

Fall 2022 Arts of Asia Lecture Series  
Forging New Connections: Asia in the First Millennium of the Common Era  
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## **Arts of the Seljuqs and their Successor States from Iran to Anatolia, ca. 1000-1300**

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### **Timeline of the Seljuqs and their Successor States**

**Around 985** Seljuq, founder of the Great Seljuq dynasty converts to Islam

**Around 1000** Seljuq dies

**By 1030s** Great Seljuqs conquer Khurasan, rich province comprising eastern Iran, northern Afghanistan, and southern Turkmenistan

**1037-1194** Great Seljuq rule

**1055, Sack of Baghdad.** Tughril, one of the two grandsons of Seljuq conquers Baghdad in Iraq, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate, which was the religious authority and sovereigns of the Islamic world at the time since the mid-8th century. The sack of Baghdad by Seljuq Tughril marks an important moment in history. This victory over the Abbasids, the religious leaders of the Islamic world, established Seljuq dominion over all of Iran and Iraq

**2<sup>nd</sup> half of 12<sup>th</sup> century:** under the reigns of Alp Arslan (r. 1063-73) and his son Malik Shah I (r. 1073-92), marked the political apogee of the Great Seljuq sultanate, borders extended from Central Asia to Palestine.

**1071 Battle of Manzikert,** Alp Arslan's great victory against the Byzantines, following which Seljuq borders get pushed into Anatolia; this battle is recognized now as beginning of end of Byzantine (Rome) power. As a result, several *amirs* or commanders and tribal leaders of the Great Seljuq army establish principalities or Seljuq Successor states in Anatolia and surrounding regions.

**1077-1308** Seljuqs of Rum (cousins of Great Seljuqs) ruling over Anatolia (roughly corresponding to modern Turkey)

**1186** Artuq founder of the Artuqids, originally a general of Great Seljuq Sultan Malik Shah, and then Seljuq Amir of Damascus, is appointed by Tutush I Governor of Jerusalem

**Ca. 1170s-1219,** *mina'i* or seven colors "haft reng" a luxurious ceramic technique developing in Kashan, Iran

**Ca. 1088-89** Nizam al-Mulk, grand vizier of Sultan Malik Shah builds the South Dome (in front of the *mihrab* prayer niche) of the Great Mosque in Isfahan, which is recognized as being the largest dome known from that period.

**Ca. 1102-1408**, Artuqid dynasty (divided into three branches), one of Successor State of Great Seljuqs, ruling in Jazira (historic region, today covering Southeastern Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Northeastern Syria)

**1127-1250**, Zangid dynasty (divided into two branches), one of Successor State of Great Seljuqs, ruling in Syria and Jazira (historic region, today covering Southeastern Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Northeastern Syria)

**1194** end of Great Seljuq rule in Iran

**Ca. 1220s-1258** Mongol invasions, culminating in the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258 putting an end to the Abbasid caliphate. These Mongol invasions also lead artists and craftsmen to flee from the east, among metalworkers who establish inlaid metalworking in Mosul, Northern Iraq. The Mongol invasions also have a major impact on the geo-political scene in Anatolia, Syria and Iraq and either put an end to several of the Seljuq Successor States or have them submit to become their vassals (ex. Rum Seljuqs).

**Ca. 1220s** onwards (until ca. 1350-1400), famous *al-Mawsili* (from Mosul) inlaid metalworking school establishes in Mosul, a high-end art form creating luxurious objects for the ruling classes. From Mosul the craft also spreads to Anatolia, Syria or Egypt, and later back to Iran, where the technique originally had developed in the Khurasan region for middle classes from ca. 1100-1250.

**1243** Rum Seljuqs become vassals of the Mongol Il-Khanids

### **Main dynasties of the Seljuqs and Seljuq Successor States:**

**Great Seljuqs**, ruling in the East from 1037-1194, were based in Greater Iran, controlling a territory stretching from Turkmenistan (Merv) in the East until Iraq and Syria in the West

**Seljuq Successor States**, ruling in the West from late 12<sup>th</sup> to ca. 1300 among the important ones for the arts are:

- **Seljuqs of Rum/Anatolia (cousins of Great Seljuqs)** r. 1077–1308
- **Artuqids** r. ca. 1102-1408, Turkish Principality in Jazira/Northern Mesopotamia
- **Zangids** r. 1127–1250, Turkish Principality in the Jazira/Northern Mesopotamia, and parts of Syria

## **Readings**

Canby Sheila, Deniz Beyazit, and Martina Rugiadi, *Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Seljuqs*, Exhibition catalog, April 25 – July 24, 2016, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (Also available in Turkish, published by Yapi Kredi Publisher, Istanbul, 2022)

*The Seljuqs and their Successors: Art, Culture and History*, edited by Sheila Canby, Deniz Beyazit, and Martina Rugiadi, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art, 2020.

Robert Hillenbrand, Chapter 4 “The Saljuqs” (p. 92-117), and Chapter 5 “The Age of the Atabegs: Syria, Iraq and Anatolia”, 1100-1300 (p. 118-144), in *Islamic Art and Architecture*, (1<sup>st</sup> edition published 1998; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published in 2021)

[The Art of the Seljuq Period in Anatolia \(1081–1307\) | Essay | The Metropolitan Museum of Art | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History \(metmuseum.org\)](#)

[The Art of the Seljuqs of Iran \(ca. 1040–1157\) | Essay | The Metropolitan Museum of Art | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History \(metmuseum.org\)](#)