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MADDE YAYIMLANDIK :
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Naqqāsh

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Naqqāsh (fl. 825/1422) was a courtier and an official diarist for the embassy of Shāhrukh, the Timūrid ruler of Persia and Transoxania (r. 807–50/1405–47), to the court of the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–24) of China's Ming dynasty, probably in 823–5/1420–2. While nothing is known of his personal life beyond a conjecture that he was an artist, as indicated by the name Naqqāsh (painter), his day-to-day descriptive account of his embassy provides important information on the contacts between Ming China and the regimes of Central and Western Asia after the fall of Mongol rule there. Following initial political tensions culminating in Tīmūr's (r. 771–807/1370–1405) failed military campaigns against China in 807/1404, both his successors and the Ming dynasty encouraged close diplomatic and commercial relations by exchanging numerous embassies between 809–10/1407 and 827/1424 testified to in historical sources, including two first-hand accounts from divergent perspectives, one by the Ming envoy Chen Cheng (1365–1457) and

the other by Ghiyāth al-Dīn (Rossabi, 29–34; Kauz, *Politik*, 79–143). The latter's account is unique for its detailed description of an embassy's experiences during the journey to and within China, in addition to its combination of itinerary and geography in a single text (Kauz, Michel Didier, 256–7).

The embassy that Ghiyāth al-Dīn joined, the second sent by Tīmūr's son Shāhrukh, sought to reciprocate for the lavish gifts brought by earlier Chinese embassies and to advance relations. The embassy's party numbered about five hundred, comprising those dispatched by Shāhrukh and those by his son Bāysunghur (including Ghiyāth al-Dīn himself), and included many merchants and returning Chinese envoys (probably including Chen Cheng). They left Shāhrukh's capital, Herat, in 823/1420, travelled along the northern slopes of the Tianshan via Tashkent and Turfan (one of several routes available at that time), and entered Chinese territory through Jiayu Pass, at the western end of the Great Wall, on 19 Sha'bān 823/29 August 1420. In Suzhou, the first city on the Chinese side of the border, they had to comply with bureaucratic procedures