

**Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2014**  
**The Arts of the Islamic World**  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

“Persian Painting: The First Golden Age (1300-1500)  
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Important dates:

- c.570-632     Life of the Prophet Muhammad
- 632-750     The age of the great Islamic conquests, creating an empire stretching from the borders of France to the borders of China
- 750-1258     The Abbasid empire rules much of the Islamic world
- 1055-1194     Saljuq Turks rule the Iranian world, establishing a vibrant Turco-Persian culture
- 1220           The invasion of Central Asia and Iran by Mongol armies under Genghis Khan begins; other Mongol armies conquer Russia and penetrate as far west as Germany and as far east as the straits of Japan
- 1256           Foundation of the Ilkhanid Mongol dynasty in Iran; it collapses in 1336. Toleration of other religions, especially Buddhism, Christianity and Judaism, results in a multi-confessional cosmopolitan society
- 1258           Baghdad falls to the Mongols; end of the caliphate
- 1295           The Mongol elite converts to Islam. Tabriz, in northwest Iran, becomes the Mongol capital and turns into a global hub, with ambassadors from England to China flocking to the city. The Mongols pursue an active diplomatic policy designed to form alliances with the Western European powers in a strategy to defeat the Muslim Mamluk sultans of Egypt and Syria. They also maintain close ties with the successors of Kubilai Khan in China; they are the junior partners in that relationship. So the Mongol empire looks both east and west; they impose a peace on Eurasia which makes travel from Europe to China safe
- 1317           Completion of one of Asia’s greatest mausolea at Sultniya, not far from Tabriz; it is the forerunner of the Taj Mahal
- 1336           On the death of the last Mongol Ilkhan, the empire crumbles and minor principalities jockey for power until the arrival of Timur (Tamburlaine), the next great Mongol conqueror, some fifty years later

## KEY ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS

c.1298        *The Usefulness of Animals*, which combines Western and Islamic knowledge of animals

1307        *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* reflects the Mongol interest in other societies and religions and in the wider world

1314        *The World History* of Rashid al-Din, vizier (prime minister) of successive Mongol rulers, charts Mongol ambitions of world leadership but is also a summary of medieval Muslim knowledge of the world and its history

c.1320-1336 The Great Mongol *Shahnama* encapsulated the mingling of cultures at the Mongol court and the Mongols' ambition to claim Iran's past as their own. This great epic – a mix of statecraft, myth, history and a code of right conduct for kings – is still crucial to Iran's self-image

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### GENERAL SURVEYS

**M.Hattstein and P.Delius (eds), *Islam: Art and Architecture***  
(Köln, 2004)  
Very short chapters; wonderful illustrations.

**J.M.Bloom and S.S.Blair, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800***  
(London,  
1994)  
Covers the required ground with admirable economy and sureness of touch.

**J.M.Bloom and S.S.Blair, *Islamic Arts (London, 1996)***  
Useful for this course because it is thematically rather than chronologically arranged.

**R.Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture*** (London, 1999)

**R.Irwin, *Islamic Art*** (London, 1997)  
Full of quirky insights. Sometimes it pays not to be an art historian.

Excellent for background - history, society, religion – as well as for art in its many forms. Probably the most challenging book in this entire bibliography. You must give it a try.

### RELIGIOUS ART IN ISLAM

T.W.Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford, 1928; many reprints)  
The opening chapter is an unsurpassed classic.

## BOOK PAINTING: GENERAL

**B.Gray, *Persian Painting*** (Geneva, 1961; several reprints, including pbk)

The essential companion to the topic.

D.Talbot Rice, *Islamic Painting. A Survey* (Edinburgh, 1971)

O.Grabar, *Masterpieces of Islamic Art. The decorated page, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century* (New York, 2009)

O.Grabar, *Mostly miniatures: an introduction to Persian Painting* (Princeton, 2000)

## PERSIAN PAINTING

**T.Lentz and G.Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision. Persian Art and***

***Culture in the Fifteenth Century*** (Los Angeles, 1989)

Easily the best colour plates published to date.

O.Grabar, *The Visual Arts, 1050-1350*, in J.A.Boyle, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume 5. The Seljuq and Mongol Periods*, Cambridge 1968, 626-48

Includes a provocative introduction to Mongol painting.

P.Chelkowski and P.Soucek, *Nizami. Mirror of the Invisible World* (New York, 1975)

L.Komaroff and S.Carboni, *The legacy of Genghis Khan: courtly art and culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353* (New York, 2002)

S.S.Blair, *A compendium of chronicles: Rashid al-Din's illustrated history of the World* (London, 1995)

D.Talbot Rice, *The Illustrations to the 'World History' of Rashid al-Din* (Edinburgh, 1976)

D.Barrett, *Persian Painting of the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1952)

T.W.Arnold, *Survivals of Sasanian and Manichaeian Art in Persian painting* (Oxford, 1924)