Tamta’s World
The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia

This book tells the compelling story of a Christian noblewoman named Tamta in the thirteenth century. Born to an Armenian family at the court of Queen Tamar of Georgia, she was ransomed in marriage to nephews of Saladin, after her father was captured during a siege. She was later raped and then married by the Khwarazmshah and held hostage by the Mongols, before being made an independent ruler in eastern Anatolia under them. Her tale stretches from the Mediterranean to Mongolia and reveals the extraordinary connections across continents and cultures that one woman could experience. Without a voice of her own, surviving monuments – monasteries and mosques, caravanserais and palaces – build up a picture of Tamta’s world and the roles women played in it. It explores how women’s identities changed between different courts, with shifting languages, religions and cultures, and between their roles as daughters, wives, mothers and widows.

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Tamta’s World

The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia

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To Helen and Stephen
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Acknowledgements

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Transliteration

As anyone who has worked on materials that cross linguistic and alphabetic frontiers knows, trying to impose consistency of spelling is well nigh impossible, not helped by the absence of consistency in the primary sources. No single system can cope with the diversity of names and sounds employed by the peoples that Tamta met, spoke and wrote with, so I have preferred to present names in ways that do not deter the casual reader. Whilst Halarc’in or mcignobart’uxuc’esi may please purists, they are not easy on the eye.
Abbreviations

*BEO* Bulletin d'études orientales
*BSOAS* Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
*DOP* Dumbarton Oaks Papers
*RCEA* Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe, 18 vols. (Cairo, 1936)
*REArm* Revue des études arméniennes
*REB* Revue des études byzantines
*RHCHO* Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens orientaux
*TEI* Thesaurus d'Epigraphie Islamique (http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org/)