) inside a mausoleum with grave goods scattered about the chamber; the door was then sealed to prevent entry. The mausoleum was located in a remote spot and was of great height, with a high and inaccessible entrance, and a foundation inscription above the door identified the incumbent and extolled his greatness. Subsequent rulers would go out of their way to visit these mausolea and ruminate upon the inscriptions; in rare cases, a tomb would be re-opened. The *Siyasatnama* described a very similar building for a wealthy 10th century Zoroastrian, who may well have wanted

⁷⁶⁵ Blair 1992, p. 95.

to imitate Sasanian practice himself, and described a creative re-use of the structure by individuals who wished to keep their activities a secret.

It is possible that this 10-11th century perception of Sasanian funerary practice was basically correct. After all, the essential elements of the funerary rituals described in the *Shahnama* do correspond with the known rituals of the shahs of a much earlier dynasty, the Achaemenids (559-330 BCE). There had always been a tension between the requirements of the Zoroastrian religion and the desire of kings to memorialize themselves by preserving their bodies in monumental structures.⁷⁶⁶ These structures took a wide variety of forms in the Achaemenid period, from the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae to the rock-cut tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam to the classically styled monuments constructed by Greek craftsmen for Persian nobles in Lycia, yet these structures all have certain elements in common with one another and with the Bavandid tomb towers. These features include an elevated location (either natural or man-made); single, inaccessible entrances; lack of windows; single, dark, undecorated chambers; and, for the free-standing structures, double roofs; in other words, the same features which differentiate the Bavandid tomb towers from other Islamic mausolea. These features suited the functions of a mausoleum in a Zoroastrian context, when compromises needed to be made to lessen the sin of preserving a corpse.⁷⁶⁷ The elevation, inaccessible entrances, and distance from habitation kept the corpse away from the living and away from the good creations, namely earth and water. The lack of windows, double roofs, and use of

⁷⁶⁶ L'vov-Basirov, pp. 111-32.

⁷⁶⁷ Hellenistic sources, which recount Alexander's troops entering the tomb of Cyrus, report that the body had been embalmed with camphor and was resting on a golden platform. Interestingly, the *Shahnama* omits this, probably because it would not have been fitting for a sovereign absorbed into the Persian line of rulers to have desecrated the mausoleum of one of his symbolic forebears.

impermeable materials for construction (e.g. stone or baked brick) also isolated and contained the pollution of the corpse.

These same features were of course redundant in an Islamic context, but they do provide evidence which helps to explain the lack of bodies in the core group of tomb towers. From the image of Sasanian funerary practices revealed in the *Shahnama* and the *Qabusnama*, the correlation between the formal characteristics of the tomb towers and the descriptions of Sasanian mausolea, and the lack of bodies buried beneath the tomb towers, it is clear that the Bavandids were emulating what they perceived to be Sasanian royal practice. In other words, they were placing the embalmed bodies on platforms made of an impermeable material, which in a Zoroastrian context would have served to further isolate the pollution of the corpse by keeping it off the floor. This does not imply that these Caspian dynasts were Zoroastrians or even insincere Muslims; local sources such as Ibn Isfandiyar are clear on the fact that the Bavandid rulers were Muslim following the conversion of Qarin b. Shahriyar in 841-2, and there are neither other sources nor any other evidence to cast any aspersions on their religious beliefs. Their mausolea all have Arabic inscriptions with a Muslim content, including Quranic verses at Resget.

There is another example of such practices in an Islamic context, at Siraf. When this former trading port on the Persian Gulf was excavated, forty monumental tombs were found dating to the 9th to 10th centuries in a cemetery which also contained simple burials with Islamic tombstones. Ten of the mausolea were excavated; nine of these were collective tombs. They were all constructed of mortared rubble, with openings above floor level and plastered interiors with vaulted compartments. Some of the monuments

were multi-storied. In all of them, corpses were placed directly on the floor, without coffins, with all ages and sexes mixed together. There were not any inscriptions indicating that these charnel houses were the resting places of local rulers; instead, they appear to have been average citizens, particularly given the numbers of bodies placed together in an anonymous and seemingly random fashion. This then is a different phenomenon from that of the Bavandids, who wished to emulate their Sasanian forebears. Instead it is evidence of syncretism and of a lingering discomfort with the idea of burial.

As noted in Chapter 2, such discomfort can also be seen in the tombs of the leaders of Sogdian communities in China. Once they received an official rank in the Chinese bureaucracy, these Zoroastrian Sogdians were required to conform to many Chinese customs, including funerary practices. Lining their Chinese-style tombs with baked brick and placing the bodies on stone platforms went some way towards protecting the earth and lessening the sin of burial. Carvings on the stone platforms depict elements of Sogdian life in China, including Zoroastrian rituals, leaving no doubt about the religious beliefs of the tombs' incumbents. Platforms of impermeable materials were a useful element whenever a compromise was needed between Zoroastrian and other traditions; they can also be seen in a hybrid context in Semirechiye, where settled Sogdian populations mingled with Turkic nomads.

So we see that similar practices can have multiple justifications. Syncretism at Siraf accounts for the use of charnel houses and platforms, whereas the hybrid culture on the fringes of the steppe and sown engaged in similar funerary practices. Zoroastrians in China found platforms to be essential to the compromise between their own religion and the dominant culture surrounding them. The Sasanians were thought to have preserved

their bodies and placed them on platforms in order to emulate Persian kings of the past, whereas the Bavandids did this in order to emulate the Sasanians. Similar needs can likewise lead to different practices; we saw in Chapter IV that the body of Tughshada underwent manual excarnation after his death. This occurred either because he was a secretly still Zoroastrian (a Zoroastrian living in a dominant culture which practiced burial would be analogous to the Sogdians living in China) or because he inhabited a syncretic milieu uncomfortable with burial (analogous to Siraf).

In the Bavandid case, there is syncretism of a sort, but this is much more subtle than what we see at Siraf, where a community in the process of conversion and transformation engaged in funerary practices sanctioned by neither the new religion nor the old but instead falling somewhere in between. We have seen that the first Bavandid ruler to convert was Qarin b. Shahriyar; this occurred at the instigation of an emissary of the caliph al-Mu'tasim, and Qarin received a robe of honor as a reward.⁷⁶⁸ It is therefore a safe assumption that his conversion was politically motivated. Qarin was engaged in a military struggle with the Ustandar Padhusban, an ally of the Zaidi ruler titled the Da'i al-Kabir, and probably hoped that an alliance with the caliph would help him defend himself. Unfortunately, this was not the case, as the Ustandar continued his campaign until Qarin pledged loyalty to the Da'i and sent his two sons to the Zaidi leader as hostages.⁷⁶⁹ Although the sources do not explicitly say so, this was in all likelihood the beginning of Bavandid Shi'ism. And although Qarin was almost certainly insincere, his two sons lived at the Zaidi court in Amul for some time and may well have felt quite differently. In any case, insincere conversions inevitably devolve into adherence to the

⁷⁶⁸ Ibn Isfandiyyar, pp. 157, 237. Two different dates are given for this event: 854-5 (p. 157), and 841-2 (p. 237).

⁷⁶⁹ Ibn Isfandiyyar, p. 237.

new religion over just a couple of generations,⁷⁷⁰ and the Bavandids were thereafter associated with Shi'ism. Bavandid coinage of the 10-11th centuries consistently reflected their Shi'ite beliefs.⁷⁷¹

Zaidi Shi'ites believed that any descendant of Husayn or Hasan could become the Imam; the main requirements were religious learning and military strength. Madelung points out that the Zaidis were strongly suppressed and could only flourish in remote and inaccessible areas, namely the mountains of Yemen and the Alborz.⁷⁷² Their Iranian stronghold was in western Tabaristan and their capital was Amul, where they were invited in 864 in conjunction with a local rebellion against the Tahirids. Although Zoroastrians remained a majority in the realm of the Bavandids for centuries, Zaidi proselytism gained an increasing number of converts in the regions west of Shahriyar-Kuh. A 10th century schism created two sects, the Qasimiyya, who were popular in Gilan and had ties to Yemen, and the Nasiriyya, popular amongst the Dailamites and uniquely Caspian. Imami Shi'ism, of both the Twelver and Isma'ili varieties, also competed for adherents in western Tabaristan. As the entire Caspian region was known for its conservative adherence to its own unique customs, competition amongst so many Islamic sects for converts in a milieu where the majority was still Zoroastrian undoubtedly led to syncretic and uniquely Caspian practices. Such phenomena have been attested in other regions, such as rural Anatolia, where the quasi-Sufic, quasi-shamanic babas made Islam more palatable to Christian villagers and Turkic migrants alike.⁷⁷³ According to Madelung, Nizari Isma'ilism, which emerged in Tabaristan, was the final product of the

⁷⁷⁰ See n. 445.

⁷⁷¹ Miles 1971, pp. 444-5.

⁷⁷² Madelung 1988, p. 86.

⁷⁷³ Ménage in Levtzion 1979, pp. 59-63; see also DeWeese 1995.

melding together of Shi'ite and Iranian religious ideas.⁷⁷⁴ The adoption of a white battle standard by the Caspian Zaidis also indicated a syncretic approach,⁷⁷⁵ as white was traditionally the color associated with Iranian religions and with the revolutionary syncretic movements of the early Islamic period.

In such a conservative social context, funerary practices styled upon those of the Sasanians would not have been controversial. Indeed, this would have served to emphasize the distinguished lineage of the Bavandids and to assert their continuing right to rule. Whether or not the practices actually corresponded with those of the Sasanians was less important than the fact that they were perceived to correspond. The Bavandids were Persian rulers first and foremost and Muslims second, and consistently stressed the longevity of their rule. As late as the Saljuq period, their coronation ceremonies were believed to date back to the distant past, as described by Ibn Isfandiyar:

The coronation festivities lasted seven days, according to the old Persian fashion, and included the usual feasting, rejoicings, giving of presents, while the notables and Ispahbads and Bavands assembled from all the countryside. When these congratulations were finished, on the eighth day the Ispahbad ascended the throne, girded on the royal girdle, and confirmed the governors in their appointments, and caused the Ispahbads and Amirs to cast aside their mourning, and clad them in robes of honor.⁷⁷⁶

In their literary and artistic patronage as well, the Bavandids stressed continuity. As discussed in Chapter 3, Sasanian styles continued for centuries in textiles and metalwork, the products for which Tabaristan enjoyed particular renown. Firdausi found a congenial patron in Shahriyar b. Sharvin, while another compilation of pre-Islamic legends mixed with history was composed by another Bavandid ruler. Even in their titulature, the Bavandids held on to the military title bestowed upon them at the end of the Sasanian era, eschewing the grandiose titles such as *Shahanshah* which were adopted by

⁷⁷⁴ Madelung 1988, pp. 102-5.

⁷⁷⁵ See Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 200.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 255.

the Buyids and late Samanids. It was left to those dynasties to claim Sasanian descent by commandeering the titles used by the Sasanians themselves; the Bavandids had no need for such contrivances, as they had been *Ispahbads* since 665.

They also had no need for showing favoritism to one religious group over the other, as neither their Muslim faith nor their Persian credentials were in any doubt. Although a majority of their subjects were Zoroastrian, we do not hear of the type of intercommunal strife which was prevalent in Fars at this time (in which the Buyids emphasized their status as Persian rulers by taking the side of the Zoroastrians). The earlier Bavandids did engage in and encourage attacks upon Muslims, but following the conversion of Qarin b. Shahriyar there are no reports of attacks in either direction. Challenges to Bavandid rule came from other Caspian rulers, not from their subjects, and they do not seem to have been concerned about appeasing those subjects with grants of land and so forth as was common with the Samanids and Ziyarids. Ibn Isfandiyar reports that taxes were low under the Bavandids,⁷⁷⁷ and yet they were by all accounts exceedingly wealthy due to the natural resources of their realm. It appears that religious persuasion in this region was more a matter of private belief, and that Caspian identity was founded upon a perceived continuity with the past. Rather than being separate from the societies they ruled, like the Buyids and the Samanids, the Bavandids had long been a part of Caspian society and hence enjoyed a type of legitimacy quite different from that of their contemporaries. Their funerary architecture and the practices associated with it reinforced that legitimacy.

The other examples of tomb towers emulate those of the Bavandids, but with a loss of some of the characteristics most closely linked to perceptions of the past; even the

⁷⁷⁷ Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 34.

Gunbad-i Qabus does not use Pahlavi inscriptions. Although it is earlier than any of the extant Bavandid towers, it must be modeled on Bavandid examples which have not survived. We have seen that Qabus had very close links with the Bavandids, and emulating their tomb towers (albeit in a more grandiose form in accordance with how Qabus wished to present himself), as well their funerary practices, would have emphasized his own links to the Sasanians through his Bavandid mother. Remembering Bosworth's characterization of the Ziyarids as "parvenu Dailami adventurers" in comparison to the Bavandids, it is easy to see how Qabus would have felt that his image would be enhanced by adopting the tomb tower form for his own very visible mausoleum.

It is unfortunate that we do not know whether bodies are buried inside the Gunbad-i 'Ali, the Pir-i 'Alamdār and Chehel Dokhtaran. In my opinion, it is likely that burial did occur at the Damghan monuments, but not at Abarquh. The Gunbad-i 'Ali is sited in a similar way to the Bavandid monuments, on a rocky outcropping away from any center of habitation, with a high and inaccessible entrance. It differs from the Caspian examples in its octagonal shape, its building material (stone) and its lack of Pahlavi inscriptions. It was constructed for a Firuzanid amir, Hazarasp b. Nasr, and his wife, Naz bt. Kashmir, by their son, Firuzan. This minor dynasty had its start when Hasan b. Firuzan was made the deputy of Makan b. Kaki, one of the Dailami adventurers associated with the rise of Buyid and Ziyarid power. Both Hasan and his son, Firuzan, became implacable enemies of the Ziyarids, and by extension, the Bavandids. Hazarasp b. Nasr was a grandson of Hasan b. Firuzan and has come to Abarquh as a Buyid vassal, although by the time the tomb tower was constructed in 1056-7, rule of the area had

passed to the Kakuyids as Saljuq vassals. The tomb tower recalls their Caspian origins and shows how deeply this type of mausoleum was embedded as a symbol of Persian sovereignty in the Caspian region. Its faithfulness to the Bavandid models indicates that it was probably used in a similar way, without bodies buried beneath the floor.

The Damghan monuments further modified the Bavandid prototype, although they are located virtually in the shadow of the Alborz. They were sited on flat land not far outside the city, with entrances almost level with the ground. The Pir-i 'Alamdār also has the interior inscription, indicating that perhaps it would not have been sealed up to discourage entry. It was constructed for the Ziyarid governor of the region, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Ibrahim, by his son Bakhtiyar (who later constructed the minarets at the Tarik Khana in Damghan and the Friday Mosque in Semnan).⁷⁷⁸ Built during the reign of Manuchihr b. Qabus, this relatively modest tomb tower is modeled more upon the Bavandid prototypes, such as the Lajim tower, than the Gunbad-i Qabus. Already, however, the features most associated with Bavandid funerary practices have been lost, indicating that a more conventional Muslim burial took place here. This governor's mausoleum makes visual reference to the Caspian tradition, but in the context of a more mainstream Muslim culture. Likewise, the nearby Chehel Dokhtaran, constructed 30 years later, is clearly modeled upon the Pir-i 'Alamdār; the patron, Abu Shuja' Asfar Begi, constructed this mausoleum for himself and his sons. Adle and Melikian-Chirvani have suggested that he may be identified with Asfar b. Kurdvayha, a soldier companion of Manuchihr b. Qabus in their youth.⁷⁷⁹ Again, the patron had strong Caspian connections, but the tomb tower has lost many of the unique Bavandid features.

⁷⁷⁸ Blair 1992, p. 94.

⁷⁷⁹ Adle & Melikian-Chirvani 1972, pp. 282-3; see also Blair 1992, pp. 124-5.

The Saljuqs adopted the tomb tower form soon after their invasion of Iran, and the changes seen at Damghan quickly evolved further into something quite different from the Bavandid mausolea. Already at Kharraqan, the interior of one of the mausolea has a stucco revetment with wall paintings alluding to paradise,⁷⁸⁰ while the latter of the two towers at Kharraqan has an interior staircase. In the Saljuq examples, the interiors are lighter and sometimes decorated, the buildings are sited on flat, open land where these still nomadic rulers and their followers would have brought flocks to graze, the proportions of the towers are squatter in comparison with their conical domes, and crypts were added at the base to accommodate the burial of bodies. Their lavish exterior brickwork, which could reasonably be compared to textiles, lends credence to the comparison of Saljuq tomb towers with the tents of these Central Asian nomads. In both form and function, however, the Saljuq towers differed from those of the Bavandids. The tower at Resget, built several decades after the Kharraqan towers, is then an excellent example both of the isolation of the Bavandids in their mountain stronghold and the importance to this dynasty of constructing symbols of their continuity with the Sasanian past.

⁷⁸⁰ See Daneshvari, pp. 41-64.

Conclusion

By situating the royal mausolea of the Samanids, Ziyarids and Bavandids in their historical and architectural context, we have seen that the standard historiographical narrative of the development of funerary architecture needs to be revised. First of all, the number of extant mausolea in Central Asia which can plausibly be dated to the 9th century shows that Creswell's scenario, whereby the Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya is not only the first Islamic mausoleum but also an isolated early transgression of Islamic law, does not hold. The mausoleum as a genre enjoyed early and enduring popularity in Central Asia, a region which did not commemorate the dead in this way in the pre-Islamic period. A type of funerary architecture did exist amongst the Sogdians, but the *naus* was a diminutive building, as well as communal and anonymous. The mausoleum came to Central Asia with Islam, indicating a much wider and earlier acceptance of this genre than has heretofore been acknowledged by historians of Islamic architecture.

The canonical mausolea of the 10-11th centuries also belong to a much richer architectural context than Western scholars in particular have acknowledged. Examining the lesser known, the remote and obscure, the badly preserved, and the overly restored can only add to our knowledge of the magnificently constructed and the well-preserved. We have seen that the Samanid mausoleum was a truly exceptional building in terms of its quality, but that it also belongs in a sizable group of contemporary mausolea. Likewise, the Gunbad-i Qabus is the most strikingly monumental of the tomb towers, but belongs in a group of Caspian tomb towers rather than the Saljuq examples with which it is usually grouped.

Understanding the architectural context of these buildings is important beyond the creation of architectural typologies, however, and helps to illuminate the choices available to the patrons of the canonical buildings, which in turn enhances our understanding of the societies which created these monuments. In the period and the region under consideration here, patrons were members of the ruling elite, and this elite was comprised of the Iranian potentates who proliferated as the power of the 'Abbasid dynasty waned, and controlled an enormous swathe of territory stretching from Baghdad to Taraz, on the edge of the Central Asian steppe.

I have focused on two of these Iranian dynasties in particular, the Samanids and the Bavandids. We have seen that both of these dynasties made use of the Persian past in constructing their dynastic mausolea and in constructing their own identities, but in very different ways. The Samanids created a new identity for their dynasty and for Muslim Central Asia based upon a creative synthesis of imported elements of Persian culture and Islam, whereas the Bavandids stressed Caspian identity and the unusual longevity of their dynasty. This Caspian identity was very localized, so that the Sasanian references and particular funerary practices of the Bavandids had no currency outside of their mountain stronghold and were quickly dropped once the tomb tower genre spread out of the mountains. The tomb towers in Gurgan, Damghan and Abarquh lost some of the Sasanian associations but referred to the towers of the Bavandids, invoking an association with that dynasty as a source of legitimacy. The Saljuqs further modified both the form and the function of the tomb tower, so that all Caspian and Sasanian associations were lost. By contrast, the New Persian identity created by the Samanids not only spread into the former Sasanian realm but was also adopted and promoted by the Turkic successors

of the Samanids, the Qarakhanids and Ghaznavids. The specific references of the Samanid mausoleum, built by Ismail as part of the process of establishing the Samanid dynasty in Bukhara, belonged uniquely to the historical context of that building, but it did clearly become a model for the rulers who followed, as can be seen in the royal Qarakhanid mausolea and beyond.

The Bavandids, ruling over a population which was still more Zoroastrian than Muslim, downplayed religion in the construction of their identity. They themselves were both Iranian and Muslim after 841, but put greater emphasis on the former in fashioning their public image. We have neither extant buildings nor textual evidence to indicate that they ever engaged in the type of architectural patronage typical of a Muslim ruler. Ibn Isfandiyar mentions numerous mosques, madrasas and shrines constructed by the Zaidi Shi'ite rulers of western Tabaristan, but not a single one built by the Bavandids. In objects for their personal use, some of the later Bavandids showed a preference for a broadly regional Muslim aesthetic, as evidenced by the silver dish of Shahriyar b. Qarin, but their architectural patronage seems to have been largely limited to their tomb towers. Those tomb towers, visible from afar but designed to discourage entry, conveyed a specific message to the local population, emphasizing Bavandid longevity as well as their links to and descent from the Sasanians. This worked only in the context of the remote mountain fastness of their kingdom, and other Iranian dynasties never tried to appropriate their titulature or their use of Middle Persian in monumental inscriptions, while only a few with strong Caspian connections emulated the form of their tomb towers, their use of the Persian calendar and their particular funerary practices.

The Samanids, on the other hand, from Isma'īl onwards, did engage in the patronage of mosques, ribats, and other types of construction typically expected of a Muslim ruler, and heavily utilized the institution of *waqf*. They emphasized both their religion and their Iranian ethnicity, and constructed an identity acknowledged by historians to constitute the transformation of Islam from an Arab to a world religion. Their creative adaptation of the Persian past distinguishes the Persian Renaissance from the Shu'ubiyya, with its simplistic assertions of Persian superiority. The Samanids demonstrated a clear appreciation of Arabic language and learning, while simultaneously adapting the Persian linguistic and cultural heritage to forge their own newly invented traditions. Of course, to the extent that all tradition is invented this can be said to apply to the Bavandids as well as the Samanids, and the uses of the past in both cases show a sophisticated awareness of tradition and its political usefulness. However, the Bavandids were striving for the perception of continuity, whereas the Samanids favored the selective importation of elements of the Persian past for their own particular *mélange*.

It was the Saljuqs who brought together both architectural types, the tomb tower and the domed square, and ensured that these forms and the Perso-Islamic culture from which they had sprung would be spread throughout Iran, Central Asia and Anatolia. However, from the earliest Saljuq tomb towers at Kharraqan, it is evident that the Sasanian associations of the form were lost on the newcomers to the region, as these towers were sited on flat grazing ground, with accessible entrances and light interiors decorated with wall paintings. The areas between the domes can be accessed through an internal staircase, a structural innovation never seen in the earlier towers. Saljuq tomb towers were constructed for the entire ruling class, and not just the sultans themselves.

Sultans chose both tomb towers, such as the tomb of Toghril at Rayy, and domed squares, such as that constructed by Sanjar at Merv. Decoration of the two types coalesced into a single style, and followed other developments of the Saljuq period such as the use of glazed turquoise tile. The existence (or lack) of different shades of meaning attributed to these two forms in the Saljuq period would be an interesting avenue for future research, as would the Saljuq adoption and propagation of Perso-Islamic culture. This phenomenon, which began with the Qarakhanids and Ghaznavids, is perhaps the greatest possible tribute to the attractiveness of the culture forged by the Samanids.

The contrast between the Samanids and the Bavandids shows not only the rich diversity of Iranian culture in the 10-11th centuries, but also that the explanations which have been advanced to explain the proliferation of funerary architecture in this period are flawed. The Bavandids were certainly not involved in any *jihad* on the frontiers, nor were any of the other Caspians who emulated their tomb towers. The Samanids did expand their northern boundaries at the expense of their Turkic neighbors, but very few of the mausolea of that period were located close enough to the frontier and could conceivably have been constructed to house a martyr who fell to the Turks; the Samanid mausoleum itself was decidedly not one of these. Shi'ism is also an unsatisfactory explanation, given that the Samanids were Sunni. The Bavandids and their Zaidi neighbors were Shi'ite, and there is textual evidence of Zaidi mausolea, but we have seen that the rationale for the construction of the Bavandid mausolea was political, and the funerary practices which occurred within those buildings were syncretic. The Bavandids did not build mausolea because they were Shi'ite, and there is nothing specifically Shi'ite

about their tomb towers. Indeed, these buildings positively discourage the practice of *ziyarat*, which is commonly associated with Shi'ism.

The Samanid mausoleum, on the other hand, was designed to encourage *ziyarat*, and hence its Sunni context is particularly interesting. Other mausolea within the Samanid realm housed the remains of holy figures and were also focal points of *ziyarat*; the most prominent is the tomb of Hakim al-Termezi in Termez, appended to a pre-existing Buddhist shrine. Much of the encouragement of *ziyarat* in Central Asia would seem to be connected with the transfer of loyalties from the shrines of the past, whether Buddhist as at Hakim al-Termezi, or local Zoroastrian cults as at Shah-i Zinda in Samarqand and the shrine of Siyavush in Bokhara. This phenomenon, common enough in many parts of the world when major religious shifts occur, was decidedly not connected with Shi'ism. The appropriation of Buddhist sites in particular and the potential for Buddhist influence on the architecture and institutions of Islam is a subject which has not received sufficient attention and would be another interesting avenue for future research.

The erroneous assumptions about funerary architecture of the 10-11th centuries in Iran and Central Asia have arisen due to a tendency in earlier scholarship to make broad, sweeping generalizations and offer pan-Islamic explanations for the emergence of both forms and institutions. I have attempted to show here that a more focused approach on an area considered peripheral can counter the essentializing effects of the historical narrative accepted thus far and enrich our understanding of the formative period of one of the most important genres of Islamic architecture. The Samanids and Bavandids are worthy of study not just because of their contributions to the mainstream of Islamic culture

(although in the case of the Samanids their contribution was enormous), and the funerary monuments constructed for these often fascinating individuals can shed light on the intricacies and complexities of this particular stage of Islamic history.

Illustrations



Figure 1: Samanid Mausoleum, NE view
(All photographs by the author unless otherwise specified)



Fig. 2: Gunbad-i Qabus



Fig. 3: Samanid Mausoleum, North Arcade

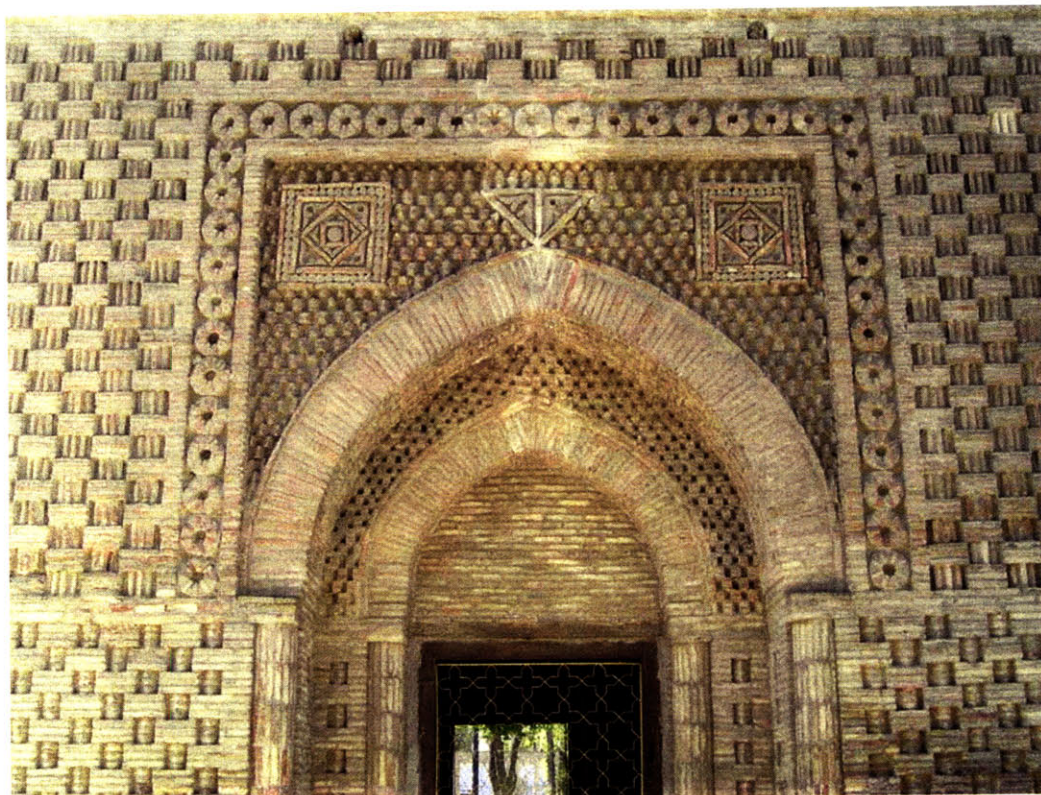


Fig 4: Samanid Mausoleum, West Doorway

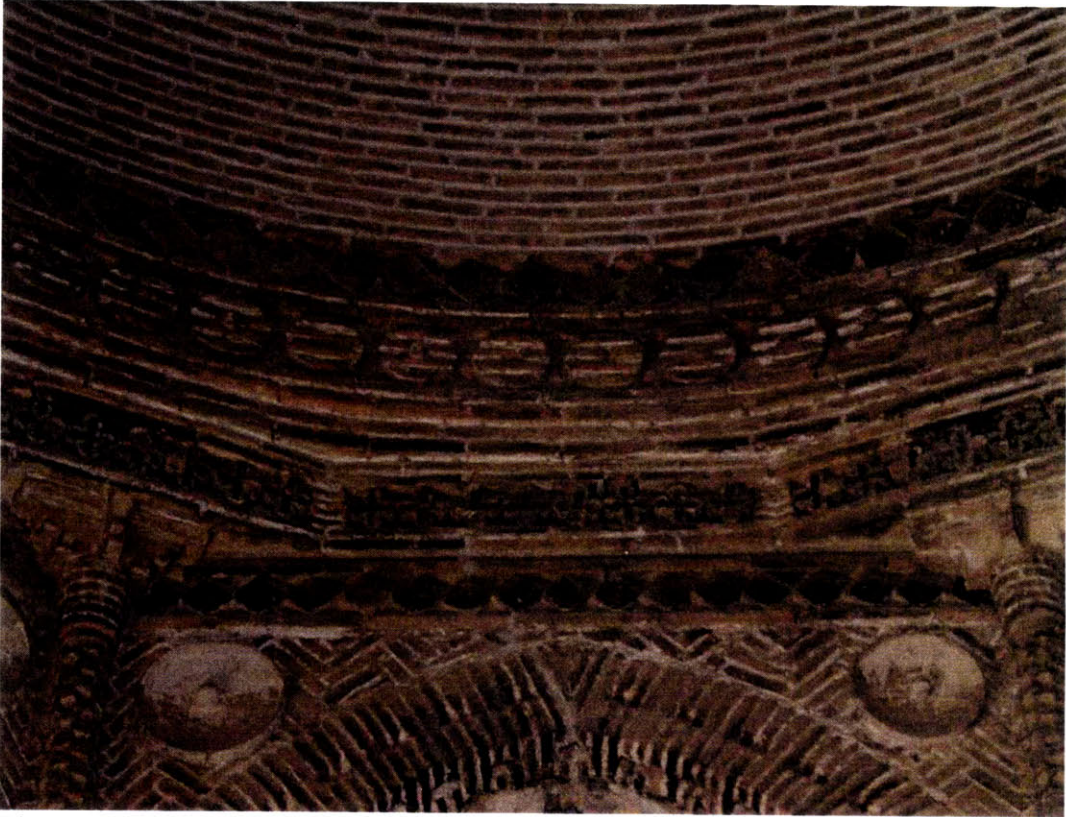


Fig. 5: Samanid Mausoleum, Base of Dome

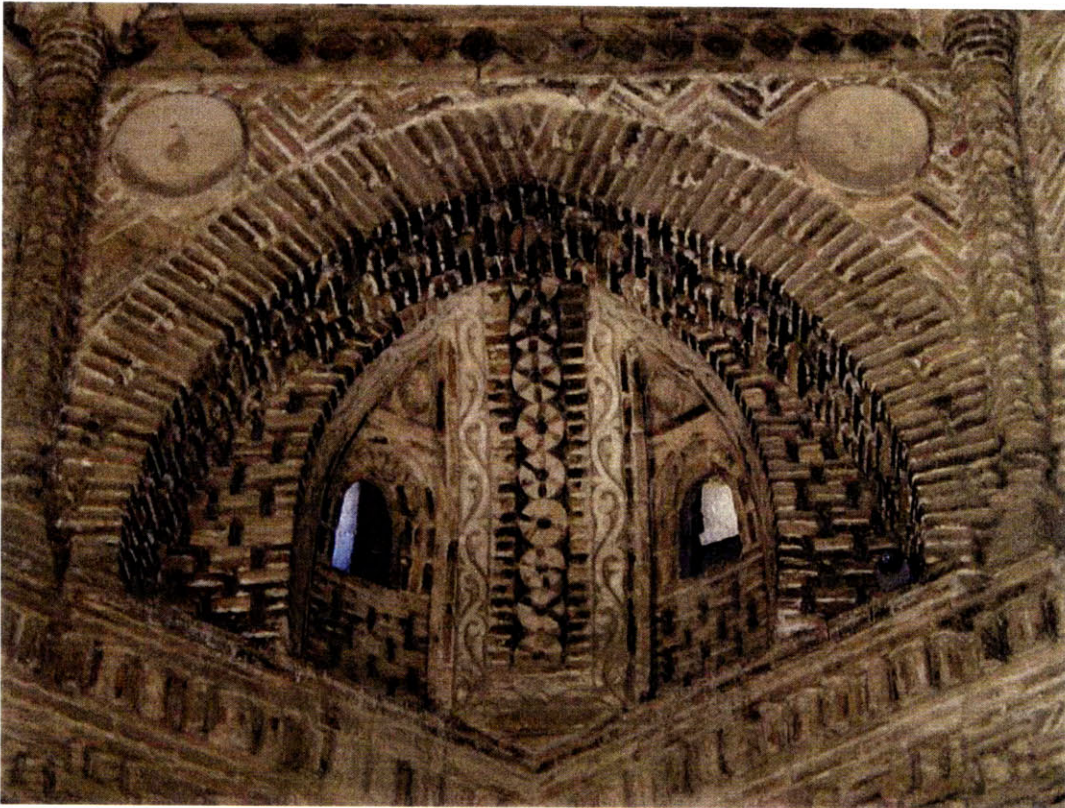


Fig. 6: Samanid Mausoleum, Squinch



Fig. 7: Arab Ata, Tim



Fig. 8: Arab Ata, Niches Over Doorway



Fig. 9: Arab Ata, Squinch



Fig. 10: Shrine of Hakim al-Termezi, W View



Fig. 11: Mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi, N View



Fig. 12: Mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi, Pendentive



Fig. 13: Mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi, Ceiling Roundel

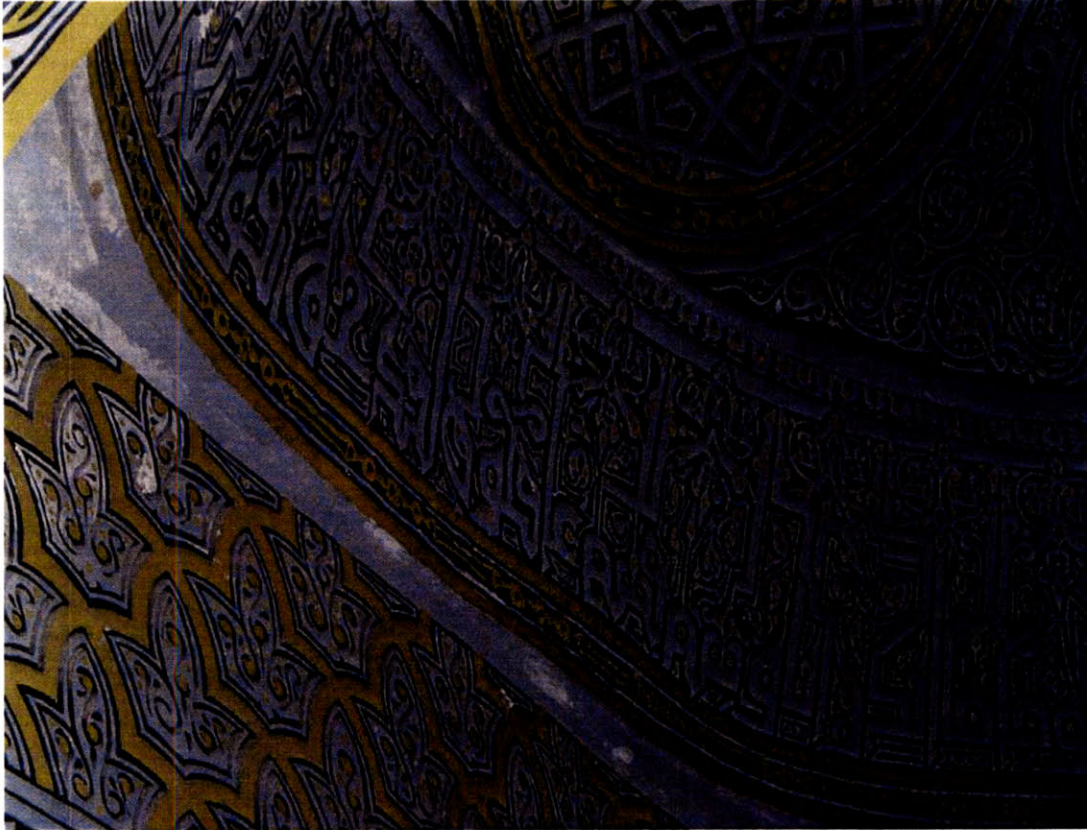


Fig. 14: Mausoleum of Hakim al-Termezi, Inscription Band



Fig. 15: Mihrab of Shir Kabir
(Blair 1992, p. 228)

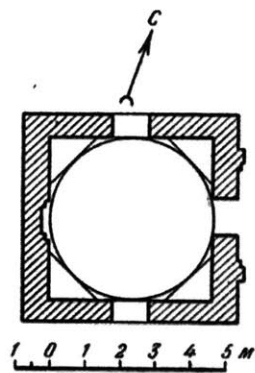


Fig. 16: Chahar Jui, Plan
(Pugachenkova 1958, p. 177)

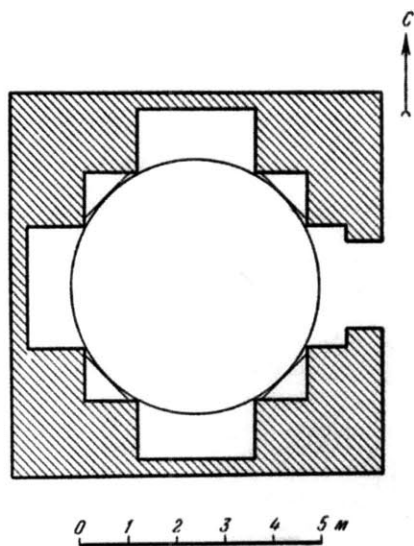


Fig. 17: Kiz Bibi, Plan
(Pugachenkova 1958, p. 175)



Fig. 18: Imam Baba
(Pugachenkova 1958, p. 176)



Fig. 19: Tomb of Ahmad
(Pugachenkova 1958, p. 179)



Fig. 20: Tilla Halaji
(Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 143)

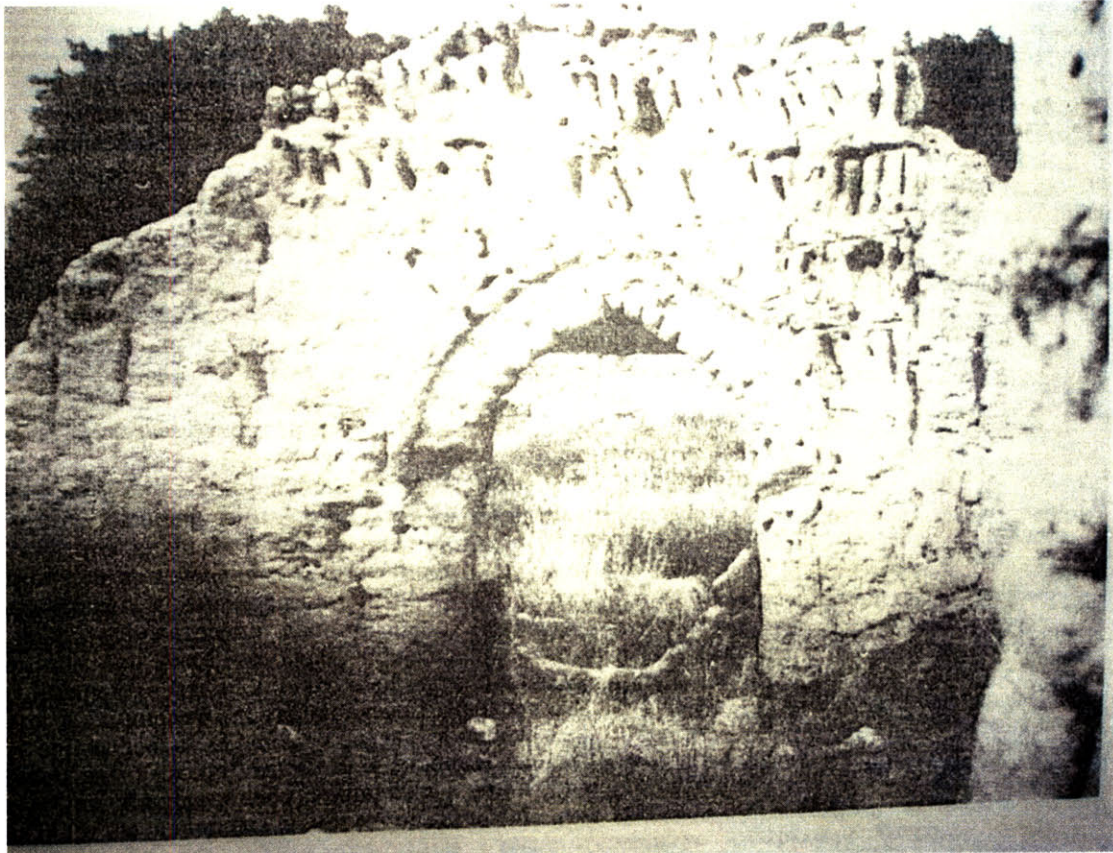


Fig. 21: Khaja Bulkhak
(Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 145)

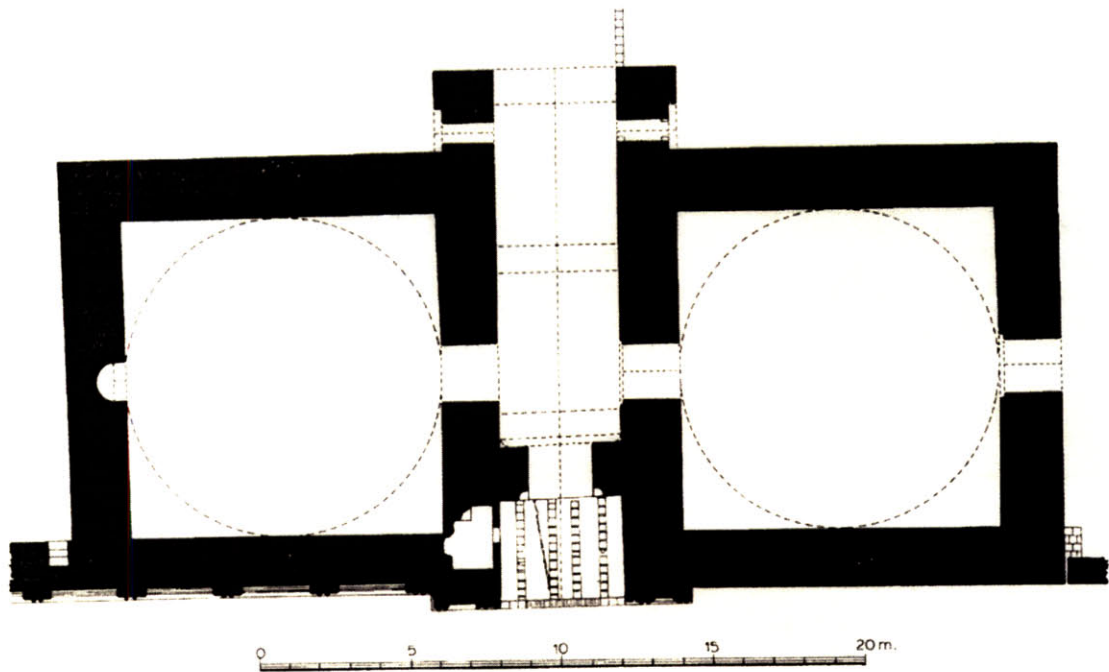


Fig. 22: Khaja Mashhad, Plan
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 264)

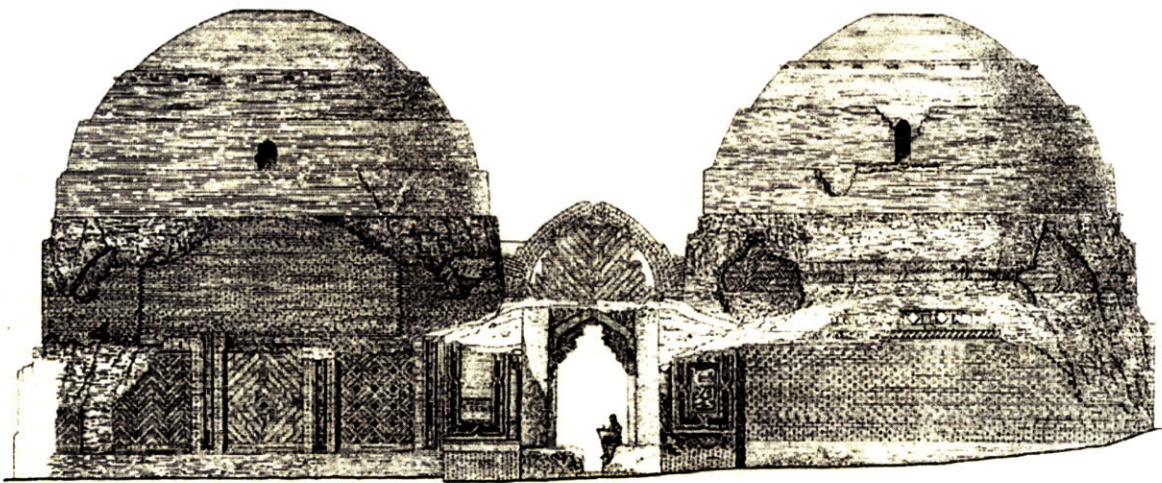


Fig. 23: Khaja Mashhad, Exterior Detail
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 263)



Fig. 24: Khalifa Rajab, Front View



Fig. 25: Khalifa Rajab, Side View



Fig. 26: Aq Astana Baba, Front View

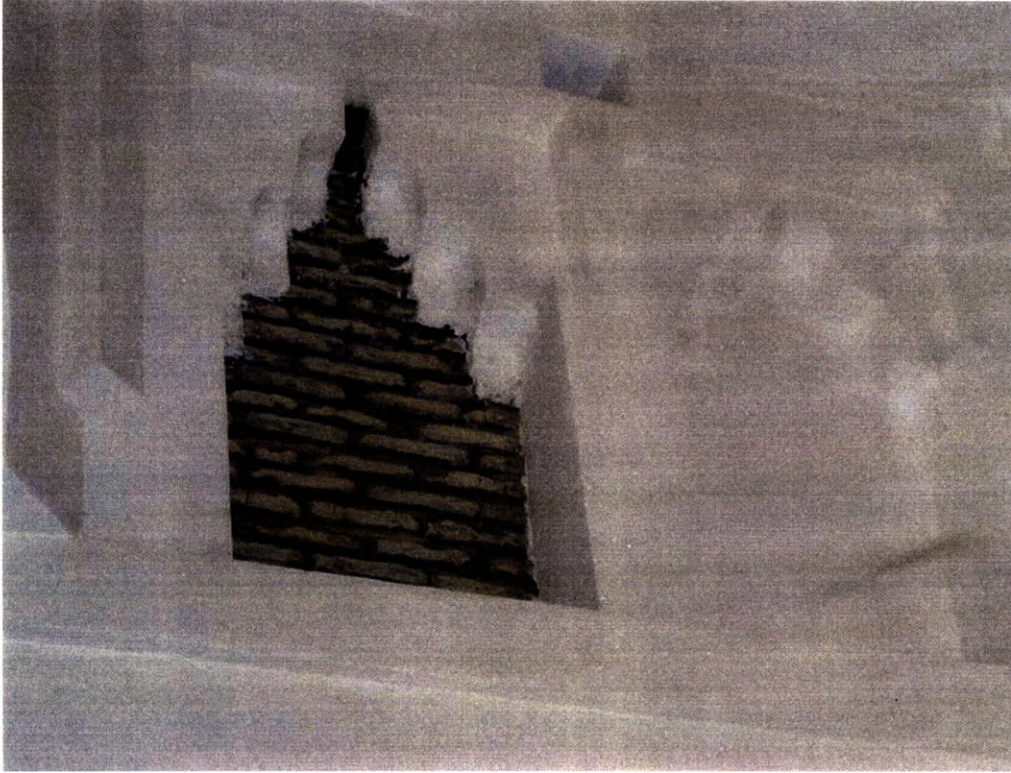


Fig. 27: Aq Astana Baba, Interior Brickwork

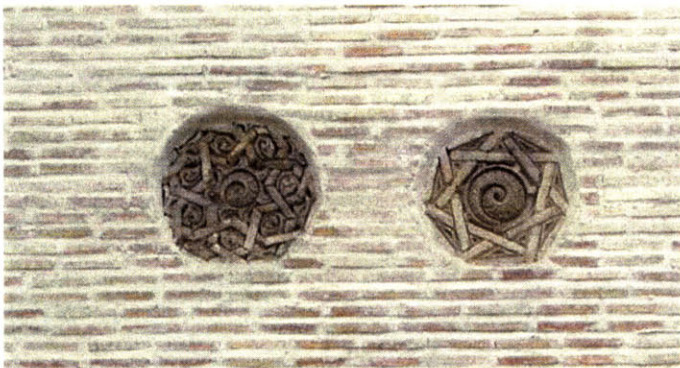


Fig. 28: Aq Astana Baba, Stucco Roundels

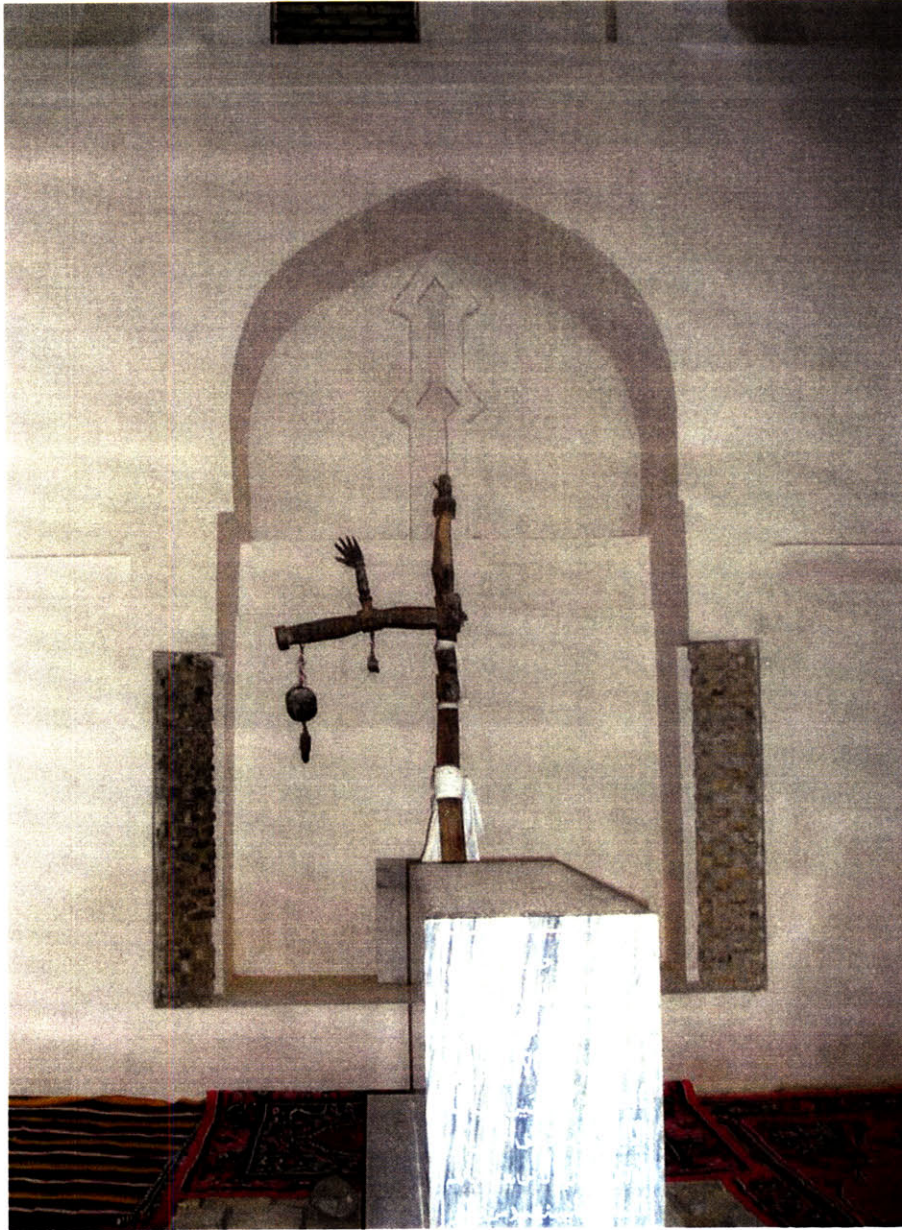


Fig. 29: Aq Astana Baba, Mihrab

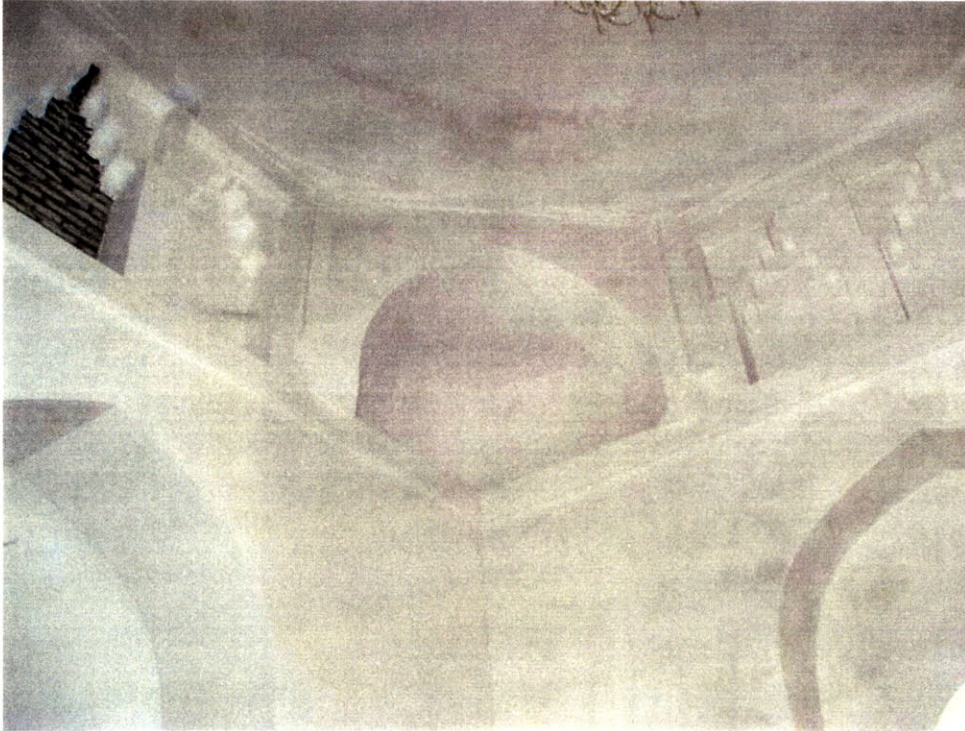


Fig. 30: Aq Astana Baba, Squinch



Fig. 31: Alamberdar
(Pugachenkova 1958, p. 269)



Fig. 32: Uzgend, Central Mausoleum, Squinch
(Hillenbrand FFM, p. 294)



Fig. 33: Sultan Saodat, W View

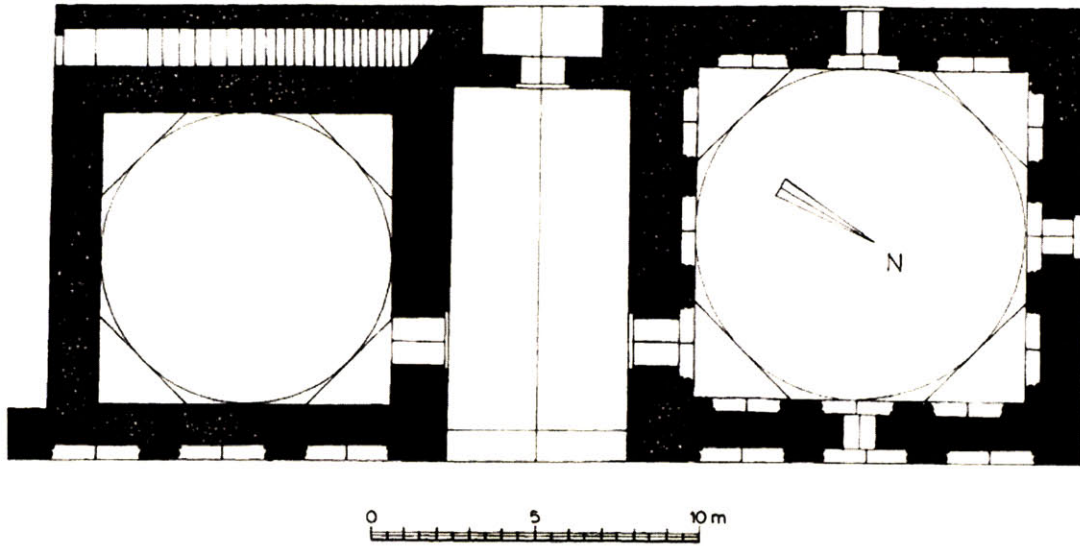


Fig. 34: Sultan Saodat, Plan
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 269)

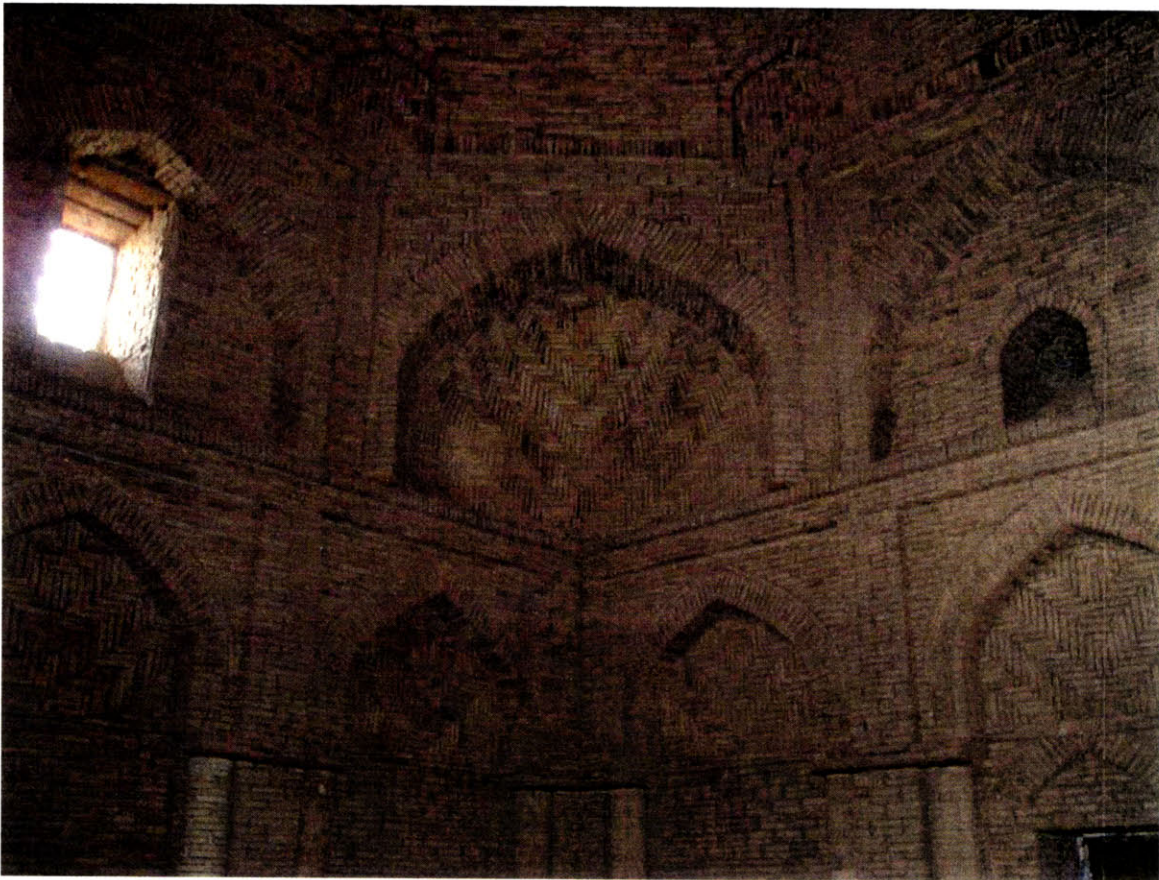


Fig. 35: Sultan Saodat, Western Mausoleum, Interior



Fig. 36: Sangbast

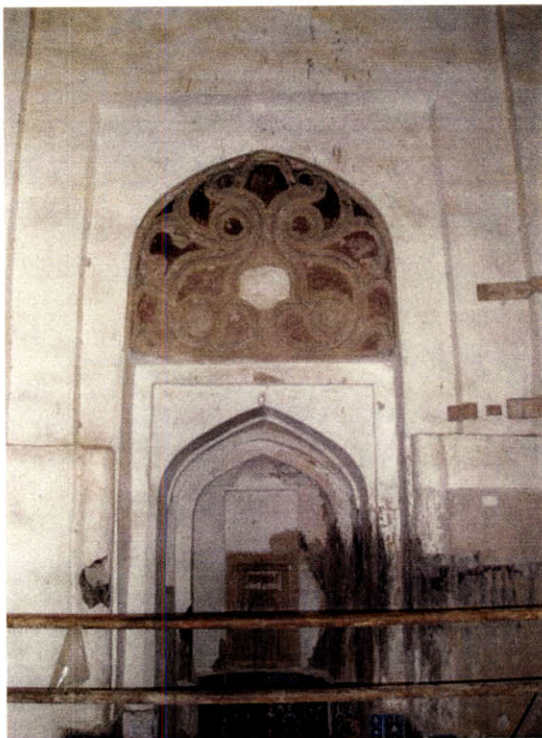


Fig. 37: Davazdah Imam, Mihrab



Fig. 38: Davazdah Imam, Squinch



Fig. 39: Mir Sayyid Bahram, Exterior View



Fig. 40: Mir Sayyid Bahram, Interior View

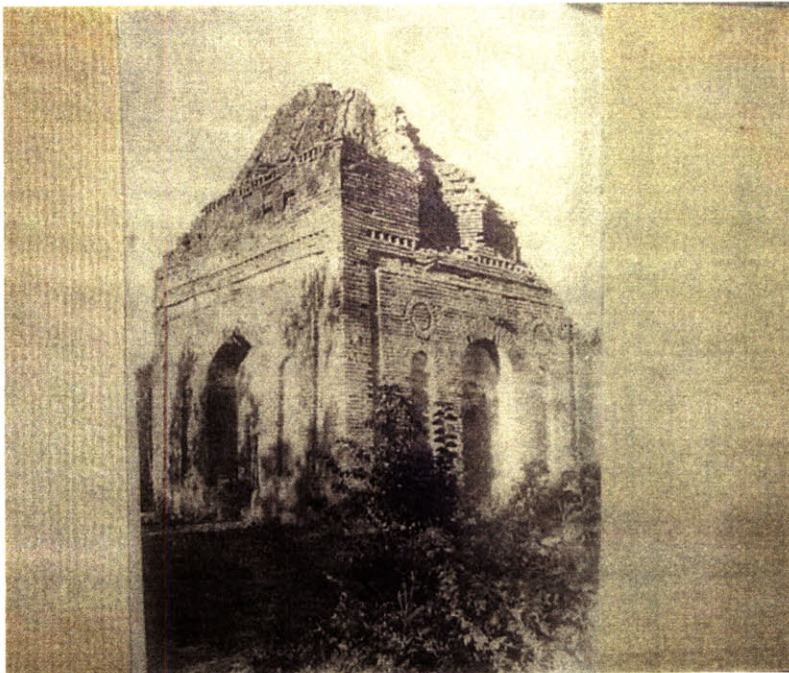


Fig. 41: Babaji Khatun
(From YPOP Archives)

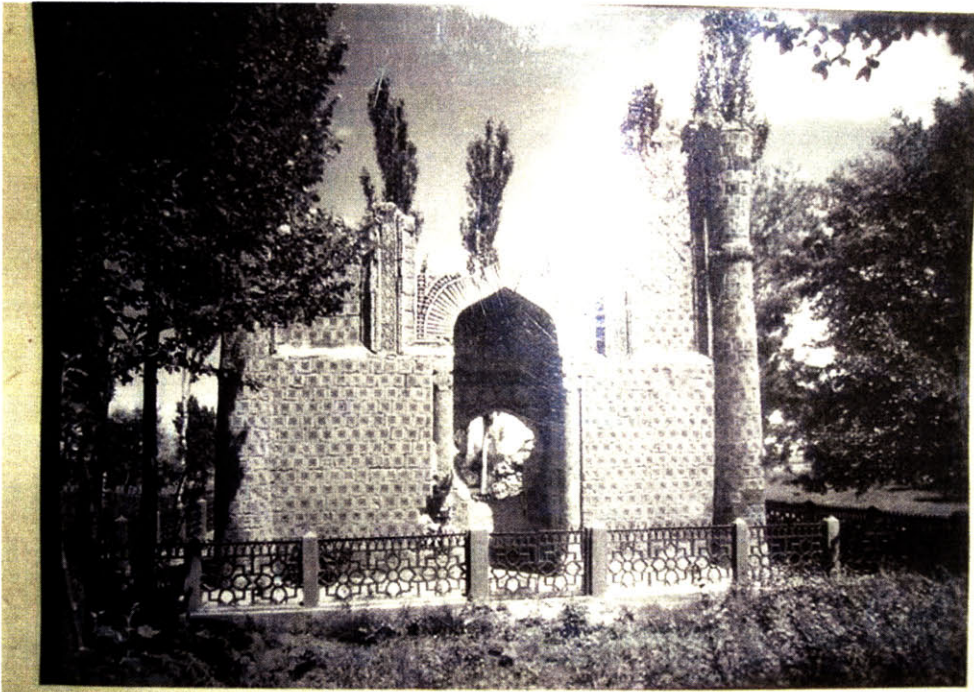
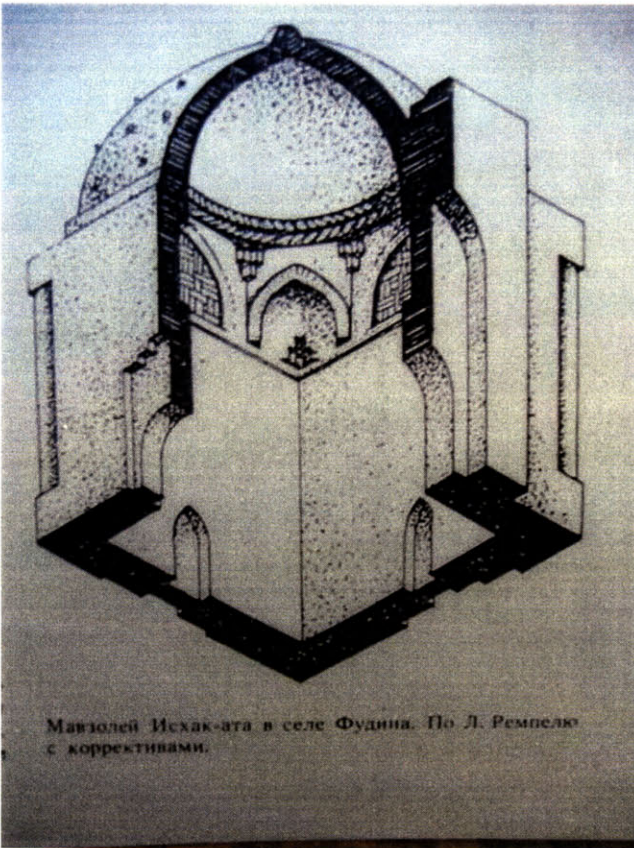


Fig. 42: Aisha Bibi
(From UPOP Archives)



Мавзолей Исхак-ата в селе Фудина. По Л. Ремпелью
с коррективами.

Fig. 43: Iskhak Ata
(Khmel'nitskii 1992, p. 174)

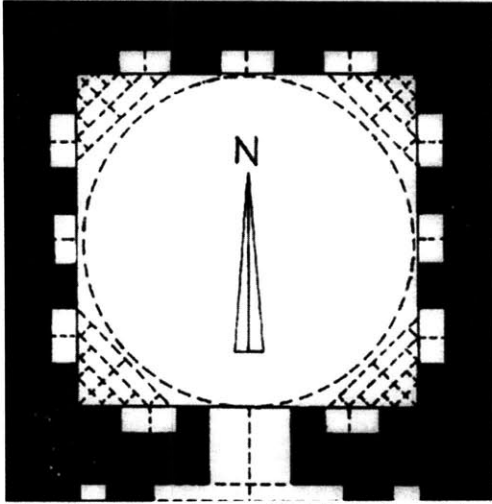


Fig. 44: Daughter of Iskhak Ata, Plan
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 161)



Fig. 45: Baba Hatem, Façade
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 190)

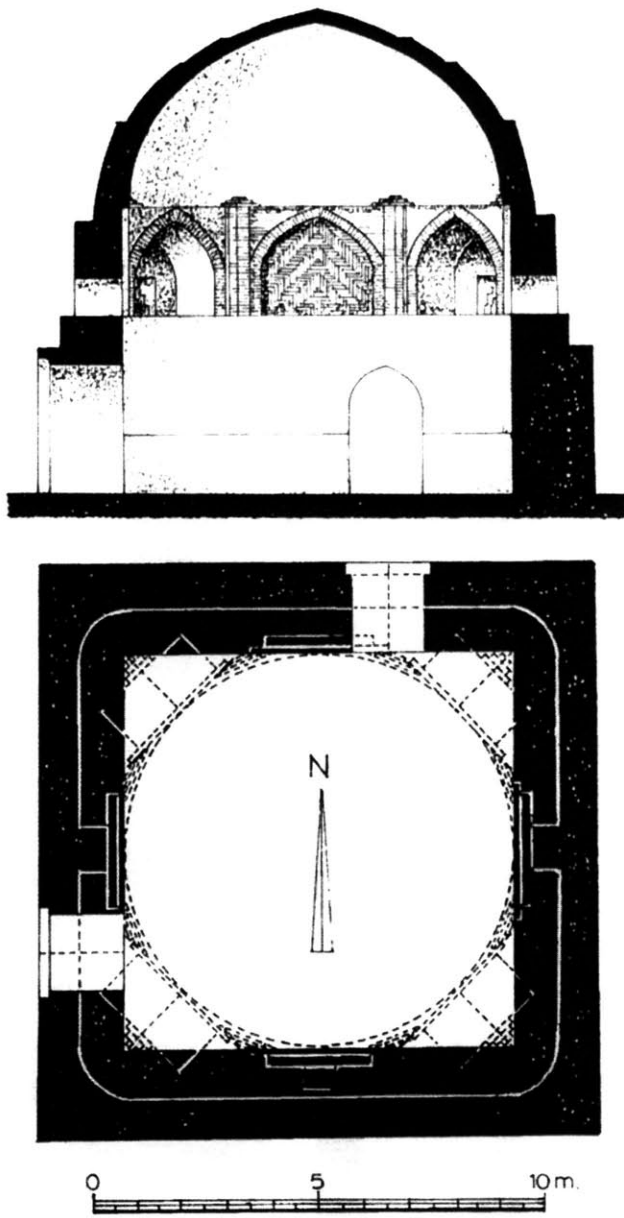


Fig. 46: Baba Roshan, Plan and Section
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 237)

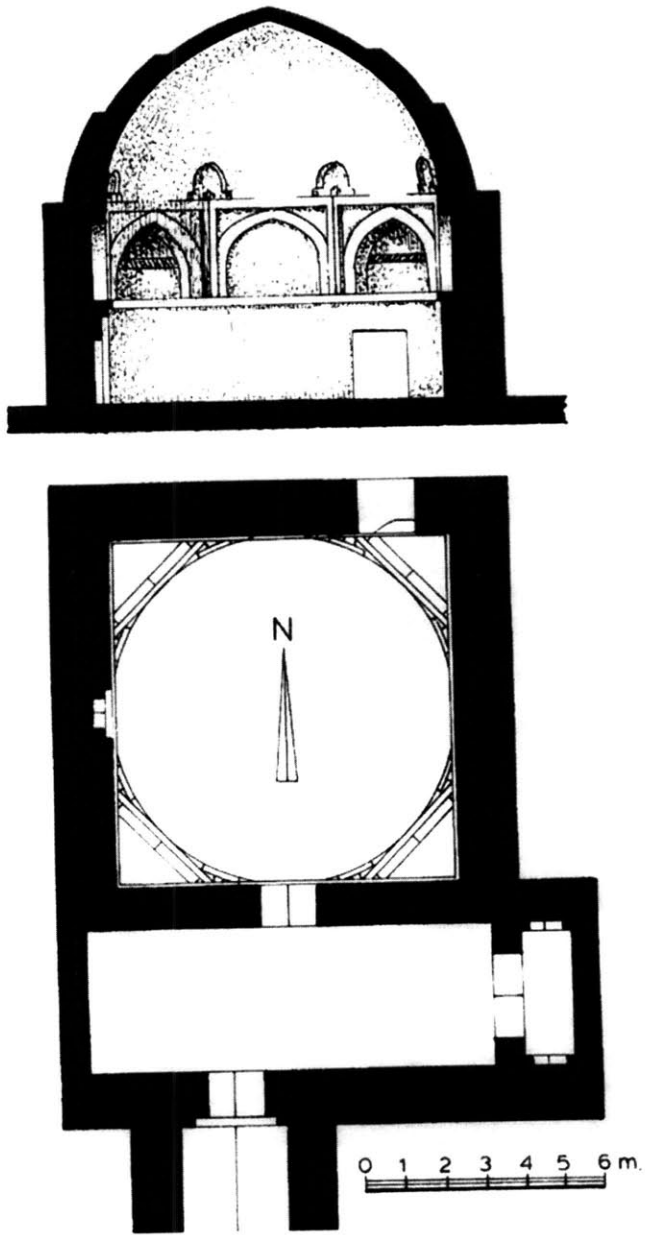


Fig. 47: Abu Hureira Gunbad, Plan and Section
(Khmel'nitskii 1996, p. 238)

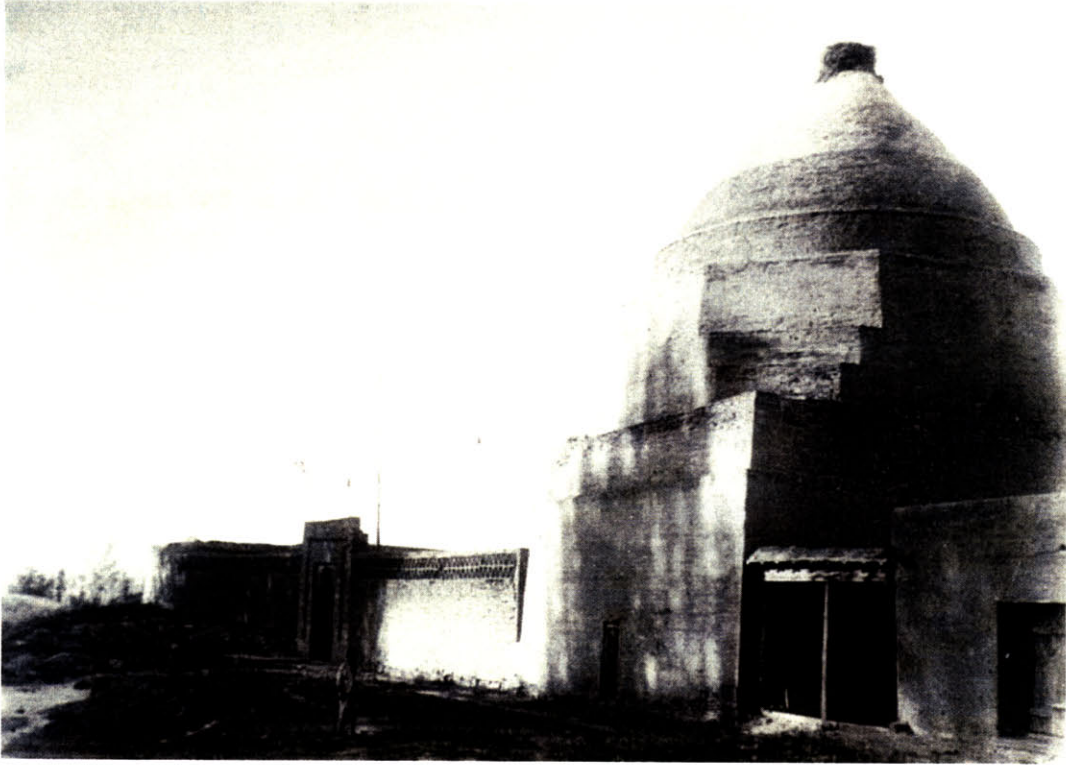


Fig. 48: Shah Fazl, Exterior View
(Blair 1992, p. 249)

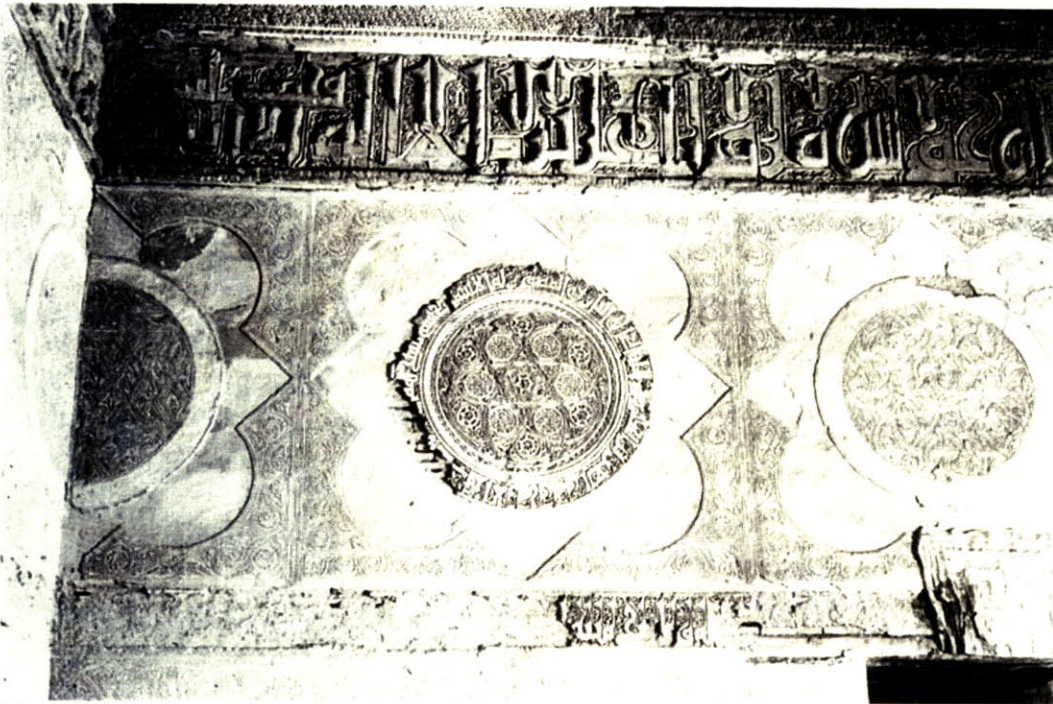


Fig. 49: Shah Fazl, Detail of Interior
(Blair 1992, p. 250)



Fig. 50: Khoja Roshan



Fig. 51: Mil-i Radkan



Fig. 52: Mil-i Radkan, Inscription Plaque



Fig. 53: Lajim Tomb Tower



Fig. 54: Lajim Tomb Tower, Entrance



Fig. 55: Pir-i 'Alamdar



Fig. 56: Pir-i 'Alamdard, Interior Inscription



Fig. 57: Chehel Dokhtaran



Fig. 58: Gunbad-i 'Ali
(Blair 1992, p. 248)



Fig. 59: Resget Tomb Tower, Entrance View



Fig. 60: Resget Tomb Tower, Detail



Fig. 61: Relief of Shapur I and Valerian, Naqsh-i Rostam



Fig. 62: Ossuary from Mulla Kurgan



Fig. 63: Ossuary from Ishtikhan



Fig. 64: Sogdian Funerary Couch Panel, MFA 12.588
(www.mfa.org)

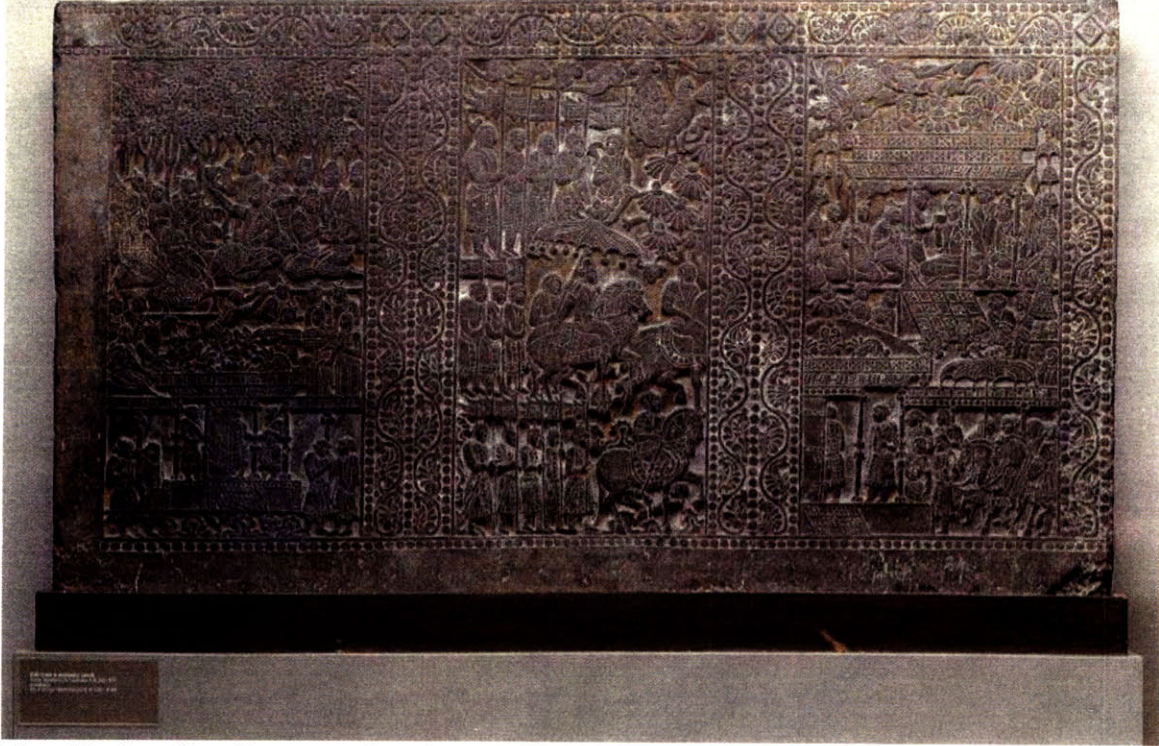


Fig. 65: Sogdian Funerary Couch Panel, MFA 12.589
(www.mfa.org)



Fig. 66: Zendan-i Suleiman



Fig. 67: Achaemenid Tomb, Naqsh-i Rostam



Fig. 68: Chahar Taq at Niasar, Squinch



Fig. 69: Chahar Taq at Niasar



Fig. 70: Silver Plate from Tabaristan, 8th century
(www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)



Fig. 71: Epigraphic Ware, 10th century
(www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk)



Fig. 72: Nishapur-style buff ware
(www.metmuseum.org)

Appendix: Inscriptions⁷⁸¹

Arab Ata

امير المؤمنين اطل الله بقاءه في شهر ربيع الاول سنة سبع وستين و ثلاثمئة --- من الهجرة

Shir Kabir

Quran 2:256/255

Quran 3:16/18

بسمه الملك لله الملك

Tomb of Ahmad

محمد رحمة الله و

Davazdah Imam

Quran 2:256/255

Quran 2:158/163

Quran 40:67/65

مما امر ببناء هذه القبة الامير الجليل المسعود --- هشتي ابو النجم و الاسفهلار الجليل المصفر --- ابو يعقوب بدر و اسحاق ابنا ينال موليا الـ منين ابتغا مرضاة الله و طلبا ثوابه في شهر رمضان سنة تسعة و عشرين و اربع مائة

Mir Sayyid Bahram

Quran 55:26-27

Shah Fazl

Quran 45:35-36/36-37

Quran 9:33

Quran 59:24

اين جاينگاه خوابگه سيف دولة است ملكان كه رادمرد بد و عز نام يافت تازنده بود دولت و كردان حق بر وى چون آفتاب بر همه عالم همى بتافت چون سير شد ز ملكت فانى شحيد گشت فانى نماند و رفت بملك بقا شتافت از ديدگاه خاق روان است خون دل تا وى شحيد گشت و روى از دوستان بتافت الملك لله

اين خوابگه معز---ل ملك نام دار فرزند سيف دولة آن فرمود تا اين بود از

⁷⁸¹ The text of the inscriptions is taken from Blair 1992, but gaps have been left except when one letter is missing and the meaning is certain.

Gunbad-i Qabus

بسمه هذا القبر العلي الامير شمس المعلي قبوس بت وشمكير امر بيتانه في حياته سنة سبع و تسعين و ثلثمائة قمرية و سنة خمس و سبعين و ثلثمائة شمسية

Mil-i Radkan

بسم الله هذا قسر الامير السيد الخطير ابو جعفر محمد ---درين باوند مولي امير المؤمنين في شهر ربيع الاخر سنة سبع و اربع مائة

بسمه امر بابتداء بناء هذا المشهد في ايام الحيوه الاسبيهد ابو جعفر محمد بن وندرين باوند مولي امير المؤ---كرمه الله بالغفران ---ضوان والجنان في سنة سبع و اربع مائة و فرغ منه سنة احدى عشر و اربع مائة من الحجرة

Lajim

بسمه هذا قبر القبه الكيا الجليل ابي الفوارس شهريار بن العباس بن شهريار مولي امير المؤمنين رحمه الله امر بينائه الستة الكريمة جهرازاد بنت سلي---ور في س---ثل---عش---بع سنة عمل الحسين بن علي

Pir-i 'Alamdardar

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا القبه قصر الحاجب السعيد ابي جعفر محمد بن ابراهيم قدس الله روحه امر ببناءها ابنه بختيار عمل علي بن احمد بن الحسين بن شاه البنا بن البناء سنة سبعة عشر و اربع مائة

بسمه الملك لله

Quran 39:54/53

Chehel Dokhtaran

بسمه امر ببناء هذه القبه الامير الجليل ابو شجاع اسفار بگي پير اصفهان رضي الله عنه و---ذنوبه مستعدا ليومه تربه له ولاولاده غفر الله لهم والغه بنينا محمد صلي الله عليه في سنة سب و اربعين و اربعمائة

بسم الله الامير الجليل ابو شجاع اسفار بگي پير اصفهان الملك لله

Gunbad-i 'Ali

بسمه هذه التربة الامير السيد السعيس الماضي عميد الدين شمس الدولة ابي علي هزارسب بن سيف الدولة ابو الحسن نصر بن الحسن بن الفيروزان نور الله قبرهما مما امر ببنائه ابنه الفيروزان في سنة ثمان و اربعين و اربع مائة

والدته لاسيدة الجلييلة ناز بنت كشمير رحمة الله عليها

Resget

Quran 21:36

Quran 112

لا اله الا الله مخلصا محمد رسول الله صادقا هذا القبة لهرمزديار ابن مسدرا ولحبوسيار ابن مسدرا --- اربعة

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Fig. 73: Fragments of Figural Pottery from Afrasiab
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