
Richard Bulliet is without doubt one of the most qualified scholars to undertake the incorporation of early Islamic Iran into a narrative of world history. His latest book, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History* provides us with an excellent example of how to interpret a significant transitional period within a world historical context, thereby revealing the impact of new religious values on economic developments and social structures. He has thus illuminated a historical ‘moment’ that stretches from the seventh century when the Muslim conquest of Iran provided an opportunity for Arab entrepreneurs to develop cotton fields and a cotton textile industry in the region to the eleventh century when climate changes not only contributed to the end of the cotton boom, but also induced a southern migration of camel-raising Turks, who eventually became the dominant force in the Islamic Middle East. In his analysis of these two seemingly unrelated processes, Bulliet illuminates the historical developments that led to the integration of Arabian, Iranian, and Turkish populations within a new and larger Islamic world.

Cotton production came to Iran only after a number of Arab entrepreneurs decided to take advantage of wastelands that had been allotted to them after the conquest. They prepared the land for profitable agriculture by investing in the expensive qanat system, without which it would have been impossible to grow a cash crop like cotton in Iran. Using simple, yet clear diagrams (figs. 1.2, 1.3), the author explains the techniques and the specific geographical features that made this system possible. The success of the system, however, did not just depend on the irrigation provided by qanat, but also on the existence of a growing demand for cotton products. During the first few centuries of the Islamic conquest and occupation, Islamic religious values favored simple white cotton robes, and thereby helped to create a larger market for the cotton growers and weavers. Its Arab conquerors, textile dealers in Iran, and the earliest Iranian converts to Islam were all trying to demonstrate their rejection of the extravagant Sassanian imperial style. Elaborate silk brocades had been a symbol of Sassanian imperial power, but after the conquest its silk industry fell into the hands of the Arabic empire, and Arab clerics worried that Muslims would be corrupted by the polluting effect of Sassanian luxuries. Thus, they introduced rules banning glittery or ornate textiles in an effort to keep them out...
of the mainstream of Muslim styles. Even so, silk threads were still required in order to make the *tiraz*, a mandatory inscription of an Islamic message placed on the border of all textiles, including the cotton textiles made in Iran (92-95, Fig. 3.3). However, by the tenth century, most of the Iranian elite had converted to Islam, and their rulers no longer felt any need to distinguish Muslims from Zoroastrians or Christians by their attire. Those who could afford Sassanian-style silk brocades began to wear them again, and abandoned their plain white cotton robes, causing a decline in the demand for cotton. Furthermore, the low temperatures visited upon central Eurasia in the eleventh century finally wiped out the already declining cotton boom. On the other hand, the increase in urbanization on the Iranian plateau spurred by the cotton industry remained unaffected.

The ‘Big Chill’ also created problems for the owners of one-humped camels that had been brought to Central Asia by its Arab conquerors. And not long after their arrival nearby Turkish nomads became interested in these animals. Thus, Chapter Four, ‘Of Turks and Camels’, provides an explanation for the migration of Turkish populations from Mongolia all the way to Anatolia, a significant but little understood world historical phenomenon. According to Bulliet, Oghuz Turkomans soon became impressed by the one-humped camels that the Arabs had introduced to the region. In order to meet the transportation needs of the Silk Roads, the Turkomans began to breed Arab camels with the two-humped Central Asian camels in order to produce a hybrid camel. The new hybrids were tough and strong, but they could not produce proper offspring. Thus, in order to keep producing hybrids, they had to maintain sufficient numbers of both one- and two-humped camels (110-113). The onset of the ‘Big Chill’ in the eleventh century suddenly rendered the Arabian camels as well as the hybrids unfit for the climate of the pastoral land north of the Karakum Desert.

Seeking warmer breeding lands for their valuable hybrids, the Turkomans migrated further south. The first wave of migrants received permission from the Ghaznavids (975-1187) to settle in their territory, but later they turned to pillaging in the Khurasan region of Iran. The Seljuqs, a second Turkish wave, defeated Mas‘ud, the Sultan of Ghaznavid, at the Battle of Dandanqan in 1040 (116), after which they too migrated into Khurasan. The Seljuqs were more disciplined than the earlier Turkoman immigrants, and their attention was focused more on trade than agriculture. They also distributed grazing lands to their tribesmen, a practice called *iqta*. One