

Remarks on some genealogical and religious Inscriptions from Central Asia and Iran

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Regarding Islamic architecture Central Asia is a very important region. Starting during the Samanid Dynasty¹ (892-999) we observe a very important development of a local style in the dynastic architecture. At that time the city of Bukhara was the capital of the Samanids. One of the best examples is the mausoleum in Bukhara², which most probably belongs to the famous and powerful Samanid king Ismail ibn Ahmad (892-907). It is a new aspect of a local and at the same time dynastic cult to erect a domed building above a grave. The whole building is made out of bricks and is similar to a small palace influenced by the Sasanian fire temples. It was considered a shrine and that is why it was not destroyed by the Mongolians. It seems that the barbaric Mongolians respected the grave and didn't plan to destroy it. Unfortunately, most of the monuments of this Dynasty were destroyed by the Mongolians in the 13th century.



Fig. 1: The Samanid Mausoleum of Isma'il in Bukhara

For the development of Islamic art and culture, the rise of the Timurid Dynasty (1370-1506)³ means, to have reached the „golden age“ in the big centres like Samarkand and Herat. The architecture of this period is a good testimony to the great efforts of that particular dynasty. The famous mausoleum of Timur (1336-1405)⁴ is one of the most important monuments of Samarkand in that period. This monumental mausoleum was actually commissioned by Timur for his grandson and successor to the throne Muhammad Sultan, who was killed in a battle in Iran in 1403. One year later (in 1404) the mausoleum was already finished. In the year 1405 Timur also died in a military campaign and was buried in the same mausoleum, which is now

¹ Cf. Gronke 2003, pp. 29-32; Krämer 2005, pp. 105-108.

² Cf. Du Ry (n.d.), Fig. p. 58; Pugatschenkowa 1975, Fig. 51; Stock 1989, pp. 253-290, Taf. 25-26; 1990, pp. 231-260, Tafel 43-44; 1991, pp. 243-246; Krämer 2005, Fig. p. 102. After *communis opinio* was the construction and shape of this monument influenced by the parthian and sasanian fire temples.

³ Cf. Cahen 1978, pp. 329-331; Manz 1989; Bosworth 1996; Krämer 2005, pp. 182-187.

⁴ See also Spuler 1971, Fig. p. 218; Pugatschenkowa 1975, Fig. 10; Otto-Dorn 1980, Fig. 53; Lenz/Lowry 1989, Fig. 7.

commonly known as Gor-e Emir (= the tomb of the ruler/commander). Under Ulugh Beg (r. 1447-1449), Timur's grandson, this mausoleum was chosen as the dynasty's family tomb.



Fig. 2: The mausoleum of Timur called „Gor-e Amir“ in Samarkand

Above the doorway of the tomb's main entrance, which is located on the left side of the big inner aywan, there is one large frieze with two inscriptions, one in a characteristic style called *tulṭ* and the other in *kufic* script, combined with arabesques (see Fig. 3). The *tulṭ* Inscription shows the name of Timur, and he is titled „king of the world“ Amir Timur (arab. *sulṭān al-ālam Amīr Tīmūr*) as well given the specific designation *gūrkānī* or *gūrgānī*⁵. The word *güregen/kürügän* in the Mongolian language means „son-in-law.“ Timur was married to a woman from the tribe of Chagatai called Sarai Mulk, which goes back to the Chengiz Khan Family. He chose this title to justify himself as the legitimate follower of the Mongolian dynasty as a new ruler. As we can read in the inscription, Timur himself was titled Emir (*amīr*) and King (*sulṭān*) as well. That is to say, his successors also used the same titles in order to substantiate their claim to power. After all, Timur was a great and successful conqueror.



Fig. 3: The entrance of Timur's mausoleum with the inscription which bears his name and title

⁵ Cf. FĀ, LN, Moīn under this word.

What attracts our attention is the question of who the artisans and craftsmen who worked on the monument were. The answer may be found partly in the inscription of the outer great aywan, which bears the following information (Fig. 4):

ʿamal al-ʿabd al-zaʿīf Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-bannā al-iṣfāhānī = This is the work of the poor slave [of God] Muhammad son of Mahmud the architect (literally: bricklayer/mason) from Isfahan. If we take into consideration that this person was allowed to put his name on a central part of the aywan, we can assume that he was the chief architect under whose supervision the Mausoleum, as well as the portal, were constructed. It is well known that Timur brought the best artists and artisans to his capital Samarkand from all conquered regions.



Fig. 4: Part of the outer portal of Timur's mausoleum with the inscription, which bears the name of the chief architect/bricklayer Muhammad from Isfahan, Samarkand



Fig. 5: The famous Registan place in Samarkand with its three theological schools. The Ulugh Beg school (left), the Shir-dor/ the Lion-bearer [door] school (right) and the Tillja-kari/the gilding one (centre)

The next monument which should draw our attention is the oldest known and well preserved theological school (arab./pers. *madrasa*) in Central Asia built between 1417 and 1420 (Fig. 5) and commissioned by Ulugh Beg, grandson of Timur, in the huge Registan place in Samarkand⁶. Above the entrance of the main Gate (aywan/iwan) there is an inscription of the ruler (Fig. 6-7) with his title in Arabic *tulṭ* script, which characterises him as sultan/king, son of sultan and grandson of sultan (*al-sulṭān ibn al-sulṭān ibn al-sulṭān*). He is also the donor (*bānī*) of the whole building (pl. *mabānī*) as well as the saviour of the world and religion (*muḡīṭ al-dunyā wa-l-dīn*). As his grandfather Timur (cf. Fig. 3), he is also titled with his specific designation *kūrkānī/gūrkānī* or *gūrgānī*. Ulugh Beg was not only a great patron of Islamic Art and culture; moreover he was primarily a scientist, in particular an astronomer and a mathematician. He was son of Shah Rukh. After Shah Rukh chose Herat as his capital in 1409, Ulugh Beg remained as a deputy of his father's in Samarkand, where he always acted as a patron of sciences and culture. It was also he who commissioned the famous observatory on the old mound of Samarkand.

Now the question is why Ulugh Beg calls himself king and son of the king and grandson of the king. Most probably he cares about his legitimacy as a legal follower of his father and grandfather. It is shown by evidence that there were also other candidates who wanted to ascend the throne and that is also the reason why Ulugh Beg was assassinated by a person who was hired by his own son Abd al-Latif. Since the earliest time we notice that many rulers of the oriental dynasties used the same kinds of formulae to express their claim to power. We find a similar formula, for example, in the trilingual inscription of Darius (r. 522-486 B.C.) in Bisotun. As we know, Darius was in fact the successor of Cambyses, son of Cyrus. But he was not their direct descendant; on the contrary he originated from a collateral descent of the Achaemenid Dynasty.



Fig. 6: Entrance to the theological school of Ulugh Beg with the inscription in white, which bears his title as sultan, son of sultan and donor of this edifice, Samarkand

⁶ Cf. Lenz / Lowry 1989, Fig. 34-36.



Fig. 7: Detail of the above inscription in Fig. 6

Now we turn our attention to Iran, specifically to examine some similar genealogical inscriptions of the Safavid Kings in Isfahan⁷. In the main domed building of the Friday mosque, which was built under the famous saljuqs vizier Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092), there are two inscriptions⁸ of the safavid kings Shah Ismail (r. 1501-1524) and Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576). Ismail (Fig. 8) titles himself the victorious king (*abū-l-muzzafār al-sulṭān ismāʿīl*). Moreover he is a Safavid and also a Hero (*al-ṣafawī bahādur ḥān*)⁹. The Turkish word *bahadur* was used as a title, not only in Iran but also by the Moghuls in India. The Arabic term victorious (*abū-l-muzzafār*) is an equivalent of the Greek word „*nikephoros*/ Νικηφόρος“ (= victorious). Since ancient times some kings used that title, such as Seleukos I. [Σέλευκος Α' Νικάτωρ] (ca. 305-281 B.C.; King 312-281 B.C.), who had the epithet „*nikator*“ (= victor). The same epithet was also used by Demetrius II. (r. 145-138 and 129-126 B.C.), who belonged to the same Dynasty¹⁰.



Fig. 8: Inscription with the name of the first Safavid king Shah Ismail, Friday mosque Isfahan

Shah Tahmasp's inscription (Fig. 9) is located under the inscription of his father Ismail. He also uses the same formula as his father, except that he doesn't call himself „victorious“. But he is now king, son of the king (*al-sulṭān ibn al-sulṭān*), a fact, which absolutely corresponds with his genealogy¹¹.

⁷ For this Dynasty see also Grunebaum 1971, pp. 160-174; Gronke 2003, pp. 68-77; Krämer 2005, pp. 231-245.

⁸ The inscriptions are located in the huge aywan of the big Dom on the right side of the entrance

⁹ Cf. Honarfarr 1350, p. 86-87.

¹⁰ Cf. Welles 1986, 454-55, in: PWG, Bd. 3.

¹¹ Honarfarr 1350, p. 88-89.



Fig 9: Inscription with the name of the second Safavid king Shah Tahmasp, Friday mosque Isfahan

The next inscription, which should be mentioned in that respect, belongs to the last king of the Safavid Dynasty and is located in the huge portico (aywan) of the Master (*ustād*) in the Friday mosque at Isfahan (Fig. 10)¹². In this inscription, the king is described at first as usual in a mixed Persian-Arabic language, using terms such as „the great king of kings“ (*al-šāhan-šāh al-aẓam*). Then there follows the well known Arabic title, which we already saw with some of the prior inscriptions in the Arabic language (*al-sulṭān ibn al-sulṭān* = king son of the king). He is also called as „assisted (by God) / helper“ (*abū-l-muʿyyad*). This is again followed by the term „victorious“ (*al-muẓẓafār*) and his name *al-sulṭān Huṣayn al-huṣaynī al-mūsawī al-ṣafawī bahādur ḥān*. It would say, the king is not only a Safavid, but a descendant of the seventh Imam of the Schia Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He also calls himself a hero (*bahādur ḥān*) as the other kings have done. All the Safavids claimed to be descendents of the Family of the Prophet Muhammad through the Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim¹³.

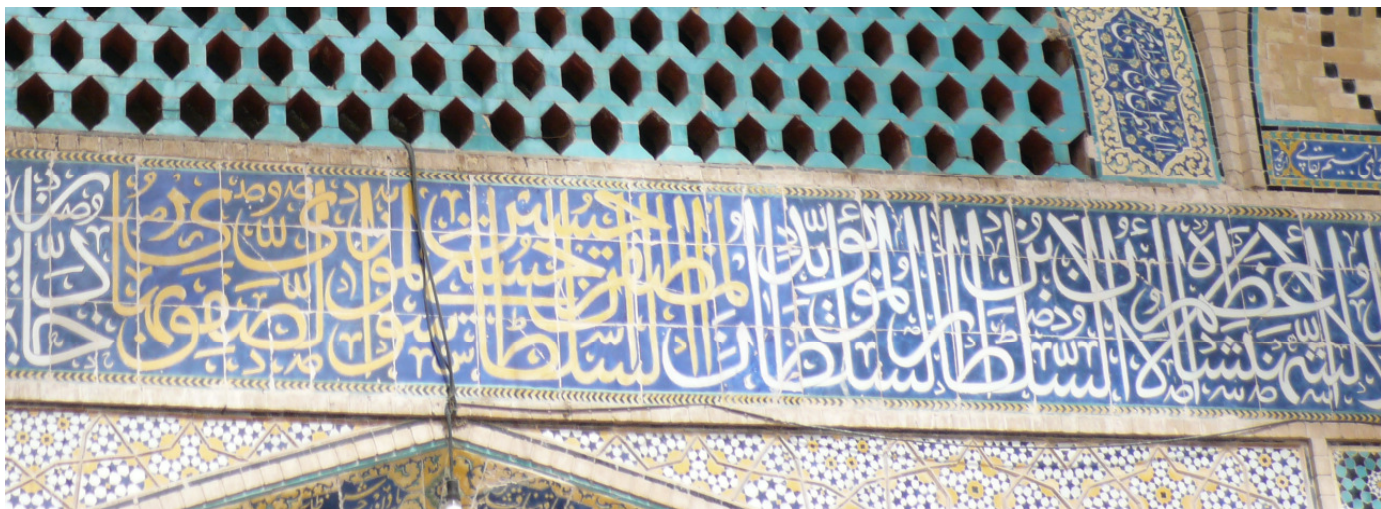


Fig. 10: Inscription written on tiles with the name of the last safavid king Shah Husayn, Friday mosque Isfahan, entrance of Master’s Aywan /Iwan

As we can see, the Safavids try to justify their claim for kingship not only by means of their genealogy but also through direct descent from the Prophet of Islam. It is well known that at the Safavids’ court Turkish was spoken and we shouldn’t be surprised to see them use the Turkish term for hero (*bahādur ḥān*)¹⁴ as we saw above. Further, the last Safavid king also uses the terms “great king,” “king of kings,” which is also mentioned in the Persian historiography of the Safavid time. But as we know, this term is very old and occurs in the Achaemenian cuneiform inscriptions.

¹² Cf. Newid 2006, pp. 138-140, Fig. A9-A11a.

¹³ Cf. Honarfarr 1350, p. 109.

¹⁴ Cf. BQ, FĀ, LN, Moʿīn under this word.

It appears as a written record for the first time from Iran, on the famous Cylinder of Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 B.C.)¹⁵, who was the founder of the dynasty. That term could be also proven in the edicts of Darius I (522-486 B.C.) at Bisotun (Fig. 11-12), where he says: „I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, King of countries, son of Hystaspes, Grandson of Arsames, an Achaemenian“¹⁶. In his foundation inscription of the Apadana at Persepolis (Fig. 13), the same king clearly expresses his genealogy and substantiates his claim to power as the great king of Persia: The inscription begins with: “Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of the countries, son of Vishtaspa, the Achaemenian...“¹⁷. Similar genealogical formulations also occur as a standard type in inscriptions of Xerxes¹⁸ (486-465 B.C.) and his successors¹⁹.

Then the Greeks in Bactria and some Scythian kings of India, such as Azilises and Azes I., used such titles on their Coins, for example (obverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΖΙΛΙΣΟΥ = king of kings of great Azilises) and (obverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΖΟΥ = king of kings of great Azes). They sometimes used Greek letters and also the Charoshti script²⁰. The same title occurs also on some coins of the Kushan king Vima Kadphises²¹. This title occurs also in written sources of the Parthian kings Mithridates and

¹⁵ About his genealogy he says: “I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, powerful king, king of Babylon, king of [Sumer](#) and [Akkad](#), king of the four quarters [of the earth], son of [Cambyses](#), great king, king of Anshan, descendent of [Teispes](#), great king, king of Anshan, the perpetual seed of kingship ...”. (Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder#Description; FE 2005, p. 59, Fig. 6).

¹⁶ Cf. Kent 1950, 119, Translation of DBI: § 1. 1. 1-3. For genealogical inscriptions of the Achaemenian Kings cf. also Brandenstein/Mayrhofer 1964, p. 82-91. See also Hinz 1976, p. 24; Schmitt 1977; Kienast 1979; Wiesehöfer 1998, 33 ff.; Schmitt, in *EncIr*. Article about Achaemenids; Ahn 1992; Koch 1992, pp. 17-22.

¹⁷ Cf. Trümpelmann 1988, pp. 100-101; FE 2005, p. 57, Fig.2, where the silver foundation plaque with the same content is depicted. For another similar formulation of Darius see FE 2005, p. 27, Text B (Darius).

¹⁸ For example on a doorway label attached to a palace sculpture of Xerxes: „Xerxes, the great king, king of kings, son of Daraius, the king, an Achaemenian“ (cf. FE 2005, p. 27, Text A (Xerxes)). Now this formulation is also well-known from the famous inscription of Xerxes at Persepolis (XPb), where he says: „adam : Xšāyāršā : xšāyaθiya : vazraka : xšāyaθiya : xšāyaθiyānām : [...]“. I'm Xerxes, the great king, king of kings [...]. Cf. Trümpelmann 1988, p. 51; Kent 1950, p. 147-148. We find in detail the genealogy of Xerxes several times at Persepolis, for example in the following inscription (XPf = Xerxes Persepolis F) (Kent 1950, p. 149-15, § 15-20): „Saith Xerxes, the King: My father was Darius; Darius's father was Hystaspes by name; Hystaspes's father was Arsames by name“. Cf. also Herodot VII. 11.

¹⁹ Concerning these inscriptions see Kent 1950, p. 153 ff. (Artaxerxes I, Darius II etc.).

²⁰ Cf. Lohuisen-de Leeuw 1949, p.349. The reverse of this coins bear the same content in Kharoshthi letters: „MAHARAJASA RAJARAJASA MAHATASA AYILISASA“ and „MAHARAJASA RAJARAJASA MAHATASA AYASA“. (Für oldindian scripts see Bühler 1896; Dani 1986). We find similar titles also on coins of the Indo-Scythian King Maues as following: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΜΑΟΥ = King of Kings of the great Maues. Revers of his coins bear mostly the translation of the Greek legend, i.e.: rajadi-rajasa mahatasa Moasa = King of Kings of the great Maues (cf. Mitchiner 1976, pp. 466-480). Cf. also <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?hl=de&q=cache:jpKK5lsaj5AJ:http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/resources/lectures/668/04.pdf+Basileos+Basilewn&ct=clnk>

²¹ Cf. Rosenfield 1967, p. 22: Greek legend from the Obv. of coin No. 17 in Plate I: „BACIAEUC BACIAEWN CWTHP ΜΕΓΑC ΟΟΗΜΟ ΚΑΔΑΦΙCΗC“. I think /C/ should be regarded as the Greek Letter /Σ/ and /W/ as /Ω/. Translation: King of Kings, the Great Saviour, Vima Kadphises. On the reverse side of this coin is the legend in Kharoshthi, which Rosenfield reads: „maharajasa rajadirajasa sarvaloga išvarasa mahišvarasa Vima Kathphīśasa tradara (Great King of Kings, Lord of the World, the Great Lord, Vima Kathphīśa, the Saviour“). I'm not sure, if the transcription as well as the translation given by Rosenfield are absolutely correct. I think it would be better to consider, that the ending – sa (Skt. – sya) is in genitive and we should translate it as: Of the Great King ... Again there is an inscription of four lines in Brahmi-script between the feet of the colossal seated image of king Vima, which beside his usual title bears also the term *kushana-putro* = scion of the Kushans. (cf. Mitterwalner 1986, p. 54, Pl. 2). The only difference with the Achaemenian inscriptions is that the Kushan King doesn't mention his genealogy in full, otherwise he is „Great King, King of Kings ...“. Beside the Greek and Kharoshthi script we find also the Iranian (Bactrian?) script, which was used by the Kings of the Kushans Dynasty such as Kanishka: „SHAONANOSHAO KA/NESHKI KOSHANO“ =King of Kings Kanishka, the Kushan (cf. Rosenfield 1967, 56). Most of the inscriptions of the Kushan dynasty from India are written in Brahmi-script, such as the one, which occurs on a headless statue of the king Kanishka from Mat, today in the

Artabanos²². The Sasanian king Shapur I (r. ca. 239/40 – 270-72 A.D.) gives a full description of his genealogy in his inscription in Naqshe Rostam, where he says that he is a follower of the Mazda-Religion, son of king Ardashir and grandson of king Papak and he is also king of kings and king of „Ērān“ [= Iran] and „Anērān“ [= Non-Iran]²³. We find almost the same formulation in the inscription of the Sasanian ruler Narseh (r. 293-302) in Paikuli, where he speaks with special emphasis on his right to be king of Iran and of other countries. He says: „ [I am the Mazdaean Majesty Narseh] King [of Kings] of Ērān [and] Non-Ērān, whose origin (is) from [the gods, son of the Mazdaean] Majesty Šābuhr King [of Kings] of Ērān and Non-Ērān, [whose origin (is) from the gods, grandson of the Majesty Ardashēr] King of Kings“²⁴. Since Achaemenias, Parthians and Sasanians were kings of a large empire it is easy to understand why they used that title, and the other minor or greater kings followed them. But in the case of the last Safavid king Shah Husayn it is historically not at all justified that he also called himself „great king of kings“. As we know he was a very weak king, not willing to defend Isfahan against the attack of the Afghan troops. From the above expositions we can derive that such formulas were used since ancient times to secure the power and definitely to glorify the kings and finally their dynasty. Let us say that the last king of Iran used this title also for the same purpose.



Fig. 11: The rock relief of Darius at Bisotun. The King has his left foot on the prostrate body of Gaumata, followed by the nine rebel kings roped together at the neck, with their hands tied on their backs. The relief is surrounded by a trilingual inscription in Old Persian, Elamite and Neobabylonian/Akkadian.

museum of Mathura with the following contents: *mahā-rāja rājāti-rāja deva-putro kāniṣko* (cf. v. Mitterwalner 1983, p. 81). Translation: Great King, King of Kings, Son of Gott, Kanishka. As we see Kanishka uses the term *deva-putra* to stress his divine origin, something which was very common in India, but was not familiar in ancient Persia or Islamic countries because of their monotheistic beliefs (i.e. Zoroastrianism / Islam). But nevertheless, in his inscriptions the Sasanian king Shapur calls himself a „*bay*“, a word which in mp. means „god“ (cf. Wieschöfer 1998, 220).

²² See Wieschöfer 1998, 168-169.

²³ See Back 1978, pp. 284-285; Wieschöfer 1998, pp. 207-208, 223 a. 228. We find also from the same king in Naqshe Rajab, near Persepolis, an inscription with a similar formula (cf. Wieschöfer 1998, pp. 220-221).

²⁴ CF. Humbach/Skærvø 1983, p. 27.



Fig. 12: Details of Fig. 11

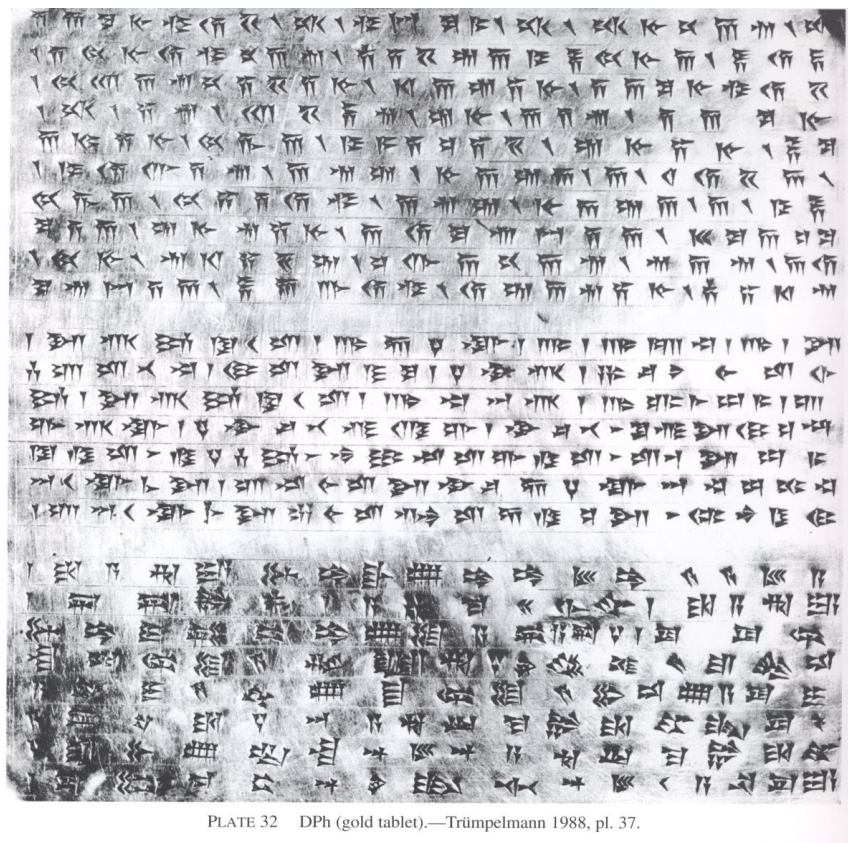


PLATE 32 DPh (gold tablet).—Trümpelmann 1988, pl. 37.

Fig. 13: Gold plate with a foundation trilingual inscription of Darius I. (522-486 B.C.) from the Apadana at Persepolis written in Old Persian, Elamite and Neobabylonian/Akkadian.

The second theme, we want to investigate, belongs to a religious type of inscriptions, which are represented in large numbers on monuments, so that we are forced to confine ourselves on a few of them. The inscription depicted in Fig. 14 shows the islamic creed in the well-known characteristic style called *tult*. It is located on a wooden door belonging to a religious institution in Tashkent. The special feature of this inscription is, that the letters „alif“ and „lām“ are vertically extended.

Moreover the addition of some signs of vocalization and spacing material and framework turn it into an interesting picture.



Fig. 14: An inscription showing the Islamic creed, carved twice on a pair of wooden doors, Tashkent

Another very important inscription, both in Persian and Arabic, is located on a pillar of the Tillja-kari (the gilding one) school in Tashkent (Fig. 15), erected between 1646 and 1660. The optically indefinable script (some kind of *tulṭ* or *nashḥ*) has a very important content. It is written in three panels and runs from right to the left. The middle panel is a glorification of God in Arabic: *subḥāna llāhi wa-l-ḥamdu-li-llāhi* = God is Great! And thank God!

This main formula is flanked by a stanza in Persian, which probably should be read as following:
sar-e man dar fedā-ye čār sarvar / abū bakr-o ʿomar ʿomān-o ḥaydar //

Translation: I give my life for the four leaders, (namely) Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Haydar (epithet of Ali). As we know, these are the four Caliphs, who followed the Prophet of Islam²⁵.

I should add that the reading of the first half of this stanza is, because of the difficult orthographic writing, not easy. But I know it by heart, because I learned it in my childhood.



Fig. 15: Eulogistic Inscription in Persian and Arabic from a pillar of the Tillja-kari (the gilding one) school in Samarkand (cf. Fig. 5)

²⁵ Most of the mosques of sunnit islam bears besides of different koranic verses and quotations of the Prophet also the name of holy persons such as the Prophet and his well-known four successors. some times we find their names also on palaces, such as the privat audience hall of the Moghul Emperor Schah jahan in the red Fort in Agra, which I visited recently.

Let us now examine some religious inscriptions from Iran, which are very representative for the Shiite Islam. On both sides of the main dome in the Shah Abbas mosque (now called Imam Mosque) there are two theological schools. The one located on the left bears some inscriptions of our interest. The main inscription is inside a prayer niche/mehrab (Fig. 16). The inscription, which is written in a very esthetic *tulṭ*-script, contains an eulogistic formula with the names of the 14 „Holy Persons“ of the Shiia and is written in several panels²⁶. It begins in the first panel with the names of the Prophet Muhammad, followed by Imam Ali and Fatima (the daughter of the Prophet and wife of Imam Ali). The Arabic Inscription can be read as follows:

allāhumma ṣallā²⁷ ʿalā muḥammad al-muṣṭafā wa-l-imām ʿalī al-murtaẓā wa-fīṭima al-zahrā /

Translation: O God bless Muhammad Mustafa and Imam Ali Murtaza and Fatima Zahra.

In this inscription there are not only the names, but also the epithets of the “Holy Persons“. Then in the other five panels the names and the epithets of the other 11th Imam of the Shiia follow.



Fig. 16: Eulogistic inscription with the Names of the Prophet, Ali and Fatima from a theological school in Shah/Imam mosque in Isfahan

The next inscription, which should be examined in this context, is on a stone cauldron inside the Friday mosque at Isfahan (Fig. 17-18)²⁸. The bilingual inscription is carved in stone on two levels. The upper zone bears an eulogistic formula in Arabic, which shows the names of the 14 „Holy Persons“ of the Shiia (i.e. = the Prophet, his daughter Fatima and the 12 Imam). As the upper part of the stone cauldron is broken, the inscription doesn't exist in full length.

²⁶ Cf. Newid 2006, pp. 148-150, Figs. A19-A21.

²⁷ The correct spelling is actually *ṣallā*.

²⁸ Cf. Newid 1998, pp. 88-93, Fig. 1-2d.; Newid 2006, pp. 143-146, Fig. A14-A16: Honarfarr 1345, who published a short article on some stone cauldrons in Isfahan.

But the last part of Fatima's name is still visible. Then follows the word „*sibtayn*“²⁹ (= the both grandsons) and after that come the names of Hasan and Husayn.



Fig 17: Stone cauldron bearing a bilingual inscription in Arabic and Persian, Isfahan, Friday Mosque in front of the Dervish Aywan

The next field continues with the names of Ali, who has the epithet *zayn al-‘ubbād*³⁰ (fine example of the pious) and then we read the names of Baqir Muhammad and Sadiq Ja'far. Below the Arabic inscription is the Persian one with the following content:

[...] *barā-ye tešnegān īn jān-rā etmān [kard]/*
kard vaqf-e šāh-e maẓlūmān Ḥoseyn Ebn-e ‘Alī//

For the thirsty ones was made this cauldron (literally = cup)/
 It is donated to the king of the oppressed Husayn son of Ali//

²⁹ Actually it should be written as سبطين „*sibtayn*” and not سبتين as it occurs on this inscription.

³⁰ Needless to say, if we should read this passage as *zayn al-‘ābidīn* or as *zayn al-‘ubbād*, as Ulrich Marzolph suggested in his review [cf. ZDMG, Bd. 158 – Heft 2 (2008), pp. 421-424] on my book „Der schiitische Islam in Bildern, München 2006“ (cf. p. 423) the first version. But it is very obvious that as well as in this inscription and also in the inscription on the tambour of the Shah Abbas mosque in Isfahan we can only read it as *zayn al-‘ubbād*. Another example of an eulogistic inscription with a similar content on a bowl from the Safavid time in the British Museum bears the same version, namely *zayn al-‘ubbād* (cf. Canby 2009, Cat.-No. 117). Of course we find the regular plural form of *‘ābid* as *‘ābidīn* in some other inscriptions (cf. Newid 2006, Fig. A1, p. 130). (I'm afraid that Marzolph did not attempt seriously to review my book entirely). Another example is the Fig. L6 Newid 2006, p. 293), where it is clearly mentioned that the inscription bears the names of Imam Reza and Harun, but in fact Imam Reza met with Ma'mun in Khorasan, as historical sources refer to this topic (cf. TB, Vol. VI 190-192; Newid/Mumm 2007, pp. 117-119). These facts are already explained in my text. But the reviewer overlooked this explanation. There are also some other points, which could be mentioned in this respect, but this is not the place to discuss them. Fact is that the reviewer didn't take the necessary care to examine my work meticulously.



Fig 18: Details of Fig. 17

Among the various inscriptions, which we come across in the Friday mosque of Isfahan is the one to be dedicated to Imam Ali (Fig. 19)³¹.



Fig. 19: Religious inscription dedicated to Imam Ali, Friday mosque Isfahan, Aywan of Master

The inscription runs in a clockwise direction and begins in the lower left corner, and consists of four half-stanzas with the following content in Persian:

*čon nāme-ye ĵorm-e mā beham pičīdand/
bordand-o be mīzān-e ‘amal sanjīdand//
biš az hame kas gonāh-e mā būd valī/*

³¹ Cf. Honarfarr 1350, Fig. p. 111; Newid 2006, pp.151-152, Fig. A22.

mā-rā be moḥabbat-e ‘Alī bakšīdand//

After my sins` catalogue was rolled up /
it was scaled on the scale of deeds rate//
My misdeeds were more than the sins of the others/
But these were forgiven me because of my devotion to Ali//

This inscription is of a most artistic ornamental quality and is written in angular or geometric *kufic* style. In Iran it is also called *bannā’ī*-script (i.e. bricklayer-script). In his study (arab./pers.: *tarḥ*) the artist presents first of all a unique picture with maximum harmony and accuracy. He tempts the observer at first through an imaginative decoration of separate parts of this work in order to make sure that we perceive a homogeneous picture. Only on closer inspection are we able to decipher the script.

At the centre of the inscription we find the name of the artist in Persian:
‘amal-e ebn-e moḥammad mo’men moḥammad amīn = (This is) the work of Moḥammad Amīn, son of Moḥammad Mo’men.

We remember that the artist of the Inscription on the Gate of the tomb of Tamarlan was also of Isfahan origin (cf. Fig. 4).

Abbreviations:

AcIr. = Acta Iranica

AMI = Archäologische Mitteilungen aus dem Iran

AO = Acta Orientalia Lugduni

AOS = American Oriental Series

AOSoc = American Oriental Society

BQ = Borhān-e Qāte‘, Moḥammad Ḥosayn Ibn Qalaf motakalleṣ be Borhān, mo’allef be sāl-e 1062 h. q. (Dictionnaire de la langue Persane) par Mohammad Mo’in, 4 Tomes, Teheran, Amīr Kabīr 1982 (1. Aufl. 1335 h. š.)

EncIr. = Encyclopaedia Iranica

FĀ = Farhang-e Ānandrāḡ, ta’lif Moḥammad Pādšāh motakalleṣ ba Šād, hrsg. von Moḥammad Dabīr- Siyāqī, Teheran, Kayyām 1353 h. š.

FG = Forgotten Empire

FWG = Fischer Weltgeschichte

KAW = Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt

KI = Die Kultur des Islams. Handbuch der Kulturgeschichte, begründet von Prof. Dr. Heinz Kindermann, neu herausgegeben von Dr. Eugen Thurner. Akad. Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, Frankfurt am Main

LN = Loḡat-nāma, ta’lif-e ‘Alī Akbar Dehḡodā (1258-1334 h. š.). Zīr-e naẓar-e doktor Moḥammad Mo’in, Teheran, čāp-kāna-ye dawlatī-ye īrān 1337-1345 h. š.

mp. = Middle Persian

PWG = Propyläen Weltgeschichte, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main

OR-T = Orientalia Rheno-Traiectina, Ed.: J. Gonda et H. W. Obbink, Leiden

Skt. = Sanskrit

TB = *Tārīḡ-e Bayhaqī*, taṣnīf-e K̄āḡe Abū l-Faẓl Moḥammad b. Ḥosayn-e Bayhaqī-ye Dabīr, bā ma’nī-ye vāẓa-hā va šarḡ-e bayt-hā va ĵomlehā-ye doṣvār va amṡāl-o ḡekam va barkī noktehā-ye dastūrī va adabī, be kūšeš-e Doktor Qalīl Qaṭīb Rahbar, Teheran 1371₂ h. š.

WI = Welt des Islam, hrsg. von B. Lewis

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