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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, grec 1853, f. 186v

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Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz, ed. by J. Pfeiffer, Leiden-Brill, Boston 2014 (Iran Studies, 8), 397 pp.

In *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz* an international group of scholars from different fields investigates the role of the Iranian city of Tabriz as one of the primary centres of learning, culture, religion and politics in post-Mongol Middle East. The volume, which focuses on Tabriz among other capitals of the region, shows clearly that this age, far from being an epoch of cultural and political decline, is very important for its intellectual, artistic and philosophical production: the contributions highlight in particular the ways of transmission of knowledge and of the institutional and cultural patronage in the post-Mongol period.

The book is divided into three parts: the first is dedicated to the milieu of the intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians; the second concerns the question of the transmission of knowledge, and the third is devoted to Tabriz and its interregional networks. In her introduction (pp. 1-11) Judith Pfeiffer, the editor of the volume, summarises the problem of the *translatio studiorum* from Baghdad to Maragha and Tabriz in the context of the multi-faceted intellectual landscape of the vast area between the Nile and the Oxus.

The first section of the book includes articles by Reuven Amitai, Devin DeWeese, Domenico Ingenito and Judith Pfeiffer. The essays by R. Amitai (“Hülegü and His Wise Men: Topos or Reality?”, pp. 15-34) and Devin DeWeese (“Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī Religious Encounters at the Mongol Court near Tabriz”, pp. 35-76) are very interesting analyses of the interactions between the Mongol and local elites at the courts of Baghdad and Tabriz. The contribution of D. Ingenito (“Tabrizis in Shiraz are Worth Less than a Dog’: Sa’dī and Humām: a Lyrical Encounter”, pp. 77-127) is focused on the culture of the poetic circle of this period and on the competition between two great poets: Humām al-Dīn ‘Alā’ Tabrizī and the famous Sa’dī, which symbolizes the competition between two major Iranian urban centres under Mongol rule: Tabriz and Shiraz. Judith Pfeiffer’s article (“Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate” pp. 129-68) is devoted to the relationships between the Mongol elite and the Twelver šī’i groups of Iraq and Iran which led to the religious and political legitimization of Šī’ism, with a long-term impact on political thought in the region.

The second section of the volume includes the articles by Birgitt Hoffmann, Nourane Ben Azzouma, Robert Morrison and F. Jamil Ragep. The contributions by B. Hoffmann (“In pursuit of Memoria and Salvation: Rashīd al-Dīn and his Rab’-i Rashīdī”, pp. 171-85) and N. Ben Azzouma (“Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh al-Hamadhānī’s Manuscript Production Project in Tabriz Reconsidered”, pp. 187-200) offer case studies concerning the political, religious and literary work of the great vizier, historian and intellectual Rashīd al-Dīn. R. Morrison’s and J. Ragep’s articles (respectively, “What Was the Purpose of Astronomy in Ījī’s *Kitāb al-Mawākifī ‘ilm al-kalām?*”, pp. 201-229, and “New Light on Shams: the Islamic Side of ΣΑΜΨ ΠΟΥΧΑΡΗΣ”, pp. 231-247) discuss various aspects of the study of the astronomy at Tabriz during the epoch of the Ilkhanate.

The last section of the volume includes articles by Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Patrick Wing, Sheila S. Blair, Joachim Gierlich and Ertruğul Ökten. J. Preiser-Kapeller’s contribution (“*Civitas Thauris*. The Significance of Tabriz in the Spatial Frameworks of Christian Merchants and Ecclesiastics in the 13th and 14th Centuries”, pp. 251-99) describes the mercantile area of Tabriz and analyses the important diplomatic role played there by Franciscans and Dominicans and their relationships with the local Christian communities. The article by P. Wing (“‘Rich in Goods and Abounding in Wealth’: The Ilkhanid and Post-Ilkhanid Ruling Elite and the Politics of Commercial Life at Tabriz, 1250-1400”, pp. 301-20) provides a very useful sketch of Tabriz as a political and commercial centre under the Ilkhanids and explains the role of European merchants in the region. The contribution of S. Blair (“Tabriz: International Entrepôt under the Mongols”, pp. 321-56) and J. Gierlich (“Tabrizi Woodcarvings in Timurid Iran”) are dedicated to the transmission of various artistic styles from the late Ilkhanate into the Timurid and early Ottoman period. Last, but not least, the article by E. Ökten (“Construction of Religious Establishments in the Late Fifteenth Century Tabriz”, pp. 371-85) is a very interesting study on the religious foundations of Tabriz under the Aqqyunlu dynasty.

In sum, the volume is a fundamental companion for scholars who want to increase their knowledge about the political, religious and cultural situation of Iran during the very intense and stimulating period of transition between two great empires: that of the Seljukids and that of the Safavids.

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