

Iranian Cities from the Arab Conquest to the Early Modern Period conference

Abstracts

'From Shahrīstan to Medina' revisited

Donald Whitcomb

This paper will present some initial ideas on tracing change from Sasanian cities to the earliest Islamic urban foundations. The focus would begin with the city plan of Jundishapur, and then discuss some recent research on other Sasanian cities, with a view to study the beginning of the Islamic cities in Iran, such as Istakhr and Shiraz.

In 1985, Hugh Kennedy wrote an article, "From Polis to Medina"; this set a new paradigm for seeing the urban transition from late Antiquity to Early Islam. This was the same year that I wrote a monograph on Qasr-i Abu Nasr, archaeological evidence for this transition in Shiraz. Kennedy has more recently studied Iranian cities, with far less success; the reason for this is the present state of understanding the Sasanian city. There seems to be an assumption of a common urban foundation, that is, Classical cities of the Levant imported into Iran. Bishapur is a good example where the pre-Islamic city need not be a copy of Western models but may follow an Iranian urban tradition. This pattern remains to be defined with new archaeological research.

Inherited landscapes in Muslim Bactra

Etienne de la Vaissière

Recent (2012-present) surveys and excavations are conducted in the Bactra oasis by the team of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (Ph. Marquis, J. Bendezu-Sarmiento) and myself, at least when security conditions allow them. They have already deeply modified our understanding of the early medieval transition from a Buddhist-dominated town to a provincial capital on the Eastern frontier of Islam (7th-11th c. AD).

This paper will try, first to present this new archaeological data, much of which is unpublished. Leaving aside Antiquity, progress has been made for this period on four archaeological zones: the Nowbahar monastery at the very center of the oasis; an artificial planed town close to Siyahgerd on the road to Termez; the oasis wall, described by the geographers; and a fortress protecting Bactra in the North from Antiquity (Yuezhi/Kangju rivalry) to c. 1000 AD (Ghaznavids/Qarakhanids rivalry).

With both this better understanding of the building chronology of the town and the hypothesis of Bactra as a monastic republic in the 7th c. at hand (see my "De Bactres à Balkh par le Nowbahar" article in the *Journal Asiatique* 298.2 2010), I will try to analyze how this pre-Islamic landscape was reinterpreted in the Arabic and Persian texts describing the town, but also how it was integrated into the Muslim city.

Iranian Cities: Settlements and Water Management between Antiquity and the Islamic period

Rocco Rante

A city is conceived as the result of cultural choices, linked to different political, economic, functional and climatic needs. The human will to group into societies reflects the need to protect, defend, exchange and create. Within these needs there is also the will to determine a space, to demarcate a territory in which these societies can work, realise projects, produce and exchange both internally and externally. The requisite territorial delimitation has been achieved by different approaches throughout different periods, always with the overriding necessity of being near sources of water. Directly linked to water exploitation is the morphology of this territorial delimitation, which is at the origin of the formation of the urban nucleus. The ensuing form of the city also depended on a cultural context regulated by ideologies, practises and norms founded on decisions dictated by the multiple needs of these societies. Moreover, the form of the city is considered not as a simple anarchic development of 'primitive' urban agglomerations, but rather as the result of a specific human and social will.

In this short presentation I will try to examine some urban topographies in a vast geographical area including Iran, northwest Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which overall could be divided into two large geographical regions: the Persian territories and the Central Asian steppes. Urban topographies will be examined between late antiquity and the early Islamic period. According to the aforementioned considerations, I will first introduce the cities, when possible through a geographical approach, considering them in light of their own geographical aspects, which inevitably oriented urban needs. Second, taking a limited number of examples into consideration, I will provide a global framework for these cities in the pre-Islamic period and focus on observations about Islamic urbanization. The Islamisation of these societies added new elements to the previous urban settlements, which, together with rapid economic and demographic growth, accelerated the cities' evolution. The reorganisation of old fortified settlements, the constitution of new well-organised quarters such as the *rabads* and the creation of cities *ex novo* show the major contributions of the Islamic societies to Iranian and Central Asian urbanisation. The approach of this study is primarily archaeological as well as geomorphological. When necessary, written sources complete the overall framework.

The vast area of study obviously includes numerous cultural and spatial models, and an all-encompassing examination could be difficult to achieve. However, it is through the study and comparison of such models that a historical sense of urban evolution specific to cities, as well as to regions and provinces, can be brought to light.

Early Islamic Marv: From the Islamic Conquest to the Ghaznavid Era

Deborah Tor

The last several decades have witnessed the sporadic appearance of works about various individual Iranian cities in the pre-Mongol period. These works— which range geographically from Richard Bulliet’s work on Nīshāpūr and Richard Frye’s on Bukhārā to the more recent opera of Andreas Wechsler on Qomm, David Durand-Guédy on Seljuq Isfahan, and Arezou Azad on Balkh—virtually all focused on cities for which there is at least one extant dedicated local history.¹ It is considerably more complex to attempt to reconstruct the life— political, economic, and social— of a medieval city for which we possess no such useful resource, but this paper will attempt to do precisely that: namely, to recover the early Islamic history of one of the most important urban centers of Khurāsān and, indeed, of the entire Islamic world, but which is not graced by any surviving medieval city history: namely, the city of Marv (Marv-i Shāhijān, or “Royal Marv”). The aim of this paper in doing so will be to elucidate Marv’s role and significance in Islamic history in pre-Seljuq times.

This ancient city, perched on the edge of the Central Asian steppe, while retaining its importance after the Islamic conquests as both a bulwark against and a launching point into the nomadic steppes, as well as one of the key emporia on the trade routes, attained new significance during early Islamic times: Politically and militarily, first as the launching point for the Arab conquests of Transoxiana, and subsequently as the home of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution and the intermittent capital of Khurasan and even, at one point, of the entire Islamic Empire; economically, as probably the most important center of sericulture in the Islamic world, as well as a major trade entrepot; and religiously and culturally, as the place of origin of such outstanding Islamic luminaries as the proto-Sunnīs ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak and al-Fuḍayl b. ‘Iyāḍ, and the Sufi shaykh Abū’l-‘Abbās Qāsim b. al-Mahdī al-Sayyārī, who founded one of the major *ṭarīqas* of Khurāsān.

The sources which will be utilized to glean information about Marv are variegated, and include conquest literature, general histories, the major geographical works, the major biographical dictionaries, including Sufi works; and even a chapter dedicated to Marv, along with a few other major cities, in al-Isfīzārī’s local history of Herāt.

What is Really Known about Ancient and Medieval Yazd?

Jamsheed Choksy

The focus will be on Yazd and its surroundings. This presentation begins by assessing scholarly suggestions that Yazd has been occupied since Median and/or Achaemenian times. It examines the appropriateness of attributing a clifftop place called Issatis by Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder) and a similarly named tribal region mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy, both during the 1st century CE, to Yazd. The relevance of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, whose archetype can be ascribed to the 1st century BCE, to such attempts at tracing Yazd back into ancient times will also be discussed briefly. Next, Middle Persian sources, such as the *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr*, which describe

¹ The exception is David Whitehouse’s history of Sirāf, which relies quite heavily on archeology; David Whitehouse, *Siraf: History, Topography, and Environment* (Oxford: British Institute of Persian Studies and Oxbow Books, 2009).

founding of cities by Yazdegird I in the early 5th century will be examined to determine the validity of the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* (10th century) claim that Sasanian ruler established the urban center. Also discussed, within the context of even later sources such as the 15th century CE *Tārikh-e Yazd* and *Tārikh-e Jadīd-e Yazd*, will be its name as Katha and whether the term refers to a moat around its ramparts, a fortress or prison ascribed to Alexander III of the 4th century BCE, or to its location within a deep valley. The writings of Al-Istakhrī (10th century CE), Ibn Ḥawqal (10th century CE), Ibn al-Balkhī (12th century CE), and Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī al-Qazwīnī (13th century CE), among others, will be utilized to sketch out some details about the physical layout of Yazd, its conquest by Arabs, gradual conversion of residents to Islam, the trade and crafts of its denizens, and resurgence as a Zoroastrian religious center there.

Balkh from the Seljuqs to the Mongol invasion

Juergen Paul

Balkh is not only an urban space, but also a region within which the city was the main settlement. It included the agricultural hinterland (irrigated by the *Hazhdah nahr* system) and also the grazing grounds – from the banks of the Amu Darya to the higher ground in the hills south of the oasis. It can be shown that Balkh (like many other regions) functioned as a regional state: a dynastic appanage and an emirate within the Great Seljuq empire, later as a Qarakhanid domain within the Qarakhitai orbit. Even in the short period of Ghurid dominion, a line of potentially hereditary emirs can be detected. It is only in the Khwarazmian period that we do not have any evidence for that. The city notables are not well represented in the sources. Besides some very cursory remarks in *inshāʿ* appointment deeds, only some reports (of hagiographic character) can be used for assessing the notables' relation with emirs controlling the region.

Nevertheless, we can suppose that in the Seljuq period (until 1157 or thereabouts), Balkh was ruled under the *aʿyān-amīr*-system: city notables such as the *qāḍī* and the *raʾīs* were working in the judiciary and in the fiscal institutions under control of the provincial governor. Later, in the Qarakhanid-Qarakhitai period, the picture changes somewhat: the division of labor is not so visible, some officials were no notables, and at least one notable seems to have had a position which otherwise would have been a prerogative of the amir.

The paper will give an overview over the history of Balkh (the city and the province) from the coming of the Seljuqs to the Mongol invasion (1040-1221), and it will review what evidence there is for the *aʿyān-amīr* system in the city of Balkh.

Kashan, A Crossroad of Knowledge

Mehrdad Amanat

Kashan lies at the center of an oasis on the edge of the Kavir desert under the daunting shadow of the ruins of the pre-historic Sialk and the abiding spring of Fin. It's strategic position at the cross road of major thoroughfares is key to understanding of its history. Kashan did have a pre-Islamic

presence but was transformed from an agricultural township to an urban center under the Buyids and especially under the Saljuq rule, a time of increased urbanization throughout the Iranian Plateau. This remarkable growth was in part a product of a diverse and vibrant economy -- agrarian based but also tied to the transit trade, crafts and industry—supported by access to larger markets. Even more distinctive was Kashan's role as a hub for transmitting knowledge and artistic innovation. Access to trans regional roads provided a two-way path for receiving outside expertise and sharing ideas and techniques. It also opened up opportunities for artists such as master ceramic craftsmen of the Abu Taher family and scholars such as the renowned mathematician Qiyas al-Din Jamshid Kashi who sought patronage at other distant centers of art and learning, especially at times of crises and decline. Kashan's famous glazed tile and ceramics are original examples of hybrid interplay.

From the pre-Islamic times Kashan was part of a grouping of persistently non-conformist cities and townships connected through a defining geographic thread. What may be called the "Axis of Faith" had traces of Mazdakite, Khorramdini, early Shi'ite and later, Nuqtavi and Babi tendencies. Though often ostracized in the Islamic Middle Ages as a heretical Shi'i center, Kashan's self-definition as a *Dar al-mu'minin*, with real or imaginary Shi'i saints and shrines, reinforced a resolve to excel through education and work ethics. A class of local scholars and notables who reached high administrative positions in the Saljuq court brought back assets that helped shape Kashan's urban space through generous endowments. As resilient families of notables lasting several generations, they were a source of stability, continuity and cohesion at times of crises and occasional tribal attacks such as the Mongol invasion. This paper explores the apparent paradox of a class of notables in a heterodox environment pursuing cosmopolitan ambitions. It further attempts to locate Kashan's significance in the Islamic and transregional contexts.

Isfahan under Turko-Mongol rule (11th-15th centuries)

David Durand-Guédy

Located in the heart of Western Iran, Isfahan reached its maturity in the 10th century after three centuries of uninterrupted growth. In the following five centuries, it had a tumultuous history – its utmost glory under the 11th century Saljuq ruler Malikshah, when it was the centre of one of the largest Muslim empires in sharp contrast with its infamous ordeal at the hand of Timur in 1387. It nevertheless showed a remarkable resilience compared to many of its rivals at the onset of the period, like Rayy and Nishapur which had been irremediably destroyed. While continuous occupation has been detrimental to archaeological excavations, Isfahan is probably the Iranian city whose socio-economical pre-modern history is the best documented by textual sources on the *longue durée*. In its case, the traditional and well-known corpus of historical and geographical texts are supplemented by valuable local histories (the different versions of the *Mahāsin Isfahān*; the newly edited *Munāzara-yi Baghdād wa Isfahān*) and also, for the 12th century, by a large number of archive-like documents providing unique insight into the functioning of the city, the structuration of the elite (including its economical basis) and the nature of its relationship with "imperial" powers. This paper aims to put into perspective the results already established for the Saljuq period (see Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, 2010) by considering 1) the five centuries of Turko-Mongol rule, 2) the

cases of other cities from the same province (the “*kavir-city*” Kashan and the “pastoral-city” Gulpayigan), 3) new archaeological findings.

Early Sufis of Isfahan: A Forgotten Path

Hossein Kamaly

This paper examines the early history of Sufi pietism in Isfahan until the fifth/eleventh century. Surveying the role of patrician families in defining Islamic thought and practice in the local context, it focuses on relations between the influential Manda and Muškān clans. Cooperation and competition between these and other powerful networks in and around the city are reflected in relations among the *madhhabs* (especially the Ḥanbalīs and the Shāfi‘īs), theological positions (especially Ash‘arīs and the *ḥadīth*-folk), as well as attitudes toward ideas and behaviors which are generally placed under the rubric of Sufism.

The ten-volume work *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’ wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Aṣfiyā’* by Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣbahānī (ca. 336-430/ca. 948-1038) is a well-known biographical dictionary which contains notices on more than six hundred renunciants (*nussāk*), and gives a familiar description of Sufism, including the different etymologies of the word *ṣūfī* and stressing its connotation with pietistic behavior. Completed by 422/1031, it stands as a monumental achievement of the early phase of Sufism in Isfahan.

Abū Nu‘aym’s great grandfather, Ibn Ma’dān al-Bannā’ (d. 286/899) had been a pioneer of early Sufism in Isfahan. The latter’s disciple, ‘Alī b. Sahl (d. 307/919-20), who was recognized as one of the most prominent mystics in tenth-century Isfahan, maintained connections with the great Sufis of Baghdad, including Junayd.

The connection between Isfahani Sufis and the Hanbali (as well as *Ẓāhirī*) *madhhab* has already been explored in pioneering studies by N. Pourjavady during the 1980s, and the result of his work are available English, notably in A. Karamustafa’s recent inquiry into the formative period of Sufism. Ties with Abū Turāb al-Naḳṣabī (d. 245/859), Dhu’l-Nun, as exponents of “pre-Baghdad Sufism” also have been studied.

The present paper seeks to shed further light on the complex relations between Shafi‘ī and Ash‘arī authors and other Sufis in Isfahan and beyond. Reportedly, when Abū Nu‘aym personally brought his massive *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’* to Nīšāpūr, the heartland of Khorasani Sufism, the work was well-received. This occurred after the Turkic warlord Subuktigīn had ravaged Isfahan, as he sought to extend his dominion beyond Khorasan.

Looking closely at Abū Nu‘aym’s *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*, his other large work, *Dhikr Akbār Aṣbahān* and the two-volume work of his teacher Abū al-Shaykh al-Aṣbahānī – the *Akbār al-muḥaddithīn bi al-Aṣbahān wa al-wāridīn ‘alayhā* – this paper traces the roots of pietism and Sufism in Isfahan to hitherto unexplored circles formed around a few pious individuals as early as the eighth century. Referred to as Brotherhoods, these are not to be confused with *ṭarīqas* which later became defining

institutions in Sufism, especially after the thirteenth century. The word Sufi began to appear as an attribute in Isfahan sometime during the ninth century, and it is first attested for Abū ‘Imrān Mūsa b. ‘Abbād al-Šūfī (d. ca. 220/825), who was a descendent of ‘Abbād b. Muškān (d. 175/791) and belonged to a powerful local clan. This paper will comment on more than forty other names that were associated with Sufism in pre-Seljuk Isfahan.

An Arabized exile's perspective on intellectual life in Seljuq Isfahan

Lutz Richter-Bernburg

‘Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad, Saladin’s trusted secretary and historian (519-97/1125-1200), largely built his self-image on his stylistic prowess in Arabic and generally, on his command of the secretarial craft, which for him was inextricably linked to the Arabic language. Yet if we extrapolate from his *shuhra* al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (“The Secretary from Isfahan”), in the eyes of his Arab colleagues and acquaintances, he may have retained some, possibly but vague, foreignness. And even by his own admission, his knowledge of Persian and ‘eastern’ diplomatic etiquette commended him to his superior, patron, and eventually friend al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, when the Qāḍī was looking for a deputy in attendance on Saladin during his own absences from military campaigns. However, notwithstanding al-‘Imād’s express pride in his ‘Persian’ background, beyond passing remarks he never elaborated on literary interests, let alone production in this language. All the same, he received his primary and secondary education in Isfahan and Kashan, before his father moved the family to Baghdad in 534/1139-40. It was there that he pursued his studies at ‘college’, i.e. *madrassa* level, which eventually qualified him to fill the position of ‘professor’ (*mudarris*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) himself; concurrently he studied and honed his skills in, poetry. In 543/1148, a scant decade after leaving Isfahan, his father took him and his brother back to their native town, where he spent the next five years, primarily with literary studies. Allegedly because he missed his circle of familiar friends, he then decided to move again and finally settled into administrative service, first in the caliphal government and then, after a dangerous change of regime at Baghdad, in Syria, where he soon entered into employ with Nūr ad-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zengi and, again after a fraught transition, with Saladin.

Al-‘Imād’s major works, while not autobiographical in the first place, are replete with pertinent data; his voluminous anthology of—roughly—contemporaneous poetry and ornate prose, “The pearl-like virgin of the castle and the register of the people of the age” (*Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat ahl al-‘aṣr*), perhaps offers most detail. But the author’s perspective, however family- and self-centered it may be, at the same time and perhaps for its very idiosyncrasy, offers an intimate view of urban intellectual life—as evidenced especially in the sections on his native Isfahan and eastern Iranian regions. In our reading of *al-Kharīda*, its belletrist focus will be seen to be blurred in order to offer a more inclusive tableau; on the other hand, the author’s determined refusal to include Persian samples reflects his ambivalence about the bilingualism he could not refuse to take cognizance of and consequently, his but grudging acknowledgment of Persian as a literary medium. Al-‘Imād’s arguably retrograde approach notwithstanding, here as elsewhere in his writing, he is too close an observer to be lightly dismissed—including various *obiter dicta*. Thus in spite of his narrow vantage point, he offers indispensable information on the urban society he moved in and recorded.

The Shiraz of Hafez: A Most Learned, Poetic, and Violent Place

John Limbert

Shiraz in the 14th century was the setting in which Hafez created his masterpieces, not just of Persian poetry, but of world literature. What was this setting? What kind of a place was Hafez's Shiraz?

Hafez was, first and foremost, a Shirazi, and there was thus a close link between his work and the cultural, social, and political life of his native town. M.A. Nodushan-Islami said it best in *ماجرای پایان* (The Eternal Story of Hafez).

زندگی آنگونه که بر مردم دوهزار ساله ایران تابانده شده بود او بازتابش را گرفته. بدان چکیدی که ما امروز گوی
با نیوشیدن غزلهای او تاریخ را مینوشیم

He reflected the life as it had shone for the people of Iran for two thousand years. (He did it) with such precision that today, when we listen to the *ghazals* of Hafez, it is as if we are drinking from the cup of history.

Earthquakes, wars, and neglect have destroyed much of Hafez's city, although Shiraz remains where it has been since its founding in the early centuries of Islam. A few of the main features have survived as buildings or ruins. Other places that Hafez must have known – markets schools, and Sufi centers – remain only as names in the sources.

Three currents shaped the Shiraz of the 14th century.

- Violence. Rulers changed frequently and violently. Between 1339 and 1344 the rule of Shiraz changed hands eight times. Members of the Inju, Chupani, and Mozaffarid families waged complex and bloody struggles that would sometimes pit Shiraz neighborhoods against each other.
- Creativity. Hafez is just the best-known poet of the age. The 14th century was also the time of Obeid Zakani, Khaju Kermani, Joneid Shirazi, and the poetess princess Malek-Khatun Inju.
- Spirituality. Shiraz was popularly known as *borj al-owlia* ("tower of saints"), and was famous for its shrines, seminaries, and mosques. It was famous as the burial place of three brothers (Ahmad, Mohammad, and Hossein) and one nephew (Ali b. Hamzeh) of Imam Reza, the 8th Imam of the Shia. All four died in Shiraz around 835 CE and the Sunni Salghurid rulers rediscovered and endowed their tombs in 13th century.

Hafez portrays Shiraz as a battleground between puritans (*zahedan*) and hedonists (*rendan*). The former devoted themselves to fasting, prayer, and holy poverty. The latter preferred the worldly pleasures of wine, song, and poetry. His poetry frequently records this struggle, and there was no doubt where his sympathies lay.

مارا به رندی افسانه کردند پیران جاهل شیخان گمراه
از دست زاهد کردیم توبه وز فعل عابد استغفرالله

Ignorant sages, deluded preachers
Have made me a legend among the *rend*.

We have repented of the ascetic,
And have said, “God forbid” to the deeds of the pious.

The rulers vacillated between the two camps. At the ascetic extreme was Amir Mobarez al-Din Mohammad Mozaffar (ruled Shiraz 1353-1364), nicknamed *mohhtaseb* (the inspector). At the other extreme was his rival and predecessor, Abu Eshaq Inju (ruled Shiraz 1343-53), who drank and reveled while his enemies besieged the city.

Economics favored Hafez and his fellow *rendan*. In general, the rulers’ need for money overcame their religious scruples. The ascetics, for all their virtues and piety, did not produce much revenue. A 15th century inscription from Shiraz records taxes on taverns (*sharabkhaneh*), opium dens, (*bangkhaneh*), and brothels (*beit al-lotf*). These haunts of the pleasure-seekers were excellent sources of taxes. For the rulers, it was more efficient to tax sin rather than make futile efforts for suppress it.

Tabriz before, under and after Mongol rule (6th/12th–9th/15th centuries): From the City Turning Imperial to the Kingdom Localized
Daniel Zakrzewski

Mongol rule in Iran had a tremendous impact on the history of the country and Tabriz is the city most closely associated with it. The presentation will highlight one fundamental aspect of this impact, namely the reconstitution of a territorially distinct kingdom named Iran but as an Islamic monarchy. This process of reconstitution unfolded in close conjunction with the history of Tabriz which came to be the place embodying the notion of this kingdom. Moreover from the pre-Mongol 6th/12th to the post-Mongol 9th/15th century the notables of the city were crucial in shaping the development and outcome of that process. In order to support this double argument the presentation will focus on urban and local history in their wider frameworks from two angles.

The first part combines an introduction of dynasties that ruled Tabriz during these centuries with a discussion of changes in the physical appearance of the city. Specifying to the extent possible the location of walls, markets, princely residences or congregational mosques in individual periods the focus will be on massive pious endowment complexes, many of which hosted royal tombs. With few exceptions these complexes were located outside the walled city where the generally nomadic courts of the era made camp frequently. The economic significance of these endowment complexes is often difficult to assess but their material structures continuously marked royal presence at Tabriz. Beginning with the one hosting the mausoleum of the Mongol convert Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 694/1295–704/1304) these endowment-tomb complexes signaled that the city embodied the notion of an Islamic kingdom named Iran.

The second part concentrates on the notables of Tabriz and their specific interests as factors promoting the process in question. Distinguishing to the extent possible between local leaders and eminent courtiers under various ruling houses the focus will be on a couple of notable families who represented these interests and saw to their realization. In general the notables of Tabriz expected a ruler not only to provide security and maintain or restore prosperity but also to privilege the city as

principal urban center of the realm. They appear as very supportive of the Mongols never offering resistance to the non-Muslim conquerors and serving them in crucial governmental and administrative functions on the local level and beyond. Thereby the notables of Tabriz were instrumental in turning their city into an imperial center of the first order.

The notables seem to have cultivated the awareness that Tabriz embodies the notion of an Islamic kingdom named Iran already under non-Muslim Mongol rulers. Ghazan's legacy significantly enhanced this awareness and all in all Mongol rule raised the standard in terms of Tabriz as principal center of the realm. Some of the urban notable families of pre-Mongol and Mongol times retained eminent positions after the collapse of Mongol rule but families based in the villages of the rural hinterland increasingly entered the ranks of the notables. However their specific interests hardly changed as they continued to support those rulers and dynasties privileging the city and thereby perpetuating the localization of Iran as an Islamic kingdom at Tabriz.

The Writing Culture of Nishapur in the 11th Century

Sarah Savant and Maxim Romanov

This paper focuses on the writing culture of Nīshāpūr in the 11th century through an analysis of Abū Maṣṣūr al-Thaʿālibī's (d. 429/1038) "Fruits of the heart among nouns in construct form," *Thimār al-qulūb fī al-muḍāf wa-l-mansūb*. This is a lexicon of formulaic two-word phrases and clichés. It is an oddity: on the one hand, it calls up memorable phrases, proverbs, poetry, and settings for a vibrant, aural culture; on the other hand, it is a product of a written culture in which living memory was distilled into literary frameworks. We employ a new digital method that detects the copying of texts into other texts to show that al-Thaʿālibī, despite giving a stylised picture of oral transmission, depended quite extensively on written sources, including most likely texts from a prominent local library. This digital method allows us, furthermore, to begin to chart a "circulatory system" within which al-Thaʿālibī operated as a cultural broker, perpetuating memory of a heritage linking Muslim elites in Khurāsān to their counterparts throughout the eastern Islamic world. Studies of citation such as ours can contribute generally to the cultural history of Nīshāpūr, Khurāsān and other Iranian cities and regions.

A Tale of Three Cities: Nishapur, Tus, Jurjan

Richard Bulliet

Why did Nishapur become a major metropolis in the early Islamic centuries? This question will focus a discussion of economic, social, and political matters and a comparison of Nishapur with the important, but lesser, cities of Jurjan and Tus. Like them, Nishapur, known in pre-Islamic times as Abarshahr, had been a significant administrative center, but it had played neither an important defensive role in Sasanid Iran nor been associated with royalty. Did these circumstances contribute in some way to it becoming a preeminent Islamic city?