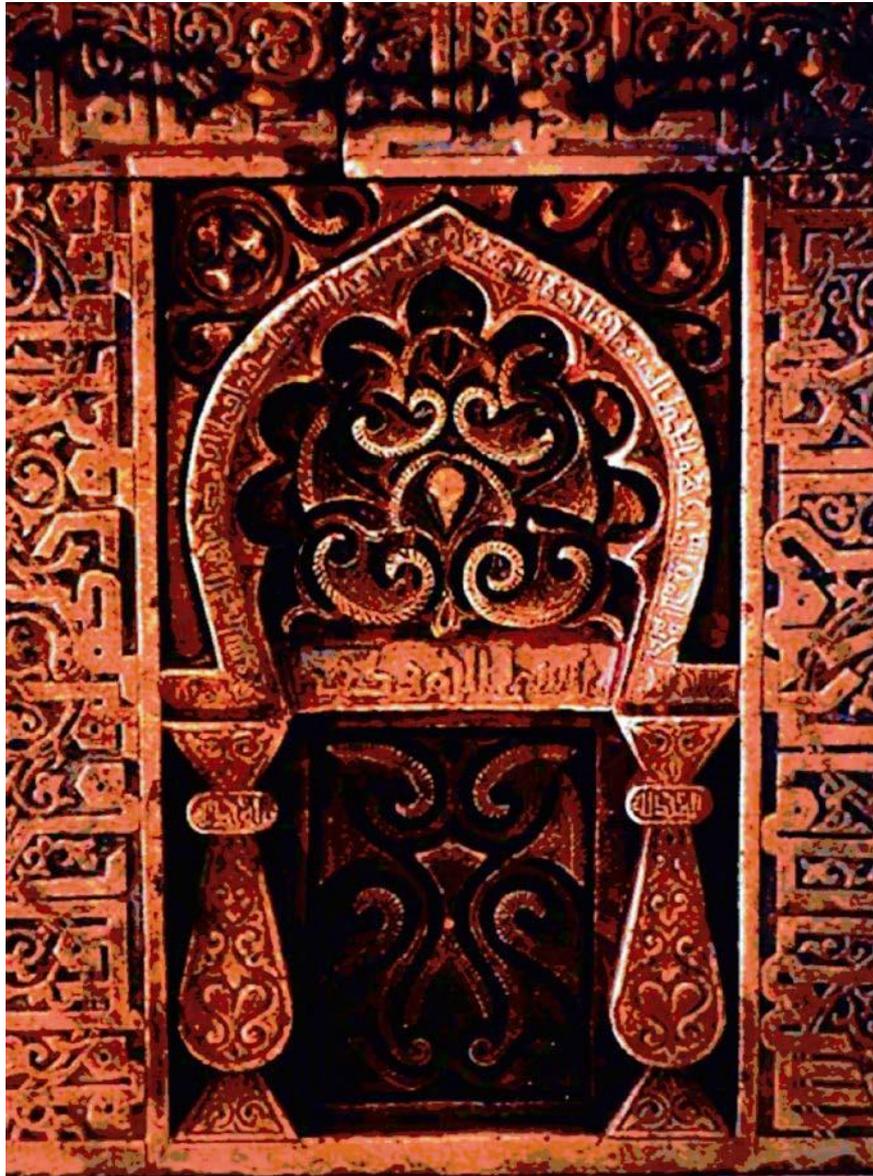


# The Architecture of the Iranian World

## 1000 – 1250



A conference convened by Professor Robert Hillenbrand FBA, FRSE

**University of St Andrews, 21 – 24 April 2016**

Conference Booklet



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## Conference Committee

Professor Robert Hillenbrand FBA, FRSE (Convenor)

Professor Ali Ansari (Consultant)

Dr Paul Churchill (Organiser)

## Acknowledgements

Financial support received from the University of St Andrews.

Administrative & Organisational support provided by the Schools of History (Institute of Iranian Studies) and Art History.

# Speakers

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Dr Alireza ANISI	Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, Tehran
Mr Warwick BALL	Eastern Approaches Ltd.
Professor Sheila BLAIR	Boston College, Massachusetts
Professor Jonathan BLOOM	Boston College, Massachusetts
Professor Abbas DANESHVARI	California State University, Los Angeles
Dr Eisa ESFANJARY	Art University of Isfahan, Isfahan
Dr Abdullah GHOUCHANI	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Prof. Dr. Joachim GIERLICH	Qatar National Library, Special Collections & Archives, Doha
Professor Roberta GIUNTA	University of Naples
Professor Robert HILLENBRAND	University of St Andrews/ University of Edinburgh
Professor Mohammad KHAZAIE	Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran
Prof. Dr. Lorenz KORN	University of Bamberg
Dr Richard McCLARY	University of Edinburgh
Professor Marcus MILWRIGHT	University of Victoria, Canada
Professor Bernard O'KANE	Smith College, Massachusetts
Professor Mahnaz SHAYESTEHFAR	Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran
Dr Paul WORDSWORTH	University of Oxford
Mr Mustafa TUPEV	University of Bamberg

# Conference Schedule

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## • Thursday, 21 April •

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**5.00PM – 6.30PM: PLENARY LECTURE**

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Prof. Sheila Blair

**On the Periphery: the tomb Tower at Abarquh**

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**6.30PM – 7.45PM: BUFFET SUPPER**

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## • Friday, 22 April •

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**8.45AM – 9.15AM: REGISTRATION**

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**9.15AM – 9.30AM: WELCOME & INTRODUCTION**

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Prof. Ali Ansari (Director of the Institute of Iranian Studies, School of History)

Prof. Robert Hillenbrand (School of Art History)

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**9.30AM – 11.00AM: LECTURES 1 & 2**

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Mr Warwick Ball

**Architecture in Afghanistan, 1000-1250: an overview and future directions**

Prof. Bernard O’Kane

**Carved Brick: The Westward Spread of an Indian Technique in Ghaznavid and Later Islamic Architecture**

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**11.00AM – 11.30AM: COFFEE BREAK**

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**11.30AM – 1.00PM: LECTURES 3 & 4**

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Prof. Dr. Lorenz Korn

**Saljuq building activities in Khurasan. Evidence of a new inscription**

Prof. Abbas Daneshvari

**The Architecture of the Shepherd Sun-King in Medieval Iran**

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**1.00PM – 2.30PM: LUNCH**

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**2.30PM – 4.00PM: LECTURES 5 & 6**

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Prof. Jonathan Bloom

**The Minaret in the Saljuq Period**

Prof. Mohammad Khazaie

**Symbolic Concepts of the Inscriptions and Decorative Motifs of the Jam Minaret  
(12th Century)**

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**4.00PM – 4.30PM: TEA**

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**4.30PM – 5.15PM: LECTURE 7**

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Dr Paul Wordsworth

**Akja Gala: the archetypal caravanserai?**

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**6.15PM – 7.15PM: RECEPTION**

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**7.15PM – 10.00PM: CONFERENCE DINNER**

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• **Saturday, 23 April** •

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**9.15AM – 9.30AM: REGISTRATION**

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**9.30AM – 11.00AM: LECTURES 8 & 9**

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Professor Roberta Giunta

**Le palais ghaznévide de Ghazni fouillé par la Mission Archéologique Italienne:  
essai de reconstitution de ses phases de construction**

Mr Mustafa Tupev

**Ghaznavid palaces in Termez and Khulbuk**

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**11.00AM – 11.30AM: COFFEE BREAK**

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**11.30AM – 1.00PM: LECTURES 10 & 11**

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Dr Joachim Gierlich

**The medieval Palace of Khulbuk in South Tajikistan and its stucco decoration**

Prof. Mahnaz Shayestehfar

**Shi'ah Artistic Elements in Medieval Islamic Architecture of Persia. During the  
Bûyids Dynasty (932-1048)**

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**1.00PM – 2.30PM: LUNCH**

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**2.30AM – 4.00PM: LECTURES 12 & 13**

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Dr Abdullah Ghouhani

**Does the Suffeya Umar of the Friday mosque belong to Muzaffarid Period or  
early 12th century?**

Prof. Marcus Milwright

**The Emergence of Encircling Inscriptions in the Religious Architecture of Early Islamic Iran**

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**4.00PM – 4.30PM: TEA**

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**4.30PM – 5.15PM: LECTURE 14**

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Dr Eisa Esfanjary

**Imamzada 'Aqil: A little-known Seljuq Monument**

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**7.30PM – 10.00PM: SPEAKERS' DINNER**

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• **Sunday, 24 April** •

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**9.30AM – 11.00AM: LECTURES 15 & 16**

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Dr Alireza Anisi

**The Friday mosque at Sava**

Dr Richard McClary

**Brick, Stone and Glazed Tiles: The 'Izz al-Din Kay Kawus Hospital in Sivas and the development of the Rum Saljuq Architectural Aesthetic**

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**11.00AM – 11.30AM: COFFEE BREAK**

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**11.30AM – 12.15PM: LECTURE 17**

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Prof. Robert Hillenbrand

**A lost treasure of Saljuq architecture: the Great Mosque of Van**

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**12.15PM – 1.00PM: CLOSING DISCUSSION**

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**1.00PM – 2.00PM: LUNCH**

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# Synopses of Papers

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**Alireza Anisi** (Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, Tehran)

## **The Friday mosque at Sava**

The Friday mosque at Sava because of its originality, complexity, various types of decoration and a notable size is one of the major mosques in Iran. The construction of the mosque dates from the early Islamic centuries, but it had modified in the later periods.

Despite its importance, not much has written about it, and in fact it is still little known. Since the 1930s, when Pope partly described it as a Safavid monument; however our knowledge about this building as a whole has been enriched by succession of discoveries, partly as a result of conservation measures. The preliminary detailed study of this monument started at the time of its conservation programme launched in 1349/1971, which was continued after the Islamic revolution in Iran, but finished without any substantial publication.

A further series of archaeological investigations carried out by the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organisation in 1362-68/1984-1990, has yielded much new information about the development of this monument. However, this study has not yet been able to determine the exact date when the mosque was founded. Thus a complete understanding of this mosque depends on still more archaeological investigations.

This study aims to review the new evidence to clarifying the evolution of this mosque, characterizing its important features, and establishing its position in the history of the Iranian mosque.



**Warwick Ball** (Eastern Approaches - [www.easternapproaches.co.uk](http://www.easternapproaches.co.uk))

## **Architecture in Afghanistan, 1000-1250: an overview and future directions**

The architecture of this period - mainly Ghaznavid and Ghurid - has often been regarded as peripheral, even provincial. To some extent this has been due to its inaccessibility, caused both by inhospitable terrain and political circumstance, with resultant inadequate publication. Although comparatively little has survived, it is of exceptionally high quality - especially in decoration - easily as fine as anything else in the eastern Islamic world at the time. It draws on elements from Iran, Central Asia and India; it boasts one of the largest palatial complexes in the Islamic world for the period; it has extensive and complex fortification systems defending entire regions. This paper

will highlight the main monuments and themes, as well as the main difficulties and threats. In the light of the latter, future directions might seem little more than statements of hope, but there are indications that the future of Afghan studies generally is entering a new and positive era.



**Sheila Blair** (Boston College, Mass.)

### **On the Periphery: the Tomb Tower at Abarquh**

The period 1000-1250 is justly lauded as one of the most creative in the history of Iranian architecture in Islamic times, as many materials, forms and building types became standard under the patronage of the Saljuqs and other rulers. This presentation looks at the architecture of the period from the periphery, focusing on the tomb known as the Gunbad-i 'Ali constructed at Abarquh in 448/1056-57. The building is remarkable on many accounts: by its materials (it is constructed of stone instead of the typical baked brick), its form (it is a rare example of a tall tomb tower built in southern Iran), its date (it is one of the earliest tombs to survive in Iran), and its patron and occupants (it was built by an 'Alid amir for his parents). The lecture takes this singular building as a foil against which to examine many of the canonical architectural features that developed during the period and as a node from which to investigate different networks of patronage and social structure that existed in medieval Iran.



**Jonathan Bloom** (Boston College, Mass.)

### **The Minaret in the Saljuq Period**

The slender brick minaret is one of the most distinctive features of Islamic architecture to appear in the greater Iranian world during the period when the Saljuqs ruled parts of it. In 1982, while in the midst of writing a book on the history of the minaret (*Minaret: Symbol of Islam*, 1989), I presented a talk on the history of the minaret before the Saljuqs, which was published in 1994. Twenty years later, I published a revised edition of my book (*The Minaret*, 2013). While only a few, if any, new structures have come to light in the intervening years, our knowledge of the architecture of the period has increased exponentially and new sophisticated techniques of analysis have been developed. The present talk will attempt to apply some of these new techniques to an old subject.



**Abbas Daneshvari** (California State University, Los Angeles)

**The Architecture of the Shepherd Sun-King in Medieval Iran**

This talk is an excerpt from a larger study in progress on the image of the ruler as a Shepherd Sun-King in medieval Islamic art. This presentation will focus on those medieval Iranian edifices that exemplify the semiotic and symbolic role of the ruler as a Shepherd Sun-King.



**Eisa Esfanjary** (Art University of Isfahan)

**Imamzada 'Aqil: A little-known Seljuq Monument**

This paper adds an unjustly neglected Seljuq monument to the list. The building known as the Imamzada 'Aqil is located next to Hasanabad village, one of the rural areas of Bijar in Kurdistan province in Iran. In 1995, the Cultural Heritage Organisation (Kurdistan branch) started an excavation in order to damp-proof the building. During this process, the original core of the building was discovered. Although Wolfram Kleiss visited the building in 1971 and published a brief summary of the building's condition, the building attracted little interest, not least because it was mostly buried in the ground. The original building, once fully uncovered, is revealed as an isolated Seljuq domed square chamber, embellished with brick and stucco ornamentation on both its internal and external elevations. Its significance is reflected in its ground plan, its fine decorative brickwork, and its stylish inscriptions, and all this endorses the advancement of science, knowledge and technology enshrined within the building. Discussion of these elevations form the core of this paper, which is supported by high quality architectural drawings and illustrations.



**Abdullah Ghouhani** (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

**Does the Suffeya Umar of the Friday mosque belong to Muzaffarid Period or early 12th century?**

In 1988 I published an article regarding a stucco inscription in the upper room of the North Ayvan of the Friday mosque of Isfahan. Most of the inscriptions were damaged and destroyed so I read what I could see. One inscription located on the arch contains the damaged name of a prince: Murtaza ibn al Hasan al Zaynabi. Numerous other inscriptions are also to be found – they are generally later in date and are etched on the walls. One of these later inscriptions is written by a person who slept there in 841 A.H/ 1473 A.D. I attributed the earlier inscription containing the prince's name to 13/14 century, based on its style of calligraphy but I now believe it might be earlier in date. At that time I did not pay attention to check any other inscriptions of the Friday mosque of Isfahan because it was all previously read and clear.

On another occasion when I was drawing the Angular Kufic inscriptions of a part of the mosque known as the Suffeya Umar, I found same name as that on the arch of the North Ayvan, completely preserved. By researching more on these inscriptions I found some documents which prove that the lower part of the north ayvan must belong to the late 11th or early 12 c.

Murtaza ibn al-Hasan al-Zaynabi, according to historical texts, was a minister in the first half of 12 c. so the room in which his inscription was found must also date from early 12 c. In the past researchers attributed Suffeya Umar to Mozaffarid period (14th century), and of course there are lot of inscriptions there from different periods such Mozaffarid, Safavid and Afghans. But the earliest inscription at top of the arch proves that the Ayvan must be early 12 c. Restoration work done on this structure had provided the name of a king: Mahmud Ibn Muhammad. Therefore researchers had assumed this refers to the Mozaffarid Shah of the same name. However they did not pay attention to the fact that there is another Mahmud Ibn Muhammad who was a Saljuq Sultan in the first half of 12c. His name and that of his minister Murtaza ibn al-Hasan al-Zaynabi together prove the earlier date of the structure.

In the lecture this evidence and more documentation will be discussed to demonstrate that both the North Ayvan and Suffeya Umar were ordered by same Prince and minister during 511-525A.H/ 1118-1131A.D.



**Joachim Gierlichs** (Qatar National Library, Doha – Special Collections & Archives)

**The medieval Palace of Khulbuk in South Tajikistan and its stucco decoration**

Compared with Iran larger parts of Central Asia are still a kind of “terra incognita”. In the South of Tajikistan, about 112 miles (180 km) south east of the capital Dushanbe near the modern village of Kurban Sheid the settlement of Hulbuk/ Khulbuk, the ancient capital of the upper Oxus principality of Khuttal is located.

In spite of the fact that Russian-Tajik excavations took place from the 1950s until 1989 (with interruptions), the site is more or less unknown to many Western archaeologists and art historians.

After a short introduction into the history of Khuttal and the palace of Khulbuk the paper will present the findings: among others ceramics, glass, metalwork and chess pieces. Most interesting are the more than 5000 stucco fragments with came to light during the excavations. They are decorated mainly with floral and geometrical pattern but also with figural representations. Some of them are stored in a local museum which finally opened in 2006. The site with the partially reconstructed palace/ citadel is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage “inventory”, the so-called “Tentative List” (since 1999).



**Roberta Giunta (University of Naples)**

**Le palais ghaznévide de Ghazni fouillé par la Mission Archéologique Italienne : essai de reconstitution de ses phases de construction**

La reprise des activités de la Mission Archéologique Italienne en Afghanistan en 2002 et la continuation des études sur la riche documentation collectée à Ghazni ont donné une forte contribution à nos connaissances de l’architecture et de la production artistique ghaznévide et ghuride. Le palais royal de Ghazni – seul témoignage d’une activité architectonique incessante qui avait transformé une petite ville périphérique dans l’une des capitales les plus importantes des territoires iraniens orientaux à l’époque médiévale – se révèle une étonnante source d’information sur les solutions planimétriques et les programmes architecturaux de l’époque. Les dernières recherches apportent des éléments nouveaux et laissent soulever de nouvelles hypothèses sur les différentes phases de construction, de modification et de réfection de l’édifice et de son appareil épigraphique et décoratif. La question de l’attribution du palais au sultan ghaznévide Mas’ud III semble pouvoir également être réinterprétée.



**Robert Hillenbrand** (Universities of Edinburgh & St Andrews)

**A lost treasure of Saljuq architecture: the Great Mosque of Van**

The Great Mosque of Van was destroyed by earthquake in the second decade of the 20th century. Shortly before this, it had been visited by Walter Bachmann, who left a brief account of it, with drawings and four fine photographs – one of the portal and three of the interior. A second scholar, Halil Edhem, a colleague of Max van Berchem, took some supplementary photographs which have attracted little attention. This paper will seek to locate the mosque within the context of Iranian Saljuq mosques and to date it to the early 12th century on the basis of its rich ornament (which bears striking resemblances to the Friday Mosque of Qazvin), its ambitious muqarnas dome, and its full epigraphic programme, which has been teased out by Dr Abdallah Ghouchani.



**Mohammad Khazaie** (Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran)

**Symbolic Concepts of the Inscriptions and Decorative Motifs of the Jam Minaret (12th Century)**

The paper will cover the re-construction of certain inscriptions and the preparation of Kufic alphabetical charts including all of the sūrah of Maryâm and other inscriptions. It will attempt to simplify and re-construct all of the patterns and motifs of the minaret. Furthermore, it will discuss the date of construction, the architect and the height of the minaret. Apart from the physical appearance of the minaret, symbolic features including the numbers, letters and names used will also be studied.



**Lorenz Korn** (University of Bamberg)

**Saljuq building activities in Khurasan. Evidence of a new inscription**

Khurasan, the region in which Saljuq rule was first established, can be considered a heartland of this dynasty. Under the long reign of Sultan Sanjar, it experienced relative political stability. Not only under these auspices, the architecture of Khurasan has been in the focus of Islamic art

historians from early on. However, extant buildings are frequently scattered among various places and cannot easily be subsumed under a typological system. Likewise, it is hard to determine Saljuq building politics, because information on patrons and dates is limited and frequently isolated. An additional piece in this puzzle consists in a newly discovered inscription belonging to Ribat-i Mahi east of Mashhad. A more encompassing view of Saljuq architecture in Khurasan, however, can only be achieved by close comparison of relevant monuments according to stylistic features. Both architecture and decoration have to be considered in order to form groups of monuments that transcend current political borders. It has to be asked to what degree the styles and building activities of Khurasan and neighbouring regions were interconnected, and which features justify the term of an architecture of Khurasan.



**Richard McClary (University of Edinburgh)**

**Brick, Stone and Glazed Tiles: The 'Izz al-Din Kay Kawus Hospital in Sivas and the development of the Rum Saljuq Architectural Aesthetic**

As the pre-eminent surviving example of Rum Saljuq architecture, the hospital and tomb complex in Sivas, built between 1217 and 1220, marks the pinnacle of the early, developmental, phase of Islamic architecture in Anatolia. A study of the key formal and decorative elements of the building allows for a deeper understanding of not only the working methods of the craftsmen, but also the wide range of sources which they employed. These range from indigenous Armenian lithic building techniques to Saljuq and Khwarazmian architecture, and can be seen to have been combined in a tour de force of architectural synthesis. The complex acts, in part, as a visual metaphor for the political and cultural syntheses which were underway in the early years of the thirteenth century in Anatolia. A well-known, but poorly understood building, this paper presents a number of the decorative and formal elements for the first time. These include an updated ground plan, evidence of the crypt under the tomb and numerous unique decorative brick and glazed tile motifs. The combination of brick and stone, along with the presence of both Arabic and Persian epigraphy, highlights the newly emerging identity of the Rum Saljuq dynasty. The complex includes examples of almost all of the major architectural elements that came to define the architecture of the Rum Saljuqs, yet retains much of the flavour of its various antecedent structures, located across the wider Iranian world.



**Marcus Milwright (University of Victoria, Canada)**

**The Emergence of Encircling Inscriptions in the Religious Architecture of Early Islamic Iran**

Monumental epigraphy is a dominant element in the decoration of religious architecture across the Islamic world. Many of these inscriptions are arranged in long bands that either surround interior spaces or run around the exterior circumferences of domes and minarets. These practices can be traced back to the first great Islamic building, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and earlier still to a series of Late Antique architectural inscriptions in mosaic and carved stone. It would appear, therefore, that encircling inscriptions could be understood as a continuous tradition in the architecture of the Mediterranean and Middle East. The ubiquity of encircling inscriptions in later Islamic architecture encourages the idea that they represent a 'natural' strategy in the planning of epigraphic programmes, and that the practice of enclosing architectural forms and spaces with text adds little to the meanings conveyed by the content and aesthetic qualities of the words themselves. This paper questions these positions, with particular focus on the monumental architecture of the Islamic East dating from the late tenth to the early twelfth centuries. Attention is paid to the sequence of dated structures with encircling text bands and to the precise content and placement of these bands. Comparative data are sought in Byzantine, Armenian and Georgian churches, as well as the portable arts of the eastern regions of the Islamic world.



**Bernard O'Kane (Smith College, Mass.)**

**Carved Brick: The Westward Spread of an Indian Technique in Ghaznavid and Later Islamic Architecture**

The earliest extant monument in Kuhna Urgench is a tomb, probably that of Il-Arslan (1156-72). This has outstanding brick decoration on its entrance façade. But what is unique about it is that it is not, as it first appears and has usually been recorded, simple terracotta decoration, but actually carved brick. This applies not just to the elaborately carved arabesques filling the spandrels of each of the arched niches, but also to the bold naskhi inscription that frames the portal.

Where does this kind of decoration originate? The rule of Il-Arslan was contemporary with that of the Ghurids in Afghanistan, and the closest monument geographically that has this feature is the Ghurid ceremonial arch at the Bust citadel near Lashkari Bazar. The occurrence of the same technique of carved brick on the Mas'ud III minaret at Ghazna and in Ghurid buildings in India, suggests that we should look for the origin of the technique in Hindu architecture. The carved

brick decoration of the mausoleum of Shaykh Sadan Shahid near Multan in the Punjab and the nearby ribat of 'Ali b. Karmakh at Kabirwala (1176) show similarities with the 8th-9th century Hindu Kallar temple in the Salt Range.

My paper will trace the spread of this technique in detail, and its rapid decline after the Ghurid period.



**Mahnaz Shayestehfar (Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran)**

**Shi'ite artistic elements in the medieval Islamic art of Persia during the reign of the Buyids**

In the 'Abbâsid empire in the tenth century, a number of local dynasties slowly began to establish themselves. Among them were the Bûyids (932-1048), who rose to power in the southern region of the Caspian Sea, in an area where most people had either converted to Shi'ism or were still Zoroastrians. The Bûyids became sovereigns of western Persia and became a well-established dynasty that formed major cultural centers. During the first half of the tenth century the Bûyids reached Baghdâd and their artistic life flourished and manifested itself in parts of modern-day Persia and Iraq. Furthermore, the late tenth century was a formative period for Islamic art of Persia, revealing the transformation of past traditions and the beginning of a new style. This paper will investigate several structures of Bûyid times in terms of their architectural features, inscriptions and ornament. They include the Jami' Mosque of Jaz, Isfahan, the Shrine of 'Abd al-'Azim at Rayy, the Jami' Mosque of Neyriz, the Davazdah Imam shrine in Yazd, the Jurjir Mosque of Isfahan and the Tomb of Bibi Shahrbanu. The study will document the impact of these buildings on later structures, while also affirming religious and often specifically Shi'ite meanings through inscriptions and visual motifs.



**Paul Wordsworth (University of Oxford)**

**Akja Gala: the archetypal caravanserai?**

Both the form and function of the earliest road-side caravanserais in greater Iran have been debated in considerable depth, in part owing to the variety of terms for 'outposts' encountered in medieval historical literature. The body of extant architectural evidence for caravanserais in

Northeastern Khurasan and Transoxania before the 12th century is somewhat limited, however, and the period before the 10th century remains obscure indeed. This paper examines one example of a caravanserai, which, although monumental in scale, has remained at the fringes of discussions about the evolution of this architectural tradition. Akja Gala (Akcha Qal'a) in modern Turkmenistan is one of few such structures in unfired earth that remain from the 11th-12th century. As well as considering how far it represents the development of a model for the form of caravanserais on a regional level, this discussion will highlight the unique aspects of its design that reflect distinctly local traditions.



**Mustafa Tupev (University of Bamberg)**

**Ghaznavid palaces in Termez and Khulbuk**

During the 11th century a rich cultural life came to flourish under the rule of the Ghaznavid dynasty in Eastern Iran and Central Asia. Today the Ghaznavids (977-1186) are renowned for their patronage of Persian literature, science and historical writings in general. A valuable testimony for the prevailing taste of the time, as well as for the technical skills of the age, are two palaces constructed north of the Amu Darya river during the 12th century.

The proposed paper will focus on the physical appearance of the two monuments: a palace in Termez, which was excavated during the 1930s, and a second residence in Khuttal. For both, the building type and the applied decorative techniques will be discussed. Techniques, motifs and styles of the architectural decoration of the transoxanian buildings offer themselves for a comparison with monuments in Khurasan. This will lead to conclusions on the question whether a mutual exchange or influence between Iran and Central Asia took place during the period under consideration – a topic largely underrepresented in Islamic art history, since both regions are generally seen as a single cultural sphere.





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