



market for his paintings. The incoherence of the chapters combined with the overall brevity of the book suggests that its content may have been more effectively presented in the form of separate articles.

It is furthermore sometimes easy to lose sight of the overarching arguments of the book given the great attention Yu devotes to asking questions with seemingly obvious answers. For example, the first chapter aims to understand whether the buildings represented in Xia's paintings were modelled on existing architecture; however, judging by their fantastic structures, it is immediately clear that they only give the impression of real buildings by combining standard elements such as pillars, brackets sets, and gable roofs. Yu eventually reaches the same conclusion (she calls the combination of elements a 'modular system'), but far less effort could have been spent on developing this argument. Much of the second chapter likewise involves trying to determine whether Wang Zhenpeng may have served as Xia Yong's direct master, as some scholars have suggested on account of the stylistic similarities in the artists' architectural representations, particularly in their use of the 'plain drawing' (*baimiao* 白描) technique. Yu ultimately refutes this claim based on a lack of textual evidence but, in the meantime, the reader encounters much more than is probably necessary about Wang Zhenpeng's already well-studied paintings and artistic circles.

*Painting Architecture* provides an engaging and informative introduction to Yuan Dynasty *jiehua*. One of the greatest contributions of the book are the copious inscriptions and other historical records about painting that Yu has meticulously translated into English. These original texts, combined with the many paintings reproduced throughout the book, give readers a deep dive into the lives of artists working in the Yuan and into aspects of their artistic processes that are often absent in art historical scholarship. The book will be of interest to art historians wanting to understand what made *jiehua* produced during the period of Mongol rule so distinctive, as well to scholars interested in how politics shaped painting practices more generally.

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## **A History of Herat: from Chinggis Khan to Tamerlane**

**By Shivan Mahendrarajah. xvi, 379 pp. Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2022.**

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Our knowledge of medieval Iran suffers from major gaps. Because the most accessible sources are narrative chronicles written at royal courts, modern scholarship has traditionally focused on the political activities of imperial elites, at the expense of local and socio-economic histories. More recently, scholars have dug into new sources and read familiar sources in new ways to push back against this tradition. Shivan Mahendrarajah quotes two such efforts in his opening pages: the 'view from the edge' advocated by his M.A. mentor Richard Bulliet and a

Special Issue of *Iranian Studies* dedicated to local Iranian histories and sources.<sup>1</sup> His own contribution to this effort tackles the lacunae of local and socio-economic history by examining a city and its hinterlands as they recovered from the Mongol invasion.

The structure of *A History of Herat* meets its dual challenge: it is divided into two parts dealing, respectively, with the local political history of Herat during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the ‘social, economic, and cultural renewal’ that occurred there. In short, Mahendrarajah provides a local (if somewhat traditional) narrative in Part I, which provides context for the topical chapters of Part II. Each of the parts falls into several pairs of chapters (three pairs in Part I, two in Part II), which are described below. Overall, this structure is very helpful, as it allows the reader to focus on one or another approach as needed. A reader wishing to understand the place of Herat and its Kartid Dynasty of governors in the context of Mongol political history might limit their reading to Part I; another with a strong understanding of the relevant political history might skip directly to Part II. For most readers, the first six chapters set the stage for the material outlined in the latter and regrettably shorter half of the book.

After the violent sack of Herat in 1221–22, the Mongols selected the city to be the political centre of the eastern Iranian world. To run affairs, the Mongol Great Khan Möngke invested the Kartid Dynasty over the city and region. This was a reward for the cooperation that their ancestor, Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad Marghanī, had tendered to the Mongols from his base at Fort Khaysār in Ghur during the campaign in which the city was destroyed. Over the next century and a half, the role of the Karts in Herat fell somewhere between governing and ruling, and they rebuilt the architectural and agricultural landscape of greater Herat alternately in spite of and in cooperation with Ilkhanid Mongol efforts. Our knowledge of the Kartid Dynasty and their capital city relies on a contemporary chronicler working at the Kartid court, Sayf al-Harawī, with further information from select Ilkhanid and Timurid court sources. Mahendrarajah uses these sources well, though the ‘sources’ section of his introduction only describes narrative texts, overlooking the important non-narrative sources of economic data, such as Ḥamd Allāh Mustaufi’s *Nuzhat al-Qulūb* and Ḥāfiz-i Abrū’s *Geography*. These are not really described until Appendix 2, but the second part of the book relies heavily on them.

As mentioned, the narrative history of Part I is divided into three pairs of chapters, treating respectively the ‘Early’, ‘Middle’, and ‘Late’ periods of Kartid history. Each pair of chapters begins with a short prolegomenon encapsulating in a few hundred words the events that occupy the following few dozen pages. These chapters present a rather dense political history, interrupted occasionally by theoretical reflections, such as the numerous ideas about conflict that appear early in the section on the ‘Middle’ period: the idea of the ‘conflict ecosystem’, the difference between roving and stationary bandits, the theories of Carl von Clausewitz, and the difference between low-intensity and high-intensity conflict. These are interesting, but not evenly integrated into the work and could perhaps be narrowed and focused.

Also, while the first part of the book does introduce the events of Kartid history, it misses the opportunity to situate Herat within the Mongol conquest more broadly. Mahendrarajah relates the sequence of submission, rebellion, and destruction that characterised Herat’s response to the Mongols, sometimes in exhaustive detail. A comparison to the stances taken by the other cities of Khurāsān might shed light on notions of central and regional sovereignty current during this dynamic period. Also, given the devastation that the Mongols ultimately visited on Herat, an overriding question of this first part of the book is why in the end it was selected as the new capital of the region. Mahendrarajah addresses this question in the conclusion to Part I, and more fully in chapter Nine. By bringing some

<sup>1</sup> Richard Bulliet, *Islam: the View from the Edge* (New York, 1994); *Iranian Studies* 33.1 (2000).

taste of the latter discussion into the political narrative of Part I, Mahendrarajah might better convey the fact that the subsequent recovery of Herat was rooted in circumstances of geography and topography that even Mongol destruction could not fundamentally change. It is a delicate task to balance two takes on the same history, and Mahendrarajah in general does well with this, but a bit more integration between the two halves of the book could draw them into a more convincing whole and help the reader understand why the specific course of events in Herat is worth retelling at such length.

The topical chapters of Part II are more in line with contemporary trends in the study of medieval Iran. Here again we get pairs of chapters (though, unlike in Part I, they are not explicitly presented as such). Chapters Seven and Eight deal with early and late efforts to revive agricultural activity around Herat. This includes significant discussions of Mongol taxation efforts as well as local Kartid initiatives. The detailed description of irrigation systems found in chapter Eight, as well as the discussion of the importance of *waqf* endowments for economic activity, are discrete contributions to the study of Iran in the Mongol period.

Chapters Nine and Ten deal with the city and its built environment. Chapter Nine catalogues Kartid patronage of new economic and public buildings, and makes a very important observation about their interrelation (pp. 249–51). Chapter Ten treats Kartid fortifications, with a very clear focus on the fortified city of Herat. It reads as a bit of a pet project: it is the longest chapter of the book, and it engages significantly with the terminology and concepts of medieval defensive fortification and siege warfare. Mahendrarajah acknowledges the network of forts scattered across the regional landscape (pp. 271–72, 298–304) and, at the end of the chapter, he discusses these forts for their role in protecting trade and transit through the Kartid realm. For a study of history ‘from the edge’, we might ask more of how these smaller loci of Kartid authority created the atmosphere of day-to-day security that undergirded the significant revival of the period.

For Herat did survive the Mongol period. It thrived, even, enough to become the capital of the Timurid empire in the early fifteenth century. Its elevation by the Mongols set it apart, ‘pre-selected [it] for historians’ in Mahendrarajah’s apt formulation (p. 2). The survival of sources—both Kartid and Timurid—on the city and its region makes it possible to study Khurāsānī economic and social history. However, we must recognise that, thanks both to royal investment and the pen of Sayf al-Harawī, Herat was also unique among the cities of Khurāsān, benefiting in the moment of its selection as the regional centre from opportunities denied to Marw, Nishapur, and Balkh. This culminated in the efflorescence of the city under Shāhrukh, who, unmentioned in the book, patronised scholars such as Ḥāfiz-i Abrū, who provide so much information about the city.

Four appendices round up *A History of Herat*. The first includes dynastic trees of the various pertinent families. The other three present data on the agricultural, urban, and demographic development of the Kartid period, supplementing the discussion of chapters Seven through to Nine. This is important data, but its appearance in appendices again shows the imbalance in treatment between the two parts of the book and among the chapters of Part II. It is unclear why the catalogue of fortifications included in chapter Ten is not similarly relegated to an appendix, or why more of the data in these appendices is not integrated into the chapters of Part II to create a study as dense as the narrative history in Part I.

The story told in *A History of Herat* benefits greatly from Mahendrarajah’s other book, *The Sufi Saint of Jam*, which traces the long history of one Sufi institution in the neighbourhood of Herat that was particularly prominent during the late Seljuq and Mongol periods.<sup>2</sup> In that book, Mahendrarajah shows how deeply the Jāmī shaykhs were involved in

<sup>2</sup> Shivan Mahendrarajah, *The Sufi Saint of Jam: History, Religion, and Politics of a Sunni Shrine in Shi‘i Iran* (Cambridge, 2021).

regional politics, economics, and society. Given that the family of shaykhs was linked to the Kartid Dynasty through marriage as well as economic and cultural projects, *The Sufi Saint* lends important depth to *A History of Herat* that would not emerge from a study based entirely on sources explicitly about the Kartids and their city.

Mahendrarajah writes in a unique style that is less formal than most academic prose. At its best, this brings a levity to the work that keeps the reader engaged through passages that might otherwise become tedious. At other points, the book reads as unfinished—a collection of reading notes not yet fully composed. This impression is enhanced by the inclusion of extensive tables in chapters One, Four, Six, and Ten and Appendices 2 and 3 that catalogue the evidence on which the book is based but which do not necessarily lend information beyond what is in (or should be in) the main text.

One real shortcoming of this book is its index. While poor indexing often goes unremarked, the particular nature of this book makes certain indexing choices regrettable. Since the two parts of the book deal with two aspects of the same history, the reader needs a tool to help draw connections between them. The index should be this tool, but it is not. Large bodies of material are subsumed under generic headers ('citadels', 'gateways', 'hodonoms', 'toponyms', etc.), so that the reader must first divine the indexer's categorisation to find a particular item. For example, the Kartid redoubt at Iskilchih, which gave the family refuge in times of political turmoil and which formed an important link in their regional security network, is listed only under 'Citadels > Fort Iskilchih', with no cross references to help the reader find it there. In a book about medieval Iranian economy and society, there is an entry for Charles Tilly, but not for caravansarays.

On the whole, *A History of Herat* takes an important step in scholarship, but it stumbles in some crucial ways. It will be a helpful resource for students of the political, economic, social, and cultural history of Iran in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but it is not as comprehensive or internally consistent as it might have been, leaving the final impression that it was rushed to publication.

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## **Uncertainty in the Empire of Routine: The Administrative Revolution of the Eighteenth-Century Qing State**

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State centralisation stands as one of the most significant developments of the early modern world.<sup>1</sup> As empires swelled, rulers worked to extend personal power and enact policy

<sup>1</sup> For overviews of early modern trends, see Jerry Bentley, 'Early modern Europe and the early modern world', in *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World*, (eds.) Charles Parker