The architectural legacy of the Chaghatayids is meager. Yet they ruled over lands that had seen extensive and varied architectural patronage under the Buyids, Ghaznavids, Saljuqs, Qara-Khita, and Khwarizmshahs. Why the paucity under the Chaghatayids? The answer probably lies in their more or less successful attempts to remain true to their nomadic heritage. Their peers in this venture were the Mongols of the Golden Horde, who have left even less of an architectural heritage. Fortunately, the urge to commemorate oneself need not be motivated solely by supramundane considerations, and a substantial number of Chaghatayid mausoleums were erected, the best known being those of the Shah-i Zinda and that of the Chaghatayid ruler Buyan Quli Khan at Bukhara. These include some of the finest masterpieces of tilework, and the tilework of the nearly contemporary tomb of Tughluq Temür, further east at Almaliq, is indeed one of its most attractive features.

In contrast to the tomb of Buyan Quli Khan, that of Tughluq Temür has been virtually ignored by historians of Islamic architecture. This is due not so much to the (admittedly) lesser quality of its tilework as to the accident of history that situated it within the borders of Xinjiang in western China, next to the land border with Kazakhstan, an area of political sensitivity that until recently has precluded travel in the vicinity.

The ancient town of Almaliq, where Tughluq Temür’s mausoleum is located, was a summer encampment (yailaq) at the time of Chaghatai Khan and progressed to become the capital of the eastern section of the Chaghatai ulus. The quriltay (meeting of clan notables) at which Tarmashirin was deposed was sited there. Earlier it had been renowned as a major commercial center on the silk route. In the early fourteenth century the town was mentioned by several European sources as flourishing, containing a Catholic bishopric and probably also a Nestorian monastery. But its status decayed rapidly owing to the continuous civil wars later in the century. The Mughal emperor Babur, writing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, noted that it had formerly been a city, but “because the Moghuls and Uzbeks passed there, there is no longer any civilization.”

However, the tomb escaped the general devastation, and one of the few extensive notices in medieval Persian texts of any mausoleum was devoted to it by Mirza Haidar Dughlat, the author of the Tārīkh-i Rashīdī:

Another of the great and famous cities is Almalyk. It is known at the present time, and the tomb of Tughluq Temür Khan is there. The traces of a great civilization remain. The khan’s tomb is extremely lofty and elaborate. It is covered with tile bearing writing, and I remember a hemistich of the inscription: “This court (in bārgāh) is
the work of Master (ustād) Sha‘rībaf.” From this it can be surmised that the master was an Iraqi, for in Iraq weavers are called sha‘rībaf. As well as I can remember, the date of the dome was written as seven hundred sixty-odd.12

This account is notable for several reasons. It confirms Babur’s report that the town was reduced to a shadow of its former glory. It gives the impression that the whole of the monument was covered with tilework, although whether this was indeed the case is a matter that we shall discuss further. The more specific mention of the Persian inscription is also valuable, as the surviving inscriptions are all in Arabic. More generally, it shows that the quality of the monument must have been exceptional for Dughlat to have produced such an extended description of it.

The tomb indeed makes a strong impression, particularly its entrance facade, the only one decorated with tilework (fig. 1). The other three sides and the dome are at present covered with plaster (fig. 2). Was it different in its original state? As the pishtaq was originally higher than present, the exterior of the low dome would barely have been visible to anyone approaching the entrance. The only earlier photographs available to me do not give any indication that tilework was present on the other sides. Although one might expect the model of the completely tile-revetted Buyan Quli Khan mausoleum to have been followed, the logistics of either importing the tiles or moving the tile workshop to the site may well have been difficult enough to permit only the limited use of tilework that is presently seen on the building. Several other nearly contemporary mausoleums in the Shah-i Zinda provide parallels for the restriction of tiled decoration to the entrance facade.13 Dughlat did write that it was “covered with tile,”14 but it is arguable that the strong impression made by the entrance facade could have caused him to remember the building as completely revetted.

The tilework is of carved and glazed terracotta, identical in technique to that of its finest exemplar, the mausoleum of Buyan Quli Khan. It has the same palette of colors: white, turquoise and what at first sight seems to be black but is in reality dark manganese. The

Fig. 1. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temūr, 771 (1369–70), entrance facade.
turquoise of the tiles at the Buyan Quli Khan mausoleum sometimes runs over adjacent white areas, but at Almaliq it is more carefully controlled, with no leakage apparent.

The rectangular portal screen is framed by engaged columns; eight bands between it and the iwan in turn frame the foundation inscription. The bands range from simple alternations of manganese and white or manganese and turquoise to deeply cut panels of eight-pointed stars and cross-shapes. The top of the portal screen has been lost, and with it the middle of the foundation inscription. This was in Arabic, in white letters on a dark turquoise background. The remaining portion reads as follows:

Right side (fig. 3):

...the great sultan, the domain of grace and favor, the protector of the territory of Islam, guardian of the multitude of the nobles, the protected by heaven, victorious over his enemies, who makes manifest the most high word of God, the pride of the sultans...

Left side (fig. 4):

(May?) the raiment of the Pardoner (cover?) her house, the wife, the wise queen, Bilqis15 of the age, the pride of the ladies, the paragon of women in the worlds, Tini16 Qara Buqa Khatun, (may God) prolong her virtue and lengthen her life and carry out in the east and west... Muharram, in the year one and...

The reading of the date here leads to some problems, which are explored below.

The inscription following the profile of the portal arch is as follows:

Basmala. Say: “O God! You give power to whom You please, and You strip power from whom You please. You endure with honor whom You please, and You bring low whom You please: in Your hand is all good. Truly, over all things You have power. You cause the night to gain on the day, and You cause the day to gain on the night. You bring the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living, and You give substance to whom You please, without measure.” God has spoken the truth, may He be exalted.17
Containing allusions both to the power that God has given the ruler and to God’s power to raise the living from the dead, the verses are especially appropriate to the tomb of a sultan.\(^ {18}\) The spandrels of the arch have a simple pattern of repeated lozenges—a disappointment after the masterpiece of arabesque design that was used on the spandrels of the Buyan Quli Khan mausoleum.

The script is an extremely elegant one. Although typical of fourteenth-century Chaghatai monumental calligraphy, it has an unusual characteristic—namely, the curvature to the left of the bottom of the alif, so that it sometimes joins on to the succeeding lām or other following letter. Other examples of this are to be seen, for instance, at the ziyrātkhāna of the shrine of Qutham b. ‘Abbas at the Shah-i Zinda (1334–35) and at the Buyan Quli Khan mausoleum. Another, somewhat ungraceful, characteristic is the cramped final form of the dāl, although less extreme parallels are also found in earlier buildings such as the mausoleum of Qutlugh Agha (1361) at the Shah-i Zinda.

The area surrounding the upper window within the entrance īwan has a inscription in square Kufic of chahār Allāh, repeated in such a way the final hā’s form a larger square of their own smaller squares (fig. 1). This sounds simple and repetitive, but the design is in fact quite subtle, organized in such a way that the space of any chahār Allāh as a whole does not form a square but dovetails with an adjacent design, leading the eye from one cluster to the next. Below this area, to either side of the door, the main pattern is of large hexagons, their sides bisected by parallel lines so that the resulting

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Fig. 3. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temür, 771 (1369–70), foundation inscription, right side.

Fig. 4. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temür, 771 (1369–70), foundation inscription, left side.
Lozenges become an equally vivid aspect of the design. The geometric elements here are flat; the same design is repeated on the sides of the recesses perpendicular to the door, but the compartments there are deeply carved with vegetal ornament whose richness compensates for the smaller field (fig. 5).

It is not clear where the Persian inscription giving the name of the craftsman, ʿustād Shaʿrbaʿ, might have been, although a panel near the end of the decayed foundation inscription is a possibility. Shaʿrbaʿ, as Dughlat notes, is indeed an Arabo-Persian term for “weaver,” but this tells us little about the craftsman’s work on the monument: his name could as well have been derived from family ancestry as from his occupation of, say, designing tile patterns. More unusual is the term that Dughlat says was used for the building: bārgāh, used of
a court or a court tent. Ibn Battuta, for instance, gives a detailed description of the *barka* (*bərgəh*) of the Golden Horde erected at Bishdagh, which consisted of a huge tent supported by four columns in the center. Could this secular term have been an attempt to assuage the non-Muslim residents of Almaliq, a politic gesture in view of their determined opposition to Islam? We are unfortunately missing the evidence that could have confirmed this—that is, the term that was used for the building in its foundation inscription.

The interior is devoid of decoration. In the center on a large rectangular platform two graves are situated on stepped plinths topped by bulbous cylinders, all whitewashed like the rest of the interior (figs. 6–8). It is unlikely that they are of any great antiquity.

The four squinches are mostly plain, with five overhanging corbels at their rear rising to a plain molding that coincides with the springing of the arch. Denticulated corbeling is a common feature of the zones of transition in tombs of the area—the mausoleum of Saïf al-Dīn Bakharzī (late fourteenth century), situated beside that of Buyān Quli Khan at Fathabad, providing an example—and the horizontal layers at Tughluq Temür’s tomb may be seen as a variation of this type. But one feature is entirely unexpected in this context: the projecting brackets that support the lowest horizontal corbels. Their upper curved form might at first be taken to resemble the imitations of wooden corbels found on the columns demarcating the eight divisions of the zone of transition of the mausoleum of Isma‘īl the Samanid at Bukhara and the Arab Ata at Tim (figs. 9–10). But the eye-like moldings towards the bottom and the snout-like curves of these brackets give them the feeling of slightly abstract *makaras*, the guardian monsters with curled snouts that flank the gateways to Indian temples. Presenting a geographically closer parallel are the Chinese carved roof timbers that begin as quite plain combinations of brackets and corbels, as here at Almaliq, and later add vegetal decoration that, at least by the Ming period, is almost zoomorphic.

The plan of the building shows, in addition to the main central dome chamber, a number of small extra rooms. There are four in the corners of the lower floor, and, in a most unusual arrangement, an extra three on an upper floor, on the side opposite the entrance (fig. 11). Those on the upper floor, each covered by a shallow dome, are reached by two staircases from the small rooms nearest the entrance; from these staircases a corridor leads to the rooms and also connects the two staircases by a passage that runs behind the rear of the entrance iwan. What were these rooms for? No specific description or waqf documents survive that enable us to be sure, but it is likely that they provided either extra...
Fig. 7. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temür, 771 (1369–70), section. (After Liu Yingsheng, “Urban Development and Architecture”)

Fig. 8. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temür, 771 (1369–70), interior.
Fig. 9. Bukhara, Samanid mausoleum, 320s (930s), detail of zone of transition.

Fig. 10. Tim, Arab Ata mausoleum, 367 (977), detail of zone of transition.

Fig. 11. Almaliq, tomb of Tughluq Temür, 771 (1369–70), sketch plan of upper floor. (Plan: drawn by Omar Kishk)
burial spaces for the extended family of the deceased (in the case of the rooms on the ground floor), space for family visits to the shrine, temporary accommodation for Sufis, or a combination of these. In fact the larger grave within the dome chamber has at present a slightly smaller one adjacent to it that allegedly commemorates Tughluq Temür’s father and son, and the recess on the axis opposite the entrance could more easily have accommodated an extension of the main burial space, if desired. The narrow, low doorways into the corner and upstairs rooms suggest chilla-khânas, spaces for withdrawal more in keeping with Sufi practices. Encouraging the presence of Sufis could also have provided benefits to the deceased in the form of the increased baraka from their prayers.

Such a connection is also likely in view of the formal links of the mausoleum plan with earlier funerary complexes, with its near contemporaries, and with later examples, which frequently include such small rooms. The funerary complex of Shaikh Mukhtar Vali near Khiva (late thirteenth to early fourteenth century) combines five dome chambers of varying sizes with a number of smaller room and corridors. The mausoleum of Muhammad Bashara (1342–43) in Tajikistan is the product of several building campaigns, but in its final mid-fourteenth century state its central dome chamber was surrounded by two rectangular areas, partially domed, that could have provided space for burials or for Sufi religious activity. The mausoleum of Buyan Quli Khan provides a parallel of sorts, in that it has an annex consisting of a room at the rear of the main domed space, which Haase explains as a ziyârî khānâ, and gîrkhâna (i.e., a smaller tomb chamber with a larger space for pilgrims). It is also noteworthy that just three decades or so before the mausoleum at Almaliq was built, Ibn Battuta was accommodated in different towns within Chaghatayid territory in hospices, which he refers to as zâwiyyas, that had been built on or at (‘alî) the tombs of various dignitaries, such as that of Najm al-Din Kubra at Urgench, the Shah-i Zinda necropolis at Samarqand, the tomb of Saif al-Din Bakharzi at the Fathabad suburb of Bukhara, and Khvaja ‘Akkasha’s tomb at Balkh. The combination of mausoleum and accommodation for pilgrims was perhaps sufficiently established to be copied in the tomb of a secular ruler, whose builder—his wife—may have hoped for greater baraka to accrue to her husband through the provision of such charitable benefits. All of these examples pale into insignificance, of course, when compared with the enormous khânaqâh erected less than three decades later by Temür Lang at the mausoleum of Khvaja Ahmad Yasavi.

What was the missing date at the end of the foundation inscription? The date of Tughluq Temür’s death is variously reported in the chronicles as 764 (1362–63) or 765 (1363–64). One would expect the date of the mausoleum to be shortly before or after this, but although the condition of the inscription is poor at the end, there is clearly an alif followed by a hâ’, and possibly a fragment of a dâl, at the beginning of the date, indicating that ihdû, one, was the unit number. Since Tini Khatun was the builder (there is no possibility that the building was erected for her, since the inscription asks that her life be prolonged), we must assume that the mausoleum was erected post mortem, and that it therefore was built in 771 (1369–70). The long gap is certainly surprising, but perhaps it was occasioned by the civil war that ensued on the death of Tughluq Temür. Although his son Ilyas Khvaja succeeded him, he and the rest of his family were soon murdered by a rival amir, Qamar al-Din, who himself was soon overcome by the waxing power of Temûr Lang. We can only assume that Tini Khatun had somehow managed to keep most of her family’s wealth intact and at the earliest possible opportunity erected a monument for her husband, and quite possibly for her father-in-law and son (or sons) as well. The only alternative I can posit is that the date was 761 (1359–60), and that it reflects a waqf that was set up at the commencement of building work. But as Tughluq Temûr lived for at least another three years, it is extremely unlikely that a building of this small size would not have been completed within this time.

One other factor is worth emphasizing: this is another example, unusual within the Islamic world, of the prestige of Turkish women that permitted them to be patrons of major buildings. Apart, of course, from numerous examples in Anatolia, one may note the almost contemporary patronage of mausoleums by Timurid women in the Shah-i Zinda, which presaged their even greater involvement under Temûr Lang’s successors.

The tomb of Tughluq Temûr is thus of multiple interest. It is a rare survival of Chaghatayid architecture and the only medieval remnant of a formerly prosperous city. Its tilework is of high quality, being one of the few extant examples of the technique of carved and glazed terracotta outside Samarqand and Bukhara. Its plan is unusual in the provision of three upper-story rooms for Sufis, other worshippers, or family members. It was, surprisingly, erected several years after the death of its
occupants by the formerly unknown wife of the patron, 
Tini Qara Buqa Khatun, who deserves to be remembered alsوبة of a notable sequence of female Turkish 
patrons of architecture. Now that travel restrictions in 
the area have been eased it may attain some of the 
renown that is its due.

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NOTES

1. It is a great pleasure to dedicate this article to Michael Rog-
ners.

2. Accidents of survival have undoubtedly been a factor; Ibn 
Battuta mentions two no longer extant buildings in Kuhna 
Urgench: a madrasa complex built by its governor Qutlundu-
mur, and a mosque erected by his wife Turabak Khatun: see 
3, p. 541. For a background to the question of the 
chamber of the madrasa and sedentary cultures in the areas, see Maria Eva 

3. The most accessible publication is in Lisa Golombek and Don-

4. The main account of this building is Claus-Peter Haase, "Buyan 
25; see also his "The Tübre of Buyan Quli Khan at Bukhara," 
Fifth International Congress of Turkish Art, ed. G. Fehér (Buda-

5. A brief notice is found in Liu Yingsheng, "Urban Development 
and Architecture, Part Three: Eastern Central Asia," in 
70–71.

6. The present location of the tomb is sometimes given as Huo-
cheng, but this is merely the nearest large town; the tomb itself 
is much closer to the town of Kargas on the border between 
Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, being some 5 km northeast of it.


vol. 10, pp. 590–91. For the ramifications of Chaghatai expan-
sion into Khurasan, see Jean Aubin, "Le Khanat de Çağatai et 
le Khorassan," *Turcica* 8, 2 (1976): 43ff. For an updated gene-
alogy of Tughluq Temür and his descendants, see Sholeh Quinn, 
"The Mu'izz al-Anṣāb and Shu'a ibn Pansëínânah as Sources for the 
Chaghataid Period of History: A Comparative Analysis," Central 


10. Henry Yule, tr. and ed., revised Henri Cordier, *Cathay and the 

1996), p. 35.

of the Khans of Moghulistan*. Sources of Oriental Languages and 
Literatures 37 (Persian text), 38 (English translation), Central 
Asian Sources 2–5, ed., trans., and annot. W. M. Thackston 
(Cambridge, MA, 1996), fol. 205a. Dughlat wrote his history 
ca. 1543.

13. E.g., the mausoleums of Khwaja Ahmad (1350s), Qutlugh Agha 
(1361), Shadi Malik (1572), and Tughlu Tekin (1376): the 
most complete documentation on these is in Raya Marefat, 
"Beyond the Architecture of Death: The Shrine of the Shah-i 
Zinda" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1991).

14. See n. 12, above.

15. I.e., the Queen of Sheba.

16. I am grateful to Robert Dankoff for suggesting the reading of 
this name. I would also like to thank Husam al-Din Isma‘îl for 
his help with the reading of parts of this inscription.


18. The same verses are also found on the north dome of the 
Isfahan Friday mosque (1088–89): see Sheila Blair, *The Monu-
mental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana*, Stud-
Qurʾan 3:26, sometimes with 3:27, is found regularly in Cai-
rene monuments: at the mosque of al-Salih Tala‘i’s (1160), the 
mausoleums of Kuz al-‘Asal (1441) and Bash Bay al-Dawadar 
(1476–77), the madrasa of Inal (1496), and the complex of 
Qurqums (1506–7). (Information on Cairo is from the proj-
ect, "Documentation of the Inscriptions in the Historic Zone 
of Cairo," prepared for The Egyptian Antiquities Project of the 
American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. [ARCE] under USAID Grant N. 263-0000-G-00-3089-00.)


20. There is thus no equivalent to either the extensive tiled deco-
ration of the interior of the Buyan Quli Khan mausoleum or 
the extensive use of Persian in its inscriptions. The latter is 
examined in detail in Bakhtiyar Babajanov, "Monuments 
épigraphiques de l’ensemble de Fat̄aybâd à Boukhara," 

21. See Golombek and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, vol. 2, fig. 3: this 
is admittedly untypical in that it forms a pendentive rather than 
a squinch. For a more conventional example within a squinch 
in the tomb of Shaikh Sadan near Multan (late twelfth cen-
tury), see Finbarr B. Flood, "Ghurid Architecture in the Indus 
Valley: The Tomb of Shaikh Sadan Shahid," *Ars Orientalis* 31 
(2001): 130, fig. 4.

22. D. P. Ghosh, "Symbolism of the Kiritimukha-Makara Motif in Indi-

23. Chinese Academy of Architecture, *Classical Chinese Architecture* 
(Hong Kong, 1986), pp. 66, 81, 91, 95, 105.


25. I am grateful to Omar Kishk for drawing the sketch plan. It 
do not take into account some of the irregularities that are 
are to be found in the walls of the surrounding corridors but other-
wise is reasonably accurate.


27. Some earlier funerary complexes augmented the burial cham-
ber with extra domed spaces that frequently included a mihrab 
and other adjacent dome chambers, as at the eleventh-century 
examples of Hakim-i Tirmizi and Khvaja ‘Isa (near Tirmiz):


31. For the plan of this complex, see A. Garriev, ed., *Pamyatniki arkhitekturi Turkmenistana* (Leningrad, 1974), p. 211. It consists of a small domed vestibule flanked by two slightly larger dome chambers, with a still larger domed chamber on the main axis.

32. The tomb of Saif al-Din Bakharzi consists of a larger dome chamber preceding a smaller one (Borodina, “Osobennosti formirovania memorial’nikh,” fig. 5.1), but this can hardly correspond to the “large institution with vast endowments from which food is supplied to all comers,” as mentioned by Ibn Battuta. It has been suggested that it may have been restored later in the fourteenth century; see Golombok and Wilber, *Timurid Architecture*, vol. 1, p. 225.


