

ROUND THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF PERSIAN ART

THE Roman poet Horace, in a well-known ode, called to his boy to serve his dinner with all simplicity, avoiding costly adjuncts and those out of season, for he hated, so he said, "Persian trappings". In those days Persia was the focus of courtly luxury, learnt, according to Herodotus, from the conquered Lydians, for the Persians were originally poor folk, unused to the sight of riches, as that historian relates in his moral tales of Cræsus. With the conquest of western Asia to the Ægean Sea and of Bactria, famed for its fertility and wealth of gold, their riches grew enormously and led to a luxury of display which we find still reflected in the Roman poet's ode.

The taste for gorgeous things, once acquired, has never left them, and through all succeeding ages they have reared wonderful craftsmen and delicate artists, as this exhibition amply showed. The aborigines of the country were of an artistic stock, a branch, if recent ethnologists are correct, of the wide-spread race prominent in antiquity on the shores of the Mediterranean and always fertile in things of art; Persia is often spoken of as if wholly Aryan, but in fact the Iranian branch of the Aryans were the horsed Nomads who, coming from northward, conquered the aborigines here as in India, forming the aristocracy of the country and bringing to it the alert energy of the adventurous wanderer.

The Aryans, having no art of their own, were nevertheless always quick to adopt and develop it in the countries where they settled, the chief example being the branch which conquered the land now called Greece and there generated that supreme art which has dominated the Western world and largely influenced the Eastern ever since its culmination at Athens in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C. Thus the Persians took from Assyria and from Egypt their arts of architecture and its companion, sculpture; in the Tower of Xerxes, at Persepolis, and the Palace

of Cyrus huge winged man-bulls guard the gateways as at Nineveh, while a winged genius wears a wholly Egyptian crown and the borders of the archer's dress at Susa are decorated with a looped pattern of the Egyptian lotus alternating with its bud. Sculpture, mostly in high relief, everywhere follows Assyrian models, a well-known example being the carvings of the triumphs of Darius on the living rock at Behistun. Even more indicative are the sculptures in the palace of Darius at Persepolis and its pylon-like buildings in the Egyptian style, with the reed-cornice peculiar to that country; the cornices lasted, indeed, through all dynastic vicissitudes till as late as the reign of Ardashir I, who founded the Sasanian dynasty in 226 A.D. Egyptian influence also appears in religious symbolism; the sacred symbol of the Persian kingdom, a winged disk with a human bust arising from it, representing Ormuzd, was derived from the Egyptian winged disk of the sun, and the head of the Egyptian godling Bes is often seen on Persian cylinder-gems, as it is in two objects of the Oxus Treasure now in the British Museum: the catalogue of that treasure, a rich store of relevant learning, and Sarre's handbook, "Die Kunst des alten Persien", abound in further instances, if such are needed, of these foreign influences. To clinch the matter, we need only refer to the report of Diodorus Siculus that Cambyses, on sacking Egypt, was so struck with its art that he transported many skilled artisans from there to raise up palaces in his own country, an example followed in later times by the Sasanian Shapur I, conqueror at Edessa, who carried off Greek craftsmen with the same intent, and by Timur, when he captured Baghdad, for the benefit of his own city of Samarqand; again in the early sixteenth century, the Turks, conquering Egypt, were so moved by the beauty of its buildings that they embarked numbers of craftsmen, of many different races, that they might create the like beauty in Stamboul—but, alas, they never arrived there.

It must be noted that the Persians always added their own contribution in æsthetics to the objects of their art, just as the Etruscans did in their bronze figures, derived from the Greek but endowed by themselves with a more fluid expression of pose and movement, freer, if less correct, than the more hieratic products of the Greek genius. The Persian reliefs display greater liveliness than their Assyrian models, a keener sense of vivacity, a quality which was due not only to their racial genius, but also, as we may suppose, to the nature of the country, a high plateau, mountainous and, except on the maritime borders,

exceedingly dry; begetting, as history shows, a characteristic nimbleness of mind: at the court of the Caliphs of Baghdad the foremost poets and grammarians were usually of Persian origin, as were the translators of ancient Greek literature, to whom, we may recall, Europe owed her earlier knowledge of Aristotle; the jovial philosopher-physician, Avicenna, whose Canon was studied in some European universities till even the seventeenth century, was a Persian. It is also significant that the Kassite kings, Aryans of a more rationalistic strain than the Babylonian Semites whom they conquered, did not take over from them their old presumptuous claim that the king was a god.

In one direction the Persians seem to have accepted foreign art with too great thoroughness, namely in their metal-work. Professor Herzfeld, a great authority on ancient Persia, suggests that Armenian artisans, in the district of Van, copied metal objects from those of Mesopotamia and supplied them to the Medes, the immediate predecessors of the Persians and of the same Aryan stock; this is a likely account, if we may judge by the derivative and uninspired character of most old Persian metal products, bearing in mind, however, that it is quite possible that the best examples have not survived, metal being always a valued prey for the looter. Furthermore, a class of objects in bronze has recently come from cemeteries in Luristan, in the western hills of the Persian plateau, that may throw a new light on the metal work of the Medes. Many are of rough make, but some, especially the heads of ceremonial staffs, display keen vision for heraldic designs and the lithe beauty of animal life, together with fine powers of execution. They have been compared with the art called Scythian, notable for its particular treatment of animals, but if we take that name in its strict sense, they differ from it much; they do not show in the representation of animals the full modelling of the Scythian type, with its guiding ridges which have led some critics to compare it with 'chip-carvings', nor others of its characteristic features, such as the remarkable stylization of antlers and limbs, the writhing contortion of animals and the powdering of figures on their bodies, the bird's-head finials—sometimes tipping the antlers of an elk—and so forth. Their treatment of the ibex is spirited indeed but not more so than in the arts of Greece and Assyria, always enamoured of the fierce tenseness of that creature of the heights; they bear strong traces of Mesopotamian influence,—their plain axe-heads are on the model of the

early Sumerian, the winged man-bull, of common occurrence, is wholly in the Assyrian tradition and the strong man, demi-god or king, holding off two demon-figures, confronted, is a very Babylonian composition. The same features are to be seen in relics dug up in Cappadocia not of Scythians but their predecessors, the Cimmerians, a fact which supports the attribution to the seventh century B. C., which has been given by some authorities to the objects from Luristan. Others, however, place them in the fifteenth century B. C., and if that is the correct date they may be considered products of the Kassites who, coming from the east of Babylonia, conquered and held it for several centuries in the second millennium B. C. They were a branch of the Aryan race which in those remote times was making conquests all through the western half of Asia as far as India, adventurous horsemen imposing their rule on settled peoples who lacked that great instrument of battle, the horse. A few of the graves in Luristan are reported to have held bodies of horses, killed and buried with their masters in the Scythian manner, and the relics consist largely of horse-gear, indicating a race of riders such as the Kassites were—it was they who brought the animal into Babylonia and they even made of its head a sacred symbol. These rude wanderers, conquering a rich agricultural country, would naturally adopt its art, as other Aryans did; Luristan, in the high country east of Assyria, might well be the region from which the Kassites, who seem to have come down in stages from Asia Minor, started on their conquest of the river-plains, and further discoveries may yet show that these are indeed the relics of the Kassites in their earlier home in Persia; their weapons are all of bronze, but minute quantities of iron are found as pins for attachments; iron was known, and much valued, in Asia Minor in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B. C., coming from the Chalybes in the north of that district, and it was quite possible for these people, at the date surmised, to have small quantities of it. If, however, the later dating proves correct, the objects in question must be attributed to the Medes, who were Aryan horsemen like the Kassites and immediately preceded the Persians in Iran—unless, indeed, the raiding Cimmerians reached as far south as this and founded a settlement which yielded later to the Medes.

The Persians, too, were great horsemen and that character is reflected in the favourite subjects of their art, triumphs of war and hunting; even in the engraved cylinder-gems, an art-form derived from the Babylonian

cylinder-seals, such scenes were substituted for the religious ones of their prototypes, a most popular representation, of Babylonian origin, being the hero subduing two beasts or monsters, often winged, confronted, one on each side of him, as in the Luristan bronzes. Xenophon may have perpetrated, in his *Cyropædia*, a romantic myth on the early life of Cyrus, but he has left us a striking account of the pursuits and ambitions of the Iranian noblemen, their training to horsemanship and the chase, their zeal for war and feuds, their generosity—and, on occasion, their pettinesses—as chiefs of a bold and hearty aristocracy. Have we not here the general scheme of other conquering peoples of Aryan descent, such as the Norman barons and the ancient Greeks, with whom it may be discerned in the story of Troy and of the Peisistratids, of Kylon, the Alcmaeonidæ and the like, and in the bitter feuds and jealousies which largely underlay the tragedy of Athenian history in the fifth century B. C. The accounts of Xenophon and Herodotus agree in describing Persian characteristics, but the latter, unwearied admirer of those people, had added the famous finishing touch about their education, confined, according to him, to learning to ride, to shoot and to speak the truth—the last a Zoroastrian ideal too little followed out, perhaps, to have been noticed by the practical Xenophon.

The art of the Persians was wholly one for the Court, a character retained under all succeeding dynasties till the latter part of the Safavids. The Sasanians, in the early part of the Christian era, like their predecessors, chose for their subjects the exploits of kings and nobles and sometimes of their fair dames, such as Shirin and Azada; their traditions were carefully garnered in the centuries immediately following the Muslim conquest of Iran and were immortalized in the *Shah-nama* of Firdousi, at the end of the tenth century, since when the incidents there related have ever formed the chief theme of the poets and painters of Iran, predominating in the miniatures of later times with which we shall presently have to deal.

After the conquest of the Achæmenids by Alexander, Greek influence naturally pervaded the country, strongly supported by his policy of planting it with Greek cities; the art underwent much modification, the effects of which are to be seen in the examples of Sasanian art that have survived to our time, and ancient Greece has had a great share, if now somewhat veiled, in the formation of later Persian art. The Scythian Arsacids who displaced the

Greek dynasty continued to favour its art and methods, but the Sasanian rulers, descended, as they claimed, from a royal Achaemenid, initiated a policy of strong nationalism, reestablishing the native-born religion of Zoroaster, a reaction from the foreign rule against which they had revolted. In architecture they dropped the trabeal of their predecessors, adopting the Roman arch and vault, but they improved on their exemplars in the dome, for, first of all builders, they learnt how to construct it scientifically on the walls of a square chamber. In textiles they developed a rare excellence, in both technique and design, resulting in a beauty and dignity which have influenced weaving designs wherever that craft has excelled from China to Italy and France. A special feature was the enclosing in roundels of various figures—men, beasts, birds, monsters—often in pairs, confronted, sometimes horsemen fighting or heroes in glorious combat with savage beasts, all in the old Mesopotamian style; the repeats were managed with great ingenuity to give a feeling of spatial continuity in the complicated patterns that such figures involved. The roundel seems to have been developed from patterns brought by Syrian weavers who were carried into Persia by Shapur II, in the latter part of the fourth century, after his victories over the Romans; its origin was probably from the late Hellenistic of Alexandria, where circular loops, becoming wreaths, are common in figured stuffs of the early Christian period: Byzantine weavers also had roundel-patterns of the same derivation; the products of the imperial looms were of extraordinary quality and doubtless acted as a stimulus to their Sasanian rivals.

Sasanian metal-work, as seen in the massive objects of silver and gold in this exhibition and elsewhere, falls much behind the textiles: it follows the usual path in being mostly derivative, chiefly from late classical art; the designs, specially those connected with hunting, were often of energetic conception and show, in the dishes, the characteristic mastery of the roundel-form; the execution, in the best examples, is carefully finished, but stiff and dull lacking imagination: yet the simple undecorated beauty of mere form was well within their powers and was nobly attested in the exhibition by the massive gold dish from Russia of oval, boat-like form, much like certain Chinese vessels in silver of the T'ang dynasty, which with its bold and swelling gadroons, might well have smitten with envy the goldsmiths of Nuremberg at the height of the Renaissance.

Here we may end our excursion into archæology, occasioned by the exhibits in Gallery I, illustrating the earlier stages of Persian art and the more distant origins of the glowing splendour that, budding in médiæval Persia, produced so magnificent a blossoming in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A new direction was given to the stream of art by the Arab conquest, about 640 A.D. The Muslim conquerors brought with them their beautiful script which superseded the Pehlevi of the defeated Sasanians, and they enriched the language with many of their words and turns of speech ; the new language and writing grew up together and gave to the pictorial art of Islamic Persia its conspicuously calligraphic character, the process of formation culminating with Firdausi in the latter part of the tenth century. The beauty of the script was very evident in the masterpieces shown in the exhibition, with its fluidity and strength of line combined with delicate grace and an exquisite sense of proportion. This kind of beauty had clearly a special and intimate appeal for the Persian genius for decoration ; seizing on it they became pre-eminently calligraphic artists, as the Chinese had done, centuries before, and in this respect their paintings provide many points of comparison, the most evident being their two-dimensional character ; but while the Persians seem never to have looked beyond this convention, the Chinese did not completely accept its limitations, for they had a true bird's-eye perspective, with its high horizon-line, and not seldom displayed the rare and precious power of encompassing three dimensions in one subtle line. In the complete acceptation by the Persians of this convention we may then discern the origins of a trait common to all their art, a lack of profundity, of real appeal to the emotions. It is evidently a sensuous art, delighting with its glittering wealth of colour and its delicacy of form suggestive of the glow and perfume of a rose ; it has been rightly termed a garden art, and surely none could be more fitted for the leisure hours of kings and nobles, be-gardened themselves in the gorgeous brocades of silk and gold of which so rich a collection was exhibited. Not for them the deeper probings of a Rembrandt, a Goya or a Michael Angelo ; the gem-like colouring, the brilliant surface and amazing technical skill fulfilled their needs.

Like a well-planned garden, their art is self-contained, each part fitting the rest, script and painting and arabesque, embroidery and brocade, and from these alone we might

deduce the Persians' love of gardens. Two of their great classics, poems by Saadi, are called "The Garden" (*Bostan*) and "The Rose-garden" (*Gulistan*), garden scenes abound in their miniatures and there are but few to which flowers do not contribute their note of gaiety. A large share in the formation of their taste may perhaps be attributed to the character of the country, mountainous for the most part and sterile, with level stretches here and there, cultivable and the more precious for the contrast with the surrounding bareness; in such a country it is natural that gardens should be specially enjoyed. The old garden-architecture of the court may still be seen in the Generalife of Granada, with its rectangular water-tank, stone-edged, its narrow beds of flowers, its perfumed shrubs and formal trees, all closed in walls, and further varieties are illustrated by the 'garden-carpet' of which some were here exhibited. The pattern, based of course on artificial irrigation, seems to have been formed on the ancient Egyptian model, as represented in wall-paintings of tombs, which show the same rectangular pond with palm-trees planted round it in formal regularity, also within high walls. Here the Egyptian, like the Persian, loved to repose, shaded in the great heat and cooled by the water; the Egyptians too were great flower-lovers, at feasts they provided bouquets in heaps and on all social occasions held flowers in their hands, smelling them or handing them to each other to smell: Thothmes III, conqueror in Syria, brought back from the wars numbers of exotic plants and bade his sculptors carve their forms on the walls of a chamber in his Theban temple. Lesser folk also had their green retreat for relaxation, of a kind common everywhere in the Near East and of which good typical examples are—or were—the famous 'gardens' in the near suburbs of Damascus; they are in fact orchards of fruit-trees, intersected with running water or artificial rills and planted with rose-bushes in the open interspaces and, in a haphazard way, with straggling beds of flowers; the gardens of the courts were but specialized developments from this general scheme.

But now we ask ourselves whence sprang this gay flower of art in Islamic Persia and how came it, inseparable as it is from the delineation of living things, to avoid the ban of its religion in that matter. To begin our enquiry with the first part of the question, we shall find the sources very mixed, coming from many regions, west and east; of these the most important was certainly Byzantine art, founded essentially on the Hellenistic but blended with

many Eastern elements : it had spread far into western Asia, overlaying the older arts in the various districts to which it reached ; in the first three centuries of Islam it had not yet fully developed the narrow formalism which characterised its later stages and for which its name generally stands, and it was still in its freer stage when it first impinged on Islam, as we may see in the one example surviving, at Qosair Amra, in the Syrian desert, east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. Here at the end of the eighth century A.D., an Omayyad prince built a pleasure-house, calling in Byzantine painters to decorate its walls with frescoes ; they were of very Hellenistic character, with several nude figures (in the bath-chambers), an Eros, female figures allegorising History, Philosophy and Poetry, with their names inscribed in Greek, representations of trades, hunting scenes, dance and music and much else for the diversion of the prince and his friends. In a niche of the great hall facing the entrance, probably where he received his guests, was the portrait of a king, in pure Byzantine style, seated on a throne and, as Sir Thomas Arnold has remarked, much like the Byzantine representations of the Deity—a striking example of awkwardness in the adaptation of an exoteric art-form. Besides the Greek element there is a considerable oriental one, specially visible in the pictures of gazelles and other animals, drawn with a line of masterly firmness and instinct with a feeling of grace and ease that distinguishes them, in some subtle way, from the work of the Greeks no less masterly in their own mode.

The school to which this art belonged was the Syro-Hellenic, arising from the mingling of the ubiquitous Greeks with the native population with whom they threw in their lot, adopting their dress and habits. Earlier forms of the art in its religious aspect, are to be seen in the frescoes of Palmyra (Tadmor), once a great centre of commerce, and in a church at Dura (Salihiyeh, the classical Europus) on the Euphrates, dating, according to the great authority, Franz Cumont, before 270 A.D. (This school, as he points out, had a great share in the formation of Byzantine religious art).

The frescoes at Qosair Amra provide the earliest surviving example of pictorial art in Islam ; the next, about a century later, is at Samarra, some miles north of Baghdad, once a capital of the Caliphate, but soon abandoned and left to fall into ruin ; remains of frescoes have been found there and have been skilfully put together by

Professor Herzfeld. They came from the walls of a bath of the Roman kind and as some of the painted rooms of Qosair Amra also served that purpose, the idea has arisen that the painting of walls for the palaces of Muslim grandees was confined to baths, but the great reception hall of Qosair Amra is sufficient proof to the contrary: bath-chambers were, however, reserved for paintings of a freer character, amounting even, in later times, to licentiousness, and they were sometimes painted with living creatures when other rooms conformed to the Islamic interdiction.

The frescoes at Samarra contain naturally a considerable proportion of elements absent in the more western school and derived from the Sasanian, yet the Hellenistic is still strong, sometimes tinged with the Byzantine. The variety of the constituent elements makes the study of these relics most interesting and the amateur who would understand visually the foundations of later Persian art should master the details given by Herzfeld in his book "Die Malereien von Samarra". Turning to the more salient of them, we find the paintings of heads, with their large lustrous eyes, following a type midway between the Byzantine and the medieval Persian and thus indicating the connection of the latter with the former; Herzfeld thinks that their connection is closer with Sasanian art, but this also was much influenced by the orientalized Hellenic—very naturally, in view of the large number of Greeks who settled in Iraq and Iran in Hellenistic times. Unfortunately, though it is known that Sasanian walls were adorned with paintings, no relics of them have survived, but we may be certain that the principal themes were of the antique Persian type, as seen in the designs on their silver-ware, portraying heroes and deeds of war and the chase—in fact, some Arabic authors have referred to them as such; in these designs, too, the Hellenistic element is very visible, as we can see from the examples, mostly from Russia, published by Sarre in "Die Kunst des alten Persien", several of which were lent for this exhibition. At Samarra the animals depicted display the free naturalism and grace of those of Qosair Amra and of the later Persian work, true to the artistic tradition of Western Asia; the floriated decorations are not so free as those of Qosair Amra, which are closer to the original Hellenistic, but tend rather towards the heavier type of the illustrations of the Mesopotamian MSS. of the early thirteenth century. A Hellenistic feature is evident in the cornucopiæ and in the treatment of the half-nude women

with shawls draped over their arms, perhaps in a kind of dance, who seem to show that the ancient pagan idea of the great Mother-goddess of Western Asia still lingered in the place, for though she was usually represented as wholly naked, she was sometimes shown on the engraved cylinders of North Syria, especially the later ones, as semi-nude, with the ends of a shawl looped over her arms as in these frescoes—in ancient Persia, and even with the Sāsanians, she was a deity of national importance, under the name of Anāhit. These figures, and others, are shown between the columns of an arcade, which was a common mode of representation with the Sāsanians, adopted even for their cylinder-amulets, and is of course of Roman origin. A feature referable to ancient Persian art is the frieze of camels modelled in white plaster on a blue ground, a cheap imitation of the magnificent enamelled tiles with figures in relief of archers, lions and griffins which enlivened the palace walls of Susa—themselves copying earlier Babylonian models. Camels are depicted with great spirit and essential truth, as they were at Persepolis and before that at Nineveh of the Assyrians whose art engendered that of the old Persians : the camel is perhaps the most difficult animal to translate into vivid line and the power shown by Persian artists in that respect is indeed remarkable. (An interesting detail is the treatment of the furry parts of the beast round its neck and fore-legs which are brought into strongly decorative use by the artist of Samarra as by Bihzad and others of his time and later). The camel is of the two-humped Bactrian variety, while Sasanian seal-engravings exhibit the one-humped Arabian—a significant indication of developments in foreign connections.

It should be noted that the Hellenistic elements pervading early Persian art were derived through Syrian sources and not directly, a point emphasised by M. Blochet in his books, with special reference to the Mesopotamian illustrations of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries ; the paintings at Samarra make no exception ; we find in them, for instance, the same treatment of drapery, as in the Mesopotamian examples, the folds are represented very stylistically, in broad looped curves of colour with soft edges, and following a decorative pattern of their own which paid but little heed to the details of patterning in actual folds. This development seems to have been purely local ; it is far removed, on the one hand, from the angular stiffness into which the true Byzantine grew and, on the other, from the dry but beautiful austerity of contemporary Chinese work and it remained a local characteristic till

the coming of the Mongols, when it was superseded by the firmer, sharper kind of treatment derived from the Chinese art whose influence then began to predominate.

Chinese influence was at work also at Samarra; many fragments of porcelain have been discovered in the ruins, both celadon and white, of the late T'ang period. Trade was carried on at first in Chinese ships and later by the Arabs who soon became bold traders and sailors, establishing stations, or, in eighteenth century English, 'factories', in the ports of southern China—at Canton, perhaps, even before the dawn of Islam. Silk and porcelain were among the precious articles thus obtained, the latter highly prized not only for its beauty but also for the magical virtue that it was believed to possess, derived in some mysterious way from the peculiar earth of which it was made; it is not surprising, then, to find the local potters imitating it. Trade was carried on also overland, by the very arduous mid-Asian route that had become possible with the western extension of the Chinese empire under the T'ang dynasty; it supplied many articles of luxury to the rulers of the Eastern Caliphate and the toll that it paid on its way to Byzantium and other cities of wealth must have procured them great gain—so great, indeed, and so galling to the Romans, ever enemies to Persia, that the Emperor Justinian contrived to have silk-worm eggs smuggled out of China in a walking-stick, that his people might be independent of supplies from abroad. The articles traded in return were doubtless also of a costly nature, for, besides the greater profit derivable from them, their small bulk would lessen proportionately the cost of carriage; thus we may suppose an export from Persia of such desirable luxuries as pearls from the Persian Gulf and incense from South Arabia, as well as the products of its own fine craftsmanship. Of the latter we may specially note woven silks, of which the raw material was drawn from China, for it is in this T'ang period that we find Chinese textiles copying designs of pure Sasanian style, roundels enclosing confronted animals with floral decorations adorning the ground; an example is known as early as the middle of the eighth century, stored at Nara in the magnificent treasury of the Japanese emperor Shomu, an ardent amateur of Chinese art, and many fragments, of a century or so later, have been found in ruined places of Eastern Turkestan by Sven Hedin, von le Coq and Sir Aurel Stein.

The art of the T'ang dynasty was eager and absorptive, welcoming new materials from many regions through the

countries opened to trade by the dynasty's conquests ; what it drew from Persia was not confined to textiles, but may be traced even in free painting, as for example, in a panel in the treasury of Nara decorated with two deer, confronted, beneath a formal tree, following a very Persian scheme, inspired, doubtless, by woven patterns. The painting is remarkable for a deep feeling for grace and delicacy, a gift of the Far East : keen perception of vigour in animal life and exact observation of its manifestations have always been displayed by artists of the antique Near East, by the Persians as by their Assyrian predecessors, but they had not achieved the subtle grace of Syrian animal-paintings which was reserved for the Persians of a later time, when Chinese influence was paramount.

At Samarra this influence is traceable in the more pronouncedly calligraphic nature of many of the frescoes, with their firmer and more flowing lines, though possibly the Arabic script had its share in thus guiding the artist's brush.

We have just been dealing not with Persia itself but with the capital from which it was governed ; what we have found there is important as showing the work of the various influences which had so great a part in the formation of the typical art of Persia. So far, also, no remains of equal age and importance have been explored in that too little excavated country, and the only general indication that we possess of the art-forms then in vogue is furnished by the pottery. To this we may now turn our attention, premising that the surviving remains are scanty and the indications afforded by them of the general art, of the period can be but faint. These remains which were exceedingly well represented in the exhibition, show that the original source of inspiration was in sculptured low-reliefs in stone ; they display an engraving technique of a kind that was then common in the regions of the Eastern Mediterranean and is best marked in the products of the Byzantine and Cypriote kilns, eventually finding its way into medieval Italy. In these regions it often follows a painter's tradition, the engraving representing the draughtsman's line-work, but in the Persian examples the effect achieved is rather that of fine architectural decoration adapted to the roundel form ; birds and animals figure largely in the designs and there is much strap-work corresponding to the intricate knot-work characteristic of the carved decorations on Islamic buildings and derived, it would seem, from complicated interminglings

of the classical meander pattern, or 'Greek fret'. The potters' technique and control of materials were excellent, derived originally, it is probable, from Greco-Egyptian craftsmen, and they show equal mastery over glazes, blue being predominant, whether dark cobalt or the very ancient turquoise tint derived from copper; the Greco-Egyptian models have often as a chief feature a decoration in low relief, monochrome or in varied colours, in which animals usually hold a principal place. This style was developed of course from its predecessors in ancient Egypt which themselves were copies of low reliefs on the walls of their religious buildings; the lineage was well illustrated by the ancient Egyptian objects in coloured faience exhibited at the Burlington Fine arts Club in 1922 and may be seen in Pls. XLIV, XLVI, and XLVII of the Catalogue, of which the first shows the architecturally derived reliefs, the second the Ptolemaic extension, introducing various colours and borrowing designs from ancient Persian sources while the third, a platter of the Roman period, in the Ptolemaic style, with a vigorous animal design perfectly related to the roundel-shape, could well be taken for a direct ancestor of the Sasanian and early Persian. The decoration in all these cases was achieved by moulds and not by the engraving technique of the Eastern Mediterranean regions; it is probably the use of the latter, as well as the Sasanian element in forming the Persian work that differentiates that work from its Ptolemaic predecessors, but we shall find that in a later age the Persians practised moulding much in the Ptolemaic style.

We may here give a glance at the contemporary art in Sogdiana, then a populous region of Central Asia, which also was represented in the exhibition for its bearings on Persian art and because that country was for several generations under the same rule as the Persians. Bokhara and Samarqand were great centres of Islamic culture; they were developing their own style, of which little is now known owing to the devastations of Chengiz Khan in the early thirteenth century, but it seems that the Islamic interdiction was there more strictly regarded than in Persia—an inference justified by the few objects in pottery of this period that have come to our knowledge; they follow a painting technique, founded on floral and similar designs, with bold positive colourings, such as are current even to this day at Bokhara—the tradition is followed, too, in the magnificent embroideries, with their great and solid floral shapes, for which that city is famed: the potters also made free use, for their decorations, of

the Arabic script, thereby starting an art-form which has ever since permeated all Islamic regions. (Spreading through Spain, it entered Christian Europe and may be traced in many a picture and embroidery of the early Renaissance, as little understood there as by later Islamic craftsmen who have so often copied inscriptions in ignorance of their content, usually mutilating them or recording strokes and signs that have but the most superficial likeness to true lettering).

The pottery found at Samarra itself showed little originality but followed generally, with a naïf clumsiness, the degraded Hellenistic style that we have traced there in other crafts. There is, however, one technical process of importance that seems to have been invented there, namely the use of copper and other metals to produce, by a special method of firing, a lustred surface, a technique originating, doubtless, in efforts to procure an inexpensive kind of gilding. The white background, formed usually of a tin enamel, was painted with powdered metal-salts in figures of animals and birds, and the empty spaces were filled with blobs and dashes which seem to be much degraded elements of late Hellenistic floriation; they developed later into the dappled background seen in pieces of the thirteenth century. (The technique has been considered to have originated in Egypt, but since the discoveries at Samarra this view has been abandoned by most authorities. It passed rapidly to Egypt and later to Spain, where it developed into the characteristic Hispano-Moresque). Besides the lustre-ware, another class is to be noted in the polychrome pottery moulded in very low relief, in which the decoration, again largely consisting of birds and animals, is somewhat alike, allowing for the differences of technique, to that on the Persian incised ware previously noticed. Unglazed ware was frequent, often stamped with the kind of design described above: arcades are present as an element of composition, and twisted scrolls or 'guilloches' such as the North Syrians of fifteen centuries earlier had favoured in their seal engravings.

The pottery just described covers the ninth and tenth centuries; in the two following ones we find a more specialized development in design and a more brilliant technique, in a class which has been brought, rather recently, to the notice of amateurs under the name of 'Gabri', a specification now abandoned as the result of researches fixing the date approximately as above. The designs are of

a Sasanian character, fitting appropriately into roundels, usually heraldic and displaying monstrous creatures, mostly winged animals of Assyrian tradition, often human-faced, from which the Persian miniaturists of a later age drew their conceptions of the 'Boraq' which took the Prophet to his vision of Paradise. The heraldic designs were often accompanied by floral scrolls, doubtless originating with the Hellenistic but very highly stylized and developing the characteristic Islamic floriation prevalent till now in all Muslim countries—purely decorative, in consonance with the rulings of Islam in matters of art: it has undergone its own changes and has differed, naturally, in its various provinces, Spanish, for example, and Indian, or Egyptian and Turkish, but is always readily recognizable. We do not find it in its early forms at Samarra or among the contemporary remains at Susa where debased Hellenistic still largely ruled, producing as a minor result the broken-down floriations of the lustre-ware mentioned above. The heraldic character of the so-called 'Gabri' designs is very marked, reminding us—of course with a difference—of the German drawings of the sixteenth century; they display great vigour and keenness of conception and are hardly less remarkable for their technique—clay, glaze and slip, colour, line and engraving being each used in perfect propriety and balance by simple methods under masterly control. The case of bowls and dishes shown in the principal room, decorated in bright green on a dark brown ground, almost black, provided a vision the brilliance and strength of which threw much around it into shade.

Other kinds of contemporary pottery display the same Sasanian elements, figures painted in colours or black on a creamy white background, with incised lines to reinforce the drawing; the colours are in the glaze, favourites being a brilliant cobalt blue or a turquoise tint—as with the Ptolemaic potters—often in monochrome with the design engraved in the body of the vessel under the glaze. More rarely there is an engraved design with polychrome glazes of which a magnificent example, from the famous Eumorfopoulos collection, was exhibited, attributed to the latter part of the period under review: this remarkable piece sums up the various characteristics and tendencies of its period and will repay special notice; the design represents a dancer on a platform, with a girl beating a drum on her right and another on her left clapping her hands in time, while in the foreground two animals of vague species face each other in the attitude of

dogs cowed. The folds of the girls' clothes are outlined in broad swirling lines, incised in the clay, very reminiscent, on one side, of the drapery folds on the frescoes of Samaria previously described and, on the other, of those seen in the Mesopotamian miniatures of the next century, the thirteenth. The swirling line is extended even to the animals, making patterns of curved stripes that have led them to be classified as hyenas, though probably the patterns have only a decorative signification, of which an exact parallel is to be seen in the picture of an elephant in a MS. in the Pierpont Morgan Library (Tabriz, 1295) reproduced by E. Blochet. "Musulman Painting", Pl. XLII: the background is engraved with floriated scrolls of a free character, executed with a firm hand, while those on the rim are of a sketchy calligraphic nature; the use of polychrome glazes in broad washes of two or three colours, in some cases independent of the engraved design, may have been learnt from China but was known to the potters of Egypt in the early Christian period; the scrolls are somewhat like Chinese but are in the direct line of development of the Islamic variety, while the long sleeves, which have been supposed to be in the Chinese style, are to be seen in other designs of purely Persian or Mesopotamian character, as, for example, in an ivory panel belonging to M. Kann, of about the same date, forming one of the well-known set at the Bargello of Florence, which was also exhibited here. Thus the dish under review serves well to illustrate the various elements at work in the art of its period, of which most have been already discussed with the exception of the style of the figure-painting which has been noted as akin to that of the Mesopotamian illustrations to books of the following centuries, but is more refined. The Mesopotamian paintings are comparatively rustic, designed simply for illustration; they are naïf in conception and broad in treatment, they sometimes suggest, in the drawing, faint memories of early English illustrations of religious subjects. Their prototype, as authorities in general agree, was to be found in Christian illustrations to religious writings, no mere luxury or toy for rich patrons but made for the support and consolation of members of poor congregations following a despised creed; their art is thus unlearned and simple, thereby gaining much in freedom and sincerity and winning our sympathy by its earnest human qualities—its foundations were of course late Hellenistic.

The Bargello ivory plaques mentioned above also deserve a special reference for they are witnesses to a high

artistic ability and technical skill of which time, in its ravages, has left us little evidence but, which we know must have existed in such a seat of luxury as the Caliph's court at Baghdad. They consist of finely executed flourishes of Hellenistic derivation in which are set gay figures of dancers, musicians and drinking youths such as often form the subject of Persian miniatures; these figures wear very ornate dresses and bear in that respect, as in general, a great resemblance to the miniature figures enamelled on the pottery of Reyy in the next century; they contain also representations of winged monsters which might almost have come from Nimroud itself.

We are now on the threshold of a great development in Persian art when, leaving behind the worn-out traditions so apparent at Samarra, it assumes the aspect of profuse gaiety with which we always associate it and which, beginning under the Seljuks, culminated with the early Safavids.

Looking for the causes of this new movement, we cannot find them in any native happenings; art was, as always, very much the affair of kings and courts who, in Persia were all foreign till the coming of the Safavids; among them were the Turkish Seljuks whose zeal for art is best known from their splendid architecture. The early Turks are generally considered as barbarous land-pirates, successors to the Huns whose exploits, savage enough, were horribly magnified by timid and credulous scribes (describing them even as raging cannibals) and raised in the breasts of Christian Europe a panic terror which was long in dying down and even till quite recently had its reflection in a popular idea of the "terrible Turk" pasha and peasant alike, whose hand was ever ready for sword or knife. The Turks indeed were fierce and warlike, true products of the savage rivalries of the Mongols of Central Asia, forced by their own hunger or that of stronger congeners to fight their way where they could; in doing so they acquired such military strength that at the beginning of the seventh century they established a Central Asian empire able to attack with success the northern provinces of China, so that one emperor of that country was willing to buy their friendship with money, and another, later, by giving his daughter in marriage to their Khan; their dealings with China, whether friendly or otherwise, were frequent.

These fighting Turks lived, as all such have done, as lavishly as their time and circumstances allowed, with great display of wealth. Menander Protector, at the

end of the sixth century speaks of their rich hangings of silk, of drinking cups and great jars of gold and the golden couch and two-wheeled chariot of their chief, the silk hangings of his tent, skilfully wrought in many colours, the many waggons filled with silver utensils and figures of animals equal in art to the European. Sixty years later a Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang, relates that the Khan "occupied a great tent adorned with gold flowers of dazzling richness. The officers of the court sat in two long rows on mats before the Khan, brilliantly attired in embroidered silks, the Khan's guard standing behind them. Although here was but a barbarian prince under a tent of felt, one could not look on him without respect and admiration" (from "Cathay and the way thither", 2nd ed., by Yule-Cordier, Vol. I, pp 209 and 210). Other pilgrims' stories might be adduced but enough has been quoted to show that such chiefs as these were of ample dignity to send embassies to the Roman Emperor, as they did to Justin in 568 A.D., seeking his help against the Persians who had closed to them the road of the silk trade. Their savage predecessors, the White Huns, were little behind them in luxury; of them another Chinese pilgrim, Sung Yun, tells us, early in the sixth century, that their court was richly furnished and attended, with much show of gold and ivory and of the gems received as tribute—probably by trade—from distant lands; some of them had accepted Buddhism and they must have been acquainted with the arts that always accompanied that creed.

If we compare these Turkish princes with others living also in turbulent times—though with a difference—such as the Italians of the Renaissance or the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt, we can be sure that, with their love of luxury and display, they, like those others, fostered largely the arts that lay to their hands, thus signaling their regal power, generosity and taste; it is therefore no matter for surprise that when the Seljuk Turks conquered Persia and Hither Asia, finding themselves seated in conditions of stability unknown to them before, in countries long famous for their art, they gave free rein to the tastes that they had acquired and their encouragement of artists initiated in those countries a real renaissance. Sure proof of this conclusion is to be seen in the art of the countries outside Persia which came under their rule. Syria, with its centre at Damascus, that ancient and renowned focus of civilization, possessed craftsmen of the highest skill which, in one brilliant category, reached its culminating point in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the glass-makers

produced their famous lamps, goblets and dishes, resplendent in enamelled colours, which have never been surpassed in their kind. The designs on them are of a class which seems characteristically Persian and yet the country had never been under Persian dominion, except for a short interval in the seventh century; it was under Turkish rule and patronage when this quasi-Persian art flourished. A little later, in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, the Persian character of another phase of Syrian art is to be noted in the ceramic vessels, decorated chiefly in underglaze blue, black and grey, with much foliation and figures of birds and animals, especially hares, radiated patterns being a common feature; this class is often indistinguishable from the Persian type, usually attributed to Sultanabad, some of which were on show at this exhibition. Later still, in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Turks gave proof of their taste in other districts more purely Turkish, in the brilliant faience once called 'Rhodian', but now known to have been made in many Anatolian kilns: its use of formal semi-naturalistic groups of flowers, often resembling groups in the fine contemporary rugs of Herat, has never been equalled, for both composition and colour; its line-work is as sharp and fine as the Persian; feluccas are sometimes introduced as an element of decoration, with brilliantly bold effect. Damascus followed this fashion with equal skill and taste—if not higher, as some connoisseurs think—but in its own way, with a greater degree of stylization and more reserve, the colour scheme being cooler, with a greyish blue often prominent; the difference is perhaps due to the restrictive influence of the quasi-Persian style that had directed the Syrian artists of the previous age. In the Caucasus, a somewhat similar make of faience has been found, taking its name from Kubadja, where it first became known; it has an admixture of Persian, arising from its proximity, and welcomes representations of the human figure; it is less naturalistic than the Anatolian and prefers a paler colour-scheme; the line-work is equally good and, in general, as a decorative art, it stands high, as was proved by typical examples in the exhibition.

Returning to the period of the Damascus glassware, we find in Mosul, in the far north of Iraq, another striking instance of craftsmanship developed under Turkish rule, in the metal-work, with its adornments of the same quasi-Persian character: its noble, solid forms, the supreme skill and taste with which their surfaces were covered with intricate designs, chiselled out and often incrustated with silver,

and the perfect control of material make this work the epitome of all the best in the decorative art—putting aside colour—of the Muslim world. A quotation from G. Migeon (“Art Musulman”, 1st ed., vol. I, p. 168) will make this clear :—“Horsemen, often crowned with haloes, engage in the various forms of hunting dear to the Persians ; some, carrying a cheetah at their saddle-bow or a hawk on their fist, with greyhounds following, chase the bear, the lion or the antelope. Within panels princes are figured seated, with crossed legs, eastern fashion, on low thrones, decked with crowns or haloes, with pages at their sides, wine-cup in hand and dancers and musicians to add to their delights. Variety is secured by figures of the zodiac in small medallions. There are no finer subjects than the fights between men or birds or animals. Long rows of animals, lions, panthers, antelopes, greyhounds, birds and hares, amidst enwreathing foliations, divide the different zones of decoration while the intermediate spaces are often filled by ducks and water-birds in flight. The backgrounds are enriched with bold and supple arabesques or with a kind of T-shaped hook : inscriptions take their place, in narrow bands, with *neski* lettering.” (The “T-shaped hook” is in the form of a broad arrow).

According to some authorities, work similar to that of Mosul was, executed in the province of Khorasan, in the north-east of Persia. This district was always famous for its artistic products, especially carpets till recently attributed to Ispahan : it is also the district which was most occupied by Turks, being on their road from Central Asia to the West, and had been under their sway for more than a hundred years at the period with which we are now dealing.

The style of art practised at Mosul and Damascus appears simultaneously in northern Persia, at Rey, in the delicate articles of pottery painted with enamels in a mode manifestly forecasting that of the later miniatures. But Rey, though in Persia, had become the capital of the Seljuk sultans, replaced, it is true, in the twelfth century by the Khwarezm-shahs—but they too were Turks, and so we may well apply to this new style of art the convenient term Turco-Persian.

The Turks, then, were clearly generous patrons of art and doubtless brought with them to the countries where they settled skilled craftsmen and attracted others by their liberality, just as, under the Mamluk sultans, artists of many countries were, according to Ibn Eyyas, attracted

to Egypt. They had no art of their own and it follows that the elements of the new style that grew up under their fostering must have been brought with them from the regions whence they came, in Central Asia, to which, accordingly, we may now turn our attention.

To take first the general state of civilization : Buddhism had entered Turkestan out of India before the Christian era, and also Eastern Persia, which then comprised Afghanistan—where it produced the art of Gandhara—and we find the Chinese, in the second half of the first century A.D., sending a mission to Khotan to procure learned books and men to teach the truths of Buddha, whom they described as ‘ the golden man ’, from his gilded temple-statues ; they continued to draw their teachers from that region till the end of the third century, when they first allowed their own countrymen to be trained as priests. Thus Turkestan had its centres of light and learning, in touch with Chinese civilization as well as with Indian, and indeed the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsian, as early as the fourth century, gave a glowing account of Khotan and Kashgar. (Later, too, Khotan sustained its reputation by becoming famous as a repository of Islamic learning). To these we must add, though later, Bokhara and Samarkand which became, early in the Mohammedan era, centres of Islamic civilization.

These great cities of Turkestan and others of similar condition, on the road of Chinese trade, always open to the influence of the highly advanced civilization and refinement of China, drew likewise from there the great part of their art. At Bokhara painting was known as “ the Chinese art ” and a Chinese embassy sent there in 943 was accompanied by artist-painters who decorated for the Samanid prince a MS. of the Fables of Bidpai, which had recently been translated into Persian ; the work was greatly acclaimed, probably as superior to the paintings of Eastern Turkestan which must have been then well known in Bokhara.

The art of Eastern Turkestan, of the ninth and following centuries which has been brought to light in considerable quantities by the various explorers previously mentioned, shows the great predominance of China which had occupied the country in the Han period and the earlier T’ang, although, as that art was mostly devoted to religious purposes, that is, to Buddhism, it has received much also from India which then, as earlier, had frequent commerce with Central Asia. The district was indeed a lively centre

of international trade, quite cosmopolitan, as is proved by the variety of languages and scripts which have been found there, Chinese, Tibetan, Turkish (two varieties), Indian (Sanskrit and two others) and even that mysterious branch of the Indo-European, Tocharian, with others not yet deciphered. The Indian element was of the well-known Greco-Buddhist style of Gandhara; some of its manifestations were so near to its first origin that they might almost pass for actual Greco-Syrian, and it was of course through this region that the Chinese, on their adoption of Buddhism, absorbed that style, so apparent in their plastic figures in the two centuries preceding T'ang. But at the period under consideration, the later T'ang, Chinese art had fused into itself the Indian elements and the religious paintings of Eastern Turkestan, especially on the banners, are of true Chinese character, executed in the rich and stately style of the temple frescoes, though in a somewhat provincial manner, with less reserve and tending more to the profuseness of the Tibetan art that followed them. The hieratic poses of the figures has caused a kind of verticality in the composition, as in Gothic religious sculpture, which we shall find reflected in the Persian miniatures of the best period. But the most prominent effect of these religious paintings on the miniatures of Persia is seen in the richness of colour that the latter borrowed from them, and the heightening with gold, so lavishly used in Buddhistic art. It has been suggested that these features may be attributed to primitive Italian paintings given by ambassadors sent to the Mongols in the middle of the thirteenth century by the Pope and the French king, to request their co-operation against the Saracens with whom the Mongols, not yet converted to Islam, were then fighting; but if we examine the reports of the two friars who headed these missions, John Pian of Carpini and William of Rubruquis, we shall find that the missions were small and miserably equipped and carried no rich gifts; Brother William took with him a psalter with 'golden pictures', given him by the French Queen, a lovely thing, no doubt, which roused the cupidity of the Khakan's lieutenant who took it from him, but that was hardly a sufficient cause for the great development that Persian art had then begun to undergo. These same Mongols were in constant touch with China, which Chengiz partly conquered in the beginning of the thirteenth century, and when Hulagu, his grandson, ruled in Persia, with Kublai, another grandson as emperor in China, intercourse between the two countries was free and

organized. The eldest brother of these two Khans, Mangu, was the Great Chief or Khakhan and it was of his court at Karakoram that the aforesaid Brother William gave so striking an account, with its columnar reception-hall, much like a church, and its massive automata and other apparatus in solid silver—a centre of truly 'Persian' luxury.

The strongest evidence of the domination of Chinese art in the Turkestan paintings is provided by the calligraphic quality of the drawing; of this we have already noticed traces, a century earlier, at Samarra, but only as an element confined to comparatively small areas of the designs, whereas here the whole of the drawing is sharp and crisp, of completely formed calligraphic style, such as was followed by the pottery painters of Reyy and, more conventionalized, by the miniaturists of the fifteenth and succeeding centuries. Handwriting was for the Chinese, as for orthodox Persians and Muslims in general, the nobler form of art; it was brought by them to a high degree of perfection and translated into exquisite drawing, which conquered the imagination of all art lovers of Central and, later, Western Asia, and was specially acceptable to the followers of Islam, brought up in reverent admiration of the strong and graceful Arabic script so closely connected with their religious teachings. The noble sweep of line which characterized the old Chinese frescoes is so imposing that the subtler qualities of their draughtsmanship might at first sight escape notice; it is perhaps more evident in works of non-religious character, liberated from hieratic control; for example, a few swift sketches in ink on paper have survived in Turkestan which show how lively the local Chinese draughtsmanship could be, vigorous and true, not unlike that of artists of the European renaissance—a quality observable, in its own degree, in the painted pottery of Reyy.

The Buddhistic element is prominent in the circular haloes crowning holy personages and this was adopted bodily into the Turco-Persian art, without any regard for its religious meaning; its use there is quite capricious, not applied to all human figures nor yet confined to any class: it affords a good example of the transference of an element of illustration from one art-region to another for decorative purposes only, its original functions being ignored or misunderstood—in some early miniatures haloes are depicted even round the heads of flying birds, perhaps a reminiscence of Christian pictures of the Holy

Dove. The Chinese used an almond-shaped nimbus, (*mandola*) highly decorated and flame-like, developing into a screen behind a sacred image, sometimes also retaining with the *mandola* the circular halo round the head. The flame-like halo noticed first about 1430, with the cloud scroll—See Blochet, pl. LXXXVIII) appears often round the heads of holy personages in Persian miniatures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Chinese influence was at its height, coming from its source direct; in this case its real meaning was known and its use regulated accordingly.

To sum up broadly, it may be said that Serindian art (to adapt Sir Aurel Stein's expressive name) of the ninth and tenth centuries appears superficially to balance between Chinese and New Persian, inclining sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, but in fact it is compounded of Chinese, late Hellenistic and Indian, with the first as its strongest factor; going west with the conquering Turks, it developed into the Turco-Persian and from that, later, with further direct additions from the Chinese, into the New Persian, which blossomed forth complete under the Timurids at the end of the fourteenth century. The chain is not complete chronologically, for between the Serindian finds and the miniature paintings of Reyy there is a gap of two centuries; yet the mutual likeness is remarkable and there can be no doubt that a link, not yet revealed, closely connected them.

The interval is a dark one; most of what it produced has been destroyed, lost in the complete ruin brought on all large cities that fell in the ruthless path of Chengiz and his Mongols. Much therefore is obscure, though it may be hoped that excavations in Persia, where much remains to be done in that way, will some day give us light.

Searching in this obscurity, we turn again to the Turks: if, as our conclusions seem to establish, they were the active agents in promoting the new art, they must have had some medium, easily transported, which could supply models for their artists; no more suitable one could be found than illuminated manuscripts emanating from Eastern Turkestan and following the Serindian style which had grown up there. Now we know that manuscripts answering this description were made by the Manichæans who, like the Christians, provided illustrations to their books for the benefit of their flocks; they spread into Central Asia and even found their way for a time, in

the seventh century, into China ; they came under the spell of its art, in the Serindian variety, as we know from the remains of their frescoes, brought to light by von le Coq in Eastern Turkestan, which are wholly painted in the lay style of that region, with perhaps a somewhat greater inclination than the average to the more purely Chinese. A further point of note with respect to their connection with Persian art is that they were richly adorned with gold, as we learn from literary sources of the tenth century.

There are, therefore, strong grounds for concluding that the new Turco-Persian art of Reyy, Mosul and Damascus was founded on Manichæan miniature paintings and developed under the patronage of the Turks, and this conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Manichæan art was held in extreme honour by the Persians of the later epoch who often refer to Manes himself as the supreme model of all painters. No copies of the Manichæan illuminations are so far known, but it is quite possible that some may yet be found, for von le Coq has reported the destruction of large quantities, not forty years ago, by ignorant peasants who held them as unholy : if a happy chance should bring others to our knowledge, we should doubtless find that they justified the Persians' honouring.

The distinction of fostering West Asiatic art may be claimed by the Turks, yet it is very probable that the instruments employed by them consisted largely of Persians, for great numbers of the latter, as we read in Maqrizi, fled to Asia Minor and Egypt before the Tartar invasions of the early thirteenth century and of these the skilled craftsmen would doubtless be among the first to escape, bringing great artistic enrichment to the lands where they settled, comparable on a different plane, with the benefits brought to England in a later age by the Huguenot craftsmen, who took refuge there from continental prosecutions of their religion.

A few lines must be given to the paintings on the Reyy pottery of the miniature style which has been frequently referred to above. They are generally very small, the colour palette is extensive, obtained by enamels under a comparatively low temperature which admitted of easy control by the potters ; gilding was used in some profusion, much of it worn off in surviving specimens, and the total effect resembles that of illuminations of manuscripts— which, as we have seen, probably served as models

for this work. The draughtsmanship is free and vigorous, comparable in this, as previously noted, to the lay Serrindian. The figures represented are the usual ones of Persian art, as recounted at some length in the quotation given above from M. Migeon ; those of women greatly predominating ; the world depicted is always one of courts and pleasure. The composition of the pieces, though it sometimes includes with success the confrontation familiar in Sasanian art, is often loose and very slightly co-ordinated ; the richer pieces suffer from over-ornamentation, a fault sometimes observable also in the shapes of the vessels. The dresses figured are generally of very ornate stuffs, multicoloured, a feature derived largely from the old Mesopotamian art, a fine and characteristic example being provided by the carved ivory plaque from the Bargello previously referred to. Richness of decoration was ever a notable feature in the fabrics of Mesopotamia and her neighbours and has been carefully recorded by Egyptian artists from the earliest times, most markedly, perhaps, in the faience figures of captives from that country which were inlaid as architectural decorations in a temple of Rameses III. Very similar were the stuffs worn by Assur-bani-pal and his courtiers, as shown in the low-reliefs from his palace ; the dresses of the archers in the famous frieze from the Persian palace of Susa are adorned with the same kind of rosettes, and also those of the knights and ladies depicted on the pottery of Rey—*but the textile patterns appearing there are not all of this kind ; among them are some of the more complicated Chinese character, to be dealt with below.*

A feature of widest occurrence in the designs of this pottery, as on the glass of Syria and the metal vessels of Mosul, is the representation of musicians with girls and youths drinking, which form, indeed, almost a commonplace of the decorations of this period, spreading also into Egypt where they are found in carvings from the ruins of Old Cairo, introduced doubtless from Syria which had constant communication with Egypt and whose art, as we see from the many remains of decorated pottery dug up in Fostât, was extensively copied there ; this class of design figures on the previously mentioned early ivories in the Bargello and survived in strength all through the later periods of Persian art ; so fully did it occupy the minds of the metal-inlayers of Mosul in the late thirteenth century that they worked it into the most inappropriate places, as we may see in the large flask or cooler in the Eumorfopoulos collection, made for some great Christian

dignitary or church and covered with religious designs, including the Nativity and figures of saints, and adorned with texts from the Old Testament in magnificent Kufic script (see illustration in "Apollo", January, 1927, by Mrs. Devonshire). Such designs, originally forming part of scenes of courtly entertainment, were equally adapted to less exalted circles of society, such as that of wealthy merchants, and to this owe their great popularity; the finer metal-work was reserved for Sultans and their courtiers and was often inscribed with their names and titles, as were the ornate vessels, mostly in superb slip-ware, which were made in great quantities in medieval Egypt, for the use of their households.

It may seem strange that the new artistic impulse manifested in the works just dealt with did not as quickly affect the art of painting, for though traces of it are visible in a few works of the thirteenth century and still more in the fourteenth, it is not till the end of the latter that it found its full development in Persian miniatures. It is probable that at the end of the twelfth century the arts of enamelling on glass and glazed earthenware and of inlaying on brass had only just been brought to perfection and the minds of the artists, not bound by previous decorative conventions, were directed immediately to the fresh Serindian style while the painters, steeped in the traditions of several centuries' standing and not yet specially favoured by kings and courts, who would demand of them a more refined art, clung naturally to their old ways; but the change was to come to them also, before long, with royal patronage, and it is most interesting to follow up the different stages of development in the few characteristic examples of the transitional period that remain to us; these were well represented by the MSS. exhibited at Burlington House and in the British Museum, affording the student a unique and precious opportunity of making comparisons and deductions from actual examples.

In the thirteenth century painting is still largely in the Mesopotamian style; most of its remaining examples consist of illustrations to the "Assemblies" of Harîri, that ever-popular epic of the most brazen and entertaining of picaresque rogues, Abu Zaid of Seroug, of the Æsopic Fables of Bidpai, translated from India, and of the most popular physical works of Aristotle; such works were not so much for the delectation of courts as for the wealthier of the middle classes, quite content with the older forms of painting with which they were familiar, yet the new leaven may be seen clearly at work in them also, even in

the twelfth century, as, for example, in the illustrated MS. of the Fables of Bidpai now in the *Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris* and illustrated by E. Blochet in "Musulman Painting", pl. II *: this MS. was produced about the middle of the twelfth century at Ghazna which is now in Afghanistan but then in Eastern Persia and once an important capital, the seat of the sultans of whom the most famous was the grudging patron of the poet Firdousi; the paintings were executed in a style closely resembling that of the ceramics of Reyy and give further support to the theory advanced above that it was through Turkish conquerors that the Serindian style was first implanted in Persia. In pls. III to IX (Blochet) the illustrations to an Arabic MS. of Harîri's "Assemblies", dated about thirty years later, are very markedly in the old Mesopotamian style, though one (pl. IV) shows traces of the new influence: we may further note that the older manner of representing the human eye, full and round, as in Byzantine and Syrian paintings, has now given way to the Chinese manner, with eyes almond-shaped. In the next (pl. X), dated at the beginning of the thirteenth century, we find Serindian influence very marked and though the human figures are somewhat lumpish, in the Mesopotamian fashion, the style in general is real early Persian; this is a MS. of Firdousi's "Book of Kings", belonging to the courtly class and not to the popular Mesopotamian, it was a product, according to Blochet, of North-west Persia, the neighbourhood of Reyy, or of Seljuk Asia Minor, and would therefore be expected, in view of previous arguments to show, as it does, marked Serindian influence. In MS. of the first half of the thirteenth century traces of this influence are always clear, as in pls. XVII, XXII, XXV and especially XXXI (Blochet), while in some it is paramount, as in the illustrations to an Arabic translation of part of Galen's Treatise on Electuaries of which one is beautifully reproduced in "The Islamic Book" (pl. XXXI); the background is vermilion, brilliant colours are used for all the figures and yet the whole effect is harmonious; haloes

* This book will be generally used to exemplify the various phases dealt with here, as it is the most accessible of the larger books dealing with the subject: of these we may notice F.D. Martin; "The miniature painting and painters of Persia, India, etc.," London, 1912; "The Islamic Book", by Sir Thomas Arnold and Professor A. Grohmann, the Pegasus Press, 1929, and "Painting in Islam", by Sir T. Arnold, Oxford, 1928. For a short introduction, one of the most up-to-date is "Persian Painting", by Basil Gray, London, 1930. Several series of art-books, specially in Germany, have volumes including the subject; full bibliographies are found in the larger volumes mentioned.

are bestowed indiscriminately although the personages represented are but commoners—an evident misreading of Serindian work : at first sight we might almost think that this brilliant page came from 'Serindia' itself. In the second half of the century the general style was still unsettled, the paintings displaying sometimes more of one style, sometimes of the other, yet the ever-increasing influence of the Serindian is evident, a characteristic example of this being available in the Persian version of the Fables of Bidpai, of 1280 (pl. XI, Blochet), which, though executed at Baghdad, is markedly in the Serindian style.

About this time the characteristic Chinese cloud-scroll appears, as in the Tabriz MS. of a Treatise on Animals, dated 1295 (Blochet, pl. XLI), though the dervish with the begging-bowl who forms part of the composition is still in the Mesopotamian manner, though refined ; the warrior about to kill a dragon intent on devouring a maiden, in the manner of St. George, is depicted as a Mongol ; knights at this time and for fifty years later were often shown as clad in Mongolian armour. In the "Book of the Kings" at the Louvre, from Tabriz, dated about 1310 (Blochet, pls. XLIV-XLVII), the touches of Mesopotamian character are few and hardly perceptible while Chinese refinement governs the delicate line-work of the drawing and the use of the cloud-scroll is not merely prominent but (pls. XLI and XLIV) obtrusive. These new elements are of pure Chinese derivation and not of the provincial Serindian variety, but the influence of the latter is still very strong, especially in illustrations of the more homely class of books noted above ; of these a good example is provided in a MS. of Harîri's "Assemblies" dated 1334 in the National Library of Vienna ("The Islamic Book", pl. XLIII) ; the painting is exceedingly rich, true to the Buddhistic model on which its class was formed, the whole presenting a massive splendour like that of Byzantine representations of the Deity or of emperors ; touches of the Mesopotamian style are nevertheless still discernible, while the growth of the New Persian style is evidenced by the great intricacy of the decorative details, specially noticeable in the patterns of the dresses and in the ornate borders added architecturally round the paintings.

The pure Chinese element was soon to prevail, leading quickly to the complete New Persian style ; both countries, as well as Turkestan, had fallen under the domination of the same Mongol family, intercommunication had become, for the times, easy and frequent and the Mongol princes,

eager, as ever, in the patronage of art, turned to the highest form of it that lay within the circle of their power; the Chinese element, thus favoured, gained its first prominence in the art of Persia, growing steadily in the second half of the thirteenth century; it is manifested in the elaborate decoration of the robes noticed above ("The Islamic Book", pl. XLIII), which first appears in the painted pottery of Rey; it is of floral character, often on a basis of long intertwining vines of the kind which had been highly developed in China in the T'ang dynasty, if not earlier, and became, in Persia, most prominent in the great carpets of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. The earlier patterns, of Mesopotamian derivation, were of a kind suited to the process of weaving, but not so these later ones which spread over large surfaces of the stuff and seem derived from some other art, perhaps embroidery.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century there has been preserved to us, by good fortune, at least one notable example of courtly patronage exercised at Tabriz by the Thomas Wolsey of his day, Rashîd-ud-dîn, who set up establishments for the fostering of learning in general and, in particular, the knowledge of contemporary history as set forth in his "History of the World" and "History of the Mongols". He employed artists to illustrate copies of these works destined by him to be distributed to the chief centres of Muslim learning; a copy of the "History of the World" has survived, part being now in the Library of Edinburgh University and part in that of the Royal Asiatic Society of London, while a copy of the "History of the Mongols" is preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* of Paris, both well illustrated by Blochet, pls, XLVIII—LXV. The miniatures are the work of different hands and the points of difference are instructive: those of the "History of the World" are characteristic examples of the transitional period, much in them being in the old Mesopotamian style, but more in the newer mode of Chinese derivation which has also strongly impressed the whole with its fine calligraphic draughtsmanship but the miniatures in the "History of the Mongols" are almost wholly in the new style, with very few remains of the Mesopotamian; it is perhaps an exceptionally advanced case, or, more probably, as some authorities think, a later copy, for during the greater part of that century the paintings still surviving show many Mesopotamian features and it is not till the fresh Mongolian invasion, under Timur the Lame, that the New Persian style was definitely established, to the exclusion of the earlier.

Timur was a great patron of the arts, zealous especially for the beautifying of his capital, Samarqand, which is eloquent of his efforts even in its modern decay: Persian painting in his time had reached its first perfection, a characteristic expression of courtly art; he does not appear himself to have specially patronized it, but his son, Shah Rûkh, did so, attracting the best artists to Herat, which he had made his capital and which became for many years a great centre of art. Miniatures of Timur's time are exceedingly rare but two MSS. containing them are preserved in the British Museum, one of poems by Khawâju Kirmâni and the other of the "Garshâsp-nameh", a page of the former being reproduced by Blochet (pl. LXXII) and others by Martin. The colouring is solid and very brilliant, the blue of the skies almost dazzling, gardens and orchards take their gay part in some of the scenes, the line-work is firm and convincing, calligraphic and often of extraordinary fineness; there are many details suggestive of direct Chinese influence yet there is little of the suppleness of Chinese drawing; the whole effect is of great brilliancy to which all else is subordinated—excepting perhaps the natural Persian tenderness towards flowers and certain aspects of animal life. A feature prominent throughout the Timurid period is the verticality of the figures, very marked in the two MSS. in the British Museum just noticed, derived doubtless from wall-frescoes in Buddhist temples or, perhaps, more directly, from cognate religious paintings on banners or votive pictures. Another feature common to both classes is their brilliant colouring and these two qualities, together, make it clear that the influence of Chinese art on Persian was effected by the religious works of the former rather than by the lay ones, with their freer liveliness and lower tone of colour-scheme. The Chinese have always valued strong and supple line as the highest manifestation of art and in this, too, their influence on Persian artists has been paramount: pure line-drawing was specially favoured by the latter in the seventeenth century, to be treated of below, but we should note also that it was attempted even in the Mongol period, an excellent example existing in a MS. of the Poems of Mu'izzi, dated 1314, in the library of the India Office, London, of which two drawings are reproduced in "The Islamic Book" (pl. XLII); the poet is seen in both with his patron, the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar; he is bearded and wears a turban while the Sultan and his followers, with shaven chins, wear Suljuk costumes, very like Chinese; the drawing is quite alien from the Mesopotamian style of the period

and seems to be wholly founded on Chinese—(the very eyes have the slant peculiar to them); it is simple and somewhat archaic, pleasing in its sincerity. Another example of almost pure drawing, nearly a hundred years later, is in a MS., shown at the exhibition, of the poems of the Sultan Ahmed Jalâyir, dated 1402, made famous by the splendid reproductions brought out by Dr. F. R. Martin (Vienna, 1926). The artist's draughtsmanship is so sure and strong that he was content to do without the added attraction of vivid colour, he gets his effects with a few light touches of colour and gold · had they been laid on solidly, in the manner of that time, they would have detracted much from the effect of the drawing—so excellent that it was considered by Dr. Martin's enthusiastic expert friends as superior even to Dürer's. The century that divides this MS. from that of Mu'izzi's Poems witnessed a great development in draughtsmanship; the Chinese foundation remains always evident in the treatment of trees and landscape and in a hundred little touches, but the archaic naivety of the earlier MS. has been abandoned and a freedom and fluidity gained comparable to that of masters of the European high renaissance. Even more sympathetic, if perhaps not so masterly, is the draughtsmanship displayed in a MS. from Herat of the late fifteenth century, now in the Louvre (Blochet, pl. CIV); a Turcoman, mounted, is drawing his bow on a standing heron, the horse a very Rosinante, the rider keen and angular, both treated with as much sympathy as Cervantes showed to his Don Quixote: the next plate (CV) reproduces a portrait of a dervish, of the same origin and date, and equally remarkable, with all the sensitive qualities of a Chinese portrait—high praise indeed. The Chinese basis is most apparent in these as well as in less striking works of the great period of the art, a basis well recognized by the Persians themselves who, since the days of Firdousi, never ceased to proclaim the Chinese as the highest masters of painting.

G. D. HORNBLLOWER.

(To be continued).