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History: From the Saljuqs to the Aq Qoyunlu (ca. 1000–1500 C.E.)

THE HALF-MILLENNIUM OF PERSIAN HISTORY BETWEEN THE COMING OF THE Saljuqs and the establishment of the Safavid dynasty is one of repeated upheaval and largely alien rule. The arrival of the Ghuzz tribes in the early 11th century was not an entirely peaceful affair—the author of the Tārīkh-i Sīstān regards it as a calamity for that formerly prosperous province—and much worse was to follow, with the Mongol invasions of the 13th century and Tīmur’s campaigns in the late 14th, all of which caused enormous destruction, while leaving a profound impression on Persian society, culture, and political life.

This long and eventful period is seldom treated as a whole; volume 2 of Marshall Hodgson’s The Venture of Islam is still perhaps the nearest approach to a united vision of the “Middle Periods” of Islamic history, but of course his view is not confined to Iran.1 Traditionally, the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258 and the end of the Abbasid caliphate is taken as the defining turning point in medieval Persian history, an event that falls almost exactly in the middle of the period under review and which to some extent destroys its unity. Nevertheless, there was considerable continuity despite the changes wrought by the Mongols. Compared with both what went before and what came after, certain recurring features and long-term trends help to define and characterize Persian history from the Saljuqs to the Aq Qoyunlu.

In the first place, this is the age of Turkish domination, which snuffed out the tentative Persian reassertiveness of the 10th century under such widely-differing regional dynasties as the Saffarids, Samanids, and Buyids. Turks were, of course, already very much in evidence, particularly in the army and in the military regime of the Ghaznavids. Despite the continuing use of ghulāms or slave troops, however, the Saljuqs were freeborn Turkish chiefs and the reins of power were henceforth held by rulers from the same milieu up to the Safavid period, and again under the Qajars. Even the Safavids, generally claimed as a “Persian” dynasty, were heirs to the tribal background of the Aq Qoyunlu and relied heavily on Turcoman support. What makes the Safavids distinctive is that once again—for the first time since the fall of the Abbasids—religion becomes a crucial element in state ideology. The period to 1500 is a formative phase in the

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1. See also the recent Etats, sociétés et cultures du monde musulman médiéval Xe–XVe siècle, vol. 1, ed. J.-C. Garcin (Paris, 1995), again with a wider perspective. D.O. Morgan, Medieval Persia 1040–1797 (London, 1988), considers that even the longer period up to 1800 possesses a unity that justifies its treatment in a single book (p. ix), though he doesn’t go out of his way to elaborate the point.
development of Persia’s religious identity, encapsulated in the growth and transformation of the Safaviyya leadership itself, from Sufi shaikhs to Shi’i sultans. The tribal origin of Persia’s rulers during this period is its second and concomitant characteristic. The nomadism of the court was a new feature, which entailed new offices and institutions and required adjustments on the part of the bureaucracy. The traditions of the Inner Asian steppes were another element to be absorbed into the Perso-Islamic amalgam that had emerged under the Abbasids. This brought a new dimension to the nature of political legitimacy and additional instability to the processes of dynastic succession. In both the Saljuq and Mongol periods we see the rapid disintegration of centralized family rule into regional “party kingdoms.”

If there was an increasing tendency towards military rule, the men of the pen continued to play their part and to offer their services to their overlords, to the extent of involving themselves in their factionalism and intrigues. Even in the Mongol period, it is not possible to view amirs and viziers as two watertight opposing interests, with the latter portrayed as protectors of the indigenous population and moderators of government excess. With the Islamization of the Mongols, largely at the hands of Sufi shaikhs, who played an increasingly prominent role in society and political affairs, such distinctions become even further blurred. Overarching these questions is the issue of how the nomadic invaders were assimilated into Persian society and to what extent the acculturation of the Turco-Mongolian tribes was a one-way process.

If these general observations can be taken to characterize the period under review, to what extent do the available volumes of the Encyclopaedia Iranica flesh out the picture? How much use are the relevant articles for understanding the period and how fully is it covered? What could one learn of the period by consulting the Elr?

A survey of the relevant articles suggests four broad groups: (i) historiography and historians of the period; (ii) dynasties and families; (iii) biographies of leading figures, and (iv) institutions, offices, and technical terms. In addition (v), there are a number of general articles that cannot easily be classified under a single heading but relate principally to economic activity, including entries on some places that are at least partly relevant to our period. I propose to examine each of these groups in turn, though there will inevitably be some overlap between them. The focus is on political and dynastic history, government and administration; the intellectual, artistic, and religious history of the period is covered in other review articles in this volume.

(i) Historiography and historians of the period

From the Saljuq period onwards, historical writing in Persian increases in volume and importance, slowly displacing Arabic works, particularly in the area of dynastic and local history. There are several entries on the main narrative sources of the period, under either their titles or the name of the author, reflecting these trends. Persian historians of India, ʿAFĪF and BĀRĀNĪ are also included. Two Arabic works are covered, the ʿAKBĀR AL-DAWLAT AL-SALJŪQĪYA and the ʿAJĀʾEB-AL-MAQDŪR, Ibn ʿArabshah’s biography of Timur, in adequate detail to bring out their importance (and, in the latter case, to highlight areas where further research is likely to be fruitful). EBN ʿARABŠĀH is himself the
subject of a brief but useful entry. The Persian *Matla’-i Sa’adain* of ʿABD-AL-RAZZĀQ SAMARQANDĪ is also given a full treatment, emphasizing his accounts of Timurid relations with Egypt, China and India. EBN AL-ATĪR, perhaps the single most important source for the pre-Mongol period, has an appropriately long and analytical entry.

Otherwise, however, on the whole the entries are too brief to provide a real assessment of the work in question, and this is often not available elsewhere either. Ideally, we would read about the structure, sources, outlook, and reliability of the chronicles, and their importance as historical texts. The *Tārikh-i Uljaitū* by ABU’L-QĀSEM KĀŠĀNĪ, for example, is the only detailed account of the reign of the Ilkhan Ŭljeitū, but though it is full of precise dates, these are often inaccurate. Another source for the reign of Ūljeitū, by BANĀKATĪ, gets a succinct entry which gives little idea of what the work contains; while the entry on AHARĪ gives the misleading impression that his *Tārikh-i Shaikh Uvais* has valuable material on Uvais’s reign, whereas the manuscript breaks off at the outset of his rule. The only obvious omission I have noticed under this heading is an entry on Aqsara’ī, author of a Persian chronicle on the Saljuqs of Anatolia and their Mongol successors, down to ca. 1319. The Mongol and Timurid historians ʿAta’ Malik Juvainī and ʿAli Yazdī will perhaps be found later under Juvainī and Sharaf al-Dīn respectively.

Local history is represented by brief entries on the lost history of Herat by ABŪ NASR FĀMI; the historian of Yazd, AHMAD B. ḤOSAYN—for which see the useful study of Isabel Miller; the historian of Kirman, AFZAL-AL-DĪN KERMĀNĪ; the 14th-century history of Ruyan by AWLĪĀ’ALLĀH ĀMOLĪ; and the local history of Sabzavar by Ibn Funduq BAYHAQĪ, which does not do justice to the importance and value of that work, long ago exploited by Jean Aubin.3

In addition to histories and their authors, there are brief but useful articles on works connected with the administration, such as the Timurid ĀṬĀR AḤMAD B. ḤOSAYN, and manuals for secretaries, DASTĪR-E DABĪRĪ and DASTĪR AL-KĀTEB. An important work of this nature which might have been included here is the collection of Saljuq documents, the ʿAtabat al-katabah.4

Chronology is very much a part of historiography, as shown by the use of the word *tārikh* to designate both. A valuable and substantial article, CALENDARS ii. Islamic period infers, without emphasis, the importance of Turkish patronage of astronomers, as witnessed by the calendar reforms undertaken for Malikshah and the work of the Maragha observatory under the Ilkhan and later at Samarqand under Ulugh Beg. The twelve-animal calendar was introduced into Iran by the Mongols and continued to be used alongside the Hijri lunar calendar for longer than is stated here.5

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Travellers’ accounts of Persia in this period may also be mentioned under the heading of sources; BARBARO, CLAVIJO, CONTARINI and CONTI are all given notices commensurate with their importance. Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Persia in the late 12th century, might have been worth a mention. Another Italian merchant, BUSCARELLO, is included more for the role he played in Mongol diplomatic relations with the west than for the record he left of his travels, as is Guillaume ADAM, who was appointed second archbishop of Sultaniyya in 1322.

Among the scholars who have contributed particularly to the study of this period of Persian history, there are entries on BARTHOLD, BEREZIN, BLOCHET, BOYLE, and DEFRÉMERY. These articles tend to list their achievements and output; space does not allow detailed evaluation of individual works.

Persian historiography is not adequately studied and it is useful to have important historical texts and the work of Persian historians given space in the *Elr*. In view of our heavy reliance on the chronicles for reconstructing medieval Persian history, critical evaluations of these works are essential. For the post-Abbasid period, Arabic sources continue to be valuable, though often neglected, and no doubt many of them will feature in the volume(s) devoted to “Ebn.” With luck, a more thorough discussion and comparison of the various genres will be possible in a future entry on historiography than can realistically be found in articles on individual works.

(ii) Dynasties and families

The difficulty of establishing and maintaining centralized rule in medieval Persia, particularly for dynasties of tribal and nomadic origin, is well illustrated by the number of entries dedicated to both regional and local powers. The coverage extends outside the wider Iranian sphere, to include the Indian BAHMANIDS, the DELHI SULTANATE and the Central Asian CHAGHATAIDS. Actually, thanks to alphabetical chance, articles on the Ghurids, Jalayirids, Khwarazmshahs, Mongols/Ilkhans, Muzaffarids, Qara Qoyunlu, Saljuqs, and Timurids are still to follow. Some of these are at least represented by entries on individual rulers (“ALÂ’-AL-DÎN ATSÎZ, etc.; see next section).

Thus only a couple of the major dynasties are dealt with here. The Karts of Herat (ÄL-E KART) are given rather cursory treatment by Bertold Spuler, who concentrates more on the wider picture of Ilkhanid Persia and relations with neighboring powers; nothing is revealed of the inner dynamics or politics of the Kart state, nor of their cultural patronage or relations with the religious classes.  
A long article on the ÄQ QOYUNLÜ by R. Quiring-Zoche underlines the essential Turk versus Tajik clash (esp. p. 166) that has been taken to characterize the whole period, particularly in the pioneering studies of Minorsky. Nevertheless, closer analysis might yield a more sophisticated picture than a simple dichotomy between ‘men of the sword’ and ‘men of the pen’. Although the author refers to

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the marriage between Uzun Hasan’s daughter and Sultan Haidar Safavi, the previous connection with Junaid is passed over. There is perhaps an insufficient emphasis on the extent to which the Safavids were themselves the posterity of the Aq Qoyunlu, not only in a genealogical sense, but also as heirs to a tribally constituted military elite posing the same problems for stable government.

R. Stephen Humphreys gives a very succinct statement of the distinguishing features of the political system of the period as a whole in his article on the Kurdish AYYUBIDS, less obviously connected with Persian history or culture but rightly viewed as successors to the Saljuqs. The fragmentation of Saljuq power into appanages is reflected in a sequence of articles on the atabegates, notionally established on behalf of Saljuq princes (s.v. ATĀBAK). These articles provide useful surveys of the Ildegozids of Azarbaijan (I’m not sure that Bosworth’s reconstruction of the name as Ildeñiz can be dismissed so easily), the Salghurids of Fars, the rulers of Greater and Lesser Luristan, the Ahmadilis of Maraghat and the Atabegs of Yazd. All are critical and up-to-date reviews of these dynasties,7 most of whom survived into and beyond the Ilkhanate period. They were important not only in giving some continuity of rule and local autonomy in their districts, but also as patrons. In addition to those noted, for example, Nusrat al-Din Ahmad b. Yusufshah (brother and heir of Afrasiyab, not son, p. 897) was the dedicatee of Hindushah’s Tajārib al-salaf, and Arslan Aba b. Aq Sunqur, the Ahmadili, was dedicatee of the Bahr al-fawā’id.8

Of the Mongol successor regimes, there is an article on the CHOBANIDS, but not on the Jalayirids, who could have been incorporated by the device of calling them Al-i Jalayir (the same goes for the Al-i Muzaffar); in a sense, the DU’L-QADR are also a Mongol successor state, becoming independent in Anatolia after the collapse of the Ilkhanate.

One region with more than its share of local rulers is the Caspian province of Mazandaran. It is represented here by entries on the Bavandid (ĀL-E BĀVAND), BADUSPAINDS of Ruyan and Rustamdar, and ĀL-E AFRĀŠĪĀB. The history of this region is rather obscure and seldom impinges on events south of the Alburz, though the converse is less true. The coherent and detailed narratives provided in these articles are thus particularly welcome, as is the space devoted to them. Among other things, the progress and influence of Shi‘ism in the Caspian provinces, as well as their conservative attitude to their pre-Islamic heritage, give these regions a particularly significant place in the continuity of Persian culture.

Apart from ruling dynasties, there are entries on the DARGAZĪNĪ family of Saljuq viziers and the Bukharian family of ‘ulama, the ĀL-E BORHĀN. The authors emphasize the importance of such families in administrative, economic, and civic life, bringing with them political influence that in neither case was necessarily any less oppressive than the Turkish regimes with which they clashed.

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7. Though Shabankara’i’s Majma‘ al-ansāb, which contains sections on the rulers of Fars, Luristan, and Yazd, is not cited in the bibliography of any of these articles (see now ed. Mir Hashim Muhaddith, Tehran, 1984).

478 Melville

Given the absence of modern monographs on all but a tiny fraction of Persia’s dynasties (the nearest approach still being the relevant chapters of The Cambridge History of Iran), these encyclopedia articles fulfill a very important need in assembling scattered materials and bibliographic information. Many of them demonstrate the Elr’s value in stimulating research on little-studied subjects.

(iii) Biographies

There are about 75 entries on historical figures from the period under review, far too many to mention individually here. A basic subdivision of the entries by type indicates that dynastic rulers constitute the largest group, and are evenly spread across the period, so that Saljuq and Ghurid sultans, Atabegs, Isma‘ili Imams, Khwarazmshahs, Ilkhans, Timurids, and various others are represented, including sultans of Delhi. Although rulers from Transoxania are featured, neither Batu Khan of the Golden Horde nor his brother and successor Berke are included.

The rulers are generally given sufficient space for a proper survey of their reigns and of the issues facing them, including the ever-present question of succession. The Saljuq sultans, ALP ARSLĀN and BARKIĀROQ, both had to fight for their positions in a political system that was resistant to centralization and in which brothers were as likely to succeed as sons. By chance, all but four of the Ilkhans appear in the first two letters of the alphabet, and the result is a series of valuable articles by Peter Jackson (consulting editor for the Mongols). These draw interesting insights from the Arabic sources, particularly for the reign of ABŪ SA‘ĪD, which is not well served by Persian historiography, and not just for the long-running war against the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria. Two of the Bavandid rulers are given their own entries, neither of which adds very much to the information already given in the detailed article by Wilferd Madelung devoted to the dynasty (see above), though it is interesting to see how he slightly amplifies this material in his article on ʿALĀ‘-AL-DAWLA ḤASAN, whereas Prof. Bosworth views ʿALĀ‘-AL-DAWLA ʿALĪ from a rather wider perspective. Whether or not it is feasible to impose a standard formula on the different types of article is a question for the editors, but there is always a need to strike a balance between an overview of a subject and the presentation of factual detail, which should be that much easier to achieve when the subject appears in more than one place.

A second category of biographies of amirs and royal princes or princesses reveals a far less even coverage. There is an almost exclusive monopoly of biographies for the Mongol and to a lesser extent Timurid periods. Only two or three amirs from the Saljuq period are mentioned, one of whom, ANŪSTIGIN GARČĀ‘I, was in effect the first of the Khwarazmshahs. Categorization of the atabegs as amirs rather than rulers would slightly redress the apparent imbalance, but this must be partly a result of editorial inconsistency (particularly if compared with the previous Ghaznavid period). There is perhaps no certain way of deciding who should be included merely in the context of larger articles, and who merits an individual entry, however brief. Various Aq Sünqurs, notably al-Bursuqi, would certainly deserve their own article. Even for the Mongol period, generally well covered, there are one or two surprising omissions, such as ʿAli
From the Saljuqs to the Aq Qoyunlu 479

Padshah the Oirat and Ariq Böke, brother of Hulegü. The few women to be mentioned are all from the Ilkhanid period when, it is true, they play a far more visible and important role in affairs. Thus the princesses and royal wives, BOLOGAN KATÜN, DELSÄD KATÜN, and DOKUZ KATÜN are representative of a wider constituency (Baghdad Khatun is omitted). The extent to which the ruling Turco-Mongol elites gradually assimilated the culture of their subjects is brought out in various articles on Timurid prince governors who became important patrons and even practitioners of the arts, notably BĀYSONGŪR.

If the men of the sword, so important a group in the period under review, appear rather few, the men of the pen too seem under-represented. This time the bias is strongly towards the Saljuq period, to which the vizier al-Kunduri could have been added under ʿĀmid al-Mulk. Only BORHĀN-AL-DĪN, the Muzaffarid vizier, ʿALĀʾ-AL-DĪN MOHAMMAD, and DARVĪŠ AHMAD, the Timurid officials, post-date the Ilkhans. There may be several very good reasons for these variations in coverage (notably of course the alphabet, but also the existence of sources and the volume of information available about individuals), but it is worth drawing attention to them, in case it is possible through a deliberate editorial policy to achieve a more even balance. No amirs or viziers from the sultante in India are included, no doubt on purpose. Loosely under the heading of men of the pen, but in fact men of action in a religious guise, are the Ismaʿīlī dāʿī, ʿATTĀṢ, and the Turcoman dervish, BARĀQ BĀBĀ, who according to some accounts was responsible for ʿOljeiti's war against Gilan.

The articles on these two groups are generally short but sufficient to indicate the importance of the subject and the reason for its inclusion. As with the duplication between dynasties and rulers, however, there is also occasionally a wasteful overlap between rulers and those who served them. Thus the treatment of BŪQĀ, the Mongol amir and vizier, adds nothing to the article on ARGŪN KHAN, other than some conflicting information and the odd statement that Khabushan is near Ray; in fact, two separate incidents in the struggle between Arghun and Ahmad Teguder seem to have been conflated into one, cf. AHMAD TAKŪDĀR.10

(iv) Offices and institutions

For the administrative systems of the regimes from the Saljuqs to the Aq Qoyunlu the reader is advised to refer to the respective dynasties. In practice, however, there are various better places to look for information on both administrative history and individual posts. Ann K. S. Lambton devotes a long article (CITIES iii. Administration and social organization) to distilling a lifetime's research on the subject, incorporating a discussion of about 30 terms and offices. She has little to say on social structure, a gap partly catered for elsewhere (CLASS SYSTEM iv. Classes in medieval Islamic Persia), in an article that


10. For Buqa, see now the study by Jean Aubin, Emirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation, Studia Iranica, Cahier 15 (Paris, 1995).
explores both the traditional groupings of sword, pen, religion and commerce and the relations between them (cross-reference here should be made to AYYÁR, and, for the important tribal element in society, to AŠÁYER, a regrettably brief entry). DÍVÁN ii. Government office (esp. 434–36), contains a summary of the main administrative offices and departments. It is difficult to chart the significance of changes in titulature, though the vizierate seems on the whole to have maintained its position; for a clarification of the situation under the Timurids, see DÍVÁNBEGÍ i. The most persistent role of the bureaucracy is in financial administration, covered by various articles on taxes (AWÁREZ; BÍGÁR, BÍGÁRÍ; CUSTOMS DUTIES).

The peripatetic nature of the Saljuq and Mongol courts is discussed not only under DÍVÁN, but in articles on CAPITAL CITIES ii. In Islamic times (esp. 771–72) and COURTS AND COURTIERS iii.–v., the latter a particularly useful attempt to synthesize information on court etiquette and organization, which has not received much scholarly attention. It remains unclear what practical effect the nomadic lifestyle of the court had on administration, beyond the introduction of new offices such as the yártchi (camp master) and perhaps a simplification of procedures. Many of the offices attached to the court are listed separately, some held by the military elite, such as the AKTAJI (why not AğaçI?), BEGLERBEGÍ, which was equivalent to the Arabic title AMIR-AL-OMARÁ, ÇÁNWICIGIR, and BOKÁVOL, others evidently by the civilian secretariat, e.g. ĀLCI, though as Bosworth notes, many household and nominally administrative posts tended to fall to the Turkish military (see DAWÁ(T)DÁR). The conflict and rivalry between the pen and sword is also alluded to in the article on the bureaucrats (DABIR ii. In the Islamic period), as is the factionalism that often affected both groupings. The primacy of the Persian bureaucrats in the early Ilkhanid period, at least, was probably undermined by the influx of other ethnic groups into the chancery. An article on bitikéi (Mongol scribe) would have been useful in this context.

These articles are necessarily concise, particularly for the period under review, but taken in combination they provide a very adequate picture of the current state of knowledge—which is hampered by an absence of archival material and a reliance on manuals. Thus we see the theoretical duties of the offices and occasionally the abuses associated with them, and also their development over time and the decline in status of certain titles, e.g. AMIR. Many of the terms introduced during the Turkish invasions were inherited via the Zangids and Ayyubids by the Mamluk sultanate in Egypt, where they have received more systematic study.

Of all the institutions of the period, the army is perhaps the most prominent and is discussed in several places. ARMY ii. Islamic, to the Mongol period (II, 499) is a good place to start for a general review, which does not, however, enter into or refer to the debate about the size of the Ilkhanid armies and the logistical problems posed by the numbers of mounts employed.11 A common feature of the armies of the period was the continuing use of military slaves, to supplement the tribal contingents that made up the original forces of the Saljuqs and Mongol

invaders; cf. BARDA AND BARDADĀRĪ v. Military slavery in Islamic Iran for a brief overview. The composition of the Mongol army is further discussed under ČERĪK; by the Timurid period, the term had come also to mean a tax to levy troops. Evidence for the continuity of institutions such as the military review into the Turcoman period depends largely on the Aq Qoyunlu example in Fars in 1476, cf. "ARŽ, DĪVĀN(-E).

The article on COMMUNICATIONS unfortunately begins with the 19th century, but relevant and often repetitive information is to be found in articles on the horse (ASB iii. In Islamic times) and the postal service (ČAPAR), neither of which refers to the other; cf. also BARĪD.

(v) Miscellaneous topics

The question of communications leads us beyond the details of dynastic and institutional history and of the people who made it, to the wider dimensions of the period. It is helpful to have a geographical perspective on Persian history, though in many cases this simply means that the same basic material is rearranged under different headings. Thus AZERBAIJAN iv. Islamic history to 1941 contains a brief reminder of the history of the Ildegozids and the Atabegs of Maragah (see above), as well as focusing on the importance of Azerbaijan, and particularly Tabriz, as a capital under the Mongol and Turcoman dynasties. CENTRAL ASIA v. In the Mongol and Timurid periods contains great areas of overlap with the article on the Chaghatayids, though different emphases and bibliographies make both valuable. Articles on BALK and BUKHARA (why not Buḵārā?) in the pre- and post-Mongol periods illuminate the effects of larger historical developments on the rise and fall of cities, and the importance of their religious associations, e.g. with the Kubraviyya and Naqshbandiyya in the case of Bukhara.12 The fundamental importance of contacts with the east during this period is further underlined by articles on CHINESE TURKESTAN iii. and iv., that again contain much on the Chaghatayids and assert that diplomatic and commercial contacts between China and Persia declined in the early 14th century, although this is not the impression given elsewhere.13 The matter is not broached directly in CHINESE-IRANIAN RELATIONS iii. In the Mongol period, but the hazards of the overland journey are mentioned, as is the Great Khan’s representative in Persia, BOLOD Ch’eng-Hsiang (s.v.), who has been the subject of some more recent research.14

12. The articles on Bakh were unable to take advantage of R. D. McChesney’s Waqf in Central Asia: Four hundred years in the history of a Muslim shrine, 1480–1889 (Princeton, N.J., 1991).


Such contacts were of artistic, intellectual, and commercial significance. Commercial contacts are covered in an article on COMMERCE iv. Before the Mongol conquest (for the later period, see Supplement), which usefully concentrates on trade routes and methods of transportation as much as the commodities and economic aspects of trade. Articles on the bazaar (BĀZĀR), CARAVAN, and CARAVANSARY also address the organization of trade and commercial activity, with reference to historical developments in our period. The important area of numismatics and monetary history, relevant to economic, financial, and political affairs, is covered in articles on COINS AND COINAGE (see esp. 20–30), DINAR, and DIRHAM, with excellent illustrations. The Ilkhanid experiment with paper money is also treated separately (ČĀV [sic]).

In conclusion, the foregoing review necessarily touches only briefly on the main trends and the major topics covered by the Encyclopaedia Iranica, but is perhaps sufficient to reveal the great wealth of its material on the history of the Saljuq to Aq Qoyunlu period. It is certainly an indispensable reference work, and on the whole, despite increasing restrictions on space, provides not only a summary of existing knowledge but also the fruits of new research and many signposts for the way forward. The cross-referencing is not all it might be, and where authors are not aware of what has been or is being written in other related articles, this could be brought to their attention, in an effort to avoid duplication and stimulate different approaches. An index of the articles would be very useful and in my view easily as desirable as a list of the contributors, who form, indeed, a most impressive and celebrated group of authorities. Their readiness to contribute to the Encyclopaedia is both a testimony to and a guarantee of its quality.