



# MASTERPIECES

*from the Department of Islamic Art  
in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*







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EDITED BY

Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Priscilla P. Soucek,  
Sheila R. Canby, and Navina Najat Haidar



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## CONTENTS

Director's Foreword / vi

Preface / vii

Acknowledgments / viii

Conservation Work for the New Galleries / x

Contributors to the Catalogue / xii

Note to the Reader / xiii

Map / xiv

### Introduction

*Building a Collection of Islamic Art at the*

*Metropolitan Museum, 1870–2011*

Priscilla P. Soucek / 2

*A Century of Installations: A Photo Essay*

Rebecca Meriwether Lindsey / 2

*The New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands,  
Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia*

Navina Najat Haidar / 10

### *Art of the Early Caliphates (7th to 10th Centuries)*

Essay by Maryam D. Ekhtiar / 20

Cats. 1–29

### *Art of Spain, North Africa, and the Western Mediterranean*

Essay by Olga Bush / 53

Cats. 30–51

### *Art of the Eastern Islamic Lands (9th to 14th Centuries)*

Essay by Priscilla P. Soucek / 86

Cats. 52–89

### *Art of Egypt and Syria (10th to 16th Centuries)*

Essay by Stefano Carboni / 136

Cats. 90–116

### *Art of Iran and Central Asia (15th to 19th Centuries)*

Essay by Sheila R. Canby / 170

Cats. 117–199

### *Art of the Ottoman Court*

Essay by Walter B. Denny / 285

Cats. 200–238

### *Art of South Asia (14th to 19th Centuries)*

Essay by Navina Najat Haidar / 338

Cats. 239–289

Glossary / 406

Bibliography / 408

Index / 426



## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Since the closure of the galleries of the Department of Islamic Art for renovation in 2003, Museum staff and outside researchers have been engaged in a thorough reassessment of the collection. This work has taken the form of art-historical and scientific research. Often the results have led to discoveries about the makers, patrons, or materials of objects in the collection. This handbook, published in conjunction with the opening of the refurbished, renamed Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia, presents the latest findings on the finest works of art from these regions in the Metropolitan Museum's collection. In addition, many objects acquired since 2003 are presented here for the first time.

The publication of this book is generously supported by Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani. It has involved numerous editors, curators, and conservators and contains contributions from more than twenty-five authors. During the long evolution of this handbook, Maryam Ekhtiar, Senior Research Associate, Professor Priscilla Soucek, and Navina Haidar, Curator and Coordinator of the Gallery Project, have guided authors and have edited its content. Sheila Canby, Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge of the Department of Islamic Art, contributed to the effort in its later stages.

While no experience can replace that of seeing the actual works of art, this handbook will enhance and deepen the reader's understanding of the interconnections and particularities of the art produced from Spain to India between the seventh and late nineteenth centuries. Books such as this volume represent one of the core activities of a universal museum. Departmental curators, researchers, and consultants as well as a number of the Metropolitan's conservators have analyzed the most significant objects in the Museum's permanent collection in light of recent scholarship and have presented their findings in a manner that is of scholarly interest to experts, but is also accessible to nonspecialists. In the several decades that have elapsed since the Metropolitan Museum published a book dealing with the whole range of objects in the Department of Islamic Art, the study of Islamic art has expanded, as has global awareness of the regions from which the collection comes. What has remained constant is the beauty and importance of the finest works of art from the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia, many of which are presented here.

Thomas P. Campbell  
*Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*



## PREFACE

From the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, from Rabat to Dhaka, as populations adopted Islam from the seventh century onward they adapted local artistic idioms to the new forms and requirements associated with the new faith. Alongside the official symbols of Islam—the mosque, Qur'an manuscripts, and coinage—new art forms evolved in part due to the changing political realities in western Asia and North Africa. The Arab conquest of Egypt and Iran brought religion, a new language and alphabet, and a realignment of trade between the recently Islamized regions that resulted in creative artistic cross-fertilization. Yet, as strong an example as the Umayyads at Damascus or the Abbasids at Baghdad, Raqqa, or Samarra set, slavish copies of their art in other regions of the Islamic world are the exception rather than the rule.

Thanks to over a century of scholarship on Islamic art, the specific character of the art from different regions with large Muslim populations has come increasingly into focus. As a result, the new galleries of the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Islamic Art have been given a geographical name: Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia. This name reflects the shift away from the perception of Islamic art as a unicum to the recognition of the variety of forms and meanings that characterize each period and locale. In addition, Islam today is practiced by large numbers of people in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. As the new galleries do not contain the art of either region, the new name more precisely defines what the visitor can expect to find in them. The nomenclature and organization of galleries along geographical lines in no way negate the existence of what is commonly called "Islamic art." Works of Islamic art have been identified as such because of the unique combination of their properties—such as Arabic calligraphy, geometric ornament, and the use of the vine scroll—from Spain to South Asia, from the seventh to the end of the nineteenth century. While most of the regions represented in the Department of Islamic Art were once dominated by ancient empires, a new era accompanied the advent of Islam, and with it came the distinctive approaches to ornament that characterize Islamic art.

This book treats a number of objects that have entered the Museum's collection since 1975. While some have been exhibited at the Museum, others acquired since the Islamic Department's galleries closed in 2003 have not been published or seen by the

public. The team of authors who have written entries and chapter introductions have presented the collection within the context of modern scholarship, drawing on a body of literature that has expanded in the past thirty years. Moreover, advances in scientific research have enabled conservators and researchers to pinpoint dates of production and aspects of technique that were previously elusive.

While the question of where and when an object was made continues to concern historians of Islamic art, increasingly these scholars are asking why a particular piece was produced, even when the patron is known. With the understanding of the complexity of the societies in which these objects were conceived has come the question of the extent to which non-Muslims created and used the same objects as Muslims. Along with the luxurious works that originated in court ateliers for royalty and nobility, large numbers of fine ceramics, glassware, metalwork, textiles, and carpets of very high quality were the property of anonymous people who represent the population at large of the lands from Spain to India. What is remarkable is how appealing and fresh so many of these objects appear hundreds of years after they were made.

In today's world, attention to the areas represented in the Met's new galleries mostly concerns dynamic political events, such as the Arab Spring or the conflicts occurring in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Meanwhile, interest has grown in the burgeoning contemporary art scene and the position of Dubai as a center for artists from across North Africa and the Middle East to show their art. The originality and depth of work produced by contemporary artists, who invariably refer to themselves by the region from which they come or in which they live, not by their religion, does have some parallels with the art of the past. Then as now, artists were not deterred by times of strife and weak leadership. Their work almost always continued in spite of political instability. While the subject matter and forms of art in contemporary North Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia have changed, the human spirit has continued to find expression in works of art, both humble and grand, sacred and profane.

Sheila R. Canby

*Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge, Department of Islamic Art*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present volume is the first major publication in this century devoted to the collection of the Department of Islamic Art, appearing in celebration of the reopening of the permanent galleries in 2011. The reinstallation of the new Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia and this accompanying publication are the result of several years of planning and execution representing the dedicated efforts of numerous individuals within and outside the Metropolitan Museum. We would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to all those whose invaluable roles contributed to the vision and the making of the new galleries and this book.

Our Director, Thomas P. Campbell, has provided unwavering institutional backing for this endeavor at every turn. We are also grateful for the support of Emily Rafferty, President; Jennifer Russell, Associate Director for Exhibitions; Carrie Rebora Barratt, Associate Director for Collections and Administration; and Nina Diefenbach, Vice President for Development and Membership, and her team. The gallery reinstallation project was initiated under Philippe de Montebello, Director Emeritus, who oversaw its early development along with Mahrukh Tarapor, former Associate Director for Exhibitions and Director for International Affairs; J. Nicholas Cameron, former Vice President for Construction; Jeffrey Daly, former Senior Design Advisor to the Director; and Doralynn Pines, former Associate Director for Administration. We also express thanks to Sharon Cott, Senior Vice President, Secretary, and General Counsel; and Jeffrey Blair, Senior Associate Counsel.

In the course of preparing the works of art for display and publication the Museum's conservators and scientists have undertaken important research on the collection leading to a deeper scholarly and technical understanding and many new discoveries. The conservators involved in objects conservation under Lawrence Becker, Sherman Fairchild Conservator in Charge, included Mechthild Baumeister, Jean-François de Lapérouse, Lisa Pilosi, Karen Stamm, Vicki Parry, Beth Edelstein, Sarah McGregor, Amy Jones, Daniel Hausdorf, Rudolph Colban, Sarah Barack, Janis Mandrus, Drew Anderson, Nancy Britton, Pascale Patris, and Marijn Manuels. Textile conservation under Florica Zaharia, Conservator in Charge, included Janina Poskrobko, Kisook Suh, Yael Rosenfield, Midori Sato, Giulia Chiostrini, Julia Carlson, Olha Yarema-Wynar, Emilia Cortes, Kristine Kamiya, Kathrin

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In the Department of Islamic Art many present and former members have contributed to the reinstallation of the new galleries and to this volume. Navina Najat Haidar has coordinated the curatorial side of the gallery project from its inception. In addition, department contributors include Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Ellen Kenney, Marika Sardar, Denise-Marie Teece, Professor Walter B. Denny, Professor Priscilla P. Soucek, Stefan Heidemann, Deniz Beyazit, Annick Des Roches, Timothy Caster, Kent Henriksen, Warren Bennett, Ria Breed, Melody Lawrence, Courtney Stewart, Michelle Ridgely, Julia Rooney, Rina Indictor, and Patricia Sclater-Booth, with special thanks to Marie Lukens Swietochowski. For research and other assistance we thank Elena Chardakliyska, Kendra Weisbin, Ayşe Pinar Gokpinar, Karin Zonis, Rashmi Viswanathan, Mariam Otkhmezuri, Eda Aksoy, Madeleine Cassella, Ariana Muessel, and Paola Chadwick. Special thanks are due to our former senior colleagues Daniel Walker, Michael Barry, and Stefano Carboni. Among our many supporters we thank our Visiting Committee, the Friends of Islamic Art, volunteers, docents, and walking-tour guides.

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Sheila R. Canby

*Patti Cadby Birch Curator in Charge, Department of Islamic Art*

## CONSERVATION WORK FOR THE NEW GALLERIES

The renovation of the Department of Islamic Art galleries provided curators, conservators, and conservation scientists with an extraordinary opportunity to examine the collection in its entirety and to assess its conservation needs. Artworks from Islamic lands were among the earliest acquisitions by the Museum, and well over four-fifths of the present holdings were obtained before the 1970s, when the technical examination of works of art prior to their entering the collection became standard practice. As a result, the condition of many objects, textiles, and works of art on paper and parchment had never been fully ascertained, and their technical descriptions were often unverified or incorrect. Some treatment work had taken place before the opening of the previous galleries in 1975 and in the succeeding years, but these efforts were not as comprehensive in scope as the project that has accompanied the current reinstallation. In addition, past treatments often involved the use of materials that we now know to be unstable as well as outdated mounting methods that did not adequately protect the art. Finally, recent advances in scientific analysis and expertise in the Museum have allowed

us to glean more information than ever before about the materials and production methods used by Islamic artists and craftsmen.

Many discoveries, both minor and major, have been made during this project. For example, among the smaller objects in this volume, it was found that dark layers of tarnish on the surface of a silver cup with *kufic* inscriptions (cat. 83) since its acquisition had concealed the fact that the interior was gilded by the amal-gam process while the exterior was not. Now that it has been cleaned, the intended coloristic contrast between both sides can be fully appreciated. On a much larger scale, a thorough examination of the Damascus Room (cat. 238) revealed that in the previous installation the wall panels had been rearranged from their original configuration to suit the available gallery space. Now that the entrance door and windows have been returned to their correct location along the same wall, a sense of the sun-filled courtyard this audience chamber once overlooked has been restored. In addition, the proper sequence of the calligraphic text that runs from right to left in the upper part of the wall panels has been reestablished.

At the same time, some less felicitous discoveries were made in the course of this project. Examinations revealed the incorporation of extraneous fragments and/or excessive restoration in some cases, while the decorative program of others had been over-embellished by past restorers. Such restorations often cast a discolored veil that partially obscured original compositions. In other instances, the restorations themselves—some executed over a century ago—have acquired historic value. Working together, conservators and curators discussed how to deal with these modern interventions on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the integrity of the original fabric and artistic conception. Understandably, this process influenced final decisions about which art works were selected for exhibition.

Textile conservators identified twenty-seven of the most important textiles and carpets in the collection that required comprehensive treatment, including the removal of previous restorations, cleaning, stabilization, and in-depth fiber and structure analysis. Within this group, the Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181) was the focus of an intensive three-year project. Over one hundred textiles also required extensive consolidation and protection in enclosed mounts to ensure adequate structural support and a microclimate with a stable relative humidity. Many of these textiles were lined on the reverse and/or stitched onto a fabric that had been specifically dyed to a compatible color. Mounting systems for an additional two hundred fifty textiles and carpets were designed and implemented by conservators so that they could be safely displayed.

For paper conservators the closing of the galleries provided a rare opportunity to examine the bound manuscripts in the collection that had regularly been on view and to address any needed stabilization to their miniature paintings and bindings. Over three hundred folios, including those from the incomparable *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp (cat. 138 A–G), were also thoroughly examined, treated as needed, and rehoused in archival mounts. Given their light-sensitive nature, these folios cannot be exhibited for more than a few weeks at a time. As a result, over seven hundred works of art on paper and parchment will be displayed on a rotating basis each year in the new galleries.

In 2008 object conservators were awarded an Institute of Museum and Library Services matching grant to treat the more than four hundred glass, ceramic, and stucco finds from the Museum's archaeological excavations at Nishapur, many of which had been restored with unstable adhesives and could not be safely handled. Over five hundred additional objects of various media from the collection were examined and treated to

assure their stability and improve their appearance with the removal of old adhesives, discolored restorations, and deteriorated metal coatings. Hundreds of ingeniously supportive but unobtrusive mounts were made by preparators and metalworking staff, often in consultation with conservators.

With the de-installation of the former galleries, the long-standing need for the structural stabilization, cleaning, and consolidation of actively flaking paint layers and metal-leaf decoration in the Damascus Room and Spanish Ceiling could finally be addressed. These architectural projects presented considerable challenges given their size and complexity, calling on the collaboration of conservators, construction staff, architects, and specialists for the installation of historic architecture. After the conservation work was completed, wall and ceiling panels were remounted using more appropriate supporting frameworks and fastening systems, with full access provided for monitoring and maintenance.

Less visible but crucially important to the long-term preservation of the collection is the considerable attention that has been devoted to case design, environmental systems, and climate monitoring for the new galleries. In the decades since the former galleries were installed, the deleterious effects of unstable wood products, fabrics, and adhesives on works of art have been noted and investigated. While in some cases this damage can be acute and readily apparent, in others the alterations can occur at an insidiously slow rate and may not be noticeable in the short term. Consequently, all of the materials proposed for use in the casework for these galleries were tested by conservation scientists, and only those approved have been incorporated. In addition, all case designs were reviewed and modified when necessary by conservators and conservation scientists.

Before and during conservation treatments, analytical information was obtained by nondestructive means or by sampling at break edges or other inconspicuous locations. The results of these analyses were used to determine appropriate treatment strategies and to provide material identifications for object records and gallery labels. Dissemination of the significant technical discoveries and related studies conducted during the course of this project has begun and will continue in lectures and scholarly publications. It is hoped that this knowledge will increase appreciation of the technical skill and artistic mastery evident in this extraordinary collection.

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ME	Maryam D. Ekhtiar, Senior Research Associate, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	SWP	Stuart W. Pyhrr, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Curator in Charge, Department of Arms and Armor, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
HCE	Helen C. Evans, Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator of Byzantine Art, Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	MS	Marika Sardar, Research Associate, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
AG	Abdullah Ghouchani, 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 Andrew W. Mellon Fellow, Epigrapher, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York		
PG	Ayşe Pinar Gokpinar, Intern, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York		

JS	Jochen Sokoly, Gallery Director and Assistant Professor, Department of Art History, Virginia Commonwealth University, School of the Arts in Qatar, Doha	JCYW	James C. Y. Watt, Curator Emeritus, Department of Asian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
PS	Priscilla P. Soucek, John L. Loeb Professor, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, New York	KW	Kendra Weisbin, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
DMT	Denise-Marie Teece, Research Associate, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	KrW	Kristina Werner, Intern, Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
RV	Rashmi Viswanathan, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York	FZ	Florica Zaharia, Conservator in Charge, Department of Textile Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
DW	Daniel Walker, Pritzker Chair and Curator of Asian Art, Chair and Christa C. Mayer Thurman Curator of Textiles, Art Institute of Chicago	KZ	Karin Zonis, Department of Islamic Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

## NOTE TO THE READER

For the transliteration of Arabic, Persian, and some Turkish words, we are using a simplified version of the IJMES (*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*) system. *Ayn* and *hamza*, letters of the alphabet, are marked, but other diacritical signs are not used. We have attempted to retain the phonetic integrity of the individual languages. For example, the name *Sulaiman* is used in an Arabic or Persian context, but *Süleyman* in a Turkish one. In most instances, we use the modern Turkish spelling for Turkish words. In addition, the Persian silent *h* (ه) is transliterated as *a*, as in *Shahnama*, as is the Arabic *ta marbuta* (ة), as in *mashraba*. When an Arabic, Persian, or Turkish word is found in *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary* with a standard English spelling, this form is used. We have chosen to keep the names of cities untransliterated.

Dates are given in the Gregorian calendar unless an object carries a precise Hegira date. In that case, dates are given in both eras. References to the Qur'an follow the numbering used in the Egyptian standard edition of 1924, which has been widely used in the Muslim world. English translations of the Qur'an are taken from Arthur J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, 1966). It is worth noting that the verse numbering in Arberry's translation often differs from that in the Cairo volume, which was based on an edition of the Qur'an first published by Gustav Flügel in 1834 (*Corani textus arabicus*; Leipzig, 1834).

Throughout the catalogue, dimensions are given in the following sequence: height precedes width precedes depth. When necessary, the abbreviations H. (height), L. (length), W. (width), and Diam. (diameter) are used for clarity.





# The Islamic World

City

Modern capital



Robinson projection, centered on 55°E







# MASTERPIECES

*from the Department of Islamic Art  
in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## Introduction

### Building a Collection of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum, 1870–2011

PRISCILLA P. SOUCEK

More than twelve thousand objects from the Islamic Near East, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Islamic West—Spain, North Africa, and southern Italy—are currently preserved in the Metropolitan’s Department of Islamic Art, reflecting the taste, enthusiasm, and generosity of the Museum’s donors as well as the expertise of its curators and the skill of its archaeologists. During the first phase of its development—in the decades that intervened between the Metropolitan’s foundation in 1870 and the establishment in 1932 of a separate department devoted to the art of the Near East—this collection was formed largely by donations and bequests.<sup>1</sup> A second stage in the collection’s development—the decades between 1932 and the designation in 1963 of an independent Department of Islamic Art—marks the Museum’s participation in Near Eastern archaeology, initially in Iraq at Ctesiphon and then in Iran at Nishapur.

These activities substantially augmented the department’s holdings; nearly half of the objects in the department’s custody derive from these excavations. The third stage in the collection’s life began in 1975, when a suite of rooms on the second floor of the Metropolitan’s southeastern wing was chosen to house its permanent installation; it is to that space that the objects have now returned (see the following essay on the new galleries by Navina Haidar).

The collectors whose donations and bequests laid the foundation for the Museum’s Islamic collection reflect the expanding cultural horizons of American, and particularly New York society in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most of them visited Europe repeatedly or even settled there; a few ventured to the Near East and beyond to South and East Asia. The earliest and most comprehensive of these collections was that formed by Edward C. Moore (1827–1891), head designer at Tiffany and Company from 1868 until his death.

Moore’s collection, which arrived as a bequest in 1891 and was first put on view the following year, covered a wide range of periods and media, including Greek and Etruscan vases, metalwork (cat. 104), glass, ceramics, and textiles of various periods and regions. The terms of Moore’s bequest required that the entirety

### A Century of Installations: A Photo Essay

REBECCA MERIWETHER LINDSEY

These photographs from the Museum’s Archives record installations over the last one hundred years of objects now in the Department of Islamic art. They provide a long view of the changing contexts and interpretations of the collection.

In presentation, the pictures follow historical developments. Initially most works of art from the Islamic world were considered to be industrial or decorative rather than fine art, and were displayed as such. At the same time, major donations began to prompt the dedication of a permanent display of such material. Thus “Donors and Decorative Arts: The First Displays, 1907–20” assembles images of the first installations, which were heavily dependent on early benefactors. By contrast, the period covered by “The Near Eastern Department: Establishment and Expansion, 1921–49” saw refinement of displays, with a clear focus on Near Eastern art driven by curatorial expertise as well as donations, purchases, and excavations

at Nishapur. The section “Postwar Displays, 1949–70” reflects the growing recognition of the field of Islamic art, culminating in the 1963 establishment of the Department of Islamic Art and its first permanent galleries in 1975.

The displays shown here have primarily been installed in two areas on the second floor of the Museum: from about 1907 to 1970, on the north side of the building, in Wings D, E, and H (now the Asian Department); and since 1975 in Wing K, above the Greek and Roman galleries. Since 1963 the objects have belonged to the Department of Islamic Art. Before that, they were part of the Department of Decorative Arts (1907–22) and its sub-department of Near Eastern Art (1923–31), and then of the Department of Near Eastern Art, which was created in 1932 with two divisions, Ancient Near Eastern Art and “Art of the Islamic Near East, comprising Moorish Spain and North Africa, Egypt under the Arabs, Turkey in Europe, the Caucasus, Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Persia, West Turkestan, Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, and Indo-China.”

Museum archival records, including some referred to here, provide varying dates for the building and administrative divisions.



of his collection be displayed in a contiguous space (figs. 2, 6).<sup>2</sup> Moore's broad taste was characteristic of the Aesthetic Movement, which focused on the qualities of the individual object without respect to its time and place of origin. This eclecticism encouraged him and others to integrate elements from various periods, cultures, or regions in their own artistic creations.<sup>3</sup>

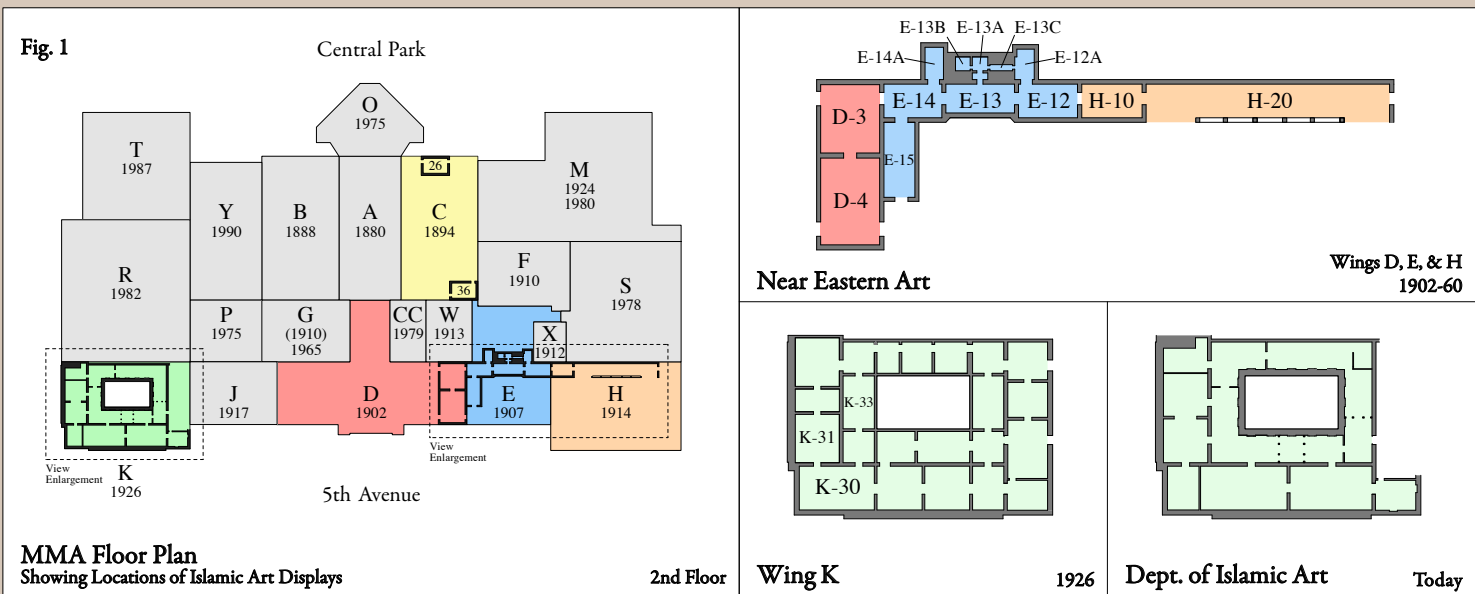
In 1902 the Museum received a collection, described as "bric-à-brac" in the *New York Times*, amassed by William B. Osgood Field (1823–1900), a New York businessman and philanthropist who lived for many years in Rome. Upon his death the collection was bequeathed to his wife, Katherine Parker, then to the Metropolitan after her death in 1901.<sup>4</sup> Into the Museum came Turkish (cats. 215, 218A), Chinese, and European ceramics along with a pair of Italian clocks and some Indian shields.

Also donated in 1902 were jade objects belonging to Heber Reginald Bishop (1840–1902). Bishop, who made his fortune in Cuban sugar and Minnesota iron ore, was an avid collector of carved jades and other hard stones. Shortly before his death he arranged for this collection to be given to the Metropolitan Museum, stipulating that it be displayed in a setting that replicated the ballroom in his house in which it had been on

view. He also provided for the publication of a book about jade and similar stones, including the twenty-seven jades attributed to Central Asia (cats. 133, 258) or India that are now on display in the Islamic galleries.<sup>5</sup>

Although most closely associated with the library and museum that bears his name, John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913) played several distinct roles at the Metropolitan. One of the Museum's initial supporters, he joined its Board of Trustees in 1889 and served as its fourth president (1905–12).<sup>6</sup> His tenure in that capacity was instrumental in the institution's transformation from an enterprise run largely by volunteers to a professional organization with full-time employees.

Morgan preferred to purchase groups of objects amassed by others, one such example being the George Hoentschel collection of decorative arts that arrived at the Museum as a loan in 1910.<sup>7</sup> The size and quality of this group prompted the Museum to construct a new gallery for its display, in anticipation of its eventual donation.<sup>8</sup> Although Morgan died before the collection's status had been clarified, objects purchased by him, now in the Islamic Department, were donated in 1917 by his son, J. P. Morgan, Jr. Among them were a magnificent ivory casket from southern Italy



(cat. 39), a pair of Indian carpets (cat. 262), an ecclesiastical vestment made from an Ottoman textile, a group of enameled and gilded mosque lamps from Mamluk Egypt (cat. 109), and panels of colorful tiles from Ottoman Iznik.

Alexander Smith Cochran (1874–1929) donated a collection of illustrated manuscripts (fig. 17). Twenty-four manuscripts as well as thirty single-page pictures, given in 1913 (cats. 123A–C, 135), were accompanied by a published catalogue compiled by A. V. Williams Jackson and Abraham Yohannan.<sup>9</sup> Cochran, who had inherited carpet mills from his maternal grandfather, was most active as a yachtsman and competed in numerous races. In 1907 Cochran and Jackson, who were neighbors in Yonkers, traveled together to Iran. Containing illustrated versions of Persian literary classics as well as texts in Turkish and a copy of the Qur'an, Cochran's manuscript collection was probably formed with Jackson's advice.

The bequest of William Milne Grinnell (1858–1920) combined some twenty paintings, including a dozen from Firdausi's *Shahnama* (cat. 239A, B), with an impressive variety of ceramic vessels and tile panels (cat. 130).<sup>10</sup> Grinnell, who came from a well-established New York family of Huguenot origin, had graduated from Yale University in 1881; subsequently, he trained as an architect at Columbia University and practiced this profession for some years. A brief sketch of his life, however, published in a history of Yale graduates written in 1910, placed particular stress on his years of travel, suggesting that he had visited "every country in the world."<sup>11</sup> Describing the Grinnell

bequest in 1920, Joseph Breck indicated that many of the donor's purchases had been made in Cairo, "where he spent several winters."<sup>12</sup> If so, the preponderance of Persian ceramics, ranging in date from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, in his collection is noteworthy; his Egyptian examples consist mostly of fragments from luster-painted bowls.<sup>13</sup> Grinnell also collected Syrian, Turkish, and Central Asian vessels.<sup>14</sup>

Near Eastern and Indian rugs, widely popular, came to the Museum from several donors. Merchant Benjamin Altman (1840–1913) gave some sumptuous Persian carpets made of silk (cats. 182, 183) and Indian rugs of *pashmina* (cat. 265).<sup>15</sup> Having long coveted Altman's painting collection, which included pictures attributed to Rembrandt, Museum officials accepted his requirement that they be displayed, along with the donor's own portrait, in a room surrounded by the remainder of his collection—carpets, Turkish ceramics (cat. 210), Chinese porcelain, Japanese metalwork and lacquer, European sculpture, rock crystal, and furniture as well as an extensive array of snuff bottles (figs. 3, 13).

During the 1920s the Museum's growing importance as a repository of Near Eastern art began to attract the attention of more specialized collectors. In the fall of 1921 James F. Ballard (1851–1931), a lifelong resident of St. Louis, selected the Metropolitan Museum as the venue for a temporary exhibition of sixty-five examples from his rug collection.<sup>16</sup> Ballard, who had made a fortune through the sale of patent medicines, particularly "Ballard's Snow Liniment," was in equal measure self-promotional and

## Donors and Decorative Arts: The First Displays, 1907–20



Fig. 2 May 9, 1907: Wing C, The Edward C. Moore Collection of Oriental Glass. This is the Museum's earliest photograph of objects now in the Islamic Department.



Fig. 3 November 11, 1914: Wing C, The Benjamin Altman Collection, which included sixteen oriental carpets, Safavid and Ottoman ceramics and metalwork, and Chinese porcelain. In 1926 the Altman Collection moved to galleries K-30-36.

passionate about the moral, historical, and artistic significance of the rugs he owned.<sup>17</sup> Between 1916 and 1921 he arranged for public exhibitions of his rugs in St. Louis, New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo. After this flurry of publicity, he donated to the Metropolitan 112 rugs (figs. 10, 11; cats. 51, 236, 237) along with several other textiles (cat. 198A, B). He also wrote and published catalogues that combined colorful descriptions of the rugs on display with tales of his own harrowing adventures as a collector in the Near East.

Maurice Sven Dimand (1892–1986), the Museum's first specialized curator for Near Eastern art, had a strong personal interest in the study of rugs.<sup>18</sup> He joined the Museum in 1923 after completing a doctoral dissertation on Coptic wool tapestries at the University of Vienna under the tutelage of Josef Strzygowski.<sup>19</sup> Starting with a catalogue of the Metropolitan's Coptic textiles, Dimand's thirty-seven-year career provided the study of Near Eastern art a solid professional foundation. He gave lectures, mounted exhibitions, and published collection guides in addition to important reference works. The years of Dimand's service also witnessed major acquisitions by the Near Eastern Department. Among the more focused collections of this period was that of George Dupont Pratt (1869–1936). Donated in 1929 and 1931, most of these textiles were inscribed but varied in technique (cats. 26, 27, 29). Many had embroidered *tiraz* inscriptions signaling their production in official state-sponsored workshops; others had woven, stamped, or printed texts.<sup>20</sup>

Some donors enriched multiple departments of the Museum. Theodore M. Davis (1837–1915), primarily known for his archaeological projects in Egypt, bequeathed to the Near Eastern Department an impressive album of seventeenth-century Persian and Indian paintings (cat. 190) along with more than eighty objects from Spain, Turkey, Iran, and India—these include two capitals from Madinat al-Zahra in Spain and carpets from Iran and the Caucasus. Due to legal challenges to his will, this bequest only reached the Museum in 1930.<sup>21</sup>

While donations by the Havemeyers to the Museum's collection of European paintings are well known, the family also owned works from the Near East. The original impetus to collect examples of "decorative art" appears to have come from the family patriarch, Henry Osborn Havemeyer (1894–1907), who had become fascinated with objects from distant regions that he had seen at international fairs and expositions.<sup>22</sup> The family's initial gift, in 1929, was given in his memory and is known as the H. O. Havemeyer Collection. It included Persian, Syrian, and Turkish ceramics along with some Persian manuscript pages (cats. 43A, B, 53). The family's generosity to the Metropolitan was continued by Horace Havemeyer (1886–1956), son of Henry and Louisine; the final installment of his gift arrived as a bequest in 1956.<sup>23</sup> His collection was composed largely of ceramics and included objects that had once belonged to his parents (cat. 97); his own purchases were made with advice from the dealer and collector Dikran Kelekian (1869–1951).<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 4 November 5, 1910: "Early Oriental Rugs." Several pieces shown here at this first Islamic art special exhibition at the Museum later entered the permanent collection. The total exhibition costs of \$4,000 included \$100 for rental of the topiary bay trees from Bloomingdale's department store.



Fig. 5 March 21, 1919: "Plant Form in Ornament," a special exhibition in collaboration with the New York Botanical Garden, was conceived during World War I as a patriotic means "to give art designers a new trend and inspiration . . . better than Germany and Austria." It included nineteen objects from the Islamic world, including ceramics from the 1902 Osgood Field donation. (Letter, Britton to Kent, September 4, 1918)



Another important donor of the Dimand era was Cora Timken Burnett (ca. 1865–1957). Her father, Henry Timken (1831–1909), born in Germany, had emigrated to St. Louis in 1847. After a number of years in farming, he turned to the manufacture of carriages and made a fortune from the patent he held for the tapered ball bearings used in carriage axles. (Today, the Timken Company that he founded in 1889 continues to operate in several countries.)<sup>25</sup> In 1897 the Timken family moved to San Diego, where Cora was active as a painter and sculptor, although no work by her appears to survive.<sup>26</sup> Following her July 1920 marriage to an osteopathic physician named John Clawson Burnett, Cora traveled extensively and collected works of art. After her death in January 1957, her collection was divided between the San Diego Museum of Art, an institution supported by other members of her family, and the Metropolitan Museum. San Diego received Japanese woodblock prints and Indian sculptures;<sup>27</sup> the portion of her Metropolitan Museum bequest that is now in the Islamic Department included more than twenty-five single-page pictures and album leaves (cats. 55, 59, 92, 120–21, 202). Some of these had passed through the collection of F. R. Martin (1868–1933), who appears to have obtained them in Istanbul.<sup>28</sup>

By the 1950s the Metropolitan's collection of carpets was sizable, yet its range and quality were much enhanced through gifts and bequests from Joseph V. McMullan (1896–1973), whose generosity to the Museum extended from 1955 to 1974. McMullan's collection was particularly strong in rugs from

Turkey (cat. 235), the Caucasus, and Central Asia, but he also gave the Museum key examples from Iran, India, and Spain. While some of these came from important court production centers, McMullan had a particular affection for works with unusual designs of nomadic or village origin (fig. 18).<sup>29</sup>

Notable objects for the Near Eastern Department were also acquired by purchase under Dimand's leadership. These included a Mamluk enameled glass bottle formerly in the collection of the Habsburgs (cat. 111),<sup>30</sup> two carpets from the collection of Edith Rockefeller, one of which has come to be known as the Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181),<sup>31</sup> and a majestic, lion-shaped incense burner dated to 1181–82 (cat. 85).<sup>32</sup> Dimand's tenure also marked the beginning of the department's close working relationship with the Kevorkian Foundation and its successor, the Kevorkian Fund.<sup>33</sup>

The 1930s and 1940s witnessed the Museum's establishment of a Near East Expedition to conduct archaeology in the region. Two of this group's founding members, Walter Hauser and Charles K. Wilkinson (1897–1986), had previously worked in Egypt; the third, Joseph M. Upton, came from the Decorative Art Department. Their initial venture, in 1931, was to participate in the German-led expedition to Ctesiphon in Iraq.<sup>34</sup> In 1932 and 1933–34 the group worked at Qasr-i Abu Nasr in Iran near Shiraz.<sup>35</sup>

After these rather modest ventures, the group accepted an invitation from the Persian government to shift its attention to the site of Nishapur near the modern city of Mashhad, where they had expected to find remains of the pre-Islamic period. What they

## The First Displays, 1907–20



Fig. 6 June 27, 1918: Gallery E-12, showing glass from the Moore Collection and 19th-century carpets. After Wing E opened in 1910 the Museum gave Near Eastern art separate galleries in Wings D, E, and, after 1912, H. At the north end of Wing E, galleries E-12, E-13, and E-14 served as the three primary display rooms for Islamic objects for approximately fifty years.



Fig. 7 June 26, 1918: Gallery E-13, looking south into E-14. Although called the "Central Persian" gallery, E-13 displayed mostly Indian art and was one of the three large Near Eastern art galleries from 1910 to 1958. During those years the terms *Persian* and *Assyrian* were also in use, often to distinguish Islamic-period from ancient Near Eastern art. A Museum trustee wrote, "It may be necessary eventually to separate the Persian and the Assyrian and have different experts in charge." (Letter, Coffin to Breck, October 14, 1931)

found instead were substantial quantities of high-quality ceramic vessels, many of which were embellished with Arabic inscriptions. They also discovered the remains of substantial buildings, including a mosque. These structures had walls decorated with painted plaster, carved stucco, and glazed ceramic tiles. The terms of their agreement with the Persian authorities allowed the Museum to keep half of the materials unearthed, which helped greatly to expand the Near Eastern Department's holdings (figs. 16, 21). In 1939 international turmoil caused them to suspend operations, but in 1941 the expedition returned to Iran for a short concluding season. It fell to the group's youngest member, Charles Wilkinson, to publish detailed descriptions of the ceramics (cat. 68), wall decorations (cat. 60), and architectural remains (cat. 61) that they had unearthed at Nishapur.<sup>36</sup>

Following Dimand's retirement in 1960, Wilkinson was chosen to head the Near Eastern Department, whose collection at that time ranged from prehistory to the nineteenth century. Wilkinson's tenure was brief, however, as he himself retired in 1962. His departure marked the end of an era and led to the creation of two new departments, the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Department of Islamic Art.

Ernst J. Grube became the first head of the new Islamic Department.<sup>37</sup> In conjunction with this change, a selection from the collection was reinstalled in the Museum's north wing in a chronological sequence, an innovation that acknowledged the distinctive historical phases of Islamic culture (fig. 24). During

Grube's leadership the collection was augmented by important purchases of ceramic and glass vessels.<sup>38</sup> He also founded The Friends of the Islamic Department, a support group that continues to assist the department in building its holdings.<sup>39</sup>

In December 1966 the sudden death of James Rorimer (1905–66), director of the Metropolitan, also led to changes in the Islamic Department. Rorimer's successor, Thomas Hoving (1931–2009), entrusted the direction of the Islamic Department to Richard Ettinghausen (1906–1979), a professor at New York University who previously had been a long-time curator at the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C.

The Ettinghausen era was marked by important acquisitions as well as a major reinstallation of the Islamic collection on the second floor of the Museum's south wing (fig. 25). This display featured interior wall and ceiling panels from an eighteenth-century Damascus reception room (cat. 238) and a marble-inlaid basin and fountain donated by the Kevorkian Fund.<sup>40</sup> The Museum's centennial year, 1970, saw the purchase of an exceptional carpet from Mamluk Egypt (cat. 116) notable for its elaborate geometric design and its unusually varied color scheme.<sup>41</sup>

Notable bequests of the 1970s included fifty-two carpets from Joseph McMullan, the final stage in his generous gifts to the Museum.<sup>42</sup> A very special presentation of the Ettinghausen years was the 1972 exhibition of ninety-eight pages from an extraordinary copy of Firdausi's *Shahnama* belonging to Arthur Houghton (cat. 138A–G). Seventy-six of these had been given to



Fig. 8 April 19, 1921: Gallery E-13C. A small passageway built parallel to E-13 was pressed into service as a display gallery in 1919, when Museum acquisitions resumed after World War I. Here it is seen with Indian jewelry cases lining both walls, looking north into E-12A, which showed Indian sculpture.



Fig. 9 October 2, 1912: Gallery E-14, the "Persian Room" looking north into E-13, pictured here in a Museum postcard. Note the draperies over the skylight to protect the art from direct sunlight.

the Museum in 1970; the exhibition was commemorated by the handsomely illustrated monograph *A King's Book of Kings* by Stuart Cary Welch.<sup>43</sup> A number of gifts in this period also came from Ettinghausen's private collection.<sup>44</sup>

In October 1979 leadership of the Islamic Department passed to Stuart Cary Welch.<sup>45</sup> Art from the Indian subcontinent became prominent in the purchases and donations of his time, among them remarkable paintings by Indian artists of various periods as well as a pierced marble window screen and a marble basin from a Mughal monument.<sup>46</sup> These new objects were featured in the international loan exhibition "India," held at the Museum in 1985–86.<sup>47</sup> Welch's enthusiasm for Indian art encouraged Alice Heeramanek and others to donate several works to the Metropolitan, among them a charming study of a lion at rest and a child's coat from nineteenth-century Punjab made from wool tapestry decorated with a grapevine (cat. 284).

During the 1980s the collection and study of jewelry also increased. Acquisitions, particularly those made with funds provided by Patti Cadby Birch in addition to the objects purchased with help of the Louis E. Seley Foundation, reflect this emphasis.<sup>48</sup> By 1982 the Museum's collection of jewelry was sufficient to be used as the basis for a monograph written by Marilyn Jenkins and Manuel Keene.<sup>49</sup> Further purchases of jewelry included a necklace fashioned from sheet gold and set with gems (cat. 88).<sup>50</sup>

In recent decades the bequest of Louis E. Seley (d. 1986) has been of critical importance for the growth of the department's collection (fig. 25; cat. 185). Some curatorial purchases have added key objects to the already substantial collections of ceramics, jewelry, and metalwork, while others have strengthened holdings linked to Islam's religious practice, such as pages from Qur'an manuscripts, prayer books, and pilgrimage guides. Another innovation made possible by funds from the Seley bequest and other donors is the purchase of single-page paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced in India, Iran, and Turkey, challenging the common view that identifies Islamic art with the medieval period.<sup>51</sup>

With the arrival of Daniel Walker as departmental head in 1988, the study of carpets assumed a renewed prominence, evident in gifts, departmental purchases, and program of exhibitions. Among these were a "Chessboard" rug fragment presented by the Wolf Foundation and a carpet showing pairs of confronted quadrupeds attributed to fourteenth-century Anatolia (cat. 234). Walker continued to build the department's holdings of art from the Indian subcontinent, notably such architectural elements as a wooden calligraphic roundel (cat. 278b) and a pair of *jalis* or pierced sandstone window grills, as well as diverse pieces of metalwork, including a sculptural brass water flask, an iron elephant goad inlaid in gold and silver, and a wooden writing box overlaid with both metal plaques and patterned silk (cat. 276). A 1988 agreement with the family of Stuart Cary

## The Near Eastern Department: Establishment and Expansion, 1921–49



Fig. 10 October 3, 1923: The Ballard carpet donation. "There is a majesty and grandeur in these imperishable colors, mellowed but uneffaced by time and in the exquisite designs which render them a thing to love and cherish beyond any other form of art and when seen under proper light, each one seems bent on outdoing his neighbor in an effort to display every regal charm of beauty." (Letter, Ballard to Museum trustees, May 20, 1922)



Fig. 11 March 31, 1925: Gallery H-20. Wing H was added to the north of Wing E in 1914, and one of its largest galleries, H-20, was devoted to "Oriental" carpets and textiles, including several Ballard Transylvanian rugs, at left. Note the swinging panels on walls for the display of small carpets.



Welch was significant for allowing a remarkable picture in their collection, by the sixteenth-century painter Sultan Muhammad, to be shared between the Metropolitan's Islamic Department and Harvard University Art Museum (cat. 137). Walker's connections with the Wolf Foundation were instrumental in their decision to donate a collection of Turkmen silver to the Museum (cat. 199). Their donation of more than two hundred fifty objects has given the department a new strength. A fully illustrated monograph about this collection was published in 2011 by Layla S. Diba.<sup>52</sup> Walker also initiated the development of plans for the reinstallation of the Islamic Department's collection prior to his departure in 2005 to become director of the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.

Since 2005 the department's energies have been focused on the study and reinstallation of its collection. The magnitude of this task required the establishment of a new administrative framework within the department. Walker's successor as Consultative Chairman, Michael A. Barry (2005–8), contributed to the conception that shaped the collection's reinstallation. In 2005 Stefano Carboni became Departmental Administrator, a role he filled until his departure in the summer of 2008. Navina Haidar was overall coordinator of the multifaceted gallery reinstallation project from 2005 until its completion in the fall of 2011 and administered the department in 2008–9.

In 2009 Sheila R. Canby assumed leadership of the department. Since her arrival, Canby has renewed collecting activity

with such major acquisitions as a Mughal painting and an elaborate Indian dagger.<sup>53</sup> Owing to her initiative, for the first time the department is acquiring works by contemporary Middle Eastern and South Asian artists.

For more than a century, building the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum has been a collective enterprise. The Aesthetic Movement encouraged collectors to trust their personal taste and served to widen their appreciation of diverse artistic traditions. Early collectors valued Islamic objects for their beauty, but paid little heed to the circumstances in which they had originated. As knowledge about the region and its artistic traditions grew more widespread, additions to the collection became more focused and served to augment the department's holdings in a particular medium or period. Objects acquired through the Museum's excavations opened new vistas onto the art and culture of the Near East. Looking to the future, the department seeks to broaden appreciation not only of the objects themselves but also of the cultural and religious contexts from which they derive.



Fig. 12 January 9, 1926: Carpet Gallery D-3. For forty years David Mannes led free symphony concerts from the Great Hall balcony (seen through doorway at rear); here, overflowing Museum audiences sit on the carpet platforms to hear Beethoven, Bach, Lully, Gluck, Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saens, Brahms, Strauss, and Smetana.



Fig. 13 April 13, 1926: Wing K, Gallery K-33, at the opening of this grand space originally built for the Altman Collection. The 1953 decision by the Altman trustees to allow the collection to be displayed with other related objects elsewhere in the Museum paved the way for the eventual use of the space by the Islamic Department.

## The New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia

NAVINA NAJAT HAIDAR

The new Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia mark a fresh interpretative approach to collections that had previously been on permanent display in the same wing from 1975 until 2003 (fig. 25).<sup>54</sup> The reinstallation, which occupies an expanded area of nineteen thousand square feet, underscores the artistic and cultural diversity of the art of the Islamic world in fifteen galleries grouped by geographical region overlooking the Roman court below. A new emphasis on region is reflected in the geographic title of the galleries, a departure from the previous designation of Islamic Art, which remains a term used widely within the installation and accompanying didactic program.<sup>55</sup> A map of the Islamic world in close proximity to the gallery entrance further conveys the underlying rationale for the works of art brought together.

Drawn from a permanent collection of over twelve thousand works, the approximately one thousand objects on display have been chosen for their aesthetic merit, rarity, condition, and art-historical importance. The largely chronological organization of material within each gallery highlights artistic centers and

follows the historical sweep of Islamic civilization through the Arab world, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and later South Asia from the seventh century onward. This arrangement aims to impart a clear sense of place and time to the visitor, crucial elements for the understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of the collection and in keeping with the prevailing approach of the Museum as a whole.

While there is a principal didactic chronological route through the galleries, multiple entrances allow for the varied experiences of the visitor. Care has been taken, however, to ensure that the display is visually and contextually meaningful regardless of point of access. As in the previous galleries, the display cases feature groups of stylistically or historically related mixed media. These are occasionally interposed by groupings of objects that explore particular themes, such as the development of styles of calligraphy, the advancement of science across the medieval Islamic period, or techniques of ceramic production, among others.

### *Interconnections, Contexts, Regions*

The open plan and new circular path of the expanded gallery space allow for wide-ranging cultural interconnections to be discerned throughout the display (fig. 27). These are particularly meaningful in light of the charged geopolitical climate during the time in which this reinstallation project has been undertaken and the global audiences it seeks to address.<sup>56</sup> The emergence of

### Near Eastern Department Initiatives, 1930s–40s



Figs. 14 and 15 May 15, 1935: The “Oriental Rugs and Textiles” exhibition. This may have been the only exhibition in the Museum’s history to have used live models to display many of the Indian costumes that were shown (see below).



Islamic art from its pre-Islamic heritage and its profound artistic exchanges with wider contemporaneous traditions, notably those of Europe and the Far East, present Islamic culture as both a recipient and a disseminator of broad influences, with many and separate points of origin and development. A new space (457) for the Islamic West (Spain, North Africa, and southern Italy) just off the introductory gallery highlights eight centuries of Islamic art and culture in premodern Europe. A second entrance into the galleries is provided through a space for later South Asia (464; mainly Jain, Rajput, Pahari, and related traditions), which lies outside the footprint of the main galleries but is connected to them through the adjoining Mughal and Sultanate galleries. This spatial innovation allows for the unified presentation of the later arts of the Indian subcontinent as related to, but also independent from, Islamic traditions.<sup>57</sup> Another historically meaningful point of entry into the galleries connects medieval Egypt and Syria to the Museum's nineteenth-century "Orientalism" galleries exhibiting European artists' treatment of Middle Eastern subjects (454).

The challenge of achieving a balance between two important cultural forces—region and religion—presents a constant tension in the installation. Islamic tradition itself recognizes the duality between unity of belief and diversity of peoples as expressed in its sacred text: "We created you nations and tribes that ye may know one another" (Qur'an 49:13). Interpretation of the works as part of the Islamic tradition rather than a phase in the long

artistic development of a particular region or culture is independently stressed through the fresh floor plan, new juxtapositions of works, integration of key objects from other departments, and updated didactic labels and texts. In light of the complex political and historical networks and numerous exchanges through trade, travel, people, and ideas, regional boundaries are not dogmatically asserted but made flexible according to the nature of the material. Links across borders are also demonstrated by the incorporation of post-Sasanian, Coptic, and Byzantine objects with early Islamic-period works; Jewish, Christian, and Islamic manuscripts displayed together with other works from Islamic Spain; and Chinese ceramics shown alongside Persian or Ottoman adaptations, among other examples. This treatment of the subject expands conceptual parameters to reflect modern scholarship and highlights the multifaceted nature of Islamic art, which includes Muslim and non-Muslim artists and patrons.<sup>58</sup>

Contextualization of art styles within the courtly patronage of Islamic dynasties has become central to the approach of the broader scholarly field and is consequently reflected within the galleries, as before. Nomenclature such as Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Iran, or Mughal India helps locate the works within such cultural parameters. Equally, tribal and nomadic art, commercial production, interregional trade, and foreign patronage are given their places within each sphere. (For example, in three adjoining spaces the Ottoman wing showcases the court arts of imperial Istanbul; the Damascus Room, an eighteenth-century



Fig. 16 October 25, 1937: Gallery E-15. The Near Eastern Department expanded its space by converting an airshaft. Gallery E-15 opened with the first temporary display of archaeological material from Nishapur, where Museum excavations were then active. Visible are stucco dado panels from Sabz Pushan and photographs of the excavation sites.



Fig. 17 May 18, 1943: Gallery E-13. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Museum sent most of its large and fragile art objects to a rural Pennsylvania location thought to be safer from air raids, and some galleries were closed because staff were serving the war effort. The Near Eastern galleries remained open with limited displays, while educational programs continued unabated, here with Mughal miniatures from the Alexander Smith Cochran Collection.

domestic interior from the Ottoman provincial center at Damascus; and classical and village carpets.) The installation thus attempts to weave together and synthesize these wide contexts, allowing for the broadest and most nuanced understanding of the material. This approach represents a shift in emphasis from the underlying unity and greater linearity that characterized the previous Islamic galleries to rooting the art in the distinctive geographic, cultural, and linguistic realms of the Islamic world.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, care has been taken to preserve a sense of the timeless permanence of the objects themselves and the many seasons of human history and varied interpretations through which they have endured.

### *Past Legacies and Present Design*

The previous installation history of this material at the Museum goes back almost a century, leading up to the creation of the Department of Islamic Art in 1963.<sup>60</sup> The immediate predecessor of the present galleries, established in the same space in 1975, represented at the time the first major and most extensive display dedicated to Islamic art in any museum in North America.<sup>61</sup> This celebrated installation of ten galleries created by Richard Ettinghausen and other members of the Islamic Department provided a stimulating visitor experience as well as a teaching tool for generations of art historians and students.<sup>62</sup> The display underscored the unity of artistic expression through an interwoven

presentation of the material spanning a period of a thousand years. Special areas within the galleries included a dedicated section for archaeological finds from Nishapur, a room for religious arts, and the installation of the Damascus period room, in addition to outer galleries for the later arts of Iran, Turkey, and the Indian subcontinent. Many of the most-admired features of these former galleries have been retained in the present installation, including seated areas for the viewing of paintings, carpet platforms for oversize rugs, the use of mixed media in display cases, and maintenance of large open spaces. The present installation also retains much of the basic outline of the original McKim, Mead, and White floor plan of Wing K (fig. 1).<sup>63</sup>

In styling the new galleries, one of the principal aims has been to create an appropriate setting for the objects in keeping with the overall emphasis on regional diversity.<sup>64</sup> Texture and color have been used to convey a sense of individual place. The stones for the floors in the galleries have largely been sourced from the regions represented, with white marble employed in transitional spaces as a common material.<sup>65</sup> A pair of sixteenth-century Mughal *jali* screens set in the east wall of the introductory gallery (450) provide inspiration for the room's inlaid cartouche- and medallion floor pattern. These classic Mughal architectural motifs are also found all over the Islamic world in a variety of media, from carpets to bookbindings.

The arch-shaped portals between some galleries and the stepped banding of the ceiling design find prototypes in Islamic

### Near Eastern Department Expansion, 1930s–40s



Fig. 18 December 2, 1944: Gallery D-3. When the Museum brought back objects sent away after Pearl Harbor, the Near Eastern Department celebrated with an exhibition, “20 Great Rugs of the Orient.” Shown at right is the Emperor’s Carpet (before 2011 displayed only twice), along with rugs from the Morgan and McMullan gifts.



Fig. 19 September 12, 1939: Gallery E-14A. The first display of the 1354 mihrab from the Madrasa Imami, Isfahan. It has been on virtually continuous display since its acquisition and remains an iconic piece.



architecture, including the Damascus Room. Modern glass mosque lamps suspended in the gallery for medieval Syria and Egypt (454) mark the space as another point of entry into the gallery suite.<sup>66</sup> Window openings in the clerestory around the Roman court allow for long views of the sculpture below seen through pierced wooden *mashrabiyya* screens, encouraging historical connections for the early Islamic material and introducing the visual and symbolic element of filtered light.<sup>67</sup> The aural and visual effects of water in the live fountains of the Damascus Room and Moroccan Court are intended to animate the gallery setting and evoke a unifying symbol of the Islamic world.

A Maghribi-Andalusi medieval-style court created by artisans from Fez is a special feature of the new galleries (fig. 26).<sup>68</sup> This Ibero-Moroccan Court is an area of repose, filled with light and color, and acts as an extension to the adjoining gallery for the arts of Spain, North Africa, and the western Islamic world. Bordered by original Nasrid-period columns from the Museum's holdings, the decoration of the court combines traditional *ziliġ* tiles, carved plaster, cedar woodwork, and a low marble fountain basin. Representing a living craft tradition of the Islamic world, the court is conceived around design elements and a color palette closely based on Marinid and Nasrid models of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> The design of the wall tiles is adapted from a tile panel from the Alhambra palace that was displayed at the Metropolitan Museum in 1992.<sup>70</sup>

## Processes, Strategies, Discoveries

The present organizational approach to the galleries evolved from the investigation of many alternative ideas, several of which were explored in early designs.<sup>71</sup> The participation of the wider academic community in developing the present scholarly approach, as well as the input of other groups toward understanding audience and visitor experience was sought throughout the reinstallation process.<sup>72</sup> Strategies included academic meetings;<sup>73</sup> an ongoing program of special installations, exhibitions, lectures, and symposia;<sup>74</sup> exchanges with a variety of audience groups;<sup>75</sup> and visitor surveys.<sup>76</sup> Among the more significant results were: the consensus among many Islamic art historians of the shortcomings of the term *Islamic art*, especially within a museum context;<sup>77</sup> the wide interest in the presentation of intercultural connections; the powerful resonance of the idea of western Islamic art; the public interest in conservation work; the degree of public unfamiliarity with the history and ruling dynasties of the Islamic world; and the prevailing misconceptions about the role of figural imagery in the arts of the Islamic world. Visitor surveys also revealed a heightened level of interest in the region and material due to current events.

The process of preparing for reinstallation led to significant new scholarship on the collection by staff and researchers and has been shared more widely through the Museum's educational and information systems.<sup>78</sup> A major survey of the holdings resulted not just in the rediscovery of many works previously only rarely,



Fig. 20 May 20, 1949: Gallery E 14A. After a complete closure in 1947–49, the slightly enlarged Near Eastern Department galleries reopened in the same space with new signage and expanded displays. Sadly, between 1958 and 1962 all of the Near Eastern galleries closed again due to Museum rebuilding; only one reopened before the construction of the 1975 galleries. Eighteenth-century Ottoman stained-glass windows at top left remain unchanged from the post-World War I installation.

or in some cases never, displayed, but also in new digital photography and updated records for global Internet access. In addition, the opportunity to undertake substantial conservation work on the collection led to significant improvements in the condition of many objects as well as a better understanding and some new discoveries.<sup>79</sup> Among them, an analysis of the original structure and decoration of the 1707 Damascus Room resulted in a new configuration, closer to the original layout of the room. The restoration of the early sixteenth-century Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181) from Iran allowed for improved knowledge of its structure and palette and its introduction into the gallery display on a long-term basis. Other notable conservation projects included the restoration of an important eighteenth-century Ottoman silk banner and numerous manuscripts and paintings. Archaeological material from the Nishapur excavations and later *mina'i* ceramics from Iran, among other objects, were closely examined, and new approaches to their restoration and presentation were jointly developed by the conservation, scientific, and curatorial departments.

Information on the collection is conveyed by a variety of means in the galleries, from the traditional object label in the vitrine to the latest technological methods such as electronic handheld devices or audio guides.<sup>80</sup> The general aim has been to stack information to serve a variety of interest levels, with a concise and lively delivery in the object labels, making use of diagrams and other nonwritten methods to impart detail, and more in-depth offerings on the accompanying touch-screen monitors,

handheld devices, Teacher Resource Guide, catalogue, and the Museum website. Wall labels, maps, and illustrations of architecture in the galleries serve to contextualize the collection within historical and cultural parameters and to help the visitor grasp the complex geography related to the collection.

### *The New Galleries (Galleries 450–464)*

The introductory gallery (450) has been envisioned as a space to feature masterpieces and new acquisitions from the collection and serves as a vantage point from which a viewer can discern the scope of the interior by offering visual and physical access into two wings around the central court, as well as views into the adjacent South Asian galleries through sixteenth-century Mughal *jali* screens. Objects on display include a pair of carved ivory inlaid *minbar* doors from Mamluk Egypt donated in the late nineteenth century by Edward C. Moore, one of the founders of the collection. Recently restored monumental Timurid Qur'an pages, a carved Ilkhanid *rahla* (book stand), and a group of calligraphic and painted folios, several of which have been recently acquired, represent the collection's strength in the arts of the book. A powerful inscribed black-on-white slip Nishapur vessel of the tenth century, a molded and glazed Kashan ceramic *mihrab* fragment with springing vines, a calligraphic stone panel from Sultanate Bengal, and other works demonstrate the quintessential elements of the arts of the region and express the underpinning Islamic influence.<sup>81</sup>

### The Postwar Displays, 1949–70



Fig. 21 May 20, 1949: Gallery E-15. A highlight of the Near Eastern Department's new 1949 gallery installations was the first permanent display of objects excavated at Nishapur. Stucco panels, ceramics, and photographs of the tomb of Umar Khayyam near the site are visible.



Fig. 22 1949: Gallery H-20, the postwar installation. Ottoman and Safavid silks are shown in the cases. H-20 had curtains that could be drawn to protect textiles and paintings from sunlight and offered views into the Near Eastern armor installation below.

### *Arab Lands (Galleries 451, 454, 456, 457)*

Leading through an early Islamic-style triple-arch colonnade, the main route off the introductory gallery initiates the visitor through the materials of the Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid (750–1258) periods in the eastern Mediterranean and Iran, regions that came under Arab sway in this early phase (451). Transitions from Late Antique and Sasanian traditions toward a new idiom under the influence of Islam are shown through Coptic textiles, post-Sasanian Persian metalwork, and examples of Late Classical-influenced woodwork. A consolidated display of early and medieval Qur'an pages explores the birth and evolution over four centuries of Arabic calligraphy, underscoring the most prestigious of Islamic artistic traditions. The art of the Abbasids centered at Baghdad and their far-reaching cultural impact is seen in the Museum's "beveled-style" carved wood from Samarra, as well as in luster ceramics from various centers at Raqqa, Cairo, and, later, Kashan. The Museum's collection of epigraphic textile fragments (*tiraz*) gives an indication of the luxury textiles produced by royal workshops at several centers in Egypt, Yemen, and Iran in this early period.

The southward route off the introductory gallery leads into a space for the arts of Spain, North Africa, and southern Italy (457), extending into the adjoining Moroccan Court (456) through Spanish Nasrid columns. This combined area represents a new conception in the overall scheme, a space in which the

artistic culture of eight hundred years of the Islamic West is presented. A collaboration with the Hispanic Society of America has strengthened the display through a long-term loan of important objects. Highlights include a group of early carved ivories from the period of Umayyad rule in Spain (756–1031) and a later group from southern Italy, including the Morgan Casket, one of the earliest objects to have entered the collection. A special grouping of manuscripts explores the shared exchanges in book decoration between different faith traditions during the Nasrid (1232–1492) and other periods.

The arts of medieval Egypt and Syria are presented in a further gallery (454) that connects with the Orientalist painting gallery of the nineteenth-century European wing through an independent entrance. Among the highlights on display are works made for Mamluk (1250–1517) and Rasulid (1228–1454) rulers, including gilded and enameled glass, inlaid metalwork, manuscripts, and paintings. Fatimid (909–1171) and Ayyubid (1171–1260) precursors include textile fragments and carved wooden architectural elements. The expanded Kevorkian Fund Special Exhibitions Gallery (458) lies off this portal, providing space for temporary exhibitions.

### *Turkey (Galleries 459, 460, 461)*

The galleries devoted to the arts of the Ottoman world have effectively tripled in size from their previous representation. The main



Fig. 23 May 20, 1949: Gallery E-13A, the newly arranged "Islamic Sculpture" gallery. The title draws attention to the collection of carved and relief works on display.



Fig. 24 1965: After years with no objects on display at all, the Islamic Department, established in 1963, was given a single temporary gallery created by combining the principal Near Eastern galleries, E-12–14. From then until shortly before the 1975 galleries opened, this modernist-feeling space showed representative objects from various places and eras.

goal of this expansion is to adequately reflect the span of the Ottoman Empire (1299–1923) as well as to display more effectively the depth of the collection in this area. Three adjoining spaces now show different levels and traditions of Ottoman art: Istanbul and the courtly arts in the central gallery (460); carpets and textiles of Anatolia and other regions (459);<sup>82</sup> and the period room dated 1707 from Ottoman Damascus (461).<sup>83</sup> Augmenting the display is material on loan from the Arms and Armor Department.

The central gallery draws together works from the classical Ottoman period, including the imperial *tughra* (monogram) of Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), a collection of Iznik ceramics spanning almost two hundred fifty years, and a group of important manuscripts, some recently attributed to Ottoman Baghdad. A thorough investigation of the reconfigured Damascus Room has provided fresh readings and identifications of the inscriptions, a better understanding of the complex techniques of the painted wooden decoration, and a reattribution of the fountain to the earlier Mamluk period (1250–1517). The flanking carpet gallery is crowned by a painted-and-gilded ceiling with interstellar geometric patterns from sixteenth-century Spain, below which a modular carpet platform permits the most fragile Turkish carpets of various shapes and sizes to be shown; space on the walls allows for the display of tribal and nomadic rugs of the wider Ottoman world.<sup>84</sup> Visually, the resulting efflorescence of medallions, stars, and geometric-based ornament expresses a fundamental formal element of Islamic art.

## Iran and Central Asia (Galleries 452, 453, 455, 462)

The arts of Iran represent almost 60 percent of the collections and are shown in at least four of the galleries in the total suite.<sup>85</sup> Iranian art therefore runs as a thread through the installation and is reintroduced at several points. Early Iranian works following the Arab conquest of the region are displayed along with other works of the early Islamic period together in the first gallery (451). Archaeological material excavated by the Museum between 1935 and 1940/47 from the important medieval city of Nishapur and a reconstruction of an interior space with carved stucco dado panels from the site of Sabz Pushan are shown together in the following gallery (452).<sup>86</sup> A further survey of works from Iran, Central Asia, and Afghanistan shows the patronage of the Samanid (819–1005), Ghaznavid (977–1186), Ghurid (1000–1215), and Seljuq (1040–1194) dynasties (453).

Following the Mongol invasions of the early thirteenth century, the arts of Iran reflect renewed connections with the Far East, developing a style that came to have a major impact on the arts of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal worlds. A gallery (455) displaying Iranian and Central Asian works from the Mongol Ilkhanid (1256–1353), Turkmen (1380–1508), and Timurid (1370–1507) worlds lies on the route to the galleries for the later empires. The arts of the book from this classic age form a major part of the display. This gallery also holds the Museum's well-known blue cut-tile *mihrab* from a *madrasa* at Isfahan dated

## A New Identity for the Department of Islamic Art, 1975–2011



Fig. 25 September 24, 1975: Gallery K-31. The Islamic Department's first permanent galleries, a major suite of ten rooms, opened in September 1975. This space, known as Gallery 6, contained Timurid and Safavid art, including the Seley Carpet, with seating at desks for the viewing of miniatures, a popular feature retained in the new galleries.



Fig. 26 March 1, 2011: Wing K, Gallery 457 (see fig. 27). Craftsmen from Fez create the Moroccan Court in the 2011 installation of the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia.



1354. Safavid magnificence is the main focus of the largest of the Iranian galleries (462), which also displays works from successive periods up until the late nineteenth century.<sup>87</sup> Among the masterpieces here are the Emperor's Carpet, folios from the *Tahmasp Shahnama*, and a dedicated "connoisseur's corner" for the display of Persian drawings. Connections with China, India, and Europe are explored through ceramics, painting, and the artistic patronage at Isfahan.

### *Later South Asia (Galleries 463, 464)*

Two galleries for the arts of later South Asia unify the collections of the Islamic and Asian departments in adjoining spaces, which together display objects from the many artistic centers of the Indian subcontinent from about the early fifteenth century. Works of art are arranged chronologically and grouped by court or region, with a concentration of Sultanate, Mughal, Deccan, and later Mughal works in one gallery (463) and Rajput, Punjab Hills, British "Company," and some late South Indian traditions in the second (464). A number of new acquisitions join the existing strengths of the collection, including a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century gilded Golconda dagger with zoomorphic hilt, a painting of the goddess Bhairavi of about 1635, attributed to the Mughal master Payag, and a study of an Indian fruit bat (cat. 285), dated about 1780. An oversize glass wall case for the display of Indian textiles

shows the Museum's multiple-niche Mughal tent panel at eye level for the first time, providing a quasi-architectural climax to the space.

A significant feature of the galleries for later South Asia is their physical position within the overall suite, which includes an independent entrance off the main vestibule area. By maintaining a position beyond the footprint of the rest of the galleries, the space allows for the free and intermixed display of objects from a variety of streams of later Indian tradition, with the powerful impact of Mughal art (1526–1858) apparent throughout.

As with any installation, the new Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia are conceived not as a definitive statement but as an adaptable space in which a growing collection and new interpretations can find future room. Allowance for change and evolution within the space acknowledges the dynamic changes in the art of the regions represented, the rise of new expressions, and the rediscovery of forgotten traditions. From the perspective of the Museum's overall organization, the upper floor of the building can now be seen to offer a long view of the art of Asia, east and west, with earlier traditions displayed in the north and central section and with the present suite of galleries at the south end bringing the Museum's collections closer to our present moment.

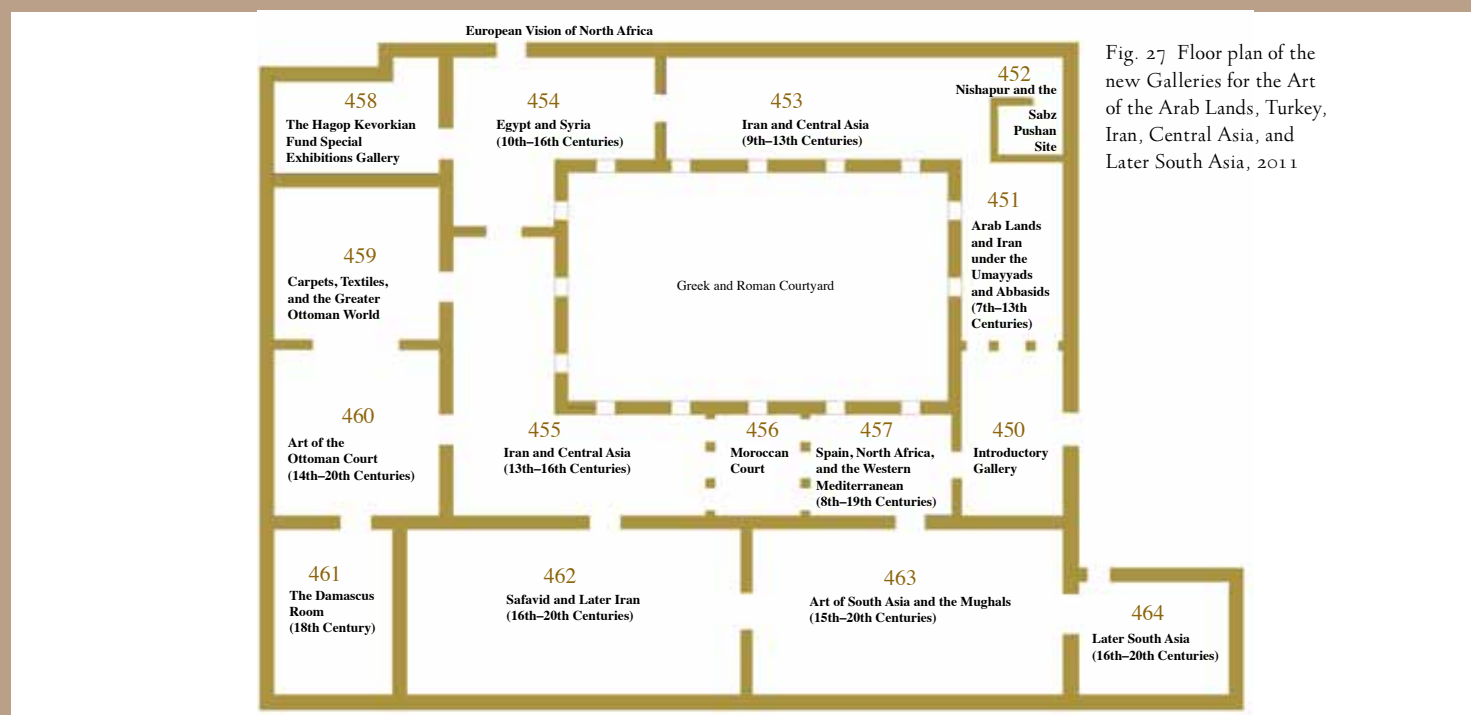


Fig. 27 Floor plan of the new Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and Later South Asia, 2011

1. Breck 1932.
2. Hewitt 1907; *MMA Annual Report* 23 (1892), p. 552.
3. Stein 1986–87.
4. *New York Times* 1901.
5. Despite display in the Islamic galleries, these objects are under the custody of the Department of Asian Art. For Bishop's biography, see *New York Times* 1902a, b; on his collection, see Kunz 1903 and *Bishop Collection* 1909, pp. 82–86.
6. Howe 1913, p. 289.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 310.
8. This wing, designated by the letter "F" in schematic plans of the Museum, was also called the Morgan Wing. At present it displays the Museum's collection of arms and armor.
9. Valentiner 1913; Jackson and Yohannan 1914.
10. Breck 1920.
11. Daggett 1910, pp. 311–13.
12. Breck 1920.
13. Objects said to come from Egypt include nine shards: acc. nos. 20.120.192–201, and a green-glazed bowl: 20.120.207.
14. His Syrian examples seem to have come from Raqqa; see Jenkins-Madina 2006, p. 122; additional Syrian examples include acc. nos. 20.120.202, 20.120.220–224, and 20.120.226.
15. Dimand 1955; Dimand and Mailey 1973, pp. 41, 43, 96, 101–4, 111–14, 130–32.
16. *New York Times* 1921; New York 1921.
17. Ballard 1916; Minneapolis 1922; Chicago 1922–23; Pittsburgh 1923; Buffalo 1926.
18. New York 1930; New York 1935; New York 1961; New York 1966.
19. Dimand 1924.
20. Dimand 1932b; Dimand 1933a.
21. *MMA Bulletin* 1930.
22. Havemeyer 1993, pp. xiv–xv, 16, 70–76, 297; Frelinghuysen 1993, pp. 101–2.
23. Dimand 1957.
24. Jenkins-Madina 2006, pp. 19, 124–39, 146–57; Frelinghuysen 1993, pp. 107–13.
25. On the history of this firm, see Pruitt 1998.
26. Her own works are said to have been destroyed by a fire at her New Jersey residence in March 1939; on the bequest, see *MMA Annual Report* 87 (1956–57), p. 68.
27. A number of the prints donated by Cora Timken were included in a recent exhibition of Japanese prints from the San Diego Museum of Art, "Dreams and Diversions: 250 Years of Japanese Woodblock Prints," Founders Hall, University of San Diego, February 26–June 5, 2011.
28. Roxburgh 1998, pp. 50–57, figs. 9–10.
29. Ettinghausen 1970a; McMullen 1965.
30. Dimand 1944b.
31. *MMA Annual Report* 74 (1943–44), pp. 37–38; Dimand and Mailey 1973, p. 101, no. 12, fig. 76, acc. no. 43.121.1; pp. 109–10, no. 37, fig. 104, acc. no. 43.121.2.
32. Dimand 1952.
33. He compiled a catalogue for an exhibition of rugs belonging to the Kevorkian Foundation (New York 1966).
34. Fino 2010; finds from Ctesiphon in the custody of the Islamic Department include 174 ceramic fragments and 20 glass objects or fragments.
35. Whitcomb 1985; Frye, ed. 1973.
36. Wilkinson 1973; Wilkinson 1986.
37. Ernst J. Grube in *MMA Annual Report* 94 (1963–64), pp. 74–76.
38. *Ibid.*, 95 (1964–65), pp. 63–65; 96 (1965–66), pp. 83–84; 97 (1966–67), pp. 74–78.
39. *Ibid.*, 98 (1967–68), p. 103.
40. Richard Ettinghausen in *MMA Annual Report* 99 (1968–69), pp. 79–81; donation of the "Nur-al-Din" room (now called the Damascus Room) is mentioned in *ibid.*, 100 (1969–70), pp. 84–85.
41. *Ibid.*, 100 (1969–70), pp. 83, 86.
42. Gifts of carpets by McMullan occurred in 1970 (*ibid.*, pp. 84, 85), in 1972 (*MMA Annual Report* 102 [1971–72], pp. 44, 45), and in 1973 (*ibid.*, 104 [1973–74], p. 47).
43. *MMA Annual Report* 102 (1971–72), p. 45; New York 1972.
44. *MMA Annual Report* 106 (1975–76), pp. 12, 47–49; 107 (1976–77), p. 55.
45. Stuart Cary Welch in *MMA Annual Report* 110 (1979–80), pp. 38–40.
46. The seventeenth-century basin is acc. no. 1984.213 and the marble screen is 1984.193. Important donors of Indian objects include Wendy Findlay and Alice C. Heeramaneck; for a listing of acquisitions, see Welch in *MMA Annual Report* 112 (1981–82), pp. 33–34; 113 (1982–83), pp. 36–37; 114 (1983–84), pp. 36–37; 115 (1984–85), pp. 39–40; 116 (1985–86), pp. 30–31; Daniel Walker in *MMA Annual Report* 118 (1987–88), pp. 29–30.
47. New York 1985–86.
48. Jewelry purchased by funds from Patti Cadby Birch include acc. nos. 1981.222.1–6 and 1976.405–406; Objects purchased with Seley funds include acc. nos. 1978.141–2, 1979.7.1–4.
49. New York 1983.
50. This object was discussed in New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, pp. 86, 275, no. 148, fig. 89.
51. Purchases of religious texts include acc. no. 1990.265, a prayer scroll dated to 1810.
52. Diba et al. 2011.
53. The ca. 1635 painting of the goddess Bhairavi is attributed to Payag; the dagger (acc. no. 2011.236) has a gilded zoomorphic hilt.
54. See the photo essay by Rebecca Lindsey in this chapter, as well as a website feature with expanded information at [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).
55. The term *Islamic Art* remains in use as recognition of the wider academic field and as the identity of the department.
56. The Museum's reinstallation project was undertaken in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, and continuing changes in worldwide political events. Coincidentally, several other major museums were also completing, or have recently completed, similar projects. For a partial overview, see Bloom and Blair 2009.
57. This gallery is the result of collaboration with the Department of Asian Art, which presently oversees part of the later South Asian collections along with early sculpture.
58. The last thirty years of scholarship in the field have seen the development of major specializations in textile studies, codicology, and metalwork, as well as new work on cultural interconnections.
59. Ettinghausen et al. 1975a, p. 4, offers perspectives into the philosophical approach of the previous installation. Adamova 1999, pp. 7–8, discusses the issue of exhibiting unity versus diversity in Islamic art. In the same volume, other approaches and displays are also explored.

60. In addition to the preceding photo essay and essay, Jenkins-Madina 2000 provides insights into the early history of the collection. In the same volume other authors discuss related topics. Wider discussions are found in Vernoit, ed. 2000.
61. Ettinghausen et al. 1975a accompanied the gallery opening. *MMA Annual Report* 106 (1975–76), pp. 9, 47, contains an official report of the opening of the galleries.
62. Responses to the previous installation include Grabar 1976 and Goldin 1976. These responses are discussed along with a summary of developments and new thoughts in Komaroff 2000.
63. See Heckscher 1995 for a history of the building including Wing K. The original plans included three windows overlooking the Roman court, which have been reopened along with other later openings above the court.
64. The design for the new galleries was created collaboratively between the Museum's curatorial and design departments and Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates. A few outside architects were invited to give informal input, records of which are maintained in the Islamic Department files. The construction was completed by RCDolner.
65. Michael Spink's suggestions of employing color and texture are gratefully acknowledged here. Stone for the floors was sourced from Turkey, Egypt, Spain, and India, among other places.
66. These mosque lamps were created by Kevin Kutch and Mary Ellen Buxton of Pier Glass, New York.
67. These screens were manufactured in Cairo, Egypt, by Adham Nadim and colleagues of Al-Nadim Company.
68. The Moroccan Court was created by the artisanal firm Arabesque Moresque, run by the Naji family of Fez, Morocco. The scholarly guide for the project was Nadia Erzini, curator of the Luqash Madrasa Museum in Tetouan. The court design was by Achva Benzinberg Stein of City College, New York, in collaboration with Museum gallery designer Michael Batista and Garry Leonard of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo Associates. An extensive didactic program, including a documentary film and forthcoming publication, records and discusses the concept and making of the Moroccan Court.
69. The stucco and ceiling designs are largely adapted from the 'Attarine Madrasa and the Bou 'Inania Madrasa in Fez.
70. For the *zili*j pattern and tile panel, see Granada and New York 1992, p. 375, no. 119.
71. Records of suggestions and alternative plans are preserved in the Department of Islamic Art private records. In addition, grateful acknowledgment is made here of the many informal contributions and suggestions of Museum colleagues, academics, designers, artists, and friends that are reflected in the concept, design, and execution of the galleries.
72. Recent pertinent discussions on the topic of Islamic art in museum installations are found in Blair and Bloom 2003, Folsach 2006–7, and Crill and Stanley 2006. Guha-Thakurta 2004 offers a critical survey on museum practices in nineteenth- and twentieth-century India.
73. On October 27, 2004, and November 18, 2004, the Museum held roundtable meetings including scholars as well as select curators and others. Internal minutes recording these discussions are preserved in the Department of Islamic Art files. In addition, the department has maintained a list of more than forty scholars who were shown the evolving plans and whose input was considered.
74. During the reinstallation period (2003–2011) a variety of objects from the Department of Islamic Art were shown in other parts of the Museum. Exhibitions and special installations included "Pearls of the Parrot" (October 14, 2005–March 12, 2006), "Venice and the Islamic World" (March 27–July 8, 2007), and "Masterpieces of Islamic Calligraphy" (June 2, 2009–September 1, 2009). Lectures and symposia included the annual Schimmel and Wilkinson lectures and the symposium "Art of India's Deccan Sultans" (October 24–25, 2008).
75. Formal and informal exchanges included those with local, national, and international cultural groups, official bodies, and academic advisers, sometimes in collaboration with the Museum's Multicultural Audience Initiative (MADI) and other departments.
76. Visitor surveys were conducted during the spring of 2009, with analysis of results preserved in the Department of Islamic Art files. The responses came from a variety of visitors aged from their late twenties to late seventies and included local and foreign residents, Muslims and non-Muslims, and a range of cultural, professional, and linguistic backgrounds. Topics included reasons for interest; understanding forthcoming expectations; familiarity with art-historical, historical, geographic, and other terminology; responses to label styles and content; responses to conservation issues; and existing misconceptions about Islamic art, tradition, or history.
77. A number of sometimes varying definitions of Islamic art exist in scholarly literature, a sampling of which can be found in Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 3; Brend 1991, p. 10; Ettinghausen 1984; Issa 1994; Grabar 1987a, pp. 1–18; Burckhardt 1976, p. 31; and Folsach 2001, pp. 19–21. One of the strongest challenges to the concept of Islamic art is expressed in Melikian 2001, p. 94.
78. See the Museum's website, [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).
79. See the remarks by Jean-François de Lapérouse in this volume for an outline of the conservation work undertaken for this project.
80. Canby 1999a outlines some of the philosophical and practical issues around the question of labels, didactics, and information in museums.
81. Komaroff 1992a provides an overview of the previous set of galleries. In 1976 the installation was accompanied by a special *Bulletin* as well as a slim booklet, *Notes on Islamic Art in Its Historical Setting* (Ettinghausen et al. 1975a, b).
82. These two galleries are named the Koç Family Galleries.
83. The Damascus Room is part of the Kevorkian Fund gift to the Museum.
84. Shtrum et al. 2010, pp. 29–50.
85. The large number of Iranian works in the collection is due to the substantial findings of the Nishapur excavations. They also reflect the roots of the Islamic Department, which grew out of the Near Eastern section and its strong component of Iranian materials.
86. This gallery is named after the Iranian American community.
87. This gallery is named the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Gallery.



## *Art of the Early Caliphates (7th to 10th Centuries)*

MARYAM D. EKHTIAR

The story of early Islamic art and architecture begins well before the advent of Islam. In recent years, scholars have attempted to reframe the art and culture of this transitional period by integrating it into the study of the Late Antique world.<sup>1</sup> This more inclusive and nuanced approach has allowed for an increasingly pluralistic, interdisciplinary consideration of the late Roman, Sasanian, and early Islamic societies by breaking down barriers of geography and periodization.<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, the advent of Islam in the early seventh century is no longer seen as a drastic break from Late Antique culture, which is believed to have extended well into the early ninth century.

Long before the birth of Islam the two greatest cultural, political, and military forces in the Near East, the Byzantine and

Sasanian empires, had developed a shared visual and cultural language of legitimacy. The cross-cultural exchanges between these two realms encompassed both friendly interchange and hostile, combative statements of competition;<sup>3</sup> the rock reliefs at Bishapur showing the Sasanian Shapur I triumphing over the Roman emperor Valerian in 260 A.D. are prime examples of this second type of interaction.<sup>4</sup> Various processes of interconnection and influence included forced migrations as a result of war, skilled craftsmen and artists seeking new opportunities, and direct diplomatic contact, as well as gift exchange and trade between the lands of the Mediterranean, West and Central Asia, and the Indian Ocean. The similarities in style and decorative vocabulary among the arts of the fifth and sixth centuries—exemplified



by the architecture and domestic mosaics from Roman Antioch, Sasanian seals, and decorative and utilitarian objects that on the basis of style could have originated in either empire—all show evidence of selective appropriation and the convergence of artistic taste.

The fall of the Sasanian Empire and the loss of control by the Byzantines of their eastern territories provided a fertile ground for the emergence of a new faith in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula and eventually a new political order in the Near East. Islam was based on the divine message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel, beginning around the year 610. These revelations were later collected and compiled to form Islam's holy book, the Qur'an. Within twenty years of his receiving the revelations, Muhammad's message had gained a following in both Mecca and Medina; its main objective was to free the inhabitants of the Hijaz region of the peninsula from pagan worship in favor of the belief in one God (in Arabic, Allah).<sup>5</sup> Including elements of both Judaic and Christian beliefs, Islam is the last of the monotheistic religions. The arrival of Islam in the Near East placed Muslims on an equal footing with Jews and Christians as "people of the book" and as the ultimate inheritors of the Abrahamic tradition.

The year 622 A.D., the date of the *hijra*, or flight of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina, marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar, which is based on a lunar year. From the Arabian Peninsula the Muslim conquest soon spread to surrounding areas in the Byzantine and Persian Sasanian empires. By 714 the Arabs had pushed the frontiers of Islam as far west as Spain and as far east as India and China, incorporating vast territories into their new realm.

The death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 was followed by the rule (632–61) of the four "Rightly Guided Caliphs," who were chosen from the Prophet's immediate circle. During this period the new Muslim rulers reportedly annexed or built new structures in close proximity to Christian churches and Zoroastrian temples, intending these buildings for use as mosques, or Muslim places of worship. In this way, the caliphs physically aligned themselves with the local religious communities in the conquered cities.<sup>6</sup> In 651, nineteen years after the death of the Prophet, 'Uthman (r. 644–56), the third caliph, ordered a group of scholars to produce a standard written copy of the text of the Qur'an, often referred to as the 'Uthmanic recension. This text, which was divided into 114 chapters (Suras), has remained fundamentally unchanged and continues to serve as the standard form for the Qur'an today.

Although the date of the *hijra* marks the beginning of the Islamic era, it does not necessarily correspond to the beginning of a new artistic tradition. The development of an Islamic artistic identity was a slow and incremental process. In fact, the art of

the earliest Islamic period is not drastically different from that of the artistic traditions that preceded it.<sup>7</sup> Artists and craftsmen who had formerly worked under Byzantine and Sasanian patronage continued to follow preexisting conventions under Muslim patrons. Textiles produced in Egypt during this period, for example, mirrored the long-established Coptic tradition,<sup>8</sup> and early Islamic glass and metalwork from Iran are often indistinguishable from their Late Antique and Sasanian antecedents. Given the centuries of interaction between the two powers prior to the Arab conquests, it is rarely possible in specific cases to identify one or the other as the sole source of artistic inspiration.

In the attempt to date and attribute these early Islamic works of art, scholars have relied on various forms of technical analysis, stylistic comparisons with datable architectural monuments, and a few dated or datable objects found in archaeological excavations. For instance, the incised decorative scheme on the so-called Marwan ewer excavated at Abu Sir al-Malak in Egypt, where the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II (r. 744–50), was reportedly killed by the Abbasids in 750, closely resembles designs on a woven textile fragment with an Arabic inscription in *kufic* script that contains Marwan's name.<sup>9</sup> This visual evidence has aided the attribution of the Metropolitan Museum's very similar ewer with a cock-shaped spout (cat. 7) to roughly the same time. In much the same way, paleographic comparisons using decorative inscriptions from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (about 690) have aided the dating of early Qur'an manuscripts and folios.<sup>10</sup>

New paleographic evidence documenting the emergence of Arabic script from its Nabatean origins in Syria at sites such as Zabad (512), Jabal Usays (529), and Harran (568) has led to the more accurate dating of early epigraphic material, providing us with the ability to date the first extant Arabic papyrus documents (643) and the first fragmentary Qur'an manuscripts on parchment, or *mushaf* (from 633 to 644–56), and the emergence of *hijazi* (678), one of the earliest Arabic scripts, as well as *kufic*. This research has also revealed close affinities between early Qur'an manuscripts and Syriac, Hebrew, and Greek Bibles and scribal traditions.<sup>11</sup>

Mosaics of the eighth century found near the Jordanian town of Umm al-Rasas and other sites, produced for Christian patrons during the first centuries of Islam, not only reflect a continuum with Late Antique mosaics but also serve as historical documents that are as equally informative as literary texts, inscriptions, coins, sculptures, and buildings.<sup>12</sup> They contain inscriptions in Greek and depict classical cityscapes in addition to scenes from classical mythology. These mosaics reflect the persistence of Greco-Roman taste in the territories newly conquered by Islam.

## *The Umayyads (661–750)*

In 661 the first Islamic dynasty—the Umayyads—came to power and established a capital at Damascus in Syria. The founder, Mu‘awiya (r. 661–80), made the succession to the caliphate hereditary, putting an end to the elective system that had chosen the “Rightly Guided Caliphs.” Umayyad rule was a period of Arab supremacy, and Arabic was the language of polity, administration, and scholarship in most parts of the new empire.

The codification of the Qur’an in written form had an indelible impact on manuscript production and on the development of Arabic calligraphy as an art form. The Umayyad ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) instituted reforms of coinage in A.H. 77/676–77 A.D., eventually eliminating the depiction of human figures and substituting for them purely epigraphic text (cats. 8, 9). He also patronized the construction of mosques that were devoid of figural representations.<sup>13</sup> Another development in coinage that occurred during this period was the unification of two monetary zones, that of the Byzantine Empire, which had minted coins in gold and copper for centuries, and that of the Sasanian Empire, whose currency was the most widespread silver coin in the Near East.<sup>14</sup>

As caliph, ‘Abd al-Malik commissioned the construction of a shrine, the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem, completed in 691 and considered to be the earliest surviving Islamic monument and the first major artistic endeavor of the Umayyad dynasty. Mount Moriah, the site of the Dome of the Rock on the eastern side of Jerusalem, had important associations for all three monotheistic religions, endowing the new structure with layers of sanctity and meaning.<sup>15</sup> Much of its interior is covered with glass mosaics—a well-established Byzantine practice appropriated by ‘Abd al-Malik. These mosaic designs incorporate an amalgam of pre-Islamic Persian and Byzantine insignias of royal power, such as crowns and jewels, along with vegetal motifs; the inclusion of Qur’anic texts and litanies vividly reflects the vision and religious convictions of the Umayyad caliphs. As the earliest extensive monumental Arabic inscriptions, they establish a watershed in the use of *kufic* script on such a scale.

Historical and physical evidence affirms that several sections of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, built during the first decade of the eighth century by the caliph al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 705–15), were covered with lavish glass mosaics representing landscapes and buildings.<sup>16</sup> As with the Dome of the Rock, the decoration of this mosque was distinguished by a complete absence of human and animal imagery. Through the exclusion of such depictions from religious buildings, the Umayyad caliphs initiated a practice that has characterized Muslim religious architecture to the present day. This conscious avoidance of figural imagery in religious contexts was not limited

to architecture and was seen in coinage, Qur’ans, textiles, and other artistic media. Since the Qur’an itself does not mention figural art, the Umayyads relied upon the hadith, teachings of the Prophet, for justification of this practice. In addition, the Umayyads pursued a distinct visual identity that would not only assert their power and legitimacy but would also set them apart from their Byzantine rivals and Sasanian predecessors: religious buildings without figural decoration signaled their control over recently conquered territories.

Among a wealth of secular art and architecture commissioned by the Umayyads, agricultural estates with hunting villas, such as Qusayr ‘Amra (eastern Jordan) and Qasr al-Hayr West (Syria, southwest of Palmyra), and the grand palaces of Mshatta (Jordan) and Khirbat al-Mafjar (Jordan, near Jericho) reflect the royal and aristocratic tastes of their Muslim patrons. These were places of retreat, where the rulers went to hunt and to escape from city life and palace protocols. Like mosques and religious structures of this period, the plans, forms, and techniques originated in the architectural vocabulary of Late Antiquity. The reuse of fragments from earlier structures in these buildings was common—columns, column bases, and capitals were often antique elements adapted to suit Umayyad taste and improved to fit into the newly constructed structures.<sup>17</sup> These villas contained a remarkable variety of figural and nonfigural mosaics, wall paintings, and even three-dimensional figural sculpture illustrating royal themes that originated in pre-Islamic times, indicating that the avoidance of figural imagery was restricted to religious buildings. The divide between the religious and the secular was among the earliest developments in the history of Islamic art.

For centuries both the eastern Mediterranean region and Iran had flourishing luxury textile industries. One of the most significant contributions of the Umayyad workshops was the production of epigraphic textiles, many of which were embroidered in gold and colored threads and bore the names and titles of caliphs and the Umayyad elite. These workshops also produced luxurious robes of honor to be given to high officials and foreign dignitaries. The earliest textual evidence for such royal textile workshops, called *tiraz*, in the Islamic era dates to the Umayyad caliph Hisham (r. 724–43), while the earliest dated textile example is a fragmentary silk from a *tiraz* workshop in Ifriqiya (present-day Tunisia) with an inscription from the reign of Marwan II.<sup>18</sup> Under the Umayyads such weaving establishments were not centralized and seem to have been administered locally.<sup>19</sup> Designs and patterns from Syria, Iraq, and Persia appear in these textiles, demonstrating the universality of artistic language during this early period in Islamic history. Glass production during this time further illustrates the persistence of Sasanian and Greco-Roman techniques, shapes, and motifs. Glass mosaic (*millefiori*) as well as cut and molded glass continued

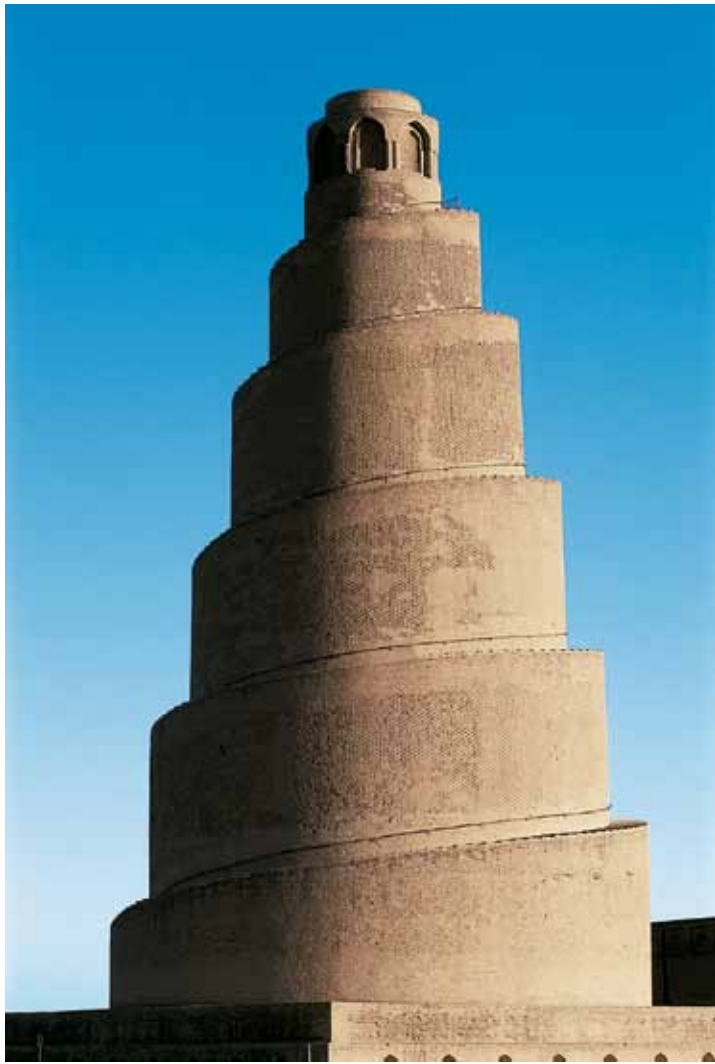


Fig. 28 Minaret, Mosque of Abu Dulaf, Samarra, 859–61. Photo: De Agostini/Getty Images

to be employed. The same is true of techniques used in early Islamic metalwork and carved wood.

Umayyad art has been characterized as a product of the novel distribution and reinterpretation of artistic forms from all over the dynasty's dominion along with the introduction of a limited number of innovations; as illustrated by the architectural structures and objects discussed above, it was eclectic, experimental, and propagandist.<sup>20</sup> Toward the end of the Umayyad period, however, a gradual movement away from pre-Islamic artistic models began with the emergence of an "Abbasid style."

### *The Abbasids (750–1258)*

In 750 the Abbasids succeeded the Umayyads; a revolt, largely by non-Arab Muslims (*mawali*) and Shi'is, led to the Umayyads'

demise and the transfer of the caliphal capital from Syria to Baghdad in Iraq. This period witnessed a turning away from the arts of the Late Antique as a direct artistic source and the gradual emergence of a new artistic identity.<sup>21</sup> Under the Abbasids, Arab supremacy was diluted. Non-Arab Muslims, such as the Persians, became the pillars of the new *umma* (community of believers). Persian *dihqans* (the local landed gentry) emerged as the backbone of the new Islamic state and sought to re-create the opulence and rich court culture of their Sasanian predecessors.<sup>22</sup> The Abbasid capital, Baghdad—the palace city, *Madinat al-Salam*, or City of Peace—with its circular wall, owed very little to the great cities of the Roman Empire: it was a later incarnation of the round cities of Assyria, Iran, and Central Asia.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, Baghdad was only about twenty-two miles (roughly thirty-five kilometers) north of the former Sasanian capital at Ctesiphon, making a relationship with the earlier culture both predictable and appropriate.

The first three centuries of Abbasid rule are considered to have been a golden age, during which distinctively Abbasid artistic developments arose that were to have a marked impact for centuries to come.<sup>24</sup> Although the Abbasid capital was first established at Baghdad, it was relocated to Samarra in 836 because of conflicts between the Turkish palace guards of the Abbasid caliphs and the other residents of Baghdad. The vicissitudes of history, as well as twentieth-century excavations at that site, have led art historians to focus on objects from Samarra to explain the evolution of early Abbasid art. Among the new artistic developments of Abbasid Baghdad and Samarra the most prominent was "the beveled style" (a technique with a distinctive slanted cut), used primarily to embellish large expanses of walls in palaces and mosques. Although decoration in the beveled style was originally formulated for stucco, it was soon applied to other media, such as carved wood (cat. 23), molded glass, and cut rock crystal. The "Samarra style" of surface decoration (which included the beveled style) eventually spread to regions as far away as Iran, Egypt, and Central Asia, where it was adapted to local tastes.

Under the Abbasids, *tiraz* weaving workshops multiplied and extended beyond the court to the marketplace. Most were concentrated along the Egyptian delta, which had been a thriving center of textile production in pre-Islamic times. Egyptian textiles survive in greater numbers than those from Spain, Yemen, Iraq, or Iran. Many inscribed *tiraz* textiles from this period include the caliph's name, which has aided in their accurate dating. Although most of the inscriptions are embroidered, some are tapestry woven, painted, or even block printed.<sup>25</sup>

The Abbasid period also saw a dramatic expansion of international trade, in particular the opening of a direct sea route from Iraq to the Indus Valley, Sind, and China that transformed Iraq

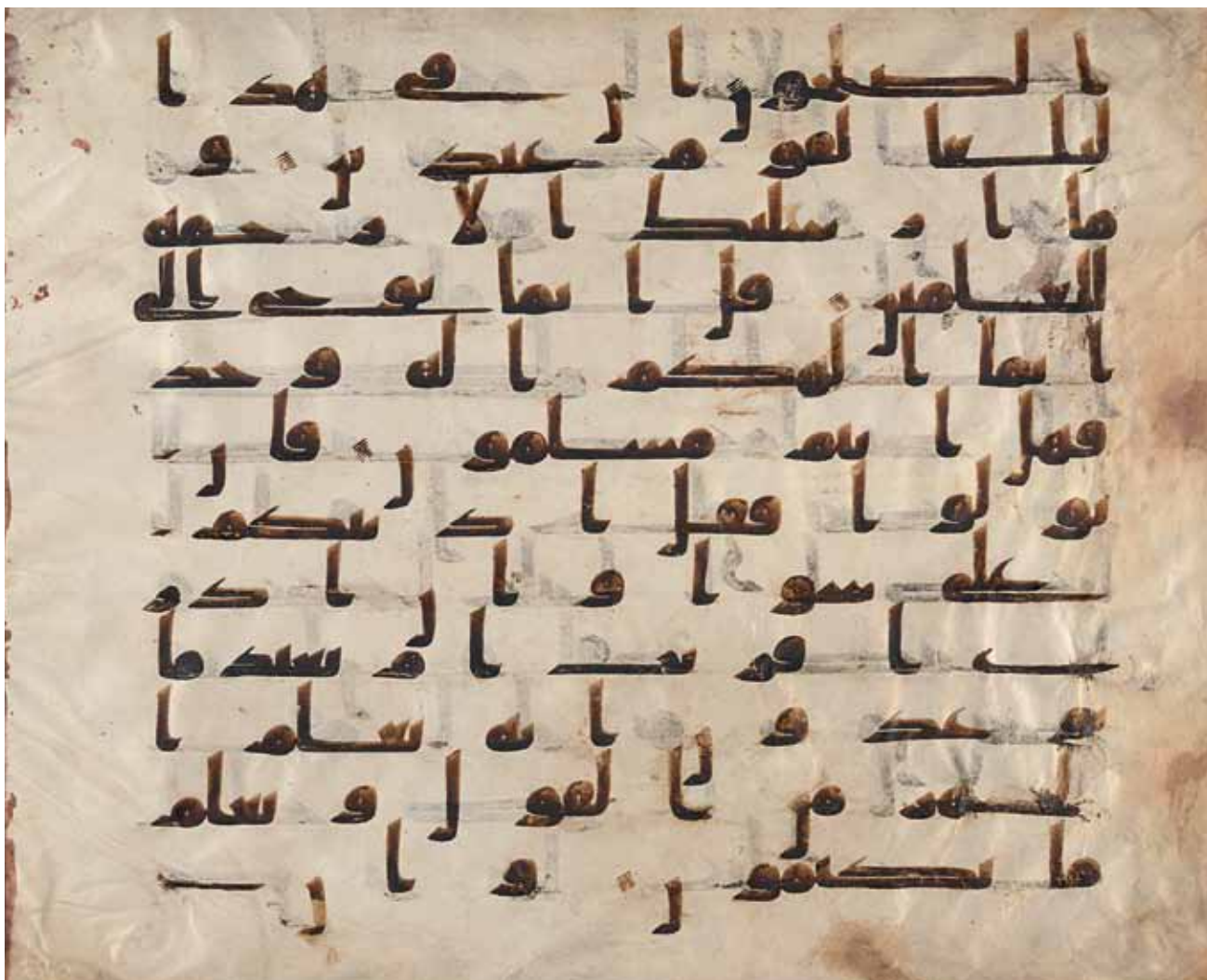
into an international marketplace in which prized Chinese and Southeast Asian goods such as silk, paper, tea, ceramics, and teakwood were sold.<sup>26</sup> The wide distribution of Chinese ceramics in the Abbasid realm introduced into the Near East new techniques and styles of pottery. Chinese-inspired ceramics with a tin-opacified glaze and a light-colored body produced by artisans under Abbasid patronage survive in quantity. Another innovation in ceramic production during this period was the introduction of luster-painted pottery. Although luster-painting on glass had first appeared in the sixth or seventh century, potters in ninth- and tenth-century Iraq, in an effort to emulate gold and silver metalwork, applied metallic glazes to the surfaces of ceramic vessels.<sup>27</sup> Techniques such as these were applied to objects in a myriad of shapes and styles and were soon disseminated far beyond Iraq to Egypt, Iran, North Africa, and Spain.

By the ninth century the central authority of the Abbasid caliphate had weakened. Independent Muslim centers of power emerged, with provincial rulers paying nominal allegiance to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. As they became more powerful and self-sufficient, these regional rulers followed the caliph's model by minting coins and commissioning *tiraz* textiles inscribed with their own names. The fragmentation of the empire resulted in the further dissemination of the Abbasid style, initiating another phase in the development of early and medieval Islamic art.

1. Of special interest are the following recent studies: Hoffman 2007, Bowersock 2007, Bowersock 2006, Canepa 2009, Brown 1989, George 2010, and Cutler 2009. Other studies include: Grabar 1987a, Allen 1988, Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, Fowden 1993, and Fowden 2004.
2. According to Eva Hoffman, this also includes the breaking down of misleading categories such as East and West; Byzantine and Islamic; Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Zoroastrian; and Late Antique and Medieval. Hoffman 2007, p. 1.
3. Canepa 2009, p. 7.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
5. Brown 1989, p. 190.
6. Genequand 2008.
7. According to Prudence Harper, "with little surely dated material surviving, the transition from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic period is still, in terms of existing monuments from Mesopotamia, Iran and Asia Minor, an almost invisible one." New York 1978, p. 153.
8. The Copts were the Christians of Egypt whose ancestors embraced Christianity in the first centuries after Christ. Over the centuries, the word *Copt* has come to refer to an Egyptian Christian.

9. Whelan 1990a, pp. 42–43; O'Kane, ed. 2006, pp. 20–21.
10. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, pp. 15–79; George 2010, pp. 55–93.
11. George 2010, pp. 27–28 and 33–38. See also Déroche 2004a, Déroche 1992, Déroche 1999, Roxburgh 2007, pp. 8–9, Déroche 2004b, and Blair 1998.
12. Bowersock 2006, p. 5.
13. The transition to the aniconic, epigraphical coin types and their meaning were recently the focus of three studies, each with a different approach. Heidemann 2010, Bacharach 2010, and Treadwell 2009.
14. I would like to thank Barry Flood for suggesting that I include this interesting point. See also Hillenbrand, R. 1999, p. 20, Heidemann 1998, and Treadwell 2009.
15. Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, p. 28; Raby and Johns, eds. 1992.
16. For an extensive study on this mosque, see Flood 2001.
17. Allen 1988, pp. 47–48.
18. Fragments of this textile are housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Brooklyn Museum, New York; until 1960, in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, the *Musées Royaux des Arts Décoratifs*, Brussels, and the Pushkin Museum, Moscow. See also Whelan 1990b, no. 20, and Kühnel and Bellinger 1952.
19. New York 1992–93.
20. Grabar 1987a, p. 197. See also Hillenbrand, R. 1999, p. 34.
21. Hoffman 2008; Northedge 2005.
22. Brown 1989, p. 201.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
24. In an effort to destabilize the East–West opposition that was stressed at the beginning of the twentieth century, Eva Hoffman has suggested that the art of the Abbasid period was not necessarily a watershed, as Ernst Herzfeld had proposed, but rather a period of "active integration"—a series of dynamic networks of interaction and connections that brought together Eastern and Western artistic conventions. She postulates that the clear labeling of West (Byzantine/Greco-Roman) for Umayyad art and East (Sasanian Persian and Central Asian) for Abbasid art is an oversimplification of a much more complex set of factors. See Herzfeld 1923 and Hoffman 2008.
25. New York 1992–93.
26. See Flood 2009.
27. Luster-painting involved the use of a paste of silver and copper oxides mixed with fine clay that was applied to a previously fired ceramic surface, often over an opacified glaze. After the decoration was completed, the object would be refired in an atmosphere with low oxygen, causing the metal oxides to reduce to metallic form and migrate into the glaze. Once the object was removed from the kiln, the surface was polished to remove the clay residues and reveal the metallic luster. For early history of the technique, see Carboni 2001, p. 200, and Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 209–11.





### 1. Monumental Qur'an Folio

Syria or North Africa, late 8th–early 9th century

Ink on parchment

21 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 27 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (55 × 70 cm)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2004 2004.87

This oversize folio comes from one of the oldest Qur'an manuscripts in existence. Often referred to as the 'Uthman or Tashkent Qur'an, this monumental manuscript is possibly the largest extant Qur'an on parchment. The text, which is from Sura 21 (*al-Anbiya*, "The Prophets"), verses 103–111, contains twelve lines in *kufic* script. Only two illuminated folios from this manuscript survive (one in Paris, the other in Gotha);<sup>1</sup> the remainder of the folios, like this one, are devoid of both illumination and diacritical marks.

The script used here is an early version of *kufic*. In fact, the verticality and the slight slant of the shafts of the letters and their position on the baseline demonstrate possible traces of the *hijazi*

script (a script used before the development of *kufic*). Although its origin remains uncertain, we do know that *hijazi* was still in use in Cairo, Damascus, or Sana'a during the late eighth or early ninth century.<sup>2</sup> Based on orthographic studies and carbon dating, a number of scholars have dated this manuscript of the Qur'an to the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>3</sup> One scholar has drawn parallels between the rows of arches in the surviving illuminated folio in Paris and those in a folio of the Sana'a Qur'an,<sup>4</sup> contending that these images resemble the shimmering mosaics of the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus and were, in all likelihood, illuminated and executed by outstanding artisans trained in Byzantine (or Syriac) scriptoria.<sup>5</sup>

The largest portion of the manuscript to which this folio belongs is presently kept in a *madrasa* library attached to the Tellya-Shaikh Mosque in an area of old Tashkent. The story of how it arrived there is not entirely clear, but most likely it was carried along the Silk Road from the Near East or North Africa via Merv, Bukhara, and Samarqand.<sup>6</sup> It was taken to St. Petersburg in 1868 after the Russian conquest of Central Asia and housed in the Imperial Library there (now the Russian National Library),<sup>7</sup> at which time a number of pages were separated from the rest, including this one. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Vladimir Lenin, in an act of goodwill to the Muslims of Russia, reportedly gave the Qur'an to the people of Ufa, in modern Bashkortostan. Following repeated appeals by the people of Turkestan, the Qur'an was returned to Central Asia in 1924, where it has since remained.<sup>8</sup> From 1905 to 1971 this exceptional Qur'an was subjected to extensive paleographic research, providing valuable insight into early *kufic* Qur'an manuscripts and their historical trajectories.<sup>9</sup>

ME

1. Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Gotha (Or. A462) and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (BN Arabe 324c). See Déroche and Gladiss 1999, p. 20, no. 5; and Paris 2001–2, p. 37, no. 14.
2. Déroche 1992, pp. 27–33. See also George 2010, pp. 87–88.
3. A companion folio was carbon-dated at Oxford, showing a 68 percent probability of a date between 640 and 765 and a 95 percent probability of a date between 595 and 855, confirming the stylistic dating. See Fendall 2003, p. 12.
4. This Qur'an, dating to 649–90 A.D., is in the Dar al-Makhtutat al-Yamaniyya (House of Manuscripts) in Sana'a, Yemen. See Amsterdam 1999–2000, pp. 101–4.
5. George 2010, pp. 87–88. For an image of the illuminated page in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (BN Arabe 324c), see *ibid.*, fig. 57.
6. See Déroche 1999.
7. In St. Petersburg it was studied in depth by A. F. Shebunin. See Fendall 2003, pp. 12–13.

8. MacWilliam 2006.
9. A facsimile of the manuscript was published in 1905 by Uspenskii and Pisarev, and a thorough paleographic study of the remaining section of the manuscript was carried out in 1971 by Salahuddin al-Muhajjid. See Pisarev 1905.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Norway; [Sam Fogg, London, until 2004; sold to MMA]

## 2. Qur'an Juz'

Syria or Iraq, late 9th–early 10th century  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on parchment  
4 × 6¾ in. (10.2 × 17.1 cm)  
Gift of Philip Hofer, 1937 37.142

The Qur'an is customarily divided into thirty *juz'*, or sections of equal length, and those divisions are often reflected in the copying of the text. This intact example of the second *juz'* (2:142–252) retains the two pairs of decorated folios that separated and protected the text pages from the binding (fols. 1b–2a, 100b–101a). Each set of these folios has a distinct design of interlacing gold bands that enclose stippled red and green dots mimicking designs derived from weaving or embroidery. A golden treelike plant projects into the outer margin of the short side of each page. In both design and size, these pages bear a close resemblance to an illuminated folio from a Qur'an in the National Library, Tunis, that had been preserved in a storeroom at the Great Mosque of Qairawan.<sup>1</sup> A group of discarded bindings decorated with interlace patterns that were discovered in the same mosque suggest that the design of the now-lost binding of this *juz'* may have resembled that of its opening and closing illuminations.<sup>2</sup>



The excellent state of preservation of this manuscript allows for a detailed analysis of its script. Each page bears five lines of text, with both the inner and outer margins justified in most cases. The hand is notable for its aesthetic consistency and for the careful way in which a harmonious design is achieved by balancing the vertical and horizontal elements on each page. The letter forms and their proportions resemble those in a select group of manuscripts dating from the late ninth and early tenth centuries that were donated to mosques. These include two Qur’ans given to the Great Mosque of Damascus: the first in 876 by Amajur, an Abbasid governor of that city (r. 870–78), and the second in 911 by a certain ‘Abd al-Mu’min.<sup>3</sup> The illuminated pages of the later Qur’an are strikingly similar in design and execution to those of the present manuscript.<sup>4</sup>

Its majestic script and kinship with Qur’ans known to have been donated to mosques place the Metropolitan Museum’s *juz’* among the most accomplished examples of early Abbasid calligraphy. Qur’ans of this type have been attributed to both Syria and Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

PS

1. Paris 1982–83, pp. 258–59, no. 343.
2. Marçais and Poinssot 1948–52, vol. 1, pls. 13b and 21; Petersen 1954, fig. 16.
3. Déroche 1992, pp. 36–37; Blair 2006, pp. 105–6, 111.
4. Arberry 1967, Ms. 1421, p. 8, no. 16, and pls. 19, 20.
5. Whelan 1990b, pp. 119, 124–25.

PROVENANCE: Philip Hofer, Cambridge, Mass. (until 1937)

### 3. Folio from a Qur’an Manuscript

Central Islamic Lands, 9th century  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on parchment  
1 1/2 × 2 7/8 in. (3.8 × 7.3 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1962 62.152.2

In many periods and regions, small-scale copies of the Qur’an served as amulets, worn or carried in special cases, and the manuscript from which this folio derives may have been made for such a purpose. The page contains verses 22–40 of Sura 25 (*al-Furqan*, “The Criterion”); the side illustrated here bears verses 32–40.

The history of copying the Qur’an has yet to be reconstructed, but this particular page from a manuscript on parchment has distinctive features linking it to versions that are much larger in size. Among these are the even number of lines on each page (fourteen in this case) and a script that exaggerates the horizontal elongation of letters while compressing their vertical elements. Imparting a marked density, which accentuates the horizontality of the page, these characteristics link the Metropolitan Museum folio with a group of Qur’an fragments studied by Estelle Whelan and designated by her as Group 2.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps because of the small size of the folio, the only diacritical signs employed are red dots to indicate the short vowels. The manuscript is also notable for the translucency of its ink, which is brown rather than the opaque black seen on most early copies; later manuscripts from North Africa and Spain are written in the same ink. Other folios from this manuscript are now in the collection of the New York Public Library.<sup>2</sup> Those folios contain the last sections of Sura 4 and the beginning of Sura 5 and mark the



transition between the two with a gold inscription written over the text. The presence of such an addition demonstrates that Sura headings were not part of the original design of this manuscript.

PS

1. Blair 2006, pp. 111–16; Whelan 1998.
2. Schmitz et al. 1992, p. 251, fig. 296; Q 4:172–76, 5:1–7.

PROVENANCE: William Ivins Jr., New York (until d. 1961); his daughter, Barbara Ivins, Milford, Conn. (1961–62; sold to MMA)



#### 4. Throne Leg in the Shape of a Griffin

Probably western Iran, late 7th–early 8th century  
Bronze; cast around a ceramic core and chased  
22 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (57 × 8.7 cm)  
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1971 1971.143

Shaped as the forepart of a griffin, a formidable hybrid creature, this throne leg was cast in leaded bronze; the strut, which originally supported the throne with two iron rods, rises from behind the griffin's neck. The head, chest, and paws are decorated with chased plant motifs, including leaf patterns and floral details, while the fur on the griffin's face and paws is delineated by curvilinear designs. Continuing a long history of fantastic animal forms in Sasanian and post-Sasanian thrones and other decorative works, this object represents the symbolic identification of winged and particularly powerful animals (real and imaginary) with royalty. In pre-Islamic times the griffin, a combination of two solar symbols (the lion and the eagle), was seen as a vehicle of ascension, implying the ruler's deification. In the early years of the Islamic period, these royal and religious symbols were appropriated to project an aura of power and legitimacy.<sup>1</sup>

Allegedly one of a pair,<sup>2</sup> this leg stands apart stylistically from other extant related examples.<sup>3</sup> Its attribution and dating have been complicated by the fact that no examples of Sasanian thrones survive. The closest counterparts are two griffin supports, one in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, and the other in the Nizami Museum of Literature in Baku, Azerbaijan.<sup>4</sup> Although the attribution of the Metropolitan's leg remains inconclusive, the vegetal decoration on the griffin's chest offers some useful clues. There is no precedent for this particular combination of forms and motifs in the western reaches of the Sasanian Empire. However, wall paintings and sealstones from Panjikent (present-day Tajikistan) dated to the fifth and sixth centuries show enthroned figures supported by a leg with a griffinlike head bearing foliate decoration. This iconography and distinct decorative detail may have been introduced to Iran during the last century of the Sasanian period, when contacts with Soghdian Central Asia increased. Like the Museum's silver plate (cat. 6), this throne leg fits comfortably into the category of post-Sasanian art.

ME



1. Welch, S. C., et al. 1987, p. 15.
2. Orbeli 1938–39, p. 719, pls. 240 B, C. According to New York 1978, pp. 97–100, both illustrations may show the same, rather than two different, pieces.
3. New York 1978, p. 99. Prudence Harper, Curator Emerita, Department of Ancient Near East, Metropolitan Museum of Art, studied this piece in great detail in 1978 and published the results in *ibid.*, pp. 97–100.
4. Bretanitskii and Veimarn 1976, p. 40 (Nizami Museum throne leg). See New York 1978, p. 99.

PROVENANCE: D. David-Weill, Paris (by 1938–71; sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 16, 1971, lot 49, to MMA)



## 5. Ewer

Iran, 7th century  
Bronze; cast, chased, and inlaid with copper  
H. 19 1/8 in. (48.5 cm); Diam. 8 1/4 in. (21.1 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1947 47.100.90

With its elegant profile and imposing size, this ewer stands out among the metal vessels produced during the early period of Islam. The ovoid body has a cylindrical neck and rests on a ring-shaped molding atop a domical base. Two heads of ducks in profile encircle the lip of the vessel. Its handle is shaped as a sinuous panther whose front paws rest on the rim, while the animal's body and legs extend down the side of the ewer. The smooth surface of the neck and handle contrasts with the undulating surface of the body, which is covered with rows of stylized lobed and bud forms originally inlaid with copper. Lotus petals surround the base of the body, and the same motif is repeated on the foot, arranged in two overlapping bands.

The elongated ovoid shape of this ewer is seen frequently in the metalwork production of Sasanian Iran from the third to the seventh century. This form was especially popular in the silverwork production of the later Sasanian period, in which it appears combined with smaller bases and narrower necks often terminating in spouted rims.<sup>1</sup> The ewer's decoration, which has been interpreted as a stylized mountainous landscape, has also been connected with Sasanian production.<sup>2</sup> Mountains and plants, sometimes visible at the bases of the vessels but more often arranged in overlapping bands covering most of the objects' surfaces, appear in more naturalistic fashion on a number of late Sasanian ewers and plates, often accompanied by animals and hunters.<sup>3</sup>

In the early centuries of the caliphate, the continuation of pre-Islamic forms was common in the production of metalware, particularly in the eastern part of the Islamic world where a solid tradition of metalwork had been in place for centuries. Along with specific types of vessels, a wide range of vegetal and zoomorphic motifs continued to be employed in the decades following the Muslim conquest. This continuity has complicated the dating of objects produced in the phase of transition from the Sasanian Empire to the Islamic caliphate. The present ewer, for example, was long considered to be one of the last masterpieces of Sasanian metalwork production. At the same time, its monumental proportions, larger foot, and more bulbous profile, along with the stylized nature of its decoration—whose rhythm and repetitive quality foreshadow two distinctive traits of Islamic ornamentation—create an aesthetic that departs from previous tradition. Thus it likely belongs to the transitional phase of metalwork production in Iran during the first decades of Islam, when forms and motifs inherited from preexisting traditions were adopted and refashioned to respond to a new sensibility.

FL



1. Ann Arbor 1967, pp. 105–6, nos. 18–19; New York 1978, pp. 60–61, no. 18.
2. New York 1978, p. 66.
3. Ibid., p. 33, no. 3; p. 39, no. 6; pp. 58–59, no. 17; pp. 65–67, no. 22; Ann Arbor 1967, p. 111, no. 24.

PROVENANCE: Prince Orloff, Russia (probably by 1912); [G. J. Demotte, New York]; [Brummer Gallery, Inc., New York, by 1940–47; sold to MMA]



## 6. *Silver Plate*

Iran, probably 8th century  
Silver; gilded, chased, and engraved, with applied elements  
Diam. 8 1/8 in. (20.6 cm)  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1963 63.186

Emblematic of post-Sasanian metalwork, this handsome silver plate depicts a female figure, possibly a goddess, who wears a three-pointed crown with a halo and rides a fantastic winged creature with a lean feathered body, feline head, and canine legs; the heads of both figures are crafted in high relief. The female's pose as she rides the mythological beast, the slender and elongated bodies, and the foliation on the animal are all features seen in wood sculptures of the late seventh or early eighth century from Panjikent (present-day Tajikistan) in Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the formalized and awkward position of the woman's arms and the hand gesture (*mudra*) are fairly common in the art of Central Asia, particularly on wall paintings; on the lower part of the plate, a stylized representation of earth, water, and sky is also reminiscent of imagery in cave paintings of Central Asia. (This is not to suggest that the Museum's plate was produced in Soghdian territories but rather that these aspects are evidence of artistic exchanges with that region.)<sup>2</sup> The six-petaled flower with a long stem the goddess is holding is a motif again seen on two silver ewers, one in the National Museum of Iran, Tehran, and the other in the British Museum, London, each assigned to the Sasanian period,<sup>3</sup> while the unusual drapery of the goddess's garment, notably the coiling technique used to delineate the ample folds, also appears on a silver ewer of the Sasanian period depicting Dionysus/Anahita in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>4</sup>

Both the design and the manufacture of this dish are complex and ambiguous, giving rise to detailed discussions about its attribution and place of production.<sup>5</sup> The plate's resemblance to a number of silver objects in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, that were found at various sites in the Urals has been helpful in attributing it to post-Sasanian eastern Iran.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the closest parallel to the woman's pose occurs on a silver-gilt plate in the Hermitage from Tomyz, Viatka (in the present-day Republic of Tatarstan in southern Russia) with an inscription in Pahlavi, a script that continued in use in parts of Iran well into the eighth century.<sup>7</sup> This plate, with its abundance of influences, serves as a testament to the extent of cultural exchange between Iran and neighboring areas during the eighth century; perhaps its meaning can be best interpreted within that context.

ME

1. Harper 1972.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Marshak 1971, pl. 29.
4. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 67.10).
5. Harper 1972.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Harper 1972, p. 154.

PROVENANCE: [J. J. Klejman, New York, until 1963; sold to MMA]

## 7. Ewer

Syria, 8th–early 9th century  
Bronze; cast and pierced  
H. 15½ in. (39.4 cm)  
Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1941 41.65

This ewer is one of five vessels with a globular body on a splayed foot, a long cylindrical neck, and a straight handle that have been related to the so-called Marwan ewer, now in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.<sup>1</sup> Smaller in size than its famous counterpart, the Metropolitan's example exhibits a similar decorative program without the same level of refinement and detail. The upper section of the neck is emphasized by an openwork band of palm trees in relief. A scrolling vine bearing fruit runs along the handle and continues on the body, blossoming into a combination of half palmettes with pomegranates flanked by stylized dolphins. Finally, like the Cairo example, a rooster in the round sits on the spout, his beak open to release the liquid contained within.

Scholars have pointed out parallels between the present ewer's peculiar shape and Byzantine glass bottles, such as those excavated at Hanita, Beth She'arim, and Beth Ras, Israel, suggesting a Near Eastern origin for this form.<sup>2</sup> Its decoration also elaborates on vegetal and zoomorphic forms drawn from the Late Antique world: the rooster was a popular motif in classical antiquity, when it was associated with royalty, and its iconography was popular in the regions of the Mediterranean that became part of the Islamic caliphate.<sup>3</sup> Evident as well is the impact of Eastern decorative motifs; the half palmette with pomegranates that descends from the handle probably originated in Sasanian Iran, where it appeared in stucco and stone decoration.<sup>4</sup> The Marwan ewer in Cairo shows similarly inspired elements, particularly its pearl-roundel ornamentation, which can be found in Sasanian stuccos and textiles. A Sasanian silk textile with the same pearl-roundel motif dates to the reign of Marwan II (744–50), thus helping to determine the date of the ewer in the Cairo museum, and, by extension, the present example.<sup>5</sup>

The incorporation of pre-Islamic forms and motifs is characteristic of metalwork production during the first centuries of Islam, reinforcing an early date for this ewer and others like it. The association of the Cairo ewer with the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II, is based on the fact that it was found in the surroundings of Abu Sir al-Malak in the region of Fayyum, where the ruler was assassinated and buried.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, no historical or archaeological proof yet exists that confirms a direct connection between this vessel—or those related to it—and the Umayyad ruler.

FL

1. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (no. 9281); see O'Kane, ed. 2006, p. 21, no. 11. A list of the ewers, with bibliography, is provided in Fehérvári 1976, p. 33.
2. Baer 1983, p. 86 n. 198.
3. In the Islamic period, the cock came to be associated with religious rituals, becoming God's way to announce and regulate the practice of daily prayers.



4. Examples are attested in Kish and Ctesiphon. See New York 1978, p. 107, no. 40.
5. For a fragment of this textile, see Brend 1991, p. 43, fig. 23 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). Another fragment is in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, New York.
6. Sarre 1934.

PROVENANCE: Bobrinsky Collection, Russia; Henry Harris, London (by 1931–38; to Brummer); [Brummer Gallery, Inc., New York, 1938–41; sold to MMA]



## 8. Coín (Dīnar)

Syria, dated A.H. 79/698–99 A.D.

Gold

Diam.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (2.1 cm)

Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898 99.35.2386

Obverse

Inscription in Arabic in field:

لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له

There is no god but God alone. He has no associate.

Inscription in Arabic in margin:

محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله

Muhammad is the Messenger of God, who sent him “with the guidance, and the religion of truth to show that He may uplift it [Islam] above every religion.” (variation of Qur’an 9:33)<sup>1</sup>

Reverse

Inscription in Arabic in field:

الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد

God is one. “God, the Everlasting Refuge, / who has not begotten, and has not been begotten.” (excerpt from Qur’an 112)

Inscription in Arabic in margin:

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينار في سنة تسع وسبعين

In the Name of God, this dinar was struck in the year A.H. 79.



8



9 (obverse)

## 9. Coín (Dirham)

Iraq, Wasit, dated A.H. 93/711–12 A.D.

Silver

Diam.  $1\frac{1}{8}$  (2.7 cm)

Gift of Darius Ogden Mills, 1904 04.35.3343

Obverse

Inscription in Arabic in field:

لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له

There is no god but God alone. He has no associate.

Inscription in Arabic in margin:

بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بواسط في سنة ثلث وتسعين

In the name of God, this dirham was struck in Wasit in the year A.H. 93.



9 (reverse)

Reverse

Inscription in Arabic in field:

الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفواً أحد

God is one. “God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him is not any one.” (Qur’an 112)

Inscription in Arabic in margin:

محمد رسول الله ارسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون

Muhammad is the Messenger of God, who sent him “with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it [Islam] above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse.” (variation of Qur’an 9:33)

For the first few years after the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty, its coins were based on those of its predecessors—the Byzantine emperors in the western part of its empire and

the Sasanian kings in the east. In 697, however, the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) issued new gold dinars bearing only writing, which included phrases from the Qur’an and the statement that there is only one God and Muhammad is his messenger. The following year silver dirhams in the same style were minted in the eastern provinces.<sup>2</sup> Although earlier Umayyad coins had had Arabic writing and versions of the affirmation of faith on them, neither the Qur’an nor any other holy text had ever appeared on the coins of this region. Images such as fire altars, crosses, and portraits, rather than written statements, had always been the



standard indicators of the issuing authority's religious and dynastic affiliations.

Many scholars have speculated about why the switch to all-epigraphic coins was made. Most recently it has been suggested that 'Abd al-Malik settled on an iconographic system that did not borrow too heavily from symbols associated with the earlier Byzantine and Sasanian rulers yet was understandable in both of these cultural realms where the coins would circulate, resulting in one unique Umayyad creation to be used across his domains.<sup>3</sup> Another hypothesis, based on the historical context of the specific moment in which these coins appeared, proposes that their message was aimed directly at 'Abd al-Malik's greatest rival at that time, the Byzantine Empire: the coins bear a version of the affirmation of faith stating that God has no partner, a refutation of the Christian doctrine of the trinity, most relevant in the political arena of the western Umayyad empire.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, however, their success and their continued use have been ascribed to market factors over other considerations.<sup>5</sup>

The dinar illustrated here has the same format as the earliest known all-epigraphic coin, which it postdates by two years,<sup>6</sup> the dirham, from fourteen years later, reflects changes that resulted from the differences between the denominations of the two coins and their dates of issue. While both coins bear essentially the same text, the dinar, as a smaller coin, includes neither the name of the mint (but believed to be Damascus) nor the full text of the Qur'anic verses of Suras 9:33 or 112 on it. On the dirham, Sura 9:33 appears on the margin of the reverse rather than the margin of the obverse.<sup>7</sup> In addition, on the obverse of the dirham the writing is located within three serrate circles, with five annulets in the border, while on the reverse the field text is surrounded by a solid circle, and the marginal text by a serrate circle with five annulets. Although these elements are borrowed from the silver Sasanian coins that they were meant to replace, they are markers of the mint administration and differ from issue to issue.<sup>8</sup> MS

no god except God, Alone, Muhammad is the Prophet of God"; based on coins, architectural inscriptions, and milestones in the west, the formulation there was "There is no god except God, Alone, He has no partner." See Bacharach 2010.

5. For Bacharach's application of Gresham's Law to this situation, see Bacharach 2010. He stresses that the ultimate success of these coins, and the adoption of their basic format by almost all subsequent Muslim dynasties, cannot be applied backward to our understanding of the circumstances of their appearance and acceptance of these coins in the market at that time.
6. American Numismatic Society, New York (no. ANS 1002.1.406), published in Bates 1982, p. 14.
7. This format became standard after A.H. 79/698–99 A.D. See Orientalisches Münzkabinett Jena (no. 305-H10), dated to that year; published in Heidemann 2010, p. 185.
8. This pattern of borders and annulets is standard until the year A.H. 99/717–18 A.D. Possible reasons for the later changes are discussed in DeShazo and Bates 1974.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 8: Joseph H. Durkee, New York (until d. 1898)

Cat. 9: Darius Ogden Mills, New York (until 1904)

## 10. Bowl with Cobalt-Blue Inscriptions

Iraq, probably Basra, 9th century

Earthenware; painted in blue on opaque white glaze

Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1963 63.159.4

Inscription in Arabic in kufic script:

غبطة / غبطة

Felicity / Felicity

1. Only the quoted phrase is from the Qur'an; it also appears in Sura 25:14 and Sura 61:9.
2. Important analyses of Umayyad coins include Walker, J. 1941, Walker, J. 1956, and Bates 1986. The last several years of scholarship on this subject, including a new chronology of the silver issues (previously thought to have appeared starting in A.H. 79), is summarized and augmented in three recent studies of Umayyad coins: Treadwell 2009, Heidemann 2010, and Bacharach 2010. I would like to thank Dr. Bacharach for sharing the text of his article with me before its publication.
3. Treadwell 2009, p. 379.
4. Bacharach notes that although scholars often mention that the "affirmation of faith" appears on certain coins, we cannot assume what the exact text is because there are differences between the seventh- and twenty-first-century versions, as well as between various seventh-century formulations. Based on the evidence of coins from the east, he suggests that there the formulation was "In the name of God, there is

Chinese stonepaste and porcelain ceramics of the Tang period (618–907) were exported in quantity to western Asia in the mid-eighth and ninth centuries. Excavated examples found at various sites throughout Iraq serve as evidence of the popularity of these wares at the Abbasid court. In an attempt to imitate the hard body of Chinese high-fired porcelain, ninth-century Iraqi potters rediscovered the earlier technique of coating earthenware vessels with tin oxide mixed with a clear lead glaze, which created a fine opaque white surface onto which a wide array of designs could be painted. Since there were no tin mines in the region, this metal was imported by sea from Southeast Asia.<sup>1</sup> Iraqi potters often decorated their wares with blue (cobalt), green (copper), and manganese purple. They also sought to replicate the shapes of the Chinese ceramics, the majority of which, like this example, are bowls with low feet, flaring sides, and everted rims.



Elegantly proportioned, the bowl is decorated with a *kufic* inscription in cobalt blue against an opaque white ground. Like others of its type, it is one of the first examples of pottery in the early Islamic period to incorporate Arabic calligraphy as the main element of decoration. Not entirely legible, the inscription appears to be the Arabic word *ghibta* (felicity), which is repeated twice at the center.<sup>2</sup> Many of these bowls include calligraphic designs with messages of good fortune or the name of the potter, although some also feature vegetal and green splash designs. The tin-opacified wares of Iraq were also the first to incorporate blue designs on a white surface, a striking combination adapted by Chinese potters of the Yuan (1271–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing periods (1644–1911) and later used extensively in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Here the calligraphic composition and overall visual effect take priority over legibility. The striking contrast between the cobalt blue of the calligraphy and the white opaque ground creates a visual impression that resembles blotted ink, while the garland-like motifs decorating the rim combine with the central inscriptions to establish a balanced composition.

ME

1. Allan 1991a, p. 6.
2. There is an almost identical bowl with an identical inscription in the Harvey B. Plotnick collection in Chicago. See Chicago 2007, p. 42.
3. Ibid. See also Watson 2004, pp. 171–80.

PROVENANCE: [Nasli Heeramanek, New York, until 1963; sold to MMA]

### 11. Bowl

Iraq, probably Basra, first half of 9th century  
Earthenware; polychrome luster-painted on opaque white glaze  
H. 2 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (6 cm); Diam. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (19.7 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1952 52.114

### 12. Bowl

Iraq, probably Basra, second to third quarter of 10th century  
Earthenware; luster-painted on opaque white glaze  
H. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (9.5 cm); Diam. 12 in. (30.5 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1964 64.134

While both bowls share the creamy yellow body fabric so characteristic of Basra pottery, they represent two very different approaches to luster painting and design, reflecting discrete phases in the history of Abbasid lusterware.<sup>1</sup> The first bowl (cat. 11) belongs to the early phase, associated with the first half of the ninth century. Standing on a low foot, its curved sides terminate in an everted lip. Polychrome painting, a distinctive feature of early Abbasid lusterware, decorates both the interior and the exterior; here, the potters used three colors—olive green, yellow gold, and copper red. Most of the luster ceramics dating to this early period bear nonfigural designs that explore pattern and texture within a rubric of stylized vegetal motifs or geometric frameworks. On this bowl, the tension between the structure of the checkerboard format, the variety of patterns within its compartments, and the painterly freedom with which they are executed is particularly successful. Reminiscent of a pattern sampler, the decoration includes herringbone designs, “peacock-eye” motifs, and rows of dots and stipples probably inspired by *millefiori* glass.<sup>2</sup> The variety and dynamism of early lusterware design correspond to the expansive and vibrant time of al-Mu’tasim (r. 833–42) and his foundation of Samarra, where luster tiles decorated the new palaces, and a period when the distribution of Basra ceramics reached far and wide.<sup>3</sup>

The second bowl (cat. 12) represents Basra lusterware roughly a century later. The bowl profile now has a straighter wall and lip. More significant is the new approach to painting and design. The densely patterned backgrounds and the continued use of certain motifs, such as the “peacock eye,” provide continuity with early Abbasid lusterware. By this time, however, potters had abandoned polychrome painting in favor of monochrome decoration. Their designs are often figural, with central human or animal forms, alone or in symmetrical pairs. This bowl depicts confronted peacocks flanking a plant, against a ground filled with a repeated V-shape. This shift in decoration may reflect the taste of a new elite, since the period coincides with the arrival of the Buyids in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

EK



11



12

1. Ernst Kühnel's identification of three phases of Abbasid lusterware is more or less supported by recent petrographic analysis; see Kühnel 1934 and Mason 2004. Mason has sampled and analyzed the petrography of both of these bowls and has published their profile drawings, *ibid.*, pp. 192–93.
2. The exterior of the bowl bears the “dash-circle” motif diagnostic of early Basra production.



3. One fragment of a luster tile excavated from Samarra is in the Metropolitan's collection (acc. no. 23.75.25); for others, see Sarre et al. 1925, pls. 21, 22; Porter, V. 1995, pp. 24–27, figs. 10, 12; and Watson 2004, p. 184, no. E.1 (LNS 1057 C). On the wide distribution of early Basra lusterware, see Mason 2004, p. 44.
4. Mason 2004, pp. 159–60.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 11: [E. Safani, New York, until 1952; sold to MMA]

Cat. 12: [Khalil Rabenou, New York, until 1964; sold to MMA]

### 13. Bottle

Egypt or Syria, 7th–early 8th century  
Glass, bluish; blown, applied blue decoration  
H. 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (20.1 cm); Diam. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (8.2 cm)  
Museum Accession x.21.210

This bottle clearly illustrates the transitional phase of development between Late Antique and early Islamic period artifacts. Of all the crafts, glassmaking was perhaps the most conservative in terms of both artistic continuity over time and the transfer of skills and ideas from one generation to another. Since the revolutionary discovery of glassblowing during the first century B.C. in the Roman-controlled areas of the eastern Mediterranean, the enormous possibilities linked to this practice had allowed glassmakers to expand dramatically their creative horizons, in particular to increase the variety of shapes and decorative techniques.

With elegant proportions and a long, narrow neck, this pale blue bottle is decorated with dark blue trails applied in a spiraling motion around the entire neck as well as in a wide band on its body. The thickening of the pattern around the neck divides it evenly into two sections, while the “spectacle” design around the body—created by pinching the trails together at regular intervals—gives the vessel a dynamic appearance. The shape, the trailed decoration, and the spectacle pattern of applied decoration had become well established in the fourth to fifth centuries A.D. but continued to be used at least into the eighth century.<sup>1</sup> The base of this bottle shows no evidence of the use of the pontil; this technical feature would suggest a pre-Islamic date. Around the advent of Islam, glassmakers universally adopted the use of the pontil (a short metal rod that was attached under the base of the vessel before detaching the blowpipe) to facilitate both handling and the application of decorative techniques.

These considerations demonstrate how difficult it is to differentiate between objects produced before or after the advent of Islam because of the strong continuity in production over centuries. The history of this bottle within the Museum is instructive in this



respect as well: acquired at an unknown time and under unknown circumstances, it was accessioned initially by the Department of Greek and Roman Art, then eventually transferred to the Department of Near Eastern Art (subsequently divided into the departments of Ancient Near Eastern and Islamic Art) in 1960.

While it could be argued that this bottle does not belong to the Islamic period, its importance lies in the fact that it symbolizes the transition between two historical eras. Thus, it finds its rightful place in the galleries of early Islamic art. SC

1. This continued use was evidenced particularly in the Egyptian region but also found as far away as eastern Iran; see Ann Arbor 1978, no. 34; Kröger 1995, no. 151; Scanlon and Pinder-Wilson 2001, p. 65, pl. 32i. The last reference relates to a conical lamp found in Fustat (Old Cairo) in a 750–800 archaeological context.

PROVENANCE: Accessioned by the Metropolitan Museum in 1921; provenance unknown



## 14A, B. Two Zoomorphic Bottles

A. Probably Syria, late 7th–8th century  
Glass, amber-colored; blown, applied decoration  
 $4\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$  in. (11.1 × 8.3 cm)  
Gift of Mrs. Charles S. Payson, 1969 69.153

B. Probably Syria, late 7th–8th century  
Glass, yellowish and pinkish; blown, applied decoration  
 $3\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$  in. (8.6 × 8.8 cm)  
Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 1999 1999.145

Like the blue bottle decorated with applied threads of blue glass (cat. 13), these playful utilitarian objects testify to the transition between two glassmaking traditions, the Roman and the Islamic, along the coastal zone of the Mediterranean region. They are also examples of the versatility and flexibility of glass as a medium, which poses no restrictions on the creativity of the glassmaker. Here, two simple vessels, small bottles for ointments or valuable liquids such as essences and perfumes, are transformed into zoomorphic figurines that “carry” the container as part of their burden.

Once a bottle had been blown and shaped, the rest of the figure was constructed around it from trails and blobs of hot glass, forming the stylized body, legs, head, and burden surrounding the functional vessel. The quadruped with a bottle (cat. 14A) is typical of early Islamic production and is probably slightly earlier than the camel (cat. 14B) because it follows more closely the Late Antique, eastern Roman tradition. It combines a figure that supports a slender tubular flask known as *balsamarium* (container for balm) and is in turn encased in a cage. This latter feature evolved from extremely accomplished third- to fourth-century bowls known as *vasa diatreta*, in which vessels encased in open cages were produced by cutting the glass when cold. In their imitations (known as *pseudodiatreta*) produced in Alexandria on the Egyptian coast, the cage was constructed from hot-worked glass trails.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the idea of constructing a cage around a vessel was adopted by the early Islamic glassmakers and fused with features of a *balsamarium* container.

The bottle of cat. 14A was built entirely with one batch of amber-colored glass whose surface has taken on an iridescent hue due to weathering. Many of these animal-shaped bottles, now preserved in various collections around the world, carry a cage made of different trails from two contrasting colors—usually nearly colorless and dark blue glass<sup>2</sup>—thus also offering a pleasant chromatic variety. In this example, the figure is given a more whimsical appearance by its double head and by the addition of four protruding stylized heads atop the cage, almost as if it is meant to represent an entire caravan of horses, donkeys, or camels carrying their precious goods.

On the other hand, figurine cat. 14B is atypical for this group because the burden that surrounds the bottle is solid. The surface of the glass is entirely weathered from long burial in the ground, but when viewed through transmitted light the object is revealed



A



B

to have been made of two different colors. Unmistakably a camel, feet well planted on the ground and ostensibly conscious of its mission, this lively piece is evocative of the vital role played by these animals along the caravan trade routes of western Asia in a time of transition between two empires. SC

1. For the *diatreta*, see Corning, London, and Cologne 1987, nos. 134–39. For the *pseudodiatreta*, see Bussagli and Chiappori 1991, fig. p. 65.
2. See Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 112–14, nos. 29, 30.

### PROVENANCE

Cat. 14A: Mrs. Charles S. Payson, New York (until 1969)

Cat. 14B: [Art market, Israel]; [Taiyo Ltd., Tokyo, until 1999; sold to MMA]

## 15. Bowl

Probably Iraq, 9th century

Glass, green, opaque yellow, and opaque red mosaic; fused, slumped, ground, and polished, applied foot

H. 2 in. (5.1 cm); Diam. 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (14.3 cm)

Rogers Fund, 2001 2001.266

The final stage of mosaic-glass production is relatively simple: the tiny tesserae are arranged according to a desired pattern one by one over a heat-resistant form that gives shape to the object. It is then placed in a kiln at high temperature to fuse their edges, thus creating a single piece, and left to cool down slowly. After polishing, the work is complete.<sup>1</sup>

The preparatory stage, however, is extremely time-consuming because each tessera represents a diminutive slice from a long and narrow glass cane that was originally formed by wrapping layers of different-colored glass around its core until the desired combination was achieved. The finished cane probably had a diameter of three to four inches (7.5–10 cm) and was at least fifteen to twenty inches long (35–50 cm). In order to reduce it to the desired diameter of about one-tenth of an inch (2.5 mm), the cane was softened and pulled from both ends, maintaining the original cross-section pattern; once the cane had cooled, it was cut into thin slices. Initially made of simple patterns of concentric circles or bicolored spirals, by late Roman times canes began to include more complex and ambitious designs. Islamic glassmakers inherited the canemaking technique, improving upon it in late eighth- or early ninth-century Abbasid Iraq.

Inevitably, glass-mosaic vessels were destined to be small in size with simple open shapes not only due to the complexity of the technique but also because they were slumped over a mold and could not be blown to a larger size. The present bowl, with a diameter of almost six inches (15 cm), seems to represent the largest intact work in this technique. When viewed through transmitted light, the bowl comes alive because the fused outer edge of each slice is a translucent emerald green.

First created in imitation of variegated stones such as agates, mosaic glass acquired a more ornamental function in the Islamic period. We know, for example, that the floor in front of the throne of the Abbasid caliph in Samarra was composed of multicolored, flowerlike mosaic tiles.<sup>2</sup> Venetian glassmakers, who revived the



technique, which became known as *millefiori* or “a thousand flowers” in Europe during the fifteenth century, were able to use it to create blown vessels. SC

1. A photographic demonstration of the various phases of canemaking, fusing, and slumping performed by William Gudenrath of the Corning Museum of Glass can be found in Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 58–59.
2. The largest surviving fragment of these tiles is in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. For a color image that fully suggests the original dazzling effect of mosaic glass, see *ibid.*, p. 148, no. 61.

PROVENANCE: [Mansour Gallery, London, until 2001; sold to MMA]

## 16. Goblet

Probably Syria or Iraq, 8th–9th century

Glass, bluish green; blown, applied solid stem and blown foot; scratch-engraved

H. 4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (11.7 cm); Diam. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (9 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1965 65.173.1

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script:

اشرب بركة من الله لصاحب الكأس

Drink! Blessings from God to the owner of the goblet.

The decorative technique employed on this elegant and unusual goblet, with its flat base, solid yet segmented stem, flaring cup of aquamarine or pale blue color, and Arabic inscription, is usually known as “scratched” or “engraved.” Although distinctive, the goblet relates to a varied group of vessels and shards that employ the same engraved technique, which have been found east of Egypt and as far away as China. Their dating has never been questioned: archaeological finds have situated these works firmly in eighth- and ninth-century contexts because the first fragments were excavated in places like Samarra in Iraq, Fustat in Egypt, and, more recently, in the crypt of a Buddhist temple sealed in 874 A.D. in the Shaanxi province of northwestern China.<sup>1</sup> While their wide distribution has puzzled scholars over the decades, a fragmentary plate in dark blue glass found in the 1930s on the site of Nishapur in eastern Iran,<sup>2</sup> which for many years was regarded as the key example of the group, tipped the balance in favor of an Iranian origin. The extraordinary discovery in the 1980s of six intact plates in the Chinese temple, however, together with dozens of additional archaeological and other new finds, has forced scholars to study this material in a more systematic fashion. The present writer has suggested a Syrian or Iraqi origin for the bulk of this group (rejecting an Iranian provenance), a conclusion that has also been reached by Jens Kröger.<sup>3</sup>

This goblet represents one of the most memorable demonstrations of this decorative technique due to its rare shape, enviable state of preservation, and subtle pale blue color (80 percent of these engraved works are made from dark blue glass). Exceptional as well is the presence of a legible inscription, “Drink! Blessings from God to the owner of the goblet.” The patterns drawn within horizontal bands (from top to bottom: a saw-tooth band just below the rim; the inscription; a band of small circles enclosed in rectangular sections; and a row of diamond-shaped designs) may not be as sophisticated and precisely executed as those of many other works belonging to this group. Yet this goblet remains an outstanding example of a short-lived but sought-after production that reached the farthest corners of the Asian routes through trade and gift exchange.

SC



1. For the finds in Samarra, see Lamm 1928, pp. 79–82, nos. 251–59, figs. 51–52, pl. 8. For Fustat, see, most recently, Scanlon and Pinder-Wilson 2001, pp. 82, 83, fig. 39, pl. 39a. For China, see An 1991.
2. Also in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 40.170.131).
3. Carboni 2001, pp. 76–81, no. 17; Kröger 2005.

PROVENANCE: [Mohammad Yeganeh, Frankfurt, until 1965; sold to MMA]

## 17. Cup

Iran, 8th–9th century  
Glass, colorless with a green tinge; blown, cut  
H.  $2\frac{3}{4}$  in. (7 cm); Diam.  $3\frac{5}{8}$  in. (9.2 cm)  
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1965 65.172.1

## 18. Beaker

Iran, 9th–10th century  
Glass, colorless; blown, cut  
H.  $5\frac{3}{8}$  in. (13.6 cm); Diam.  $5\frac{5}{8}$  in. (14.3 cm)  
Purchase, Rogers Fund, and Jack A. Josephson, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Balamuth,  
and Mr. and Mrs. Alvin W. Pearson Gifts, 1974 1974.45

Inevitably, the immediate models used by Iranian glassmakers following the advent of Islam came from their Sasanian heritage, which in turn had developed from a centuries-long distinctive and individual artistic tradition in the geographical area of Greater Iran. Under Islam, this approach was raised to new heights with the production of transparent, almost colorless cut glass, which was decorated with the aid of a rotating wheel, thereby treating the material more like stone instead of taking advantage of its great malleability when hot. Once a colorless batch had been created (by decolorizing the glass with the appropriate oxide of manganese), a thick-walled “blank,” roughly in the shape of the required vessel (usually either an open bowl or cup or a globular bottle with a narrow elongated neck), was blown either freely on a blowpipe or into a dip mold. After it cooled down to room temperature, the blank was transferred to another area of the glass workshop or, more likely, to an entirely different workshop that specialized in glass- as well as stonecutting.

For both objects presented here, this was the common origin. The artistic intent and therefore the final results, however, appear to be very different when the two works are compared.

The small cup (cat. 17) is solid, perfectly balanced in the distribution of its weight and its decoration, and sits comfortably in the hand. Its pattern is executed in high relief and looks decidedly to earlier models: the pointed petals or leaves that arise from the center of the base are strongly reminiscent of designs used in Iran during Achaemenid times (sixth–fourth centuries B.C.). The so-called *omphalos* disks (Greek for “navel,” thus termed because of the central protuberance), arranged into two staggered bands, represent one of the most popular and successful patterns from Late Antiquity through the early Islamic period. Clearly this object was a valuable drinking vessel made in imitation of the more precious and expensive rock crystal. Once the cup was empty, the drinker would place it upside down to rest on its flat rim, revealing the attractive floral pattern around the base.



17



18

When handled, the beaker (cat. 18) creates almost an opposite effect: it is weightless and appears to be very fragile. Its decoration is dynamic and light, and the beaker itself seems insubstantial to the point of creating a sense of trepidation in the person who holds it. Indeed, it is almost a miracle that, though broken and repaired, it has survived virtually complete to this day. The skill of the glasscutter who was able to create patterns on its surface is astonishing. He not only reduced the thickness of the walls to about  $\frac{3}{64}$  inch (about 1 mm) while avoiding breakage, but also produced the



relief decoration with a thickness of less than approximately  $\frac{5}{64}$  inch (2 mm). An ideal point of reference for the viewer is provided by the lower ridge, which protrudes for  $\frac{3}{32}$  inch (about 2 mm). Combined with the excellence of its cut decoration—a six-unit repeat design of palmettes, half palmettes, and calyx motifs, linked with a scroll arranged horizontally around the circumference—these qualities establish this drinking vessel as one of the very few surviving masterpieces of relief-cut glass from the first millennium A.D. Although it has been attributed to both Iran and Egypt (the latter particularly because of strong connections in technique and design with celebrated Egyptian rock-crystal vessels),<sup>1</sup> there is little doubt that the beaker represents one of the highest points of Iranian glasscutting. The identification of rock-crystal cutting traditions in the eastern lands of the Islamic world, which is corroborated by the appearance on the market in recent times of objects with an Iranian or Central Asian provenance, further validates the Iranian origin of this splendid beaker.<sup>2</sup> SC

1. Most recently, by David Whitehouse in Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 172–73, no. 79.
2. See, for example, Kröger 1993. To my knowledge, no specific study has been published on the subject; the largest number of rock-crystal objects of eastern Islamic origin is in the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, in Kuwait City.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 17: [Saeed Motamed, Frankfurt, until 1965; sold to MMA]

Cat. 18: [Saeed Motamed, Frankfurt, until 1974; sold to MMA]

### 19. Bottle

Probably Iran, 10th–11th century

Glass, greenish yellow; blown in two parts, impressed with tongs, applied blue rim

H.  $7\frac{1}{4}$  in. (18.5 cm); Diam.  $3\frac{3}{8}$  in. (8.7 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund, Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art, and Mrs. Charles D. Kelekian Gift, 1994 1994.211

A less time-consuming and inexpensive alternative to cold relief-cut vessels (see cats. 17, 18) was provided by objects whose surface decoration was created by using either molds or tonglike tools that made permanent impressions in the fabric of the glass. Unlike the process of cutting the glass when cold, these techniques were applied when the glass was hot, and the entire object was fashioned before it cooled down. Rather than having been created in two distinct phases that involved different skills and possibly different workshops, the final product therefore depended entirely on the concept and skill of the glassblower. Neither as sophisticated nor as detailed as their relief-cut counterparts, these hot-worked

objects nonetheless find a merited place in the annals of Islamic glass production for their variety of shape, color, and decoration—as well as for the often fanciful creativity of their makers.

The decorative pattern on this bottle, whose profile and shape are strongly reminiscent of eastern Islamic metal vessels, is related to the *omphalos* (navel) design previously noticed on the bowl (cat. 17) and represents a survival of this popular ornamental type well into the turn of the millennium. The angularity of the cut relief is here replaced by the softer lines and curves achieved through inflating and tooling the glass, offering a different overall effect.

Most bottles—a closed shape with an elongated neck and a narrow mouth—were produced quickly with the aid of a bronze mold that carried in reverse the desired pattern: the glass gather on the blowpipe was inserted into the mold, slightly inflated to impress the pattern, extracted from the mold, and subsequently reinflated and tooled. The entire operation would have taken just a few minutes. However, in this case—and this is what makes the present object more valuable—the glassmaker deliberately complicated his task: the bottle is composed of two units (the



horizontal seam between them is evident between the two *omphalos* rows); the decoration was created from repeated applications by tongs carrying the “navel” pattern before the two halves had been fused. The joining technique itself, known in Italian as *incalmo*, is deceptively simple but would have required great skill to ensure that the two halves fit together.

The end result, an elegant bottle with a strong profile softened by the dark blue rim and the understated decoration, has a spontaneous feeling to it that does not reveal the complexity of its creation. SC

PROVENANCE: [Phoenix Ancient Art, Geneva, until 1994; sold to MMA]



## 20. Capital

Syria, probably Raqqa, late 8th century

Alabaster, gypsum; carved

11 1/4 × 12 1/4 in. (28.6 × 31.1 cm)

Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1936 36.68.3

This capital probably comes from the site of Raqqa on the middle Euphrates in Syria. The Abbasid caliph al-Mansur (r. 754–75) built a new settlement, al-Rafiq, alongside the antique city of Raqqa in 772, but it was twenty-four years later that the new city reached its apogee, when Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809) established his caliphal residence there, spurring a huge building initiative.<sup>1</sup> Among the remains of more than twenty palatial complexes, nineteenth-century visitors found similar capitals and, more recently, excavators have recovered panels of carved stucco bearing related designs.<sup>2</sup> Several comparable capitals now dispersed in various collections reportedly originated from this site as well.<sup>3</sup> This evidence, together with the ornate design and refined workmanship of the carving, suggests that the capital was created for a monumental building such as a palace or mosque.

The alabaster capitals in this group probably belong to the period of Harun al-Rashid's residence in Raqqa between 795 and 808.<sup>4</sup> Despite this narrow time range, the capitals vary widely in style. Some, like this example, are inspired by a type of vegetal ornament found in Late Antique architectural decoration at Palmyra, situated about seventy-five miles (120 km) south of Raqqa.<sup>5</sup> Its form is distantly reminiscent of acanthus capitals, but the leaf motifs are less three-dimensional than their classical antecedents, and the foliate elements are more stylized. Around all four sides the design consists of two registers of half palmettes within a symmetrical scroll pattern filled with small trefoil sprigs. In the abacus zone atop the capital, paired winglike palmettes

with blossoms adorn two of the sides, and vegetal scrolls encircle rows of blossoms on the other two. Prominent acanthus-leaf bosses articulate the four corners. Other alabaster capitals in this group, among them a contemporaneous example at the Metropolitan Museum and another in the David Collection, Copenhagen, display a beveled style associated with stucco carvings from the Abbasid palaces at Samarra built about thirty years later.<sup>6</sup> These capitals and the related wall decoration suggest, as has been argued, that the “Samarra” stucco styles developed in Syria.<sup>7</sup> EK

1. For an overview of these developments, see Heidemann 2003.
2. Sarre and Herzfeld 1911–20, vol. 2, p. 352, fig. 321; vol. 4, pl. 140. Another similar capital is reproduced in Heidemann and Becker, eds. 2003, p. 275, pl. 17.2, below, and in situ carved stucco panels with related designs are illustrated in Daiber and Becker, eds. 2004, pls. 40, 41, and 73.
3. The Metropolitan Museum holds two related capitals (acc. nos. 36.68.1, 36.68.2). See Dimand 1936, p. 155. A nearly identical alabaster capital is in the collection of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. I. 2195), and another is published in Kühnel 1938, pl. 5, upper left; related examples include two in the David Collection, Copenhagen: nos. 35/1986 (illustrated in Folsach 2001, p. 242, no. 384), and 2/2001 (published in Boston and Chicago 2006–7, p. 156, no. 81).
4. Dimand 1936, p. 157.
5. For a discussion of parallels between the architectural ornament at these two sites, see Meinecke and Schmidt-Colinet 1993 and Meinecke 1999.
6. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 36.68.1); David Collection, Copenhagen (no. 2/2001). See note 3 above.
7. Meinecke 1998. See also Haase 2007.

PROVENANCE: [Eustache de Lorey, Paris, until 1936; sold to MMA]



## 21. Panel (*Lid from a Chest?*)

Probably Egypt, second half of 8th century  
Wood (fig); mosaic with bone and four different types of wood  
18¾ × 76½ in. (47.6 × 194.3 cm)  
Samuel D. Lee Fund, 1937 37.103

One of the most fascinating and mysterious objects of early Islamic art in the Museum's collection, this wood panel was acquired in 1937 from the dealer Paul Mallon in Paris. It is the largest and most complete of a small group of similar panels that can be found today in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo; the Museum of Archaeology of Cairo University; and the Musée du Louvre, Paris.<sup>1</sup> Their hearsay provenance—unconfirmed—is that they were found in the cemetery of 'Ain al-Sira near Fustat (Old Cairo).<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the most common identification of their function has been that they are fragments from a cenotaph. This is a possible option considering the over-six-foot length (nearly two meters) of the complete panel in the Museum. Various other considerations, however, can be put forward that question such an interpretation. First, had it been a cenotaph (*tabut*, in Arabic),<sup>3</sup> this decorated wooden box would have been placed at the center of a small room within a mausoleum dedicated to a high-ranking individual. While little is known of burial practices during the first two to three centuries of Islam when these panels were undoubtedly created, it is unlikely, given the lack of both archaeological and literary evidence, that the cemetery of 'Ain al-Sira would have hosted a sophisticated architectural structure that included this cenotaph.

In addition, close inspection of the Museum's panel in the Department of Objects Conservation indicates that the metal pins in the top edge may have originally been used to secure hinges; their location suggests that the panel functioned as the lid of a chest. If this was the case, the dimensions of the panel correspond to the width and length of the box (rather than the height and length of a side panel), making it a cenotaph of odd proportions if it was meant to suggest the perimeter of the body beneath.

An alternative possibility put forward in the past that has now gained support is that the chest might instead have been a container for an early copy of the Qur'an. Frequently written on thick parchment and produced in bound, multivolume sets, early Qur'ans were not only sacred but also precious and expensive manuscripts. The text of the Qur'an was divided into thirty established parts at an early stage, and it is likely that sets of even larger divisions were made. The dimensions of extant individual folios suggest that volumes of a height of about 16–18 inches (40–45 cm) would have been relatively common and would have fit nicely inside this chest arranged one next to another and stacked vertically in a few rows.<sup>4</sup> As demonstrated by late seventh- to early eighth-century Qur'an folios found inside the ceiling of the Great Mosque of Sana'a, Yemen, a few decades ago, early illuminated manuscripts of the Qur'an included both architectural arcades and geometric patterns similar to the central design of this panel, providing a direct link between the illumination of Qur'an manuscripts and the exterior decoration of Qur'an chests.<sup>5</sup>

From the technical as well as the art-historical point of view, this panel is a rare early example of wood-mosaic decoration, notable for the high quality of its execution. A single panel of fig wood



(*figus* sp.) served as the substrate. Ebony (*Diospyros*) or granadilla (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*), European yew (*Taxus baccata*), an unknown wood from the family *Rutaceae*, and bone (not ivory, as one might think) were applied to produce the complex geometric decoration. The diminutive triangular, square, rectangular, and diamond shapes were cut from wood rods in six different sizes and subsequently individually glued in place according to the desired patterns. Tool marks on the bone elements indicate the use of a saw, a knife, a rasp, and shaped carving tools with triangular-section blades. Holes were made using a bow drill. X-radiography reveals the metal pins in the top edge of the panel to be the only joining hardware; similar metal pins or corresponding holes in analogous locations have been observed in the closely related wooden panels in the other institutions in Berlin and Cairo mentioned above.

The composition is symmetrical with a central composite square that is strongly reminiscent of Roman stone-mosaic floors. Each of the two sides includes a series of five narrow arches separated by stylized columns (see detail, p. 43). There is no sense of architectural depth in the design as the interior of each arch is filled with a dense, sometimes complex and sophisticated mosaic pattern. The prominent columns emphasize the decorative aspect of the panel especially at their top ends, which recall the crowns of Sasanian rulers. This use of elements from the artistic languages of the two great traditions inherited by the early Islamic artists, Roman on the Mediterranean coasts and Sasanian in the Greater Iranian region, makes this panel an intriguing work to study. It also helps to date it in the first two—unlikely the third—centuries after the advent of Islam.

SC/DH

1. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. I. 5684 a-b); Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (nos. 9518, 11636); Museum of Archaeology of Cairo University (no. 58); and Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. AA 201).
2. New Cairo, or al-Qahira, was founded by the Fatimids in 969, and nearby Fustat lost its political importance while maintaining a lively society and busy trading and commercial activities. Related panels in carved wood, now at the Louvre, have also been reported to come from 'Ain al-Sira: see Anglade 1988, pp. 23–26, figs. 8–10a.
3. According to Muslim burial practice, the body of the deceased is wrapped in a simple cloth and placed in the ground. A cenotaph is therefore a sumptuous but empty grave marker placed on the ground directly above the burial place.
4. A cursory review of the recent George 2010, pp. 45 and 92 (fig. 61), for example, shows that a Qur'an in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (no. Arabe 331), measures 16¼ by 13¾ inches (41.3 × 34.8 cm), and one in the Khalili Collection, London (no. KFAQ 27), is 18½ by 13 inches (47 × 33 cm). George also observes (p. 44) that "the dimensions of preserved Hijazi fragments are consistently large (typically 33 × 24 cm and above . . .)" and shows the image (p. 87, fig. 57) of a folio from a "Giant Qur'an" in style C.Ia (also in the Bibliothèque Nationale, no. Arabe 324c) that measures 21⅛ by 24⅜ inches (53.7 × 62 cm).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–86, figs. 53–56.

PROVENANCE: [Paul Mallon, Paris, until 1937; sold to MMA]



## 22. Panel

Iraq, probably Baghdad, early 9th century

Wood (teak); carved

29½ × 33½ in. (74.9 × 85.1 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1933 33.41.1a-e

This panel is one of fourteen carved wooden elements acquired as a group, all reportedly found in the ruins of Takrit, in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Made of teak, it appears to be a fragment of a larger piece, perhaps a door or a piece of furniture. Interlacing bands frame its design within a square, of which the two lateral sides and part of the top remain, surrounding a large central circle with smaller circular loops around its circumference. Inside the large circle, an interlaced six-pointed star encloses another circle. A dense, crisply carved vine scroll, with striated trefoil sprigs, lancet leaves, and split-palmette motifs, fills the square framework.

Both the iconography and the style of this panel recall the stone-carved facade of the eighth-century palace of Mshatta (from present-day Jordan, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) though with less variety and greater stylization.<sup>2</sup> Yet the motifs here are not as repetitive and abstract as the carving in wood and stucco associated with the ninth-century palaces at Samarra; even the so-called Samarra Style A is more regularized in its imagery and less varied in the manner of its carving. Perhaps the closest parallel from a dated context—albeit physically the farthest afield—is the wood *minbar* of the Great Mosque of Qairawan, in Tunisia, produced between 856 and 863. Whether these *minbar* panels were carved in Baghdad, as previously believed, or sent as raw material to North Africa and carved there according to early Abbasid models, they share with the



Metropolitan Museum's panel its motifs and compositional approach.<sup>3</sup> A design almost identical to that found on this panel decorates a pair of doors in the Benaki Museum, Athens. There, an eight-pointed interlaced star within a circle framed in a square makes up the central part of the rectangular door leaves, enclosing similar vegetal elements.<sup>4</sup> The Benaki doors have been attributed to late eighth- or early ninth-century Baghdad, and it is likely that this panel originally comes from that milieu as well.<sup>5</sup> EK

1. Dimand 1933b.
2. For a discussion of the development of this carving, see Dimand 1937. See also Ettinghausen 1979, p. 20.
3. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 94.
4. For a recent succinct discussion of the "Solomon's-Seal" motif, see Hasson 1998.
5. Pauty 1931b, pp. 77 and 81. Cf. Moraitou 2001, which demonstrates the continuity of Umayyad-style ornamentation and compositions into the Abbasid period, and proposes a mid-eighth-century date for the Benaki doors.

PROVENANCE: Sidney Burney, London (until 1933; sold to MMA)

### 23. *Pair of Doors*

Iraq, probably Samarra, 9th century  
Wood (teak); carved

31.119.1: 87 × 20¼ × 1½ in. (221 × 51.4 × 3.8 cm)  
31.119.2: 87¾ × 21 × 1½ in. (222.9 × 53.3 × 3.8 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1931 31.119.1 and 31.119.2

According to Museum files, the findspot for these doors was the town of Takrit in north-central Iraq. Researchers, however, have deduced that local residents in modern times had brought them there for reuse from the ruins of Samarra, a site located on the east bank of the Tigris, about seventy-eight miles (125 km) north of Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> It was at Samarra, in 836, that the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim (r. 833–42) established a new administrative and military center, the ruins of which cover over fifty square miles (80 square km). Excavations at Samarra have revealed a series of sprawling palace complexes, constructed of fired and unfired brick as well as *pisé* (mud or clay applied in courses);<sup>2</sup> the walls were decorated with dadoes of carved or molded stucco panels, wall paintings, ceramic tiles, and glass mosaics.<sup>3</sup> The Museum's doors resemble the finds from Samarra so closely that they probably originated there as well.

Wood was not an abundant resource in this region, and at Samarra it seems to have been used sparingly in building interiors, primarily for doors, soffits, and jambs. The Museum's doors are made of teak, a highly prized material shipped from Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> Each leaf consists of a rectangular panel between two square



panels, arranged vertically and set within a plain framework. The six inset panels embellished with symmetrical designs represent quintessential examples of the so-called beveled style of ornament that developed under the Abbasids, characterized by the slanted profile of its carving and the rhythmic undulation of its surfaces.<sup>5</sup> Typical of beveled-style ornament, the designs on these doors vaguely suggest vegetation, with palmette-like forms and tendril-like spirals, while retaining their abstract nature. Here a raised ridge accentuates the outlines, and it is likely that brightly

colored paint and gilding once highlighted the carved designs, as is the case on most of the wood fragments associated with the Samarra palaces.<sup>6</sup>

EK

1. Dimand 1932a, p. 135.
2. Samarra was first excavated by Ernst Herzfeld between 1911 and 1914. His endeavors are fully explored in Gunter and Hauser, eds. 2004; see also Leisten 2003. Iraqi excavations took place at Samarra in 1936–39 and 1979–82 (see al-Janabi 1983). For a more recent analysis of Abbasid Samarra, see Northedge 2005.
3. Herzfeld 1923.
4. Milwright 2001, pp. 86–87.
5. This style is also known as Samarra Style C, after Herzfeld 1923. See also “Beveled Style,” in Bloom and Blair, eds. 2009, vol. 1, pp. 280–81.
6. Among the close parallels in other collections are examples in the Benaki Museum, Athens (no. GE 9128); Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. AA 267), which came in as a gift in 1938 and may be a “mate” of the Benaki panel (the attribution to Jawsaq al-Khaqani is actually based on its similarity to the stucco found there; see Anglade 1988, pp. 18–20); and the British Museum, London (no. 1944, 0513.1–2), a frieze and door purchased from a private collector in 1944. See also Canby 2000, pp. 132–35, for a discussion of the dispersal of the Samarra finds.

PROVENANCE: B. Cooke, Harrow on the Hill, England (until 1931; sold to MMA)

## 24. Cover Fragment

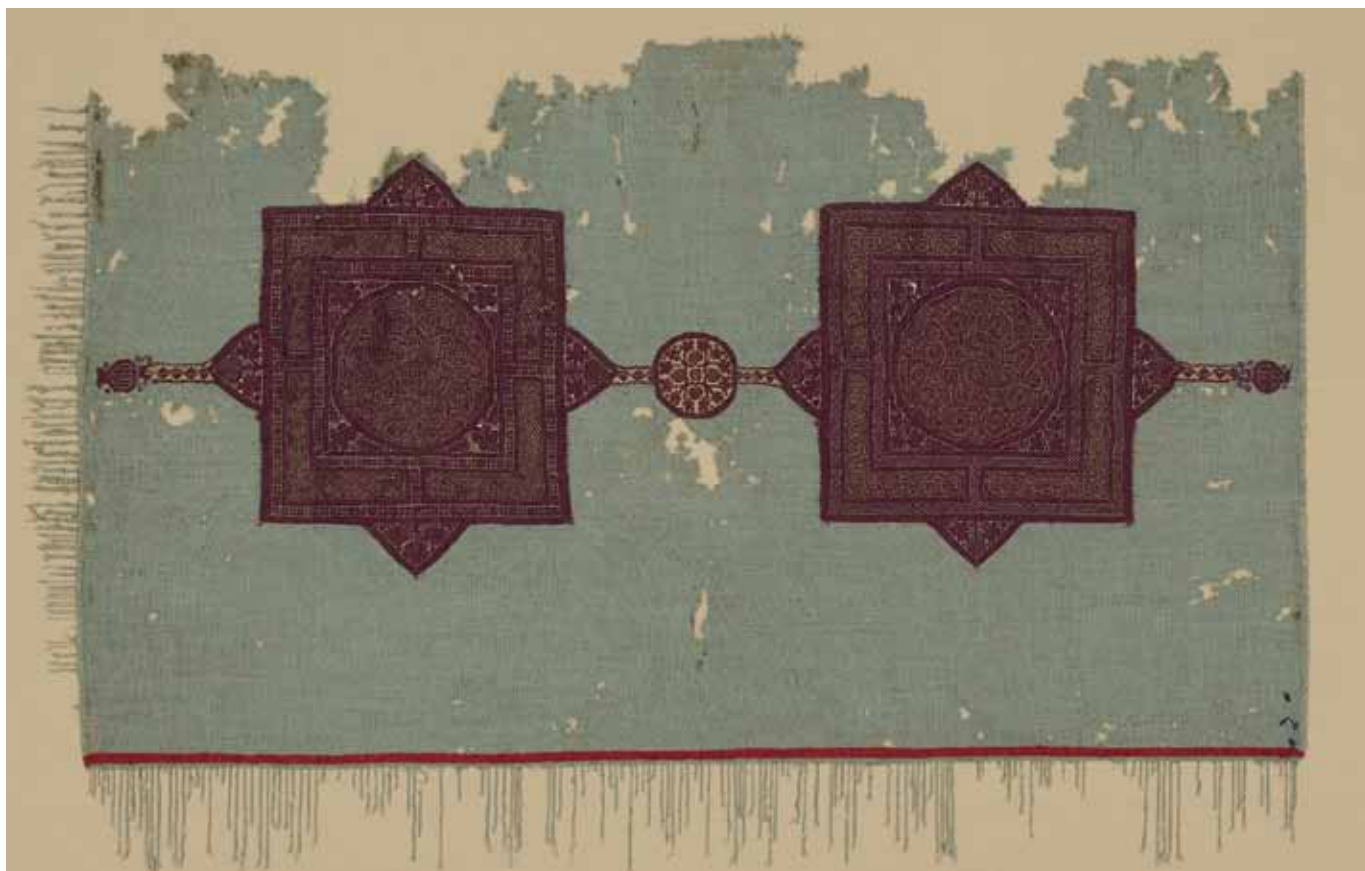
Egypt, 5th century

Wool, linen; plain weave, tapestry weave

25½ × 38¼ in. (64.9 × 97 cm)

Gift of George F. Baker, 1890 90.5.807

Finely woven, this light green and purple fabric fragment has an intricate pattern of vine scrolls and geometric interlace patterns, motifs prevalent in all media from monumental floor mosaics to textiles during Byzantine rule of the eastern Mediterranean. Here grapevines emerge from small, ornate pots at each side of the fabric to fill two large canted squares and extend on to join in a small grape-leaf-filled medallion at the center of the field. The grapevine-filled squares are each overlaid with a square and a medallion filled with geometric interlace to form two eight-pointed stars. Both the elaborate pattern and the thin red border at the fringed end of the fragment were probably repeated at the other end of the textile; fringe also appears along one side of the fabric. While the scale of this fragment suggests that it may have been a domestic covering, a similar eight-pointed star in Berlin has been described as part of a tunic.<sup>1</sup> Grapevines were popular symbols of fertility and productivity; the intricate patterns of the two stars may have been meant to protect by diverting the evil eye.<sup>2</sup>





Like most textiles from Egypt of the Byzantine era, this piece of fabric was probably used for the wrapping of a body for burial; both clothing and domestic furnishings were employed in the process. The term *Coptic* was long applied to these works, as the textiles were thought to have all been woven by native Egyptians who were members of the Coptic Church, the Egyptian Christian church. It is now recognized that these textiles include many imported works and reflect patterns popular throughout the Byzantine Empire.<sup>3</sup> The exceptional quality of this fragment suggests an awareness of the luxury goods produced north of Egypt in Syria.<sup>4</sup> In later centuries, eight-pointed stars would be a motif widely used in Islamic art.

HCE

1. Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. 9239a). See Hamm and other cities 1996–98, pp. 346–47, no. 395c.
2. Hoskins 2004, pp. 101–2; New York 1995–96, pp. 13–14; Maguire 1990, pp. 215–17.
3. Thomas 2007; New York 1995–96, pp. 5–15; Gonosová 1989.
4. New York 1995–96, p. 9.

PROVENANCE: Emil Brugsch Bey, Cairo (until 1890); George F. Baker, New York (1890)

## 25. Textile Fragment

Iran, Iraq, or Egypt, mid-8th century  
Wool; tapestry weave  
12 × 18¾ in. (30.5 × 47.6 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1950 50.83

Opulent silks with bold patterns were appreciated by the Sasanian ruling elite in the centuries preceding the advent of Islam in Iran. Rock carvings at royal tombs and other important Sasanian dynastic sites display carefully executed depictions of figures wearing garments cut from such cloth.<sup>1</sup> These carvings, along with rare surviving textiles, offer a glimpse into the sartorial taste of the period, which tended toward costume featuring staggered rows of large pearl-bordered roundels, multipetaled rosettes, and sprouting floral medallions. At the time, fabrics bearing these motifs were widely traded from China to the Mediterranean, as attested by excavated examples.<sup>2</sup> The international exchange of such cloths along the Silk Road and beyond gave rise to locally woven variations;<sup>3</sup> weavers active in the early centuries of Islamic expansion were no doubt familiar with these luxury trade goods—and, perhaps, looked to them for inspiration.

Sasanian silks often were created using drawloom technology, in which the design was “programmed” into the loom in advance, permitting a more rapid replication of the pattern during the weaving process. The present textile, however, was produced in the more time-consuming tapestry-weave technique. And, unlike the lightweight silks that probably served as its models, this textile has a heavier texture that suggests it was intended to serve as a floor covering or as furnishing fabric.

While the design of the present piece may emulate patterns favored by Sasanian weavers, the Museum’s textile has been dated to the early period of Islamic expansion. Comparing it to a group of related silk textiles with inscriptions dating to the reign of the Umayyad ruler Marwan II (744–50), scholars have attributed the Metropolitan’s fragment to the mid-eighth century.<sup>4</sup> Other wool tapestry-woven fragments, exhibiting nearly identical floral forms, color palette, and weave technique, also have been dated to the eighth century.<sup>5</sup> Many of these early pieces are attributed to Iran or Iraq, yet the presence of S-spun wool in some examples has led scholars to posit a third possible production site—Egypt, where



the utilization of counterclockwise spun wool was a characteristic of textile production for centuries.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of their place of production, these skillfully woven fragments are a testament to the continuity and adaptability of the tapestry weavers' art during the early centuries of Islamic expansion in these regions. DMT

1. New York 1978, pp. 119ff. Also Fukai and Horiuchi 1984, esp. pp. 80ff. and related plates.
2. For a discussion of the spread of motifs and weaving techniques along the "Silk Road," see Cleveland and New York 1997–98, esp. Chapter 1: "Early Exchanges: Silks from the Eighth through the Eleventh Century," pp. 20–51; and also Feng 2004–5.
3. For example, see the overall designs of a silk samite textile excavated in Qinghai Province and attributed to the eighth–ninth century (Feng 2004–5, p. 75, fig. 74) and that of a tapestry-woven fragment attributed to eighth-century Iran or Iraq (New York 1978, p. 138, no. 62).
4. See Walker, D. 1995–96. For the entry on the present fragment, see pp. 14, 28. Early writings on the Marwan silks include Guest and Kendrick 1932, and Day 1952 (Day argues for an even earlier dating, assigning it to the reign of Marwan I). For color reproduction of some of the pieces, see Baker, P. 1995, p. 39.
5. Some are published in Geneva and Paris 1993–94; see esp. p. 51, no. 6.
6. See *ibid.*

PROVENANCE: [J. Acheroff, Paris, until 1950; sold to MMA]

## 26. *Tiraz* Textile Fragment

Iran, Khurasan, dated A.H. 266/879–80 A.D.

Silk, cotton: plain weave, embroidered

6¼ × 12 in. (15.9 × 30.5 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1931 31.106.27

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script, embroidered in red silk:

[... أمير المؤمنين أيد] الله [ه] ما امر أبو احمد اخو أمير المؤمنين في طراز نيشابور  
سنة ست سنين [٩] مئتين أبي عبدالله الخامس

[... commander of the] faithful, may God strengthen [him],  
of what Abu Ahmad, the brother of the commander of the faithful,  
ordered [in the] *tiraz* of Nishapur, year two hundred sixty-six  
(879–80 A.D.). –Abu 'Abd Allah al-Khamis

A unique specimen of historic importance, this *tiraz* fragment incorporates a pattern of blue and tan stripes woven in silk and cotton.<sup>1</sup> To allow for the later insertion of an inscription, the weaver created a plain band entirely woven of silk. This text, embroidered on the obverse of the fabric with red silk, provides the name of a commissioner along with a date and place of production. Its date of A.H. 266/879–80 A.D. falls within the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tamid (r. 870–92), and its patron can be identified as his brother, Abu Ahmad al-Muwaffaq, who served as al-Mu'tamid's viceroy of the east, with its capital at Merv.

Although in 875 al-Mu'tamid had designated his own son Ja'far al-Mufawwad as his heir and viceroy of the west, the latter had little real power. It was the caliph's brother, al-Muwaffaq, who commanded the Turkish military during the years marked by the





Zanj rebellion in Iraq (869–83) and the rise of the Saffarids in Iran.<sup>2</sup> Two textiles commissioned by al-Muwaffaq in Merv are known; one is dated to A.H. 260/873–74 A.D.,<sup>3</sup> the other to A.H. 277/890–91 A.D.<sup>4</sup> The fact that al-Muwaffaq was in effective control of Khurasan for nearly twenty years may help to identify the place of production mentioned in this textile's inscription, which could be read as either "Bishapur," in the province of Fars, or "Nishapur," situated in Khurasan.

The evidence of Islamic postreform coinage tells us that Bishapur, known in Arabic as *Sabur*, had a mint more active under the Umayyads than under the early Abbasids. On the other hand, as the Metropolitan Museum's excavations in the 1930s under Charles K. Wilkinson have shown, in the Abbasid period Nishapur was a thriving commercial center with a mint. Abbasid literary sources mention that Nishapur was famous for its textiles, particularly its silk and *mulhams* (see cat. 27). It is no surprise that the twelfth-century geographer al-Idrisi actually reports that it had a *tiraz* workshop.<sup>5</sup>

Given the survival of two textiles from Merv inscribed with al-Muwaffaq's name, as well as numismatic, archaeological, and literary evidence concerning Nishapur's importance as a textile center, it is appropriate to attribute the present textile to Nishapur. Furthermore, the traditional attribution of other textiles to Bishapur should be reconsidered.

JS

1. To the present piece can be compared a striped *mulham tiraz* fragment in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 31.106.41), which may have come from an eastern workshop.
2. Kennedy 1993.
3. Kühnel and Bellinger 1952, p. 10, pl. 5.
4. *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* 1932, p. 246, no. 753.
5. Jaubert, ed. 1936–40, vol. 1, pp. 352–53.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1931)

## 27. *Tiraz* Textile Fragment

Eastern Iran or Khurasan, ca. 892–902

Silk warp and cotton weft (*mulham*); plain weave, embroidered

14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 14 in. (37.5 × 35.6 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1931 31.19.2

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script, embroidered in chain stitch in red silk:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الحمد لله الملك الحق المبين وحمل [sic] الله على محمد النبي نعم الله  
للخليفة أبي العباس الإمام المعتضد بالله ( . . . )

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the King, the pure Truth, and may God praise Muhammad the Prophet, may God delight in the Caliph Abu l-'Abbas al-Imam al-Mu'tadid billah [ . . . ]

On right margin in tiny stitch:

بن الخشوعي [أ] عانه [؟]

Ibn al-Khushu'i, may [God] help him(?)

This textile is inscribed with a protocol in the name of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tadid (r. 892–902). The inscription begins with a religious formula containing benedictory phrases alluding to the Prophet Muhammad and to the person of the caliph, the leader of the early Islamic empire and community. It is very likely that the inscription would have mentioned a place, possibly a workshop and date of production, unfortunately lost here. A tiny inscription in the right margin contains the name *Ibn Khushu'i*, possibly a reference to the weaver of the textile.

Especially notable on this textile are the style and execution of the inscription and the material of the ground fabric. Characterized



by the calligraphic treatment of individual letter forms and the ratio between low-lying letters and high letter stems, as well as their rhythm, the line of inscription in *kufic* script comprises an even thickness with pronounced, wedgelike letter ends that are embroidered in chain stitch with red silk. The ground fabric is composed of silk warps and cotton wefts, a mix that is referred to in the contemporary Arabic literature as *mulham*. A *tiraz* fragment in the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., bears an inscription dated to A.H. 283/896–97 A.D. in the name of al-Mu‘tadid and has a comparable calligraphic style on a *mulham* ground fabric.<sup>1</sup> Medieval Arabic sources tell us that the production of *mulham* was a particular specialty of Merv, the capital of the Abbasid province of Khurasan,<sup>2</sup> and several *mulham tiraz* fragments have survived that, according to their inscriptions, were produced in Merv.<sup>3</sup>

One of these, a piece in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, is significant as it was produced in Merv in the year A.H. 287/899–90 A.D., and thus during al-Mu‘tadid’s reign.<sup>4</sup> Although the style and execution of the inscription on the Berlin fragment are not as refined as those of the present textile, both share significant epigraphic details, among them the wedge-shaped pointed letter terminals and triangular and circular letter shapes, executed in chain-stitch embroidery. It is thus very likely that the present piece too was produced in Khurasan, possibly in Merv itself.

J S

1. Kühnel and Bellinger 1952, pp. 14–15, pl. 6.
2. Lamm 1937, pp. 105–6; Serjeant 1972, pp. 89–92, also p. 15 n. 32.
3. Sokoly 2002, nos. 83, 122, 171, and 190.
4. Ibid., no. 122; Kühnel 1952, p. 166, no. J 6412, fig. 3.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1931)

## 28. Prayer Mat

Tiberias (present-day Israel), first half of 10th century  
Hemp (warp), straw (weft); weft-faced plain weave, brocaded  
63<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 33<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (161 × 86 cm)  
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1939 39.113

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script:  
بركة كاملة ونعمة شاملة وسعادة متواصلة و غبطة و سرور لصاحبه  
Complete blessing and universal prosperity and continued happiness  
and joy to its owner

Floor coverings like this one were once highly esteemed, as the historical writings of medieval Islamic authors—among them al-Muqaddasi (before 985–86), the eleventh-century Persian traveler Nasir al-Din Khusrau, and the twelfth-century geographer

al-Idrisi—tell us.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps most notable is al-Idrisi’s remark that Tiberias produced widely praised mats, called *al-samaniyya*, that were made only in Palestine, thus establishing Tiberias as a noteworthy center of production from which the mats were exported to a variety of locations.

An inscribed mat from Tiberias, now in the Benaki Museum, Athens, survives complete. Its inscription, which contains a number of benedictions conferred on its owner (*li-sahibihi*), records that it had been ordered from the private *tiraz* workshop in Tabariyya, or Tiberias (*mimma umira bi-‘amalihi fi tiraz al-khassa bi-Tabariyya*).<sup>2</sup> This mat and the Metropolitan Museum example are related, sharing rough dimensions, weave structure, extraordinary quality, minimalist aesthetic, and style of *kufic* inscription. The ground fabric of both consists of hemp warps into which a double weft of fine flattened reed strands has been woven. The use of spun textile yarns, rather than reed, for the warp, as well as the presence of a fringe and carefully executed selvages, suggests that these mats were woven on conventional looms. The rather angular script of the inscriptions, with wedge-shaped letter ends and reversing *ya*, as well as the large size of the letters, recalls the style of Egyptian *tiraz* textile inscriptions from the reigns of the tenth-century Abbasid caliphs al-Mustakfi and al-Muti‘. Furthermore, the dimensions of the mats, combined with a sparing use of ornament and single lines of inscription, bring to mind linen shawls or turban cloths of the period, of which only fragments have survived in Egypt. Several other fragments of similar mats are in the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait City; the Bouvier Collection, Geneva; and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.<sup>3</sup>

Such mats were used within the Fatimid court in Egypt, as documented by a passage in the *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar*, an account of the life of one of the caliph al-Mu‘izz’s most important secretaries, Jawdhar, written by his assistant, Abu ‘Ali Mansur al-‘Azizi al-Jawdhari. It describes how al-Mu‘izz (r. 975–96) asked Jawdhar to order reed prayer mats from Mahdiya, which were to be inscribed with a text chosen by al-Mu‘izz himself.<sup>4</sup> Further references to reed mats at the Fatimid court can be found in the historian al-Maqrizi’s description of the contents of the *khaza’in al-farsh*, a treasury of furnishings that contained tents and their contents as well as reed mats (*husur*).<sup>5</sup>

Recent controlled excavation of the funerary complex at Istabl ‘Antar in the Southern Cemetery of Cairo has shown that mats were used in several tombs to wrap an enshrouded corpse and to provide a supplementary layer between corpse and ground.<sup>6</sup> This may explain the rather fragmentary nature of most surviving examples. The mat pieces at Istabl ‘Antar, however, seem to have survived almost complete, as did the present example and the mat in the Benaki Museum. The *Kitab dhikr al-mawt wa-ma ba’dahu* (Book of the Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife) of the imam Abu



Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali (died 1111), the famous Shafi'ite theologian active under the Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk, describes in one chapter the death of the Prophet Muhammad and his interment: after the Prophet had been washed by members of his family and clothed in his designated burial outfit, he was laid on a mat that was covered with some of his garments from life.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to deduce from this account alone that there existed a tradition in Islam to deposit the dead on a mat. Yet the fact that such mats were sometimes used by the living as prayer mats, as the account in the biography of al-Mu'izz's secretary Jawdhar tells us, might also explain why the deceased were sometimes buried with them: perhaps they were thought to carry *baraka* (blessing) that would thus be transmitted to the deceased.

JS

1. Al-Muqaddasi 1906, p. 180; Nasir al-Din Khusrau 1881, vol. 1, p. 58; Gildemeister 1885, text n.p. [10] and trans. p. 128.
2. Combe 1939.
3. Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait City, no. LNS 54 T. Bouvier Collection, Geneva, no. JFB I 45 (Geneva and Paris 1993–94, pp. 130–31, no. 65); no. JFB I 46 (ibid., pp. 131–32, no. 66). Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, no. 6940 (Cornu et al. 1992, p. 60). Fiber analysis on no. JFB I 45 in the Bouvier Collection has shown that the materials used were hemp for the warp and esparto grass, often referred to as reed or rushes, for the weft.
4. Al-Jawhari 1954, p. 88; al-Jawhari 1957, pp. 129–30.
5. Al-Maqrizi 1853–54, vol. 1, pp. 416–17; translated in Serjeant 1972, p. 159.
6. Tombs nos. 49, 15, and 10; Gayraud 1995, esp. p. 8, figs. 16–17.
7. Al-Ghazali 1989, pp. 73–74.

PROVENANCE: [Maurice Nahman, Cairo, until 1939; sold to MMA]





## 29. *Tiraz* Textile Fragment

Yemen, late 9th–early 10th century  
Cotton, ink, and gold; plain weave, resist-dyed (*ikat*), painted  
23 × 16 in. (58.4 × 40.6 cm)  
Gift of George D. Pratt, 1929 29.179.9

Band of pseudo-*kufic* characters outlined in ink and gilded  
Inscribed in Arabic above band:  
المَلِكُ لَهُ  
Dominion belongs to Him [God]

*Ikat*, a technique that involves using individually resist- or tie-dyed cotton warp threads, was a specialty of Yemen during the early Islamic period, attested in the literary sources of the period. The Arabic term for this type of cloth is *'asb*, the root of which means to bind or tie. *Ikats* were also produced in other locations throughout the Indian Ocean region. The piece seen here is a magnificent example of this type of textile, in both its manufacture—the fineness of the cotton threads, the regularity of the weave with its pattern, and the delicately twisted fringe—and its gilded benedictory inscription in ornamental *kufic* characters. While several *ikats* with embroidered personalized inscriptions in the names of Abbasid caliphs have survived, some of which attest the Yemeni capital Sana'a as a place of production, only two have caliphal inscriptions outlined in ink and gilded.<sup>1</sup> Both refer to a son of the Abbasid caliph al-Muntasir, the amir Abu Ibrahim. Al-Muntasir ruled from 861 to 863 and before that held governorships of several Arab provinces, possibly including Yemen. These two inscriptions share with the present piece a style of *kufic* inscription with pronounced hooklike letter ends as well as an interlaced *lam-alif* with small foliations that are typical of various regions of the Abbasid Empire during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Textiles such as this inscribed *ikat* are testimony to the importance of Yemen as a center for the production of Abbasid luxury goods, linking the trade routes of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

JS

1. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, no. 6744 (Cornu et al. 1992, pp. 63–65); Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C., no. 33.37 (Glidden and Thompson 1989, pp. 89–91, no. 12).

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1929)





## *Art of Spain, North Africa, and the Western Mediterranean*

OLGA BUSH

In the first century after the *hijra*, as Islamic faith and power quickly spread, the Iberian Peninsula (reached by Berber armies in 711) appeared to be land's end. But by the time the Umayyad ruler of al-Andalus, 'Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912–61), had adopted the title of caliph in 929, Cordoba was a capital city with some four hundred neighborhood mosques, seventy libraries, thousands of shops, a mint, and a royal workshop for the manufacture of luxury textiles. Its population of three hundred thousand religiously, linguistically, and ethnically diverse inhabitants comprised Muslims—including Arabs from Syria, North African Berbers, and Muwallads (Christian converts to

Islam)—and *dhimmis* (protected subjects), both Jews and Christians, who lived in designated neighborhoods and practiced their religions in return for payment of a special tax. Cordoba was one of the largest cities on earth.<sup>1</sup> The map of the medieval world had been redrawn.

An apt guide for reading that new map is provided by an anonymous text from the fourteenth or fifteenth century describing Madinat al-Zahra (the City Most Splendid), 'Abd al-Rahman III's opulent palace-city on the outskirts of Cordoba. It relates that, in the center of the sumptuously decorated Majlis al-Khilafa (Hall of the Caliphs), there hung



a gift from the Byzantine emperor: a pearl of unmatched size and brilliant luster, which had been identified by the eleventh-century Cordoban historian Ibn Hayyan as *al-Yatima* (the Orphan or the Unique).<sup>2</sup> The central position chosen for this gift reflects a world that was oriented visually and culturally around points of contact in a complex network of exchange rather than around a set of fixed geopolitical borders and stable, bounded identities. In light of current scholarship, which favors a view in which the frontier is everywhere—and everywhere permeable—the arts of Western Islam may be mapped as what Oleg Grabar has called a “shared culture of objects.” The geographic reach of this culture is at least pan-Mediterranean, if not considerably broader; its chief binding mechanism, at the level of court culture, is a gift economy; and its ideological foundation is the concept of monarchy.<sup>3</sup>

The history of *al-Yatima* sheds further light on this view.<sup>4</sup> When the Umayyads ruled in the East as the first Muslim dynasty, the pearl was displayed in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It was later sent to the Ka’ba in Mecca by the Abbasid caliphs, who came to power after annihilating all but one member of the Umayyad royal family in Damascus in 750. That survivor fled across North Africa and reestablished the Umayyad dynasty in Cordoba as ‘Abd al-Rahman I (r. 756–88). Sanctified by its association with the two most sacred shrines of Islam, *al-Yatima* accrued symbolic capital as the bearer of collective memories. The pearl spoke for the continuity of legitimate succession in the language of the gift. Hanging at Madinat al-Zahra, it communicated Byzantium’s recognition of ‘Abd al-Rahman III as “the Unique,” the one true ruler of *Dar al-Islam* (the Muslim world) at a time when the Abbasids, as well as the Fatimids in North Africa, also laid claim to the caliphate. But balancing such shared understandings, luxury objects could further acquire more local meanings: as the Orphan, *al-Yatima* would also recall the Umayyad forebear ‘Abd al-Rahman I, the lone survivor.

Examining some exemplary objects in various media and following a historical trajectory will clarify certain aspects of the culture of the pan-Mediterranean contact zone, and especially its microcosm in al-Andalus. The all but inevitable starting point is the Great Mosque of Cordoba, with its hypostyle sanctuary of marble columns supporting two-tiered horseshoe arches, which has come to be the very icon of medieval art in Western Islam.<sup>5</sup> The architectural and decorative forms of the mosque express the Umayyad claim to legitimate succession by forging artistic links to the Great Mosque of Damascus and the Dome of the Rock of the Umayyads of Syria. At the same time, however, they augment the tradition by their recourse to the more local vocabulary of Roman and Visigothic architecture on the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>6</sup> The grandeur of the Cordoba mosque further

communicates the political power and triumph of Islam: after its fourth expansion, in 981, it became the second largest mosque in *Dar al-Islam* after the Abbasid mosque in Samarra (present-day Iraq). Thus, in addition to the work of skilled craftsmen, both Christian and Muslim, on the masonry of the interior, mosaicists and tesserae were sent to Cordoba by the Byzantine emperor upon the request of al-Hakam II (r. 961–76) to embellish the *mihrab* of the mosque and the dome in front of it. Qur’anic verses inscribed in gold script against a blue ground in the area of the *maqsur* reinforced the association with the Dome of the Rock, where the same colors and technique were employed for Qur’anic inscriptions as well. Such colors also recall those of the Blue Qur’an (cat. 30), which was executed in gold script on blue-dyed parchment, most likely in modern-day Tunisia around the middle of the tenth century under Fatimid patronage. In addition, the luxury manuscript evokes Byzantine imperial documents written with gold and silver on purple-dyed parchment and sent by envoy to Muslim rulers.<sup>7</sup> Parallels such as these illustrate the multidirectional, transcultural, and intermedial circuit of pan-Mediterranean aesthetics.

This movement of architectural and decorative vocabularies communicated shared understandings—principal among them, ideological presuppositions concerning monarchy—through the use of recognizable visual tropes. Royal attributes of strength and magnificence were conveyed through an iconography that dated back to the Sasanian period and even earlier, as seen, for instance, in the many carved ivory boxes made in Madinat al-Zahra that show eagles, lions, peacocks, and griffins, often bearing an enthroned ruler (cats. 36, 37). As early as the tenth century, elephants were added to that panoply in a garden sculpture in Madinat al-Zahra, and they later appeared more prominently in southern Italy and Sicily, which were wrested from the Fatimids by the Normans in 1091. Sculpted elephants adorn the facade of the Cathedral of San Nicola Pellegrino in Trani (commissioned 1159–86), while, in a veritable anthology of royal motifs, the bishop’s throne in the Cathedral of San Sabino in Canosa (commissioned 1078–89) is supported by sculptures of elephants, lions, griffins, and splayed eagles.<sup>8</sup>

As the elephant’s most martial part, the tusk could represent the animal as a whole and was often given to rulers at medieval courts in Byzantium and the Christian and Muslim West as a tribute payment and symbol of allegiance.<sup>9</sup> It was also fashioned as a finished luxury object, the oliphant, a carved horn that could function either as a drinking vessel that imparted magic powers to its contents or as a wind instrument employed in ceremonials or hunting (cat. 38). The primary ideological import is inscribed succinctly on one such object as *al-mulk* (kingship/dominion).<sup>10</sup> In the Christian West, the oliphant is famously associated with the *Chanson de Roland*, but considered within the context of a shared



culture of objects, the epic hero Roland may be seen not only as a defender of Christendom *against* Islam but also as a participant in a gift economy *with* Islam. The instability of borders, identities, and allegiances is even more apparent in the Castilian epic of *El Cid*.

In this unstable cultural geography, crossed by “pathways of portability,” locating centers of production (or even the traditional assignment of styles and objects to particular dynasties) can be uncertain.<sup>11</sup> For instance, seventy-five oliphants and numerous ivory boxes (cat. 39) dated to the period between the tenth century and the end of the twelfth have traditionally been associated with the Fatimid dynasty. Yet they could have been made under various patrons in any of the Mediterranean cultural centers—Egypt, Syria, southern Italy, Sicily, al-Andalus, Byzantium—a fact that attests to an “international” style as well as to shared meanings.<sup>12</sup> These objects were also often encoded with additional meanings spawned by local circumstance. In the political environment of al-Andalus, for example, the iconography of royal power on one ivory pyxis has been interpreted as a specific warning to a lesser potentate to forgo his aspirations to the caliphal throne.<sup>13</sup> Another ivory pyxis, in the shape of a cylindrical box with a domical lid and inscribed with erotic verses proclaiming, “The sight I offer is of the fairest, the firm breast of a delicate maiden,”<sup>14</sup> has prompted discussion of issues relating to sexuality and gender.<sup>15</sup> Recent studies illuminate the role of court women in al-Andalus as patrons and recipients in the gift economy<sup>16</sup> and also as donors and founders of monumental works and public institutions.<sup>17</sup> Findings are also emerging with regard to the participation of women as an artisanal workforce in the production of luxury objects and, no doubt, of more common domestic objects as well.<sup>18</sup> And scholars are now attending to the role of women as preservers and transmitters of culture, especially in those complex households in which ethnic and religious origins were mixed.<sup>19</sup>

Even when sites of production can be determined, the results may reflect a shared culture of objects rather than constitute a map of discrete points and impermeable borders. Two examples may suffice as illustrations. First, a wood-and-ivory *minbar*, or preacher’s pulpit, most likely commissioned by an Almoravid sultan for his mosque in Marrakesh about 1120, bears an inscription stating that it was produced in Cordoba.<sup>20</sup> This declaration of portability is reinforced by evidence of Umayyad craftsmanship in the carved and inlaid surfaces and in the embellishment with geometric strapwork interspersed with dense vegetal arabesques reminiscent of Cordoban ivories and metalwork. The *minbar* was later brought to the Kutubiyya Mosque in Marrakesh by the ruler of the Almohad dynasty (1130–1269), which supplanted the Almoravids both in the Maghrib and in al-Andalus.

A second example, a textile known as the Chasuble of San Juan de Ortega, confounds the assumptions raised by the first.

The weaving technique, colors, and script of its *tiraz* (inscribed band) indicate that it was made in al-Andalus; however, its large medallions with paired lions and harpies are inscribed with the phrase, “This was made in Baghdad. May God watch over it.”<sup>21</sup> The inscription, then, would seem a bald-faced deception, perhaps aimed at fetching a better price. Yet, at an extreme, it may also suggest a certain truth: the movement of objects and styles hints at a reconfiguration of cultural identity based more on incorporation (of Baghdad in Cordoba, for instance) than on provenance. That this textile was used as part of a liturgical garment is also noteworthy: in Iberia particularly, many of the extant textiles customarily associated with Muslim dynasties have been preserved in church treasuries or recovered from Christian tombs (cat. 46A–C).<sup>22</sup>

The crossing of boundaries may, of course, reinforce the distinctive identities of self and other. The capture of the Almohad banner at the decisive battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 represented the defeat of the Muslim enemy by the Christian armies, not the end of enmity. Indeed, the annual parading, even today, of a replica of the banner through the streets of Burgos, where the original is housed, gives evidence of the ways in which contemporary Spanish national identity is still articulated as the triumph of a Christian “us” over a Muslim “them.”<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the politics of modern nationalism do not necessarily reflect the complexities of the medieval period. To cite another example, Don Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada (d. 1247), archbishop of Toledo, an ardent promoter of the crusade against the Almohads and spiritual guide of the Christian forces at Las Navas de Tolosa, was buried in a silk tunic embellished with gold and silver brocade and decorated with a *tiraz* that repeats the word *prosperity* in Arabic. This garment appears to have been the posthumous gift of King Ferdinand III of Castile and Leon (r. 1217–52), who received it from his vassal Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr ibn al-Ahmar (r. 1232–73), the founder of the Nasrid dynasty, which ruled al-Andalus from its capital in Granada.<sup>24</sup> It is a fitting gift, not so much as another commemoration of reconquest, but because it is of a piece with the two dozen ecclesiastical copes made of sumptuous textiles woven in al-Andalus that Jiménez de Rada amassed during his lifetime. The burial tunic, like the other textiles that he collected, forms part of a field of cultural production in which the self and the other are intimately interrelated on an overlapping frontier.<sup>25</sup>

An emblem of the mixed, pan-Iberian culture (a microcosm of the pan-Mediterranean culture) is offered by the doors to the Hall of the Ambassadors in the Alcazar of Seville. Built by Pedro I of Castile and Leon (r. 1350–69), this palace became home to his vassal the Nasrid king Muhammad V (r. 1354–59, 1362–91) when the latter returned from his exile at the Marinid court in Fez (Morocco) in 1362. On the interior of the wooden



Fig. 29 Court of the Lions in the Alhambra, Granada, mid-13th–late 14th century. Photo: Walter B. Denny

doors, passages from Psalm 53 are inscribed in Castilian; on the exterior, Pedro I is lauded in Arabic as “Our exalted lord the sultan.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than a border strictly dividing insiders from outsiders, the doors are bilingual, as were many of those who crossed the threshold. There is even a “trilingual” parallel in the contemporaneous Tránsito Synagogue in Toledo, built by Samuel Halevi, Pedro I’s treasurer, in which inscriptions in Hebrew and Arabic are combined with the lions and castles of the Castilian coat of arms.<sup>27</sup> Extending the metaphor, multiple languages are also found in the ceiling paintings in the Hall of Justice in the Palace of the Lions in the Alhambra (Madinat al-Hamra), built under Muhammad V when he regained his throne in Granada with the support of Pedro I.<sup>28</sup>

Overlooking the Nasrid capital of Granada, the Alhambra is the best-preserved palatial complex from the medieval Muslim world. Its architecture and decoration have been studied from many perspectives.<sup>29</sup> In this brief survey, in which inscriptions have frequently been key, the Alhambra may be cited for its abundant parietal epigraphy and especially for the distinctive use in its inscriptions of prosopopeia, the poetic device that allows inanimate objects to speak in the first person. Verses by Ibn Zamrak inscribed in the Hall of Two Sisters (al-Qubba al-Kubra) declare, for instance, “I am the garden appearing every morning adorned with beauty; contemplate my beauty and you will be penetrated with understanding.”<sup>30</sup> Muhammad V is extolled in the following verses, for one of the primary functions

of the epigraphy and other aspects of the architectural design is to reinforce the ideology of monarchy. But, given the opportunity to speak for themselves, the walls make two other statements characteristic of the Alhambra: an intermedial translation—here likening architecture to gardens but elsewhere comparing it to textiles—and an instruction to the beholder to undertake a certain aesthetic exercise.<sup>31</sup> The two points intersect. The textile metaphors suggest an integrative aesthetic, both in al-Andalus and in the pan-Mediterranean culture of which it is a part. In this light, large-scale textile furnishings, such as the double-panel curtains associated with the Nasrids, may be viewed as temporary, textile architecture, actively reconfiguring multiuse spaces, as did smaller textiles (cat. 48) and portable objects in other media.

With the fall of the Nasrid dynasty in 1492, Western Islam came definitively under the hegemony of the East. Exiled from Christian Iberia, resettled artisans continued to practice the crafts of al-Andalus, most notably in the architecture and decoration of the *madrasas* built under the Marinid dynasty (1269–1541) in present-day Morocco. But in the following centuries, no site of political and artistic prestige arose in Western Islam to rival the supremacy of the Ottoman dynasty (1299–1923). And while the relationship between waxing Christian and waning Muslim power maintained certain aspects of the pan-Mediterranean medieval map from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, European colonialism was changing the larger world and would transform North Africa as well. In consequence, the arts of Western Islam are now commonly known through the avatars of Orientalism, those exoticizing appropriations of Islamic art that spread through Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> The map is changing again, however, and a Friday mosque now crowns the Albaicin Hill in Granada, facing the Alhambra, after a hiatus of some five centuries.

I am grateful to the late Oleg Grabar for his comments on a draft of this essay.

1. Hillenbrand, R. 1992, and the exhibition catalogue *Madinat al-Zahra’* 2001. Among studies on the literary production of the Cordoban court, see Menocal 2002.
2. For the complete passage from the *Dikr bilad al-Andalus*, see Fierro 2004, p. 312. The remark from Ibn Hayyan’s *Muqtabis* is discussed by Labarta and Barceló 1987, p. 102. For an examination of textual sources on that artifact as well as its history and significance, see Rabbat 1993, pp. 71–73; and Shalem 1997. For another description of *al-Yatima*, in an eleventh-century anonymous text, see al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996, pp. 181 and 353.
3. Grabar 1998. On the medieval gift economy and the monetary value of luxury goods, see Cutler 2001 and numerous examples in al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996, as well as Hoffman 2001. For a comprehensive theoretical discussion of gift exchange and an analysis of the

- corresponding cultural networks in the context of medieval South Asia, see Flood 2009.
4. See Avinoam Shalem's development of Grabar's concept of the "shared culture of objects" in Shalem 2004a. See also the related theoretical conceptualization in Nora 1989.
  5. An extensive list of studies on various aspects of the archaeology, architecture, and decoration of the Great Mosque of Cordoba can be found in Souto 2007.
  6. For a summary of Roman and Visigothic forms adapted in the architecture of al-Andalus, see Dodds 1992, as well as Dodds 1990.
  7. Bloom 2007, pp. 42–44.
  8. See Cilento and Vanoli 2007, pp. 222–25. Textual sources speak of an elephant in 'Abd al-Rahman III's zoo in Madinat al-Zahra and of one given by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid to Charlemagne about 801 (see Shalem 2004b, p. 102).
  9. Ibn Hayyan recorded, for instance, that in 991 the Cordoban caliph Hisham II received "eight thousand pounds of the most pure ivory" in addition to numerous other gifts from a North African Berber prince. See de Gayangos 1840–43, vol. 2, pp. 190–91, a version of *The History of Muhammedan Dynasties in Spain* adapted from al-Maqqari, *Nafh al-tib*.
  10. Shalem 2004b, p. 67. In the Umayyad context, the word *al-mulk* is found on the earthenware ceramics produced in Madinat al-Zahra; more important, it recalls *Dar al-Mulk* (the House of Kingship/Dominion), the name of 'Abd al-Rahman III's palace there. The word *al-mulk* is inscribed on objects that can be traced to other areas in the Mediterranean, but more immediately, in the context of al-Andalus, it should be noted that the term appears on a Nasrid lusterware "Alhambra" vase, found at the excavations at Mazara del Vallo in Sicily (now in the Galleria Regionale della Sicilia, Palermo). See Guillermo Rosselló Bordoy in Granada and New York 1992, p. 354, no. 110. The export of the Nasrid luxury lusterware once again reflects shared meanings in the pan-Mediterranean context.
  11. Hoffman 2001. For trade routes, seafaring, commerce, and consular networks in the Mediterranean from the thirteenth through the fifteenth century, see Barcelona 2004.
  12. Priscilla Soucek has made a related point about the similarities between the decorative motifs of Byzantine textiles and Umayyad ivories made in Cordoba. See Soucek 1997, pp. 409–10, 517. For a comprehensive discussion of ivory sources, trade routes, and cutting and carving techniques during the medieval period in the Mediterranean, see Cutler 1994 and Shalem 2004b, pp. 50–79. For a compendium and related bibliography of medieval ivories made in Muslim lands, see Galán y Galindo 2005.
  13. Prado-Vilar 2005. The entire issue of the *Journal of the David Collection* in which Prado-Vilar's work appears is dedicated to papers from a symposium entitled "The Ivories of Muslim Spain," held in Copenhagen, November 18–20, 2003 (Folsach and Meyer, eds. 2005).
  14. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 95, based on Kühnel 1971, pp. 43–44. For an interpretation of the erotic aspect of the verses, see Washington, D.C. 2004, pp. 125–26.
  15. For the most recent bibliography on women in al-Andalus, see Anderson forthcoming. I wish to thank the author for sharing her essay manuscript with me.
  16. For the association of foliate decoration with the fecundity of royal concubines and, by implication, with women's role in the legitimate succession to the throne, see Holod 1992, p. 43; Prado-Vilar 1997; and Blair 2005.
  17. On the architectural patronage of mosques, cemeteries, and other pious foundations by Umayyad court women, see Anderson forthcoming. Anderson rightly remarks that the only monograph to date on women's patronage during the caliphal period (660–1236) is Cortese and Calderini 2006.
  18. For instances of women employed at the Umayyad court—as cooks and servants but also as a treasurer of luxury textiles—and of women of other social classes working as weavers, embroiderers, and vendors, see Marín 2000, pp. 270–72, 283–91. On women poets, calligraphers, and copyists, see Ávila 1989 and Ávila 2002.
  19. On the construction of the hybrid genealogies of the Umayyads of Cordoba and the impact of non-Arab and non-Muslim mothers on the cultural identities of the rulers, see Ruggles 2004a. An expansion of this discussion to include the Christian kings of the Iberian Peninsula can be found in Dodds, Menocal, and Krasner Balbale 2008, pp. 22–28. On women as "defenders of the cultural identity of their communities" in the later medieval period, see Jesús Fuente 2009.
  20. See Jonathan M. Bloom in Granada and New York 1992, pp. 362–67, no. 115.
  21. Shepherd 1957 and Partearroyo Lacaba 1992, p. 106. It is possible that the chasuble was made in Almeria, a thriving center of textile production and a commercial port, since the inscription on the *tiraz* of a similar textile, the Chasuble of Saint Thomas Becket, refers to that city. See Simon-Cahn 1993. For a recent overview of textiles made in al-Andalus, see Partearroyo Lacaba 2005.
  22. For a catalogue of objects preserved in church treasuries but associated with the patronage of medieval Muslim dynasties, as well as a discussion of their function and meaning in the context of the Christian West, see Shalem 1998.
  23. For the most recent study of this banner, see Ali-de-Unzaga 2007 and Antonio Fernández-Puertas in Madrid 2005, pp. 262–69, no. 66.
  24. For a discussion of mortuary vestments of Iberian Christian kings, nobles, and churchmen, including those of Jiménez de Rada, in the context of an argument for a pan-Iberian aesthetics, see Feliciano 2005. See also Madrid 2005. Despite the shared taste for luxury textiles, not only did the dress of Christian nobles differ in cut from that of Muslims, but specific decorative motifs were preferred by Christians. See Fernández González 2007.
  25. Dodds, Menocal, and Krasner Balbale 2008 posited the concept of "intimacy" as an alternative to the notion of *convivencia* (coexistence). In connection with that important revision of prevalent notions of cultural interrelationship in al-Andalus, the term *mudéjar style*, coined by José Amador de los Ríos in 1859 and a mainstay of the study of Iberian art history ever since, has also come under new critical consideration. Common to both terms—*convivencia* and *mudéjar style*—is the presupposition of clearly identifiable borders between self and other; moreover, they reflect a tendency to map the movement of culture in a single direction, as part of the history of Christian Spain. In addition to Dodds, Menocal, and Krasner Balbale 2008, see the essays in the following volumes for a critique of these terms, which is central to new developments in the study of Western Islam: Robinson, C., and Rouhi, eds. 2005; Feliciano, Rouhi, and Robinson, eds. 2006; Robinson, C., and Pinet, eds. 2008; and Valdés Fernández, ed. 2007. See also Robinson, C. 2003; Ruiz Souza 2004; and Ruiz Souza 1998.



26. Iberian architecture from the twelfth through the fourteenth century contains many examples of monumental inscriptions combining phrases in Arabic and Latin. With regard to the inscriptions in Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, and Castilian on the tomb of Ferdinand III, Dodds, Menocal, and Krasner Balbale argued that they “provide particularly striking markers of the Castilian intimacy with the communities they represent” (2008, p. 199). Recent studies of Pedro I’s palace in the Alcazar of Seville include Almagro Gorbea 2007 and Ruggles 2004b.
27. On Iberian synagogues, see Ben-Dov 2009. Among recent studies in Sephardic art history, see Kogman-Appel 2004 and Harris 2005.
28. For interpretations of the visual narratives of the ceiling paintings in the Hall of Justice, see Robinson, C., and Pinet, eds. 2008.
29. Much of this research agenda was set in Grabar 1978. See Orihuela Uzal 1995, Fernández-Puertas 1997, and Angustias Cabrera et al. 2007.
30. Among studies on the poetry in the Alhambra, see García Gómez 1996, Puerta Vilchez 1990, Puerta Vilchez 2007, Jarrar 1999, Robinson, C. 2008, Bush 2009, Rubiera Mata 1970, Rubiera Mata 1981, Rubiera Mata 1994, and Sumi 2004, pp. 155–93.
31. On the relationship between the architecture of the Alhambra and the gardens and landscape evoked in the verses of its parietal epigraphy, see Ruggles 2000, pp. 199–208; Ruggles 1997; and Bush 2006.
32. For a recent discussion of Orientalism with respect to the legacy of al-Andalus, see Rosser-Owen 2010, pp. 109–45.

### 30. *Folio from the Blue Qur’an*

Probably Tunisia, Qairawan, second half of 9th–mid-10th century  
 Gold and silver on indigo-dyed parchment  
 12 × 15<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (30.4 × 40.2 cm)  
 Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2004 2004.88

From the Blue Qur’an, one of the most lavish Qur’an manuscripts ever produced, this double-sided leaf contains fifteen lines of *kufic* script in gold ink on indigo-dyed parchment. Like most Qur’ans from the eighth through the tenth century, it is distinguished by a horizontal format, use of parchment, and *kufic* script. On the two sides of this leaf, as with all the pages from the Blue Qur’an, the vowelings and diacritical marks are omitted, and ornamentation is kept to a minimum. The only decoration found on many of these pages consists of the circular silver marks, now almost entirely oxidized and faded, that separate each verse. The sparse ornamentation allows for an uninterrupted progression and bold movement of the letters from right to left. The text on the two sides here is from Sura 30:24–32 (*al-Rum*, “The Byzantine Empire”).

Firm evidence is lacking regarding the origin, exact date, and patron of this manuscript, although all of the thirty-seven extant pages, now scattered in museum and private collections throughout the world, probably come from one manuscript preserved at the Institut National d’Archéologie et d’Art in Tunis.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars have suggested dates for the Blue Qur’an, ranging from the ninth to the mid-tenth century, and attributed it to either Qairawan in present-day Tunisia or Cordoba in Umayyad Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Some have posited a date on the basis of stylistic affinities between the Blue Qur’an illuminated folios in Qairawan and Raqqada and the palmette trees and vegetal designs on the *minbar* and *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Qairawan.<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Bloom’s attribution of the manuscript to Qairawan derives from a particular system of *abjad* numbering in the manuscript that is specific to the Islamic West.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a description of a manuscript having the same specifications was found in an inventory in the Mosque of Qairawan in A.H. 693 / 1293 A.D. This implies that at the end of the thirteenth century, the work was still in the city in which it was probably produced.<sup>5</sup>

Very few Qur’ans on colored parchment are known. The majority of early Qur’an manuscripts are executed in brown or black ink with red vowelings and diacritical marks against a white ground. The use of gold lettering makes this manuscript an especially rare and luxurious example. It could have been commissioned by the caliph himself or by a wealthy, pious patron such as a governor. The practice of writing in gold or silver ink on blue or purple vellum or parchment most likely came from the Christian Byzantine Empire, where official documents and manuscripts were often executed in this manner.

ME



1. The Bibliothèque Nationale de Tunisie in Tunis and the Musée National d'Art Islamique in Raqqada have the greatest share of the pages. The equivalent of a *juz'* is presently in the Musée National d'Art Islamique de Raqqada. See Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, pp. 98–99, 312.
2. Bloom 1989. See also Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, pp. 98–99.
3. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 98.
4. Bloom observed that calligraphers from the Maghrib or western Islamic lands, comprising Spain and North Africa, sometimes used different

- letters than their Muslim counterparts in the east to represent numbers in the *abjad* system. He based his argument upon the differences between markings on Iraqi and Andalusian astrolabes made around the same time. See Bloom 1989.
5. London 1980, p. 22. This connection was made by the scholar Ibrahim Shabbuh in 1956. See Neumeier 2006, p. 13.

PROVENANCE: Probably Great Mosque of Qairawan, Tunisia (from about 900); [Sam Fogg, London, by 2002–4; sold to MMA]



31. Bifolio from the *Mushaf al-hadina*  
(Nurse's Qur'an)

Calligrapher: 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Warraq  
Probably Tunisia, Qairawan, ca. A.H. 410 / 1019–20 A.D.  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on parchment  
17½ × 23⅞ in. (44.5 × 60 cm)  
Purchase, James and Diane Burke Gift, in honor  
of Dr. Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, 2007 2007.191

This bifolio comes from one of the most impressive manuscripts of the Qur'an, the *Mushaf al-hadina* or Nurse's Qur'an, which was produced in North Africa. Among the best-preserved extant leaves of the manuscript,<sup>1</sup> it features calligraphy executed on parchment in brown ink, with diacritical marks in red, blue, and green. Each page contains only five lines, and great attention has been devoted to the contrast between the thick, rounded forms and the thin verticals so characteristic of this distinct "new-style" script. This

manuscript is also one of the few indicating that the "new-style" script, traditionally associated with the eastern realms, had spread farther west in the Islamic world than had previously been known. The text, written on both sides, is taken from Sura 6:40–41, 48–49 (*al-An'am*, "The Cattle").

Producing a volume as monumental in size as the *Mushaf al-hadina* would have required a fully staffed workshop of talented calligraphers, illuminators, and binders. That no one calligrapher



could have undertaken all the work accounts for the variations in the calligraphy in the Qur'an.<sup>2</sup>

This is an unusually well-documented bifolio. A series of colophons<sup>3</sup> written in cursive *maghribi* on the original manuscript, part of which is now in the Musée National d'Art Islamique de Raqqada in Tunisia, state that the work was commissioned by Fatima, the nursemaid (*al-hadina*) of one of the Zirid rulers. The Zirids were Berbers who governed territories in central North Africa (Ifriqiya) on behalf of the Fatimid dynasty, whose capital was Cairo. Since the manuscript is not dated, it is not entirely clear under which Zirid prince it was commissioned. However, the inclusion of A.H. Ramadan 410 / January 1019–20 A.D. as the date when the manuscript was dedicated to the Great Mosque of Qairawan has anchored its current attribution and its association with al-Mu'izz ibn Badis, the fourth Zirid ruler of Ifriqiya (r. 1016–62).<sup>4</sup> The colophon further notes that the entire manuscript, including its binding, was vocalized, illuminated, and gilded by 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Warraq (the papermaker), a renowned calligrapher and artist of the period who was supervised by Durrah al-Katiba (Durrah, the lady scribe).<sup>5</sup>

A number of the surviving Qur'an manuscripts commissioned by Zirid princesses and other powerful women at the Zirid court were

dedicated to the Great Mosque of Qairawan. Among them are Umm Milal's Qur'an and that of Umm 'Ulu, the sister of al-Mu'izz ibn Badis.<sup>6</sup> But the *Mushaf al-Hadina* is probably the best-known and important extant manuscript commissioned by a North African female patron.<sup>7</sup> It serves as a testament to the generosity, faith, and influence of women patrons at the Zirid court. ME

1. It is estimated that the original manuscript had approximately 3,200 folios, or 1,600 bifolios, and was divided into sixty sections (departmental curatorial files, Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum).
2. Roxburgh 2007.
3. *Discover Islamic Art*: <http://www.discoverislamicart.org>.
4. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, pp. 285–86.
5. Blair 2006, p. 155. See also Paris 1982–83, pp. 272–73.
6. Paris 1982–83, pp. 272–73. See also: <http://www.discoverislamicart.org>.
7. Sections of this Qur'an containing illuminated folios are in the Musée National d'Art Islamique de Raqqada, the Musée d'Art Islamique in Qairawan, and the Musée National du Bardo in Tunis. Other dispersed folios are in the Khalili Collection, London, the David Collection, Copenhagen, and in private collections in Riyadh and Houston.

PROVENANCE: Fatima al-Hadina, Tunisia (until 1019–20); Great Mosque of Qairawan, Tunisia (from 1019–20); [Charif Fine Arts, Dubai, sold to Fogg]; [Sam Fogg, London, until 2007; sold to MMA]

### 32. Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript

Spain, late 13th–early 14th century  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on parchment  
21 1/8 × 22 in. (53.5 × 55.9 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1942 42.63

Few luxury Qur'ans from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain and North Africa exceeded twenty inches (approximately half a meter) in width and height, and even fewer of that size on parchment have survived. It seems that these two characteristics were combined in only one example, to which this individual folio originally belonged. The most distinctive qualities of Spanish and Moroccan Qur'an manuscripts were established in the Almoravid and Almohad periods and are still evident in this manuscript page: a roughly square format, the archaic use of parchment at a time when paper had become the most common support, and a spidery calligraphy known as *maghribi* (Western Islamic) script.

This folio therefore belonged to one of the most ambitious and largest (if not the largest) parchment Qur'an manuscripts ever

produced in the medieval Maghrib. A two-volume Qur'an now in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul seems to provide a good match for the dimensions, calligraphic style, and illumination of the Museum's folio.<sup>1</sup> Copied on both sides (recto and verso), this folio contains the first four verses and most of verse 5 of Sura 39 (*al-Zumr*, "Of the Crowds"), which was revealed in Mecca and includes a total of seventy-five verses.<sup>2</sup> The recto is particularly notable. Its first line, which gives the heading for the Sura, is copied in an intricate, dramatic *kufic* gold script outlined in red and ending in an impressive circular pendant; the pendant itself is outlined in blue and filled with a densely illuminated but perfectly balanced scrolling composition in red and gold. The end of each verse is highlighted by a small but prominent circular medallion including a white interlacing geometric motif and the



word *aya* (verse) in blue; on the verso, the fifth verse is emphasized in the margins of the page with a larger pointed medallion including the word *khamsa* (five) in white.

The seven amply spaced lines of text on each page were copied in black ink that has subsequently turned brownish against the slippery surface of the parchment. Diacritical and reading marks were added in blue, orange, and green pigments. Although the overall effect of the calligraphy is squarish, uniform, and balanced, the deep, curving, almost semicircular endings of some of the letters brilliantly tie the text together and punctuate its rhythm, not

unlike the notes in a musical score. Considering that *Qur'an* means "recitation," this monumental *maghribi* calligraphy splendidly illustrates how writing, reading, and reciting can coalesce in a truly superb combination. sc

1. Şahin 2009, pp. 86–89, and Lings 2005, p. 52, pls. 166–69.
2. The heading states that the number of verses is seventy-two, which may correspond to a specific division of the text used in the Maghrib.

PROVENANCE: [Mrs. Kamer Aga-Oğlu, Ann Arbor, Michigan, until 1942; sold to MMA]



### 33. Segment of a Qur'an Manuscript

Morocco or southern Spain, ca. 1300  
 Ink, gold, and opaque watercolor on parchment  
 8 × 7½ in. (20.2 × 19.2 cm)  
 Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2004 2004.90

Containing Suras 5 through 9, this codex represents the second volume of a seven-volume Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> As a medial volume, it has no colophon, but a few of the pages bear *waqf* inscriptions that indicate its endowment to a *ribat* in Medina known as the Ribat Sayyidna 'Uthman.<sup>2</sup> In the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, *ribats* generally functioned as accommodations for indigent Muslims, sufis, or travelers. Most were founded by individuals from other regions whose endowments often specified their own compatriots as eligible residents.<sup>3</sup> Such was the case with the Ribat Sayyidna 'Uthman, which was dedicated to Maghribi residents.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, it is through this connection that the library of the *ribat* obtained this manuscript, which was probably made in Morocco.

In most respects, the manuscript exhibits the highly traditional approach typical of Qur'an production in the Maghrib.<sup>5</sup> Although

paper had been introduced to the region well before this volume was made, parchment was favored there for Qur'ans and other religious texts through the fourteenth century. The square format of the text block here is another characteristic feature. The two opening pages are written entirely in black-contoured lettering infilled with gold, but most of the others are executed in thick brown ink, in the *maghribi* script.<sup>6</sup> When no illuminated heading is present, both the incipit pages and the continuing pages bear eleven lines of text. Characteristically, *qaf* is indicated by one dot above the grapheme, and *fa'* by one dot below it; green dots are used for *hamzat al-wasl*, yellow dots for *hamzat al-qat*, blue-green ink for *shadda* and *sukun*, and red lines for vowel markers. The graphemes combine features of the two subtypes of *maghribi* calligraphy: the compact, rhythmic scroll of the *andalusi*-type lettering and the sinuous, sprawling flourishes of the *fasi* script.<sup>7</sup> Another singular



feature of this manuscript appears on the pages with gold lettering: the looped letter forms—such as *sad*, *dad*, and *ta*—are filled with pigment.

The manuscript opens with an illuminated double page that features a design of gold-bordered white strapwork enclosing gold palmettes against a blue ground. Every fifth verse is marked by gold trefoil motifs embellished with red and blue dots, and every tenth verse by gold disks supplemented by marginal rounds containing the word *‘ashara*. Large circular devices in gold and pigments signal *hizb* divisions. Most of the Sura headings are distinguished by gold *kufic* letters with marginal split-palmette medallions. The heading on the opening page, however, is set within an illuminated panel against a blue ground within a pearl border, flanked by knotted interlace and surrounded by a gold braid with a circular-palmette medallion in the margin. Similar compositions surround the text on the bottom half of the penultimate page (folio 88v) and all of the final page (folio 89r).

EK

1. The eighty-nine folios of this volume have been rebound, as indicated by the modern spine and trimmed pages. Although the front and back covers, lined in dark brown leather blind-tooled with an allover pattern of rosettes around a floral cluster, may be historical, they are not original; their association with these pages probably dates to the time of its rebinding.
2. Formerly, the manuscript was understood to be endowed to an institution in Rabat, Morocco (Fendall 2003, pp. 62–63). I am grateful to Priscilla Soucek, Abdullah Ghouchani, Stefan Heidemann, and Werner Ende for their assistance with this research.
3. Mortel 1998.
4. The Ribat Sayyidna ‘Uthman reportedly stood in the vicinity of the Great Mosque of Medina until at least 1951 (Ansari 1985, p. 30). For further reference to this *ribat*, see Ibn Silm 1993, pp. 39–40, and Badr 1993, vol. 3, pp. 111–12.
5. Baker, C. 2007, pp. 28–29.
6. Blair 2006, pp. 221–29, 392–99.
7. Fendall 2003, pp. 62–63; Blair 2006, p. 392.

PROVENANCE: Ribat Sayyidna ‘Uthman, Medina, Saudi Arabia, sale, Sotheby’s London, October 12, 2000, lot 39; [art market, from 2000]; [Sam Fogg, London, until 2004; sold to MMA]

### 34. *Qur’an Manuscript*

Morocco or Tunisia, 18th century

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; leather binding, stamped and gilded

8 × 6 in. (20.3 × 15.2 cm)

Purchase, Gift of George Blumenthal, by exchange, 1982 1982.120.2

This Qur’an belongs to a group of late North African manuscripts noted for their use of a wide range of vibrant colors, a feature that sets them apart from earlier manuscripts of the same region (see, for example, cat. 33). Deeply saturated tones of orange, red, yellow, green, pink, and blue not only dominate the frontispiece and finispiece but also highlight the Sura and verse markers throughout the text. These bright compositions are illuminated with gold and intricately patterned in scrolling arabesques and stylized floral motifs.

Although this manuscript has been dated to the period when the arts flowered under the patronage of the Alawi sultans in eighteenth-century Morocco, a Turkish seal on the flyleaf suggests that it may have been created in Ottoman-controlled Tunisia. Morocco, though culturally and geographically linked to Tunisia, was never under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Supporting this alternate attribution is the presence of Ottoman-style “forked”

tulips on the frontispiece, the doublure, and the inside of the doublure flap.

The manuscript contains the last five *juz’* (sections 26 through 30) of the Qur’an in forty folios. The text, in black ink, is executed in horizontally elongated *maghribi* script that creates a visually dramatic calligraphic composition.<sup>1</sup> Further enlivening the text are red, yellow, and blue diacritical marks. The verse markers, in the form of gold, blue, and red trefoil and winged vegetal motifs, are traditional in North African Qur’ans, which display similar markers as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> *Maghribi*, an early cursive script that probably developed out of the more angular *kufic*, was the primary calligraphic style of North Africa and remained relatively unchanged in the region from the twelfth century onward.<sup>3</sup> This Qur’an, like others of the eighteenth century, trades the traditional brown ink of earlier North African Qur’ans for the more ubiquitous black ink. The text frames are also not characteristically



Moroccan, and it has been suggested that they were adopted in conscious emulation of Ottoman manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> This Qur'an thus represents both a continuation of traditional North African elements, such as the *maghribi* script and ornamental verse markers, and a breaking away from earlier regional prototypes in the use of black ink, text frames, and bold colors. ME/KW

1. This type of elongation, in which individual letters are stretched horizontally, is called *mashq* in Arabic and appears in early *kufic* texts as well. See Roxburgh 2007, pp. 8–10.
2. The trefoil motifs (essentially three conjoined gold circles tipped in polychrome) can in fact be seen in earlier manuscripts, such as a

twelfth-century Qur'an from Spain in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art (no. 1993.440.a), but they do not seem to be paired with the winged vegetal motif until the thirteenth century (see, for example, a Qur'an from Marrakesh in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul [no. R. 33]).

3. Roxburgh 2007, p. 35.
4. Stanley 1999, p. 42. This feature was probably introduced in the early eighteenth century, around the same time that Qur'ans and other manuscripts of North Africa began to take on a vertical format instead of the traditional square/oblong *maghribi* format.

PROVENANCE: Hajji Ahmed, Turkey; Philip Hofer, Cambridge, Mass. (until 1982; sold to MMA)



### 35. Qur'an Case

Spain, possibly Granada, second half of 15th century

Leather embroidered with gilt-silver wire

4 1/4 × 4 7/8 in. (10.8 × 12.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1904 04.3.458

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script, repeated on front and back:

لا غالب إلا الله

There is no Victor but God

Of the few embroidered leather objects that have survived from the Nasrid period, this pouch is a rare and fine example. Square in format with a shield-shaped opening flap, it contains vegetal interlacing scrolls on the front as well as the Nasrid dynastic motto, all embroidered in gilt-silver wire. Similar foliate designs also surround the silver crescents that flank the inscription. On the back, there are interlacing star and curvilinear motifs and a repetition of the motto. Pouches such as this were likely made to hold segments of the Qur'an, possibly a *juz'* (the Qur'an is typically divided into thirty parts, or *juz'*, one for each day of the month).<sup>1</sup> The small size and square shape are typical of Spanish Qur'ans from the twelfth century onward.

The embroidered motifs on this Qur'an case belong to the larger decorative repertoire associated with Nasrid Granada. Metal embroidery on leather appears on the surfaces of Nasrid armor coverings such as scabbards, shields, and other ceremonial objects. The scabbards of two Nasrid *jineta* swords bear embroidered interlacing ornamentation and decorative heraldic shields with epigraphy similar to that on the present Qur'an case.<sup>2</sup>

The Nasrid dynastic shield is found on objects as varied as silk textiles and architectural tilework. With their fanning terminals, vertical ascenders, and blocklike lettering, the boxlike Arabic inscriptions combine here with the dynastic motto and the use of gilt-metal wires to suggest a royal provenance. Such richly embroidered objects reflect the refinement and opulence of the Nasrid court. In fact, a piece of paper found inside the pouch at the time of purchase states that it once belonged to the last Islamic ruler of Granada, Muhammad XII (Boabdil, r. 1482–83, 1487–92). PC

1. James 1988, p. 266.

2. The scabbards are in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (no. 959). See Granada and New York 1992, pp. 284–86, no. 61.

PROVENANCE: Marquis de Dos Aguas, Valencia; [Duc de Dino, Paris, until 1904; sold to MMA]

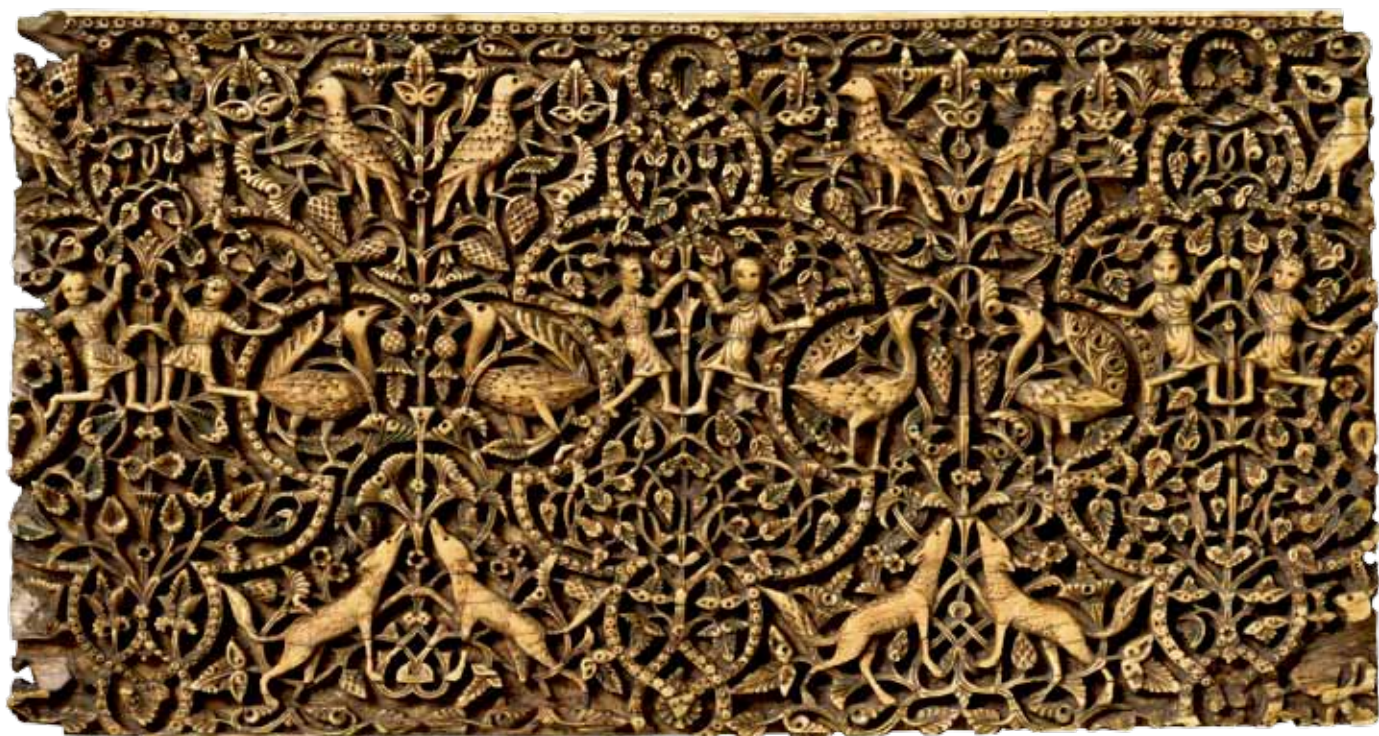


Front



Back





### 36. Panel

Spain, probably Cordoba, 10th–early 11th century  
 Ivory; carved, inlaid with stone with traces of pigment  
 $4\frac{1}{4} \times 8 \times \frac{3}{8}$  in. (10.8 × 20.3 × 1 cm)  
 John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 1913 13.141

In their time, the royal quarters at Madinat al-Zahra, the caliphal court in al-Andalus, must have been a spectacular sight, with lavish architectural decoration; luxuriant curtains, textiles, and furnishings; and sumptuous objects. Elephant ivory, one of the favorite materials, was used mostly to create objects of small size that were made with painstaking attention to the details and quality of the carvings. In caliphal Spain, as far as is known, entire elephant tusks were not kept as trophies or symbols of power, nor were they turned into oliphants (see cat. 38).

The most common small ivory object was the cylindrical box with a domed lid that is usually referred to as a pyxis (see cat. 37).<sup>1</sup> Such boxes were carved from a piece of solid ivory taken from a section of the tusk that could be made into a container with straight walls. To create a square box—four sides plus a bottom and a lid—the panels of solid ivory needed to be flat; even larger tusks that would offer a usable cross section were then required.

At roughly four by eight inches (11 by 20 cm) and one half inch (1 cm) thick, this relief-carved flat panel may seem diminutive, but a wide portion of a tusk would have been needed for its

production. It originally belonged to one of the panels of a square or rectangular casket, and the quality of its carving is nothing short of superb. The precision of detail, paired with the careful planning of the design, places the work among those few that continue to appear sharp and delicate under significant magnification. Features such as the minuscule shiny quartz stones embedded in the eyes of the figures and the red, green, and blue pigments highlighting the carved elements only increase one's appreciation for this extraordinary work.

It has been suggested that the decoration of the plaque was inspired by contemporary textiles,<sup>2</sup> and indeed the repeated units and density of its design recall patterns found in woven textiles and embroidery. The main features of the composition—the playful paired dancing figures facing each other on either side of a stylized tree and the paired predatory birds, peacocks, and jackals—strongly recall older traditions from Late Antiquity as well as contemporaneous ones from early medieval southern Europe. The general pattern, however, is quintessentially Islamic: all-over decoration and harmonious symmetry within a subtle geometric division of the space. The excellent parallels it finds

in the carved-stucco and stone architectural decorations from Madinat al-Zahra testify to the current decorative taste at the caliphal court.<sup>3</sup> SC

1. The most celebrated of these objects is the so-called al-Mughira Pyxis in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. OA 4068); see multiple color views

in Paris 2000, pp. 120–21, no. 103. Many such boxes are reproduced in Folsach and Meyer, eds. 2005, pt. 2, pp. 314–25, 330, 332, 336–37, 339.

2. Granada and New York 1992, p. 203, no. 6.
3. See Rosser-Owen 2010.

PROVENANCE: [Jacques Seligmann, Paris, until 1913; sold to MMA]

### 37. Box (Pyxis)

Spain, 10th century

Ivory; carved

H. 2<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (6.7 cm); Diam. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (8.3 cm)

Theodore M. Davis Collection,

Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 30.95.175

This pyxis, or cylindrical box, belongs to a group of ivory boxes and caskets that became synonymous with the artistic production of luxury objects under the caliphate of the Umayyad dynasty of Cordoba. Skillfully carved and often gilded or painted with colored pigments,<sup>1</sup> such objects were often presented as gifts to commemorate an event or occasion and were sometimes inscribed with the name of the recipient.<sup>2</sup> These elaborately decorated pyxides served both as carriers of multivalent social and political meanings, encoded in their iconography,<sup>3</sup> and as objects of aesthetic delectation. They frequently contained precious aromatic substances, such as ambergris, musk, and camphor, as recorded in the poetic inscriptions on one example.<sup>4</sup> The inscriptions commonly found on the lids of pyxides give the names and titles of the patrons, blessings and good wishes for the owner, and even the signatures of craftsmen. In this incomplete example, however, the knobbed lid and the metal fittings that originally held the lid in place are missing.

The body of this pyxis displays a deeply carved decoration composed of intertwined vines forming two rows of heart-shaped compartments that enclose birds of prey. These addorsed birds are depicted either perched on a branch or standing with outspread wings. The delicate stems of the vines terminate in the large, luxuriant leaves at the top, recalling the crown of a tree, under which the birds are sheltered. A narrow interlace border, typical of such ivory boxes, frames the composition.

Caliphal ivories produced in the royal workshops at the same time as this example show a complex iconographic decorative program that includes human and animal figures set against a dense and varied foliate decoration.<sup>5</sup> However, the simplified composition and sparse vegetation of this pyxis have led to the suggestion that it was made in a secondary workshop.<sup>6</sup> OB



1. A panel from a casket in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 13.141) retains traces of red and green pigments. See Daniel Walker in Granada and New York 1992, p. 203, no. 6.
2. For instance, the inscriptions on a casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. 301-1866), record that it was made for the daughter of the Cordoban caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912–61). A reference to the caliph as deceased made it possible to date the casket to after 961. See Renata Holod in Granada and New York 1992, p. 192, no. 2.
3. Prado-Vilar 2005; Prado-Vilar 1997.
4. Hispanic Society of America, New York (no. D 752).
5. Prado-Vilar 2005.
6. Galán y Galindo 2005, p. 44. Stylistically, this pyxis is most closely associated with two other examples, one in the Hispanic Society of America, New York (no. D 752), and another in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters (acc. no. 1970.234.5).

PROVENANCE: Theodore M. Davis, New York (until d. 1915); on loan from his estate during settlement of estate (1915–30)



### 38. *Signal Horn (Oliphant)*

Southern Italy, 11th–13th century

Ivory; carved

L. 22 in. (55.9 cm); Diam. at opening  $4\frac{7}{8}$  in. (12.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1904 04.3.177a

The use of animal horns or shells both to produce sounds and to communicate is common to many ancient cultures and societies, and it precedes the development of sophisticated musical instruments. Elegantly curved elephant tusks, cut down to a manageable length of about twenty inches (approximately half a meter) and capable of emitting a single note, became popular in medieval Europe from about the eighth century to at least the thirteenth.<sup>1</sup> The exoticism linked to the importation of ivory, its high cost, its perceived magical properties, and the ancient and timeless fascination with the “mysterious” African continent created a special aura around these objects. They were especially coveted as hunting horns by European noblemen, most notably in areas influenced by France. Islamic society, which does not seem to have used such horns, played a part in their diffusion throughout Europe by participating in the ivory trade.

A sizable number of these horns have survived<sup>2</sup>—and only in Europe, none in the Islamic world—because they were prized objects that were often deposited in church treasuries and other institutions, where they were sometimes turned into reliquaries or displayed during festivities.<sup>3</sup> In addition to their original functional use as signal horns, it seems that such objects were also symbols of land tenure: the two metal rings here could have been attached to a metal chain in order to suspend the object from the arched entrance to an estate.

This horn apparently belonged to a Benedictine monastery in Dijon and subsequently passed through the collections of various owners in France before it was acquired by the Museum in 1904. Exceptionally, its leather traveling case has also survived.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars agree that such ivory horns were produced in southern Italy<sup>5</sup> for the Normans between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Nevertheless, they “look” Islamic, to such an extent that it has been suggested they were carved by Muslim craftsmen who worked under Christian rule or even by Muslims who had converted to Christianity. The simple explanation is that Sicily and southern Italy under the Normans were still at the artistic and intellectual intersection of Islamic, Latin, and Greek cultures. Whether the makers were Muslim or Christian is relatively unimportant: it was the shared southern Mediterranean artistic language that enabled fabulous and real beasts and birds, grotesque figures, and turbaned warriors to inhabit vine and acanthus scrolls on these remarkable objects. sc





1. They are often associated in early European literature with celebrated and semilegendary figures such as Charlemagne, Roland, and El Cid Campeador.
2. The most recent and comprehensive study is Shalem 2004b.
3. It seems that they were also played liturgically during Holy Week, when the sound of bells was forbidden. On the use of oliphants in Christian churches, see in particular Chapter 7: "Oliphants in Church Treasures, III: How Were They Used and Displayed?" in Shalem 2004b, pp. 125–30.

4. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no 04.3.177b).
5. Amalfi, one of the Italian maritime republics south of Naples, was apparently a center of ivory carving, although several places in Sicily, starting with the capital, Palermo, must have been equally active.

PROVENANCE: Henri Baudot, Dijon, France; Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Paris; [Duc de Dino, Paris, until 1904; sold to MMA]

### 39. *The Morgan Casket*

Southern Italy, 11th–12th century

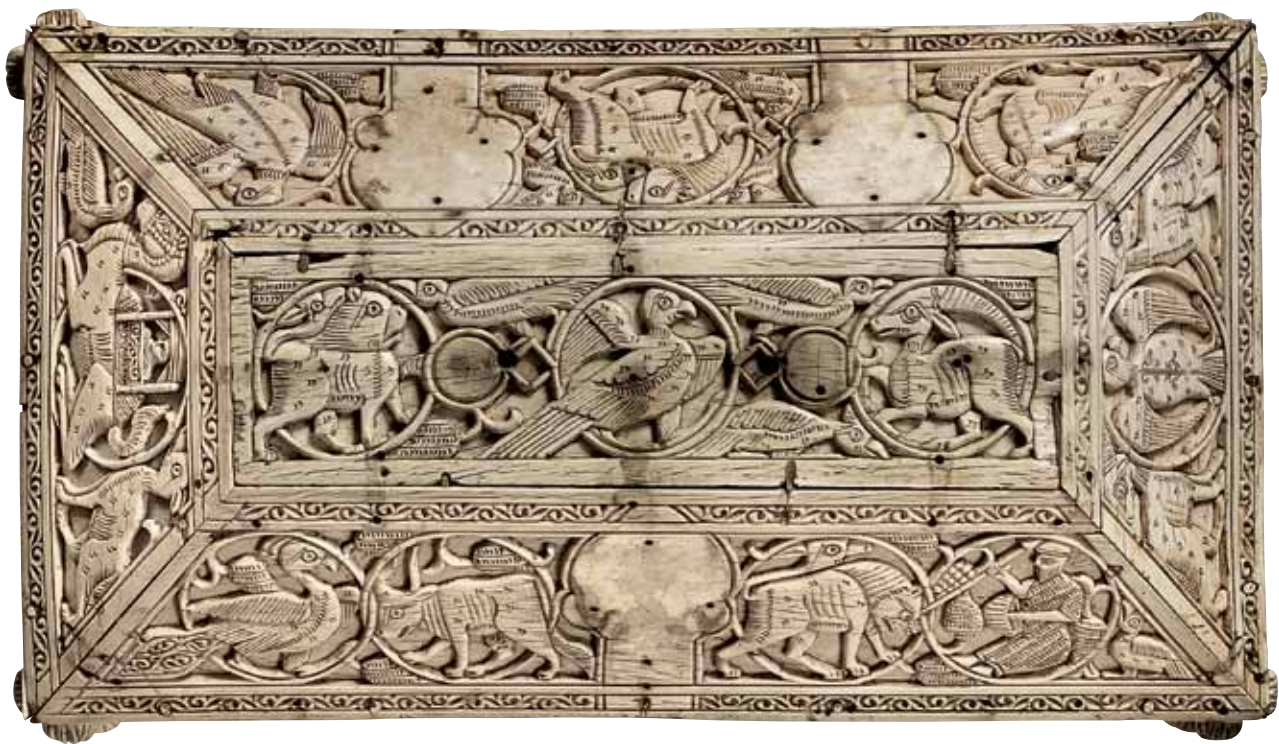
Ivory; carved

8¾ × 15¼ × 7⅞ in. (22.3 × 38.6 × 20 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 17.190.241

One of the most accomplished and yet most understudied objects of carved ivory from the Norman-ruled areas of southern Italy is the so-called Morgan Casket. These ivories were created in an extraordinary milieu that linked Fatimid traditions (filtered through the Islamic community of the southern Italian peninsula) with new artistic approaches that arose in France, northern Italy, and the Germanic world. All this occurred in a region that had witnessed a productive medley of Roman and Greek-Byzantine cultures for many centuries before the arrival of either the Muslims or the Normans.

This large box was made by joining nine decorated panels, four for the body and five for the lid. The structure was completed with four narrow strips attached to the bottom of the lid. These strips were necessary because, unlike the great majority of ivory boxes with four vertical panels joined at the sides, the panels on this lid are slanted and form a truncated pyramid. This casket also displays an unusual design for its corners. On each, a pair of stern-looking, bearded men wearing tunics and carrying straight swords stand on a pedestal, as if they were guardians of the precious contents of the box. The four corner units were first carved as single





blocks, then the two figures in relief were arranged at a ninety-degree angle facing away from the box and protruding from its perimeter. Because of the corner units, the panels of the body are shorter than the sides of the lid, with the narrow strips facilitating the transition between both sections.

The box gives the impression of being uncommonly delicate and lightweight because of the openwork on the body: four narrow strips are connected vertically to the lower edges of the panels through cylindrical pegs spaced at regular intervals.<sup>1</sup> Metal fasteners, now lost, added significantly to the original appearance of the casket. A single clasp and a rectangular locking plate appeared on the front, and two large hinges on the back; their locations are still evident. Attachments for a handle are also visible on the top of the lid.

Carved in low relief, the figural decoration on all the panels is standard for such ivories and does not have a specific narrative. The larger individual animals and human figures are encircled by continuous vegetal scrolls, while small birds and leaves fill the other available spaces. Symmetry predominates, with pairs of animals facing each other or a man with a spear attacking a feline

head-on, although the frontal panel shows an antelope and a gryphonlike quadruped both facing right. The overall quality of the carving is exceptional when compared to that of similar works. A few vignettes stand out, including a veiled woman sitting inside a howdah atop an imposing kneeling camel, carved on one side of the lid; this motif is also the most reminiscent of the Fatimid, North African Islamic models for these works.

J. P. Morgan acquired this splendid casket from the Galerie Imbert in Rome in 1910, but the object had been known since it was exhibited in Brussels in 1880, when it belonged to G. Vermeersch.<sup>2</sup> sc

1. There were originally seventeen pegs along the longer sides and eight along the shorter ones; many of these have now been replaced.
2. Vermeersch was a member of the Musée Royal d'Antiquités de Bruxelles. See de Roddaz 1882, p. 196, fig. 2, for the earliest drawing and reference to this casket.

PROVENANCE: G. Vermeersch, Brussels (in 1880); [Bourgeois Frères, Cologne, until 1904; sale, Krings and Lempertz, Cologne, October 27–29, 1904, lot 1055]; [Galerie A. Imbert, Rome, until 1910; sold to Morgan]; J. Pierpont Morgan, New York (1910–17)





#### 40. Capital

Spain, probably Cordoba, 10th century  
Marble; carved

14½ in. × 13½ in. (36.8 × 34.3 cm)

Theodore M. Davis Collection,

Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 30.95.134

Inscription in Arabic in cursive script on boss at one side of capital:

عمل خيرة  
Made by Khabara[?]

Masterfully carved, this Corinthian-style capital must have originally decorated a colonnaded hall or courtyard arcade in one of the lavishly embellished palaces erected during the tenth century under the patronage of the Umayyad dynasty in and around Cordoba, its capital. Three crowns of thick, fleshy acanthus leaves, springing from graceful stems with delicate foliage, form its main decorative elements; the curved finials of the leaves have been lost. The effect of the richly carved surface is rendered through the vigorous stems of the plant, which intertwine, branch out, and enclose the leaves and the other foliate motifs. As it fans out onto the surfaces of the corner volutes, the fine foliate spray emphasizes the volume of the capital, the complexity of the design, and the skillfulness of the workmanship. Executed in deep relief, the carving is crisply and distinctly articulated against the background. The name of the craftsman responsible for the carving appears in the partially preserved inscription on a boss at the top and center of one side of the capital.<sup>1</sup>

The harmonious dimensions, refined decoration, carving technique and style, and content and placement of the inscription indicate that the capital was most likely made in the royal workshops for Madinat al-Zahra.<sup>2</sup> This palatial city was begun by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912–61) in 936 on the outskirts of Cordoba and continued by his son and heir, al-Hakam II (r. 961–76). The palaces of Madinat al-Zahra, their reception halls lavishly adorned with carved and painted stone capitals, arcades, and wall panels—all set within verdant gardens, open courtyards, and reflecting pools—are a testament to the wealth, power, and artistic accomplishments of the Umayyad caliphs at the height of their rule. OB

1. The inscription could be interpreted as عمل خيرة (made by Khabara), although other readings of the name are possible. Many craftsmen in the royal workshop during the Umayyad caliphate are known by their names, which they inscribed on architectural elements in the royal constructions. For identification of craftsmen who worked on one of the reception halls of Madinat al-Zahra, see Martínez Núñez 1995.
2. Similar capitals are extant in situ in one of the reception halls at Madinat al-Zahra, as well as in the museum on site. See Cressier 1995. Among the examples closest to this capital stylistically are those in the Museo Arqueológico Provincial, Cordoba (no. 28.609), and in the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait City (no. LNS 1 S).

PROVENANCE: Theodore M. Davis, New York (until d. 1915); on loan from his estate during settlement of estate (1915–30)

#### 41. Panel

Morocco, 14th century

Wood (cedar); carved and painted

19 in. × 10 ft. 1 in. × 2¾ in. (48.3 × 307.3 × 7 cm)

Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection,

Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher and Rogers Fund, by exchange, 1985 1985.241

Inscription in Arabic in cursive script is written nine times,  
four of which appear in mirror image:

يمن  
Good luck

This monumental wood panel embellished with carved decoration served as an architectural element. Such carved-wood panels, along with carved and molded stucco on the upper walls and dadoes of ceramic-tile mosaic on the lower ones, formed the rich architectural decoration of the buildings erected in Morocco during the Marinid period. For instance, the interior courtyards of two *madrasas* in Fez, Bu 'Inaniyya and al-'Attarin, are embellished with similar carved-wood panels, which are placed above an





inscribed wooden lintel that spans the openings of the ground arcade. The dadoes of ceramic-tile mosaic and panels of carved and molded stucco complete the architectural decoration of the space.

Assembled from two long boards, the present panel retains multiple layers of polychromy. Its carved decoration is composed of an arcade of tall cusped arches, each of which encloses under its apex a seven-lobed scallop-shell motif flanked by an inscription that reads “good luck.” The interstices of the large arches are filled with a smaller, five-lobed shell motif similar to the element under the cusped arcade. The background of the panel is carved with densely packed, varied vegetal decoration that includes pinecones, split palmettes, and other foliate motifs.

The architectural and decorative forms and materials prevalent during the Marinid period exhibit clear affinities with the architecture and arts of the Nasrid dynasty of Iberia and reflect the contribution of craftsmen who emigrated to Morocco under the advancing reconquest of the peninsula by Christian monarchs.

Much of the currently visible polychrome surface decoration of this panel made of cedar (*cedrus* spp.)—red, yellow, blue, green, white, and black paints bound in a protein-based medium, probably animal glue—actually represents a later painting campaign. The pigments in these layers include orpiment, red lead, vermilion, white lead, and indigo, all traditional pigments that do not allow for any specific dating of this campaign. Areas of the earlier, original painted surface are also visible within losses to the later layers. The original surface decoration began with overall preparatory layers of red lead or orpiment applied beneath the arches and in the spandrels, respectively. Though the complete original decoration scheme is as yet unclear, some well-preserved areas show bright red and blue backgrounds embellished with dots and outlines in black and white. In the spandrels, the original surface of certain areas is composed of an orange-pigmented glaze applied over the yellow preparation layer, which resulted in a deep yellow-orange color. The binding medium in the original red-lead paint layer was identified as egg tempera.<sup>1</sup>

The two long, parallel cedar boards of which the panel is constructed were originally connected to each other with five hand-wrought iron spikes that were tapered at both ends; two of the spikes are now broken, with half of each missing, indicating that the panels were detached at one time. Additional spikes along the



top and bottom edges, as well as empty holes in the same areas, demonstrate that similar hardware was used to attach the panel to adjacent architectural elements. At the top, these iron spikes almost certainly held a narrow carved and painted floral border, as seen in a matching panel in the al-Sabah Collection.<sup>2</sup> The remains of both a tenon and a mortise on the proper right end indicate the original joinery with the architectural woodwork. OB/BE/KrW

1. Pigments and media analyses were carried out in the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Scientific Research by scientists Adriana Rizzo, Mark T. Wypyski, and Tony Frantz. Egg tempera was identified by Daniel P. Kirby at the Straus Center for Conservation, Harvard Art Museums, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
2. Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait City, Kuwait (no. LNS 62W).

PROVENANCE: [Spink & Son Ltd., London, by 1978–79; sold to Homaizi]; Jasim Homaizi, Kuwait (1979–85; to MMA by exchange)



#### 42. Panel of Four Calligraphic Tiles

Morocco, 14th–early 15th century

Stonepaste; glazed and carved

4<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (12.4 × 56.6 cm)

Purchase, Leon B. Polsky and Cynthia Hazen Polsky Gift,  
in honor of Patti Cadby Birch, 1999 1999.146

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script:

نعم الرفيق السعد والتوفيق

What excellent companions are happiness and good fortune

Panels of ceramic tiles, embellished with inscriptions and employed as a frieze, formed an integral part of the architectural decoration of buildings in Morocco from the fourteenth century onward. Placed on the walls slightly below eye level and thus accessible for reading, these friezes were combined with mosaic, stucco, and carved-wood panels to create colorful, textured surfaces of interior rooms and courtyards alike. Bu 'Inaniyya and al-'Attarin, two *madrasas*, or religious schools, constructed in Fez under royal patronage in 1323–25 and 1350–55, respectively, are the most representative examples of fourteenth-century Marinid architecture. Architectural and decorative forms of this period were inspired by the arts and architecture of the Nasrid dynasty of Spain, as exemplified by the palaces of the Alhambra in Granada. Close political and cultural ties between the dynasties facilitated the transmission of artistic ideas when builders and craftsmen from Muslim Iberia emigrated to Morocco as the reconquest of the peninsula progressed under the Christian kings.

Composed of four rectangular ceramic tiles, the present panel is decorated in the intaglio technique, called *zili* in Morocco, in which the entire surface is covered with a purplish black glaze and then carved away to leave the inscription and the foliate scroll of the background in relief. The auspicious content of the repeated phrase in the inscription suggests that the panel was originally part of a frieze of much greater length that was used to decorate a secular building.<sup>1</sup> Completing the decorative composition are a

delicate spiraling scroll with foliate motifs and a border that frames the inscription at the top and bottom. OB

1. Carboni 2000.

PROVENANCE: [Spink & Son Ltd., London, until 1999; sold to MMA]

#### 43A, B. Two Star-Shaped Tiles

A. Spain, probably Malaga, first half of 15th century

Earthenware; luster-painted on opaque white glaze

W. 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (23.5 cm)

H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of H. O. Havemeyer, 1941 41.165.40

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on lower border:

[...] ولاول [sic] والاول؟] ان كان الغرض منه الاحتراز عن الخطأ في تأدية الفن المراد فهو الفن الاول وإلا فهو مايع فيه وجوه التحسين وهو الفن الثالث وعليه مبع ظاهر يدمع بالك... بعد ما عرق وقيل رتبه على مقـ[طاع] [...]

[...] and first is the intention to avoid making mistakes and that is the highest art; if not, there is a liquid for correcting [mistakes] that is the third art... it creates a cloudy film [that once applied] runs down like tears [...]

B. Spain, probably Malaga, first half of 15th century

Earthenware; luster-painted on opaque white glaze

W. 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (24.8 cm)

H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of H. O. Havemeyer, 1941 41.165.41

Malaga, on the southern coast of Spain, was one of the principal manufacturing centers of lusterware in the Nasrid kingdom.<sup>1</sup> These two eight-pointed star-shaped tiles featuring copper-toned luster-painted designs were probably produced there. One tile (cat. 43A) bears a pattern of serrated leaves and flowers and an Arabic inscription on its lower border, while the other (cat. 43B) is covered in fruit-bearing scrolling vines that radiate out from a central floral medallion.

Though the use of luster tiling was not unusual in the decoration of Nasrid architecture, few eight-pointed star-shaped luster tiles survive. The scrolling-vine-and-branch and the radiating floral



motifs seen here belong to the artistic vocabulary of the period. It has been suggested that tiles of this type once covered the walls of Granadine palaces such as the Alixares and the Alhambra.<sup>2</sup> Two other examples resembling our tiles in technique and ornamentation are a contemporary Malagan tile in the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris,<sup>3</sup> and the famed “Fortuny” plaque in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid.<sup>4</sup> The Paris tile, dated to the early fifteenth century, bears a grapevine with naturalistic leaves and bunches of fruit framed within an eight-pointed star; the foliage outside the frame is typical of that seen on Malagan lusterware. The large plaque that once belonged to the artist Fortuny is among the luster-painted grave markers that have been instrumental in dating tiles of this period. Its long inscription includes a dedication to the Nasrid sultan of Granada Yusuf III (r. 1408–17). Another luster-painted grave marker, from Huelva, with similar vegetal decoration is dated A.H. Du’l Qa’da 811/ March 1409 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

The charming lightness and freedom of execution of the scrolling vines and naturalistic plant forms on these two tiles recall contemporary Gothic manuscript illumination in Spain. These vegetal designs may, however, present an even closer affinity with the fourteenth-century tilework of the Hall of the Ambassadors in the Seville Alcazar, which was produced by Christian craftsmen from the eastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula working for King Pedro I of Castile and Leon (r. 1350–69). Such itinerant craftsmen may have actually been responsible for the Gothic designs seen in numerous pieces of lusterware from the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Although previously the subject of much discussion, the impetus for the arrival of the luster-painting technique in Islamic Spain is now thought to have most likely come from the Egyptian Fatimid craftsmen who moved to the Malagan coast after the fall of the Fatimid Empire in 1171.<sup>7</sup> By the time the Nasrids came to power in 1232, a rich repertoire of designs from North Africa and the Western Islamic world had permeated Andalusian arts.

The inscription on the lower border of one of these tiles (cat. 43A) is especially unusual. Though sections of the writing are no longer decipherable, what remains is an Arabic text enumerating the skills required by the ceramic artist to glaze and decorate luster tiles. Such references, which are virtually unknown in Andalusian art, offer insight into the technique of luster tile making in Nasrid Spain.

ME/RV



1. Scholars have also suggested that Granada may have been a major center of luster ceramic production, but little documentary or literary evidence supporting this theory has come to light. See Frothingham 1951, pp. 21–27.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
3. See DeGeorge and Porter 2002, p. 64.
4. See Granada and New York 1992, pp. 360–61, no. 113.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

7. Frothingham suggested that the luster technique arrived in Spain as the result of Persian craftsmen's having fled the Mongol invasions of the early thirteenth century. Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, however, argued that differences in the composition of Andalusian and Iranian wares preclude such a theory. See Frothingham 1951, pp. 21–27; Rosser-Owen 2010, pp. 66–70; and Blair and Bloom 1995, pp. 129–31.

PROVENANCE: H. O. Havemeyer Collection, New York (until 1941)





#### 44. *Dish (Brasero)*

Spain, Manises (Valencia), late 15th–early 16th century  
 Earthenware; molded and luster-painted on opaque white glaze  
 Diam. 18¼ in. (46.4 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.427a

At the center of this luster-painted *brasero*, or deep bowl, is a rampant lion in a heraldic shield, surrounded in the cavetto by concentric bands with alternating designs of fish-scale and floral motifs. The same designs alternate on the slanted, wheel-like gadroons molded in relief that cover the broad, everted rim.

The *brasero* is representative of ceramic wares produced in Manises, Valencia, in the final decades of the fifteenth century. Many luster-painted *braseros* of this period contain heraldic blazons of rampant lions. Yet in most cases the patron is unknown, since by that time such blazons were frequently used as decorative emblems of prestige and luxury rather than as identifiers. Since the lion here has been removed from the context of a coat of arms, it cannot be connected with a particular family.

The rampant lion and decorative program on this *brasero* are reminiscent of those found on the Coello Plate (ca. 1480–99) in

the collection of the Hispanic Society of America, New York, which bears a leonine coat of arms as well as nearly identical designs of gadroons, fish scales, and floral patterns.<sup>1</sup> As one of the earliest examples of so-called gadrooned ware, the Coello Plate has helped to establish the last quarter of the fifteenth century as the earliest use of this decorative device.<sup>2</sup> Several other Valencian luster ceramics dating from the fifteenth century onward—in the Metropolitan Museum, the Hispanic Society of America, and elsewhere—show the repeated use of the designs found on this *brasero* and the Coello Plate.

The technique of luster-painting was probably first brought to Malaga and Murcia in southern Spain by Fatimid potters from Egypt in the late twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> It is believed that the technique made its way to Manises in the early fourteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The appearance of the heraldic device on so many examples affirms

that luster-painted ceramics were regarded as precious luxury objects by the Valencian nobility in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and that they were highly coveted in, and exported to, places as far away as Egypt, Algeria, and Sicily.<sup>5</sup> PC

1. Heather Ecker in Washington, D.C. 2004, no. 77. The Coello Plate bears the coat of arms of Joan Payo Coello, a member of a noble Portuguese family and abbot of Poblet.
2. Ibid.
3. Lane 1946, p. 252; Rosser-Owen 2010, pp. 66–67.
4. Rosser-Owen 2010, pp. 66–67.
5. Frothingham 1951, p. xlvi. See also Rosser-Owen 2010 and Washington, D.C., and other cities 2004–6, pp. 120–21.

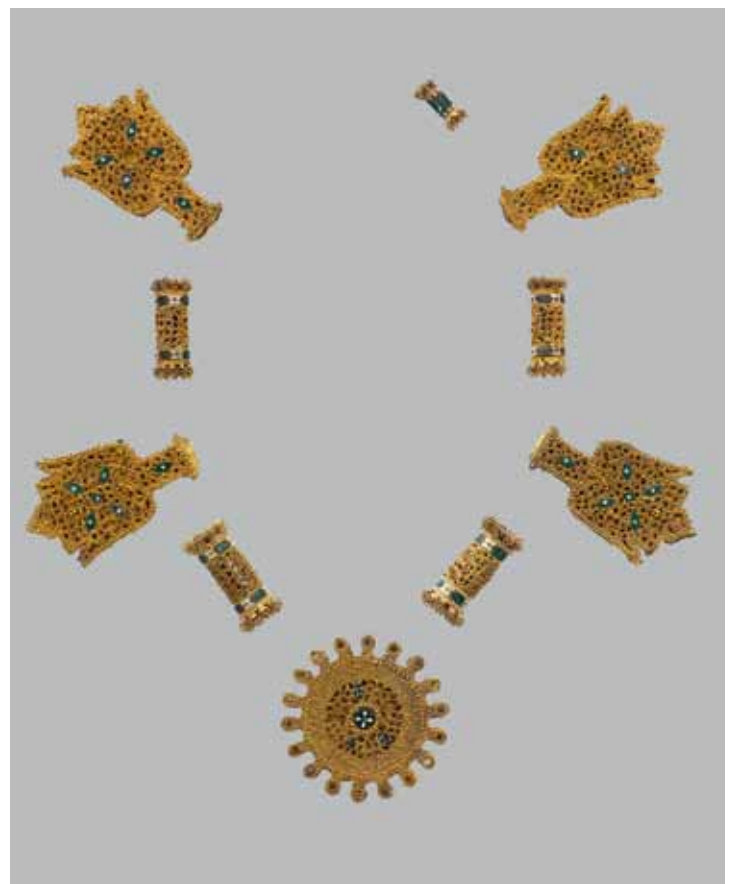
PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

### 45. Necklace Elements

Spain, probably 15th century  
 Gold; cloisonné enamel; filigree; granulation  
 Circular pendant: Diam. 3 in. (7.6 cm)  
 Pendants: L. 3 1/4 in. (8.3 cm)  
 Beads: L. 2 in. (5.1 cm); 1 1/2 in. (3.8 cm); 1 in. (2.5 cm)  
 Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 17.190.161  
 Inscription in Latin on circular pendant:  
 AVE MARIA GRACIA PLEN[A]  
 Hail Mary, full of grace

A large circular pendant, four pendants in the shape of stylized palmettes, and five cylindrical beads of three different sizes most probably formed the main elements of an elaborate necklace made during the late Nasrid period in al-Andalus. The richness of their delicate, colorful surfaces is achieved through a combination of goldsmithing techniques. Gold sheet is pierced to create the openwork of the overall background pattern, while the band framing the pendants is executed in repoussé. The surfaces are elaborated in filigree and in cloisonné techniques; in the latter, cells formed by soldered wire are filled with colored enamels. Green, white, and dark red enamels accentuate the floral motifs in the center of the pendants, and the cylindrical beads are embellished with a colored enamel band at each end, crowned by a row of hollow filigree spheres. Tiny clusters of gold balls produced by granulation technique add texture throughout. The small loops around the perimeter of the palmettes originally held wire on which pearls or stones would have been strung. In contrast, the circumference of the circular pendant was finished with circular finials decorated with enamel that is now mostly lost.

The combination of various goldsmithing techniques is characteristic of medieval jewelry making from western Europe to



China.<sup>1</sup> The present necklace elements display strong affinities to the jewelry made under the Fatimid dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Stylistically, both the cylindrical beads and the four palmette-shaped pendants can be related to Nasrid necklace elements found in Bentarique (Almería, Spain);<sup>3</sup> the circular pendant can be associated with two other examples.<sup>4</sup>

An inscription on the circular pendant speaks to the complexities of the culture of al-Andalus. The broad band around the central rosette contains the opening words of the “Hail Mary”<sup>5</sup> in large letters outlined by a granulated border, and the phrase is preceded by a cross executed in repoussé. This inscription, often found on other portable objects from the early sixteenth century onward,<sup>6</sup> indicates that the necklace was made for a Christian patron and thus that aesthetic values were shared across religious boundaries. OB

1. The dissemination of artistic styles and techniques, especially during the medieval period, is ubiquitously attributed to the portability of objects. Precious materials, elaborate techniques, and complex decorative compositions—as carriers of aesthetic and social meaning—contribute to the desirability of luxury objects and their adaptation by other cultures.



2. New York 1983, pp. 92–93.
3. Juan Zozaya pointed out that the pendants from the Bentarique hoard (Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid) have a curvilinear profile resembling that of their Ilkhanid prototypes; see Zozaya in Granada and New York 1992, pp. 302–3, no. 73. The pendants from Bentarique further support Jenkins's proposition that Ilkhanid stylistic features were transmitted to Mamluk jewelry, which in turn was adapted by jewelers in al-Andalus during the Nasrid period; see Jenkins 1988, p. 37.
4. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. I. 4940); Benaki Museum, Athens (no. 1856).
5. It should be noted that the cartouches in the bands of the cylindrical beads are embellished with a detail, executed in gold wire of cloisonné technique, that may be a poorly executed inscription of the word *Allah*.
6. Zozaya in Granada and New York 1992, p. 302, no. 73.

PROVENANCE: J. Pierpont Morgan, New York (until 1917)

#### 46A–C. Textile Fragments: Vestments of *Saint Valerius*

Spain, 13th century

A. Fragment of a Dalmatic with Tapestry  
Silk, gilt animal substrate around a silk core; tapestry weave  
3 1/8 × 8 1/4 in. (8 cm × 21 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.10

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script, repeated twice:  
اليمن والعز والرفعة والعظمة  
Good luck and glory and exaltedness and magnificence

B. Fragment of a Dalmatic

Silk, gilt animal substrate around a silk core; lampas with separable layers  
in the ground weave  
3 × 4 3/4 in. (7.6 × 12.1 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.4

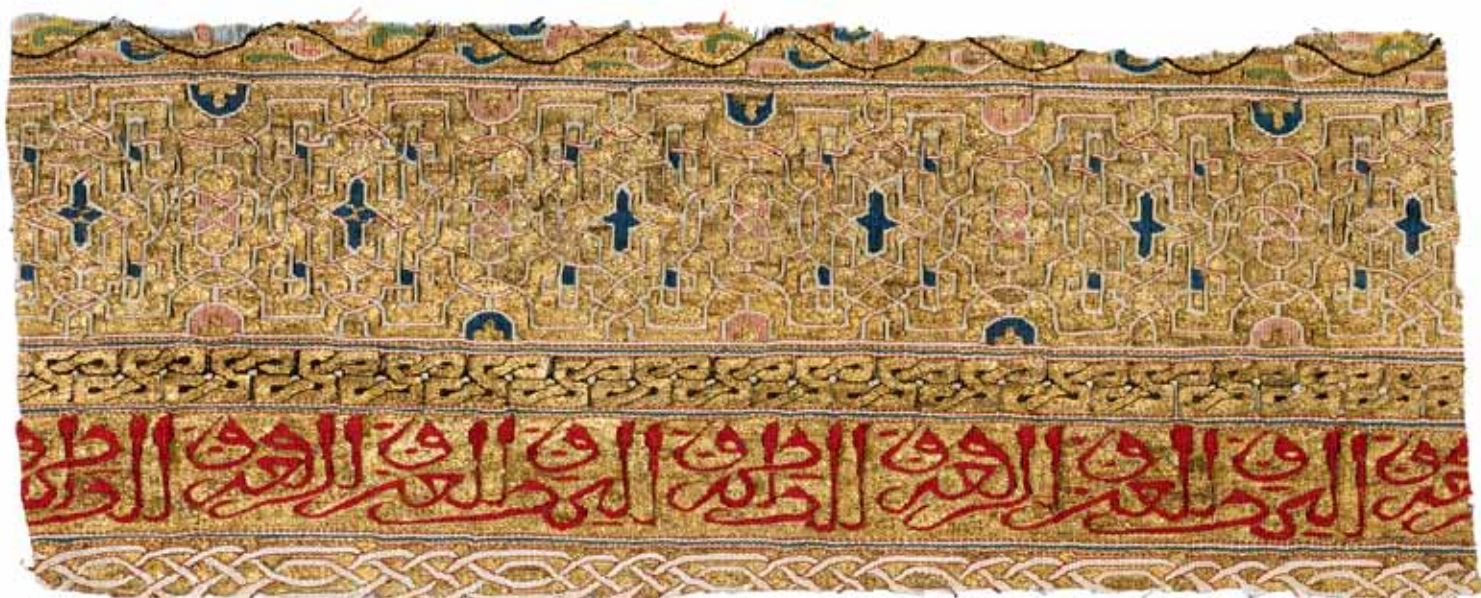
C. Fragment of a Chasuble

Silk, gilt animal substrate around a silk core; *taqueté*  
6 × 5 1/4 in. (15.2 × 13.3 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.3

These fragments belong to a once-complete set of liturgical vestments that consisted of a chasuble, two dalmatics, and a pluvial cope.<sup>1</sup> Fashioned in the thirteenth century at the Cathedral of Roda de Isabena (Huesca), the vestments have been attributed to the cult of Saint Valerius, bishop of Saragossa, Spain, from 290 until his death in 315 under the Roman emperor Diocletian. They were made to venerate the saint's relics and were especially prominent in celebrations of his feast day.<sup>2</sup>

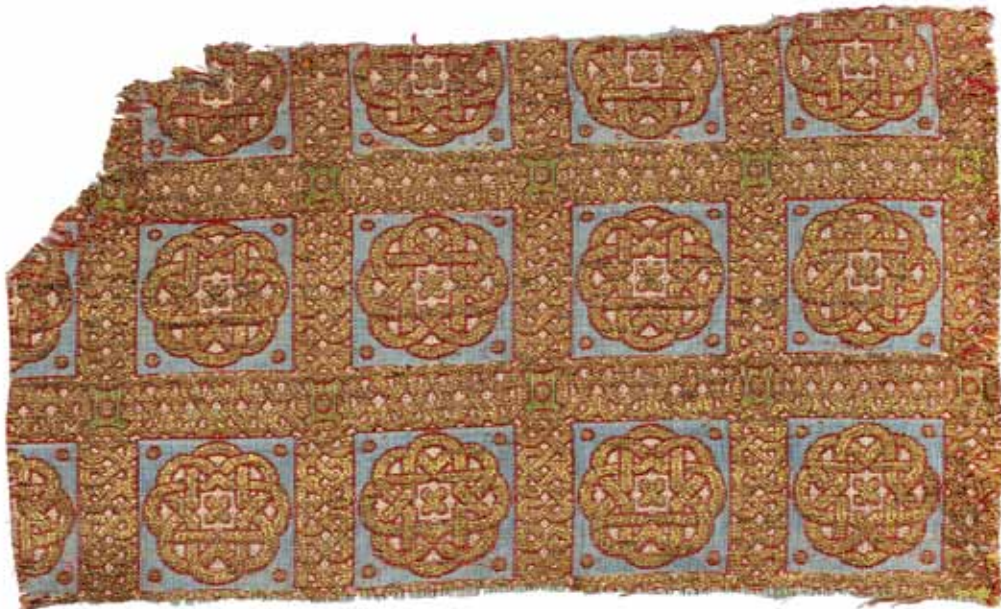
In the eleventh century Saint Valerius's relics were translated to the Church of San Vicente in Roda, and some relics were later sent from there to other churches.<sup>3</sup> It is uncertain when the vestments themselves were brought to the cathedral of Lerida, where they remained until 1922. However, a document from the cathedral chapter dated 1498 states that the chapter intended to repair the garments.<sup>4</sup> As a result of alterations undertaken at various times from that date to 1851, none of the vestments, now housed in the Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària in Barcelona, is in its original state.<sup>5</sup> Many fragments cut from these vestments are preserved in various museums in the United States and Europe, and most of them have been published.

All three fragments shown here, with their patterns of small-scale motifs, are characteristic of the thirteenth-century luxury



A





B

silk textiles woven in al-Andalus. In the tapestry-woven fragment of the dalmatic (cat. 46A), the delicate geometric interlace is created by fine lines of white silk. The simple, minute secondary motifs—executed in brilliant blue, green, and pink threads and embedded in the interstices of the interlace against the shimmering gold brocade—recall the jewel-encrusted surfaces of gold-work. An epigraphic band in vivid red against the gold ground repeats an auspicious phrase.

The decoration of the second fragment of the dalmatic (cat. 46B) consists of a square grid formed by an interlace of gold brocade on a light blue background. Each square of the grid contains a small rosette of gold interlace in the center and minute gold dots in the corners. Bright red silk outlines all the elements. The fragment of the chasuble (cat. 46C) is decorated with alternating rows of eight-pointed stars and crosses. The stars contain a pair of addorsed rampant lions, while the crosses are filled with profuse foliate motifs. All the decorative elements are executed in gold brocade on a dark blue ground, with pink employed as an outlining device.

On the Iberian Peninsula, opulent silk textiles lavishly embellished with gold brocade were eagerly sought after by Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike as signs of wealth, power, and aesthetic sophistication. Fashioned into sumptuous dress for court ceremonies, they were also used in religious rituals, although sometimes they had originally been made for different purposes. Textiles produced in al-Andalus during the thirteenth century are known today largely from their discovery in the tombs of Christian kings, nobles, and churchmen, where they were found as mortuary vestments and as coffin linings.<sup>6</sup>

OB



C

1. For technical analysis of the weaving structures of the vestment fragments preserved in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, see Borrego Díaz 2005, pp. 102–5 and 111–15.
2. Partearroyo Lacaba 2005, p. 58.
3. May 1957, p. 75.
4. While Partearroyo Lacaba suggests that the vestments were brought to Lerida in the fifteenth century for repair, Rosa M. Martín i Ros cites a

document indicating that they might have been brought there not long after 1275. See Martin i Ros in Granada and New York 1992, p. 332, no. 95.

5. May 1957, p. 75, and Martin i Ros in Granada and New York 1992, pp. 332–33, no. 95. It should be noted that fragments from the chasuble were reused for the sleeves in one of the dalmatics. Another group of small fragments, all from the pluvial cope of Saint Valerius, is also extant in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 46.156.2 and 27.52).
6. In her discussion of the use of luxury textiles on the Iberian Peninsula during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, María Judith Feliciano argued persuasively for the shared aesthetics of the Muslim and Christian elite. Instead of ascribing a textile to a ruling Muslim dynasty, she proposed that much can be gained from denoting it as “Andalusi,” which would take into account a much broader view and reflect the actual practices of Iberian society. See Feliciano 2005.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 46A: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, by 1920–46; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles, 1946; sold to MMA]

Cat. 46B: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, until 1946; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles, 1946; sold to MMA]

Cat. 46C: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, by 1920–46; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles, 1946; sold to MMA]



### 47. Textile Fragment

Spain, 13th century

Silk; gilt animal substrate around a silk core; lampas

4 × 4¼ in. (10.3 × 10.8 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1928 28.194

Esteemed for their expensive materials, refined design, and craftsmanship, luxury textiles manufactured in al-Andalus were admired and coveted by rulers, nobles, and ecclesiastics alike.<sup>1</sup> They were considered among the most valuable commodities in the medieval economy, were collected in royal treasuries, and often served as ambassadorial gifts. In addition, elaborate, if somewhat less opulent, textiles appeared in more modest settings, for example, as part of a bridal trousseau or as valued items in a family inheritance. Silk textiles produced in Muslim royal workshops (*tiraz*) were found in Christian lands in medieval Iberia, whether created for Christian patrons or cut and refashioned for entirely new uses. By one means or another, these textiles were often employed in ecclesiastic vestments or church furnishings, such as altar cloths and reliquary linings. As a result, many examples have been preserved in church treasuries.<sup>2</sup>

This silk fragment embellished with gold brocade is decorated with a row of large roundels enclosing two seated female musicians.<sup>3</sup> Dressed in robes of patterned design, the figures are depicted playing tambourines. The lamp hanging between the figures suggests a luxurious interior setting. These roundels are interlaced

with a row of smaller ones containing stars. A rich, shimmering effect is produced by the juxtaposition of the vivid reds and the lavish gold brocading. The circular shapes of the roundels and the gold brocade used for the interlace and stars are characteristic of the luxury silks of the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup> This fragment along with fourteen others (some cut in a circular shape to fit under the metal bosses of choir books) belonged originally to the same textile. The fragments were discovered between the pages of a thirteenth-century manuscript in the cathedral of Vich in Spain.<sup>5</sup>

OB

1. María Judith Feliciano provided a cogent argument for an aesthetic shared by Muslim and Christian elites in medieval Iberia and so proposed the designation “Andalusi” in place of the prior scholarly practice of ascribing a given textile to a particular ruling Muslim dynasty. The new designation allowed her to take into account a more complex—and a more convincing—view of medieval Iberian society. See Feliciano 2005.
2. Sustained research on this topic was first conducted and published in May 1957.
3. May examined fragments with similar designs, which she dated to the fourteenth century; see *ibid.*, pp. 134–41.
4. Cristina Partearroyo Lacaba in Madrid 2005, p. 248.
5. May 1957, p. 139. Most of these fragments are now in the Archivo Episcopal of the cathedral of Vich; see Partearroyo Lacaba in Madrid 2005, p. 249. For technical analysis of the weaving structure of the fragment preserved in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, see Borrego Díaz 2005, pp. 107–8.

PROVENANCE: H. A. Elsberg, New York (until 1928; sold to MMA)



## 48. Textile Fragment

Spain, 14th century  
Silk; lampas  
40 1/8 × 14 3/4 in. (102 × 36.3 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1929 29.22

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script, written twice  
on a band (once in mirror image):

الغبطة

Felicity

Second Arabic inscription in *naskhi* script in cartouches:

واليمن والإقبال

Good luck and prosperity

The royal textile factories of al-Andalus were famous throughout the medieval world in a period when luxury textiles constituted one of the most valuable possessions in a ruler's treasury as well as in the trousseaux of wealthy brides.<sup>1</sup> Wall hangings, curtains, mattresses, cushions, and pillows made from silk and embellished with gold and silver brocade were assembled in the halls and open courtyards of well-to-do homes and palaces. Medieval textual sources give evidence of these abundant textile furnishings and of the political, economic, and aesthetic meanings that they conveyed in court ceremonials.<sup>2</sup>

This silk fragment woven in bright colors and richly decorated with geometric and epigraphic motifs could have been made for such a ceremonial purpose. The large dimensions of the fragment, with the selvage preserved on one side and the fringe on the bottom, suggest that it would have served as a furnishing, not a garment. This supposition is supported by the size of many similar extant fragments, none of them complete, but many of nearly identical dimensions.

The design of this textile is composed of broad and narrow bands. The two widest contain a geometric interlace based on eight-pointed radiating stars, while other, narrower bands are embellished with a repeated, knotted *kufic* inscription and small cartouches with a phrase in cursive *naskhi* script. Additional bands with merlons and small-scale interlace motifs complete the composition. The similarity in design of the upper interlace band to carved-stucco panels in the Alhambra, the palaces of the Nasrid dynasty in Granada, and of the lower interlace band to dadoes of ceramic-tile mosaics on the Alhambra's walls, has led scholars to conclude that this and similar textiles belong to the milieu of the Nasrid court at the height of its artistic production.<sup>3</sup> OB

1. Although little textual evidence is available with regard to the employment of textile furnishings in the ruling courts of al-Andalus, and at the Nasrid court in particular, more is known with respect to other medieval Muslim dynasties. For instance, the Fatimid dynasty, centered in Egypt, had stores for upholstery and furnishings in its treasury with an inventory of thousands of textiles. On the Fatimid treasury, see al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996, p. 237; and Serjeant 1972, pp. 157–60. On the





significance of textiles in the households of the medieval elite during the Fatimid period, see Goitein 1983a, pp. 328–31.

2. Among the most famed accounts is one concerning the reception of the Byzantine ambassadors at the Abbasid court in Baghdad in 917, when sixty thousand textiles were employed to adorn numerous palaces of the caliph. For the description of this reception, see al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996, pp. 148–50.
3. May 1957, pp. 118–70; Shepherd 1943, p. 389; Fernández-Puertas 1973; Wardwell 1983; Partearroyo Lacaba 1995; and Cristina Partearroyo Lacaba in Granada and New York 1992, p. 335, no. 97.

PROVENANCE: [Adolph Loewi, Venice, until 1929; sold to MMA]

#### 49. Textile Fragment

Spain, late 14th–early 15th century

Silk; lampas

10<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (27 × 54 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1918 18.31

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script on central band, repeated:

[السلطان عز مولانا السلطان عز مولانا الـسلطان]

Glory to our lord the Sultan

This textile fragment woven in vibrantly colored silk is organized in bands. Its main decorative motif is a phrase in Arabic inscribed in cursive *thuluth* script of Andalusian form on the widest, central band.<sup>1</sup> The laudatory inscription, repeated within the band throughout the width of the cloth, is executed in yellow thread against the red background; the finials of the letters and the spaces between them are embellished with foliate elements. Palmettes, split palmettes, and other foliations repeated in the manner of a frieze in the narrower bands echo the foliate elements in the inscribed band. Yet they also contrast effectively with that central band through the use of bright colors: yellow, cream, and red on a blue ground. The design is completed by a very narrow band with an interlace motif executed in cream color on a darker ground of the same hue.

The phrase glorifying the sultan was often employed in the embellishment of the arts and architecture of the Nasrid period, especially in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Carved in wood and stucco in the decoration of the palaces in the Alhambra, the dynastic seat of the Nasrids in Granada, it also appeared on luxury objects, especially textiles. Silk textiles made in al-Andalus for sumptuous attire and costly furnishings were among the luxury commodities sought after by the Muslim and Christian elites on the Iberian Peninsula and far beyond its borders.

Many examples of Nasrid textiles inscribed with the same phrase as this example, and similar in decoration, survive today as



fragments. Their original function remains obscure, since they were cut and reused in later times. The most splendid of these fragments, which are housed today in various collections,<sup>2</sup> is a pluvial (ecclesiastic vestment) preserved in the treasury of the cathedral of Burgos in Spain.

OB

1. One selvaie on this fragment has been preserved.
2. Among the collections with similar fragments are the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid; the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, New York; and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. It has been proposed that an inscription on the second, additional band on a similar fragment in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, may refer to the sultan Muhammad V (r. 1354–59, 1362–91). The reference would give grounds for dating that fragment and the present one to the second half of the fourteenth century. See Partearroyo Lacaba 1995, p. 126. For technical analysis of the woven structure of the fragment preserved in the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan, see Borrego Díaz 2005, pp. 118–19.

PROVENANCE: [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York, until 1918; sold to MMA]

### 50. *Hanging (Arid)*

Chefchaouen, Morocco, ca. 1800  
Linen, silk; plain weave, embroidered  
8 ft. 10½ in. × 31¾ in. (270.5 × 80.6 cm)  
Purchase, Everfast Fabrics Inc. Gift, 1970.272

An example of North African embroidery traditionally associated with the cities of Chefchaouen and Tetouan, near the north coast of Morocco,<sup>1</sup> this textile is identified by its format and scale as an *arid*, or wall hanging. Such embroideries were created by women and, in their original contexts, likely decorated the home during ceremonial occasions and festivities.<sup>2</sup> Though it is unclear exactly where *arids* were displayed within the domestic interior, they were probably secured flat against a wall (rather than hanging loose) and could be arranged either vertically or horizontally.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, this particular *arid* may have been repurposed for use as an altar curtain in a Nestorian church in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

The work is executed in polychrome silk thread on white linen. In technique and general scale, it resembles a larger group of North Moroccan embroideries, but the latter works display different patterns and formats.<sup>5</sup> While the distinction is not often made between the type of embroidery represented by the present example and those of the larger group, the color palette and patterns of this *arid* place it in a subset of Chefchaouen embroidery of which only a few related examples exist.<sup>6</sup> The rarity of the type presents problems in dating: the only known examples belong to



the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it is likely that the type has a longer history.

As a group, the textiles in this subset exhibit an alternating cartouche-and-star pattern in a long, narrow format. The interiors of the cartouches and stars are filled with geometric patterns in bright shades of red, blue, green, and yellow. The repeating motifs inscribed within the larger stars and cartouches bear a resemblance to patterns seen in Andalusian tilework, woodcarving, and early textiles.<sup>7</sup> This stylistic relationship may be attributed in part to the settlement in the region of Spanish Muslims fleeing the *reconquista*.<sup>8</sup> The overall alternating cartouche-and-star pattern here has parallels in both Moroccan architectural decoration and woodwork, and the origins of the design may perhaps be found in these earlier artistic traditions.<sup>9</sup> Much remains to be learned about these remarkable embroideries, of which the Metropolitan's *arid* represents a rare type within the rich and varied North Moroccan textile tradition.

ME /KW

1. The style originated in Chefchaouen but was eventually transmitted to Tetouan, and it is therefore impossible to determine where any specific *arid* was made. For more on the connection between these two cities, see Denamur 2003, p. 75.
2. Guérard 1974, p. 229.
3. For a helpful image of such textiles in situ, see Denamur 2003, p. 53.
4. This information, provided at the time of acquisition but unconfirmed, is taken from a catalogue card in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum.
5. For examples of the more common type, see Vivier 2002–3, pp. 64–65.
6. Similar pieces can be found in the collection of Eliza M. and Sarah L. Niblack, published in Vivier 2002–3, pp. 62–63; unknown collection, published in de la Nézière 1924, pl. 46; and private collection, published in Denamur 2003, pp. 88–90, and foldout. See also Guérard 1974, pp. 236–38 and figs. 156–60. Another example was recently published in Denamur 2010, p. 57.
7. Stone 1985, p. 19; Guérard 1974, p. 226. In addition to Andalusian influence, there may also be some degree of Turkish influence in Moroccan art, especially in the embroideries of Tetouan (a neighbor of Chefchaouen). See Olgner Bey 1961. This is an especially tempting hypothesis in light of the almost Holbeinesque center motifs of the two flanking stars in the present example.
8. Vivier 2002–3, p. 62; Denamur 2003, p. 75.
9. For the cartouche-and-star design in tilework, see, for example, the Royal Palace at Rabat (Castéra 1999, p. 58). In woodwork, but not in the embroideries, the cartouche is often larger than the star; see, for example, the Metropolitan Museum's wood screens from Morocco (acc. no. 2008.567a,b) or pl. 73 in de la Nézière 1921.

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Benjamin Ginsburg, Tarrytown, N.Y. (until 1970; sold to MMA)

## 51. Lattice-Design Carpet

Southern Spain, possibly Alcaraz, late 15th century

Wool (warp, weft, and pile); single-warp (Spanish) knotted pile

8 ft. 11<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. × 54 in. (273.5 × 137.1 cm)

The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 22.100.124

The carpets of Islamic Spain have a peculiar relationship to those of the rest of the Islamic world. Many of the earliest surviving examples, from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in fact take major aspects of their design from the Anatolian carpets of Turkey. Some Spanish carpets thus probably constituted Iberian “knock-offs” of expensive Anatolian originals, which were much in demand in Spain at the time.<sup>1</sup> Others were apparently woven by Muslim artists known as *mudejares* under Spanish Christian patronage, as Castile, Aragon, and Leon gradually extended their reconquest of Spain from the Christian north to the Muslim south. Such works, including the Metropolitan's carpet from the Ballard collection, often utilized designs adapted from silk textiles. However, all Spanish pile carpets do share one unusual characteristic: the pile is woven in a “Spanish knot” tied on a single warp, with multiple parallel shoots of weft between each row of knots.<sup>2</sup>

Dominated by hues of red and blue, the Ballard carpet has an attractive repeating design: floral sprays are outlined by long leaves that form an ogival layout of small, repeating medallion-like compartments. This pattern most likely originated in silk textiles produced in Spain under the Nasrid dynasty,<sup>3</sup> whose small principality was centered in Granada in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Nasrids continued to make luxury silk textiles of high quality during the twilight of Muslim rule in southern Spain, and their art had an enormous influence on that of the Christian kingdoms steadily encroaching from the north. Just as the Alcazar, the palace of the Castilian kings in Seville, was built by Muslim artists in the style of the Nasrids' Alhambra, so carpets such as this, made by Muslim artists for Christian patrons, reflect the designs, genres, and styles of the once-dominant Muslim culture of Iberia.<sup>4</sup>

WBD

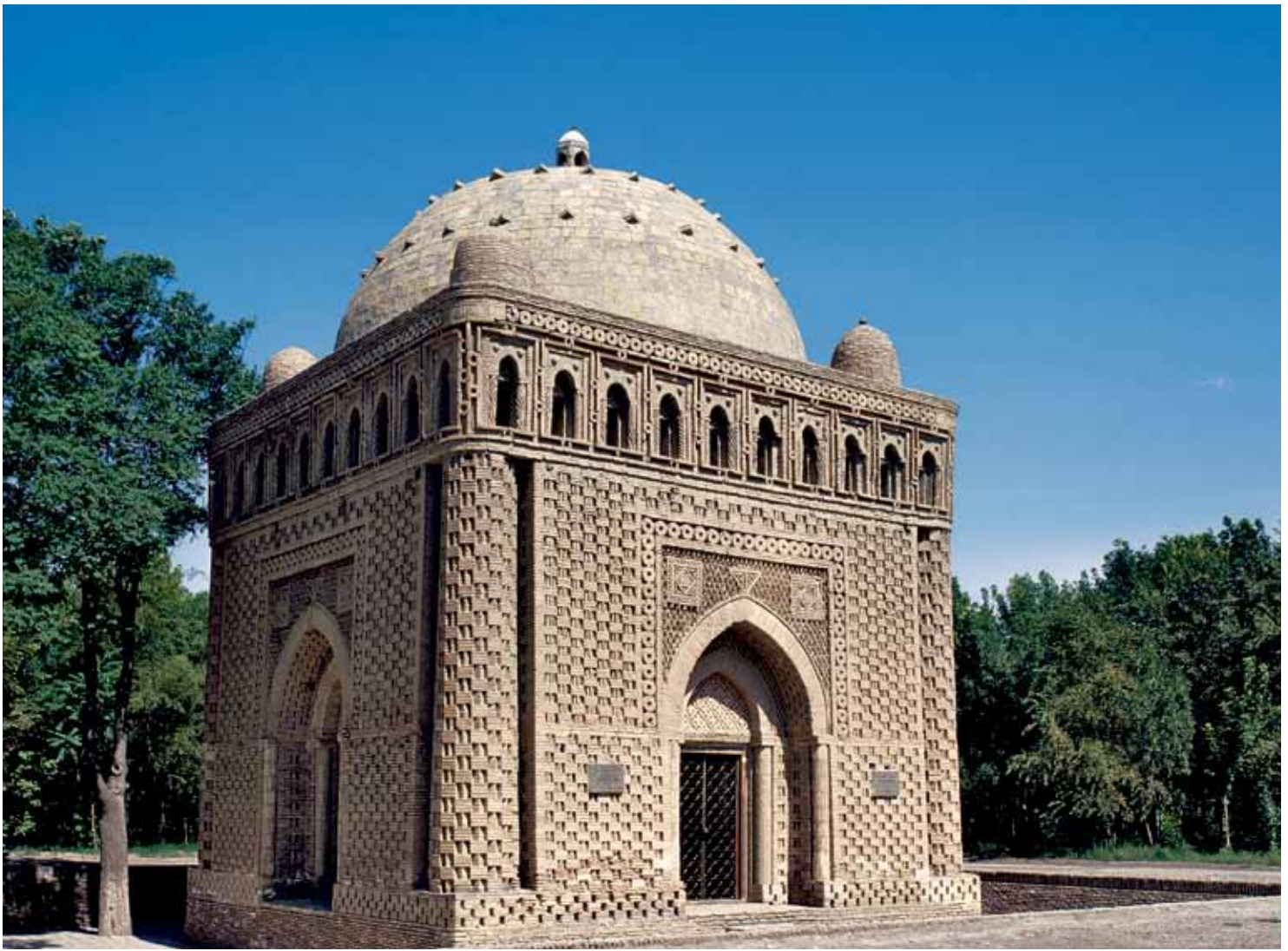
1. See Sherrill 1996, pp. 28–55.
2. Kühnel and Bellinger 1953.
3. See Partearroyo Lacaba 1992 and Granada and New York 1992, pp. 342–45, nos. 101, 102.
4. The Ballard Spanish carpet in the Metropolitan is in the care of the Department of Medieval Art.

PROVENANCE: James F. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until 1922)









## *Art of the Eastern Islamic Lands (9th to 14th Centuries)*

PRISCILLA P. SOUCEK

Although artistic accomplishment and innovation were often supported by the patronage of a particular dynasty or ruling group, in the period that stretched from the ninth to the fifteenth century—one of the high points of artistic production in the Near East under Islam—standards of creative excellence appear to have derived from the craftsmen themselves. In dynastic terms, the five-hundred-year period represented by the objects discussed here can be divided into two periods of unequal length. The longer, from 900 to 1258, coincides with the rule of the Abbasid caliphate (750–1258), whereas the subsequent one hundred fifty years were shaped by the presence of the Ilkhanid Mongols (1256–1353) and the various local dynasties that

succeeded them in the areas of Iran, Iraq, and Central Asia that they had dominated.<sup>1</sup>

While Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad may have been the titular leaders of the Muslim community, in practice they were obliged to recognize that actual power resided with regional authorities, including the Samanids of eastern Iran and Central Asia, the Buyid amirs of Iran and Iraq, the Ghaznavids of Afghanistan and western India, and the Seljuqs—who at one point controlled a vast area stretching from modern Uzbekistan to Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Such proliferation of competing regional political centers was often reflected in the parallel creation of regional artistic traditions. This is particularly evident in the diverse

techniques exhibited by the ceramics and metalwork of these centuries.<sup>2</sup>

The fragility of the Abbasid state as a military and governmental power, however, does not negate the importance of the ties that arose from the economic and commercial networks that developed within their dominion, which facilitated the movement of ideas and techniques over substantial distances. Indeed, the distinctive character of the Abbasid period for the visual arts resulted more from such interchanges between the empire's center and its periphery than from any cultural stewardship exercised in Iraq.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Baghdad's role as an intellectual center stimulated artistic developments, and caliphal initiative was important in certain areas. The translation of texts from Greek into Arabic between the eighth and tenth centuries was encouraged and supported by some of the caliphs and was a catalyst for the development of scientific knowledge in the Abbasid Empire.<sup>4</sup> A few luxury copies of such translations were even embellished with pictures. The page from an Arabic translation of the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides dated to 1224 that illustrates the preparation of a medical potion from honey (cat. 55) provides a rare glimpse of daily life in thirteenth-century Iraq.

The prestige of the Abbasid caliphs rested on their position as interpreters of traditions ascribed to the Prophet, which was most evident in their role as arbitrators of religious disputes—a role that also gave special prominence to the forms of calligraphy they favored. Qur'an manuscripts produced in Abbasid Iraq were thus endowed with a particular status, and this, in turn, encouraged their use as models in other regions. Manuscripts of the Qur'an were often copied in the most precise hands used in a given period and region, with its text given a full range of diacritical marks to eliminate any ambiguities in meaning or pronunciation. The Metropolitan Museum is fortunate to have in its collection pages from well-known Qur'an manuscripts linked to the Abbasid Empire, some of which were even produced in Baghdad. All were written on paper, though their script and decorative headings vary in appearance. Among these are a page from a manuscript dated to 993 that was copied in Isfahan and folios from manuscripts copied in Baghdad in 1192 and 1307 (for the latter, see cat. 54B).<sup>5</sup>

This sequence of pages provides a sampling of the broader history of calligraphy and manuscript production. While the Isfahan folio of 993 displays an innovative script, its dimensions and format replicate the appearance of earlier Qur'ans written on parchment. From the eleventh century onward, Iraqi scribes favored the use of a geometrically proportioned script in which individual letters have a consistent size and shape, replacing the more idiosyncratic variants found in earlier hands in which certain letters could be expanded or contracted to suit the available

space.<sup>6</sup> The regularity of later manuscripts even extended to their dimensions. Both the Qur'an of 1192 and the one from 1307 were designed to have seven lines of text per page, but the later example is approximately twice the size of the earlier one, a difference that reflects the standardization of paper sizes.<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that the 1307 Qur'an was produced nearly fifty years after the official demise of the Abbasid dynasty and is thus indicative that the importance of Baghdad as a center for book-making and calligraphy continued after the caliphs themselves had been removed.

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries portions of the Qur'an were also inscribed on objects that served a religious purpose. Two such examples—of nearly identical date and produced in the same place, the central Iranian city of Yazd—are in the Museum's collection: a stone tombstone dated to 1150 (cat. 64) and sections of a wooden pulpit or *minbar* from a local mosque that bear the date of 1151 (cat. 65A). The striking similarities between the calligraphic and ornamental repertoire of these objects demonstrate that craftsmen skilled in these two media worked closely together.

For millennia, monumental architecture in Iran and Iraq had been constructed from bricks, both sun-dried and kiln-baked. To enliven the surfaces, local builders developed decorative techniques that could lend color and texture to otherwise monotonous stretches of wall. In turn, decorative techniques established in one region spread easily to other areas where brick was also the favored material for construction. Thus it was that carved-and-painted stucco emerged as a major artistic medium in buildings erected under Abbasid patronage in Iraq, and its use spread rapidly through various centers in Iran and Central Asia. The Abbasids or their builders favored abstract patterns that often had a vegetal origin, and the popularity of such designs in Iran and Central Asia appears to reflect cultural ties with the Abbasid domains. The Iranian city of Nishapur exemplified these trends, as can be seen from architectural decoration excavated there that is now on view in New York (cats. 60, 61). Abstract patterns inspired by Abbasid-period architectural ornament were even replicated on ceramic vessels from eastern Iran or Central Asia.<sup>8</sup>

One of the special features of artistic production in areas under Muslim domination is the care and attention devoted to the creation of patterns on works made from simple materials, such as ceramic vessels or objects of base metal. The credit for the varied ways in which this practice stimulated artistic innovation lies with the craftsmen themselves. Humble ceramic vessels for everyday use were widely produced, with important regional variations in the subtle and creative manipulation of this material to create objects of arresting beauty. Potters active in eastern Iran and adjacent regions of Central Asia used slip



painting to produce calligraphy of a high order (cat. 69).<sup>9</sup> Sometimes these inscriptions offer prosperity and good health to the user and sometimes they carry aphorisms of a more pious flavor.<sup>10</sup> We know little about the individuals who created these ceramic masterpieces during the ninth and tenth centuries.

Fortunately, we are better informed about the identity and personal history of the potters active in the central Iranian city of Kashan during the twelfth to the fourteenth century because a number of objects that they produced bear both signatures and dates.<sup>11</sup> This knowledge is further amplified by a treatise on ceramic production written by a member of this workshop during the fourteenth century. His text allows us to follow the workshop's production both before and after the mid-thirteenth-century Mongol invasions.<sup>12</sup>

The international reputation of this workshop was bolstered by the ability of its craftsmen to use metallic oxides to create objects that had the optical qualities of precious metals but were produced in ceramic kilns. Some of the pieces they manufactured were of considerable size, such as luster-painted *mihhrabs* for use in mosques or shrines. Their most widely distributed lusterwares, however, were probably sets of tiles used for wall revetments in both religious and secular structures.<sup>13</sup>

Another distinctive accomplishment of the Kashan ceramic workshop was the ability to paint pictures on ceramic surfaces, thereby producing images as rich and subtle as those created on a sheet of paper. At times, these objects even depict stories taken from Persian literature, hinting at the social setting in which such works were used and enjoyed.<sup>14</sup> The skills required for this exacting form of ceramic decoration appear to have been lost by the middle decades of the thirteenth century, perhaps due to the disruption and loss of life associated with the Mongol conquests.

Regional specialization and individual creativity also underlie the accomplishments of metalworkers active during the tenth to the fifteenth century. Artisans in the city of Herat in present-day Afghanistan refined the technique of inlaying metal objects with contrasting substances to create ornamental surfaces that expanded the significance of the objects.<sup>15</sup> Often such inlay included texts that alluded to an object's function or identified the person for whom it was made.<sup>16</sup> Wares made of silver were inlaid with substances that darkened with time, so that the added design was clearly visible. The text inlaid into the small silver cup with flaring sides (cat. 83), for example, suggests that it was to be used as a wine cup, confirming the popularity of wine drinking within courtly circles despite religious strictures discouraging it.

Base metals such as bronze or brass were also treated in novel ways through the use of intricate inlays cut from thin sheets of silver or gold and held in place by the crimping of the vessel's surface. Here too the decorative themes employed inform us

about an object's function or meaning. The most common inscriptions offer benedictions and praises to the work's owner, making it a bearer of good fortune. Inkwells served a practical purpose and were emblems of office for scribes. In addition, circular vessels like the museum's inkwell (cat. 86) could be embellished with symbols of the zodiac or other heavenly bodies, suggesting an analogy between their shape and the design of the heavenly spheres.<sup>17</sup>

Although metalwork objects and ceramic vessels used in a secular context might feature figural decoration, such depictions were usually executed in two dimensions. Wall paintings, for example, sometimes portrayed nearly lifesize figures, as at the Lashkari Bazaar in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> More unusual are three-dimensional figures of people or animals. The Museum owns a pair of lifesize sculptures with elaborate costumes and weapons (cats. 62, 63) as well as a carved-stone head of a youth.<sup>19</sup> More research is needed to properly situate these figures within their original contexts.

The invasion of Central Asia and the Near East by the Mongol armies between 1218 and 1220 had a devastating impact on the cities of those regions. However, the Mongol habit of enslaving craftsmen and moving them to new locations did ensure that some artistic skills were transferred from one area to another. While a second phase of the Mongol conquest in the 1250s was less brutal than the first, it did result in the 1258 extinction of the Abbasid caliphate. Despite these traumatic events, by the 1260s some places in the Near East had begun to revive, and the vast Mongol Empire facilitated long-distance communication between previously distinct regions.<sup>20</sup>

The empire controlled by the Genghizid Mongols did not long endure, but certain aspects of their legacy informed the artistic patronage of the successor states that came to power in sections of their dominion. Economic ties that resulted from long-distance travel and trade between regions appear to have had a more lasting impact than did the political and military ideology directly associated with Mongol rule. The production of and trade in luxury textiles is one such area. Textiles embellished with gold held a high artistic and economic value for the Mongols, perhaps due to their peripatetic lifestyle. Because of this, textile production in eastern and western Asia grew closer together in both design and technique in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The vigorous trade networks of the period also contributed to the wide distribution of these fabrics, which are now preserved in European churches as well as various museum collections around the world.<sup>21</sup>

Several objects in the Metropolitan Museum exemplify the post-Mongol revival of the arts. The potters of Kashan seem to have been well treated by the Mongols, and tiles made there from the 1260s onward employed a new artistic vocabulary of



Fig. 30 Interior view of the Sanctuary of Uljaytu, Great Mosque of Isfahan, installed 1310. Photo: Walter B. Denny

East Asian origin.<sup>22</sup> Among these is a molded, luster-painted tile bearing lotus blossoms and a bird with elaborate plumage (cat. 78). This same repertoire is evident in other media, including a page from an illustrated manuscript that depicts a pair of birds (cat. 56).

In the 1290s the conversion of the Mongols to Islam, along with a gradual economic revival of Iran and Central Asia, stimulated the construction or redecoration of shrines, mosques, and tombs with glazed-ceramic revetments. The most laborious variant of this decoration featured complex designs composed of several colors of glazed ceramics that were cut to a pattern and fitted together to create a unified surface. Typically this technique was used to accent key parts of a structure, such as the *mihrab* of a mosque or the portal of a building.<sup>23</sup> The *mihrab* dated to 1354 from a religious school, or *madrasa*, in Isfahan (cat. 81) demonstrates the strong visual impact of this technique.<sup>24</sup> Although the

origin of this technique is difficult to pinpoint, it may have developed in western Iran, whence it spread to other regions.

The illustration of secular manuscripts with pictures acquired new prominence in the period following the Mongol invasion. Most striking were the changes in the illustration of texts written in Persian, particularly those of the long epic poem of Persian dynastic history, the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings). This text had been composed about the year 1000 by the eastern Iranian poet Firdausi of Tus, but few traces survive of manuscripts produced before the second half of the thirteenth century. From the late thirteenth century onward, however, the number and variety of illustrated versions proliferated.<sup>25</sup>

Pictures included in manuscripts became more varied during the fourteenth century. Some copies, such as the page from a *Shahnama* dated to 1341 (cat. 58), have simple, striplike images filled with human figures that show little if any attention to the setting of events.<sup>26</sup> At about the same time, another copy of this text contained illustrations that focus on the depiction of emotion, as seen in the funeral scene (cat. 57) in which grief is expressed with emotional and graphic immediacy.

Some innovations appear to reflect the creativity of the painters, whereas others may be due to requests made by patrons. One combination featured picture riddles in which words and pictures were used together to complete the verses of a poem; the Museum owns a page of this type from a manuscript produced in Isfahan in the 1340s (cat. 59).<sup>27</sup> Adding to the variety, some fourteenth-century paintings included the new visual repertoire brought by the Mongols; others illustrated narratives that may have carried personal meanings for a patron.<sup>28</sup> During the course of the fourteenth century, painters experimented with new ways of telling stories by integrating figures into lavish landscapes or by situating them in elaborately decorated buildings, approaches that would be exploited by artists working in Iran during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

1. Bosworth 1996, pp. 6–10, 250–51, 264–68.
2. London 1976a, pp. 23–35, 54–77, 136–52; Watson 2004, pp. 45–61.
3. Grabar 1975, pp. 349–51.
4. Gutas 1998.
5. On the Isfahan Qur'an of 993 (Metropolitan Museum, acc. no. 40.164), see Déroche 1992, pp. 154–55, no. 83; for cat. 54B, see also James 1988, pp. 77, 81, 83, 235, no. 39. The folio from the 1192 manuscript is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 2004.89).
6. Blair 2006, pp. 157–78.
7. Ibid., pp. 247–51.
8. Wilkinson 1986, pp. 229–42.
9. Compare Wilkinson 1973, pp. 96–104, 113–22, and the slip-painted earthenware bowl (cat. 69).
10. Pancaroğlu 2002; Ghouchani 1986.

11. Ettinghausen 1936; Watson 1985, pp. 176–82.
12. Allan 1973.
13. Watson 1985, pp. 22–140.
14. Simpson 1981; Watson 2004, pp. 363–71.
15. Barrett 1949, pp. ix–x; Baer 1983, pp. 4–5, 71, 102.
16. Melikian-Chirvani 1973, pp. 70–91.
17. London 1976a, pp. 69–70, 123–24.
18. Schlumberger 1952.
19. On the carved-stone head (acc. no. 33.111), see Riefstahl 1931.
20. Masuya 2002–3.
21. Watt and Wardwell 1997–98.
22. Masuya 2002–3; Watson 2006.
23. Wilber 1939.
24. Crane 1940; Wilber 1955, pp. 103, 183–84, no. 100.
25. Simpson 1979, pp. 1–40.
26. Swietochowski 1994.
27. Carboni 1994.
28. Grabar and Blair 1980, pp. 13–28; Soudavar 1996, pp. 97–101.

## *52. Bifolio from a Qur'an Manuscript*

Iran, Isfahan, A.H. Ramadan 383 / October–November 993 A.D.  
Ink and gold on paper,  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{7}{8}$  in. ( $24 \times 35.1$  cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1940 40.164.5a, b

## *53. Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript*

Eastern Iran or Afghanistan, ca. 1180  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper,  $11\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $29.8 \times 22.2$  cm)  
H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1929 29.160.23

Some of the new scripts developed from the tenth to the twelfth century in the Near East were employed primarily for religious texts. The earlier of these leaves (cat. 52) belongs to a manuscript that was conservative in its use of the horizontal format characteristic of Qur'an copies on parchment from the ninth century, but innovative in the script it adopts to transcribe that text. It belongs to the last volume of a four-part Qur'an manuscript, other folios of which (in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul), provide the date of A.H. Ramadan 383 / October–November 993 A.D. and indicate that it was copied in the Iranian city of Isfahan.<sup>1</sup> The text on the Metropolitan Museum's bifolio, from Sura 54 (*al-Qamar*, "The Moon"), is discontinuous—one leaf (a) contains verses 6–13, while the other leaf (b) bears verses 31–39—indicating that another bifolio once separated the two. A folio now in the Khalili Collection, London, that contains the end of Sura 53 (*al-Najm*, "The Star") along with the chapter heading and first five verses of Sura 54 must have preceded the Metropolitan Museum folios.<sup>2</sup>

Knowing the precise date and place of origin of this manuscript gives it a special importance. Its calligraphy occupies an intermediate zone between the angular script of the earliest Qur'an manuscripts, used here for the heading of Sura 53, and the fluid, more

cursive book hands that have been in vogue since the twelfth century. This variant, sometimes called the "new script" or "broken cursive," shows considerable variety in the size of its letters and width of its strokes. The letters that fall below the baseline are unusually long and create a visual rhythm that propels the eye forward through the text. Another notable stylistic feature is the difference in the sizes of the letters in the word *Allah*, which appears in both the final verse of Sura 53 and the first line of Sura 54. In both cases, the initial *alif* is more than twice the height of the others, a contrast that serves to emphasize the word.

Certain features of the "new script" have been exaggerated in the other page presented here (cat. 53), which contains Qur'an 5:20–21 from a widely dispersed Qur'an. Among these are the height of its vertical letters and a similar visual emphasis on the word *Allah*. Each page contains only four lines of text because of the large scale of its writing; the manuscript is also distinctive in that the spaces between its letters are embellished with a background of foliate scrolls. B. Saint Laurent, who has collated the surviving fragments of this copy, estimated that when complete it would have contained 2,250 folios. Aside from its background decoration, the manuscript resembles those in a group produced in





52

eastern Iran or Afghanistan between the late eleventh and late twelfth centuries, including one dated to 1092, formerly in the collection of Aqa Mahdi Kashani, and another in the Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul, copied in 1177 by a scribe of Afghan origin. These two examples help to establish the approximate date and place of production for the page and for the other leaves from this volume.<sup>3</sup>

PS

1. Déroche 1992, pp. 154–55, no. 83.
2. Déroche 1988–89, pp. 24–27, fig. 6; Sotheby's London, October 13, 1989, lot 76; Déroche 1992, pp. 154–55, no. 83.
3. Saint Laurent 1989; Lings 2005, pp. 57–59 and pls. 14–15, 20–21, 24.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 52: [Mrs. Kamer Aga-Oğlu, Ann Arbor, Mich., until 1940; sold to MMA]

Cat. 53: H. O. Havemeyer Collection, New York (until 1929)



53

## 54A, B. Two Folios from the Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an

A. Frontispiece, Right Side, Vol. 26  
Calligrapher: Ibn al-Suhrawardi  
Illuminator: Muhammad ibn Aibak ibn 'Abdallah  
Iraq, Baghdad, A.H. 706/1306–7 A.D.  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
17 × 13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (43.2 × 35.2 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1950 50.12

B. Colophon, Left Side, Vol. 30  
Calligrapher: Ibn al-Suhrawardi  
Illuminator: Muhammad ibn Aibak ibn 'Abdallah  
Iraq, Baghdad, dated A.H. 707/1307–8 A.D.  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
20<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (51.3 × 36.8 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1955 55.44

### Cat. 54A

Inscription in Arabic in “new-style” script in borders at top and bottom:

وإنه لكتاب عزيز لا يأتيه الباطل من بين يديه [ولا من خلفه]  
[. . .] and surely it is a Book Sublime; falsehood comes not to it, from before it, [nor from behind it] (Qur'an 41:41–42)

### Cat. 54B

Inscription in Arabic in “new-style” script in borders at top and bottom:

بغداد حماها الله تعالى في شهور/سنة سبع وسبعائة هلالية  
Baghdad, may God, the exalted, protect her, in the months of the year A.H. 707 [1307–8 A.D.] *hila*li [calendar]

Inscription in Arabic in *muhaggaq* script at center:

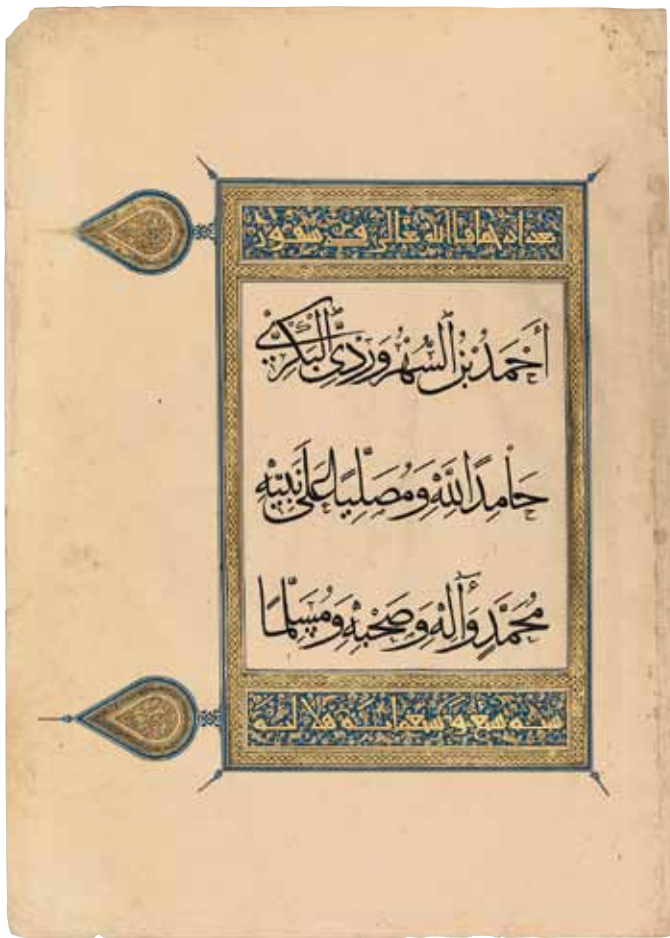
أحمد بن السهروردي البكري/حامداً ومصلياً على نبيه/محمد وآله وصحبه مسلماً  
Ahmad ibn Suhrawardi al-Bakri praises God and prays for His messenger Muhammad, his family, and his companions and salutes.

These two illuminated pages come from different sections of one of the acknowledged masterpieces of calligraphy and book production in the Islamic world. The so-called Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an was created under Ilkhanid patronage in the first decade of the fourteenth century, specifically between late 1301 (or very early 1302) and 1308.<sup>1</sup> Under the Ilkhanid rulers, who converted to Islam in the late thirteenth century, several luxury copies of the Qur'an were commissioned with the aim of distributing them across the country, either as endowments to major mosques or for placement in mausoleums that were built while the patrons were still alive. Crucial to this was the guidance of the Ilkhanid vizier Rashid al-Din (d. 1318), a converted Persian Jew who created in the capital of Tabriz an atelier for copying and distributing literary texts. In addition to that scriptorium, several other important Ilkhanid cities had long-standing traditions of book production, foremost among which was Baghdad, the former capital of the Abbasids, which had been captured by the Ilkhanids in 1258.

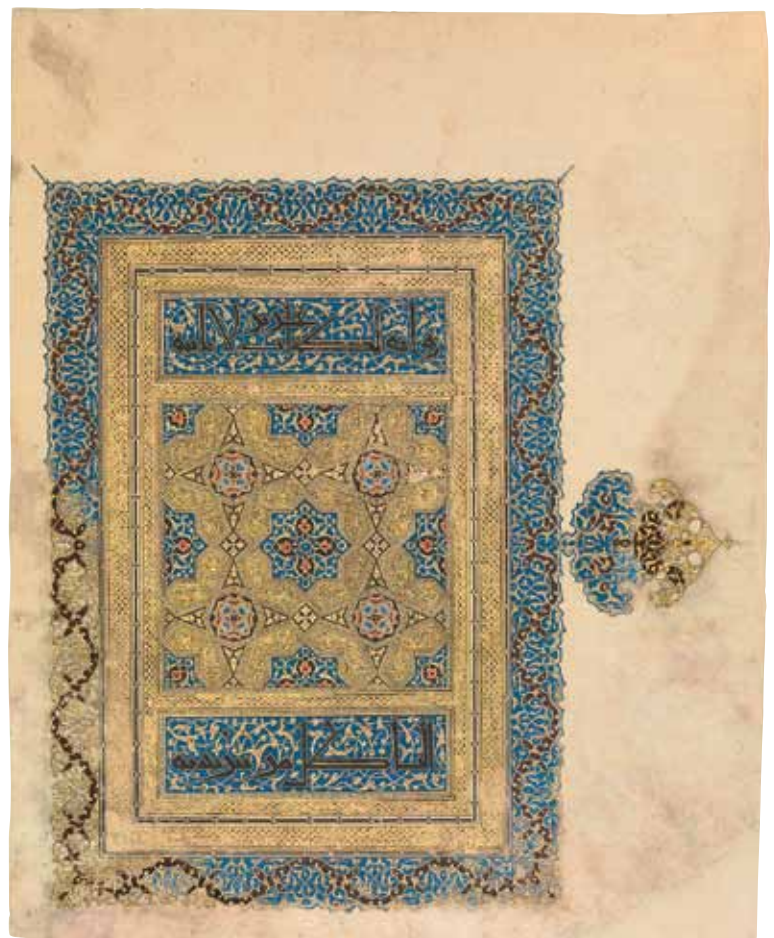
While we know that the thirty-part manuscript to which these two pages once belonged was produced in Baghdad, we do not know the name of its patron or its intended destination. Possible candidates have included Sultan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304);

his successor, Sultan Uljaitu (r. 1304–16); or one of their powerful viziers, perhaps Rashid al-Din or Sa'd al-Din Savaji. It may have been made for deposit in the mausoleum of Sultan Ghazan, which was completed in 1301.

However, we do know the names of both the calligrapher and the illuminator of this splendid codex: not surprisingly, they were among the most celebrated and prolific artists at the court of the Ilkhanids. The calligrapher, Ibn al-Suhrawardi, may have been the grandson of a well-known sufi from the small town of Suhraward in northwestern Iran. A pupil of Yaquṭ al-Musta'simi (d. 1298), the most renowned calligrapher of his time, he may well have surpassed his master while copying this Qur'an. Ibn al-Suhrawardi is credited with designing inscriptions for a number of buildings in Baghdad and with the production of thirty-three complete Qur'an manuscripts. Unfortunately, few of his works survive. The illuminator, Muhammad ibn Aibak ibn 'Abdallah, signed his name several times throughout the present manuscript, adding that he was working in the City of Peace, Baghdad; although Ibn Aibak's signatures appear in a few other manuscripts as well, little is known about his life.<sup>2</sup> The dates provided by the calligrapher and the illuminator throughout the surviving sections of this codex



B



A

document the different paces at which they worked: Ibn Suhrawardi was able to copy approximately eight volumes each year, while Ibn Aibak managed to illuminate only four of them.<sup>3</sup>

Catalogue 54A is the right-hand side of the two-page frontispiece for the twenty-sixth *juz'*, or part, of this Qur'an.<sup>4</sup> According to the colophon for this section, now in the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran, it was finished by Ibn Suhrawardi in A.H. 706/1306–7 A.D. The quality of Ibn Aibak's illumination here is nothing short of superb: the central eight-pointed star set against a lapis blue background is duplicated within an ever-expanding pattern that is interrupted by the square framing, thus allowing the view of half stars in the center of the four sides and quarter stars at the corners. The complex gold geometric interlacing that separates the stars becomes the dominant pattern and creates space for four small polychrome "flowers." The elegant inscription in black outlined in gold represents half of the text originally copied on this double-sided frontispiece.<sup>5</sup> The outer border, although slightly discolored due to damage, is also spectacular, with an undulating brown band contrasting against the blue background and a large pendant off to the right side.<sup>6</sup>

The two illuminated sections of catalogue 54B are in Aibak's hand; the text contains the second half of the colophon, possibly of the thirtieth and last *juz'* of the Qur'an.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent feature of this folio is the three lines of text set against the polished white paper, copied by Ibn Suhrawardi in a most accomplished, artistic, balanced, and flowing *muhaqqaq* cursive calligraphy. The magnificent achievement of this artist enables even those viewers who cannot read Arabic to have an emotive appreciation for it. In possibly the very last written words of the last volume of this extraordinary manuscript, the calligrapher offers his name to posterity: Ahmad ibn Suhrawardi al-Bakri.<sup>8</sup> sc

1. Due to the fact that none of the surviving volumes or individual folios contains a *waqfiyya* (official endowment) or a record of commission, this manuscript has been referred to as the Anonymous Baghdad Qur'an. See James 1988, pp. 78–92.
2. Ibid., pp. 89–92.
3. Ibid., p. 90.
4. Published in *ibid.*, fig. 58.
5. See the translation above. The full verse would have ended on the other side with "... nor from behind it. A revelation from the Wise the Praised One."



6. One has to keep in mind that a mirror-illuminated page once faced the present one, thus balancing the pattern and doubling the pleasure to the eye. This page seems to have been lost.
7. Published in James 1988, fig. 47; Schimmel and Rivolta 1992, p. 16; New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, pp. 204, 258–59, no. 64, fig. 245; Blair 2006, p. 252.
8. To my knowledge, Ibn al-Suhrawardi added the word *al-Bakri* to his name only on this page, making it particularly significant. It confirms that he belonged to the Suhrawardi order of sufis.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 54A: [J. Acheroff, Paris, until 1950; sold to MMA]

Cat. 54B: [Khalil Rabenou, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]

### 55. Folio from the *De Materia Medica* of Dioscorides

“Preparation of Medicine from Honey”

Calligrapher: ‘Abdullah ibn al-Fadl

Possibly Baghdad, Iraq, or Northern Jazira,

dated A.H. Rajab 621/ June–July 1224 A.D.

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 9 in. (31.4 × 22.9 cm)

Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.21

This illustrated folio is from an Arabic manuscript of Dioscorides’ *De Materia Medica* (*Kitab al-Khawass al-Ashjar*) probably produced in Baghdad and dated A.H. 621/1224 A.D. The painting depicts the interior of a two-storied house in which two male figures stand at either side of a large caldron over a burning fire, one mixing a medicine made of honey called *abuma’ali*, prescribed to cure weakness; another figure on the second story transfers the concoction into large jugs. A row of vessels, which were probably used to preserve the medicine, can be seen at the center of the top floor.

*De Materia Medica* was one of the most popular Greek scientific manuscripts translated into Arabic. The author, Dioscorides, was a physician from Asia Minor who served in the Roman army in the first century B.C. Translated in Baghdad in the mid-ninth century, the treatise describes ways to prepare medicines from up to five hundred plants. Developed in the fourth century B.C. and continuing in the Byzantine period, the Greek tradition of herbals provided the model for Islamic herbals and pharmacological texts.<sup>1</sup>

The illustration of Islamic herbal manuscripts developed in two directions: pictures of plants alone or vignettes including human figures, as in this example.<sup>2</sup> Characteristic of the Baghdad School in the mid-thirteenth century are the two-dimensionality of the painting, the bright colors, the sprightly figures in contemporary local garb with halos crowning their heads, and the bilateral symmetry of the composition. Representing a skillful blend of Persian, Byzantine, and Arab features typical of the Baghdad School,<sup>3</sup> the

paintings are compositionally and stylistically akin to those in a manuscript of the *Maqamat* by al-Hariri produced in Baghdad and dated A.H. 634/1237 A.D., now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.<sup>4</sup>

This folio is from a manuscript dated A.H. Rajab 621/June–July 1224 A.D., the bulk of which is presently in the Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul.<sup>5</sup> The text, which is in *naskhi* script, is by the calligrapher ‘Abdullah ibn al-Fadl. Additional folios from the same manuscript are preserved in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C., the David Collection in Copenhagen, and the British Museum in London, among other collections.<sup>6</sup> ME

1. Hoffman 2000.

2. James and Ettinghausen 1977, p. 88.

3. Ibid., p. 87.

4. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (ms. Arabe 5847). Ibid., p. 121.

5. Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul (Aya Sophia no. 3703).

6. See London 2009, p. 204.

PROVENANCE: Frederik R. Martin, Stockholm (by 1910); V. Everit Macy, New York; Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (until d. 1956)



## 56. Folio from the *Manafi' al-hayawan* (On the Usefulness of Animals) of Ibn Bakhtishu

Iran, ca. 1300

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image:  $5\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{8}$  in. (14.6 × 15.7 cm); page:  $15\frac{7}{8} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  in. (40.3 × 31.8 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1918 18.26.2

This folio was once part of a manuscript of the *Manafi' al-hayawan* (On the Usefulness of Animals), a bestiary composed in the tenth century by Abu Sa'id ibn Bakhtishu for the Abbasid caliph al-Muttaqi (r. 940–44).<sup>1</sup> The text was especially popular during the thirteenth century; three of the earliest surviving manuscripts of this text were produced at that time, including the first Persian edition<sup>2</sup> and the dispersed manuscript to which this folio belonged.<sup>3</sup> The page is dominated by a bold illustration of two eagles with rich plumage; the first bird rests on the ground with his head turned back toward his mate, who is flying in his direction. The illustration is framed by a few lines of text that discuss the attributes of eagles, specifically the gestation period of the eagles' eggs and the conditions under which they will hatch.

Created during the transformative phase of pictorial production that occurred during the rule of the Mongol Ilkhanids, this illustration fuses features of Arab painting with Chinese elements. The influence of Arab painting can be seen in the essentially decorative and two-dimensional quality of the landscape, especially in the canopy-like sky and the stylized stems and flowers. These characteristically Arab elements are combined with such Chinese influences as the strong, almost calligraphic, line, the delicate palette, and the concern for spatial relationships. The illustration also responds to the text, specifically in its inclusion of a stylized golden sun, which is described in the lines of script below the two eagles.

The cultural and political exchange between the new rulers of Iran, the Ilkhanids, and the Yuan dynasty in China, of whom the Ilkhanids were vassals, was largely responsible for the incorporation of Chinese motifs into the Ilkhanid artistic repertoire. Along with other motifs of Chinese inspiration, peonies, swirling cloud bands, and fantastic beasts like the phoenix—whose classical iconography with stretched wings appears to have inspired the shape of one of the birds in this composition—became part of the Ilkhanid and Islamic decorative repertoire at this time. FL



1. The text's original Arabic title is *Kitab na't al-hayawan wa manafi'ihi* (Book of the Identification and Benefits of Animals).
2. The manuscript, now in the Morgan Library and Museum, New York (MS. M. 500), bears the date 1297–98 and was made during the reign of the Ilkhanid Ghazan Khan (1295–1304).
3. A second page from the same manuscript is also in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 57.51.31).

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, by 1914–18; sold to MMA]



ز بهمن ز سدید و تاملستان من آن بر کردیم که چشم خود بیکدود یک روی آهنین شربتک تا بوقت که ز بهشت همه خسته نوئی که کلاه می همان تا سوز خود و خفتن همین بر در پیران خوش خروئی بر آید دایوان برآز همی که کشتا شب کوی افتد	بجید حیران کابلستان بوی بگرد نام یاد آورد ترا کند تو من شک و عیب شدن با زور خسروانی در رمان شاه کوی و دایان همان روگ و آن معجز حکمی همی زور زینت چون جان خوب جهان شد ز نام استغفار از کون می بیند رمان و ترب	که کن کجور او سود اجدار اگر کند بیدار روز کار ز دیای ز بهشت کردن کفن چرا شتر با زور زورم کردن بریده بش و دم اسب سیاه برزدند و رفتند زرد یک شاه بکشتا شب آگاهی آمد ز راه	میشا و ز صکر استغفار تر خشم را ز بخت و محار خوشان زور نامدار از سخن ز یاد تو خسته دیای چس بشون همی ز بهشت سیاه بماند همی بدان جایگاه نکون شد سرواج کشتا شب	بدو گفت رستم که انسان یکی تو تا بوقت که آهست ازان تر که مو شد او شتر دو شتریدی زور تا بوقت شاه بشون همی ز بهشت سیاه بماند همی بدان جایگاه نکون شد سرواج کشتا شب	بیاید دایان شتر سیاه یکشتر دومی در دایان چس ز بهشت و زور تا بوقت شاه جیب و است و شتر از آن زور اندازید که کوه گریز نمکان همی چون دلبر افشاند بجاک اندازید سر و مغش بیداخت هر کس کلاه می نماد و سوز زور کردن فرار
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**او در زمانوت استغفار**



یالود تیغ و بالود کیش برای فرشتی کشتن کدمه جوا که شد دایان و خوراک زنان از بهشت و زور و خشت با همگان گفت شو جان بیز	جوان را همی داشت زبانی بوی کاه تاج معنی زنی از او بر رفتند با دختران همه سوزن زورگان فرزند سازید کامد کون و سنجیر	زور کان ازان کوه خشم سرب ز راج کمان شرم باد بر همه سربوای و زور و خاک که این شربت تا بوقت دایان سربک تا بوقت که از کرد	رازم کشتا شب بشت چشم برفتن و اخترت زرم ماد بشون همی زور کدما دشمن همی زور کدما چو خاهر شربت لدرش روی	باور کشتد کای شور و خشم برفتد بکشتن ایلان اوی بشون همی زور کدما دشمن همی زور کدما چو خاهر شربت لدرش روی	جوا شتریدی زور تا بوقت شاه بشون همی زور کدما دشمن همی زور کدما چو خاهر شربت لدرش روی بیدارد بر شک و زور شاه
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## 57. Folio from the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Firdausi

"The Funeral of Isfandiyar"

Iran, Tabriz, 1330s

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

22 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (58 × 40 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1933 33.70

Blending Iranian myth, Mongol traditions, and Chinese motifs, this folio bears witness to the rich artistic and cultural exchanges that occurred in Iran under the Ilkhanid dynasty. It comes from a dispersed copy of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) known as the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, and illustrates the funeral procession of Isfandiyar, one of the central characters of the epic. King Gushtasp ordered Isfandiyar to bring the hero Rustam to his court in chains (with the promise of making him king). Reluctant to do this because of Rustam's long-standing loyalty to the crown of Iran, Isfandiyar attempted to convince him to return to Iran. Rustam's refusal to comply with the royal order led to a fight that ended in the death of Isfandiyar.

As in other paintings in this manuscript, the illustration closely follows the narrative, but it is also infused with details taken from contemporary Mongol mourning customs.<sup>1</sup> Mongol historical sources have noted that funerary processions were opened by the horse of the deceased with the saddle placed in reverse. Fittingly, the image shows Isfandiyar's black horse in front of the cortege, with his tail cut and the saddle upturned to signal mourning. The coffin, said to have been wrapped in Chinese silk and carried by mules, is accordingly depicted, escorted by a large group of mourners whose animated gestures and unbalanced postures effectively communicate the profound grief caused by the prince's death. The monochromatic palette of the scene further draws the viewer's attention to the individual expressions of the participants, enhancing the dramatic quality of the representation.

The Great Mongol *Shahnama* was commissioned by the Ilkhanid ruler Abu Sa'id (r. 1317–35) toward the end of his reign. The codex was never completed, but in its final version it would have been in two volumes and contained some 280 folios and between 180 and 200 illustrations,<sup>2</sup> making it one of the most richly illustrated codices in the history of the Persianate arts of the book.<sup>3</sup> Some of the paintings in the manuscript and their association with contemporary Mongol practices have led scholars to identify it with the *Abu Sa'idnama*, a saga about the reign of the Ilkhanid ruler that is mentioned in later sources but is now lost.<sup>4</sup> Although intriguing, this interpretation is not universally accepted.<sup>5</sup>

It has been suggested that the Ilkhanids' interest in the Persian epic tradition was a way for them to assimilate local culture into their own and to reinforce their claim as the legitimate rulers of Iran. Only a few decades after the Ilkhanids' accession, scenes and verses from the *Shahnama* were being used on luster tiles to

decorate the Ilkhanid summer residence at Takht-i Sulaiman, in northwestern Iran. At the same time, through the adoption of the local epic tradition, the Ilkhanids embraced a practice that is attested in earlier times and that linked power to myth.<sup>6</sup> The recurrence of the *Shahnama* in their cultural production ultimately demonstrates how the epic offered a formula for idealized kingship that articulated the aspirations of many generations of rulers. FL

1. As first noted by Grabar and Blair 1980, p. 100.
2. Blair 1989.
3. Another profusely illustrated version of the *Shahnama* was produced for Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76) starting in the 1520s. Seventy-seven folios of this manuscript are currently in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 1970.301.01–77). See, for example, cat. 138A–G.
4. In the preface for the album assembled for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza in 1544, the *Abu Sa'idnama* is mentioned by Dust Muhammad in relation to the painter Ahmad Musa; see Thackston 2001, p. 12. The interpretation of the Great Mongol *Shahnama* as *Abu Sa'idnama* was proposed in Soudavar 1996.
5. Among the various critiques of this interpretation, see Blair 2004, esp. pp. 46–47.
6. According to the thirteenth-century historian Ibn Bibi, 'Ala' al-Din Kai Qubad I had quotations from the *Shahnama* on the walls of his palaces in Konya and Sivas (New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, p. 102).

PROVENANCE: [Demotte, Inc., New York, by 1926–33; sold to MMA]

## 58. Folio from the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Firdausi

"Bizhan Slaughtering the Wild Boars of Irman"

Iran, Shiraz, dated A.H. 741/1341 A.D.

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 3 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (8.9 × 24 cm); page: 14 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (36.5 × 30.3 cm)

H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1929 29.160.22

This folio illustrates the culminating moment in the tale of Bizhan and the boars of Irman, one of the many stories of heroic exploits contained in the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings). In this tale, Bizhan offers his help to the tribe of Irman—a region lying on the border between Iran and Turan—when a delegation from that land asks for Kai Khusrau's assistance against the hordes of ferocious boars plaguing their forests. The illustration is a faithful rendition of the verses preceding it, which describe how an armor-clad and mounted Bizhan pursues and slays the wild boars. In spite of the illustration's loose style and simple layout, the painting eloquently conveys the magnitude of Bizhan's task by minimizing the landscape and multiplying the number and size of the boars that the hero must slaughter.

This succinct, incisive pictorial style distinguishes the earliest surviving illustrated versions of the *Shahnama*, which date from the



beginning of the fourteenth century. The manuscript from which this page derives is now dispersed, but its colophon bears the date A.H. 741/1341 A.D., with a dedication to Qiṣam al-Da'la wa'l-Din Hasan.<sup>1</sup> Qiṣam al-Da'la (ca. 1303–1357) was the vizier of the Injuids, who emerged as more or less independent rulers of the Iranian province of Fars in the decades preceding and immediately following the fall of the Ilkhanid dynasty.<sup>2</sup> The surviving folios from this codex shed light on the sophisticated nature of the original manuscript, which is, however, not comparable in quality or complexity to the almost contemporary illustrated version of the same text commissioned by the Ilkhanid Abu Sa'id (r. 1317–35), known as the Great Mongol *Shahnameh*.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the fact that an increasing number of officials decided to commission

illustrated copies of the Persian epic testifies to the growing interest in the ancient royal traditions of Iran.<sup>4</sup>

FL

1. Lowry et al., 1988, pp. 69–70.
2. Eighty illustrated pages are currently scattered among private and public collections. Seven are in the Metropolitan Museum (in addition to cat. 58, acc. nos. 29.160.21, 36.113.1–3, 57.51.35, and 57.51.36), while the dedication page is in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (no. S86.0110).
3. See cat. 57.
4. At least seven manuscripts can be attributed to the Injuids, and four of them are copies of the *Shahnameh* (New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, p. 217). A list of these manuscripts is provided in Grube 1978, pp. 15–16 and n. 43.

PROVENANCE: H. O. Havemeyer Collection, New York (until 1929)

59. Folio from the *Mu'nis al-ahrar fi daqa'iq al-ash'ar*  
(Free Man's Companion to the Subtleties of Poems)  
of Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jajarmi

Iran, Isfahan, A.H. 741/1340–41 A.D.  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (23.2 × 16.8 cm)  
Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other  
Persian Art Objects,  
Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.25

This illustrated page was originally part of a compilation of poems assembled by the Persian intellectual and poet Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din Jajarmi and titled *Mu'nis al-ahrar fi daqa'iq al-ash'ar* (Free Man's Companion to the Subtleties of Poems).

Internal evidence in the manuscript<sup>1</sup> strongly suggests that Jajarmi was in Isfahan when he copied the text, and its colophon states that he finished it in Ramadan A.H. 741/February–March 1341 A.D. It is therefore one of the few dated illustrated texts from the Ilkhanid period and the only surviving one that can be attributed to Isfahan. The codex, known to scholars since 1914, was in the Kevorkian Foundation, New York, until the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, in Kuwait City acquired it through Sotheby's London in 1979.

The manuscript currently contains a double-page figural frontispiece showing a princely couple in a mature though provincial Ilkhanid style. However, the six pages that once formed chapter 29 of this poetic anthology—the only other illustrated folios in an otherwise strictly textual work—were detached early in the twentieth century and purchased by five different institutions in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Once reconstructed,<sup>3</sup> chapter 29 includes a fascinating and rare example of pictorial poetry,<sup>4</sup> an astrological poem, and a final *rubai* (quatrain).<sup>5</sup> The two folios in the Metropolitan Museum (acquired in 1919 and 1957)<sup>6</sup> cover almost the entire astrological poem,<sup>7</sup> which explains in rhyme the most appropriate things to do when the Moon is in conjunction with each of the twelve signs of the zodiac.

Illustrated here is the verso of the folio that includes the text and images of Sagittarius, Capricorn, and Aquarius. Didactically arranged on the left facing a female figure who holds a crescent around her head to represent the Moon, the three signs are easy to identify, respectively, as an archer who shoots an arrow against his own dragonlike tail, a kid with long curved horns, and the planet Saturn (the water carrier) lifting a bucket from a well. Each rectangular vignette is set against a red background sparsely filled with large plants. As an example, the poet says: "When the Moon is in Aquarius, if you have money / Buy furnishings and goods and Indian slaves. / To see agents and sheikhs is good. / There is a ban on bleeding, hunting, marriage, and travel."<sup>8</sup>

SC



1. Alexander Morton's analysis of the text convinced him that the author was writing in Isfahan. See New York 1994, p. 51.
2. These are the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Mass.; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Princeton University Library, Robert Garrett Collection; the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and the Metropolitan Museum, the only institution owning two pages.
3. Five of the six folios as well as the manuscript in Kuwait were reunited in the Museum as part of the 1994 exhibition "Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images: Persian Painting of the 1330s and 1340s," organized by Marie Lukens Swietochowski and myself. The accompanying book with the same title (New York 1994) fully addresses the literary and art-historical aspects of the manuscript.
4. Attributed to the poet al-Rawandi, the first half of each verse of the poem is written in words whereas the second half is in the form of an illustrated riddle or rebus. See New York 1994, pp. 26–37, nos. 2–4.
5. The last two poems are attributed by Jajarmi to his father, also a well-known poet.
6. The folio purchased in 1919 is acc. no. 19.68.1.
7. Not included are the last two verses and illustration, which shows the Moon in Pisces.
8. In the translation of Alexander Morton in New York 1994, p. 44.

PROVENANCE: Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1933–d. 1956)





### 60. Dado Panel

Iran, 9th century  
Excavated at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur  
Stucco; painted  
40<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 53<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 2 in. (102.6 × 135.9 × 5.1 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1940 40.170.176

The room in Nishapur, Iran, from which this dado panel was excavated once had a lively scheme of painted decoration. The upper section of the wall was colored a deep red, beneath which was a short horizontal frieze of hexagons and diamonds, and a four-foot-high dado with alternating rectangular and square panels. Each dado panel was framed with red, blue, and white lines; the rectangular panels contained a diamond or lozenge-shaped pattern filled with a design akin to quarter-sawn marble or fish scales, and the square panels featured a motif composed of a variety of feathery shapes, scale-covered elements, and interlaced ribbons ending in stylized eyes and hands. These patterns were executed in shades of blue, red, yellow, and brown.<sup>1</sup>

The section of Nishapur where this panel was found was known locally as Tepe Madrasa; judging from its modern name, the Metropolitan Museum's archaeologists had hoped to find one of Nishapur's famed institutions of learning, or *madrasas*. During the excavations of 1938–40, they instead uncovered a large residential area with a mosque that had been developed and rebuilt in several phases between the ninth and twelfth centuries. It is within one of the residences in this area that this panel was discovered, inside a room measuring approximately sixteen by nineteen feet (roughly five by six meters).

The excavators later determined that the building from which the painted dados were extracted dated to the ninth century, and suggested that the room was once part of the Tahirid-period palaces mentioned in historical sources.<sup>2</sup> The panel here and the numerous other examples found at Nishapur, all in different styles, are the earliest known examples of wall painting from the Islamic period in Iran.

While the meaning of this panel's decoration remains an enigma, most scholars believe that its imagery had an apotropaic

function. One hypothesis is that the eye and hand symbols derived from representations of the “hand of God,” but it has also been argued that the iconography should be linked to pre-Islamic bird-snake motifs that were believed to represent the souls of the deceased.<sup>3</sup> Either of these interpretations makes it unlikely that the room containing these panels was part of a palace, although so far there are no other indications of its function, as the excavators suggested. MS

1. Of the dado surface that the excavators uncovered, it was possible to preserve only two square and two rectangular panels; one set went to the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, and one set came to the Metropolitan Museum. See Wilkinson 1986, pp. 159–84. The structure where these panels were found is labeled “W20.”
2. For an evolving discussion and identification of the site, see Hauser and Wilkinson 1942, pp. 97–100; Bulliet 1976, p. 75; Wilkinson 1986, p. 181; and Sims, Marshak, and Grube 2002, p. 28.
3. Wilkinson 1986, p. 173; and Rührdanz 1995, p. 593.

PROVENANCE: 1939, discovered at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, Iran, by the Metropolitan Museum’s expedition under a concession granted by the Council of Ministers, Iran, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education of Iran; title transferred to The Metropolitan Museum of Art pursuant to the concession



### 61. Cornice Panel

Iran, 10th century  
Excavated at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur  
Stucco; molded, applied, carved  
28 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 29 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (71.3 × 74.5 × 17.5 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1940 40.170.441

Found at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, this panel with vine leaves and projecting pineapple-shaped bosses was located among many other stucco fragments that had once decorated a group of buildings northwest of this area’s mosque. As these fragments were piled among the remains of destroyed structures, with little in situ, it was impossible to determine where this particular panel originally appeared, or even to know the type of room to which it belonged. Nevertheless, its curved upper margin led the excavators to conclude that it had once formed part of a cornice.<sup>1</sup>

The panel’s decoration is quite different from the stuccowork found at other parts of Nishapur, such as that excavated at the part of the site known as Sabz Pushan, or even in adjacent buildings at Tepe Madrasa. However, its design can be favorably compared to stuccowork with similar motifs found at Merv and at the Samanid palace of Afrasiyab (modern Samarqand), both thought to be of the ninth century,<sup>2</sup> and at Hira, possibly of the eighth century.<sup>3</sup>

The finds from these sites elucidate the use of stucco in the medieval Islamic world, testifying to this medium’s widespread popularity during the ninth and tenth centuries, especially in the Samanid realms of northeastern Iran, which included Nishapur. Although scholars have tended to credit the use of stucco at the Abbasid capital of Samarra to the prevalence of stucco throughout the Abbasid cultural sphere, remains from earlier periods at Afrasiyab, Merv, Rayy, and other late Sasanian sites in Iran seem to suggest a long local history for the stucco patterns found in Islamic-period buildings, indicating that the Samanid-era stuccowork may have had an indigenous source. The finds from Iran also provide evidence for the simultaneous use of many styles of carving at a single site. Reconstructions made by the excavators of Afrasiyab suggest that the buildings had entire walls and ceilings covered with stucco panels, each with a different design. These panels were often colored bright blue, yellow, and red, and traces of such pigments were found on this panel as well. MS

1. These fragments were found in the structure C2; see Wilkinson 1986, pp. 116–36. The panel as shown here has been restored; for the fragments as excavated, see *ibid.*, p. 133, fig. 1.142.
2. Akhbarov and Rempel 1971, p. 45, fig. 22.
3. Rice, D. T. 1934, p. 63, fig. 14.

PROVENANCE: 1938, discovered at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, Iran, by the Metropolitan Museum’s expedition under a concession granted by the Council of Ministers, Iran, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education of Iran; title transferred to The Metropolitan Museum of Art pursuant to the concession



## 62. Princely Figure with Winged Crown

Iran, mid-11th–mid-12th century  
Stucco; modeled, carved, polychrome-painted, gilded  
H. 47 in. (119.4 cm)  
Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects,  
Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.18

## 63. Princely Figure with Jeweled Crown

Iran, mid-11th–mid-12th century  
Stucco; modeled, carved, polychrome-painted, gilded  
H. 56¾ in. (144.1 cm)  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wolfe, 1967 67.119  
Cat. 62  
Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on *tiraz* band, left sleeve:  
عليك [م] بال  
On *tiraz* band, right sleeve:  
مؤمنين  
[Anxious is he] over you, [gentle] to the believers.  
(most likely from Qur'an 9:128)  
Cat. 63  
Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on *tiraz* band with cartouches, on right and left sleeves:  
الملك  
Dominion [belongs to God]

Nearly lifesize, these two stately figures with Turkic “moon faces” wear embroidered and highly embellished coats or kaftans over an undergarment and pants. The kaftans’ upper sleeves are embroidered with *tiraz* bands whose inscriptions are only partially visible. Both figures have long, flowing hair and wear elaborate crowns; one is adorned with a winged palmette (cat. 62), while the other (cat. 63) is richly decorated with jewels. In addition, each figure’s right hand firmly grips the hilt of a slightly curved sword or saber. Although their posture recalls standing Sasanian royal and Umayyad caliphal figures, it was also typical at a later date for images of palace guards.<sup>1</sup> A symbol of royalty, the *mandil* or the royal napkin, can be seen in the right hand of the second figure and may have been held in the right hand of the first one, although it is missing now. The plaster figures were highlighted in different colors, among them ultramarine, red, orange, and black; minute traces of gold foil remain on such raised elements as the flowers, jewelry, and headdresses. Even though these figures arrived at the Metropolitan Museum at different times, their technique, style, size, and decoration suggest that they once belonged to the decorative program of the same palace complex, which has yet to be identified.

Initially dated to the later Seljuq period, about the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>2</sup> these carvings have several features that suggest an earlier dating between the mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth

century. After the decline of the Abbasid Empire in the early tenth century, Iran saw a revival of pre-Islamic, Sasanian, and even Soghdian forms and images of royalty. These images were intended to shed a favorable light on new dynasties of Iranian and Turkish origin as revivers of past glory. Images of winged crowns, such as the one seen on cat. 62, are markers for this revival style.

The calligraphic design, especially with respect to the *tiraz* brassards of cat. 63, allows an approximate dating. Beginning in the early tenth century, the pointed triangular fins of the short vertical letters of such inscriptions evolved to reach the height of the long vertical shafts of the letters, as seen here. This style was popular from the eleventh century until the middle decades of the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> A *minbar* panel in the Metropolitan Museum dated A.H. 546/1151 A.D. (cat. 65b) displays a fine example of this calligraphic style.

Several similar but much smaller figures, which presumably came from western Iran, were acquired by a number of museums prior to World War I. In northern Mesopotamia and Seljuq Asia Minor, large reliefs of humans and princely figures were made of stone rather than stucco, and differed in style. The closest parallels in terms of imagery are offered by frescoes in Central Asian palaces in Bust (present-day Afghanistan) and Samarqand. The fresco murals in Bust at the Lashkari Bazaar palace complex are dated to the reign of the Ghaznavid ruler Mas‘ud I (r. 1031–41).





62



63

Depicted are forty-four standing courtly figures in three-quarter view, all with Turkish Asiatic “moon-face” features and clothed in kaftans of blue and red. The scene appears to be a royal audience, in which courtiers or guards turn to a central figure that is now missing.<sup>4</sup> Quite similar are the murals in a pavilion in Samarqand from the Qarakhanid period (992–1212), dated to the mid-twelfth century.<sup>5</sup>

The Metropolitan’s two extraordinary, large polychrome stucco sculptures of princely figures probably once served as centerpiece of a larger courtly scene of stucco revetments that complemented a palace complex in Iran about 1050 to 1150. SH

1. Gibson forthcoming.
2. Riefstahl 1931.
3. Sourdel-Thomine 1978. For Ghaznavid inscriptions, see Flury 1925, esp. pp. 83–84, no. 12, for the tomb of a certain As’ad ibn ‘Alī, which Flury dated to the early twelfth century.
4. Casal 1978. Some of the figures carry a kind of rod or mace over the right shoulder.
5. Karev 2005.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 62: Cora Timkin Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1940–d. 1956)

Cat. 63: Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wolfe, New York (by 1966–67)

### 64. Tombstone of Abu Sa’d ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan Karwaih

Carver: Ahmad ibn Muhammad Astak

Iran, Yazd, dated A.H. Muharram 545/April–May 1150 A.D.

Marble; carved, painted

22¼ × 14⅞ × 2⅞ in. (56.5 × 37.1 × 7.3 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1933 33.118

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on outer border:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم إن الذين قالوا ربنا الله ثم استقاموا تتنزل عليهم الملائكة ألا تخافوا ولا تحزنوا وأبشروا بالجنة التي كنتم [توعدون]

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Those who have said, “Our Lord is God,” then have gone straight, upon them the angels descend, saying, “Fear not, neither sorrow; rejoice in Paradise that you were promised.” (Qur’an 41:30)

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script on inner border:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو / والملائكة وأولو العلم قائلين لا إله إلا هو العزيز الحكيم

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

God bears witness that there is no God but He—and the angels, and men possessed of knowledge—upholding justice; there is no god but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. (Qur’an 3:18)

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on band at top (between borders):

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Signature in Arabic in *kufic* script on band at bottom (between borders):

عمل احمد بن محمد استك

Work of Ahmad son of Muhammad Astak

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on central panel:

هذا قبر أبي سعد بن محمد بن أحمد / بن الحسن كا / رويه توفي / في محرم سنة / خمس و أربعين / وخمس مائة

This is the grave of Abu Sa’d son of Muhammad son of Ahmad son of al-Hasan Karwaih, he died in the month of Muharram of the year five hundred and forty five.

One of the few surviving examples of tenth- to twelfth-century tombstones from Yazd (a city southeast of Isfahan in central Iran) in museum collections, this piece is carved from beige (*gandumi*) marble and contains a central prayer niche framed by Qur’anic inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> The outer border, which is the widest, contains verses from *Surat al-Fussilat* (Sura 41:30) while the inner border contains verses from *Surat al-Imran* (Sura 3:18). Two registers between the inner and the outer borders on the top and bottom





feature the *shahada* (the profession of the faith) and the signature of the carver, “Ahmad son of Muhammad Astak.”<sup>2</sup>

The central panel includes an arched prayer niche with the name of the deceased, Abu Sa’d son of Muhammad son of Ahmad son of al-Hasan Karwaih, and his death date, A.H. Muharram 545/April–May 1150 A.D. Traces of red and black paint suggest that segments of the tombstone were originally painted, perhaps to highlight the inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> The upper part of the niche is decorated with curvilinear vegetal motifs with spiral ends.

Most significant for this tombstone is its prayer niche (*mihrab*). The evolution of *mihrabs*—and the relationship between contemporaneous *mihrabs* and these tombstones—has engendered much discussion among scholars. Although similar *mihrab* designs were used in the local production of Asia Minor, Spain, and North Africa, the complexity of Iranian examples, which bear several bands of inscriptions, sets them apart from tombstones of other regions.<sup>4</sup>

A very similar style of *kufic* script and vegetal designs can be seen on two fragments from a twelfth-century *minbar* in the Museum’s collection (cat. 65A, B), suggesting that this form of *kufic* was prevalent in Iran in the twelfth century and was used across media in Seljuq art.<sup>5</sup> Another, almost identical twelfth-century tombstone in situ in Yazd dates to nine years before the Metropolitan’s example<sup>6</sup> and is signed by the same carver, Ahmad son of Muhammad. Other examples in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,<sup>7</sup> the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts,<sup>8</sup> and the Cleveland Museum of Art<sup>9</sup> have a similar composition, surface ornament, and style of script. Ideally, further paleographic studies will identify other objects produced by the same stone carver in Yazd.

AG/PG

1. These beige-colored *gandumi* stones and similar tombstones are found in Maibud, Tabas, Qaznaviyya, and Bafq in the Yazd region. For a survey of tombstones in Yazd and more information on this type of composition, see Afshar 1969 and Afshar 1973, pl. 42.
2. For more information on the inscription, see Cairo 1931, p. 27, no. 22.
3. Technical examinations determined the traces of red (iron oxide) and black (amorphous carbon-based black).
4. Fehérvári 1972, p. 241; Whelan 1986; Khoury 1992; Khoury 1998; Hanover and other cities 1991–92, p. 96, no. 32.
5. For more information, see Dimand 1944a, pp. 91–97.
6. The tombstone is published in Pope, A.U., and Ackerman, eds. 1938–39, vol. 5, pt. 1, pl. 519E.
7. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 31.711), published in “Acquisitions [MFA]” 1931, p. 95.
8. Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Mass. (no. 1963.18), published in Hanover and other cities 1991–92, p. 79, fig. 14.
9. Cleveland Museum of Art (no. 1950.9), published in Binghamton 1975, fig. 18. The tombstone is dated A.H. 545/1150 A.D., and the inner inscription from Qur’an 41:30 is the same as the outer inscription of the Metropolitan’s tombstone.

PROVENANCE: [A. Rabenou, Paris, by 1931–33; sold to MMA]

## 65A, B. Two Fragments of a *Minbar*

Iran, Yazd, dated A.H. 546/1151 A.D.

Wood (teak); carved and painted

### A. Vertical Pulpit Fragment

47½ × 12¾ × 3¼ in. (120.7 × 31.4 × 8.3 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1934 34.150.1

### B. Horizontal Fragment

18¼ × 30⅛ × 2½ in. (46.4 × 76.5 × 6.4 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1934 34.150.2

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on vertical fragment (A):

[... تفتا] وت فارجمع البصر هل ترى من فطور ثم أرجع البصر كرتين ينقلب  
/إليك الد(ب) صر خ/

[... تفتا] هو حسير ولقد زينا السماء الدنيا بمصابيح وجعلناها رجوماً للشياطين [...]  
[...]. Return your gaze; seest thou any fissure? Then return again, and again, and thy gaze comes back to thee dazzled, aweary. And we adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and made them things to stone Satans. . . . (Qur’an 67:3–5)

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on horizontal panel (B):

أمر هذا  
المنبر عبد مذنب/  
أبو بكر بن محمد بن أحمد كلاي/  
ثبانة (ق) تقرّباً إلى الله ورجاء إلى رحمة الله/  
في زمن الأمير الأجل السيد المؤيد المظفر/  
المنصور عضد الدين شمس الملوك/  
و السلاطين علاء الدولة كرشاسب/  
بن علي بن فرامرز بن علاء الدولة حسام أمير/  
المؤمنين في جمادى الأولى سنة ست وأربعين وخمس مائة

This *minbar* was ordered by a sinful slave, Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad Kalai [...], to be closer to God and in hope of God’s mercy. In the time of the most exalted commander, the Lord, the God-aided, the Vanquisher, the Victorious, ‘Adud al-Din Shams al-Muluk wal-Salatin ‘Ala’ al-Daula Garshasp ibn ‘Ali ibn Faramurz ibn ‘Ala’ al-Daula, Husam Amir a-Mu’minin, in Jumada I, in the year A.H. 546 [August / September 1151 A.D.]

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on upper right and left of horizontal panel (B):

لا إله إلا الله / محمد رسول الله

There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God

These two wood fragments, which served both structural and decorative functions, belong to a *minbar* (pulpit) from a mosque at Yazd in central Iran. The horizontal fragment (cat. 65B) once crowned the tall vertical panel on the back of the *minbar* where the imam would sit, while the vertical fragment (cat. 65A) formed the lower side section, possibly carrying the fourth step.<sup>1</sup> Both fragments are carved with Arabic inscriptions in *kufic* script.

The horizontal fragment contains the foundation inscription stating that the *minbar* was commissioned by Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad in the time of ‘Ala’ al-Din Garshasp, a governor of Yazd under the Seljuqs; it also bears the date A.H. 546/1151 A.D. The angularity of the letters is typical of the archaic styles of late tenth- and eleventh-century Iranian carved tombstones, *mihrabs* (prayer niches), and *minbars*. (For an example of tenth- to twelfth-century tombstones from Yazd with a similar style of calligraphy, see cat. 64.)<sup>2</sup>





A

The deeply carved scrolling vegetal pattern seen here is also a characteristic feature of the tombstones of Yazd.

The vertical fragment is composed of six pieces of wood fastened with mortise-and-tenon joints. A Qur'anic inscription from Sura 67 (*al-Mulk*, "Dominion") runs along the uprights as well as the top crosspiece.<sup>3</sup> As a central axis between the two upper crosspieces, two lines of vertically arranged hexagonal forms create a repeating pattern of six-pointed stars in negative space. Both fragments contain traces of red, indigo, and white paint on the surface, suggesting that they were once painted to highlight inscriptions and ornament.<sup>4</sup>

Vegetal motifs on the two fragments are typical of those found on twelfth-century Iranian carved wood, although their origins can be traced to the ninth century. By the end of the eleventh century, this motif had evolved into a more naturalistic and curvilinear style with spiral ends, and by the twelfth century it came to include elaborate floral and geometric forms of vine scrolls, seen here in the two middle crosspieces of the vertical fragment.<sup>5</sup>

A tombstone in Farasha in Yazd<sup>6</sup> displays an almost identical scrolling vegetal design. This style of ornamentation is also found on a wood *minbar* of the Great Mosque of Abiyana, Isfahan province, Iran, dated 1073.<sup>7</sup> Similar vegetal motifs embellish Seljuq carved woodwork of Konya and Ankara in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>8</sup> suggesting the wide dissemination of these motifs during this period.

AG/PG

1. A very similar wooden construction can be found in the Nadushan Friday Mosque in Yazd. See Afshar 1975 and Ghouhani 2004. Technical analyses of these two fragments were carried out by Daniel Hausdorf, Assistant Conservator, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation.



B

2. Another related piece in the Museum (acc. no. 34.152) is a tenth-century alabaster tombstone from Iran, carved in *kufic* script with the name *Yusuf*, the profession of faith, and prayers for the deceased.
3. The inscription starts from the second half of Qur'an 67:3, continues through 67:4, and ends at the first half of 67:5. Some of the missing verses may have originally been carved on the lower crosspiece. For more information on the inscription, see Ghouchani 2004.
4. Technical analysis was carried out by the Metropolitan Museum's wood conservators Daniel Hausdorf and Mechthild Baumeister.
5. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 213, and also Chapters 2 and 4: "Central Islamic Lands" and "Eastern Islamic Lands."
6. See Afshar 1973, pl. 42.
7. Also see an example in the David Collection, Copenhagen (no. 11/1977), attributed to eastern Iran and dated 1109. For bibliography, see Schimmel and Rivolta 1992 and Ettinghausen 1952, pp. 76–81. Also see Afshar 1973.
8. The panel mounted above the main door of a *minbar* in a Seljuq mosque in Konya is dated to 1155, and the *minbar* of Arslanhane Mosque in Ankara is dated to 1290.

PROVENANCE: [A. Rabenou, Paris, until 1934; sold to MMA]

## 66. Stand for a Qur'an Manuscript (*Rahla*)

Maker: Zain(?) Hasan Sulaiman Isfahani

Iran, dated A.H. 761 / 1360 A.D.

Wood (teak); carved, painted, inlaid

Closed 51 1/4 × 16 1/8 in. (130.2 × 41 cm); open 45 × 50 × 16 1/2 in. (114.3 × 127 × 41.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1910 10.218

Inscribed in Arabic in *thuluth* script on inner face of stand in six segments, three of which are missing:

اللهم صل على محمد وعلى آل محمد وسلم و [ . . . ]

[ . . . ] وأمر المؤمنين علي بن . . .

أبي طالب رضوان الله عليهم أجمعين

وقف مدرسة صدر آباد أنار صانها الله عن الأفات—في ذي الحجة حجة إحدى وستين و سبعمائة

May God bless Muhammad and his family and [ . . . ] and the commander of the faithful 'Ali son of Abi Talib, may God's good favor be upon all of them! Endowed to the Madrasa Sadrabad in Anar, may God protect and preserve it from disaster! In the month of Dhu l-Hijja of the year A.H. 761

[October–November 1360 A.D.]<sup>1</sup>

On top square panel outside (in each side), four times in square *thuluth* script:

الله  
Allah

On bottom panels in *thuluth* script:

[Shi'i prayers for the Prophet Muhammad and the Twelve Imams (on one side up to Muhammad Baqir, on other up to al-Mahdi)]

On bottom panel under flower vase in angular *kufic* script:

الملك لله

Dominion [belongs to] God





On other side:

الشكر لله

Gratitude is to God

On two corners of one side, signature in *naskhi* script:

عمل زين؟ حسن سليمان اصفهاني

The work of Zain[?] Hasan Sulaiman Isfahani

A masterpiece of design, this carved book stand, or *rahla*, is made from a single slab of teak and is framed by inlays composed of various woods in shades of brown and black. Its several inscriptions signal its sacred function and provide information about its origin. When closed, the stand is flat; when open, it forms an X-shape in which the upper portion is about half the height of the lower one. The upper arms once served to support a book, probably a Qur'an.

The majority of the inscriptions are prayers, with the texts on the outside of the panels carved in high relief and surrounded by decoration, while those on the inside are unornamented and incised. A network of vegetal scrolls, divided into four quadrants by diagonal lines, covers the outer faces of the upper arms of the X; in each of these quadrants the word *Allah* appears in high relief. The decoration on the lower panels, which also serve as the supports for the *rahla*, has three concentric zones. The outermost is filled with a sinuous plant springing from a baseline and bearing blossoms of various sizes that twist and turn as they rise toward the upper frame. Some of the plants resemble peonies, others lotuses: the plant was obviously imagined rather than observed.

The central zone of the lower panel is designed as a pair of niches filled with, and separated by, carved ornament that is largely symmetrical around the central axis. At the center, a heart-shaped vase with a pointed base rests on a low hexagonal support. Covered with overlapping scales, the vase holds a bouquet of flowers that has a well-defined, treelike contour. Two concentric frames separate the vase from the "peony-vines." The inner one is ogival, while the outer expands into seven lobes and is crowned by five palmlike fronds. Between these frames a prayer is carved in high relief that invokes blessings on the Prophet, 'Ali, and the Twelve Imams, each of whom is identified by name and epithet. The first five are mentioned on one side and the sixth through twelfth on the other. The maker, Zain(?) Hasan Sulaiman Isfahani, has carved his name on the outer surface, just above the foot, an appropriately modest location.

An incised peripheral inscription appears on the inner surface of the upper arms and was probably intended to be visible even when a book had been placed on the *rahla*. It originally carried blessings on the Prophet and his immediate successors, but it has been crudely mutilated, probably to excise portions that praised the caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman. Only the name and titles of the fourth caliph, 'Ali, are preserved. The same inscription also states that the *rahla* was made in A.H. 761 / 1360 A.D. for the Sadrabad Madrasa in Anar. Although the precise location of this village is

unknown, the same combination of prayers for the Twelve Imams with occluded inscriptions for Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman was found in the inscriptions of the Masjid-i Jami' at Ashtarjan, near Isfahan, which was dated to 1315. The existence of texts praising the Orthodox caliphs was revealed only by restorations carried out in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In Iran, inscriptions praising both the first four caliphs and the Twelve Imams are characteristic of the fourteenth century. From the sixteenth century onward, the increasing polarization of the Sunni and Shi'a communities led to the concealment or mutilation of earlier texts, such as the ones carved on this *rahla*, that extolled the Orthodox caliphs. PS

1. The beginning of the inscription, defaced, may have included the names of the first three caliphs. The designs on the exterior bearing the names of the twelve Shi'a imams must have been carved later than the date of the stand.
2. On the condition of the Ashtarjan inscriptions before restoration, see Miles 1974, esp. p. 92 and pl. Ia-c; for their restored state, see Hunarfar 1971, pp. 269–71.

PROVENANCE: Sadrabad Madrasa, Anar, Iran; [Tabbagh Frères, Paris and New York, until 1910; sold to MMA]

## 67. Bowl

Iran, Nishapur, 10th century

Earthenware; white slip with black-slip decoration under transparent glaze

H. 7 in. (17.8 cm); Diam. 18 in. (45.7 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1965 65.106.2

Arabic inscription in "new-style" script around the inner rim:

التدبير قبل العمل يؤمنك من الندم اليمن والسلامه

Planning before work protects you from regret; good luck and well-being

Produced in northeastern Iran, in the province of Khurasan during the Samanid period, this large bowl with its high, flaring sides and bold, rhythmically spaced inscription in "new-style" script exemplifies the elegance and perfect harmony of the "black-on-white wares" unearthed in the cities of Nishapur and Samarkand. The most important contribution of Samanid potters was the invention and perfection of slip-painted ware. Clarity of design is achieved through the use of a white engobe (a thin wash of slip, or fluid clay, and pigment used as a ground) to cover the red earthenware, on which the inscription is painted in brownish pigment mixed with slip. By adding slip to the pigments, the potters prevented inscriptions and designs from running into one another.

Since this bowl was not among the objects unearthed in Nishapur at the time of the Metropolitan Museum excavations, its attribution is based entirely on visual analysis. It is a superb example of the





most common type of black-on-white ware associated with that center. The style of the calligraphy, which is characterized by tall, slender vertical shafts and angular letters, is probably among the earliest versions of “new-style” script. Later adaptations of this script include floriated and plaited variations. The elegance and sophistication of the calligraphy demonstrate a particularly close kinship between calligrapher and potter.

By 875 the Samanids had established an autonomous state, controlling a vast and important area of the eastern Islamic world.

In 900 they were granted the governorship of Khurasan by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. Although the Samanids often looked to their imperial past for inspiration, it is unlikely that this bowl was produced for a royal patron. In fact, the inscription suggests that it was probably made for a humbler individual. Inscriptions such as this one and others on similar vessels constitute the first extant examples of Arabic proverbs and adages to appear in the Islamic world.<sup>1</sup> Many make reference to the social codes and high standards of moral etiquette held by the denizens

of Samanid Nishapur at a time when hospitality and generosity were deeply valued.<sup>2</sup> This particular saying belongs to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted by ‘Ali.<sup>3</sup> Aphoristic in nature, it advises the owner against harmful or impetuous actions and decisions.

ME

1. Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, p. 230.
2. Chicago 2007.
3. Ghouchani 1986, p. 80.

PROVENANCE: [E. Safani, New York, until 1965; sold to MMA]

## 68. Bowl

Present-day Uzbekistan, probably Samarqand, late 10th–11th century  
Excavated at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, Iran  
Earthenware; white slip with polychrome-slip decoration under transparent glaze  
H. 4 1/4 in. (10.8 cm), Diam. 14 in. (35.6 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1940 40.170.15

Inscription in Arabic in “new-style” script around rim:  
البركة والغبطة والنعمة والسلامة والسعادة  
Blessing, felicity, prosperity, well-being, happiness [ . . . ]

This bowl exemplifies the distinctive group of Samanid-era ceramics, known as epigraphic wares, which have calligraphy as their major form of decoration. The texts on these objects tend to be either proverbs or general blessings, and while the inscription on this bowl falls into the latter category, its particular phrasing appears to be unique.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike many of the known epigraphic objects with stark white or black slip backgrounds, the walls of this bowl are covered by alternating red and black strokes, and the base of its interior has a motif of interlacing straps on a stippled ground. Because of these features, the bowl has been attributed to Samarqand, although it was found at Nishapur, during the Metropolitan Museum’s excavations at this site.<sup>2</sup> The evidence of metalwork seems to support this attribution, because the use of its strapwork motif and stippled ground can be related to the decoration of metalwares from Transoxiana, the region of Samarqand, rather than Khurasan, the region of Nishapur.<sup>3</sup>

Another distinctive feature of the bowl that may point to its place of origin is the way in which the tips of the tall vertical letters in the inscription bend forward. While it has been suggested that the letters have been elongated to evoke the head of a bird,<sup>4</sup> no study has thus far attempted to tie the use of certain scripts or their decorative modifications to a particular place of production.

The flourishing of epigraphic wares, so specific to the Samanid realms, has yet to be explained. Perhaps there was a tradition of

making inscribed metalware in this region, comparable to the silver objects from the Hamadan hoard of western Iran, to which the inscribed ceramics can be related.<sup>5</sup>

MS

1. The extensive bibliography on this group includes Krachovskaya 1949 and Krachovskaya 1955; Bol’shakov 1958–66; Davidovich 1960; Volov 1966; Ventrone 1974; Ghouchani 1986; Paris, Caen, and Toulouse 1992–93, pp. 54–58, 90–92, 96, 103–4; Grube et al. 1994, pp. 51–53, 76–91, 94–105; and Pancaroğlu 2002.
2. See Wilkinson 1973, pp. 130–31 and p. 146, pl. 1. This bowl was found at Tepe Madrasa in a well with another similarly decorated bowl that is now in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran. For more information on the attribution, see *ibid.*
3. Raby 1985, pp. 198–99.
4. Grube et al. 1994, pp. 55, 98, 102, 105.
5. Raby 1985, p. 190.

PROVENANCE: 1939, discovered at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, Iran, by the Metropolitan Museum’s expedition under a concession granted by the Council of Ministers, Iran, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education of Iran; title transferred to The Metropolitan Museum of Art pursuant to the concession

## 69. Bowl

Present-day Uzbekistan, Samarqand, 10th century  
Earthenware; white slip with polychrome-slip decoration under transparent glaze  
H. 2 1/4 in. (5.7 cm), Diam. 10 1/2 in. (26.7 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1928 28.82

Although the decoration of this bowl is typical of a style that was used in the Abbasid heartland in the ninth century, aspects of its manufacture suggest that the bowl was made far to the east, near Samarqand, during the tenth century. This duality can be explained by the connections between Transoxiana and Iraq that arose as the Abbasid Empire came to rule over this entire area, fostering the spread of this type of ornament, known as the beveled style, throughout its lands. The popularity of this style in Transoxiana is reflected not only in the decoration of this bowl, but also in the design of stucco panels in the Samanid palaces in Afrasiyab (modern Samarqand).<sup>1</sup>

From its place of invention at Samarra, and the medium of stucco in which it was initially employed, the beveled style eventually appeared in many media, from Egypt to Iran.<sup>2</sup> When applied to wood panels or stone capitals, the style was quite easily transferred because it was possible to copy both the characteristic motifs—curved lines ending in spirals surrounded by dots, notches, and slits, with no clear foreground or background—and the method of carving, which utilized an angled, or beveled, cut.



68



69



## 70. Chess Set

Iran, attributed to Nishapur, 12th century

Stonepaste; molded and glazed

Largest piece (king): H. 2 1/8 in. (5.5 cm); Diam. 1 3/4 in. (4.4 cm)

Smallest piece (pawn): H. 1 1/4 in. (3.2 cm); Diam. 1 1/8 in. (2.9 cm)

Pfeiffer Fund, 1971 1971.193a–ff

In the case of other objects, however, the transfer was less straightforward. This potter from Samarqand has captured the essence of the style's main motif and has tried to re-create the beveled profile of the shapes by using lines of varying thickness. Yet the decision to fit the decoration into four quadrants created by strong diagonal lines and the palette of olive green, brick red, and manganese purple reflect local practice. Samarqand was an important center of ceramic production for several centuries, and local potters created three major types of glazed ceramics: calligraphic wares, red and black slip-painted wares, and three-color splash-ware, each with its own distinctive decoration. Although only a very small number of bowls with this beveled decoration are known,<sup>3</sup> the style of painting and compartmentalization of the design can be seen on other examples of ceramics from this area.

MS

1. Illustrated in Akhrarov and Rempel 1971.
2. Richard Ettinghausen was the first to trace the spread of the beveled style (Ettinghausen 1952).
3. For three other examples, see Paris, Caen, and Toulouse 1992–93, p. 98.

PROVENANCE: [Charles Vignier, Paris, until 1928; sold to MMA]

Literary tradition attributes the origin of chess to northern India.<sup>1</sup> By the late Sasanian period the game had been introduced into Iran. One of the tales preserved in the Persian national epic, the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings), explains the invention of chess as a way of demonstrating to a grieving queen the battle in which one of her sons died opposing his brother. Another recounts how the game was introduced to Iran: the ruler of India sent a set of chess pieces with an envoy as a challenge, declaring that his continued payment of tribute depended on the ability of the Iranian king to decode the point of the game.<sup>2</sup> While these legends underscore the courtly roots of chess, other sources demonstrate that the game gained popularity at all levels of society in the medieval Islamic world.<sup>3</sup>

This is one of the earliest extant chess sets, and it is nearly complete.<sup>4</sup> The pieces are molded of stonepaste and finished by hand. Seventeen of them are coated with the turquoise glaze



frequently employed in monochrome-glazed ceramics of Seljuq Iran; the other fifteen pieces are glazed with manganese.<sup>5</sup> The individual pieces are highly abstracted versions of the figures to which they refer.<sup>6</sup> The *shah* (king) is represented as a large throne and the *firzan* or vizier (in European chess, the queen) as a smaller throne. The *fil* (elephant, which became the bishop) has a circular base and a flattened top from which two protrusions recall the animal's tusks. The *faras* (horse, the knight) has a circular base with a triangular knob representing the head. The *ruckh* (chariot, the equivalent of the rook or castle) has a rectangular base with an inverted wedge at the top. The pawns are faceted domical forms surmounted by small knobs. The near-abbreviation of these forms was not a recent development, as it is evident in the earliest dated chess pieces firmly attributed to the Islamic world, a group of similarly shaped ivory examples excavated at Nishapur, dating as early as the ninth century.<sup>7</sup> EK

1. Rosenthal 1997, p. 366.
2. Gunter 2004–5, pp. 139–48. She illustrates two fourteenth-century paintings from Iran in the Metropolitan Museum collection (acc. nos. 34.24.1, 1974.290.39) in which the transmission episode is depicted, and summarizes other creation stories for the game of chess as well.
3. On the popularity of chess, see Cassavoy 2004; on the permissibility of the game, see Rosenthal 1975, pp. 37–40. For a more cross-cultural perspective, see Wilkinson 1943.
4. Thermoluminescence testing carried out by the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art at Oxford University on two pieces of this set determined that they were manufactured some time between ca. 1080 and ca. 1530 (curatorial files, Metropolitan Museum, Department of Islamic Art). See also New York and Washington, D.C. 2004–5, pp. 150–51.
5. On the use of manganese in glaze, see Watson 2004, p. 305.
6. They correlate to the type that Anna Contadini terms “Style A,” most examples of which date to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries (Contadini 1995, p. 121).
7. The previously asserted explanation that the abstraction of the forms had to do with Islamic religious prohibitions of figuration has been largely set aside (Contadini 1995, p. 143 n. 4; however, see Cassavoy 2004, p. 331).

PROVENANCE: [Saeed Motamed, Frankfurt, until 1971; sold to MMA]

## 71. Cup

Iran, probably Rayy, second half of 12th century  
 Stonepaste; incised decoration through black-slip ground under turquoise glaze  
 (silhouette ware)  
 H. 5 in. (12.7 cm); Diam. 5⅞ in. (14.3 cm)  
 Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1967 67.104

“Silhouette ware” is a technique that developed shortly after the introduction of stonepaste in Iran about the twelfth century; this



small cup is among the finest examples of its type. Bulbous in profile, it has a rounded handle and a body glazed in transparent turquoise with a row of black ibexes running across the belly. The treatment and rendition of the ibexes across the body, the rays radiating from the foot, and the black stripes on the rim stand in relief, exhibiting affinities to metal vessels, which may have inspired the potter.

Silhouette ware technically involved the application of black-colored underglaze and stonepaste to the body of the vessel, which was then carved to reveal a design rendered in relief. A transparent turquoise glaze was subsequently applied to the vessel, creating the black-against-turquoise silhouette effect seen in this cup. In some examples a transparent rather than a turquoise glaze was applied, resulting in a black design on a creamy white background.<sup>1</sup> This technique may have been a modification of a technique of ceramic decoration used in Nishapur and Samarkand in the ninth and tenth centuries, in which colored slip was painted over a white engobe ground.<sup>2</sup> The transition to the relief technique may have been related to a new type of body imported to Iran from western Islamic lands in the early twelfth century, called stonepaste or frit. Composed of glass, clay, and quartz, this material allowed for a thin white body, as well as for greater experimentation with color and design than was possible in earlier Iranian pottery. No dated examples of silhouette ware survive, but according to scholars, it may have come into use in Iran about the year 1200.<sup>3</sup>

Although this technique was used on vessels of different shapes and sizes, such as bowls, jars, ewers, beakers, and cups, the most common seems to have been the cup. These wares featured a wide array of motifs ranging from humans, animals, and mythological

creatures to calligraphic and abstract vegetal friezes, in keeping with the proliferation of animal and human figural imagery in a variety of media, including painted manuscripts and metalwork, during the Seljuq period. While the reasons for this tendency are not fully understood, it has been proposed that the representation of animals such as gazelles or ibexes may have held apotropaic qualities, offering protection and luck to the vessels' owners.<sup>4</sup>

ME/RV

1. Grube et al. 1994, nos. 198–99.
2. Watson 2004, p. 188.
3. Ibid., pp. 333–45. See also Fehérvári 2000, pp. 107–8.
4. Ettinghausen 1970b.

PROVENANCE: Mousa Settareh Shenaz, New York (until 1967; sold to MMA)

## 72. Bowl Depicting Bahram Gur and Azada Hunting

Iran, Kashan, 12th–13th century

Stonepaste; polychrome in-glaze and overglaze-painted and gilded on opaque monochrome glaze (*mina'i*)

H. 3 3/8 in. (8.7 cm); Diam: 8 3/4 in. (22.1 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund, and Gift of The Schiff Foundation, 1957 57.36.2

Among the most technically complex and luxurious glazed wares produced in the Seljuq period was a type known as *mina'i* (the Persian word for enamel). Incorporating a range of colors and intricate compositions and renditions, much of the painting found on *mina'i* wares recalls manuscript illustrations. As with Seljuq lustreware, many of these vessels portray visual and poetic themes derived from Persian literature, such as the *Shahnama* (Book of





Kings), depicting heroes, warriors, lovers, and fantastic beasts. Kashan, also the site of production of lusterwares, appears to have been the main production center for *mina'i* ceramics, providing vessels in an array of forms such as bowls, ewers, and flasks.

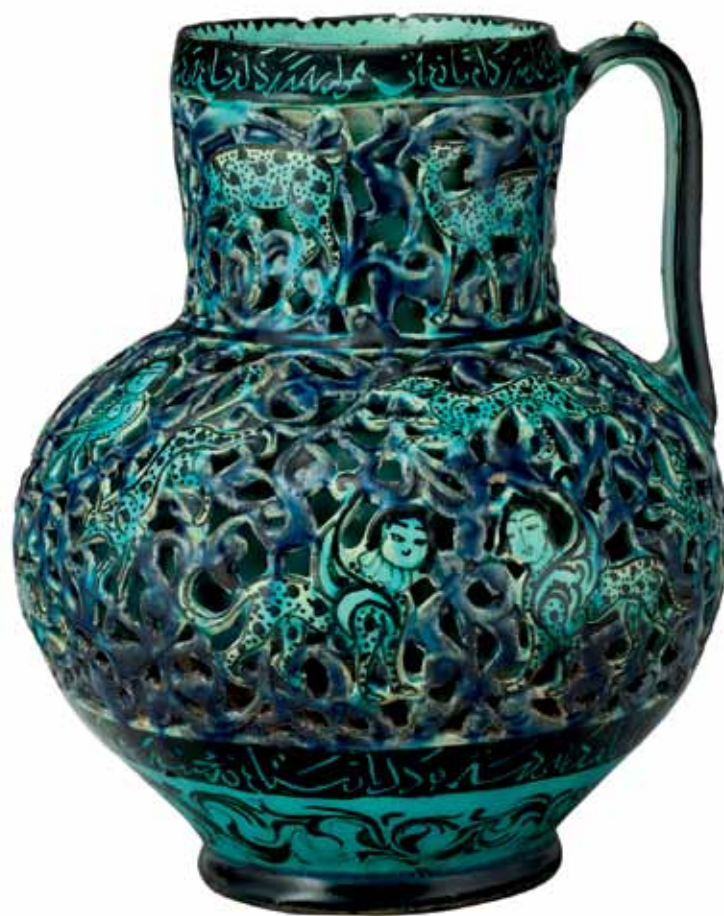
This bowl is a fine example of *mina'i* and depicts one of the cherished tales from the *Shahnama* of Firdausi—that of Bahram Gur and Azada mounted on a camel, hunting. The story is as follows: Azada, Bahram Gur's concubine, entertains the ruler by playing a harp, and challenges him to a hunting feat. When he succeeds, however, she pities the slain animal and reproaches him for being coldhearted and vain. In anger, he tramples her under the camel's feet. Here, two moments in the story are conflated into one scene, both rendered with extraordinary charm and immediacy.

This tale has great longevity and dates back to the pre-Islamic period. A number of Sasanian silver plates, including one in the Metropolitan Museum,<sup>1</sup> illustrate the same story, although in most of those examples the hunting couple are mounted on a horse rather than a camel. The inscriptions around the rim on the exterior of the bowl contain messages of good fortune and well-being to the owner.

ME

1. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 1994.402), formerly in the Guennol Collection. See also New York 1978, p. 48.

PROVENANCE: Mortimer L. Schiff, New York (until d. 1931); his son, John M. Schiff (by 1940–1957; gift and sale to MMA)



I said, "[Do] you know, if my hand reaches her tresses,  
I [could] reclaim my heart and be free from suffering."  
One moment, while sitting face-to-face with her,  
I tied my soul, like my heart, to the end of her curls.<sup>2</sup>

Inscription following the above:

في شهر سنة اثنى عشر و ستائة

In the months of the year A.H. 612 [1215–16 A.D.]

### 73. Reticulated Jug

Iran, probably Kashan, dated A.H. 612/1215–16 A.D.

Stonepaste; openwork decoration, polychrome-painted under turquoise glaze

H. 8 1/4 in. (20.8 cm); Diam. 6 5/8 in. (16.8 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1932 32.52.1

Inscription around mouth of jug, a Persian *rubai'i* (quatrain)

by Rukn al-Din Da'vidar Qummi:

من بی تو همان سر زده ام فارغ باش  
همواره بهم بر زده ام فارغ باش  
دست از تو بمر دیگرى از سر تو  
بیزار شدم گر زده ام فارغ باش

Without you, I am deprived; Be free from care.

Ceaselessly, I am unsettled; Be free from care.

[Turning] from you, I reach for the kindness of another, because of you.

Although I have done so, I despised it; Be free from care.<sup>1</sup>

Inscription around base of jug, a Persian *rubai'i* by an as-yet-unidentified poet:

گفتم چو رسد بزلف دانی دستم  
دل باز ستانم وز محنت رستم  
یک لحظه چو در پیش رخسار بنشتم  
جان نیز چو دل در سر زلفش بستم

Fanciful winged griffins, human-headed harpies, and lithesome speckled quadrupeds leap and cavort within the tangle of vine scrolls on this finely worked reticulated jug. Its free-flowing, animated drawing in black slip against a vivid turquoise- and cobalt-glazed ground offers a striking combination of color and design. While its contrasting glazes and lively imagery are exceptional, it is the skillful execution of its delicate, weblike reticulation that ranks this piece among the finest of all surviving Persian ceramics.

A tour de force of construction and technique, it has a pierced double-walled structure that only an extremely skilled potter could have created. Considering the intricate and time-consuming nature of the production process, coupled with the difficulties involved in firing, this type of ceramic was undoubtedly extremely costly to make and thus available only to a wealthy clientele. Despite their fragility and the passing of centuries, a surprising number of reticulated ceramics of this type have survived.<sup>3</sup>

Given the challenging nature of producing such a vessel in clay, it is unlikely that the shape and construction embodied by this piece originated in the ceramic arts. Rather, this vessel type likely emulates metalwork forms, as a number of Persian metal jugs exhibiting this overall profile have survived.<sup>4</sup> Further underscoring its debt to a metal prototype, this jug retains the small knob at the top of its handle, common to many metalwork examples. A large number of these metal jugs display inscriptions, often in narrow bands among multiple registers of decoration. This ceramic piece exhibits similar inscriptional decoration—around the top rim and foot of the jug, executed in turquoise on a black ground. These inscriptions comprise two *rubāʿis*, or quatrains, both voicing a lover's lament. At the end of one of the poems, near the base of the jug, the artist has included the date of A.H. 612/1215–16 A.D., enabling us to attribute this exceptional jug, and others of its type, securely to the early thirteenth century.

DMT

1. The Persian text appears in Da'vidar Qummi 1986.
2. My thanks to Sina Goudarzi for kindly assisting me in the translation of these two *rubāʿis*.
3. For related pieces, see Grube et al. 1994, p. 197, no. 212, with color plate on p. 196. Grube states, on p. 151, that at least twenty-one pieces utilizing this technique are known. See his n. 14, p. 153, for

- more bibliography on these other openwork pieces. The two that appear from published photos to be most closely related to our jug include one in the Khalili Collection, London; see Grube et al. 1994, no. 212; and another formerly in the Mahboubian Collection, today in the Reza 'Abbasi Museum, Tehran; see Austin 1970, no. and pl. 211.
4. For a related profile, see also cat. 132.

PROVENANCE: V. Everit Macy, New York (by 1923–d. 1930; his estate, until 1932; sold to MMA)

## 74. Bowl

Iran, late 12th century  
 Stonepaste; luster-painted on opaque monochrome glaze  
 H. 3¼ in. (8.3 cm); Diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1916 16.87

As the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt declined and finally fell to Salah al-Din in 1171, its skilled craftsmen sought new markets for their wares. Some of them, like the makers of lusterware ceramics, emigrated to Syria and Iran. The creation of lusterware pottery



required special knowledge and technical skill, which, apparently, were closely guarded secrets; thus it was not produced simultaneously in different centers in the Islamic world during the eleventh century. Instead, the technique of lusterware passed from Abbasid Iraq to Fatimid Egypt, and then in the twelfth century from Egypt to Syria and Iran. In the earliest Iranian lusterwares the stylistic influence of Fatimid antecedents is particularly marked.<sup>1</sup>

As on one distinct group of Fatimid lusterwares, the main motif of this bowl, a winged horse, appears reserved on a luster ground. A lively vine scroll terminating in split leaves and trefoil shapes weaves through the space around the horse. The animal's slightly rearing pose, the backward swing of its head, and the dramatic S-curve of its wing all complement the circular shape of the bowl. On the interior walls, above a plain band of white glaze, a repeating but illegible *kufic* inscription appears in a band of small vegetal elements. The small scale and density of the comma-shaped vegetal motifs anticipate the so-called Kashan style of Persian lusterware that matured around 1200. However, the luster-painted gadrooning around the inner rim of the bowl, along with the single large image of the winged horse, strongly relates to Fatimid lusterware and suggests that this piece was made between 1180 and 1200.

Although Buraq, the human-headed horse that Muhammad rode on his night journey to heaven (*mi'raj*) is also winged, the horse in this bowl is more likely derived from Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek myth. Whether the ancient iconography of Pegasus as the bearer of Zeus's thunderbolts was understood by its maker or owner is unclear. However, medieval Iranians certainly would have been familiar with the constellation named after Pegasus, *Faras al-'Azam*. While the clusters of three dots that decorate the horse's body are found in many lusterwares and in the earlier ceramics of Nishapur, they also suggest the stars one would see in a drawn depiction of the constellation of Pegasus.<sup>2</sup> In a society in which astrology and astronomy played an important role, a bowl containing a winged horse would certainly have had positive connotations for its owner.

src

1. Watson 1985, pp. 48–52.

2. Wellesz 1959, fig. 30.

PROVENANCE: [Georges Tabbagh, New York, until 1916; sold to MMA]

## 75. Bowl (Charger)

Iran, Kashan, mid-13th century  
Stonepaste; luster-painted on opaque monochrome glaze  
H: 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (11.1 cm); Diam. 19<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (49.8 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1932 32.52.2

## 76. Tile

Iran, Varamin, dated A.H. 661/1262–63 A.D.  
Stonepaste; luster-painted on opaque white glaze  
H. 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (31.1 cm)  
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.100

Cat. 75

Inscriptions divided into four registers, starting on outer rim and moving inward

First register, Arabic in *naskhi* script:

والعز والاقبال والدولة والسعادة والسلامة والكرامة والغالب والدولة والسلامة  
والغالب والدولة والعز والاقبال والدولة والسعادة والكرامة والنعمة والبركة  
والتأييد والكرامة والسعادة والسلامة والعز

Glory, prosperity, dominion, happiness, well-being, generosity,  
victory, dominion, well-being, victory, dominion, glory, prosperity,  
dominion, happiness, generosity, prosperity, blessing, support,  
generosity, happiness, well-being, and glory

Second register, four *rubai's* (quatrains) in Persian  
and two blessings in Arabic, all in *naskhi* script:

First *rubai'*:

دیدار توأم همیشه در دیده بود      آن کن صنما کز تو پسندیده بود  
ای جان جهان دلم بدان خر سند است      گواهم که او ترا دیده بود  
Your beautiful countenance is forever [captured] in my eyes,

O beloved, do what you prefer.

O life of creation, my heart is joyful; I can swear that  
[it is] because I caught a glimpse of you.

Blessings:

عز اقبال دولة سلامة بقاء . . . لصاحبه

Glory, prosperity, dominion, well-being and long life . . . to its owner

Second *rubai'*:

گفتم که مگر آن صنم نیک اندیش      رهمی آرد . . . بآدل ریش  
کی دانستم که آن کافر کیش      کارد سر مارا بدامن و گردن خویش  
I said: "Won't that virtuous beloved with a broken heart forgive you?"

How did I know that the heretic would hold our knife against your body and neck?

Third *rubai'*, attributed to Sadr al-Din Khujandi:<sup>1</sup>

مقصود بیافت هر آنج با غم یار بساخت      در کام رسید هرج با کار بساخت  
مه نور بدان یافت کز شب نرمید      گل بوی بدان گرفت که با خار بساخت  
Whoever endures living with the sorrow of the beloved

will find happiness and purpose.

The moon is luminous because it did not escape the night;  
the flower is fragrant because it lives with the thorn.

Fourth *rubai'*:

آنی که درین جهان خسته جانی      بر لشکر خوبان جهان سلطانی  
این آب دو چشم بنده ضایع مگذار      آخر بزمینی بر اگر دهقانی  
He whose soul is tired in this world, is the king of the virtuous.  
Do not waste my tears, for the farmer can rejuvenate the earth with them.



Blessings:

عز اقبال دولة سلامة بقاء عز اقبال دولة سلامة

Glory, prosperity, dominion, well-being, long life, glory, prosperity, dominion, well-being; glory, prosperity, dominion and well-being

Third register, Arabic inscription in ornamental *kufic* on cavetto: [illegible]

Fourth register, Persian verses by the mystical poet Sana'i,<sup>2</sup>

followed by blessings in Arabic:

و اندر تو ماه نو بخندیده	ای مه نو بروی تو دیده
از دور نگاه کرده دزدیده	تو نیز ز بیم خصم اندر من
در زیر سیاه ابر پوشیده	بنموده فلک مه نو و خود را
بردار ز سر خلقت شوریده	تو نیز مه چهارده بنمای
چون در زر و سیم مرد نادیده	کی باشد کی که در تو آویزم
من دو لب تو ببوسه خاییده	تو روی مرا بناختن خسته

The full moon looked at you and smiled

And you fearing hostility in me, glanced at me secretly from a distance.

The sky has hidden itself and the full moon under dark clouds.

Be like the half-moon and keep unhappy dispositions away.

When will I be able to hang upon you like gold and silver?

You stroke my face with your tired nails while I shower your lips with kisses.

Blessings:

عز اقبال دولة سلامة بقاء . . . لصاحبه

Glory, prosperity, dominion, well-being and long life . . . to its owner

Some of the finest Persian lusterware was produced in the city of Kashan during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This charger (cat. 75), covered in brownish luster, is a refined example of a type known as Kashan-style lusterware.<sup>3</sup> Inscriptions arranged in four concentric bands cover most of its interior, surrounding a medallion in which two musicians—one playing a lute while the other holds castanets—are seated against a background of vegetal scrolls.

The bowl exemplifies the artist's attention to surface pattern, leaving only select areas in reserve.<sup>4</sup> Its verses, each including blessings, are largely mystical in nature. The text on the outer rim, in *naskhi* script, is executed in reserve and consists of blessings and good wishes for the owner. The next zone, also inscribed in *naskhi*, contains four *rubai's* (quatrains), also followed by blessings and good wishes for the owner.<sup>5</sup> The striking decoration of the bowl's cavetto consists of a wide band of illegible plaited *kufic* set against a stippled ground with vegetal scrolls. The innermost inscription band that frames the pair of musicians contains verses by the mystical poet Sana'i (d. ca. 1131) and is also followed by blessings to the owner.

In its architectural quality, the "new-style" plaited *kufic* calligraphy in the cavetto resembles the inscriptions on the facades of Seljuq and Ilkhanid tomb towers, including Pir-i 'Alamdār in Damghan and the Imamzāda Yahya in Varamin. The distinct treatment of the vegetal scrolls against a stippled background is closely related to that seen on luster tiles from the Imamzāda Yahya in Varamin, a large group of which is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and bears the dates A.H. 661–63/1262–64 A.D.



76

Similar tiles from a *mihrab* of 1264, signed by the famous Kashan potter 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir, and this tile in the Metropolitan Museum dated A.H. 661/1262–63 A.D. (cat. 76) have also been linked to the Imamzāda in Varamin.<sup>6</sup>

After the Mongol destruction of Rayy in 1222, that city's potters ceased to play a significant role in Iranian ceramic production. By contrast, the potters of Kashan, who produced tiles for the buildings and mosques of other cities, including Qum, Varamin, Mashhad, and Baku, expanded their existing production of lusterware and other classes of ceramics.<sup>7</sup> The increasing production of fine pottery during this period has been linked to expanding mercantile activity and the rise of an urban bourgeoisie.<sup>8</sup>

The Museum's charger has a lyrical quality. Its central image of musicians is an allusion to a princely feast (*bazm*) at which people gathered, recited love poetry, and were entertained by musicians. The fact that nearly all its inscriptions include blessings and good wishes for an owner suggest that it was intended as a gift for a celebration, such as a wedding or Nauruz (Persian New Year); its texts personalize and enliven the object. The inclusion of the same verses on a range of luster objects indicates that the potters had a repertoire from which they selected verses for specific objects.<sup>9</sup> With its calligraphic ornament, mystical verses, and performing musicians, the charger would have made a sophisticated and desirable gift.

ME



75

1. This *rubā'i*, with some different words, appears to be by Shams Tabrizi, in Rumi 1984, p. 1334. It is also attributed to Sadr al-Din Khujandi and appears in Shirvani 1987, p. 208, no. 767. I would like to thank Abdullah Ghouchani for reading the inscriptions and identifying the poets.
2. Sana'i 1983–84, p. 1010. Sana'i (d. 1131) was a Persian mystical poet who lived in Ghazna, in present-day Afghanistan, and served at the Ghaznavid court of Bahramshah (r. 1118–52).
3. Watson 1985, pp. 90, 93, 104, fig. 65.
4. Ibid., p. 90, and Dimand 1944a, p. 199.
5. The poets of three of the four *rubā'i*s have been identified as Maulana Rumi (1207–1273), Sadr al-Din Khujandi (d. ca. 1200), and Khwarazmshah Abu al-Faraj Runi (d. ca. 1200).
6. Other examples are in the collections of the British Museum, London, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris.
7. Dimand 1944a, p. 199. In fact, the same potter who produced the Varamin *mihrab* was also responsible for the Qum *mihrab* of 1264, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
8. Ettinghausen 1970b, pp. 113, 115.
9. In research conducted at the Metropolitan Museum in 1998, Abdullah Ghouchani found that a number of objects in other collections contained the same verses.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 75: V. Everit Macy, New York (until d. 1930; his estate, until 1932; sold to MMA)

Cat. 76: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)



## 77. Tile

Iran, probably Natanz, from the Shrine of 'Abd al-Samad, dated [Shawwa]l

ا.هـ. 707/March 24–April 22, 1308 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Stonepaste; modeled, underglaze-painted in blue, luster-painted on opaque white ground

15 × 15 in. (38.1 × 38.1 cm)

Gift of Émile Rey, 1912 12.44

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script:

[شوا]ل سنة سبع وسبعماية

[Shawwa]l of the year ا.هـ. 707 [March 24–April 22, 1308 A.D.]<sup>2</sup>

Elegant calligraphy in *thuluth* script graces the central band of this large, intricately decorated tile. Executed in low relief, the cobalt-blue glazed inscription is set against a field of scrolling vines, where tiny birds perch among leafy foliage—some alighting upon the letters themselves.

The theme of birds in vegetation is continued in the smaller band above, which contains a series of confronted birds between small plantings.<sup>3</sup> Appreciable both from a distance and upon closer examination, the bold, sweeping lines of calligraphy stand in sharp contrast to the detailed rendering of the inhabited background, finished in a gold luster glaze with touches of turquoise.

This tile was probably one in a series that formed a glittering inscriptional frieze encircling the interior walls of a fourteenth-century tomb pavilion located in Natanz, Iran.<sup>4</sup> The frieze sat close to eye level, crowning a dado of equally opulent star- and cross-shaped tiles.<sup>5</sup> This tomb pavilion was erected in honor of Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Samad, a shaikh of the Suhrawardiyya sufi order. Shortly after 'Abd al-Samad's death in about 1300 construction began on a tomb complex in his honor in Natanz, a city located a few miles north of Isfahan.<sup>6</sup> The complex soon became a shrine that pilgrims visited to pay homage to the shaikh.<sup>7</sup>

Upon entering the tomb, a visitor would have encountered walls covered with carved stuccowork and luster-painted tiles, including this piece. Other similarly inscribed and decorated tiles, also attributed to 'Abd al-Samad's tomb pavilion, contain Qur'anic verses from Sura 76, passages that describe the rewards awaiting the worthy in Paradise.<sup>8</sup> This tile, however, contains an Arabic inscription with the date ا.هـ. 707, said to mark the year in which work was completed on the tomb.

DMT

1. It has been suggested that the letter *lam*, positioned at the beginning of the text, likely represents the last letter of the month *Shawwal*, allowing us to more precisely date the tile to March 24 to April 22 of 1308. See New York 1993, p. 25, no. 20.



2. The spelling of سبعمائة is provided as it appears on the tile.
3. The heads of the birds on the Metropolitan's tile, as well as those on many other tiles also said to be from the shrine, appear to have been intentionally defaced, likely due to iconoclastic sentiment.
4. For comparable pieces, see Ettinghausen 1938–39 and Blair 1986b, pp. 100–101 and n. 23. Blair, p. 64, states that about twenty such tiles are known. She reproduces the Museum's piece on p. 137, pl. 53. See also Blair 2002–3, pp. 126–28 and fig. 149, no. 114. For information on the movement of tiles from Natanz into private and public collections, see Masuya 2000, esp. pp. 41–44.
5. Blair 1986b, p. 134, pl. 47, shows a section of where the cross- and star-shaped tile dado and related luster frieze once were installed. On *ibid.*, p. 64, Blair states that this dado measures about sixty-five inches (165 cm) high. See also pp. 50, 64, where she discusses the placement of the Metropolitan's tile with respect to the dado.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5. The shaikh is said to have died in about ا.هـ. 699/1299–1300 A.D. For more on the dating of the different parts of the complex, see *ibid.*, pp. 17, and 20ff.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
8. On *ibid.*, p. 64, Blair states that other tiles in the group contain portions of verses 76:1–7.

PROVENANCE: Shrine of 'Abu al-Samad, Natanz, Iran (from 1307); Émile Rey, New York (until 1912)



## 78. Tile

Iran, probably Takht-i Sulaiman, late 13th century  
 Stonepaste; modeled, underglaze-painted in blue and turquoise,  
 luster-painted on opaque white ground  
 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (37.5 × 36.2 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1912 12.49.4

This image of a soaring phoenix with crested head and elaborate plumage, surrounded by swirling clouds, is a striking example of the adaptation of Chinese imagery by Persian artists.

With ancestry that included Genghis Khan and the Great Khans of China, the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers had strong ties with eastern Asia, facilitating the movement of people and goods across the continent. As a result, Persian art produced under Ilkhanid rule exhibits an infusion of new motifs—including depictions of the *feng* (phoenix) and *long* (dragon), both traditional Chinese symbols of imperial sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> The affinity between this new Persian iconography and that of contemporary Yuan China strongly suggests that Ilkhanid artists were aware of Chinese models.<sup>2</sup>

Excavation evidence indicates that this tile once graced the walls of a late thirteenth-century Ilkhanid palace known as Takht-i Sulaiman, located in a mountainous region southeast of Tabriz. Built on the shores of a small lake during the reign of Abaqa (d. 1282), the palace served as a seasonal camp, its location and elevation allowing the ruler and his court to escape the summer heat.<sup>3</sup> Many of its rooms were lavishly decorated with stuccowork and ceramic tiles in a rich variety of techniques, including the combination of cobalt and luster glazes seen on this molded tile.<sup>4</sup>

The appearance of motifs such as the dragon and phoenix within the context of this Ilkhanid royal palace may reflect a dual iconographic system. As traditional Chinese symbols of royalty, these images were well understood by the recently arrived Mongol Ilkhanid rulers and their court. At the same time, Persian artists began to adopt Chinese *feng* imagery as a way to visualize the Persian mythical bird known as the *simurgh*.<sup>5</sup> The possibility of two simultaneous readings for this tile's iconography underscores the cosmopolitan and hybrid nature of the arts produced for the Ilkhanid court.<sup>6</sup>

DMT



4. Ibid., p. 96, and Masuya 1997, pp. 128–34, 577, 597, and 621. See *ibid.*, pp. 514ff., for a description of tile type 6-2-2-b, findspots in the excavation, further references, and comparanda. Also see Masuya 2002–3, p. 89, for a plan of the palace complex.
5. See Masuya 1997, pp. 580–81. She states that as early as the 1290s the *simurgh* began to be depicted by Persian artists using the Chinese *feng* iconography.
6. As Masuya points out, however, it is unclear if the image of the *feng* would have been immediately recognized by the local population as representative of the *simurgh*. See *ibid.*, p. 578. For another theory of how such imagery may have been perceived, see Melikian-Chirvani 1984, especially his discussion of the *simurgh* motif at Takht-i Sulaiman beginning on p. 317. See also Melikian-Chirvani 1991, esp. pp. 102ff.

PROVENANCE: [Indjoudjian Frères, Paris, until 1912; sold to MMA]

1. Masuya 1997; see pp. 564ff. for her discussion of these motifs and their associated meanings. Also see Masuya 2002–3, esp. pp. 96–97.
2. Masuya 1997, p. 577, states “Characteristics shared by the *feng* motifs during the Yuan period and the phoenixes on the Takht-i Sulaiman tiles include the pair of long crests flowing from its forehead, a long comb under its beak, long hair-like feathers flowing from the neck, zigzag patterns in the body feathers, and long tail feathers.” For more on the relationship between Persian and Chinese arts in this period, see Soucek 1999.
3. Masuya 2002–3, pp. 84ff.

## 79. Storage Jar (*Albarello*)

Iran, second half of 13th–14th century

Stonepaste; overglaze-painted and leaf-gilded (so-called *lajvardina*)

H. 14¾ in. (37.5 cm)

Henry G. Leberthon Collection, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Wallace Chauncey,  
1957 57.61.12a, b

Jars exhibiting this distinctive shape—an elongated cylinder with a concave waist—are often referred to as *albarelli* (singular, *albarello*). The application of this Italian term is likely due to the popularity of such vessels in Italy beginning in the fifteenth century, where they were used to store pharmaceuticals, medicinal plants, and other natural remedies.<sup>1</sup> Their functional shape allowed for easy handling and arrangement on shelves.

Origins of the form lie outside of Europe, however, as ceramics of this shape are known from earlier periods in Syria, Egypt, and other parts of the Islamic world. This well-preserved and sumptuous example—with its repeating quatrefoil medallion pattern in gold, white, and red on a deep blue ground—was produced in Iran during the reign of the Ilkhanid dynasty. It exhibits a rare glaze type referred to as *lajvardina*, from the Persian word for lapis lazuli (*lajvard*).<sup>2</sup>

The elegant, curving profile of this jar is complemented by its vivid blue glaze and glittering gold-leaf patterning. The design is composed of tiny squares of gold leaf arranged in diamond-shaped patterns over the surface. Each square is carefully outlined in red glaze and enclosed within a white medallion. A time-consuming and costly technique, the application of gold leaf to ceramics is described in an early fourteenth-century treatise written by the Persian author Abu al-Qasim ‘Abdallah al-Kashani.<sup>3</sup> A member of an illustrious multigenerational family of potters from Kashan, he relates that such ceramics were subject to two firings—the first to establish the dark blue background glaze, the second to set the overpainted red and white enamels as well as the gold leaf.<sup>4</sup>

While overpainting can also be seen in earlier Persian ceramics known as *mina’i* (enameled wares), the combination of intense blue underglaze with predominantly gold overpainting is characteristic of the Ilkhanid era. It was a relatively short-lived phenomenon, and *lajvardina* ceramics are known to survive in only limited numbers.<sup>5</sup> These surviving vessels, along with *lajvardina* tiles found in the excavations of the Ilkhanid royal palace known as Takht-i Sulaiman, attest to the luxurious and precious nature of this class of ceramics—perhaps considered fit for royalty alone.<sup>6</sup> DMT



1345). Two manuscript copies of the treatise are known, one dated A.H. 700/1301 A.D.

4. See Allan 1973; Masuya 2002–3, pp. 92ff.
5. Other examples in the Metropolitan Museum include acc. nos. 91.1.1529; 20.120.73; 34.151; 40.181.16; 66.95.8; 1975.30; 1976.245; and 1991.224.1.
6. See Masuya 2002–3, pp. 96ff.; and Carboni 2002–3, pp. 201–2.

PROVENANCE: Henry G. Leberthon, New York (by 1931–d. 1939); Mrs. Louise Ruxton Chauncey, New York (1939–57)

1. Wallis 1904. See his “Introduction” for more on the form.
2. See the entry for this piece in New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, p. 271, no. 131, image on p. 200, fig. 241. Description of the *lajvardina* glaze technique on pp. 201–2.
3. Allan 1973, esp. pp. 114–15. See also the Persian edition mentioned by Allan (*ibid.*, p. 120): ‘*Arayis al-Jawahir wa Nafayis al-Atayib* (Tehran,





### 80. Tile from a Mihrab

Iran, dated A.H. 722/1322–23 A.D.

Stonepaste; modeled, painted under transparent glaze<sup>1</sup>

27<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 26 in. (69.5 × 66 cm)

Gift of William Mandel, 1983 1983.345

Inscription in Arabic in ornamental *naskhi* script:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
أقم الصلوة طرفي النهار وزلفا من الليل إن الحسنات يذهبن السيئات ذلك ذكرى للذاكر [ين]  
لسنة ٧٢٢

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

And perform the prayer at the two ends of the day and night;

Surely the good deeds will drive away evil deeds.

That is a remembrance unto the mindful (Qur'an 11:114).<sup>2</sup>

A.H. 722 [1322–33 A.D.]

With its unusual pointed arch shape and Qur'anic inscription, this large-scale tile with interlacing vegetal decoration likely formed part of a *mihrab*—a niche indicating the direction of prayer within mosques and other sacred structures.<sup>3</sup> Surviving *mihrab* assemblages incorporating similarly shaped tiles are

found in museum collections throughout the world; still others remain in their original architectural context. Complex, puzzlelike configurations, these tile panels were specially designed commissioned works, carefully fitted for installation into specific locations.



## 81. Mihrab (Prayer Niche)

Iran, Isfahan, A.H. 755/1354–55 A.D.

Mosaic of polychrome-glazed cut tiles on stonepaste body; set in mortar

11 ft. 3 in. × 9 ft. 5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (3.43 × 2.88 m)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1939 39.20

Large inscription in Arabic in *muhaqqaq* script on outer border: (Qur'an.9:18–22)

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script framing the niche:

قال عليه الصلوة والسلام بنى الاسلام على خمس شهادة ان لا اله الا الله وأن محمداً رسول الله  
واقام الصلوة وإيتاء الزكاة والحج وصوم رمضان وقال عليه الصلوة والسلام من بنى لله  
مسجداً ولو بمفحص قطاة على التقوى

He [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, said: "Islam is built on five attestations: there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, he established prayer and the giving of alms and the pilgrimage and fasting of [the month of] Ramadan." And he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, said: "Whoever builds a mosque for God, even the size of a sand-grouse nest, based on piety, [God will build for him a palace in Paradise]."<sup>1</sup>

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* and *thuluth* scripts at center of niche:

قال النبي عليه الصلوة والسلام/المسجد بيت كل تقى  
The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said:  
"The mosque is the abode of the pious."

This prayer niche, or *mihrab*, was originally an architectural element in a theological school (*madrasa*) in the city of Isfahan. An inscription in the courtyard of this former school, now known as Madrasa Imami, is dated to the year A.H. 754/1354–55 A.D. The *madrasa* was built shortly after the collapse of the Ilkhanid dynasty, when rival Injuids and Muzaffarid leaders competed for control over Isfahan. The *qibla* wall, which is now white-washed, was originally graced with this monumental and impressive *mihrab*. It was produced by joining together a myriad of cut-to-size glazed tiles to produce the intricate arabesque and calligraphic designs.

Created predominantly with tiles of contrasting dark blue and milky white glazes, the *mihrab* has additional turquoise, ochre-yellow, and dark green colors that enrich the complex geometric, vegetal, and calligraphic patterns. The decorative achievement, combined with the challenge of creating a three-dimensional work that includes a deep, rounded niche with pointed vault, makes this one of the earliest and finest examples of mosaic tilework to survive. Inscriptional bands reflect the careful planning of the decorative program: the outer frame bears a Qur'anic inscription in white *muhaqqaq* script, in which words and letters progress in two superimposed lines from the bottom right to the bottom left (Qur'an 9:18–22), while an inscription in *kufic* script containing sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith) frames the pointed arch of the niche and is set in blue against a white background, rhythmically punctuated by continuous vertical letter endings. The most legible words are inside the rectangular cartouche at the center of the niche: ochre-yellow inscriptions in *kufic* script mentioning the prophet are followed by a clear, larger, cursive white reference to the function of the mosque.

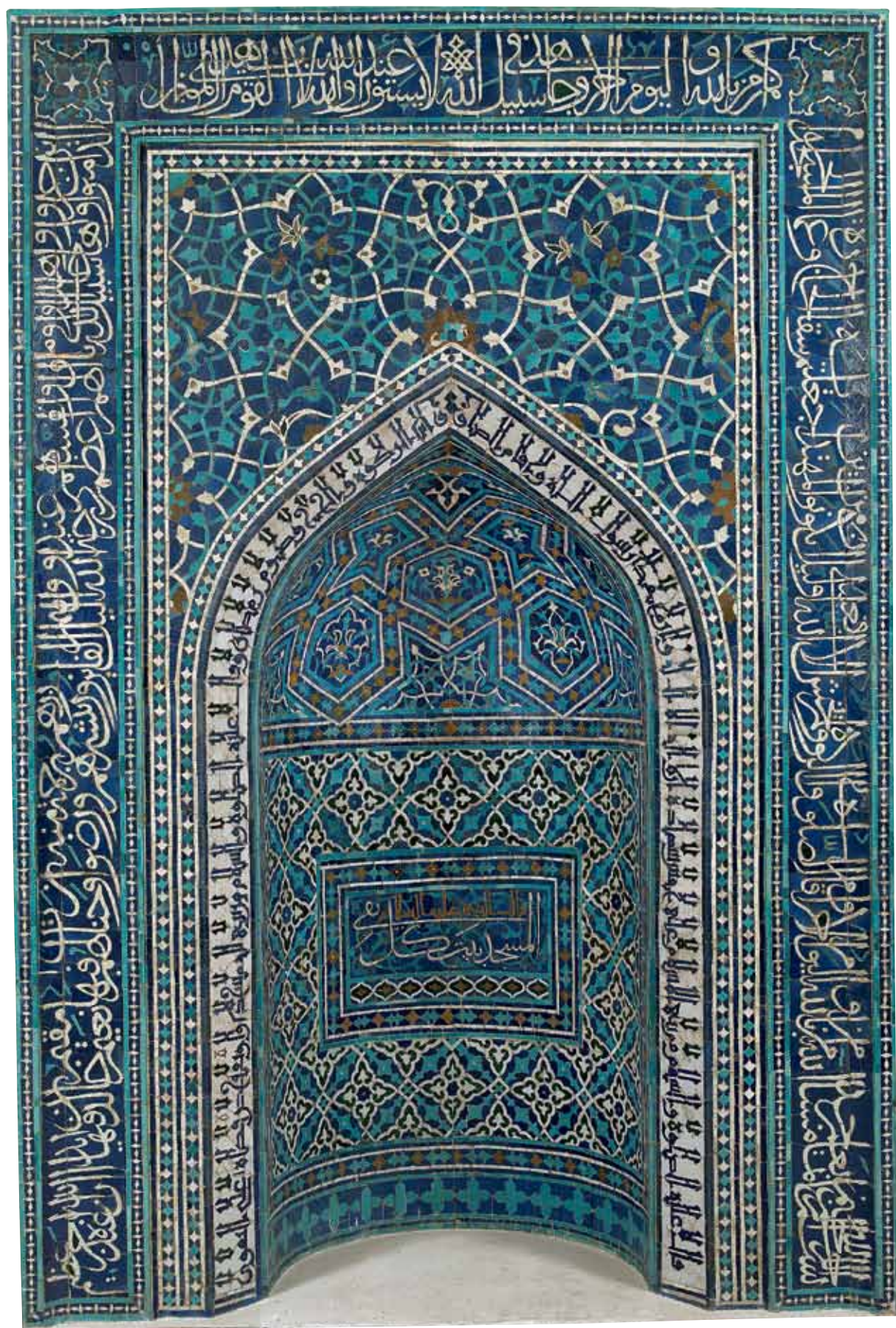
Many extant tile panels of this type were produced by a family of potters sharing the *nisba* Kashani, indicating their origins in the city of Kashan—a traditional center for Persian ceramic production. From the early thirteenth to early fourteenth century, the patriarch of this family, Abu Tahir, and his descendants produced several *mihrab* tile groupings for mosques and major shrines in the region.<sup>4</sup> In form and content, some of the individual tiles in these assemblages are analogous to the Museum's example.

While the tiles that this family produced were almost without exception luster-glazed,<sup>5</sup> this one is not. Rather, it is one of the few extant underglaze-painted *mihrab* tiles. With its simple, fresh palette of bright cobalt blue and white with touches of turquoise, its closest parallel is a tile in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, also executed in an underglaze technique.<sup>6</sup> Roughly the same size and shape as the Metropolitan's piece, the Cairo tile displays a somewhat similar vine scroll design and calligraphic script.<sup>7</sup> The Cairo niche tile is joined to two other panels, one containing an inscription referring to the grouping as a *mihrab*, and stating that it was ordered (*amara*) by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ibn Abi Nas[r] in A.H. 719/1319–20 A.D.<sup>8</sup> The Metropolitan's tile, displaying a date of A.H. 722/1322–23 A.D., was produced shortly thereafter. While neither the Cairo group nor the Metropolitan's tile can be securely attributed to the Abu Tahir family of artists, both survive as testaments to the long-lived tilework *mihrab* tradition established in the region by this multigenerational line of potters. DMT

1. My thanks to Abdullah Ghouchani for his valuable insights on this piece and to Jean-François de Lapérouse (Department of Objects Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) for ascertaining that portions of this tile were modeled, and not molded, as previously thought.
2. Translation after Arberry 1955, pp. 252–53. The transcription presented here reflects the calligraphy as it appears on the tile. Because of damage to the inscription near the top of the tile, the letter ف is missing from the phrase وزلفا من. It also appears that the letters و and ل in the same phrase may have been joined in the course of an earlier phase of restoration. My thanks to Stefan Heidemann for his assistance in reviewing the inscription and its transcription.
3. See New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, pp. 199, 270, no. 125, and p. 128, fig. 152.
4. For more on the family and the various works that they produced, see Watson 1983 and Watson 1985, esp. Chapter 10: "Tiles," pp. 122ff., and Appendix I: "Lustre Potters and Their Works," pp. 176ff. More recently, Sheila Blair discusses the Abu Tahir family in relation to other families of Kashani potters in Blair 2008.
5. Only one potter in this family, Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir, is known to have worked in the underglaze technique. See Watson 1983.
6. See Cairo 1931, pp. 134–35, no. 719, and pl. 2. It is published more recently in full color (with restoration) in O'Kane, ed. 2006, pp. 274–75, no. 236. Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (no. 3745).
7. New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, p. 270 n. 2, no. 125, provides the dimensions of the Cairo tile group.
8. See Cairo 1931, p. 135.

PROVENANCE: William Mandel, New York (by 1967–83)







This prayer niche underwent a series of restorations and relocations before it was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>2</sup> The *mihrab* was removed from the Madrasa Imami in the late 1920s, after skillful local potters had provided extensive (and almost undetectable) restoration in the area below the central inscription. Shipped to Philadelphia and stored in the University Museum there, it also spent some time in London, where it was shown at a legendary exhibition of Persian art at Burlington House in 1931. The Metropolitan eventually purchased it in 1939.

Now displayed as a splendid example of religious architectural decoration of Iranian Islamic art, the *mihrab* of the Madrasa Imami is one of the most significant and noteworthy works in the Museum's collection. SC

1. The Muslim reader can complete the phrase with the latter part of the sentence.
2. For a summary of the *mihrab*'s history, see New York 1993, p. 36, no. 31.

PROVENANCE: Madrasa Imami, Isfahan, Iran (1354–late 1920s); [A.Rabenou, Paris, by 1931–39; sold to Arthur U. Pope for MMA]

## 82. Jug

Probably Iran, 10th century  
Excavated at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur  
Glass, colorless; blown, folded foot, applied handle, cut  
H. 5¾ in. (14.5 cm); Diam. 4 in. (10.2 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1939 39.40.101

Made from transparent yellowish colorless glass, this jug has a rounded body narrowed at the base of the neck and a flared opening. It stands on a low foot ring with a pontil mark at the base, and a handle with a thumb rest is attached at the rim and body. Broken when excavated, it has been reassembled from approximately twenty pieces, and its surface retains slight traces of iridescence. The entire surface is decorated with wheel-cut motifs that stand in relief against the ground and provide the principal decoration on the body—three roundels separated by geometric and vegetal designs. The two roundels on either side of the handle show long-tailed birds, and the third bears a crouching lion, all facing left. This was the only glass vessel found at Nishapur with a pattern of roundels around its body, a type of decoration known from other examples of Sasanian and Islamic metalwork, textiles, ceramics, and glass.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to carved stucco architectural elements, extensive wall paintings, coins, high-quality ceramics, and metalwork, a total of 115 glass vessels or fragments were found at the site of

Tepe Madrasa.<sup>2</sup> None of the glass finds were from the mosque itself; many were from rooms in different parts of the complex, with a concentration in what may have been a residential quarter, and many others came from the wells, drains, and latrines, indicating that they had probably been discarded. This jug was in a drain on the lower level of the site. Although no glassmaking kilns were found at Nishapur, the number and range of finds point to a flourishing and highly developed industry in the ninth and tenth centuries. QA

1. See Kröger 1995 and Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, p. 157, for a detailed list of comparative examples.
2. Kröger 1995, p. 14.

PROVENANCE: 1938–39, discovered at Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, Iran, by The Metropolitan Museum of Art's expedition under a concession granted by the Council of Ministers, Iran, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Education of Iran; title transferred to The Metropolitan Museum of Art pursuant to the concession





### 83. Cup

Iran, 10th–12th century  
Silver; fire-gilded, hammered, and chased  
H. 3¼ in. (8.3 cm); Diam. 5 in. (12.7 cm)  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1964 64.133.2

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script below the rim:

اشرب فلليوم فضل لو علمت به	بادرت باللهو واستعجلت بالطرب
[ورد الخدود، وورد الوض قد جمعا]	والغيم مبتسم، والشمس في الحجب
لا تحبس الكاس واشربها مشعشة	حتى تموت بها موتاً بلا سبب

Drink! For this day has a special boon, which if you had known about it  
[You would have hurried up with entertainment and hastened with rapture!]  
Don't hold the cup back, but drink it diluted, until you die from it without reason<sup>1</sup>  
(The couplet in the brackets above does not appear on the cup)

This cup belongs to a group of silver vessels whose production peaked in Iran under the Buyids and the Seljuqs.<sup>2</sup> Used by nobles at court, or carried by high-rank militaries during their campaigns,<sup>3</sup> vessels like this were often part of larger sets of tableware. This cup shares several features with a silverware set, now in Tehran, that bears the name of the amir Abu'l 'Abbas Valkin ibn Harun, and may once have been part of a similar group.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the shape—characterized by straight, flaring sides and a narrow base—the cup shares these vessels' decoration, which consists of an epigraphic band located right beneath the rim. In the present example the inscription is engraved on the exterior in foliated *kufic*, a style that also appears on a group of epigraphic ceramic wares produced in northeastern Iran between the tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>5</sup> Vessels of this type are distinguished by inscriptions framed by black paste, which serves to outline the inscriptions as well as to create a bolder aesthetic. Here a second, narrower band with vegetal arabesques runs around the base, also outlined in black.

The verses implicitly suggest that the cup was used for wine. Bacchic-style verses like these are also found on a golden bowl that was part of a hoard found near Hamadan,<sup>6</sup> indicating that the practice of drinking wine from precious vessels, which was common in pre-Islamic times, continued in the Islamic period.

According to a prophetic tradition, Muslims are forbidden to use gold and silver vessels for eating and drinking, a prohibition that is further confirmed in a twelfth-century encyclopedic work that devotes an entire chapter to licit and illicit uses of gold and silver wares.<sup>7</sup> Yet the material evidence provided by



this and other vessels, along with many references contained in sources,<sup>8</sup> demonstrate that actual practice often contradicted well-established prescriptions.

FL

1. The poem, by Ibn Sukkara al-Hashimi (d. 995–96 A.D.), is found in the *Yatimat al-dahr fi mahasin ahl al-'asr*, an anthology by Abu Mansur al-Tha'alibi (d. 1038 A.D.). See Abu Mansur al-Tha'alibi 1956, vol. 3, p. 19.
2. Superb examples produced under these dynasties include a gold jug with repoussé decoration inscribed with the name of the Buyid ruler 'Izz al-Daula Bakhtiyar ibn Mu'izz al-Daula (r. 967–78), now in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C. (no. 43.1); reproduced in Pope, A. U., and Ackerman, eds. 1938–39, vol. 6, pl. 1343. See also Marshak 1986, pl. 146.
3. Ferrier, ed. 1989, p. 171.
4. The objects, currently held in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, are reproduced in Pope, A. U., and Ackerman, eds. 1938–39, vol. 6, pls. 1345–46. This and other hoards are discussed in Ferrier, ed. 1989, pp. 171–74, figs. 1–2 and 6–7; and Ward 1993, pp. 53–55.
5. Baer 1983, p. 191.
6. British Museum, London (no. 1939.11.12). See Ward 1993, p. 54, and fig. 38.
7. Quoted in Melikian-Chirvani 1982a, esp. pp. 158–59.
8. The *Kitab al-Aghani* refers to the gold cups used by the Umayyad al-Walid II in his drinking parties (quoted in Baer 1983, p. 103 n. 235). In his *Siyasatnama*, the Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk records their use during a banquet of military officials (Nizam al-Mulk 1891–97, vol. 3, p. 190).

PROVENANCE: [Nasli Heeramaneck, New York, until 1964; sold to MMA]



### 84. Bowl

Afghanistan, 12th century

High-tin bronze; cast, chased, punched, engraved

H. 1  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (4 cm); Diam. 7 in. (17.9 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund, 2000 2000.57

An example of medieval Islamic high-tin bronze ware, this metal bowl features a central six-pointed star with intertwined sides surrounded by stylized flowers and smaller motifs—in effect, minimal decoration applied only to the interior of the vessel. The bowl belongs to a group of objects associated with the metalwork production of the eastern Islamic world, characterized by a preference for open forms, the use of engraved or punched decorative motifs, and a silver color.<sup>1</sup>

These features are the result of the alloy used in the casting, called high-tin bronze, also known in the Islamic tradition as “white

bronze” (*safid ruy*). The minimal decorative repertoire found here is partly the result of the medium’s limitations. The high percentage of tin in the alloy produced a shiny and highly malleable metal. As a result, traditional working methods such as hammering were not adaptable to high-tin bronze, and artisans instead used chasing, engraving, and punching, as seen on this example.

The production of this alloy is first mentioned by the eleventh-century scholar al-Biruni, who documents the causes that presumably led to its introduction.<sup>2</sup> Following a Qur’anic prohibition, the Umayyad governor of Iraq and Iran al-Hajjaj (r. 694–714) outlawed

gold and silver vessels, the use of which had been popular in the Middle East since pre-Islamic times. Although high-tin bronzes predate this prohibition, their precious appearance did make them an appealing substitute for gold and silver vessels, satisfying the taste for luxury objects while adhering to the governor's new decree. In addition, the tin component of the alloy prevents the high-tin vessels from developing the poisonous green patina known as verdigris, thus in part accounting for the popularity and longevity of the technique.<sup>3</sup>

Although the production of high-tin bronze peaked in medieval Iran, the metal was in use in India from the third century A.D. as well as in China, before being adopted under the Parthian

Empire (238 B.C.–226 A.D.) in Sistan and Sogdiana. Hence, Muslim craftsmen rehabilitated an old technology in order to meet new requirements.

FL

1. Two related high-tin bowls can be found in the Metropolitan's collection, one with figural decoration (acc. no. 1971.42) and one with geometric designs (acc. no. 1973.338.8).
2. Al-Biruni 1936, esp. pp. 264–66; Nasir al-Din Tusi 1969, p. 228, quoted in Allan et al. 1979, pp. 47ff.; al-Kashani 1966, quoted in Allan et al. 1979, pp. 47ff.
3. Ward 1993, p. 30.

PROVENANCE: Sale, Christie's London, April 26, 1994, lot 310; [Momtaz Islamic Art, London, until 2000; sold to MMA]

## 85. Incense Burner

Maker: Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali

Iran, dated A.H. 577 / 1181–82 A.D.

Bronze; cast, engraved, chased, pierced

Overall 33½ × 9 in. (85.1 × 22.9 cm); length 32½ in. (82.6 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1951 51.56

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script around neck and continued on chest:

امر به الامير العادل العالم/ سيف الدنيا والدين بن محمد/ الماوردي

Ordered by the just and wise prince Saif al-Dunya wa'l-Din ibn Muhammad al-Mawardi<sup>1</sup>

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on left and right bosses and boss on chest:

السعادة الاقبال السلامة

Happiness, prosperity, well-being

Signature in Arabic in *kufic* script at left, on chest, and on right foot:

عمل جعفر بن محمد بن علي سنة سبع وسبعين وخمسة

Work of Ja'far son of Muhammad son of 'Ali in the year A.H. 577 [1181–82 A.D.]

Each element of this monumental incense burner, a demonstration of the excellence achieved in metalwork under the Seljuqs, was cast individually and then attached with solder; the head remained removable so that incense could be inserted and lit, then waft from the figure, perfuming the air. This piece, and others like it, would have probably been used in domestic, secular settings, as their zoomorphic and aromatic attributes would have made them unsuitable in a religious context.<sup>2</sup>

The object exhibits an elaborate decorative program that combines openwork patterns and epigraphic bands. The neck, body, and upper part of the thighs are pierced with trefoils, creating a latticelike design. The scrolling vine motifs that mark the ears of the animal are mirrored in the upturning of the corners of the eyes, and the snout is incised with stylized whiskers. Epigraphic bands in foliated *kufic* script run along the base of the neck and the chest,

giving the name of the patron, Saif al-Dunya wa'l-Din Muhammad al-Mawardi; of the artist, Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali; and the date, A.H. 577/1181–82 A.D. In addition, the words *happiness*, *prosperity*, and *well-being* appear on the three round bosses located on the chest and on the two sides of the lion's front paws.

Zoomorphic vessels gained popularity in the medieval period, and lion-shaped incense burners were especially common in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, though this example is larger than most of them and belongs to a small group of related works.<sup>3</sup> The group shares common features, including openwork decoration on the body, stylized facial features, incised eyes and whiskers, and upturned tails. The related examples differ most dramatically in their scale, in the pattern of openwork, and in the modeling of the body. The Metropolitan's example is the largest of this group and exhibits robust modeling and smooth joinery





that together convey a sense of musculature. Another example, in the Cleveland Museum of Art, while much smaller in scale and lacking the copious inscriptions of the Metropolitan's lion, has a similar robustness and comparable features, and its long curving tail provides a sense of how the Metropolitan's burner may have looked when intact.<sup>4</sup>

FL

1. The family name *Mawardi* is written on the chest between the name of the metalworker and under the name of the prince, so it is not clear to which one of them it applies. Although the word *al-Mawardi* means "the rosewater-seller," the size of the inscription corresponds to that of the prince and not that of the maker, which is considerably smaller.
2. Boston and Chicago 2006–7, p. 197.
3. Other examples can be found at the Cleveland Museum of Art (no. 1948.308.a), in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (no. IR-1565), and in the David Collection, Copenhagen (no. 48/1981). A list of the examples is given in Baer 1983, p. 58 n. 114. To them a further example in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (no. 2007.1301.A,.B) should be added.
4. See n. 3 above.

PROVENANCE: [Khalil Rabenou, New York, until 1951; sold to MMA]



## 86. Inkwell

Probably Iran, early 13th century  
Brass; cast, inlaid with silver, copper, and black compound  
H. 5 7/8 in. (14.9 cm); Diam. 4 3/8 in. (11.6 cm)  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1959 59.69.2a, b

Remarkably well preserved, this inkwell is a fine example of the elaborate embellishment applied to utilitarian objects in the medieval Islamic world. Calligraphic tools and implements were particularly ornate, often made of brass or other copper alloys and decorated with elaborate openwork or inlaid designs.<sup>1</sup> It bears a rich decorative program of benedictory Arabic inscriptions in animated *naskhi* script, animal motifs, and zodiac signs. The body is divided into three registers; the middle one is the widest and is decorated with the twelve signs of the zodiac inscribed in interlocked star-shaped medallions. Above and below this wide middle band run two thinner registers with the secondary design of animals set against a background of scrolling vines. The motif of running animals is mirrored on the lid, despite the fact that the base and lid originally belonged to separate objects.

Cylindrical inkwells similar to this one were produced in Greater Iran during the eleventh century under the Seljuq dynasty and continued to be produced in Iran through the thirteenth century. The popularity and often lavish ornamentation of inkwells in this period speak to the cultural importance attached to the art of

writing.<sup>2</sup> The choice of astrological signs as the primary decorative theme also reflects contemporary taste, and similar designs can be seen on numerous examples in the Metropolitan Museum and other collections.<sup>3</sup> First introduced into the Islamic world through Greek texts, the art of astrology was considered integral to the science of astronomy.<sup>4</sup> The depiction of the zodiac on precious objects such as inkwells was thought to invest them with cosmological and talismanic properties, thereby placing their owners under the auspicious influence of the stars.

FL

1. See, for example, a thirteenth-century pen box also in the Department of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 89.2.194). See New York 1997a, p. 18, no. 6.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
3. Another inkwell, deprived of its lid but also decorated with the zodiac, is housed in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 44.131). In addition, astrological themes decorate two of the Museum's ewers (acc. nos. 44.15 and 91.1.530) and a mortar (acc. no. 91.1.527a), all of which are associated with the twelfth- and thirteenth-century metalwork production of central or eastern Iran (*ibid.*, p. 16, no. 5; p. 22, no. 8; and p. 24, no. 9).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

PROVENANCE: Charles Mège, Paris (by 1903); [Brimo de Laroussilhe, Paris, until 1959; sold to MMA]



### 87. *Basin*

Probably Iran, early 14th century

Brass; raised, engraved, inlaid with silver and gold

H. 5 1/8 in. (13 cm); Diam. 20 1/8 in. (51.1 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.521

Called *tasht* or *lagan*, large hand basins such as this are documented in the eastern Islamic world from the late twelfth century onward.<sup>1</sup> Yet the distinctive scalloped form of this basin appears to have been specifically produced under the Ilkhanid dynasty, as seen in a similar example datable to about 1300–1320, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>2</sup>

The decoration, which was once entirely inlaid with gold and silver, covers the interior of the basin and is organized in concentric bands. Radiating from a central sun-shaped medallion, the registers contain depictions of servants, seated musicians playing instruments, courtiers and attendants, and five enthroned figures flanked by hunters and polo players (a motif that appears twice,

once on the base and once on the wall of the basin). Additional details include images of birds on the crenellated border, addorsed griffins and human-headed winged animals, and high-stem flowers distributed in the interstitial spaces created by an intricate geometric grid used to frame the decoration.

Although inscribed in separate registers and medallions, and thus used as individual decorative units, the characters are thematically related. They all belong to the princely cycle, a group of themes illustrating royal life and pastimes. Courtly subjects were recurrent motifs on sumptuous inlaid brasses and ceramic vessels produced for aristocratic patrons.<sup>3</sup> In a few instances, the objects employ motifs directly inspired by literary texts that celebrated





royalty, as in the case of the Victoria and Albert's basin, which is decorated with scenes from the story of Bahram Gur, narrated in both Firdausi's *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) and Nizami's *Khamsa* (Quintet). In most instances, however, the decoration consists of standardized formulas such as enthronement scenes, musical entertainments, and outdoor activities comparable to those ingeniously combined in the present vessel. The choice of these motifs, their detailed execution, and the use of fine materials indicate that this object was probably produced in a royal workshop. FL

1. An example from Ghazni is discussed in Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, pp. 61–63.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. 546-1905), published in *ibid.*, pp. 202–7, no. 93, in New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, pp. 179–80, and p. 280, no. 169, and in Ward 1993, p. 87, pl. 66.
3. See, for example, the late thirteenth-century brass basin signed by 'Ali ibn 'Abdallah al-'Alawi al-Naqqash al-Mawsili currently in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. I-6581), or the fourteenth-century tray now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Tbilisi (no. 48/I). Both are discussed and reproduced in Komaroff 1992b, pp. 10–11, figs. 2 and 4.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

## 88. Necklace Elements

Iran or Central Asia, late 14th–16th century

Gold sheet; worked, chased, and set with turquoise, gray chalcedony, and glass

Large medallion:  $2\frac{7}{8} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $7.3 \times 7$  cm)

Half medallion:  $1\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $4.4 \times 7$  cm)

Cartouches:  $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{2}$  in. ( $1.9 \times 1.3$  cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and Habib Anavian Gift, 1989 1989.87a–l

The dating and attribution of gold jewelry from the Islamic world presents numerous challenges to scholars and art historians. Hardly any of the extant examples are dated or bear inscriptions. Furthermore, because of their inherent value, gold and other precious metals were melted down and reused in times of economic crisis. As a result, few examples survive, complicating research and comparative analysis, as in the case of these necklace elements. The basic form and arrangement of similar necklaces are, however, depicted in paintings of women from the late fourteenth to the late sixteenth century in Iran and Central Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Two medallions in the necklace—one a large circular medallion pendant with lobes, and the other a smaller fan-shaped piece—are both of box construction. The large central pendant is inset with a cartouche of gray chalcedony with a turquoise bead at its center, surrounded by turquoise, chalcedony, and glass beads of different sizes and shapes. The fan-shaped element, also inset with a variety of gems and glass, lacks a large cartouche. The two are joined by ten small cartouche-shaped elements, each with a central turquoise. The backs of both of the larger elements are chased and punched with animal motifs of Far Eastern inspiration, including gazelles and quadrupeds attacked by lions, while the fan-shaped medallion has a number of small loops, presumably to hold a delicate string of pearls.



A close look at paintings of women, ranging from an illustrated folio in the Great Mongol *Shahnama* of about 1330 to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century images from Bukhara, shows that comparable gold necklaces were indeed worn by women.<sup>2</sup> The pendants in these representations are all in the shape of half medallions with lobes (rather than full medallions), similar to the one in the scene of “Rudaba Chastised by Her Mother” from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*.<sup>3</sup> The paintings also show cartouche-shaped elements alternating with other shapes, but these connecting pieces are missing from the Metropolitan Museum’s assemblage. Lisa Golombek, who has studied the Metropolitan’s necklace in great detail, has reproduced a number of these paintings; her survey, however, does not extend beyond the fifteenth century, mentioning the sixteenth century only in passing. She assigns the Museum’s necklace elements to late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Iran or Central Asia on the basis of their relationship to paintings, cartoons, and preparatory sketches in one of the Timurid albums in the Topkapı Palace Library (H.2152), which was used by artists and craftsmen to replicate patterns in a variety of media. A close stylistic resemblance between the chased motifs on the back of the large elements of this work and those in the Topkapı cartoons is evident, and this association is corroborated by Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo in a vivid account of the Spanish envoy to the Timurid court in 1405–6.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is not entirely clear that these jewelry elements belong to a single ensemble. The large lobed central medallion, in fact, more closely resembles elements of men’s belts seen in paintings. This type of element is almost never shown as the central pendant in a necklace, and when it is represented, it appears on the back of the neck of the female wearing it. The absence of holes for stringing the elements complicates matters further. Upon close inspection, these elements appear to have been produced in the same workshop, but they raise unanswered questions. Until a painting appears with an identical configuration of elements, it can be said only that individual elements of this so-called necklace attest to the popularity and longevity of tastes, forms, and techniques of jewelry making in Iran and Central Asia from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century. ME

1. See Golombek 1991.
2. See, for example, the image of a young woman from an anthology painted by Mahmud (Bukhara, ca. 1550) in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul (Revan 1964, fol. 2a; Titley 1983, p. 90), and a folio from an album dated Dhu’l Qa’da 935 [July 1529] produced in Bukhara (Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, no. c-860).
3. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (no. S1986.0102). Golombek 1991, p. 66; New York and Los Angeles 2002–3, pp. 86–87.
4. Golombek 1991, p. 65.

PROVENANCE: [Habib Anavian, New York, until 1989; sold to MMA]

## 89. Textile Fragment

Eastern Islamic Lands, second half of 13th–14th century  
Silk, silvered(?) animal substrate around cotton core; lampas<sup>1</sup>  
Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 1996 1996.286

Opulent textiles woven of silk and gold threads referred to as *nasij al-dhahab al-harir* (cloth of gold and silk) were treasured fabrics among the Mongol ruling elite and subsequent Ilkhanid dynasty rulers.<sup>2</sup> The most luxurious surviving examples are gold-on-gold fabrics in which both pattern and background are executed in differing types of gold thread.<sup>3</sup> This textile fragment—with a pattern of confronted birds and pinecone medallions against a blue silk background—is only slightly less ornate and ranks among the most lavish textiles of its day.

After the Mongol conquest of Persia in the thirteenth century, an extensive trade network opened from China to the Mediterranean, allowing goods to move more easily than ever before. Luxury textiles traveled along this route, and as they moved, their motifs were widely copied and dispersed by weavers seeking to emulate their sumptuous effect.<sup>4</sup> The achievements of these weavers make it difficult to identify textile origins based on surface pattern

alone. As a result, this textile and others like it have been variously attributed over the years to Italy, Mamluk Egypt and Syria, Iran, and China.<sup>5</sup>

Anne Wardwell and other textile scholars have demonstrated that comparisons of structure and weave can aid in delineating the origins of some of these pieces.<sup>6</sup> Among the many factors to be considered is the composition of their gold threads.<sup>7</sup> During the Ilkhanid period, such thread was made in different ways in various regions along the Silk Road. In contemporary Chinese textiles, for example, long narrow strips of gilded paper were wrapped around a silk core to create a golden thread suitable for weaving.<sup>8</sup> In the Metropolitan’s example, however, gilded animal skin replaces the paper, and cotton forms the core of the wrapped threads.

Only a very small group of related textiles shares this unusual combination of structure and materials.<sup>9</sup> While their precise place of production remains unknown, Wardwell argues for their



origins in Khurasan, in eastern Iran. Many publications, however, attribute them more generally to the “Eastern Islamic Lands” of this period. Whatever their specific origins, these luxurious fabrics were most likely woven by artists seeking to emulate the splendid gold-on-gold textiles of the Ilkhanid court. DMT

1. During microscopic examination of this textile in consultation with the Museum’s textile conservator Janina Poskrobko, only the presence of a silver-colored metal (not gold) on the animal substrate was noted, despite the overall golden appearance of this fabric. It is possible that the brownish-beige color of the underlying substrate now lends this piece its golden hue. Further scientific analysis would need to be conducted to identify the metal used here. The same examination also observed the presence of hair-follicle pockets on the substrate, confirming it as animal skin.
2. Allsen 1997, pp. 2–3. For more on types and terminologies, see pp. 11ff.
3. See the discussion of textiles of this type in Wardwell 1992, Folsach 1993, and Watt and Wardwell 1997–98, esp. pp. 132–38.
4. Wardwell 1987. See also Watt and Wardwell 1997–98, pp. 127ff., and Komaroff 2002–3, esp. pp. 171ff.
5. Wardwell 1988–89, pp. 95ff., and Copenhagen 1993, pp. 100–101, no. 12. For attributions of textile fragments similar to the Metropolitan’s piece, see Mayer, C. 1969, p. 55, pl. 34 (attributed to Italy); and Lafontaine-Dosogne 1981, p. 14, fig. 4 (attributed to Iran).
6. Wardwell 1988–89 examines differences in the formation of selvages, the combinations of fibers, and the composition of metal threads in order to delineate the various groups and to propose possible regions of production for these textiles.
7. Indictor, Koestler, Blair, and Wardwell 1988 (fig. 1, no. 2) analyze a piece very similar to the Museum’s textile, in Vienna’s Kunsthistorisches Museum.
8. Wardwell 1988–89, pp. 99ff. Exceptions are noted in Folsach 1993, esp. pp. 44–61.
9. Wardwell 1988–89, “Category V,” pp. 106–8, and “Appendix I,” figs. 36–37, for comparable pieces. Pieces of similar textiles are said to be in the *Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire*, Brussels, no. 554 (published recently in Raemdonck 2006, p. 78); *Musée Historique des Tissus*, Lyon, no. 22.724; Art Institute of Chicago, no. 61.1196; *Kunstgewerbemuseum*, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, no. 80,257; and the Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen, no. B 19/1931 (published in Copenhagen 1993, pp. 100–101, no. 12).

PROVENANCE: Iklé Collection, St. Gallen, Switzerland (until 1989; sale, Christie’s South Kensington, November 7, 1989, no. 90); [The Textile Gallery, London, until 1996; sold to MMA]





## *Art of Egypt and Syria (10th to 16th Centuries)*

STEFANO CARBONI

The Metropolitan's vibrant carved wooden panel showing the heads of two horses (cat. 112) exemplifies the visual compositions created by artists in eleventh-century Egypt at a time when the city of Cairo (*al-Qahira*, the Victorious, founded by the Fatimids in 969) had recently become one of the great world capitals. Symmetry, repetition, overall patterning, and abstraction:<sup>1</sup> these were the patterns that had been established in Abbasid Iraq in the ninth century, and they would reverberate across the entire Islamic world. Symmetry and repetition are evident in the Museum's panel through the vertical division of the space into two almost identical, mirror-reverse patterns. Overall patterning is manifest in the creator's reluctance to leave undecorated areas anywhere on the surface. Abstraction—intended here as a

transformation of naturalistic forms into nonrepresentational shapes for decorative purposes—could in this instance more appropriately be termed ambiguity, meaning the tendency of Fatimid artists to hark back to the figurative tradition without negating two centuries of steady movement toward abstraction. The horses' heads are clearly defined, but their bodies dissolve into semipalmettes and curls that form the vertical axis of the composition, while their ears evolve into large spiraling scrolls. These seahorse-like creatures are part of a remarkable work of early Fatimid art. Originally set into the door of a Fatimid palace, the panel belonged to a large composition that included its companion<sup>2</sup> and a number of other similarly paired panels, forming a triumphant and public display of symmetry, overall patterning,

and ambiguity—our starting place in discussing the development of the portable arts in Egypt and Syria from the advent of the Fatimids (909–1171) to the demise of the Mamluks (1250–1517).

The Fatimids had their origins in North Africa and traced their descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima (hence the name) as well as from the seventh imam, Ismaʿil.<sup>3</sup> They were therefore fervent Ismaʿili Shiʿis,<sup>4</sup> and their expansionist goals were fed by their assumed right of rule over the Muslims after they became a powerful dynasty. The occupation of Egypt and the transfer of power to Cairo were conscious decisions to position themselves in an important geographic and political area. Their eastward expansion briefly included Baghdad, the seat of the rival Abbasid caliphate, and Jerusalem and Damascus for somewhat longer periods. But Cairo became the heart and soul of the Fatimids, and it quickly grew into a cosmopolitan and economic hub where goods from northern Europe and the Indian Ocean were exchanged; where the social fabric was complex and varied (a tiny portion of the Muslim population became Ismaʿili, and Copts and Jews were well represented); and where public buildings, magnificent ceremonials, and the creation of luxury products were highly encouraged.<sup>5</sup>

Today we can afford only a partial glimpse into the dynastic arts of the Fatimids. Cairo, with its innumerable sumptuous buildings, mosques, and mausoleums, was transformed by successive dynasties and had already become a “dream from the past” in the historian al-Maqrizi’s description of the early fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In the mid-eleventh century the treasures of the court were looted and dispersed during a severe political crisis. Described in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities*,<sup>7</sup> many objects found their way into ecclesiastic treasuries in Europe or the palaces of the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople before these too were looted during the infamous Fourth Crusade of 1204.<sup>8</sup>

Striving to imitate their Byzantine counterparts, members of the Fatimid court were particularly fond of objects carved from semiprecious stones, especially transparent rock crystal. Less expensive (but equally impressive and sophisticated) relief-cut glass works in imitation of turquoise, emerald, ruby, and rock crystal were also in great demand.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, only a handful of rock-crystal ewers carved in relief with well-executed designs of confronted animals, vegetal patterns, and inscriptions mentioning the caliph’s name provide direct links to the Fatimid court.<sup>10</sup> The Museum’s collection can offer a hint of how the taste for carved rock crystal percolated to different levels of the Fatimid elite through a thriving production of small objects, in particular perfume flasks.<sup>11</sup>

The textile industry was under the control of the Fatimid establishment. High-quality linens with tapestry-woven bands of figural designs and inscriptions produced in *tiraz* factories in Cairo and the Nile delta were destined for the court or tagged as gifts for

the court entourage and visiting delegations. They were also used for burial purposes. Although their fragility, function, and age allow today only a partial understanding of the sumptuousness and significance of these textiles, the weaving and the bold inscriptions carrying the names of the caliphs are impressive.

Fatimid artists, as mentioned above, often made use of figural imagery in their works. The high-end media for such expressions were carved ivory and precious rock crystal, though little has survived.<sup>12</sup> Exported north, these objects found fertile ground in southern Italy under the rule of the Normans; the spectacular results of this cross-fertilization are exemplified in the Metropolitan’s collection by the Morgan Casket (cat. 39) and the signal horn or oliphant (cat. 38).

Ceramic production—in particular popular monochrome luster-painted pottery produced also for the lower classes of patronage—demonstrates how the new Fatimid figural style had soon filtered through all levels of artistic production from the court to the bazaars. A fine example depicting a heraldic eagle, renowned also because it carries the signature of Muslim, one of the earliest known potters (or pottery production centers), is in the Museum’s collection (cat. 93).

While the Fatimids survived the eleventh-century crisis, they could not prevail against their vizier Salah al-Din Ayyub (d. 1193), who had the ambition, ability, and opportunity to overthrow his masters. Known in the West as Saladin, he proclaimed himself ruler of Egypt upon the death of the Fatimid caliph al-ʿAdid in 1171. Within fifteen years the new rulers, the Ayyubids, had entirely replaced the Fatimids, and their territory extended from Tunisia to northern Iraq and to Yemen. In 1187 Saladin’s army defeated the Crusaders at the celebrated battle of Hattin.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the Fatimids, the Ayyubids were organized into a collective government through an association of principalities bound by family rule. Saladin became the “Great Sultan” (*al-sultan al-muʾazzam*), whereas family members were semi-independent “petty sultans.” This type of government inevitably created rivalry for succession and weakened the sultanate. Although Cairo remained the economic engine of the realm and the preferred residence of the Ayyubid rulers, the strategic political focus shifted east. Damascus was central to the control of the Crusaders and the ambitious principalities of Syria and the Jazira.<sup>14</sup>

Despite their relatively short rule (1169–1250 in Cairo, until 1260 in Damascus and Aleppo), the Ayyubids had a lasting impact as great builders of military architecture (the Citadels of Cairo and Aleppo provide splendid examples) and as patrons of educational and Sunni religious institutions.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Ayyubids, Syria became the leader in the manufacture of both luxury objects and the less expensive and sophisticated works made for the middle class and the bazaars. Metalwork, glass, and ceramics—the three principal media—

were all produced there; under Ayyubid patronage, the Fatimid luxury Cairene works in carved rock crystal, ivory, and colored glass seem to have all but disappeared.

Metalwork production, at least at court level, provides some perspective on the interconnections of this era. Stimulated by the transfer to Syria of specialized metalworkers from Mosul in Iraq, splendid objects with silver and gold inlays made a triumphant appearance in the Ayyubid-dominated regions, perpetuating a tradition well established east of Syria. This, combined with the influential presence in Greater Syria of eastern Christian communities and monasteries as well as the constant interaction—not exclusively confrontational but also commercial and economic—with the Crusaders, resulted in the creation of distinctive and highly accomplished inlaid-metal objects that depict Christian themes and/or figures.<sup>16</sup> As some of these outstanding thirteenth-century works are unquestionably dedicated to Muslim rulers, it cannot be established with certainty why the Ayyubid court would have taken an interest in Christian scenes or if the Syrian Christian community and the bordering Crusaders provided a broader patronage. The Metropolitan owns a relatively minor yet significant work from this distinctive group, a cylindrical box that depicts the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem (cat. 102).

Enameling and gilding on glass had its first great flowering in the Ayyubid period, when Syrian glassmakers were able to bring their experimentation with these techniques to successful results and thus pave the way for future developments. The most distinctive of these objects are elongated beakers with small circular bases and flaring curved walls. Among these, the earliest datable example carries a dedication to the ruler of Mosul, Sanjar Shah (r. 1180–1209).<sup>17</sup>

Several Syrian ceramic centers, Raqqa in particular, enjoyed a renaissance under the Ayyubids. They became extremely productive and served the market across a broad geographic area, overshadowing Egyptian output. Syrian pottery in this period is characterized by dark brown luster decoration (cat. 96) and by the technique, relatively new to the west of Iran, of underglaze painting, which resulted in objects decorated either with black under a blue glaze or with several colors with a clear glaze (cat. 97).<sup>18</sup>

As with the Fatimids, the brief rule of the Ayyubids collapsed under internal pressure, in this case at the hands of their own corps of Mamluks. Originally military slaves of Turkish descent (hence *mamluk*, “owned”), the Mamluks steadily rose in the ranks, obtained freedom and power over time, and became an essential part of security and defense under the Ayyubids. When the sultan al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub died in Cairo in 1249, his personal corps of Bahri Mamluks (*bahr* being the Nile, where they had their headquarters) supported the installation on the throne of his widow, Shajar al-Durr. The chief of the Mamluks, ‘Izz al-Din

Aybak, installed himself at the head of the Ayyubid army; three months later he married al-Salih’s widow and seized power.<sup>19</sup> Thus began the long reign of the Mamluk dynasty (or *Daulat al-turk*, the Turkish state), which put an end to Mongol expansion in western Asia as well as to the Crusaders’ campaigns in the Holy Land. This powerful political entity endured until the Ottoman conquest in 1517.<sup>20</sup>

The trading and commercial roles that the dynasty played between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean for over 250 years in the late medieval, precolonial European world should not be underestimated. Their outreach, resources, power, and political influence successfully allowed the Mamluks to thrive in an increasingly competitive world. In addition, their complex hierarchical, nonhereditary, and military structure seems to have worked to their advantage both in Cairo and in the provincial cities. The status of the capital as the new seat of the caliphate combined with control over the three holiest cities—Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem—made the Mamluks the undisputed champions of Islam.

Not surprisingly, the dynasty’s best contributions to the arts coincide with the period of their greatest political and economic fortune. In 1340 Cairo was the largest city west of China, with an estimated half million people,<sup>21</sup> and the religious university of Al-Azhar had become one of the preeminent centers of learning in the world. Today, what remains of Mamluk Cairo still offers a sense of the grandeur of a medieval metropolis with its urban structure and staggering number of architectural gems, such as the complex of Sultan Qalawun, the Blue Mosque of Aqsunqur, the gigantic mosque of Sultan Hasan, and the mausoleums in the Eastern Cemetery.<sup>22</sup>

Most visible among the developments in the arts in the Mamluk period is the progressive disappearance of figural decoration and an increasing predominance of inscriptions and vegetal backgrounds. The continuation of Ayyubid imagery, which had a strong figurative component, was relatively brief. Nonetheless, specific motifs originating from the regions east of Syria controlled by the rival Mongol Ilkhanids, such as the *simurgh* or phoenix (cat. 111), provided intriguing additions to the diminishing figural repertory.

This change in taste occurred during the long reign of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad (1294–1340, with brief interruptions) and was probably encouraged by the Mamluks’ strong focus on religious buildings and their patronage of aniconic architectural decoration, furnishings, Qur’an manuscripts, and portable objects destined for religious establishments. Such patronage trickled down to the sultanate’s administration—virtually every amir who could afford it would sponsor and endow his own buildings.<sup>23</sup> Gradually, the only figurative decoration encountered in a secular context became the amir’s emblem of office as a





Fig. 31 Mihrab, or prayer niche, Complex of Sultan Hasan, Cairo, 1356–63. Photo: Walter B. Denny

symbol of ownership, identification, and acknowledgment of rank, such as a footed cup, polo sticks, pen box, and crossbow (see, for example, the emblem on cat. 109).<sup>24</sup>

Doors from the *minbar* of the Mosque of Amir Qawsun in Cairo (cat. 113) splendidly illustrate the essential aspects of Mamluk art. Here, a virtuoso designer planned a geometric pattern of stars within polygonal compositions so that the two larger patterns are split symmetrically along the outer edges of the two doors and meet seamlessly in the middle once they are closed; half stars and quarter stars complete a composition that could equally have been designed for Qur'anic illumination, marble mosaic, stained glass, or the dome of a mosque. The technical skills required to execute the details of the individual wood and ivory sections that constitute the whole are stunning. Symmetry, repetition, and overall patterning have here lost the “ambiguous” aspect of earlier Fatimid works and have evolved into full geometric abstraction.

The greatest accomplishments, both artistic and technical, of Mamluk craftsmen in the portable arts include large enameled-and-gilded glass mosque lamps and bottles as well as

silver-inlaid metal basins, ewers, and trays. The Museum's collection includes the largest group of mosque lamps outside of Egypt (cat. 109)<sup>25</sup> and a remarkable selection of richly inlaid metalwork from the first century of Mamluk rule (cats. 103, 105, and 106). Glass enameling—a technique that required extraordinary skill to ensure that the enamel adhered to the glass surface during a second firing, without damage to the object—was perfected in the second half of the thirteenth century, resulting in a variety of shapes and decorations that would become prized examples in faraway European church treasuries and Chinese palaces.<sup>26</sup> Works such as the magnificent footed *tazza* (cat. 110) and bottle (cat. 111) offer a hint of this superb production that, as a measure of its achievement, would be understood, imitated, and improved upon only after the industrial revolution in Europe in the late nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

The brass and silver brazier (cat. 104), a masterpiece of Mamluk inlaid metalwork, is a powerful “architectural” piece with the relatively humble function, perhaps only symbolic, of a heater or grill. Its silver-inlaid decoration is dominated by a large inscription, but the lively sequence of running animals along the narrow upper bands and the menacing, dynamic looped dragon heads confer a sculptural and animated appearance to this object. The inscription and the five-petaled rosette—the dynastic emblem of the Rasulids (the dynasty that ruled Yemen from 1229 to 1454, and with whom the Mamluks shared control of trade from the Indian Ocean into the Red Sea)—also indicate that the brazier falls into a special category of metalwork production created for export, in this case most likely as a diplomatic gift from the sultan in Cairo to a key political ally, or to the Rasulid court in Yemen.<sup>28</sup> Enameled glass was similarly produced and exported.

The slow decline of Mamluk power and influence—due to economic changes, internal struggles, and the growing confidence of the Ottomans—began shortly after the establishment of the Burji branch of the Mamluks (*burji*, “of the tower,” refers to the Citadel in Cairo, from which they ruled from 1390 to 1517).<sup>29</sup> Patronage declined, with architecture remaining the favored type of sponsorship. This is not to say that workshops entirely disappeared, but demand dwindled, and almost all glass factories were forced to close.<sup>30</sup> Here and there we have evidence that inlaid metalwork continued to be commissioned at high standards, like a box made for the keeper of hours of prayer in Damascus.<sup>31</sup> Only under the rule of the last great sultan of the Mamluk dynasty, Qaitbay (r. 1468–96), did court patronage have a period of resurgence, although by then the level of execution in most crafts had dropped off.

The Ottomans completed their conquest of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517. Cairo lost its status as a great capital and became instead an important albeit provincial town of the longest-lasting empire in the history of Islam. Since its foundation in 969, Cairo of the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk dynasties had been a beacon

of thriving humanity, architecture and urban sprawl, learning, wealth, commercial power, and political intrigue. While all this diminished dramatically after the arrival of the Ottomans, at least one craft marks a bright passage between the Mamluk and the Ottoman periods. Possibly made in Ottoman Cairo, the Simonetti Carpet (cat. 116), which with its nearly thirty feet (almost nine meters) of length and five brilliant medallions dominates the room it shares with the Spanish ceiling in the new galleries, is celebrated as one of the most beautiful and accomplished Mamluk rugs.<sup>32</sup> These precious and extraordinary carpets, which began to be woven in a limited palette of three to four colors in fifteenth-century Cairo, have all the hallmarks of Mamluk compositions, bringing forward in time the illustrious artistic traditions of the great capital that for over half a millennium was Cairo.

1. With special reference to Samarra, see Ettinghausen and Grabar 1987, p. 104.
2. An almost identical panel is in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo (no. 3391).
3. One of the best historical surveys on the Fatimids is Walker, P. 2002.
4. The Isma'ilis are still today a well-established community throughout the world under the spiritual leadership of the Aga Khan.
5. On Cairo and the role played by the Fatimids in the Mediterranean area, see among others Goitein 1967–93 and Sanders 1994.
6. Two works by Taqi al-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi (1364–1442) are relevant to the history of the Fatimids: *Al-mawa'iz wa al-i'tibar bi-dhikr al-khitat wa al-athar* (Exhortations and Instructions on the Districts and Antiquities; al-Maqrizi 1853–54), now in a critical edition by Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid (al-Maqrizi 1995); and *Itti'az al-hunafa' bi-akhbar al-a'imma al-fatimiyyin al-khulafa'* (Admonitions of the Orthodox on the Most Important Information about the Fatimid Caliphate; al-Maqrizi 1967–73). The most significant and best-preserved Fatimid monument in Cairo is the small Mosque of al-Aqmar.
7. An English translation of this eleventh-century work by Ibn al-Zubayr is available, al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996.
8. Among many others, see Phillips 2004 and Lace 2006.
9. See Erdmann, with Grabar and Hahnloser 1971, pp. 103–8, nos. 117–20, pls. 89–94; and Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 176–79, 187–88, nos. 83–84, 92.
10. Two rock-crystal objects are linked directly to the caliphs al-'Aziz (r. 975–96) and al-Zahir (r. 1021–36): a ewer in the Treasury of San Marco, Venice (no. 80), and a crescent-shaped ornament in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (no. KG 695). Another ewer is dedicated to the general Husain ibn Jawhar (ca. 1000–1008), now in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence (no. 1917). The three objects were published most recently in color in Bloom 2007, pls. 72–74. A survey of Fatimid rock crystal as a medium is in Contadini 1998, pp. 16–38, where the three objects mentioned above are figs. 15–17.
11. Two such examples in the Museum's collection are acc. nos. 31.18.1 and 31.125.
12. For rock crystal, see above, note 10. The most important examples in ivory are four plaques assembled as a frame in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. I 6375), and six plaques in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence (no. 800 and Solenne 460, legato Carrand 1094). See Hoffman 1999 and Venice 1993–94, no. 63. All figural ivories can be found in Kühnel 1971, pp. 68–73, nos. 88–101, pls. 97–100.
13. A basic bibliography on the history and social history of the Ayyubids includes Humphreys 1977, MacKenzie 1992, Chamberlain 1994, Tabbaa 1997, Lev 1999, and Hillenbrand, C. 2000.
14. The Jazira (literally, island) is a geographic area that includes modern-day northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, and southeastern Turkey.
15. The Ayyubids adhered to the Shafi'i legal system. The other three major Sunni juridical-religious systems are the Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki. For a good survey of the arts of the Ayyubids, see the exhibition catalogue *L'orient de Saladin: L'art des Ayyoubides* (Paris 2001b).
16. See, among others, Schneider 1973, Katzenstein and Lowry 1983, and Baer 1989.
17. Carboni 1999, esp. pp. 173–74 and fig. 3.
18. See among others Grube and Tonghini 1988–89, Tonghini 1994, and Jenkins-Madina 2006.
19. Court intrigues, treason, and tragedy inevitably followed, and by 1257 both Aybak and Shajar al-Durr had died. The latter had her husband killed while taking a bath, the plot was revealed, and she was subsequently arrested and beaten to death with a clog; her body was found near the Citadel.
20. The *Mamluk Studies Review* is a periodical dedicated to various aspects of the history of the Mamluk dynasty. Significant recent studies for various aspects of Mamluk history and historiography in relation to the arts are Behrens-Abouseif, ed. 2000, Kennedy, ed. 2001, and Alsayyad, Bierman, and Rabbat, eds. 2005.
21. Shillington, ed. 2005, vol. 1, p. 342.
22. A large body of literature is available on Mamluk architecture. See, for example, Creswell 1959, Meinecke 1992, Rabbat 1995, Behrens-Abouseif 2007, Warner 2005, Kahil 2008, and Kenney 2004.
23. Amir is a military rank and title that was conferred on powerful ministers, army chiefs, and provincial governors.
24. This statement is challenged by a few scholars who date a few key pieces, such as the so-called Baptisterie de Saint Louis in the Louvre, to the mid-fourteenth century, thus implying that figural decoration was still strong at that time. On the emblems of the amirs, the standard work remains Mayer, L. 1933; see also Meinecke 1972.
25. The largest number is in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo. See Wiet 1929.
26. For example, two works now in the Cathedral and Diocesan Museum, Vienna, recently published in Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 249–53, nos. 124–25. For exports to China, see Hardie 1998.
27. An introduction to the subject is offered in Whitehouse 2001–2, pp. 297–301.
28. Porter, V. 1987–88, pp. 232–40; Porter, V. 1998. Mamluk art made for the Rasulids was also the subject of a departmental exhibition in the Hagop Kevorkian Special Exhibitions Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum in 1995 titled “The Five-Petaled Rosette: Mamluk Art for the Sultans of Yemen.”
29. The first ruler of the Burji Mamluks had declared himself sultan in 1382 but was expelled and recaptured Cairo only in 1390.
30. Carboni 2004.
31. Lidded box of Muhammad al-Hamawi, timekeeper at the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus (Metropolitan Museum, acc. no. 91.1.538).
32. Shtrum et al. 2010.



Fol. 230r



Fol. 274r

## 90. Segment of a Qur'an Manuscript

Syria or Egypt, 13th century  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
20 × 13 1/4 in. (50.8 × 33.7 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1924 24.146.1

The 274 folios of this manuscript comprise the second half of a large Qur'an, extensively illuminated and inscribed throughout in gold.<sup>1</sup> The thick, creamy-white paper has been extensively consolidated, trimmed (sometimes grazing the text block), remargined, and rebound. As no colophon survives and no signatures have been detected, the date and attribution of this Qur'an rest on stylistic and technical evidence.

This luxurious manuscript preserves three of its fully illuminated text pages.<sup>2</sup> On each, a square panel with three lines of text over densely swirling vegetal scrolls is set within a gold frame,

also decorated with vegetal scrolls and headings in "new-style" script. The final folio consists of the right half of a double page decorated with a rectangular panel of gold with large-scale vegetal scrolls, around which a gold-on-blue calligraphy border proclaims the ritual purity required for handling the Qur'an—an excerpt of Sura 56 frequently employed on Qur'an frontis- and finispieces.

Illuminated bands on the other folios contain Sura headings, most also in "new-style" script against a background of vegetal scrolls (above, left). For each heading, a palmette extends into the



margin and red annotation provides a related hadith.<sup>3</sup> The text, generally eleven lines per page, is entirely gold outlined with black, in a script corresponding to what medieval sources classified as *ash'ar* or *thuluth ash'ar*.<sup>4</sup> Diacritical marks are also gold, while vowels and orthoepic signs are in alternating red and blue. Illuminated disks, inscribed with the word *aya*, indicate verse endings, and marginal disks or teardrop shapes surrounded with colorful petal-like borders highlight the fifth and tenth verses—as well as prostration points. Each section is announced by a rectangular margin table—also written in gold—providing its number, a count of the verses, words, letters, and diacriticals in it, and a count for the entire text of one letter of the alphabet. Two annotations are inked on the penultimate page of the manuscript: one, in Arabic, an attestation of faith; the other, in Turkish, a sacred oath (p. 141, right).<sup>5</sup>

While the all-gold calligraphy and the absence of text-block borders recall the 1304–6 Qur'an of Baybars al-Jashnagir at the British Library in London as well as other luxury manuscripts attributed to Mamluk Cairo, some aspects of the script and ornament correspond more closely to Damascene Qur'ans, such as that made (ca. 1330–40) for the Umayyad Mosque, now in the Khalili Collection, London.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the illumination of the present Qur'an appears archaic in comparison to both of these examples and contains none of the geometric compositions or interlacing cartouche frameworks so characteristic of fourteenth-century Mamluk manuscripts. A number of the illuminated devices, the flowing calligraphic hand, and certain letter forms compare with much earlier examples, among them the Zangid Qur'an dated 1199–1219 and attributed to Sinjar or Nisibin.<sup>7</sup> For these reasons, the attribution of this Qur'an has been broadened to include a possible Syrian place of production and a thirteenth-century date. EK

1. The first folio begins partway through the third verse of Sura 19 (*Maryam*), and the continuing text is complete except for four points where replacement pages substitute for originals (fols. 61–64, 98–99, 267, and 269).
2. These are the first folio, which is the left half of a double page, and the penultimate and final folios, bearing the last Sura (114, *al-Nas*, "Mankind") on a double page.
3. One of these hadith annotations is done in gold *ash'ar* script (fol. 8r, next to the heading for Sura 20, *Taha*).
4. James 1999, pp. 18–19; and James 2009, p. 351. However, some aspects of the script relate better to *tauqi'* and *tumar*, especially the way the final letter of *Allah* is open, and the tail of the *mim* is relatively short and hooks upward (Safwat and Zakariya 1996, pp. 74, 234; Blair 2006, pp. 318, 345–49).
5. We are very grateful to Abdullah Ghouchani and Rifat Günalan for their assistance with these readings.
6. British Library, London, Add. 22406–13 (James 1999, p. 220, no. 1; James 1992b, p. 176, no. 43).
7. James 1992b, p. 44, no. 7.

PROVENANCE: [Maggs Bros., London, until about 1914]; Vladimir G. Simkhovitch, New York (from ca. 1914); [Brummer Gallery, Inc., New York, until 1924; sold to MMA]

## 91. Folio from the *Mantiq al-wahsh* (Speech of the Wild Animal) of Ka'b al-Ahbar

Egypt, probably Fustat, 11th–12th century  
Opaque watercolor on paper  
6 1/8 × 4 3/4 in. (15.7 × 12.1 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1954 54.108.3

Verso: Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script at top and bottom of page:

كتاب فيه منطق الوحش / بأمر مليح مصور

This book includes *Mantiq al-wahsh* by the order of Malih, the illustrator

Recto: Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script at top of page:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم / ذكر . . . قال كعب الأحبار عن منطق الوحش فقال نعم إنه  
إذا . . . ضياع الأسد يقول

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Mention [. . .]

Ka'b al-Ahbar said about *Mantiq al-Wahsh*. He says yes

it is if [. . .] the realms of the lion who says [. . .]

This fragmentary folio was originally part of a zoological treatise with strong roots in the classical tradition. It belongs to a group that is considered to be among the earliest Arabic illustrated manuscripts to survive.<sup>1</sup> The verso features the image of a lion outlined in black ink with touches of red and pink and a few lines of text. The inscription identifies the animal and gives the text's title, *Mantiq al-wahsh* (Speech of the Wild Animal), as well as the name of its author, Ka'b al-Ahbar (d. 652/53), who was among the first Jews to convert to Islam. The title is repeated on the recto, where the image of a hare is painted in the same style and palette.

Although little is known about the *Mantiq al-wahsh* in particular, the text is part of a group of Arabic sources that are connected to the classical tradition of scientific handbooks, which were copied and expanded by Muslim scholars for centuries. The ninth-century encyclopedic work of al-Jahiz (d. 868/69) titled *Kitab al-hayawan* (Book of Animals) and the later *Kitab na't al-hayawan wa-manafi'ih* (Book of the Identification and the Benefits of Animals) by Ibn Bakhtishu are two of the best-known bestiaries based on Greek texts, which were translated in the late eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>2</sup>

This folio was probably executed during the Fatimid dynasty, whose rulers were avid collectors of illustrated codices.<sup>3</sup> Lions and hares similar to those on this page are seen in Coptic textiles and abound in Fatimid ivories and woodcarvings. In addition, paleographic comparison of the text to other Fatimid works reveals close affinities. The folio was found with hundreds of other paper fragments in the course of early twentieth-century excavations at Fustat, a garrison built in 641 for the armies leading the first phase of the Arab conquest and later incorporated by the Fatimids in their new foundation for *al-Qahira* (the Victorious), present-day Cairo. The fact that the folio was found in Egypt reinforces its Fatimid attribution. FL



recto



verso

92. Folio from the *Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* (Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Objects) of al-Jazari

"The Elephant Clock"

Syria, dated A.H. 715/1315 A.D.

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 7 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (30 × 19.7 cm)

Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.23

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script at lower left:

الفصل الثاني صح فصل

The second chapter is the correct chapter

One of the finest surviving examples of Mamluk painting, this manuscript page belongs to a dispersed copy of the *Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* (Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices) transcribed by Farrukh ibn 'Abd al-Latif in A.H. 715/1315 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Originally composed at the beginning of the thirteenth century by Badi' al-Zaman ibn al-Razzaz al-Jazari (1136–1206) for the Artuqid ruler of Amid (present-day Diyarbakir), Nasir al-Din Mahmud (r. 1201–22), the treatise discusses fifty mechanical devices used for princely entertainment.<sup>2</sup> In addition to clocks, the text mentions drinking vessels, fountains, automated devices for hand-washing and bloodletting, and other machines activated by heat or hydraulic mechanisms.

The spectacular automated clock illustrated here is the subject of one chapter, which includes detailed instructions for its assembly. Every half hour, the rider would hit the elephant with his pickaxe and the bird would turn, allowing the falcon to release a pellet into the dragon's mouth. The dragon would next drop the ball into a pot, where it hit a gong before ending up in a bowl at the bottom of the pot. The time would then be determined by counting the balls gathered in the bowl.

The illustration reflects the impact of the Arab style of manuscript painting developed in Iraq and Syria during the thirteenth century. In particular, features such as the rider's halo, the robe with *tiraz* bands, and the turban with loose ends appear in thirteenth-century copies of Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica* and al-Hariri's *Maqamat*.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the conservative nature of the illustrations accompanying scientific manuscripts accounts for the representation of the dragons as open-mouthed serpents with coiled and scaled bodies, a formula that occurs in the oldest known copy of al-Jazari's treatise, made in 1206.<sup>4</sup> In acknowledging the achievements of Jaziran artistic centers while finely reinterpreting the contents of the treatise, the 1315 manuscript remains one of the most accomplished copies of al-Jazari's work.<sup>5</sup> FL

1. Hoffman 2000, p. 38. See also Grube 1963c.

2. Two pages from a thirteenth-century copy of the work by Ibn Bakhtishu are also in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 18.26.2, 57.51.31).

3. No single, intact illustrated book survives from this period; see Bloom 2007, p. 109.

1. The intact codex contained 150 folios and was accompanied by nine diagrams and ninety-eight paintings. See Washington, D.C., and other cities 1981–82, p. 255.

PROVENANCE: [Michel Abemayor, New York, until 1954; sold to MMA]







2. At least fourteen copies of al-Jazari's text have survived. See Washington, D.C. 1975, p. 102 n. 12. See also al-Jazari 1974.
3. Washington, D.C. 1975, esp. pp. 53–60.
4. London 2005, p. 113, fig. 33.
5. Eight folios from this manuscript in the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution (nos. 30.71r, 30.72r, 30.73r, 30.74v, 30.75r, 30.76r, 30.77r, and 42.10v), are discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 102–10.

PROVENANCE: Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1932–d. 1956)

### 93. Bowl with Eagle

Signature by Muslim

Egypt, ca. 1000

Earthenware; luster-painted on opaque white glaze

H. 2 7/8 in. (7.3 cm); Diam. 10 in. (25.4 cm)

Gift of Charles K. and Irma B. Wilkinson, 1963 63.178.1

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on interior, below eagle's claw, and on base:

مسلم  
Muslim<sup>1</sup>

### 94. Bowl with Hare

Egypt, first quarter of 11th century

Earthenware; luster-painted on opaque white glaze

H. 3 in. (7.6 cm); Diam. 10 1/4 in. (26 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1964 64.261

luster potteries recently established in Cairo by émigré specialists from Basra offered exactly the kind of luxury products this new elite demanded. In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that makers' marks are often found on Fatimid-period lusterware. One such instance is that of *Muslim*, a name that appears in two places on the bowl decorated with an eagle (cat. 93).<sup>2</sup> More than forty known Fatimid-period ceramic objects or fragments and at least one luster-painted glass piece bear some version of this signature.<sup>3</sup>



94

The tenth and eleventh centuries under the Fatimid caliphate were times of prosperity in Egypt and the neighboring lands, when a burgeoning class of wealthy consumers emerged. The



93 (interior)



93 (exterior)

A more complete rendering of the name, *Muslim ibn al-Dahhan* (Muslim son of the painter), appears on one of these fragments in the Benaki Museum, Athens, along with the name of the patron, whose *nisba* suggests that he was associated with the court of Caliph al-Hakim (r. 996–1021). This inscription dates the ceramist's production to the time of that reign.<sup>4</sup> Because these works vary considerably in quality and style, it has been argued that the word *Muslim* must be a workshop trademark rather than the signature of an individual artist.<sup>5</sup> However, elsewhere such variability is explained by the suggestion that Muslim was both a master ceramist and the head of a workshop that used his name on its ware.<sup>6</sup>

This straight-sided, low-footed bowl is one of the few signed *Muslim* works that is complete. Its decoration provides a prime example of the vitality characteristic of Fatimid painting, which is quite distinct from the rigidity of late Abbasid lusterware. The monumental eagle, painted in a greenish-yellow luster against a white ground, occupies the entire interior of the bowl. Even though the artist has adopted an age-old, heraldic pose and embellished the creature improbably with strings of pearls and *tiraz*-like bands, his painterly execution breathes life into the eagle. A similar depiction of an eagle with spread wings may once have decorated the center of the previously mentioned Benaki fragment.<sup>7</sup>

The same sense of dynamism enlivens the second bowl, depicting a hare (cat. 94), which shares many features with the “Muslim” bowl but bears no signature. The hare strikes an especially lively pose: it raises its front leg playfully, in an animated version of the heraldic “passant” position, and—like the eagle above—grasps in its mouth a sprig of clover. Its figure is executed in yellow-colored luster pigment. As is typical of most of the “Muslim” examples, the details of its eyes and the articulation of its body parts are reserved in white. The hare was a particularly popular motif in the art of the Fatimid period in Egypt, where it may have been associated with good fortune.<sup>8</sup> A number of similar hares decorate objects and fragments in other collections.<sup>9</sup> Surrounding the hare, trefoils and sprigs sprout from a circular border that is itself enclosed by a slanted vine scroll repeated in a wavelike pattern. Both bowls carry over features from the Basran phase of luster-painted ceramic production, including the interstitial “peacock eye” filler on the eagle bowl, the festoon border on the hare bowl, and the circle-and-dash motifs on the outer walls of both.<sup>10</sup>

EK

3. Jenkins listed twenty in her appendix (*ibid.*, pp. 366–69). Helen Philon published another eleven (Philon 1980, pp. 167–78, 197–201), and noted further examples (*ibid.*, p. 168 n. 53). A shard published in Watson 2004 (p. 280, cat. Ja.8, no. LNS 975 C e) can be added to this list. On the glass object, see Contadini 1998, p. 82.
4. Jenkins 1968a, p. 361.
5. Watson 2004, p. 280.
6. This explanation, first suggested by Marilyn Jenkins (1968a), was supported by Robert Mason's petrographic analysis pointing out the shared attributes among these works, which belong to a technical group that he dated between 975 and 1025 (Mason 2004, p. 65). Mason sampled and analyzed the petrography of both the bowls presented here and published their profile drawings (*ibid.*, p. 83, fig. 4.4, and p. 193).
7. Philon 1980, p. 198. Jonathan M. Bloom demonstrated Philon's proposition with superimposed images in Bloom 2007, p. 95, fig. 3. For another similar eagle bowl, see O'Kane, ed. 2006, pp. 80–81, no. 73.
8. For publications on the symbolism of the hare in the Fatimid context, see Dodd 1972 and Daneshvari 1981.
9. For examples, see Benaki Museum, nos. 19447 (Philon 1980, p. 206, fig. 425), 207 (*ibid.*, p. 202, fig. 414), and 19599a [signed “Muslim”] (*ibid.*, p. 199, fig. 408); O'Kane, ed. 2006, pp. 80–81, no. 72.
10. Mason 2004, p. 63.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 93: Walter Hauser (by 1938); Charles and Irma Wilkinson, Sharon, Conn. (by 1961–63)

Cat. 94: [Charles D. Kelekian, New York, until 1964; sold to MMA]

### 95. *Pyxis*

Syria, late 11th–early 12th century

Stonepaste; luster-painted on incised, opaque white glaze  
H. 8 in. (20.3 cm); Diam. 5½ in. (14 cm)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, Harvey and  
Elizabeth Plotnick Gift, and Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley  
Purchase Fund for Islamic Art, 1998 1998.298a, b

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script, on exterior of body:

توكل يكفا (!) الصبر عز من صبر قدر

Trust [in God] suffices. Perseverance becomes glory.

[He] who is patient possesses strength.

By the late eleventh century, a new type of ware had emerged in Syria that represented the transfer of two technologies pivotal for ceramic development in the region: stonepaste and overglaze luster-painting.<sup>1</sup> These ceramics relate so closely to the lusterware produced in Fatimid Egypt that they have often been misclassified. Only gradually, over the course of the first half of the last century, was the group identified as a type distinct both from the Egyptian material and from the Syrian material classified as Raqqa ware. This type has come to be known as Tell Minis ware, based on the putative findspot of a cache in the eponymous village, located between Hama and Aleppo. However, there is no evidence to

1. Abdullah Ghouchani suggests that the birdlike form below the word *Muslim* on the base of this bowl may be a floriated version of the word *Muhammad* (personal communication, 2011).

2. Jenkins 1968a. As Jenkins pointed out, it was not that uncommon for Fatimid-period ceramics to bear signatures of some kind, but Muslim's is the only one so far that can be assigned dates on an inscriptional basis.



suggest that it was manufactured in that village, and the exact place of production is still undetermined.<sup>2</sup> In fact, recent analyses suggest that this type of ware was produced in multiple centers in Syria rather than in a single workshop or town.<sup>3</sup>

The body of this container is composed of the fine white stonepaste typical of Tell Minis ware and distinguishable from the coarser, darker fabric of Raqqa ware. It also has the characteristic thin walls, chiseled foot, crackling glaze, and copper-red monochrome luster paint with a tendency to iridescence.<sup>4</sup> Two registers decorate the exterior: above, a narrow band with a thick white scrolling motif created in reserve; below, a broad calligraphic band of *kufic* lettering interspersed with slender vine scrolls, all luster painted against white. On the lid is a row of partridges, with the details etched through the luster to reveal the white of the stonepaste beneath. The inner surface is also glazed and luster-painted, with a starburst motif on the bottom and alternating pseudo-calligraphic panels and composite scrolls on the sides.

The pyxis shares a number of specific characteristics with pieces in other collections. For example, the decoration on a bowl in the Robert Mouawad Private Museum, Beirut, corresponds to that on the calligraphic band here, with similar proportions expressed between the *kufic* lettering and surrounding scrolls.<sup>5</sup> The reserve painting employed in the upper register of the pyxis and the etched details found on its lid compare closely with the decoration on a bowl in the David Collection, Copenhagen.<sup>6</sup> However, in one respect, this pyxis is unique: its form does not appear among other Tell Minis pieces, which most often take the shape of conical bowls.

EK

1. For nearly a century after Basran lusterware ceramists retrenched to Egypt, their specialized technique was employed exclusively there, but in the late eleventh century these ceramists began to disperse, eventually taking up their specialization again in different regions. On the transmission to Syria, see Mason 2004, pp. 160–61.
2. Porter, V., and Watson 1987. Similar material was excavated at Hama and published in Riis and Poulsen 1957, pp. 132–40.
3. Until recently, Tell Minis ware was usually dated either around the mid-twelfth or simply twelfth century (see Porter, V., and Watson 1987). Marilyn Jenkins argued for an earlier date, partly on the basis of the presence of luster pieces embedded in the walls of eleventh-century buildings in Italy (Jenkins 1992), which, however, provides only a *terminus ante quem*. More accurate evidence, emerging from archaeological contexts and petrographic analysis, suggests that production began in the last quarter of the eleventh century (Mason 2004, p. 97).
4. The copper-rich luster of Tell Minis ware may have been the result of a shortage of silver in the region (Mason, lecture, Metropolitan Museum, December 2009).
5. No. 0776, illustrated in Mouawad and Carswell 2004, p. 125, no. 47.
6. No. Isl. 196, illustrated in Boston and Chicago 2006–7, p. 121, no. 51.

PROVENANCE: [Phoenix Ancient Art, Geneva, Switzerland, until 1998; sold to MMA]



## 96. Lantern

Syria, probably Raqqa, early 13th century

Stonepaste; underglaze-painted in blue, luster-painted on transparent glaze

9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (23.2 × 14.6 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.138

Recent studies point to the production of glazed ceramics in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Syria at multiple locations and indicate that several types were produced at each of the various centers.<sup>1</sup> One type from this period, a group of underglaze- and luster-painted stonepaste ware, is associated mainly with Raqqa, a site on the middle Euphrates.<sup>2</sup> The Ayyubid prince al-Malik al-Ashraf Musa lived in this city from 1201 to 1229, during which time ceramic production is thought to have thrived there; it tapered off toward the middle of the thirteenth century and ended with the Mongol invasion in 1258. This ware belongs to a larger class of ceramics referred to as Raqqa ware, which shares the same body fabric and glaze composition.

While this lantern represents a classic example of Raqqa lusterware in its stonepaste composition, overglaze luster-painting technique, and decorative motifs, its form is unusual. Modeled from slabs and rolls, its shape resembles a square-domed building, articulated at each corner by a column and finial.<sup>3</sup> On two opposing sides, the walls of this “building” are pierced with eight-petaled rose windows. The other two sides are open and surmounted by lobed arches. The dome is also pierced, with small openings on its sides.<sup>4</sup>

The decoration of the lantern highlights its architectonic elements. A sketchy vegetal scroll with dots, executed in brown luster against a white ground, meanders across the dome and the walls. The columns are painted entirely in luster, which is now rather abraded. Concentric outlines of blue and luster paint accentuate the piercings of the dome as well as the four rectangular wall panels and their openings. Surmounting the arches is interlace ornament that mimics a decorative device frequently found in Syrian buildings of the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods.

Two similar ceramic lanterns are known, both roughly contemporaneous examples of the same technique attributed to Raqqa: one, slightly larger, has corner columns and finials but is open on all four sides;<sup>5</sup> the other, like the Museum’s lantern, has alternating rose windows and openings.<sup>6</sup>

EK

5. Sotheby’s London 1986, p. 47, lot 157. These references come from a report by Annie-Christine Daskalakis in the Department of Islamic Art files, Metropolitan Museum, New York.
6. Dumbarton Oaks (no. D.O. 50.39).

PROVENANCE: M. Albert Goupil, Paris (until d. 1884; sale Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 23–27, 1888; Edward C. Moore, New York (probably 1888–d. 1891)



1. See, for example, Watson 2004, p. 289.
2. This is a subgroup that has been identified through petrographic analysis (Mason 2004, pp. 91–120). The attribution of this group of Raqqa ware is explored in Jenkins-Madina 2006.
3. Three of the existing finials are modern reconstructions based on the fragmentary remains of the fourth.
4. The original summit of the dome is lost. A pierced spherical knob that was formerly applied to the dome was identified as a modern reconstruction and removed in a 1975 restoration.



### 97. Bowl

Syria, probably Damascus, late 12th–early 13th century  
 Stonepaste; polychrome-painted under transparent glaze  
 H.  $4\frac{1}{8}$  in. (10.5 cm); Diam.  $8\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22.5 cm)  
 H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Gift of Horace Havemeyer, 1941 41.165.2

It has been difficult to pin down the attribution of the ceramic type to which this handsome polychrome bowl belongs. Found at sites throughout Syria, such bowls were formerly classed with ceramics attributed to Rusafa. Later, they came to be grouped with Raqqa ware. One theory—that they were made not only at multiple centers in Syria but also in Egypt—is based on shards found at Fustat “in quantities and of a quality that show it [Egypt] was an important producer.”<sup>1</sup> Another, based on recent petrographic analysis and supported by a study of archaeological evidence, suggests Damascus as the main center of production for this ware.<sup>2</sup>

To create the design on this bowl, the ceramist painted directly on the white stonepaste body with three pigments—chromium black, cobalt blue, and bole red—over which he applied a transparent alkali glaze. The interior design consists of a band of pseudo-inscription around the rim, surrounding a framework of radial

panels with alternating designs of bold, crisply drawn palmettes, split palmettes, crescents, “big-eye” motifs, and trefoils against either white or stippled grounds. The outer walls are painted with loosely drawn arc motifs, another diagnostic indicator for this pottery group.

Similarities in technique, form, and design clearly suggest a relationship between this group of Syrian underglaze-painted pottery and comparable material from Iran. This ware may have appeared in Syria and Egypt as an attempt at imitating the colorful Iranian *mina'i* ware, a development linked with the east-to-west transfer of the conical bowl form around 1200.<sup>3</sup> Another chronology for medieval Syrian ceramics, however, dates the appearance in Syria of polychrome underglaze-painted ware as early as about 1125, preceding *mina'i* production by about fifty years.<sup>4</sup> The technical, formal, and stylistic ceramic relationships



between Syria and Iran in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries appear to be more complex than previously thought and warrant further consideration.<sup>5</sup>

EK

1. Watson 2004, p. 296; Tonghini 1994, p. 255. I am grateful to Rosalind Wade-Haddon for her assistance and bibliographic suggestions.
2. Mason 2004, pp. 106, 108.
3. Watson 2004, p. 294. See also Porter, V. 1981, pp. 30–33.
4. Mason 2004, pp. 108–9 (where he also points out the technical dissimilarity between *mina'i* and “true under-glaze painting”), and p. 178.
5. Chicago 2007, pp. 96, 101, and 107, no. 65. The relationship between the ceramics of Iran and Syria in earlier phases is discussed in Allan and Roberts, eds. 1987.

PROVENANCE: H.O. Havemeyer Collection, New York (by 1931–41)

## 98. *Tile Panel*

Syria, Damascus, ca. 1430

Stonepaste; modeled, polychrome-painted under transparent glaze

45 × 45 in. (114.3 × 114.3 cm)

Gift of Prof. Maan Z. Madina and

Dr. Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, 2009 2009.59.2a–p

Gift of Ralph Minasian, 2011 2011.156a, b

In the first half of the fifteenth century, a ceramics workshop headed by the master Ghaybi al-Tawrizi flourished in Mamluk Syria and Egypt, producing more than a dozen known tile panels or revetments for architectural contexts as well as portable objects.<sup>1</sup> As the *nisba* “al-Tawrizi” indicates, Ghaybi probably emigrated





from the Iranian city of Tabriz to Syria.<sup>2</sup> This set of eighteen tiles, which originally belonged to a panel consisting of twenty-five, is so similar in technique, composition, and style to revetments signed by Ghaybi that it most probably can be attributed to his workshop. A report that the panel was acquired in Damascus in the early decades of the twentieth century suggests that it came from one of several buildings in that city decorated in the early fifteenth century with ceramic tiles.<sup>3</sup>

The best known of these Ghaybi revetments in Damascus survives in an incomplete state in the funerary complex of Ghars al-Din al-Tawrizi (d. 1430).<sup>4</sup> While the majority of revetments associated with the Ghaybi workshop are composed of hexagonal tiles, a few are made up of square or rectangular ones. At Ghars al-Din's complex, in addition to the hexagonal and triangular tiles lining the walls of the mausoleum, there are two rectangular panels composed of square tiles located in the prayer hall. One of these compares quite closely with the present panel, which may well come from the same building—especially in light of the fact that only part of the revetment in the mosque building survives in situ.<sup>5</sup> Both panels are decorated in reserve, the designs standing out in white, outlined with thin black lines, against a cobalt ground. Both bear medallions filled with a distinctive basket-weave motif, which is also found on signed Ghaybi shards in the Museum's collection.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, a number of Damascus buildings were once decorated in this manner as well, including sections of the Umayyad Mosque *riwaq*, which appears to have been partially tiled in connection with an early fifteenth-century restoration.<sup>7</sup>

EK

## 99. Biconical Bead

Egypt or Syria, 11th century  
Gold; filigree and granulation  
2 × ¾ in. (5.1 × 1.9 cm)

Purchase, Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah Gift, in memory of  
Richard Ettinghausen, 1980 1980.456

## 100. Spherical Bead

Egypt or Syria, 11th century  
Gold; filigree and granulation  
Diam. ⅞ in. (2.1 cm)

Purchase, Mobil Foundation Inc. Gift, 1980 1980.457

## 101. Pendant

Egypt, 11th century  
Gold, cloisonné enamel, turquoise; filigree  
1 ¾ × 1 ⅜ in. (4.5 × 3.5 cm)

Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 30.95.37

Among the luxury arts that flourished under the Fatimid caliphs, gold jewelry stands out for its innovation and complexity. According to literary sources, prodigious amounts of such jewelry were manufactured for both royal and patrician patrons; most of

1. A survey of these revetments is published in Meinecke 1988. The Museum has more than a dozen shards bearing the signature of this workshop, as well as a ceramic mosque lamp signed "Ibn Ghaybi" (acc. no. 91.1.95).
2. Marilyn Jenkins-Madina has argued that the artisan settled in Syria before moving to Cairo (Jenkins 1984, pp. 112 and 113 n. 20), but Meinecke—while allowing for that possibility—believed Ghaybi executed the Ghars al-Din revetment in Damascus after already establishing himself in Cairo (Meinecke 1988, p. 211 n. 29).
3. According to a communication from the donor in the files of the Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum.
4. Interestingly, both the patron of the building and the master ceramist who decorated it appear to have come from Tabriz (Degeorge and Porter 2002, p. 188).
5. Carswell 1972b, p. 117, pl. 8, left.
6. Acc. nos. 08.184.53 and 08.256.113.
7. Meinecke 1988, pp. 210–11.

### PROVENANCE

Acc. no. 2009.59.2a–p: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York]; Dr. Maan Madina and Dr. Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, New York (until 2009)

Acc. no. 2011.156a, b: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York]; Dr. Maan Madina and Dr. Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, New York; Ralph Minasian, New Hyde Park, New York (until 2011)



these items were later melted down for currency or refashioned into newer pieces. Gold jewelry elements of the Fatimid period share several distinct characteristics, including box construction, rings for stringing, filigree openwork with S-curve decoration, and, at least until the later period, granulation. The three pieces here—two beads and a pendant—demonstrate all these characteristics.

Both beads exemplify the distinctive Fatimid tradition of filigree openwork with granulation. The biconical bead (cat. 99) is divided into five sections by strips decorated with granulation along the body, creating an allover design of scrolls and S-curves. A nearly identical bead is found in the Khalili Collection, London.<sup>1</sup> The spherical bead (cat. 100) is composed of two hemispheres of curling scrolls that form heart-shaped units. Two eleventh-century gold rings from Fatimid Egypt in the Khalili Collection bear the same scrolled-heart motif on the bezels, shanks, and sides; this motif can also be seen in a drawing of a woman in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, dating from the Fatimid period.<sup>2</sup>

Practically all the published Fatimid beads are independent, unattached to any larger piece of jewelry, but one exception shows how these beads might have been incorporated into a larger jewelry setting. A necklace in the collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority, part of a hoard excavated at Caesarea, consists of several beads, the most important of which are one biconical and two spherical beads that form the centerpiece of the necklace. All three are constructed of openwork filigree and decorated with granulation.<sup>3</sup> Because the necklace had been preserved in a vessel with other objects, it remained intact and presumably in its original form.

The pendant (cat. 101) employs the typical Fatimid box construction and filigree technique, using straight and twisted gold wire. The points of the crescent terminate in a turquoise bead, and several loops around its perimeter suggest that a string of gems originally embellished the border. At the center, a pair of confronted birds is depicted in polychrome cloisonné enamel, a technique more closely associated with Byzantine production in Constantinople than with the eastern Mediterranean during the Fatimid period. However, enamel work (known in the medieval Arabic literature as *mina*) clearly had appeal in Fatimid Egypt as well. One eleventh-century source mentions a gift from a Byzantine king to the Fatimid court that included five bracelets and three saddles, all encrusted with polychrome enamel.<sup>4</sup> Another source includes jewelry with enameled elements in trousseau lists.<sup>5</sup> The cloisonné enamel inserts on this pendant may have been purchased ready-made, perhaps imported from the Byzantine world, and then incorporated into the locally made gold setting, a theory supported by the construction of the setting and the apparent use of adhesive to fix the enameled plaque in place.<sup>6</sup> A similar polychrome-enameled crescent medallion, which was excavated at

Fustat, is in the collection of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. It, too, bears a confronted-bird motif.<sup>7</sup> ЕК/КЗ

1. Another biconical bead is in the collection of the L. A. Mayer Institute for Islamic Art, Jerusalem, but it is not openwork. Rather, it is made of a flat sheet in the form of two attached cones, with decoration in wire filigree possibly covered by granulation (Jerusalem 1987, p. 89, no. 119). The National Museum of Damascus has a necklace composed of gold beads, both spherical and biconical, along with pearls and other round beads (see Amsterdam 1999–2000, p. 272, no. 266).
2. Amsterdam 1999–2000, p. 268, nos. 257, 258. For the drawing, see Rosen-Ayalon 1991, p. 15.
3. Weyl et al. 1995, p. 90.
4. Al-Qaddumi, ed. 1996, pp. 113–14, and see also note on p. 302 explaining the translation of the term *dusut* as “bracelet” rather than “chest” (cf. al-Qaddumi 1990, p. 90, cited in an essay on this pendant by Marilyn Jenkins in New York 1997c, p. 420).
5. Goitein 1983b, pp. 200–26, esp. p. 208.
6. Jenkins in New York 1997c, p. 421. Other enameled pieces of the period bearing inscriptions correctly rendered in Arabic suggest that Fatimid jewelers eventually adopted this technique; see Gonzalez 1999.
7. O’Kane, ed. 2006, p. 61.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 99: [Art dealer, Jerusalem, until about 1977–78]; [Derek J. Content, England, from about 1978]; [Khalili Gallery, London, until 1980; sold to MMA]

Cat. 100: [Art dealer, Jerusalem, until about 1977–78]; [Derek J. Content, England, from about 1978]; [Khalili Gallery, London, until 1980; sold to MMA]

Cat. 101: Theodore M. Davis, New York (until d. 1915); on loan from his estate during settlement of estate (1915–30)

## 102. Pyxis

Syria, mid-13th century

Brass; hammered, chased, inlaid with silver and black compound

H. 4 1/8 in. (10.5 cm); Diam. 4 in. (10.3 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1971 1971.39a, b

This pyxis is one of a group of inlaid brass pieces, dated around the thirteenth century, that technically and stylistically belong to the Islamic metalwork tradition but are decorated with scenes related to the life of Christ, certain Christian saints, and ecclesiastical figures.<sup>1</sup> Most of these objects, including the present work, are anepigraphic and thus yield little documentary information. Their visual sources, patronage, attribution, and authorship have been discussed in several studies.<sup>2</sup> Scholars generally attribute most of them to Ayyubid Syria and concur that different examples from the group were made for a variety of reasons and patrons.<sup>3</sup> Some may have been ordered by local Christian patrons, others for crusader knights who wished for Holy Land souvenirs, and still others for Muslim patrons who wanted them as diplomatic gifts



to crusader representatives or European potentates or even for their own appreciation.<sup>4</sup>

Here, eight trilobed arches contain figures against a background filled with tightly interwoven vegetal scrolls, which also decorate the interstices between the arches. One arch represents a compressed version of the Entry into Jerusalem, with Christ shown seated upon a donkey; two figures below the donkey spread garments while another couple behind it holds branches. At the apex of this vignette, two angels support a canopy over Christ.<sup>5</sup> The other arches

contain single standing figures, and the lid represents a scene of the Madonna and Child. The absence in this decorative program of any of the geometric interlace, T- or Y-fret patterns, or plaited bands so frequently encountered in inlaid metalwork of the period is striking. The only exception occurs on the underside of the pyxis, where one small, central roundel bearing a six-pointed star composed of centrifugal Y-frets appears amid dense vegetal scrolls.

Even though the pyxis is missing most of the inlay that would have provided design details, the figures are unusually expressive in their gestures, poses, and sense of movement. The two to the right of the Entry scene both turn in the direction of Christ. To the left of that scene, a male extends his hands in supplication toward Christ, and a female twists in his direction as her feet face away. Only the figure positioned opposite the Entry scene stands frontally, while those flanking him signal his importance by turning in his direction. This personage has been tentatively identified as Saint Andrew on the basis of his forked beard, an attribute found in other representations of the apostle.<sup>6</sup> Since Andrew was the patron saint of an eponymous crusader fraternity founded in the 1230s and based in Acre, it is tempting to associate his representation here with crusader patronage.<sup>7</sup> The iconography of the Madonna and Child scene is especially intriguing. Whereas the other figures are haloed, the Christ Child is not, the Madonna's halo is lobed in an atypical fashion, and her headgear—a turban more suitable to a man than to a woman—is curious.<sup>8</sup> Unlike most eastern Madonnas, she sits on the ground, not a throne.<sup>9</sup> Here again, gesture performs an important role: the mother tilts her head toward the infant, who reaches up to her face tenderly. EK

1. Eva Baer surveyed eighteen of these objects (Baer 1989).
2. Katzenstein and Lowry 1983; Washington, D.C. 1985–86, pp. 124–46; Baer 1989, pp. 41–49; Ward 1993, pp. 84–85; Hoffman 2004; Ward 2005; Auld 2009.
3. Indeed, as Rachel Ward recently concluded, “The provenance, patronage and meaning of each . . . should be reassessed individually” (Ward 2005, p. 321). For a broader perspective on the question of Christian imagery and iconographic intent, see Snelders 2010.
4. Stefano Carboni in New York 1997c, p. 427, no. 285.
5. Auld 2009, p. 50.
6. Baer 1989, p. 38.
7. On the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew, see Setton et al. 1985, pp. 167–68. On the other hand, Saint Andrew is also connected with the foundation of the See of Constantinople, and it is conceivable that his representation here relates to that role.
8. For further discussion of the unusual iconography of the lid, see the catalogue entry by Carboni in New York 1997c, pp. 426–27, no. 285. The lid displays evidence of reworking.
9. Auld observes that this was a convention of European representations of the Madonna only from the fourteenth century and later (Auld 2009, p. 68).

PROVENANCE: Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until d. 1962); Kevorkian Foundation, New York (1962–70); Kevorkian sale, Sotheby's London, December 8, 1970, lot 73, to MMA



### 103. Spherical Incense Burner

Syria, Damascus, late 13th–early 14th century

Brass; spun and turned, pierced, chased, inlaid with gold, silver, and black compound

H. 6¼ in. (15.9 cm); Diam. 6¼ in. (15.9 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 17.190.2095 a, b

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script, at top and bottom:

عز لمولانا الملك المالك العا / لم العادل المؤيد المظفر المنصور / المجاهد الم رابط الماغر الغازي  
 Glory to our lord, the king, the master, the wise / the just, the supported  
 [by God], the triumphant, the victorious, the defender [of the faith],  
 the warrior [at the frontiers], the warden [of the marches], the vanquisher

On top hemisphere, central band (same as above,  
 but with the following added after *الغازي*):

ركن الاسلام والمسلمين  
 pillar of Islam and the Muslims

On lower hemisphere, central band (same as above,  
 with the following added after *المسلمين*):

والمملوك والسلاطين قاتل الكفرة [داو] [د؟]  
 the kings and the sultans, slayer of the infidels, Dawu[d?]

A large number of medieval Islamic pierced-brass globes survive.<sup>1</sup> Like the present example, the globes in this group are composed of two hemispheres. The walls of the hemispheres are usually decorated with inlays of metal or a black compound and perforated with small holes, usually arranged decoratively in groups corresponding to the inlaid design. Most of the globes were fitted inside with a small metal bowl attached to a set of gyroscopic rings that kept the bowl upright, whatever the position of the globe.<sup>2</sup> The function of pierced globes has been the subject of some debate, and it is possible that not all of these objects had the same purpose. The smaller examples—some of which are only a few inches in diameter—may have been carried as hand warmers, with burning coal in the cup, or worn as pomanders containing perfumed substances.<sup>3</sup> Larger globes, such as this one, are generally classified as incense burners, with the cup considered a receptacle for an aromatic substance.<sup>4</sup> It has been argued compellingly that the cups may have held perfumed candles, which would have not only emitted a pleasing scent but also illuminated the perforations.<sup>5</sup>

The designs on the two hemispheres of this globe mirror each other almost exactly. Around the rim of each, epigraphic bands alternate with sets of diamond-shaped cartouches filled with stylized vegetal motifs. A wide register of interlaced large and small circular medallions frames a Z-fret background and pierced sections with knotted openwork, vegetal motifs, or groups of confronted ducks. A smaller epigraphic band circles each hemisphere near its apex. This globe is fitted with a knob and suspension ring, but similar examples were designed without suspension fixtures so that they could roll freely on a surface.<sup>6</sup> Inside, a cup is supported on gimbals, three concentric rings that pivot from their attachment point.

EK



1. Sylvia Auld has catalogued sixty-four of them (Auld 2004, pp. 116–40).
2. Baer 1983, pp. 60–61.
3. Washington, D.C., and other cities 1981–82, p. 58.
4. On thurification in early and medieval Islamic contexts, see Aga-Oğlu 1945, pp. 28–29.
5. Ward 1990–91, pp. 67–82.
6. Ibid., pp. 69, 78; Baer 1983, p. 60.

PROVENANCE: J. Pierpont Morgan, New York (until 1917)

## 104. Brazier

Egypt, second half of 13th century

Brass; cast, chased, inlaid with silver and black compound

13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (35.2 × 39.4 × 41.6 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.540

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on body:

عز لمولانا السلطان العالم / العامل العادل المجاهد المرباط / المؤيد المنصور سلطان الاسلام والمسلمين قاهر / الخوارج و المتמרدين السلطان الملك المظفر يوسف بن عمر

Glory to our lord the Sultan, the wise, the ruler, the just, the defender  
[of the faith], the warrior [at the frontiers], the supported [by God],  
the victorious, sultan of Islam and the Muslims, the subduer of insurgents  
and rebels, the Sultan al-Malik al Muzaffar Yusuf son of 'Umar

Inscription in Arabic in *kufic* script on legs:

[illegible, but may contain some of the same eulogistic phrases as above]

This brazier is one of a group of objects, consisting of metalwork, enameled glass, and at least one textile, made in Egypt or Syria for the Rasulid sultans of Yemen and their officials and identified on the basis of inscriptions and heraldic motifs. Most of these objects were delivered as diplomatic gifts from Mamluk sultans, although some may have been direct commissions.<sup>1</sup> Technically and stylistically, there are no distinctions between the works made for the Rasulids and those made for Mamluk owners.<sup>2</sup>

Braziers such as this served as portable grills and heaters. Here, the lion-headed knobs with suspension rings would be threaded with rods or handles used to transport the heated unit. The paired and confronted dragons' heads positioned centrally on the upper edges of all four sides functioned as spit brackets. Each of the corner elements, consisting of conical finials, edge pieces, and jointed legs with hooflike feet, was cast whole and then bolted to the side panels. Across these panels stretches the monumental



inscription, against a background of scrolling vegetal ornament. The dynastic emblem of the Rasulid sultans, a five-petaled rosette upon a circular shield, features prominently on both sides of each corner bracket.<sup>3</sup>

The names and honorifics mentioned in the inscription clearly belong to Sultan al-Malik al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf ibn 'Umar, the second ruler of the Rasulid dynasty (r. 1250–95) and a prolific patron of architecture and literature. At the beginning of his reign, al-Muzaffar Yusuf was occupied with regaining control over Sana'a, the Tihama, and areas of the south—feats that perhaps earned him the epithet “Subduer of insurgents and rebels” inscribed here. Eventually, a series of strategic political appointments ushered in a long period of peace and prosperity for Yemen, which had already profited from taxation of the lucrative Red Sea trade.<sup>4</sup> For most of his rule, al-Muzaffar Yusuf maintained a favorable diplomatic relationship with the Mamluks: he sent several gift-laden embassies to Cairo and would have received a number in return.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps it was in one of these exchanges that the brazier came into his collection. As many as twelve surviving works of inlaid metalwork are inscribed with his name.<sup>6</sup> EK

1. These are distinct from a group of metalwork objects that are believed to have been produced in Yemen (see Allan 1986). Partial lists of these objects can be found in Porter, V. 1987–88, pp. 250–52; Allan 1986, pp. 39–41.
2. New York 1997a, p. 14.
3. On the rosette as Rasulid emblem, see Allan 1970, pp. 104–5.
4. Smith 1987–88, p. 137. Marco Polo reported that al-Muzaffar Yusuf was “one of the richest princes in the world” from these proceeds (Polo 1875, vol. 2, Book III, p. 434).
5. Porter, V. 1987–88, pp. 232–34.
6. Ibid., pp. 250–52.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

## 105. Tray Stand

Egypt or Syria, mid-14th century

Brass; hammered and turned, chased, inlaid with silver, copper, and black compound, incised

10¼ × 9½ in. (26 × 24.1 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.601

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script on upper section:<sup>1</sup>

مما عمل برسم الجناح العالي / المولوي الاميري الكبير الغازي ا

From [the objects] that were made by order of His High Excellency, the lord, the great amir, the vanquisher

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script at center:

مما عمل برسم الجناح العالي المولوي الاميري الكبير المالكي العالمي ا

From [the objects] that were made by order of His High Excellency, the lord, the great amir, the royal, the learned

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script on lower section:  
المخدومي الحسامي حسين ابن المقر المرحوم / السيفي قوصون الملكي الناصري  
The well-served, al-Husam [al-Din], Husain son of his late excellency  
Sayf [al-Din] Qawsun, [officer] of al-Malik al-Nasir

By 1341, the terminus post quem for this brass tray stand, the so-called epigraphic style that had come into vogue during the reign of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad was fully developed in Mamluk art.<sup>2</sup> Wide bands of bold calligraphy had replaced the animal and figural friezes of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Medallions now framed heraldic motifs rather than scenes of princely enthronements or astrological personifications. Executed in monumental *thuluth* script, the inscription on the lower section of this stand identifies the patron as the son of the powerful amir Qawsun. Although no date is provided, its reference to Qawsun as “the late excellency” places the commission after the amir’s death in 1341. Husain, the son of Qawsun, adopted the heraldic device of his father—a ringed cup on a divided shield, which indicated Qawsun’s ceremonial role as cupbearer to the sultan. This device is repeated four times on the sloping upper and lower sides of the stand within large round medallions decked with lotus blossoms and peonies, and four times on the central inscription band. Although the cup emblems are small relative to the object and the other decorative elements, they stand out because they are the only motifs inlaid with copper, the reddish hue of which contrasts with the brass body as well as with the yellow brass and silver inlays.





This tray stand corresponds to the late phase of fluorescence in Mamluk metalwork, immediately before the decline that set in by the last quarter of the fourteenth century. It also demonstrates the elevated rank to which some sons of Mamluks could rise. The patron's father, one of the most influential amirs during the sultanate of al-Nasir Muhammad, had secured his position even further through marriage: not only had he married a daughter of the sultan, but one of his own daughters had married the ruler himself. Even though Qawsun was ousted ignominiously by fellow Mamluk amirs after al-Nasir Muhammad's death, his sons continued to enjoy high status in Mamluk society—and sufficient wealth to commission luxury objects such as this.<sup>3</sup> EK

1. Published in Mayer, L. 1933, pp. 120–21; Dimand's misreading of this inscription led him to date the tray stand to 1296–98 (Dimand 1926, p. 199).
2. Ward 2004.
3. Levant 1995, pp. 81–85.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)



## 106. Candlestick Base

Iraq, southeastern Turkey, or Syria, 13th century

Brass; hammered and turned, chased, inlaid with silver, copper, and black compound

H. 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (23.8 cm); Diam. 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (34.4 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.561

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on shoulder, outer rim:

العز الدائم والاقبال الزائد والجد الصاعد والأمر النا ● فذ [و] الـ[سـ]عد القاصد [و] النصر الغالب والدهر المساعد الأ ● مر [و] الدولة الباقية [و] السلامة الكاملة والعافية الدا ● ثمة والسعادة والغنى [سـ]ـة [؟] الصافية والكرامة العالية و ● [1] لسلامة الكاملة والعز [و] البقا والشكر والثـ[نـ]ـا [سـ]ـا والمجد [و] ● لعللا والظفر بالاعدا والسعاد[ة] والبقا لصاحبه  
Perpetual glory, increasing prosperity, ascending luck, effectual command, ● constant happiness, conquering victory, eternal support, lasting command and dominion, complete well-being, perpetual health, ● happiness, pure [ . . . ], high generosity, ● complete well-being, glory, long life, thanks, praise, magnificence, ● nobility, victory over the enemies, happiness and long life for its owner ●

In Arabic in *kufi* script on shoulder, around missing socket:

العز الدائم والعمر السالم والجد الصا ● عد والدهر المساعد [و] العافية لصا [؟] والدو ● لة الباق[سـ]ـة والسعادة الكاملة والسلامة ● الكاملة والجاد [؟] النا والبقاء دائم لصاحبه  
Perpetual glory, a healthy life, ascending luck, ● eternal support, [ . . . ] health, eternal dominion, ● complete happiness, complete well-being, ● increasing [ . . . ] and everlasting life for its owner

In Arabic in *naskhi* script on shoulder, added later, chiseled:

حمد الرحم [؟]  
Praise be to the Benefactor[?]

In Arabic in *naskhi* script on shoulder, added later, incised:

علي بن أحمد  
'Ali ibn Ahmad

In Arabic in *naskhi* script on body, added later, incised:

فاطمة  
Fatima

In Arabic in an angular script on inside of body, incised:

برسم الخزانة / المظفرية  
By order of the treasury of [al-Malik] al-Muzaffar

In Arabic in *naskhi* script on inside of body, incised:

علي أبي [؟]  
'Ali . . . [?]

In Arabic in *naskhi* script on inside of body, chiseled:

أحمد بن العباس  
Ahmad ibn al-'Abbas

Candlesticks of this shape were made for both religious and secular contexts. Only the truncated conical base of this example remains; originally a cylindrical neck would have risen from the base and would have been surmounted by a candle socket. Typically, such sockets imitated the shape of the body on a miniature scale, so the one for this object probably had a truncated conical form as well.<sup>1</sup> The sides are decorated with three densely ornamented zigzag bands. On the central band, pairs of confronted winged dragons with knotted serpentine bodies, finely incised with scales, feline forelegs, and dragon-headed tails, interlace against a background of delicate vegetal scrolls. Two concentric

inlaid inscriptions embellish the shoulder of the candlestick base: around the outer edge, a circular band of *naskhi* interrupted at intervals by rosettes against a vegetal ground, and around the absent socket, a circle of *kufic* divided by four interlace medallions.<sup>2</sup> The remaining inscriptions, etched into areas of plain brass, are not part of the decorative program but rather owners' marks. One, located on the underside of the candlestick base, states that the piece was ordered for the treasury of an individual whose *laqab* was "al-Muzaffar," which suggests a royal patron or collector.<sup>3</sup> However, this personage has not been identified: while the *laqab* corresponds to that adopted by several different rulers in Syria and the Jazira between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the personal name and patronymic following it do not correspond to any of these figures.<sup>4</sup>

Since the inscriptions neither mention the date or place of manufacture nor definitively identify a patron, the attribution for this candlestick depends on stylistic evidence. The tightly rolled spirals filling the background of the arabesque zigzag bands are a hallmark of the group of metalworkers whose *nisba*, *al-Mausili*, signals their connection with the city of Mosul in northern Iraq. Yet, this detail does not narrow down the provenance because these craftsmen are known to have operated in multiple centers in Iraq, Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt during the thirteenth century. Tapering, drum-shaped base forms, while characteristic of thirteenth-century Jaziran workshops, are also found in later examples from Syria and Egypt as well as from Iran.<sup>5</sup> Parallels for the paired dragons depicted here appear in a variety of media during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from Iraq, Anatolia, and Syria. Similar dragons—surmounting gates and portals in Amid (present-day Diyarbakir), Sinjar, Aleppo, Damascus, and Baghdad and fashioned into cast-bronze door knockers in southern Anatolia—have been interpreted as talismanic devices. Analogous figures on a series of Artuqid coins and in manuscript illustrations associated with Artuqid patronage suggest that they may have served as a sort of dynastic emblem in that context.<sup>6</sup> EK

1. Baer 1983, p. 27.
2. A brass disk, pierced in the center, has been soldered onto the opening where the stem of the socket was originally attached.
3. Rice, D. S. 1949, p. 340, esp. n. 40. See also Rice, D. S. 1957, p. 319.
4. See Bosworth 1996, pp. 70–73.
5. Baer 1983, p. 28.
6. For a recent discussion of this dragon motif and its possible significance, see Houston 2010, pp. 17–18, no. 3.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

## 107. *Astrolabe*

Yemen, dated A.H. 690/1291 A.D.

Brass; cast and hammered, pierced, chased, inlaid with silver

Case: H. 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (19.4 cm); Diam. 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (15.6 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore,  
1891 91.1.535a–h

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on back of case:

هذا الاصطرلاب عمل عمر بن يوسف بن علي بن رسول المظفري مُباشرة وإملاً  
سنة ح ٦٩٠

This astrolabe is the work of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn

'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari directly [by himself]

and by his instruction in the year A.H. 690 [1291 A.D.]<sup>1</sup>

Invented in antiquity and refined in various regions of the Islamic world during the medieval period, the astrolabe was used to locate the *qibla* direction, establish correct prayer times, predict positions of heavenly bodies, and determine horoscopes, among other purposes.<sup>2</sup> The present piece is an extraordinarily well-documented example. Its inscription attributes it to a Rasulid prince of Yemen, 'Umar ibn Yusuf, and dates it a few years before 'Umar ascended to the throne under the regnal name *al-Ashraf* (1295–96). 'Umar is known to have compiled a number of treatises on subjects related to the sciences, including a text on the



## 108. Bowl

Probably Egypt, late 10th–early 11th century

Glass, bluish; blown, stained

H. 4¼ in. (10.7 cm); Diam., 6 in. (15.3 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and Gifts of Richard S. Perkins,  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, Mr. and Mrs. Louis E. Seley,  
Walter D. Binger, Margaret Mushekian, Mrs. Mildred T. Keally,  
Hess Foundation, Mehdi Mahboubian and  
Mr. and Mrs. Bruce J. Westcott, 1974–1974-74

Inscription in Arabic in kufic script around rim: [illegible]

construction of astrolabes, sundials, and magnetic compasses.<sup>3</sup> One of the extant manuscripts of this treatise (possibly an autograph version) contains not only illustrations and tables that correspond to this astrolabe but also a certification by 'Umar's teachers attesting to his competence as a maker of such devices and describing several of his works, one of which can be identified with this very piece.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of that description and the particular wording at the end of the inscription, it has been proposed that the astrolabe was created by the prince in collaboration with an unnamed metalworker.<sup>5</sup>

In most respects, 'Umar's instrument follows the form typical of other astrolabes from the medieval Islamic world. Made of brass, it consists of a rotating rule; an openwork rete, or "star-net," with an ecliptic ring and star pointers; a case, or mater, housing four plates; a rotating sighting bar, or alidade, on the back of the case; and a pin (modern). The back of the case bears the previously mentioned inscription along with several registers of astrological symbols and notations. From the top there protrudes a decoratively pierced suspension bracket of arabesque design attached to two rings. Inscribed around the outer edge of the rete are the names of the twenty-eight lunar mansions. One of the four plates is not original and appears to have been reused from another astrolabe. The others, all original, bear the latitudes for four specific locations in Yemen as well as for Mecca and Medina.<sup>6</sup> EK

1. See also the translation in King 1985, p. 102.
2. An explanation of astrolabes and their uses is found in Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, pp. 168–282.
3. Copies of this text survive in Cairo, Tehran, and Berlin (nos. TR 105, MUI 150, and Ahlwardt 5811 [Sprenger 1870], respectively). On the particular interest in astronomy demonstrated in Yemen, see King 1983.
4. Cairo TR 105. These evaluations are based on 'Umar's completion of six astrolabes and two magnetic compasses, as well as other instruments (King 1985, p. 101).
5. The Museum's astrolabe is the only instrument that has been securely attributed to this ruler.
6. Aden, Ta'izz, Sana'a, and North Yemen (King 1985, p. 104).

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

Few works of Islamic stained glass are as impressive as this bowl. Reconstructed from many fragments, it is almost complete, with a few minor losses. Its decoration can therefore be fully appreciated, unlike that of the great majority of similarly ornamented objects, which are fragile, thin-walled, and almost colorless. The profile and shape are also unusual, because most glass bowls have curving rather than flaring walls. A single other glass work, excavated in Syria, has been cited as proof that this shape was sometimes used,<sup>1</sup> but the most obvious comparative medium is luster-painted pottery from ninth- and tenth-century Iraq, as demonstrated by a bowl of almost identical profile excavated in Samarra and now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.<sup>2</sup> This artistic relationship is confirmed by the division of the surface of this bowl into circular and rectangular panels, each including a single stylized palmette tree. Such a decorative program, virtually unknown in glass vessels, is relatively common in luster-painted plates and bowls, most notably from Egypt in the early Fatimid period.<sup>3</sup> There is little doubt that the





painter of this glass bowl had ceramic models in mind when he decorated it.

The presence of an inscription around the band that separates the rim from the decoration is extremely unusual on such glassware.<sup>4</sup> This text was probably copied from a familiar *diwan* of poetry, or was perhaps a proverb, but the chosen calligraphic style and the haste in which it was copied on the curving glass surface have unfortunately defeated any attempt to decipher it except for a few scattered words.

In both stained glass and luster-painted ceramics, silver and/or copper compounds are applied to the surface to produce a metallic sheen. After its surface is painted with a mixture containing metal oxides, the object is heated in a furnace or kiln under reducing conditions. During heating, the metal ions migrate into the glass or glaze and are subsequently reduced to the metallic state. In lusterware, unlike glass, the metallic layer lies over an opacified glaze, producing a more reflective metallic appearance. sc

1. Jenkins 1986, p. 23.
2. Sarre et al. 1925, pl. 16, no. 2.
3. Pinder-Wilson 1959, pl. 1; Jenkins 1968b, figs. 2 and 21.
4. It is comparable only to an inscription on a dish in the Kuwait National Museum (no. LNS 44 G). See Carboni 2001, pp. 58–59, no. 12; and Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, pp. 211–13, no. 104.

PROVENANCE: [Saeed Motamed, Frankfurt, until 1974; sold to MMA]

### 109. Mosque Lamp

Egypt, probably Cairo, shortly after 1285

Glass, brownish; blown, folded foot, applied handles; enameled, gilded

H. 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (26.4 cm); Diam. 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (21 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 17.190.985

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script on neck and body:

مما عمل برسم تربة المقر العالي/ العلاءي البندقدار/ قدس الله روحه

From [the objects] that were made for the tomb of His High Excellency al-'Ala'i al-Bunduqdar (the keeper of the bow), may God sanctify his soul

Enameled-and-gilded glass “mosque lamps” are among the most ambitious, distinctive, and sought-after products made in Egyptian and Syrian glass factories during the Mamluk period. Every mosque, *madrasa*, *khanaqah* (hospice), and mausoleum that flourished within the Mamluk sultanate would have required many, and in some cases dozens of, mosque lamps. Each holding a saucer filled with oil and water and a floating wick, they were suspended from the ceiling by means of long metal chains at just over a man's height from the floor. The resulting “forest” of dimly lit lamps neatly arranged in rows—their light glowing through the gilt and the

glassy enamels—must have been quite an impressive sight for worshippers entering a mosque.

The technique of enameling allowed glass workers extraordinary creative freedom, not only in decorating an object but also in adding inscriptions. Mosque lamps usually bore the most appropriate verses from the “Sura of Light” (Qur'an 24:35) and thus emphasized the luminous presence of God. Many inscriptions, however, blended religious and secular themes by also providing the name of the patron who commissioned the building. The present mosque lamp is somewhat unusual because it carries only a dedicatory inscription, copied around the neck in blue enamel and then again around the body in gold.

This historical inscription, a rare occurrence in glass studies, reveals much useful information and establishes the lamp as the earliest datable one from the Mamluk period. The keeper of the bow (*bunduqdar*) was a high-ranking officer of the complex Mamluk court system and had the right to display his own emblem, here appropriately illustrated as a stylized golden bow against a red background.<sup>1</sup> “Ala'i” means that the *bunduqdar*, who had begun his career as a slave (as was common under the Mamluks), had maintained the patronymic of his first owner, the amir 'Ala' al-Din Aqsunqur. The patron of this lamp was undoubtedly Aydakin al-'Ala'i al-Bunduqdar, who, according to one source, died in Cairo in June 1285.<sup>2</sup>



The inscription reveals that this lamp was commissioned for Aydakin's tomb (*turba*), which was erected about 1284 near the Citadel in Cairo as part of a complex that also included his daughter's tomb and a *khanagah*. The tomb chamber, a small room of about sixty-four square feet, still contains Aydakin's wooden grave marker (*tabut*) and a keel-arched prayer niche (*mihrab*). This lamp was once suspended either directly over the *tabut* or in front of the *mihrab* as a testament to his life and social status.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, enameled-and-gilded mosque lamps became popular among European collectors, and a large number of them were taken from their buildings in Cairo and sold. J. P. Morgan, who donated this work to the Museum in 1917, had acquired it in 1904 through a Paris sale from Émile Gaillard, who was apparently its first European owner. SC

1. The *bunduq*, a term commonly translated as "hazelnut" in Arabic today, was a bow that propelled pellets (hence, "nuts") rather than arrows.
2. Mayer, L. 1933, pp. 83–84.

PROVENANCE: Émile Gaillard, Paris (until d. 1904; sale Hôtel Gaillard, Paris, June 7–16, 1904, lot 579, to Morgan); J. Pierpont Morgan, New York (1904–17)



### 110. Footed Bowl (*Tazza*)

Probably Syria, mid-13th century  
Glass, colorless with yellow tinge; dip-molded, blown, applied  
dip-molded blown foot, stained, enameled, gilded

H. 7¼ in. (18.3 cm); Diam. 7¾ in. (19.7 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.1538

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script:

يا طلعة القمر المنير الزاهر

يا قامة الغصن الرطيب الناضر

His (Her) face is like the brilliant shining moon,

The posture like a tender blooming sprout

A note found in the archives of the Museum as part of Edward C. Moore's celebrated bequest in 1891 names "this *tazza*" as "the crown and glory of the collection." Indeed, some 120 years after it entered the Museum, it is still one of the best-known, most impressive, beloved, and frequently published works in the Islamic art collection. Even though its original domed lid is missing, its appealing, elegant profile, honey-colored glass, and lavish decoration dominated by the use of gold fully justify its fame.

The bowl was also among the first to be instrumental in fostering an appreciation of Islamic enameled-and-gilded glass in the second half of the nineteenth century. French imitators of this complex decorative glass technique, among them Philippe-Joseph

Brocard and J. D. Imberton, copied this bowl in the 1870s and 1880s, while it was in the possession of the collector Charles Schéfer (who had reputedly acquired it from a barber in Damascus).<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest modern studies on glass appropriately includes an illustration of this object.<sup>2</sup>

A bowl supported on a tall foot is known as a *tazza*, a term that may derive from the Arabic *tas*. This shape is most likely datable to the transitional period between Ayyubid and Mamluk rule in Syria around the middle of the thirteenth century. Here, the generous use of gold, modest use of other enameled colors, small scale of the figures, shallow, molded vertical ribs of the walls, and poetic inscription reinforce this attribution. The author of the verse, copied in cursive *naskhi* calligraphy around the largest diameter of the bowl, has long been unknown.<sup>3</sup> Recent research by Abdullah Ghouchani has revealed that the text appears, albeit with slight variations, in the corpus of Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Mukhtar (A.H. 543–622/1148–1225 A.D.).<sup>4</sup>

The exact function of this *tazza* has not been determined, although sources suggest that it may have contained sweetmeats, dates, or nuts. However, if the poetic reference and the glow of its golden decoration lead the viewer to imagine it full of sweet wine or *fugqa'* (beer), the vision of a full moon sounds entirely appropriate. SC

1. See Vernoit 1998, esp. p. 111, fig. 25.2.
2. Gerspach 1885, fig. 44.
3. The verse is translated in Corning, New York, and Athens 2001–2, p. 241.
4. See Safadi 1981, p. 146.

PROVENANCE: Charles H. A. Schéfer, Paris; Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

### 111. Bottle

Egypt, possibly Cairo, late 13th century  
Glass, greenish; blown, folded foot; enameled, gilded  
H. 17 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (43.5 cm); Diam. 11 in. (27.9 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1941 41.150

Enameling and gilding on glass was a difficult technique that required much practice before it was mastered. After the enamels were applied on the finished object, they needed to be fired in order to fix them permanently onto the surface; however, the high temperature needed to fuse the enamels could also melt the object. The glassworkers' clever solution was to constantly rotate the object at the mouth of the furnace while it was still attached to the pontil—a movement that prevented the vessel from sagging. This is how the celebrated mosque lamps, bottles, vases, basins, and other functional objects in enameled-and-gilded glass were created in Egypt and Syria during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when a full understanding of the physical and chemical properties of glass could be achieved only through experience.

This bottle is perhaps the most important work of enameled-and-gilded glass in the Museum's collection, a true tour de force because of both its enormous size and its unusually complex painted decoration. It is also memorable because it entered the Museum after a series of fortunate circumstances. Said to have been acquired in Cairo in 1825 by the Austrian vice-consul Champion,<sup>1</sup> it was presented to the Habsburg emperor Francis I. The bottle went on display at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, where it remained until 1938, when it was sold together with other objects in order to acquire an important thirteenth-century Austrian chalice. Joseph Brummer, the dealer in charge of the sale, had a gallery in New York, and the Museum moved swiftly to acquire this, as well as other splendid works, from him.

The decoration of the bottle is not only superior in quality but also unusual for incorporating several features that show a kinship with the Iranian Ilkhanid artistic language, a frequent inspiration for Mamluk artists. The most obvious of these elements is the Chinese-inspired phoenix, known as a *simurgh* in Iran, that surrounds the neck. Another, the series of individual horseback duels,

provides one of the most remarkable painted figural sequences in any media in Mamluk art and probably reflects the popular *furusiyya* (horsemanship) tournaments. Some of the fourteen individuals engaged in combat are represented as Ilkhanid soldiers, the greatest rivals of the Mamluks in the Islamic world. The three prominent circular medallions are also exceedingly sophisticated: their precise, dense scrolling patterns resemble those found in the best illuminated manuscript pages and inlaid metalwork from the same period.

SC

1. Schmoranz 1898, p. 31.

PROVENANCE: [Art market, Cairo, until 1825; to Champion]; M. Champion, Austrian vice-consul, Cairo, 1825; to Habsburg emperor; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria (1825–1938); to Brummer; [Brummer Gallery, Inc., New York, 1938–41; sold to MMA]







### 112. Panel

Egypt, 11th century  
Wood (teak); carved  
13 3/4 × 8 7/8 in. (34.9 × 22.7 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1911 11.205.2

Although this piece bears no inscription or other intrinsic dating evidence, it can be attributed to the eleventh century on the basis of stylistic comparison to works from dated contexts. Wooden beams and panels discovered in secondary use in Mamluk buildings erected at the site of the Western Fatimid Palace in Cairo are very similar in style and design.<sup>1</sup> These wooden elements are believed to have been originally carved for that palace, which Caliph al-'Aziz (r. 975–96) erected and Caliph al-Mustansir (r. 1036–94) renovated.<sup>2</sup>

The composition of this panel centers on a pair of addorsed horses' heads. Arching into S-forms, their necks merge in the middle of the panel with a stylized vegetal design of stalks and leaves

that intertwines with the surrounding vine scroll. The rounded and beveled edges of these elements recall woodwork in the Abbasid and Tulunid period "beveled-style," but are distinguished from it by the deep relief with which they are carved and by the distinct figure-ground relationship that results. Furthermore, a second level of shallow relief appears in details such as the eyes and nostrils of the horses, their bridles ornamented with pearl borders, and the serrated leaf elements, all of which are executed with delicately incised lines. The entire exuberant zoomorphic scroll is contained within a beveled rectangular frame.

The Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, has in its collection a panel of nearly identical design and dimensions that was almost certainly created for the same context.<sup>3</sup> The two panels may be elements of a door, similar to one also preserved in the same museum. That door consists of seven such rectangular plaques arranged both vertically and horizontally within a plain framework.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, the horse-headed panels may have belonged to a piece of furniture, such as a chest, cupboard, or screen. EK

1. Pauty 1931a, pp. 50–51; Anglade 1988, pp. 45–82.
2. See also Meinecke-Berg 1991 and Meinecke 1991.
3. O'Kane, ed. 2006, p. 88, no. 80; Lamm 1936, pl. 1c; London 1976c, p. 285, no. 443.
4. Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina 2001, p. 200, pl. 313. See also Jenkins 1972.

PROVENANCE: Lucy Olcott Perkins, Florence, Italy (until 1911; sold to MMA)

### 113. Pair of Doors

Egypt, Cairo, ca. 1325–30  
Wood (rosewood and mulberry); carved, inlaid with carved ivory, ebony, and other woods  
77 1/4 × 35 × 1 3/4 in. (196.2 × 88.9 × 4.4 cm)  
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.2064

This pair of doors once belonged to a *minbar* and most probably came from the base of its stairs.<sup>1</sup> An elaborate geometric design centered on twelve-pointed stars arranged in staggered rows decorates the front of the doors, which are constructed of rosewood. Plaques of ivory, intricately carved with arabesque designs surrounded by thin borders of inlaid wood, fill the interstitial spaces inside the interlace framework. On their reverse, the doors are made primarily of mulberry wood and decorated in a simpler manner than on the front, with an arrangement of horizontal and vertical panels carved with vegetal scrolls and inlaid with light-colored wood and ebony.

Originally, each leaf had its own rectangular frame. At some point before the doors came to the Metropolitan Museum, the inner vertical frame elements were removed from both leaves, which were then mounted together, with the result that the geometric pattern of the strapwork appears contiguous.<sup>2</sup> Today a modern outer frame of beechwood laminated with rosewood surrounds the pair. These alterations may have been done by the previous owner, Edward C. Moore, who, before bequeathing them to the Museum in 1891, had them installed in his own residence.<sup>3</sup>

The similarity of these doors to fragments of furnishings from the Mosque of Amir Qawsun, now at the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, suggests that they may have also come from that mosque.<sup>4</sup> A published description of Qawsun's *minbar* before the mosque's demolition in 1873 included drawings detailing several of its elements, one of which is a panel decorated in an almost identical manner.<sup>5</sup> An inscribed panel from Qawsun's *minbar* bearing the date A.H. 727/1326–27 A.D. is now in the collection of the same museum.<sup>6</sup> Other fragments said to come from this *minbar* were recently auctioned at the sale of the collection of Charles Gillot, who obtained them from Dikran Kelekian in 1900; one, an inlaid panel with a geometric design very similar to that of the Metropolitan's doors, is now at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar.<sup>7</sup> As one of the most powerful and wealthy amirs during Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's third reign, Qawsun had access to the finest materials and most expert craftsmen of the period, and he may well have turned to them for the execution of this pair of doors.

EK

1. Karnouk 1981.
2. Thanks are due to Miriam Kühn of the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, for sharing her expertise on *minbars* and providing numerous images for comparison.
3. A painted portrait of the collector depicting him seated in front of these doors is reproduced in Jenkins-Madina 2000, p. 78, and Loring 2001, p. 24.
4. Karim 2002, p. 45.
5. Prisse d'Avennes 1877, p. 107 and pls. 85–88.
6. The Danish Orientalist A. F. Mehren recorded this inscription in situ (Berchem 1894, p. 178, no. 121). Van Berchem noted that this date precedes that of the mosque's completion and posits that the *minbar* was made first; however, J. D. Weill contends that this plaque, when seen on the *minbar*, must have been in reuse (Weill 1931–36, vol. 2, pp. 96–99, no. 7850).
7. Christie's Paris, March 4–5, 2008, lot 40.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)





### 114. Wall Panel with Geometric Interlace

Egypt, Cairo, 15th century

Polychrome marble; mosaic

46¼ × 23½ × 5 in. (117.5 × 59.7 × 12.7 cm)

Gift of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, 1970 1970.327.8

Panels of inlaid polychrome marble often decorated interior walls of both religious institutions and palaces in Egypt and Syria during the Mamluk period. This example comes from an unknown building. With its rectangular format and vertical orientation, it probably once adorned the lower register of a wall, but similar marble inlay also appears on contemporary *mihrabs*, spandrels, and even cenotaphs. Flanking the inlaid panel, the interlocking marble revetment in contrasting colors, a device known in medieval times as *ablaq* (literally, striped), is a hallmark of Mamluk architectural decoration. The framed, rectangular baseboard slabs at the bottom of the panel are also typical of wall treatments of the time.<sup>1</sup>

The design of the tessellated central panel—an interlacing repeat pattern based on a central ten-pointed star, surrounded by a variety of polygonal shapes—compares closely with designs from many media in Mamluk art. Such patterns were frequently used in carved and inlaid woodwork, especially door panels, including the *minbar* doors previously discussed (cat. 113). Another vehicle for this pattern, on a much smaller scale, is bookbinding: a fourteenth-century example in the Metropolitan Museum attributed to Egypt or Syria provides an especially close parallel.<sup>2</sup> The correspondence between such distinct media can be attributed to the role of the *rassamun*, designers whose workshops, situated in the market streets of Cairo, generated patterns for a wide range of purposes that could easily have been scaled as needed.<sup>3</sup>

Marble was not widely quarried by the Mamluks.<sup>4</sup> It was a prized material, removed from ancient Egyptian, Roman, Byzantine, and crusader sites within the Mamluk territories and collected as war booty from other regions.<sup>5</sup> Whole columns in pairs or sets were especially valued, but those unsuitable for structural reuse were sliced thin and applied as polychrome sheathing or carved into ornamental revetment, while the small remnants were combined to create inlays such as those found here.

EK



1. Behrens-Abouseif 2007, pp. 90–97.
2. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 33.103.2a, b). Mexico City 1994, pp. 106–7; Dimand 1944a, p. 79, ill. p. 80, no. 46 (33.103.2a, b).
3. Behrens-Abouseif 2007, p. 41.
4. Burgoyne 1987, p. 97; see also Goodwin 1977, esp. p. 26, and Meinecke-Berg 1980.
5. Kahil 2008, pp. 81–82.

PROVENANCE: Hagop Kevorkian Fund, Roslyn, N.Y. (until 1970)



## 115. Textile Fragment

Egypt or Syria, 14th century  
Silk; lampas  
21 1/4 × 14 in. (54 × 35.6 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.17

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script, repeated within medallions, in mirror image:

السلطان الملك

The sultan, the king

Against a deep blue satin ground, a cream-colored ogival vine scroll encloses lotus-blossom medallions—each one containing an almond-shaped form with an Arabic inscription announcing, “The sultan, the king.” The anonymous ruler invoked by this inscription was likely one of the Mamluk sultans who reigned over much of Egypt and Syria from their capital, Cairo. Owing to the dry climate of this region, a number of textiles survive from this period.<sup>1</sup>

Luxury textiles such as this one played a vital role in the courtly life of the Mamluk sultans. Contemporary historians document the bestowal of textiles by Mamluk rulers—including so-called *khila'*, or robes of honor—at investiture ceremonies where such weavings served to confer promotions of rank and to reward service.<sup>2</sup> Over time, a carefully coded sartorial hierarchy developed within Mamluk society, wherein dress indicated status. While it is difficult to align surviving examples with the textiles described in the historical accounts, silks like this, inscribed with the title of the sultan, may have counted among these highly treasured and politically charged gifts.

In terms of design, this example is similar in both pattern and palette to several silk textile fragments, thought to be of Chinese manufacture, found in the environs of Cairo. Some of these fabrics display an ogival pattern comparable to the Museum's piece,<sup>3</sup> while others exhibit designs incorporating swaying vines with almond-shaped medallions containing similar Arabic inscriptions.<sup>4</sup> The medallions on the latter textiles refer to a specific Mamluk sultan, al-Nasir Muhammad (r. 1294–1340, with interruptions).<sup>5</sup>

Textile scholars note that in 1323 the Ilkhanid ruler Abu Sa'id reportedly sent a gift of seven hundred specially commissioned “Mongol” textiles, woven with the Mamluk sultan's name and titles, to al-Nasir Muhammad.<sup>6</sup> It has been proposed that these silks bearing Arabic inscriptions naming al-Nasir Muhammad are survivals from that early fourteenth-century gift. While this connection remains to be proven, the strong correspondence between the Metropolitan's textile pattern and the design of the related “Chinese” or “Mongol” silks suggests that imported fabrics inspired the weaver of our Mamluk textile. This would not be unexpected, as the use of chinoiserie elements in works in other

media produced during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad has already been noted.<sup>7</sup> Thus, this textile speaks not only to the cosmopolitan taste of the Mamluk court in the fourteenth century but also to the continuum of trade and diplomatic contact stretching from China to the Mediterranean during this period.

DMT

1. For more on the subject of Mamluk textiles, see Mackie 1984. Textiles similar to the Museum's example may be found in Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. 95.153; see Wilckens 1992, p. 60, no. 99); Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels (no. Tx 395; see Errera 1927, pp. 37–38, no. 26; and Raemdonck 2006, p. 78); and Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. 1896–333; see Kendrick 1924, p. 41, no. 960, pl. 11). A number of other Mamluk textiles exhibit more distantly related inscribed patterns; see Washington, D.C., and other cities 1981–82, pp. 232–33, no. 116. The Metropolitan's piece has been published in Day 1950, p. 113.
2. See Petry 2001 and Mayer, L. 1952.
3. See Wilson 2005, pp. 21–22, figs. 17, 18, and a related textile in the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Asian Art collection (acc. no. 46.156.20). Their overall ogival pattern is comparable to the present piece, but in place of an Arabic inscription these textiles contain the Chinese character for “longevity.”
4. See Mackie 1984, pl. 21 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 769.1898), and more recently Menshikova 2006, esp. pp. 96–97, no. 94 (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. EG-905).
5. For more examples of pieces inscribed with the name of al-Nasir Muhammad, see Washington, D.C., and other cities 1981–82, pp. 224ff.
6. This event is reported by the Arab historian Abu'l al-Fida. One of the first references to this account in relation to these textiles is found in Kendrick 1924, p. 40. Citing an earlier 1870 article by Joseph Karabacek, Kendrick states that “the Arabic chronicler Abu el Fida . . . record[s] . . . that in 1323, Mongolian ambassadors brought to En Nasir 700 Mongolian stuffs, with the Sultan's titles interwoven, on the backs of 11 Bactrian camels.” Subsequent textile scholars make reference to this story, including Mackie 1984, p. 145 n. 40; Wardwell 1988–89, pp. 101–2; Carboni 2002–3, p. 206 n. 36; and more recently Menshikova 2006, pp. 95, 97. For more on Abu'l al-Fida, see Washington, D.C., and other cities 1981–82, pp. 15 and 224.
7. Ward 2004, esp. p. 66.

PROVENANCE: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, until 1946; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles, 1946; sold to MMA]





## 116. *The Simonetti Carpet*

Egypt, probably Cairo, ca. 1500  
Wool (warp, weft, and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
29 ft. 5 in. × 94 in. (896.6 × 239 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1970 1970.105

The conventional practice of naming Islamic carpets either after the place they were found (“Niğde Carpet”) or after a previous owner (“Anhalt Carpet”) in this case memorializes the former Italian owner of this magnificent example of fifteenth-century Cairene weaving under the Burji Mamluk dynasty (1382–1517). The Simonetti Carpet is commonly called a “five-color Mamluk carpet” because of its color palette. The materials (most notably S-spun, or clockwise-spun, wool), dyestuffs (a limited range of colors including a purple-red made from the lac insect), and distinctive repertoire of geometric designs are all characteristic of Mamluk carpets from the period. The width, about ninety-four inches (239 cm), is typical for contemporaneous carpets woven in Cairo. A roller-bar loom was used to make the carpet: the unwoven warps were unwound from a rotating cylindrical wood roller

at the top of the loom, and the finished carpet was then wound up around a similar roller at the bottom. This method allowed the same loom to be employed to weave both very long and relatively short carpets in the same width. The Simonetti displays three of the geometric medallion designs usually seen in short Mamluk carpets (two of them repeated, combined in A-B-C-B-A sequence) in one very long, impressive work of art.

Mamluk carpets originated in a physical environment that lacked the combination of abundant marginal grazing land and a temperate climate with cool winters that was common to most carpet-weaving areas in the Islamic world. While related to a broader tradition of Turkish weaving centered in Anatolia, far to the north, the designs of these carpets include atypical elements, such as stylized papyrus plants, that are deeply rooted in





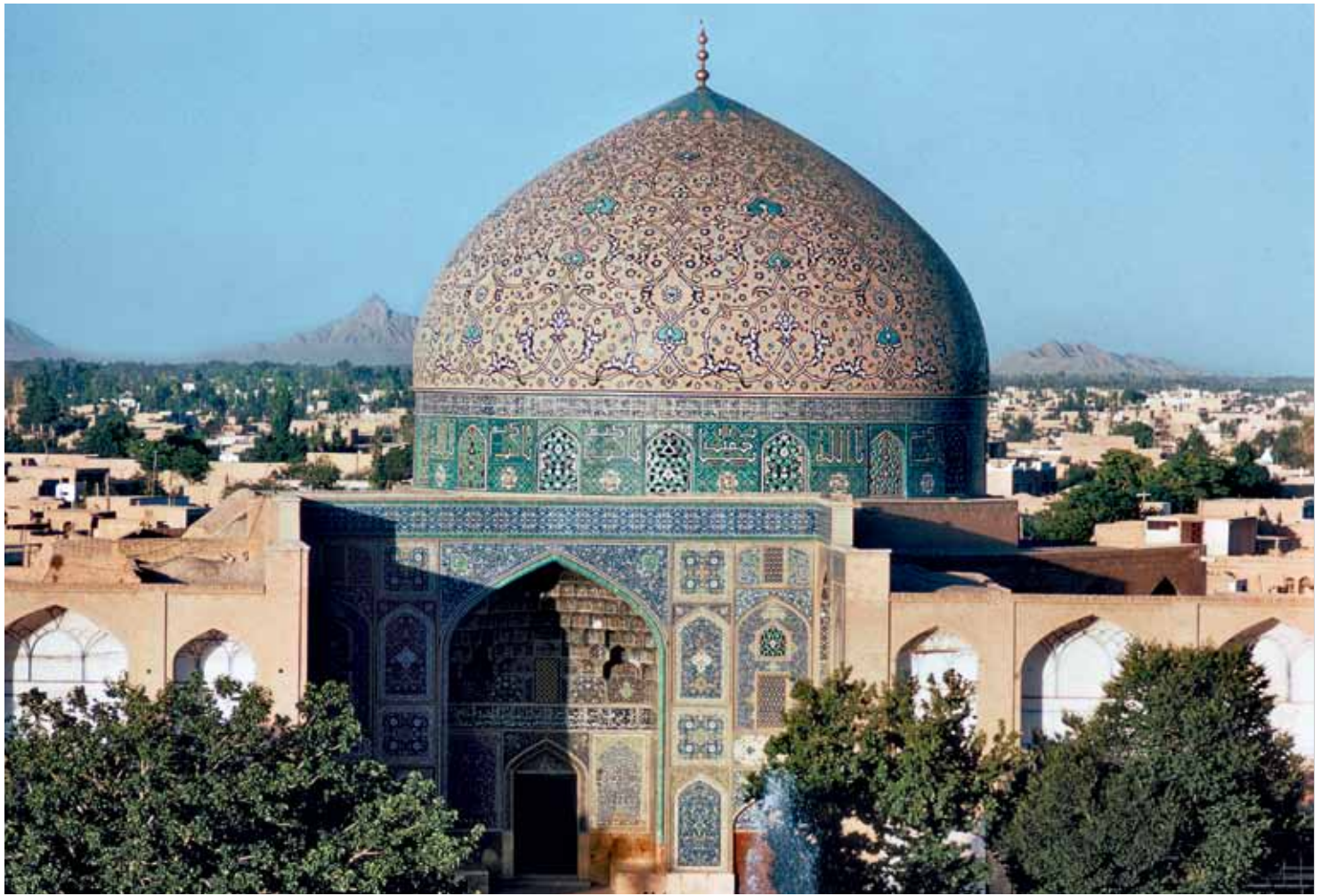
Egyptian tradition. Their unusual composition and layout probably represent an attempt to develop a distinctive product that could in effect establish a “Mamluk brand” in the lucrative European export market. The uncharacteristic color scheme—devoid of undyed white pile and employing a limited range of three or five hues in much the same value—also suggests a conscious attempt to create a particular stylistic identity. Also virtually unique in the world of Islamic carpets is the S-spun wool. It has been argued that the tradition of clockwise wool spinning originated in Egypt because of the earlier Egyptian tradition of spinning flax into linen thread. Details of the plant’s botanical structure make it impossible to spin flax fiber in the more common counterclockwise direction utilized throughout the Middle East for wool and cotton.

Mamluk carpets with the color combinations seen in the Simonetti are now generally accepted as part of an earlier tradition that has many links to the weaving of Anatolia, Iran, and Syria. The “three-color” Mamluk carpets, well represented in the Metropolitan’s collection, represent a later development that continued well after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. Many such carpets may have been produced well into the seventeenth century, and possibly even later.

W B D

PROVENANCE: Guida da Faenza, Italy (until 1902); [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome]; [Attilio Simonetti, Rome, in 1910; cat., 1912, no. 167]; private collection, Pisa (by 1937); [P. W. French and Company, New York, until 1970; sold to MMA]





## *Art of Iran and Central Asia (15th to 19th Centuries)*

SHEILA R. CANBY

Our understanding of Timurid portable arts is primarily based on works produced after the reign of Timur (Tamerlane, r. 1370–1405), the founder of the dynasty. Although Timur himself commissioned grandiose buildings in Samarqand and his birthplace, Kish (Shahr-i Sabz), few works of art can be associated with his patronage. The impact of mass deportations of skilled craftsmen from Iran, Syria, India, and Anatolia to Samarqand to construct and decorate the Timurid capital may have lasted in Transoxiana only for two generations, but the reverse movement of these artisans after Timur's death ensured the spread from Cairo to Delhi of the artistic style associated with this dynasty. In the early fifteenth century, the components of this "International Timurid style" included both the penchant

for extremely intricate designs and the taste for very large-scale buildings and objects, such as the Qur'an (cat. 117A–E) probably produced for the Bibi Khanum, Timur's congregational mosque in Samarqand.<sup>1</sup>

In the late twentieth century, much art-historical attention was focused on the organization of the royal Timurid workshops and library, at which books were copied, illustrated, and bound but which also served as a center for disseminating designs for all manner of decorated objects.<sup>2</sup> Ranging from woodwork, leather, and stone to textiles, carpets, and lacquer goods, materials produced for royal Timurid or aristocratic use exhibit a level of uniformity that supports the existence of a primary source of design ideas, with many ancillary places of production. The so-called



*Arzadasht* (ca. 1430) attributed to Ja'far al-Tabrizi, the head of the library of Prince Baisunghur at Herat, represents a progress report on the work of the various artists under his supervision, including illuminators, binders, illustrators, stonecutters, tent-makers, and those providing designs to saddlemakers and other craftsmen.<sup>3</sup>

As important as demonstrating that a production system underpinned the stylistic unity of Timurid art in the first half of the fifteenth century is determining how such a practice came into being. Until the hugely destructive Mongol conquests of the early thirteenth century, ceramic and glass production had flourished in the cities of Iran and Central Asia. Silk textiles attest to a high level of expertise and wealthy clientele during Seljuq times (1040–1194). As a result of the two Mongol invasions of Iran in the 1220s and 1250s, glassworking ceased; some ceramic techniques devised under the Seljuqs continued to be used with little innovation until the 1260s, when new elements were introduced that included motifs commonly used in China. The fractured Seljuq urban life and social structure were replaced by the more peripatetic Mongol and Timurid *modus vivendi*, in which leaders moved from region to region in encampments organized along military lines. Yes, Timur and his successors Shah Rukh (r. 1405–47) and Ulugh Beg (r. 1447–49) sponsored major architectural monuments, but for the portable arts the organization of artists in a workshop system gradually emerged as the most effective way for the mobile Timurids to circulate their ideas to a broad range of artisans. The implications of the Timurid *kitabkhana*,<sup>4</sup> or library cum workshop, for the court arts were extremely far-reaching, extending throughout the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) and beyond.

Of the extant works of art from the fifteenth century, the book arts provide a microcosm of Timurid art history. While Shah Rukh, the third Timurid sultan, commissioned historical manuscripts such as the *Majma' al-tavarikh* (The Assembly of Histories, ca. 1425) to be illustrated in a simple, didactic style,<sup>5</sup> his nephew Iskandar Sultan in Shiraz furthered the elegant style of painting practiced at the Jalayirid courts of Tabriz and Baghdad during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. After the blinding of Iskandar Sultan in 1414, some of his artists moved to Herat to work for his cousin, Baisunghur, while others remained at Shiraz in the service of Ibrahim Sultan, Baisunghur's brother. Both princes commissioned illustrated manuscripts. Those produced for Ibrahim Sultan followed the example of Shah Rukh's somewhat austere historical style (cat. 124A, B), while Baisunghur's artists created lyrical paintings characterized by a subtle, jewel-like palette and complex yet harmonious compositions (see cat. 123A–C).<sup>6</sup> The style of painting practiced by Baisunghur's artists was broadly influential, not only in later

Timurid painting but also at the Turkmen courts and at the non-royal level in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Following the death of Ulugh Beg in 1449, the Timurid empire began to shrink in size as a result of misjudged military forays and the growth of confederations of Turkmen tribal groups in western Iran and eastern Anatolia. By the end of the century, as the Turkmen had expanded southward and eastward, the Timurid sultan Husain Baiqara (r. 1470–1506) could hold only the province of Khurasan and a few areas of eastern Iran. Nonetheless, he presided over a court at Herat known for its patronage of brilliant poets and artists such as Jami and Bihzad. The latter, along with his circle in the royal *kitabkhana*, revitalized Persian painting by injecting it with a level of individuality and emotional depth that had been absent from earlier Timurid manuscript illustrations and album pages (cat. 127B). Paintings in royal manuscripts from the late fifteenth century contain innumerable perfectly rendered details that both illustrate the narrative and make sometimes obscure references to people and practices at the court of Sultan Husain Baiqara.<sup>7</sup>

Turkmen painting, by contrast, developed at provincial centers. While its figural style owes much to the Timurids, compositions are far simpler, figures are less individualized and varied in pose and physiognomy, and the palette is brighter than in Timurid painting. The few extant works produced for the Turkmen rulers at Tabriz in the 1480s suggest that court-level Turkmen art was every bit as refined as that of the Timurids. Helmets inlaid with silver (cat. 131) reveal expertise in armor production, with an emphasis on large decorative forms, unlike the minute, almost fussy ornament of late Timurid metalwork. Although the Turkmen ruled western Iran for only half a century, their influence on the arts of the sixteenth century was as great as that of the Timurids. Moreover, the commercial production of illustrated manuscripts at Shiraz, already under way by the 1420s, continued unabated through most of the sixteenth century under the Safavids.

The decisive victory of Isma'il Safavi over the Aq Quyunlu prince Alvand in Tabriz in 1501 marked more than the advent of a new dynasty in Iran. Over the course of the following thirteen years, the political, religious, and artistic landscape of Iran and Central Asia was reconfigured. The Safavids absorbed the Turkmen lands of western Iran and in 1510 defeated the Shaibanid ruler of the territory of Khurasan. Although the Shaibanids in the east and the Ottomans in the west would repeatedly attack Iran during the sixteenth century, the Safavid reunification of Iran had a striking impact on the portable arts. The few objects and royal manuscripts that can be assigned to the period of Shah Isma'il I (r. 1501–24) reveal the continuing taste for refinement and highly detailed ornament (cat. 132).



Painting at Tabriz in the first and second decades of the sixteenth century incorporated the animated palette, fine brushwork, and minute scale found in the few manuscripts illustrated for the Aq Quyunlu Turkmen rulers.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1510s Sultan Muhammad, a native of Tabriz, was the leading artist in the royal Safavid *kitabkhana*;<sup>9</sup> he was later chosen to teach painting to the young Prince Tahmasp, who apparently studied with him for two years before succeeding to the Safavid throne.

A number of factors set Shah Isma'il I apart from his Turkmen and Timurid predecessors. He was the descendant of the shaikhs of a sufi mystical order at Ardabil and was accepted as Iranian, not Turkish, by the Persians.<sup>10</sup> This Iranian identity was accentuated by Isma'il's decision to instate Twelver Shiism as the official religion of Safavid Iran: he thus doubly defined his dominions as distinct from those of their Ottoman Turkish and Shaibanid Sunni enemies. The effect of this exceptional personage on the arts is evident in a new type of inscription adorning objects used in a religious context, in which praise of Imam 'Ali and the Shi'i imams predominates. Even Shah Tahmasp's choice of producing an opulent illustrated *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) may have stemmed from his desire to emphasize the Iranian nature of his realm, despite the fact that politically he was supported, and sometimes bedeviled, by Turkmen tribes. Although Tahmasp (r. 1524–76) did not forcibly relocate artists to the capital at Tabriz, they were attracted to the court. The most gifted joined the royal *kitabkhana*, and by about 1530 the distinctive pictorial styles of Timurid Herat and Turkmen Tabriz merged into a unified, synthesized idiom. In manuscript illustration this took the form of highly polished compositions that included myriad details and vignettes in addition to the main protagonists (cat. 138D).

Until 1555 Shah Tahmasp led a highly mobile life, traveling around his realm while fighting Ottomans in the west and Uzbeks in the east and trying to maintain control of his own tribal allies, called Qizilbash. This nearly constant movement, with life spent in tents, required that the shah be accompanied by members of his court, which included craftsmen and artists as well as soldiers and administrators.<sup>11</sup> Metalworkers would have been present to repair arms and armor, saddlers and leatherworkers would have been needed to make and maintain horse and camel trappings, and artists would have supplied designs not only for all the components of books, from bindings to illustrations, but also for artisans working in other media. As with the Timurids, artistic ideas formulated at the Safavid court filtered out to craftsmen working in provincial cities such as Shiraz and, in the case of textile and carpet weavers, throughout Iran (cats. 168, 171). Some textiles followed the figural style of Shah Tahmasp's manuscript paintings, while others were composed of latticework and flower patterns (cat. 170), a format greatly

admired in Ottoman Turkey. Such variety is to be expected, as silk was an important trade item both internally and outside Iran. While most of the international silk trade focused on the raw material, some manufactured sixteenth-century Safavid silk textiles have been found in Denmark, Austria,<sup>12</sup> and other European countries; such textiles would certainly have been familiar in Turkey and India.

The arts developed differently at the Uzbek courts of Transoxiana than in Iran. Painters and calligraphers who had lived in Herat under the Timurids were in some cases forcibly moved to Bukhara,<sup>13</sup> where a painting style based on late Timurid painting evolved in the 1520s and 1530s. Figures with short necks and barrel chests typify Bukhara painting, and by the 1540s a taste for single- or double-figure album pages prevailed. Fine illumination featuring arabesque decoration on a black ground is also characteristic of sixteenth-century Bukhara manuscripts. The Uzbeks were no strangers to Safavid art, since they repeatedly raided and besieged the Khurasan cities of Mashhad and Herat, but as Sunnis they eschewed the Shi'i trappings of the Safavids and did not inscribe their objects with the names of the imams or with typical Shi'i prayers. As the Mughals came to power in India, artists in Bukhara and other Central Asian centers began to incorporate influences from both east and west, particularly in metalwork.<sup>14</sup> With the exception of the book arts and architecture, however, little evidence remains of the material culture of Central Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The plethora of nineteenth-century carpets and textiles suggests that a long-standing weaving tradition had existed in the region, but its products are no longer extant.

In 1555 Shah Tahmasp concluded the Treaty of Amasya with the Ottomans, ensuring peace until 1578, and transferred the Safavid capital to Qazvin in north central Iran. Tahmasp's reported diminution of interest in the arts has perhaps been overstated,<sup>15</sup> since the shah continued to employ painters to decorate his new palaces at Qazvin, and single-page works dated after 1555 attest to his continued patronage.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, between 1556 and 1565 many of the leading Safavid court painters worked for Shah Tahmasp's nephew Sultan Ibrahim Mirza, who served as governor of Mashhad and Sabzavar, both in Khurasan, during this period. Under this prince, Safavid painting went through a mannerist phase, in which figures with long necks, swaying backs, round cheeks, and incipient double chins replaced the more regularly proportioned bodies of the first half of the century. The magnificent carpets produced during the second and third quarters of the sixteenth century for royal and aristocratic clients (cat. 181) demonstrate not only the technical wizardry of designers and weavers but also the diffusion of the decorative vocabulary used in manuscript illuminations and bindings, textiles, and metalwork.



Fig. 32 Marble throne in the *talar* of Imarat-i Takht-i Marmar, Gulistan Palace, Tehran, 16th–19th century. Photo: © Earl & Nazima Kowall/CORBIS

After Shah Tahmasp died in 1576, Iran entered a dark period both politically and artistically. Not until 1587 and the accession of Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) was the royal *kitabkhana* fully reconstituted. Yet, even though artists returned to royal service, the emphasis had shifted away from illustrated manuscripts to single-page paintings and drawings, which were more broadly affordable and could be collected one by one for inclusion in albums. Such compendia, called *muraqqa’*, included calligraphy specimens as well as images and operated as portable galleries of their owners’ collections. Even artists who worked at the Safavid court expanded their pictorial repertoire to include pictures of men and women from a variety of social strata (cats. 146, 152). In both Qazvin and Khurasan the figural style began to evolve away from the slender youths with small heads to more substantial men and women with shorter necks and a swaying stance. Following the move of the Safavid capital to Isfahan in 1598, painters began to work in a distinctly new style in which primary colors were no longer predominant and everything from facial types to drapery and bodily proportions became larger and heavier than in works of the Qazvin and Khurasan schools.

The establishment of the capital at Isfahan stimulated more than a change in pictorial style. To respond to the need for silver

and a trade imbalance with India, Shah ‘Abbas encouraged trade with Europe. In addition to the raw silk the Iranians sold to the Europeans, more luxury silk textiles and carpets were produced for foreign consumption (cat. 186). Moreover, the end of the Ming dynasty in China in the seventeenth century led for a time to a decrease in exports of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. Iranian potters responded to this gap in the market by greatly increasing production of such ceramics in imitation of Chinese wares. Although the majority of these objects were made for the local market, some were sent abroad as ballast in ships heading for Europe.

By the mid-seventeenth century, Europeans had been visiting Iran for fifty years, and Iranians had become familiar with European art and objects. Along with depicting individuals in European dress, artists began to adopt the illusionistic techniques and even the subject matter of European paintings (cat. 162). The influence of Indian painting and textiles also grew stronger at this time as a result of the continuing traffic of people and goods between the Mughal and Safavid empires. Only at the end of the seventeenth century did innovation in the arts begin to decline in Iran, owing to a dysfunctional government and its resulting economic woes. Even so, artists and their sons continued to be employed in the royal *kitabkhana*, maintaining a two-hundred-year-old tradition.

In 1722 Isfahan was invaded and sacked by Afghans, effectively resulting in the end of the Safavid dynasty. Through the ensuing period of turmoil, the tribal leader Nadir Khan Afshar (r. 1732–47) emerged as *de facto* ruler of Iran. Although he maintained the pretense of ruling on behalf of the Safavid shah, Nadir actually gathered political and military power to himself. During his reign, artistic trends introduced in the previous seventy years of Safavid rule became fully established. For example, some illustrators of Safavid manuscripts had also produced lacquered pen boxes and bookbindings; under the Afsharids, many gifted artists turned to making lacquerware with characteristic bird-and-flower designs. Additionally, the introduction of oil painting on canvas from Europe in the late seventeenth century led well-to-do Iranians to acquire large-scale works in this medium for their great houses. Having adopted the title *shah* in 1736, Nadir led an army to India and sacked its capital at Delhi in 1739, hauling off many caravan loads of jewels and other precious objects. Although this booty briefly improved the economy of Iran, it did little to forestall the political dissolution that led to the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1747 and the rise of a new regional leader, Karim Khan Zand (r. 1750–79).

From his base in Shiraz, Karim Khan ruled southern Iran but could not gain control over the remainder of the Safavid domains. After his death in 1779, the leader of the rival Qajar tribe, Agha Muhammad Qajar, began to consolidate his power from

Mazandaran in the north. In 1794 the Qajars murdered the last Zand ruler, and in 1796 Agha Muhammad Qajar became the effective ruler of Iran. Upon his assassination in 1797, his nephew Fath 'Ali Shah (r. 1797–1834) ascended the throne and took steps to revive the arts and architecture. He constructed palaces and government buildings in Tehran, the new capital, and commissioned numerous portraits featuring his “signature look,” an exceptionally long black beard and wasp waist. Almost as if conducting a modern marketing campaign, Fath 'Ali Shah aimed to spread the image of the powerful, imperial ruler of a resurgent Iran far and wide.

While these paintings could not stem the geopolitical tide of European interference in the affairs of Iran and the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, they represent one aspect of a general artistic renaissance. Production of fine glass revived (cat. 196), and the range of lacquer objects created by leading artists expanded. The variety of subjects illustrated on Qajar lacquerware indicates the multiplicity of influences to which these artists were exposed, from conservative bird-and-flower imagery to nineteenth-century European print sources, to vignettes from illustrated Persian manuscripts and depictions of historical battles (cats. 193, 194). In recent decades scholars have recognized the importance and originality of Qajar art.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the willingness of the Qajar shahs to expose their artists to European techniques and to establish art schools set the stage for developments in the twentieth century. As in many other countries in the Middle East, a Europeanizing academic style of painting prevailed for the first half of the twentieth century, but the openness of Iranian artists to developments elsewhere ultimately led to the burgeoning modern art movement that survives in the country to this day.

The majority of Iranian and Central Asian objects in the collection of the Department of Islamic Art come from courtly and urban settings and, as such, do not reflect the entire range of those societies from 1500 to 1900. A key segment of the population of both areas remained tribal and nomadic. These people produced utilitarian objects of great beauty and technical skill, of which carpets and textiles are the most characteristic creations. Additionally, the beautifully fashioned silver ornaments

worn by women served both to signify wealth and to mark important rites of passage, such as weddings or the birth of a child. The written records of such populations may be far sparser than those of the city-dwelling citizens and rulers of Qajar Iran, but the objects that these people left behind tell of a rich cultural life that is another distinct strand of later Iranian art history.

1. Crowe 1996, pp. 61–62, 189, figs. 2–4; Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, p. 141.
2. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 159–236. A dissenting view was put forward in Rogers 1989. He noted that no documents attest to the existence of a *kitabkhana* during the reign of Timur and characterized “strictly centralized art-production” under Timur’s successors as a “chimera.”
3. Thackston 1989, p. 323.
4. Given as *kutubkhana* in *ibid.*
5. Ettinghausen 1955, p. 42, called this “the historical style of Shah Rukh.”
6. While the *Shahnama* produced for Baisunghur in 1430 (Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran) is the most famous manuscript compiled for this patron, the albums of painting and calligraphy commissioned during his reign are equally important for the subsequent history of the book arts in Iran and Central Asia. As David Roxburgh contended, these albums elicited a level of art-historical awareness that future royal Iranian bibliophiles emulated (Roxburgh 2005b, p. 38).
7. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 258–59.
8. Çağman, Tanındı, and Rogers 1986, *Khamse* of Nizami, H762, nos. 71, 72.
9. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 181.
10. In fact, he was descended from the Aq Quyunlu Turkmen on his maternal side and from Kurds on his father’s side. Savory 1998.
11. Canby 1999b, p. 65.
12. Bier and Bencard 1995; Leithe-Jasper and Distelberger 1998, p. 31; also, Herzig 1992.
13. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, pp. 130–31.
14. Abdullayev, Fakhretdinova, and Khakimov 1986, p. 100 (brazier from Kokand, which the authors date to the nineteenth century but which follows a seventeenth-century Indian form).
15. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 135; London, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass. 1979–80, p. 27; Canby 1999b, pp. 71–72.
16. Roxburgh 2005a, p. 243.
17. Brooklyn 1998–99, pp. 30–62.



## 117A–E. Five Fragmentary Folios from a Qur'an Manuscript

Present-day Uzbekistan, Samarqand, late 14th–early 15th century (before 1405)

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

A. (18.17.1) 19½ × 43⅞ in. (49.5 × 110.8 cm)

B. (18.17.2) 19½ × 43 in. (49.5 × 109.2 cm)

C. (18.17.3) 19½ × 43⅞ in. (49.5 × 110.8 cm)

D. (21.26.12) 28⅞ × 42¼ in. (73.3 × 107.3 cm)

E. (21.26.13) 28¾ × 42 in. (73 × 106.7 cm)

Gift of Samuel T. Peters, 1918 18.17.1–3

Rogers Fund, 1921 21.26.12, .13

In his treatise on calligraphers and painters of the past, the late sixteenth-century writer Qadi Ahmad mentions the left-handed master 'Umar Aqta' saying that "for the Lord of the Time, Amir Timur Gurkan, he wrote a copy [of the Qur'an] in *ghubar* writing; it was so small in volume that it could be fitted under the socket of a signet ring. He presented it to the Lord of the Time, but as he had written the divine word in such microscopic characters, [Timur] did not approve of it. . . . 'Umar Aqta' wrote another copy, extremely large, each of its lines being a cubit [*dhira'*] in length, and even longer. Having finished, decorated and bound [the manuscript] he tied it on a barrow and took it to the palace of the Lord of the Time. . . . The sultan came out to meet him . . . and rewarded the calligrapher with great honors."<sup>1</sup>

The Qur'an described in this anecdote was copied for Timur (Tamerlane, d. 1405), the founder and ruler of the Timurid dynasty (ca. 1370–1507). According to Qadi Ahmad, it was made after Timur rejected a miniature copy and was so large and heavy that it had to be transported on a cart.<sup>2</sup> A stone book stand in the courtyard of the Mosque of Bibi Khanum in Samarqand is believed to have been added by Timur's grandson Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) a few years later in order to accommodate the manuscript and enable the reader to turn its pages during the Friday prayer. Qadi Ahmad's anecdote is likely to be at least partly fanciful, since a production of such magnitude must have been undertaken upon a direct royal commission rather than the calligrapher's initiative. There is little doubt, however, that the manuscript he refers to survives in extremely fragmentary condition in many institutions around the world.<sup>3</sup> Already broken up and dispersed during Qadi Ahmad's time, less than two centuries after its production, its folios were cut horizontally in three parts so that the original seven lines on each page were divided into two sections of two lines and a central one of three.

The Museum has acquired six such fragments over the years, in 1918 (three sections, A–C), 1921 (two sections, D, E), and 1972 (one section, acc. no. 1972.279). Research by the present author in the early 1990s revealed that, surprisingly, the five fragments from 1918 and 1921 form a continuous portion of Sura 28 of the Qur'anic text (from the end of verse 79 to the beginning of



verse 84): the last five lines of one page (three lines of E and two lines of C) are followed by the complete seven lines of the next one (two lines of A, three lines of D, and two lines of B).<sup>4</sup> Appropriately reconstructed and prepared for display by the Museum's paper conservators, they now find pride of place side by side in the new galleries of Islamic Art.

In their re-created format, these pages afford viewers the opportunity to enjoy and admire an exceptional example of *muhaqqaq* cursive calligraphy as well as to appreciate the masterful strokes that 'Umar Aqta' achieved with an oversize reed pen (its tip alone was one centimeter wide) on enormous sheets of polished paper. No other patron, papermaker, or calligrapher has ever been reported to have accomplished such a colossal undertaking. SC

1. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 64.
2. Blair and Bloom 2006 suggested that each page would have originally measured about seven by five feet (2.2 × 1.55 m) and that the complete manuscript would have included 1,500 folios, thus requiring 21 ½ square feet (2,700 sq m) of high-quality paper. Soudavar and Beach 1992, p. 59 and n. 17, under no. 20a, b had estimated earlier that it included about 340 folios "weighing perhaps as much as half a ton" and measured roughly 84 5/8 by 55 7/8 by 13 3/4 inches (215 × 140 × 35 cm).
3. The largest portion is in the Shrine of the Imam Riza in Mashhad, Iran, with at least six complete folios. Additional complete pages are in the Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran; the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, London; the collection of the sultan of Brunei; and, as discussed below, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The most complete, though not exhaustive, list is in Blair and Bloom 2006, pp. 5–6. A full study of the manuscript and an effort to reunite the dispersed fragments have not been attempted yet. Valuable additional information can be found in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 38–39, 259, no. 6a; and James 1992a, pp. 18–23.
4. Blair and Bloom 2006, p. 10, stated that the folios of this Qur'an were copied only on one side, left unbound, and probably laid face-to-face in pairs. If so, the identical damage that occurred to the lower right corner of the first page and to the lower left corner of the second page suggests that these two folios were originally laid not face-to-face but back-to-back. It can also be postulated that the manuscript was originally copied on both sides and that its thick, heavy folios were split vertically to obtain separate one-sided pages; in that case, the Museum's fragments would have originally belonged to the recto and verso of the same folio. This, together with the observation that the paper on the unwritten side is coarse and lacks any surface treatment such as sizing or polishing, strongly suggests that the double-sided folios were indeed split in half. I am grateful to Yana van Dyke, Associate Conservator, for her help in this matter.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 117 A–C: Samuel T. Peters, New York (until 1918)  
 Cat. 117 D, E: Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until 1921; sale, Anderson Galleries, New York, January 26–29, 1921, lot 722, to MMA)

### 118. Two Folios from a Manuscript of the *Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabita* (Book of Images of the Fixed Stars) of al-Sufi

"Constellation of Pegasus"

Iran, late 15th century

Ink and gold on paper; leather binding

10 1/8 in. × 7 1/8 in. (25.8 cm × 18.1 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1913 13.160.10

This manuscript is a late fifteenth-century copy of the *Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabita* (Book of Images of the Fixed Stars), an astronomical treatise originally composed by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (d. 986) in 946.<sup>1</sup> After a preface, the book presents tables with the names of hundreds of stars as well as descriptions of forty-eight constellations; each description is accompanied by two illustrations in mirrored form showing how the constellation appears in the sky and on astronomical instruments.

The present, incomplete manuscript contains descriptions and images of only forty-three constellations, including Pegasus, the Greater Horse (*al-faris al-a'zam*, fols. 117, 118), which is shown as it would have appeared on the celestial globe (*al-kura*). The figure of the galloping half-winged horse is marked by a series of gold dots outlined in red that identify the primary stars of the constellation. Some stars are specifically identified by Arabic words associated with parts of the horse's body, while others are marked only by letters.

The inclusion of illustrations in the treatise was meant to aid scholars and students in identifying and memorizing the locations of the constellations in the sky and on astronomical instruments. This is probably why the iconographic program associated with this text remained standardized through time, with only small variations revealing the style of the period in which each copy was produced. In this manuscript the figural images of the constellations are depicted in typical Timurid garb. The treatise exposed its readers to the Classical tradition of astronomy, exemplified by works such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*, one of the sources of al-Sufi's text. The inclusion in the text of technical terms and names in both Greek and Arabic fostered the survival of the Greek tradition and terminology while simultaneously transmitting the Islamic one.<sup>2</sup> FL

1. The oldest version of this text, dated A.H. 400/1009–10 A.D., is currently in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Marsh, 144).
2. For a catalogue of extant manuscripts of this treatise, see Carey, M. 2001, Appendix 1.

PROVENANCE: [Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, until 1913; sold to MMA]





## 119. Two Lohans

Iran, possibly Tabriz, ca. 1480  
Ink and transparent watercolor on paper  
13<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (34.5 × 23.8 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1968 68.48

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script in lower left-hand corner:

استاد محمد [ . . . ] قلم

The master Muhammad [ . . . ] Qalam

Lohans were revered in China as Buddhist disciples who had attained a high level of enlightenment through their devotion to that faith and its teachings. They were often said to number sixteen or eighteen individuals, but some sources estimate that there were as many as five hundred of them. Their spiritual qualities were manifested in their laughter, and some had distinctive physiognomies or were associated with specific attributes.

In Chinese painting from the ninth century onward, Lohans were depicted both singly and in groups. This tinted drawing unites two of the more popular figures from the tradition, but its edges have probably been cut down, which suggests that they may have been part of a larger gathering of Lohans. With his prominent bare belly and laughing face, the figure on the left appears to be Budai, a popularized representation of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, who was associated in Chinese practice with material prosperity and male children.<sup>1</sup> The figure on the right is accompanied by a tiger and carries a staff made from a gnarled tree root. His association with a tiger hints at a power over cosmic forces, and the knobby staff characterizes him as a rustic sage—both are attributes of the Zen Buddhist ascetic Fenggan. The posture and garments of this figure are mirrored in reverse in a Lohan depicted in a Yuan-era painting now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.<sup>2</sup>

The somewhat tentative execution of the drawing and the presence of an attribution to Muhammad Siyah Qalam in its lower-left corner suggest that it was made in Iran or Central Asia rather than in China. Its closest analogues in style and content are found among the paintings that form part of *Hazine 2153*, an album in the Topkapı Palace Library. Some of these bear attributions to Shaikhi Naqqash, the court painter of Sultan Ya'qub Aq Quyunlu (r. 1478–90), who ruled from the Iranian city of Tabriz.<sup>3</sup> The most direct parallel to the present work shows five figures in a schematic landscape. A man and two women in “Chinese” dress occupy the foreground, while two laughing Lohans, partially hidden by a hill, are seen behind them. The Lohan on the right carries the same distinctive knobby staff held by the figure in the Metropolitan Museum's painting.<sup>4</sup>

PS



1. Lawrence, Kans., and San Francisco 1994, pp. 36, 140, 392–93, pl. 28 (I would like to thank my colleague, Dr. Huseh-man Shen, for drawing my attention to this publication); Taipei 1990, pls. 30, 44–45.
2. Lawrence, Kans., and San Francisco 1994, pp. 196–207; Taipei 1990, pls. 21, 25, upper-right corner.
3. Çağman 1981, and Çağman and Tanındı 1979, pp. 30–31, fig. 24.
4. For tinted drawings in *Hazine 2153* (fols. 104v, 82v, 8v), see Çağman 1981, figs. 19, 20, 282. For the Lohan figures on *Hazine 2153* (fols. 15b, 138a), see *ibid.*, figs. 185, 186.

PROVENANCE: [B. H. Breslauer, London, until 1968; sold to MMA]



## 120. *Wine Drinking in a Spring Garden*

Iran, possibly Tabriz, ca. 1430  
Opaque watercolor and gold on undyed silk  
8½ × 30¼ in. (21.6 × 76.8 cm)

Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.24

Courtly couples in spring gardens were a popular theme of paintings made in Iran and Iraq during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the present example exhibits features that are both common and unusual in such works. The gold-embroidered clothing worn by the central couple and their attendants has many parallels in pictures from centers as far-flung as Baghdad, Tabriz, Shiraz, and Herat. It is also typical that the emotional connection between the main protagonists is conveyed by their actions and not by their facial expressions.

Leaning against the trunk of a flowering tree, the young woman glances up from an open manuscript, which has a long, narrow format typical of books of love poetry. Her suitor's ardor is expressed

through his kneeling posture and the wine cup he offers her. That these compositional elements—a garden setting and a youth offering a wine cup to a woman resting against a flowering tree—appear in both an earlier drawing in Berlin and a later painting in the David Collection, Copenhagen, may indicate that the three elements form a compositional unit.<sup>1</sup> The tree was probably based on a Chinese painting of a flowering branch of a prunus, emblematic of winter or early spring, to which the Persian painter has attached a trunk. Dependence on a Chinese model is evident in the gnarled silhouette of the branches as well as in the varied positions of its blossoms, some of which are seen from the side or back.<sup>2</sup>

The ragged edges of the painting demonstrate that it has been forcibly removed from another context. Portions of its silk ground are said to still be visible on fol. 76r of the album Hazine 2153 in the Topkapı Palace Library.<sup>3</sup> Three closely related pictures of youthful couples standing on either side of a tree have a similar provenance. One, now in the Kuwait National Museum and also executed on silk, situates the young woman and her female attendant (who also holds a metal vessel) on the left and the two handsome youths on the right.<sup>4</sup>

The use of silk as the support for the present work is unusual for Iran and is probably intended to mimic Chinese practice. A technical report concerning the ground describes it as “woven on a tension-adjustable loom with quite irregularly-prepared warps

and wefts.” It states that S-twisted and Z-twisted warps “alternate throughout” and that the “fabric appears to have been wetted” before the painting was executed.<sup>5</sup> PS

1. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin (Ms. Diez A, fol. 72); Grube 1981, p. 6, fig. 133; and Humlebaek 2007–8, p. 92, no. 36.
2. Loehr 1954, p. 87, fig. 54; Grube 1981, pp. 2, 11, fig. 117.
3. Grube 1981, p. 11 n. 2.
4. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 184, 186, 346, no. 85.
5. Notes by Nobuko Kajitani in the curatorial files of the Department of Islamic Art, Metropolitan Museum.

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, by 1930]; Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1940–d. 1956)

## 121. *A Princely Couple Embrace*

Iran, possibly Tabriz, 1400–1405  
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper  
19¼ × 12½ in. (48.9 × 31.9 cm)

Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.20

The unusually large size of this picture and the monumental scale of its youthful couple have led scholars to conclude that it may have served as the model for a wall painting.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the turbaned youth and elaborately dressed woman who look into each other's eyes, the landscape setting is given a summary treatment. The figures are framed by flowering trees that appear to be mere saplings when compared with the blossoming plant that grows between them. Although chaste, their embrace carries an erotic charge, and they have sometimes been identified with legendary lovers celebrated in Persian literature, including Humay and Humayun or Khusrau and Shirin, but there is no text associated with the painting that would permit the couple to be named.

Historical sources mention the existence of erotic wall paintings as early as the eleventh century, and figural wall paintings are both described and illustrated in literary texts. Those showing lovers are associated particularly with Zulaikha's efforts, described in the Qur'an, to seduce Yusuf in a chamber embellished with erotic wall paintings. The most popular literary rendering of this story is the one composed by the fifteenth-century poet 'Abd

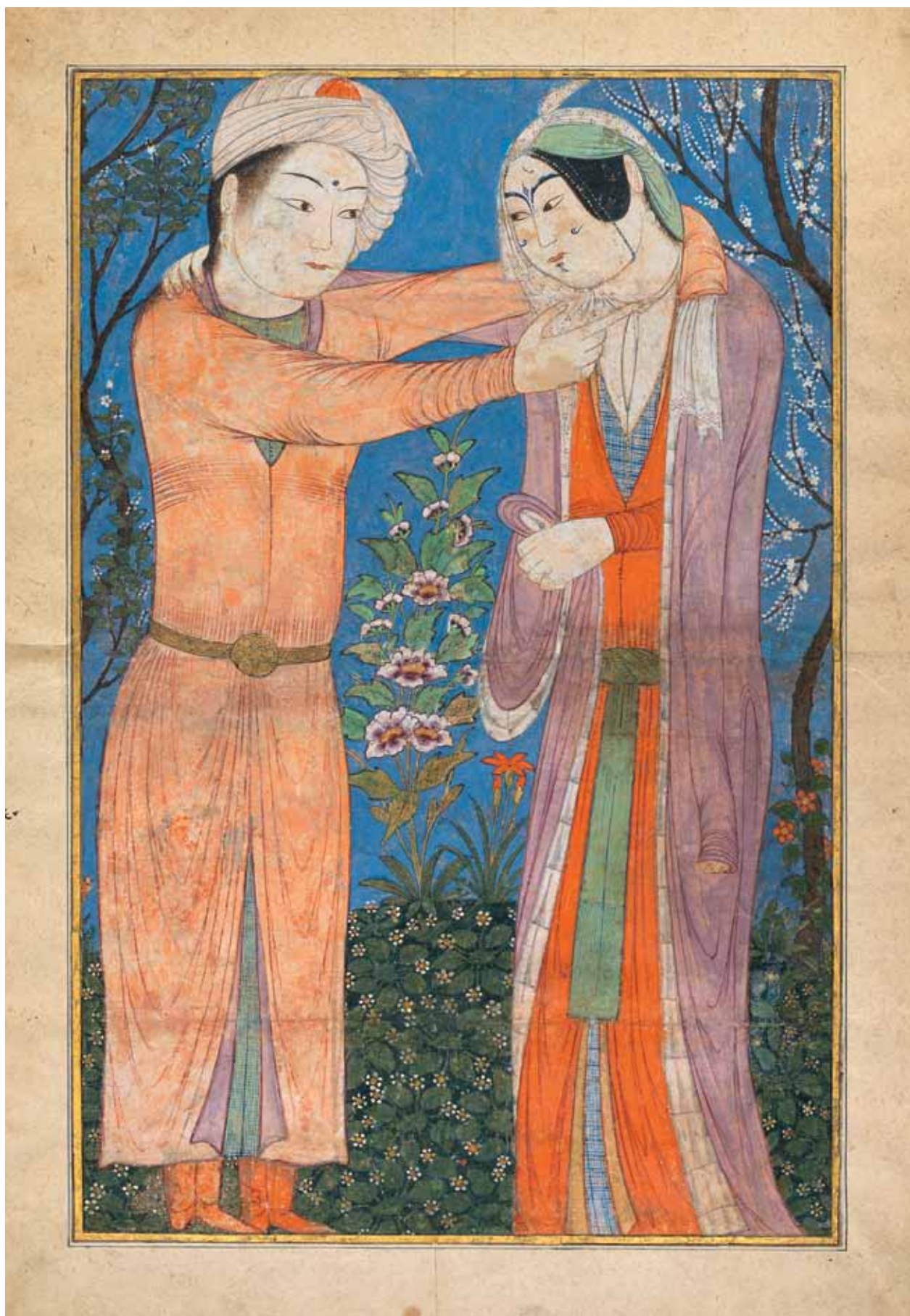
al-Rahman Jami, but the closest visual parallels to the princely couple here are found in wall paintings of the same tale depicted in a mid-sixteenth-century copy of Sa'di's *Bustan* now in Vienna.<sup>2</sup>

The proportions of the figures in the Metropolitan Museum's painting, along with details of their clothing and the pattern of tattoos on the woman's face, recall similar features in manuscript illustrations produced in Iraq and Iran in the late fourteenth and the early fifteenth century (University Library, Istanbul) and in a copy of Nizami's "Khusrau and Shirin" (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.).<sup>3</sup> The Freer manuscript, documented as produced in Tabriz and thought to date to the early fifteenth century, provides an approximate date and place of production for the present painting. PS

1. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 58–61, 331–32, no. 17.
2. Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (Ms. AF 103, fol. 73a); illustrated in Edinburgh 1977, pp. 74, 77, no. 175.
3. Gray 1977, pp. 39–54.

PROVENANCE: Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1940–d. 1956)







## 122. *Four Demons*

Iran or Central Asia, 1470–1500

Watercolor and gold on silk

8 × 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (20.2 × 34 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1968 68.175

Painting on silk was a common practice in China but rare in Central Asia or Iran, which raises the question of where this picture was executed; its jagged lower margin suggests it has been forcibly removed from another context. The two pairs of crouching demons, each appearing to be in conversation, are compositionally and spatially independent of each other. All four have golden bands at their wrists or ankles. One of each pair is dark-skinned, with nearly human features (although one is horned), and both of these wear skirtlike garments. The other member of each pair is covered in soft fur or hair, and one has a tail. The pair on the right appears to be grinding something, perhaps grain, between a pair of stones.

In depicting demonic figures against a plain background, this picture is reminiscent of certain examples preserved in Hazine 2153, an album in the Topkapı Palace Library. Painted on either paper or silk, these show similarly attired demons, some dark-skinned and others fur-covered, dancing, wrestling, fighting with one another, tending animals, and performing domestic chores.<sup>1</sup>

No text is associated with any of the demon paintings, although some carry attributions to a certain Muhammad Siyah Qalam, whose historical identity is uncertain.

There is a group of pictures, depicting humans, that relate in their execution to the demon pictures. The human figures, who may be nomads, are shown preparing a meal, tending animals, or conversing. Muhammad Siyah Qalam is also credited with these scenes, which are now preserved in Hazine 2153 as well.<sup>2</sup> The pictures and calligraphies in that album appear to have been collected in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, which provides an approximate date for the demon paintings. Although it has been posited that they come from Turkestan, a more precise definition of their origin and purpose has not yet been established.<sup>3</sup> PS

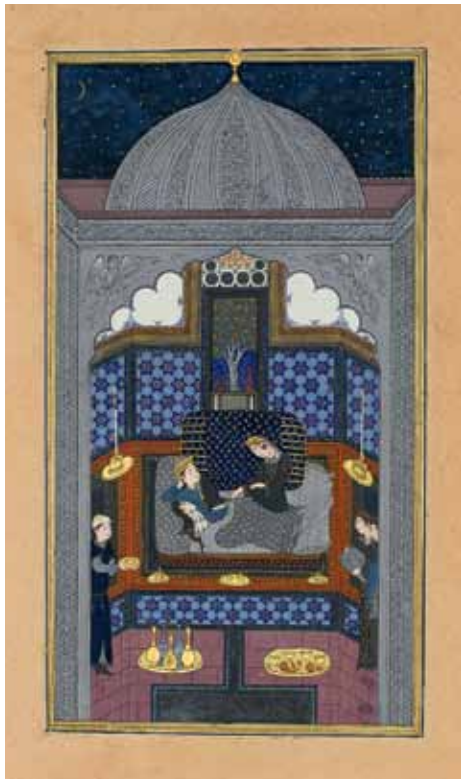
1. Çağman, Tanındı, and Rogers 1986, pls. 81–90.

2. Ibid., pls. 91–100.

3. Aslanapa 1954, pp. 81–82; and Ettinghausen 1954.

PROVENANCE: [B. H. Breslauer, London, until 1968; sold to MMA]





A



B



C

### 123A–C. Three Folios from the *Haft païkar* (Seven Portraits) of the *Khamṣa* (Quintet) of Nizami

Calligrapher: Maulana Azhar (d. 1475/76)  
Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, ca. 1430

A. "Bahram Gur and the Indian Princess in the Palace on a Saturday," fol. 23b

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image:  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$  in. (21.6 × 11.7 cm)

Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.13.4

B. "How the Hunter Drowned in the Well," fol. 33b

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image:  $8\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  in. (22.5 × 12.1 cm)

Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.13.5

C. "An Eavesdropper Peering at a Group of Beauties through a Shuttered Window," fol. 47a

Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper

Image:  $8\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22.5 × 12.4 cm)

Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.13.6

The manuscript from which these three folios are taken contains the *Haft païkar* (Seven Portraits), one of the five books of Nizami's *Khamṣa*. Its delicate calligraphy, elaborate opening illumination, and five full-page illustrations are characteristic of manuscripts produced in Timurid court circles during the second quarter of the fifteenth century, probably in Herat.<sup>1</sup> During the sixteenth

century, the manuscript was taken to India, where it entered the libraries of the Mughal rulers Akbar and Shah Jahan.

Nizami's poem, composed in 1197, explores the life of the Sasanian ruler Bahram Gur. Opening with descriptions of Bahram's prowess as a hunter and closing with accounts of his actions as ruler, the work is mainly structured around the weekly rotation of



the ruler's visits among the palaces of seven different princesses. Each of the princesses comes from a different region of the world, wears clothing of a specific color, and entertains Bahram with a story that is both sensual and edifying.

Notes made at the courts of Akbar and Shah Jahan describe the manuscript as having seven pictures, two more than it contained when it reached the Metropolitan Museum in 1913. Two of the surviving pictures, on folios 10a and 17b, illustrate Bahram's early exploits as a hunter, while aspects of his visits to the princesses are shown in the other three. One records his visit to the Black Pavilion (fol. 23b; cat. 123A; the remaining two illustrate stories told by the Princesses of the Green and White Pavilions (fol. 33b, 47a; cat. 123B, c). The missing paintings may have depicted Bahram's visit to the Princess of the Golden Pavilion and his conflicts with the ruler of China.

Despite the high quality of this manuscript, its origin has been periodically the focus of debate because its colophon (on fol. 56b) combines the signature of a well-known fifteenth-century calligrapher, Maulana Azhar, with a completion date of A.H. 988/1580 A.D., which accords with the moment when the courtier Khan Khanan donated it to Akbar rather than with the time of its original transcription.<sup>2</sup> John Seyller's examination of the manuscript's Mughal inscriptions has revealed that the Mughal rulers, or their librarians, gave it a monetary value that rose from five hundred rupees in the reign of Akbar to one thousand in that of his grandson Shah Jahan.<sup>3</sup>

PS

1. Robinson, B. 1957.
2. Williams Jackson and Yohannan 1914, pp. 71–79, no. 10.
3. Seyller 1997, pp. 256, 281–82, fig. 17.

PROVENANCE: Emperor Akbar, India (from 1580); his grandson Shah Jahan, India (in 1658); Alexander Smith Cochran, Yonkers, N.Y. (until 1913)

## 124A, B. Two Folios from the *Zafarnama* (Book of Victory) of Sharaf al-din 'Ali Yazdi

Calligrapher: Ya'qub ibn Hasan  
Iran, Shiraz, A.H. 839/1435–36 A.D.

A. "Timur and His Army Besiege the Baghdad Citadel"  
Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper  
Page: 13 1/8 × 9 3/4 in. (33.4 × 24.6 cm)  
Louis V. Bell Fund, 1967 67.266.1

B. "Timur and His Army Besiege the Baghdad Citadel"  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
Image: 11 3/8 × 8 in. (28.9 × 20.3 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1955 55.121.17



A

Although acquired by the Museum at two different times, these pages were intended to be seen together. They were painted on adjoining folios of a manuscript that was copied in Shiraz in 1436 by Ya'qub ibn Hasan, known as Siraj al-Husaini. The *Zafarnama* (Book of Victory) had been composed by Sharaf al-din 'Ali Yazdi (d. 1454) only a few years earlier, in A.H. 828/1424–25 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Yazdi's narrative provides a vivid description of the siege of the Baghdad citadel by the Timurid army, an event that stretched over forty days in July and August 1401, a time of unrelenting heat. As was his custom, Yazdi describes the roles played by the different divisions of the army and the positions taken by the most important princes and amirs. He also delineates Timur's part in directing his army and overseeing the battle. With respect to the citadel's defenders, Yazdi stresses the fear instilled in them by the Timurid siege. The deafening tumult of a simultaneous attack on all sides of the citadel, which was situated on the eastern shore of the Tigris, led the besieged to imagine that the Day of Judgment had arrived. In desperation, many flung themselves from the citadel walls, only to be devoured by sharp-toothed creatures waiting in the water below.<sup>2</sup>

These two paintings re-create the mood and substance of Yazdi's chronicle by contrasting the might of the Timurid army with the panic that has overtaken the Baghdad garrison. In one (cat. 124B), the painter highlights Timur's role, showing him directing the battle while protected by his royal umbrella. The

125A, B. Two Folios from the *Khavarannama* (Book of the East) of Maulana Muhammad ibn Husam al-Din



B

A. "The Author, Ibn Husam, Is Visited by the Poet Firdausi"

Iran, Shiraz, ca. 1476–86

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

15<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (39.8 × 28.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1955 55.184.1

B. "Amr Tosses His Enemies Overboard"

Iran, Shiraz, ca. 1476–86

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

15<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (39.8 × 28.6 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1955 55.125.1

These two paintings, with their vibrant color palette and lively action, are taken from a manuscript of the *Khavarannama* (Book of the East), a gathering of tales relating the adventures of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. These mostly imaginary accounts of the exploits of 'Ali and his companions against demons, dragons, and kings include conflicts with the ruler Kubad, the shah of Khavaran.<sup>1</sup> The poet who penned these engaging stories, Maulana Muhammad ibn Husam al-Din (active fifteenth century) is otherwise known as Ibn Husam.<sup>2</sup> Written in epic *masnavi* form, his poem is composed in emulation of the poet Firdausi's *Shahnama*, but with the important religious figure of 'Ali as its protagonist.

The author's homage to the poet of the *Shahnama* is particularly evident in one of the present paintings (cat. 125A), which depicts the aged Firdausi (shown with gray beard and cane) paying an imagined visit to Ibn Husam. In the other, 'Amr (a contemporary of 'Ali) tosses his enemies from the deck of a fantastical horse-headed ship.<sup>3</sup> As in many other illustrated scenes from this engaging manuscript, the figures burst from the page, with the action spilling over the edges of the text block. Here, the boat sails upon a brimming sea overflowing into the margins.

These folios exhibit the distinctive painting style characteristic of many manuscript illustrations produced in Shiraz in the later fifteenth century. A few of the dispersed illustrated folios from the same manuscript contain inscriptions with the name "Farhad," an otherwise unknown painter, as well as dates ranging from 1476 to 1486.<sup>4</sup> During this time, the city of Shiraz was under the control of the Aq Quyunlu confederacy, one of the two Turkmen dynasties that reigned in western Persia, Iraq, and eastern Anatolia during the fifteenth century. The two paintings seen here originally formed part of one of the earliest and largest illustrated copies of Ibn Husam's *Khavarannama* text, a weighty manuscript containing nearly seven hundred folios, each measuring approximately sixteen by twelve inches (40.6 × 30.5 cm).<sup>5</sup> At least forty of the 155 illustrated folios in this *Khavarannama* manuscript have been

siege itself and its equipment, described in detail by Yazdi, are alluded to by a soldier who shoots arrows from behind a wooden screen and by the massed weapons of the Timurid soldiers who populate separate pockets of the landscape surrounding Timur. The facing page (cat. 124A) shows the beleaguered defenders within the citadel walls turning to each other in perplexity, unable to mount a counterattack against the Timurid forces. Even more desperate are their compatriots below, who must evade not only the Timurid army but the jaws of predators lurking unseen in the waters in which they swim.

This manuscript of Yazdi's text appears to have remained intact until the early twentieth century, when its paintings were removed and sold. Eleanor Sims has conducted a painstaking reconstruction of this process that has enabled her to describe the illustrative program of the work. According to her calculations, the "Siege of Baghdad" once occupied folios 345 and 346 in this copy, which may also be the earliest surviving manuscript of the text.<sup>3</sup> PS

1. Sims 1990–91, pp. 175–77.

2. Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi 1957, vol. 2, pp. 263–64.

3. Sims 1990–91, pp. 175–76.

PROVENANCE

Cat. 124A: Hagop Kevorkian, New York (by 1940–d. 1962; estate sale, Sotheby's London, December 6, 1967, lot 20, to MMA)

Cat. 124B: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]



dispersed; they are to be found today in collections throughout the world,<sup>6</sup> including the Metropolitan Museum,<sup>7</sup> the Brooklyn Museum,<sup>8</sup> the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin,<sup>9</sup> and the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup> The largest part of the manuscript is housed today in the collection of the Gulistan Palace Museum in Tehran.<sup>11</sup>

DMT

1. See Rieu 1966, vol. 2, pp. 642–43, no. Add. 19,766 (a later seventeenth-century copy of the text in London). The title of this book has been given as both *Khavarān-nama* (in Ibn Husam's text) as well as *Khavarānāma* (in some secondary literature). This entry will follow the spelling as it appears in the author's text.
2. Conflicting dates for the author's death appear in the historical literature: either A.H. 875 or 893/1470 or 1487–88 A.D. See Rieu 1966 (above) for discussion.
3. These two pieces have been previously published. For cat. 125B, see New York and Venice 1962, p. 66, no. 47, pl. 47 (color detail, cf. p. 50); for cat. 125A, see Grube 1963b, with black-and-white image on p. 293, fig. 7.
4. See London 1976c, p. 346, nos. 574a-b, which provides this range of dates for the paintings in the Tehran manuscript. In other publications, only the date of 1477 is noted for the paintings in the manuscript. According to Basil Robinson in London 1967, pp. 95–96, no. 125, the manuscript contains a colophon with the date of A.H. 854/1450 A.D., but Robinson doubts its authenticity. For more on the manuscript and its paintings, see New York and Venice 1962, pp. 64–68, nos. 46–49; and Zuka 1963. See also the recent facsimile edition: Khusifi Birjandi 2002.
5. According to London 1976c, p. 346, nos. 574a-b, the *Khavarānāma* manuscript under discussion is said originally to have contained 685 folios (now reduced to 645) and 155 miniatures (now reduced to 115). The five dispersed folios in the Museum's collection each measure about sixteen by twelve inches.
6. See New York and Venice 1962, p. 65, for a list of some private collections and museums where folios of the manuscript may be found.
7. Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 55.125.1, 55.125.2, 55.125.3, 55.184.1, and 55.184.2).
8. See Brooklyn 1987, pp. 242–43, nos. 185, 186.
9. Robinson, B. 1958, p. 27, states that "seven of the miniatures are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, and the remainder in America." See also Arberry et al. 1959–62, vol. 3, pp. 60–62, no. 293, which lists a total of ten illustrated folios of the *Khavarānāma* in the Dublin collection.
10. *Khavarānāma* folios appearing in the Sackler online collection include nos. 1956.23 and 57.1965. See also Simpson 1980, pp. 42–43, no. 11.
11. The manuscript was in the Museum of Decorative Arts, Tehran, but according to Abdullah Ghouchani, it has been moved into the holdings of the Gulistan Palace Museum.

PROVENANCE: [Hassan Khan Monif, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]



A



B



## 126. *Anthology of Persian Poetry in Oblong Format* (*Safina*)

Calligrapher: Sultan Muhammad Nur (ca. 1472–ca. 1536)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 905/1499–1500 A.D.

Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper; leather binding

8¼ × 3 in. (21 × 7.6 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund, Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art, and Persian Heritage Foundation Gift, 1997 1997.71

Signatures in Persian in *nasta'liq* script on three folios as follows:

On folio 45 verso:

کتبه سلطان محمد نور

Written by Sultan Muhammad Nur

On folio 56 verso:

سلطان محمد نور تجاوز الله خمس و تسعمائة

Sultan Muhammad Nur, may God forgive [him,]

[in the year] A.H. nine hundred and five [1499–1500 A.D.]

On folio 85 verso:

مشقه العبد سلطان محمد ابن نور الله

Written by the servant Sultan Muhammad, son of Nurallah

Leaping hares, flying birds, and flowering vine scrolls enliven the small, delicately stenciled folio shown here—one of a number of similarly decorated pages from a fifteenth-century Persian poetry anthology in the Museum's collection.<sup>1</sup> With its numerous stenciled folios, pseudo-marbled pages,<sup>2</sup> and multicolored papers and inks, this manuscript displays many of the innovations in decorative techniques that developed within the book arts in Iran during this period.<sup>3</sup> The engaging “patchwork” conceit of its colorful pages echoes the collected nature of its text: a gathering of short, sonnetlike Persian *ghazal*-form poems from diverse authors, including ‘Iraqi, Salman Savaji, and Kamal Khujandi.

The calligrapher who copied these lyric verses signed his name as *Sultan Muhammad* [Nur] on three of the folios and added the date to one (A.H. 905/1499–1500 A.D.). Sultan Muhammad Nur (ca. 1472–ca. 1536) was active in Herat during the reign of the Timurid prince and art patron Sultan Husain Baiqara (r. 1470–1506). Evidence suggests that Sultan Muhammad Nur trained in Herat with the celebrated master calligrapher Sultan ‘Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century) and remained in that city for his entire career.<sup>4</sup> This manuscript has been ascribed to Herat, although it displays affinities with contemporary oblong-format manuscripts produced in Shiraz.

Often referred to as *safina* or *bayaz*, these elegantly shaped manuscripts survive in collections throughout the world—a majority of them comprising anthologies of lyric Persian poetry.<sup>5</sup> The word *safina* may be translated as “ship” or “vessel”—and, by extension, “ark”—perhaps reflecting the manuscript’s role as a carrier of assemblages of texts. The typically diminutive dimensions of these manuscripts allowed for portability; they could be easily tucked into a sash or hidden up a sleeve. Contemporary and later Persian



paintings often depict such small poetry books being enjoyed at outdoor gatherings or in garden settings, as in a fifteenth-century painting on silk in the Museum's collection (cat. 120). DMT

1. This manuscript has been previously published by Stefano Carboni in Carboni, Walker, and Moore 1998, color image on p. 11.
2. The "marbled" pages of this manuscript were mentioned in Blair 2006, p. 55 n. 53. However, further consultation with Yana van Dyke, paper conservator at the Metropolitan Museum, has determined that these papers are not examples of true marbling as the method of their production does not involve the use of a bath. The pages are instead more akin to the French nineteenth-century pseudo-marbled papers known as *papier coulé*, in which colors are applied directly to the paper; water is then introduced in a manner that results in a streaked or "rivulet" appearance, as seen here. For more on these papers, see Wolfe 1990, esp. p. 114, and pl. 20, nos. 8–9.
3. For further discussion concerning the techniques of paper decoration in fifteenth-century Persian manuscripts, see Porter, Y. 1994, Blair 2000, and Roxburgh 2005a.
4. For more concerning this calligrapher, see Bayani 1964, pp. 272–80, no. 387; Soucek 2003–4, p. 52 and figs. 3.4–3.7, p. 65 and fig. 3.13. Soucek states that several sixteenth-century sources describe Sultan Muhammad Nur as a student of Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi. Also see Blair 2006, pp. 55 n. 53, 466 n. 54, 467 n. 61, for Sultan Muhammad Nur's skill in writing with colored inks. A folio very similar to those found in this manuscript—also displaying a signature by a Sultan Muhammad Nur—was sold at Christie's London, on March 31, 2009, lot 26.
5. A number of terms have been used to refer to oblong-format manuscripts, among them *bayaz*. See Danishpazhuh 1988.

PROVENANCE: [Massoud Nader, until 1997; sold to MMA]

## 127A–D. Four Folios from the *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds) of Farid al-Din 'Attar

A. First text page, fol. 1b

Calligrapher: Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century)

Illuminator: Zain al-'Abidin al-Tabrizi

Text: Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 892 / 1487 A.D.;

illumination: Iran, Isfahan, ca. 1600

Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper

7¾ × 4½ in. (19.7 × 11.4 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1963 63.210.1

B. "The Son Who Mourned His Father," fol. 35a

Calligrapher: Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 892 / 1487 A.D.

Opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 9¾ × 5½ in. (24.8 × 14 cm); page: 13 × 8½ in. (33 × 21.6 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1963 63.210.35

C. "The Drowning Man," fol. 44a

Calligrapher: Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 892 / 1487 A.D.

Opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 7¾ in. × 5½ in. (18.7 × 13 cm); page: 13 × 8¾ in. (33 × 21.4 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1963 63.210.44

D. "The Concourse of the Birds," fol. 11

Painter: Habiballah of Sava (active ca. 1590–1610)

Iran, Isfahan, ca. 1600

Ink, opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

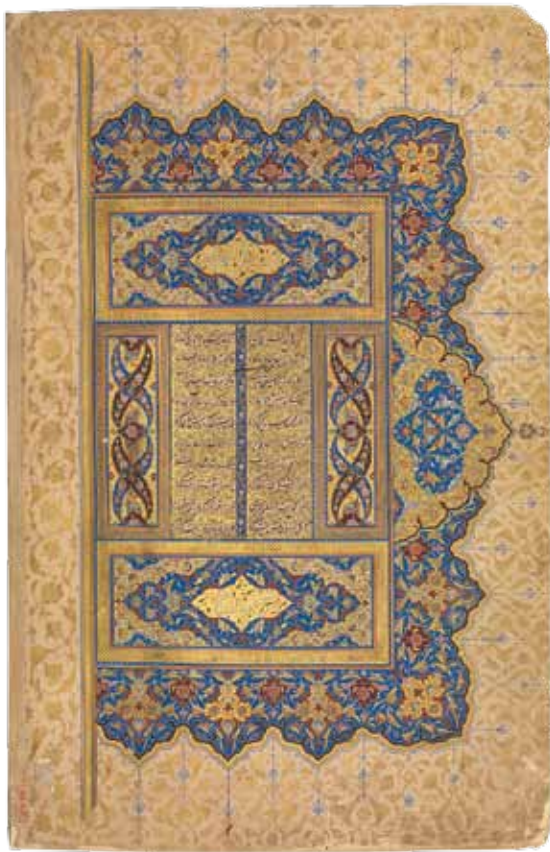
Image: 10 × 4½ in. (25.4 × 11.4 cm); page: 13 × 8¼ in. (33 × 20.8 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1963 63.210.11

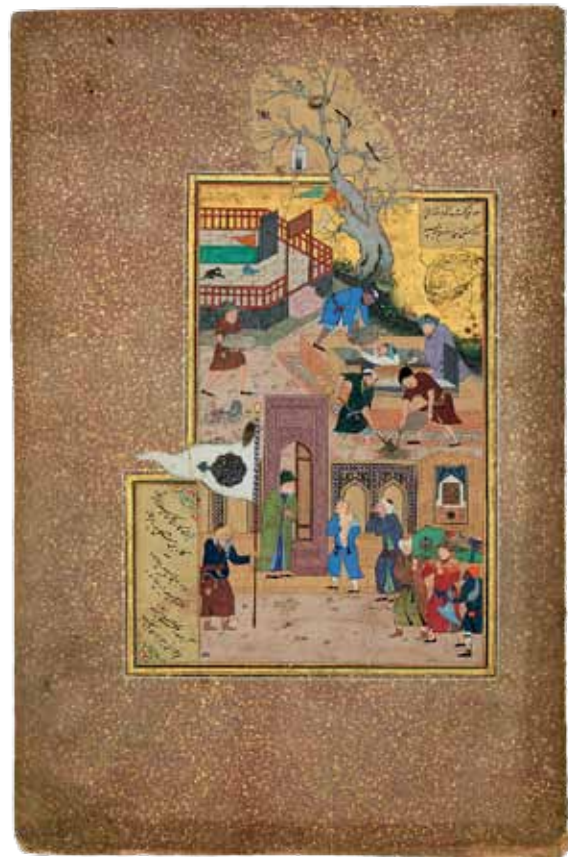
Farid al-din 'Attar's epic poem the *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds), composed about 1187, is a parable about the desire for union with God that is couched in the terminology of sufism. It describes a physical and spiritual journey through seven valleys by a group of birds that move from their initial quest (*talab*) to their final goal of annihilation of the self (*fana*) through unity with God. The stages of their journey are explained through the use of anecdotes.

This copy is notable for its high-quality illustrations produced in two distinct periods and places.<sup>1</sup> The earlier phase, in which most of the text and four of the paintings were executed, is linked to the city of Herat (cat. 127B, c). Its colophon, signed by Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi, dates the work to the first day of the fifth month of the second year of the last ten years preceding 900—that is, to A.H. 892/April 25, 1487 A.D. The later phase occurred about 1600, when the manuscript was refurbished, probably for Iran's ruler, Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629). Elements from this phase include the binding, the illuminated opening folios signed at Isfahan by Zain al-'Abidin al-Tabrizi, and four of its pictures, one of which is signed by Habiballah (cat. 127A, d). In 1609 Shah 'Abbas donated this manuscript to the ancestral tomb of the Safavid family at Ardabil.





A



B



C



D



Sultan ‘Ali al-Mashhadi is known to have worked for Herat’s contemporary ruler, Sultan Husain Baiqara (r. 1470–1506), and for one of its leading intellectuals, Mir ‘Ali Shir Nava’i, whose interest in the theme of this text is signaled by the fact that he composed an analogous poem in Turki titled *Lisan al-tair* (The Speech of the Birds).

All of the subjects to be illustrated in this copy of the *Mantiq al-tair* were determined at the time of its copying by Sultan ‘Ali al-Mashhadi in the late fifteenth century, but the manuscript’s first four scenes were not completed until about 1600 in Isfahan. Three of these are frequently depicted in other copies of ‘Attar’s text: the initial gathering of the birds at the onset of their quest (cat. 127d) and two scenes from the story of a sufi, Shaikh San‘an, who loved a Christian maiden (fols. 18b, 22b). These pictures seem to have a clear connection to major themes in ‘Attar’s text, although Habiballah, the artist who signed the “Concourse of the Birds” on a small rock at the center of the picture, has added the superfluous figure of a man holding a rifle.

Two of the manuscript’s remaining four paintings, made toward the end of the fifteenth century in Timurid Herat, present more oblique references to ‘Attar’s text. Both “The Son Who Mourned His Father” (cat. 127b) and “The Drowning Man” (cat. 127c) have been interpreted as sufi allegories.<sup>2</sup> The other two fifteenth-century paintings appear to be more illustrative than symbolic. Yumiko Kamada has suggested that these more subtle paintings reflect the appreciation of textual and pictorial intricacy in late fifteenth-century Herat.<sup>3</sup>

PS

1. For an overview of publications about this manuscript through 2010, see Kamada 2010.
2. Ibid., pp. 136–40, and Kia 2006, p. 97.
3. Kamada 2010, pp. 144–49.

PROVENANCE: Shah ‘Abbas, Isfahan, Iran (until 1609; to Ardabil Shrine); Ardabil Shrine, Iran (1609–1826); Dr. M. Farid Parwanta (until 1963; sale, Sotheby’s London, December 9, 1963, lot 111; to MMA)

## 128. Folio from the *Divan* of Hafiz

“Dancing Dervishes”

Attributed to Bihzad (ca. 1450–1535/36)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, ca. 1480

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

Image: 6¼ × 4¼ in. (16 × 10.8 cm); page: 11¾ × 7½ in. (29.9 × 18.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1917 17.81.4

Painted about 1480, this illustrated folio is from a manuscript of the *Divan* of the renowned fourteenth-century poet Hafiz of Shiraz. It depicts a ring of sufi dervishes (Islamic mystics) playing music to



accompany another group of dervishes performing the celestial dance (*sama*). The mystics in the foreground, who have achieved a state of trance and self-abandonment, are rendered with particular sensitivity. The special care taken in depicting a variety of figural types, expressive facial features, natural movements, and intense emotions sets this work apart from earlier paintings produced in Timurid Herat.

Costume plays a central role here in imparting emotion and spirituality to the scene.<sup>1</sup> As in other Timurid and Safavid paintings, sleeves serve as a metaphor for the emotional state of the wearer, expressing contemplation, reverence, trepidation, and intoxication, both physical and spiritual. Some move in time with the music and rhythm of the dervishes’ mystical dance. Others—belonging to those who stand in contemplation or have succumbed to dizziness and trance—hang limp, crossed one over the other.

Mystical scenes such as this were a popular theme of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century illustrated manuscripts. The naturalism

of the painting and its muted palette are all features of the so-called Bihzadian style of Herat. Although there is no concrete evidence supporting an attribution to Bihzad, this painting embodies many of the qualities of paintings assigned to the master. The question of Bihzad's authorship has, in general, been a topic of much discussion among scholars of Persian painting. Some believe that the attribution of any work to him can be somewhat problematic and misleading because, in all probability, paintings were almost always a result of a collaborative effort, making it difficult to ascertain the extent of involvement of the master himself.<sup>2</sup> The dearth of signed works by Bihzad and the presence of numerous false signatures on paintings attributed to him further complicate matters. Other scholars have assigned works to the master on the basis of style, palette, composition, and approach to painting.<sup>3</sup> In any case, this soulful painting remains among the most moving, spiritually charged representations of dervishes engaged in a celestial dance produced in late medieval Iran.

ME

1. Allgrove McDowell 1989, p. 159.
2. Roxburgh 2000; Lentz 1990.
3. Bahari 1996.

PROVENANCE: [Georges Tabbagh, New York, until 1917; sold to MMA]

## 129. *Divan (Anthology) of Sultan Husain Baiqara*

Calligrapher: Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi (active late 15th–early 16th century)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 905/1500 A.D.

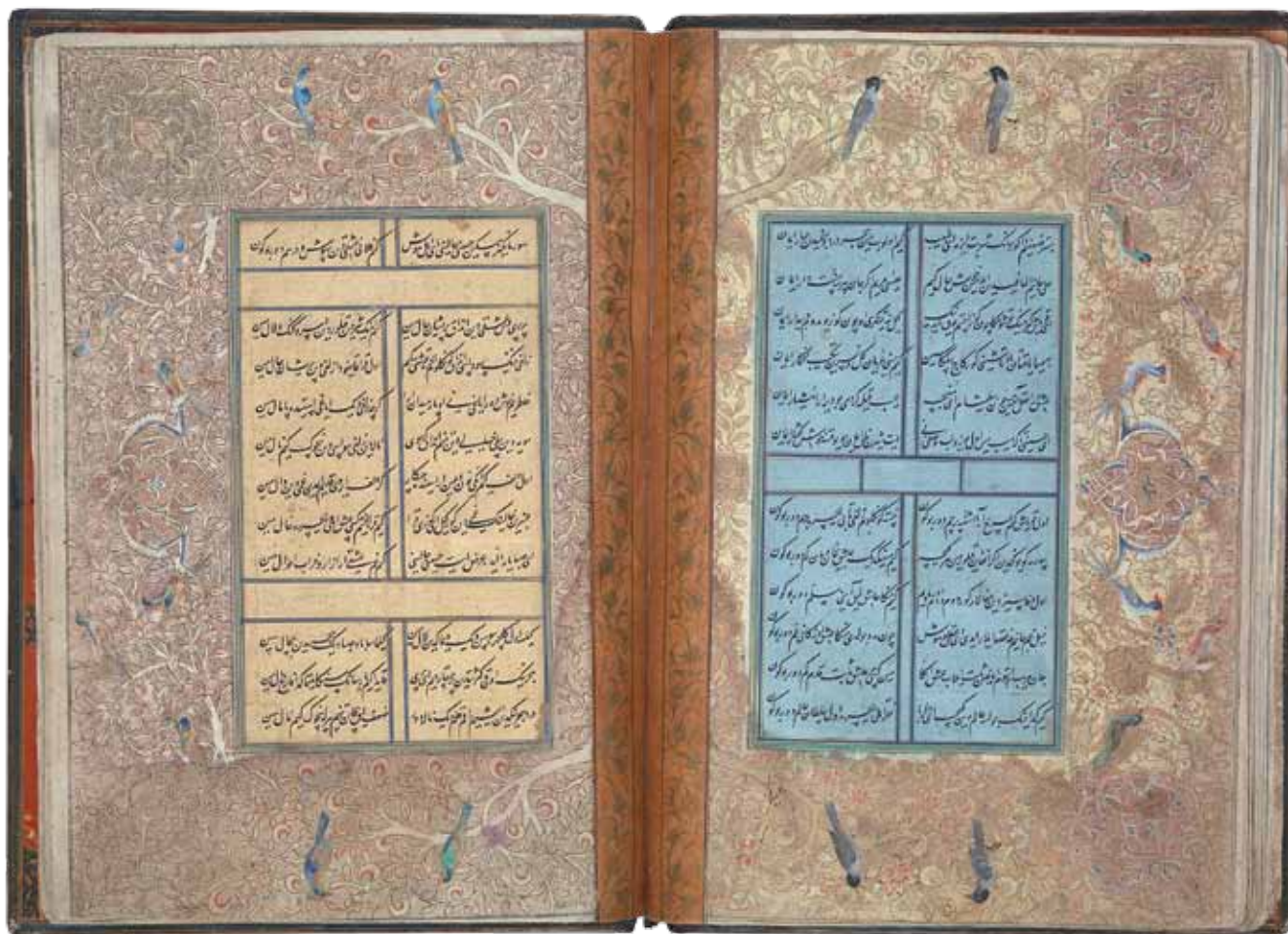
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; lacquer binding

10½ × 7¼ in. (26.7 × 18.4 cm)

Purchase, Richard S. Perkins and Margaret Mushekian Gifts, 1982 1982.120.1

The city of Herat in northern Afghanistan flourished as a center of culture and learning during the reign of Timur's great-grandson Husain Baiqara (1468–1506).<sup>1</sup> This manuscript of the sultan's poetry embodies two features characteristic of that epoch: the rise to literary prominence of Turki, the local Central Asian form of Turkish, and a focus on lavishly produced books. Husain's royal status appears to have added luster to his poetry, which was collected not only by his subjects but also by the Ottoman sultans and the Mughal emperors. The works were also translated into Persian for the Safavid ruler Shah Sultan Husain I (r. 1694–1722).<sup>2</sup>

Most manuscripts of Husain Baiqara's poetry are arranged alphabetically by rhyme words, but they vary considerably in length and content. This example contains 138 *ghazals*, on forty-two folios, of the more than two hundred different *ghazals* known from various copies. It is appropriate that, as a ruler,





Husain Baiqara would have his poetry produced in a particularly opulent fashion. Several copies, including the present example, were executed on colored and gold-sprinkled paper. This is one of three known manuscripts of his poetry that were made during his lifetime by his court calligrapher, Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi.<sup>3</sup>

Aside from its superb calligraphy, this copy is notable for the elaborate patterns—most highlighted with paint—that are stenciled on the margins of each page. One design features a scroll animated by masks and animal heads. Another shows five pairs of birds perched in flowering trees that appear to grow from the inner margins. A third features polylobed cartouches filled with arabesques and surrounded by flowering plants. Prior to the late fifteenth century, stenciling had been employed primarily to embellish the pages of the small, oblong poetry albums known as *safinas*.<sup>4</sup> The traditional association of such albums with stenciled decoration may have influenced the person who gave this manuscript its lacquer-covered binding in A.H. 1300/1833 A.D. Perhaps not realizing that it contained the poetry of a single individual, the author of the verses on the interior of the binding praised it as a “colorful album.”

PS

1. Husain was descended from Timur's son 'Umar Shaikh. His full lineage was Husain ibn Mansur ibn Baiqara ibn 'Umar Shaikh ibn Timur.
2. Baiqara 1968, pp. 51–62.
3. The other two entered the collections of the Ottoman sultans and are now in the Topkapı Palace Library (Ms. E.H. 1636, dated to A.H. 897/1491 A.D.) and the University Library, Istanbul (Ms. T.Y. 1977, dated to A.H. 900/1494 A.D.). The latter once belonged to the Mughal imperial collection; see *ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
4. Roxburgh 2005a, pp. 157–59.

PROVENANCE: Philip Hofer, Cambridge, Mass. (until 1982; sold to MMA)



### 130. Tile

Present-day Uzbekistan, Samarqand, second half of 14th century  
 Stonepaste; carved and glazed  
 11 5/8 × 8 5/8 × 6 3/4 in. (29.5 × 21.9 × 17.1 cm)  
 The Grinnell Collection, Bequest of William Milne Grinnell,  
 1920 20.120.189

In their original context, tiles such as this one—each individually and meticulously crafted—would have constituted the architectural revetments of mosques, mausoleums, and other dynastic buildings in the Timurid period (ca. 1370–1507), particularly in the late fourteenth century. Similar tiles are found in many buildings in Timurid Iran, with some of the finest examples at the dynastic burial complex of Shah-i Zinda, just outside of Samarqand.

The rich shade of turquoise, highlighted by a white border, is typical of the architectural ornamentation of the Timurid period.<sup>1</sup> Carved in deep relief with repeating circular vegetal scrolls diminishing in size toward the apex, the tile has a distinct curving-arch shape that characterizes it as a *muqarnas* element. *Muqarnas* is the honeycomb-like decoration that often adorns the interior curves of domes, niches, squinches, *iwans*, cornices, and portals of Islamic buildings. The shape was probably derived from the squinch, an architectural element that serves to distribute the weight of a dome and creates a transitional zone between a circular dome and its square base.<sup>2</sup> This curved tile would have been combined with dozens, or even hundreds, of others (depending on their location in the building) to form an ornate faceted and curving surface that would capture light and tantalize the eye.

Although the exact origin of this tile remains unknown, it displays similarities to a *muqarnas* tile in the Aga Khan Collection that is dated to the same period,<sup>3</sup> as well as to tiles still in situ at the Shah-i Zinda complex.<sup>4</sup> Begun in Timur's lifetime (1335–1405), Shah-i Zinda contains dozens of mausoleums, with tombs largely



commissioned by the women of the Timurid court.<sup>5</sup> Glazed and carved earthenware tiles such as this were used there in conjunction with tiles in other techniques, including mosaic and *cuerda seca*, and other materials, among them carved wood, stucco, and wall painting.<sup>6</sup> At Shah-i Zinda *muqarnas* is most commonly employed in squinches, domes, and *iwans*, and tiles similar to the Metropolitan Museum's example can be seen there at the mausoleums of princesses Shadi Malik and Qutluq Aqa, as well as in others.<sup>7</sup> ME/KW

1. Roya Marefat has connected the prevalence of blue in Timurid buildings both to the dark blue worn in mourning and to the warding off of the evil eye (Marefat 1991, p. 210). The glittering turquoise surfaces of many Timurid buildings may also be meant to conjure up paradisaical imagery and the waters of Firdaus (Garden of Paradise). See Marefat 1991.
2. Golombek et al. 1988, p. 107.
3. See Paris 2007, pl. 31 (no. AKM00573).
4. See, for instance, the illustrations of the tile revetment on the shrines at Shah-i Zinda in DeGeorge and Porter 2002, pp. 111–15.
5. Roxburgh 2005c, p. 195.
6. Marefat 1991, p. 196.
7. Ibid., p. 220.

PROVENANCE: William Milne Grinnell, New York (until d. 1920)

### 131. Turban Helmet

Iran, Caucasus, or Anatolia, late 15th–early 16th century  
 Iron; forged, engraved, and damascened with silver; copper alloy rivets  
 H. 13 1/8 in. (33.2 cm)  
 Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 1950 50.87

Perhaps the most distinctive and visually impressive helmet worn by the Muslim warrior was the so-called turban helmet. This modern term alludes to the helmet's large, bulbous form that was both turbanlike in appearance and, as its great volume suggests, intended to be worn over a thick textile head covering. While the turban-helmet type appears to have originated in the fourteenth century, most of the surviving examples, including twelve in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. That several examples include in their calligraphic decoration the names of members of the Aq Quyunlu and Shirvan dynasties in Azarbaijan and Iran, as well of Ottoman rulers, suggests the use of turban helmets was widespread, though the centers of production have not been localized.

This richly decorated turban helmet, an outstanding example of the type, is a masterpiece of metalworking. Forged from a single



plate of iron, it has a smooth-sided base rising to an outward-bulging middle zone articulated with convex spiral flutings that turn and taper to the smooth apex, which is closed by a small, separately applied plug with a polygonal terminal. The front of the bowl has cutouts over the eyes, reinforced by applied iron bands; set between them is a sliding nasal bar that terminates in a large decorative finial. The helmet rim is fitted with pierced lugs for the attachment of a long mail curtain, or aventail, that covered the warrior's lower face and neck, and above these fixtures is riveted a protective iron bar. The cross-hatched surface of the helmet is densely covered with engraved and silver-damascened Arabic inscriptions on the upper and lower zones, while spiraling foliate arabesques fill the fluted middle zone. The inscriptions are not legible, although on comparable examples they typically include honorific titles such as "the greatest sultan," "the mightiest khan," or "master of the necks of nations."

The helmet is incised at the front with the *tamga* mark applied to pieces stored in the Ottoman arsenals, the largest and most important of which was that in the former Byzantine church of Hagia Eirene in Istanbul. This storehouse contained not only Turkish arms but also a vast quantity of booty captured by the Ottomans following their defeat of the Persians in 1514 and of the Mamluks in 1517. DGA/SWP

PROVENANCE: Nathaniel de Rothschild, Vienna; [Blumka Gallery, New York; sold to MMA]

characteristic dragon-shaped handle associated with the type. The primary decoration consists of three stacked bands of gold-inlaid medallions: two rows of large medallions encircling the body and one row of smaller medallions around the neck. Set against a silver background, these gold decorations produce a lively two-toned effect, further enhanced by scrolling arabesques distributed in the interstitial spaces of both neck and body.

The form of this jug is widely found across Asia. Chinese potters of the Ming period (1368–1644) produced blue-and-white ceramic pot-bellied jugs with dragon-shaped handles during the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In Central and western Asia, the form became increasingly popular after the Mongol conquests, and particularly under the Timurids and Safavids,<sup>2</sup> although it is still not known whether the earliest examples were ceramic, metalwork, or stone.<sup>3</sup> The most celebrated example is an elaborate jade jug made for Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) datable to the second quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The presence of these jugs at the Timurid court is well documented in historical sources, as well as in illustrated manuscripts of the time.<sup>5</sup> That the form was eventually imitated by Ottoman metalworkers is demonstrated by a number of sixteenth-century examples.<sup>6</sup>

While the form remained relatively unchanged throughout the history of its production, the surface decoration and inscription of the present example indicate that it was probably produced either at the end of the fifteenth century or in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Although it has been argued that the *naskhi*

### 132. Jug

Present-day Afghanistan, probably Herat, late 15th–first quarter of 16th century  
Brass; cast and turned, engraved, and inlaid with silver, gold, and black organic compound

H. 5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (14.3 cm); Diam. 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (15.6 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.607

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script around molded collar:

ناد علياً مظهر العجائب  
تجده عوناً لك في النوائبي  
كل هم و غم سينجلي  
بولايتك يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Ali, the revealer of miracles made manifest,  
You will find him a comfort to you in times of misfortune  
All grief and sorrows will disappear through your companionship,  
O 'Ali, O 'Ali, O 'Ali

Small pot-bellied jugs (*mashraba*) such as this example are among the best-known types of Iranian metalwork. Although this jug has lost the lid that survives in several related examples, it retains the



inscription, which invokes 'Ali as a source of comfort and the soul's companion, definitively establishes the jug as an early Safavid piece with strong Shi'i associations,<sup>7</sup> production within a Sunni context in the late Timurid period is also equally possible. Such an attribution has been suggested for a jade signet ring with the same inscription that is also in the Museum's collection (cat. 134).<sup>8</sup> Since neither the jug nor the ring is dated, both works raise similar questions of dating and attribution.

FL

1. Jenyns 1988, p. 66, fig. 35. See also London 2005, pp. 423–24; and Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, p. 354.
2. Several comparable jugs with dragon-shaped handles are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. MAO 697); the David Collection, Copenhagen (no. 34/1986); the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul (no. 2962); the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. 943-1886); and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Nuhad Es-Said Collection). See Komaroff 1992b, p. 115, fig. 37; p. 116, fig. 41; p. 134, fig. 53; pp. 156–59, no. 4; pp. 166–68, no. 7.
3. Metal examples can be traced to early thirteenth-century Iran or Khurasan, as demonstrated by a jug with a flaring foot (without a handle) and a band of human-headed *naskhi* around the neck (Brooklyn Museum, no. 86.227.123). See Melikian-Chirvani 1974, pp. 566–67 n. 12. For an illustration, see Brooklyn 1987, p. 233, pl. 177. Another example, closer to the present one but without the foot, is a silver inlaid bronze jug dedicated to Majd al-Din 'Isa al-Zahir (r. 1376–1404), the Artuqid ruler of Mardin, modern-day Turkey (Sotheby's London, Thursday, April 27, 1995, lot 58).
4. Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, no. 328. See Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, p. 144, fig. 46.
5. See *ibid.*, pp. 277, 354. A metal pot-bellied jug with an S-shaped handle appears in the manuscript illustration "Shirin Viewing the Portrait of Khusrau" from the *Khamsa* of Nizami dated to A.H. 900/1494–95 A.D. (British Library and Museum, London) and is reproduced in *ibid.*, p. 277, no. 140.
6. See Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York 1987–88, pp. 121–22. Also see London 2005, p. 469.
7. Komaroff 1979–80, p. 13. Komaroff suggests that the appearance of the same verse on several coins and one seal datable to the reign of Shah Isma'il I (1501–24), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, places this jug firmly in the early Safavid period, that is, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. See also Melikian-Chirvani 1974, pp. 561–62.
8. It is important to note that 'Ali was revered not only by the Shi'is but also by the Sunnis.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

### 133. Sword Guard (Quillon Block)

Central Asia, 14th–early 15th century

Nephrite; carved

2 × 4 × 1 1/8 in. (5.1 × 10.2 × 3 cm)

Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902 02.18.765

The finest jade (the mineral nephrite) in Asian history has come from the two river systems flowing down the northern slope of the Kunlun Mountains in the Khotan and Yarkand districts of the Tarim Basin in Central Asia (now in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China). It comes in several colors, the rarest of which is black, the color of this sword guard (previously called a "quillon block" or "quillons").<sup>1</sup> Practically all the known carvings of black jade, including the present piece, can be dated from the thirteenth to the early fifteenth century, that is, from the time of the Mongols to that of the Timurids in Central Asia. The princely use of black jade can be said to begin with Khubilai Khan and end more or less with Ulugh Beg.<sup>2</sup>

Because of its size, this sword guard has been thought to belong to a dagger rather than a sword. But this is not necessarily so, particularly in light of its Central Asian characteristics. The early long swords used by nomadic peoples on the Eurasian steppe all had small guards. This type of guard, some made of jade, occurs on Chinese swords from about 300 B.C., newly adopted from their northern neighbors. At about the same time, the two-headed dragon appeared in Chinese art. In jade, it took the form of an arc-shaped pendant with a dragon head at each end—the idea, if not the animal, no doubt imported from the West, courtesy of roaming nomads. A seventh-century Chinese sword in the Metropolitan Museum sports a pommel in the shape of a coiled creature terminating at each end with confronted dragon heads.<sup>3</sup> This was also a period of frequent exchanges with Central Asia.

By the time of the Mongol expansion, the two-headed animal had lapsed in China, but in Central Asia, where traditions die hard, it would have survived. This sword guard may well be among the earliest known examples of the type from Central Asia. As to its date,<sup>4</sup> opinions vary from the fourteenth to the early fifteenth century, all within the period of incidence of black jade. For want of hard archaeological evidence, a precise date cannot be assigned. What is certain is that this type of sword guard originated in Central Asia, having evolved in style and workmanship from traditions East and West, some of which reached back over centuries to antiquity.

The iconography of the dragon heads helps somewhat. Similar motifs are found on Central Asian silk tapestries, including one in the Museum's collection.<sup>5</sup> The basic attributes of the Central Asian dragon are horse's teeth, lion's mane, deer's antlers, and a long snout resembling that of a *makara*. By the thirteenth century, the snout began to decrease in length, and another element, the





- Manuel Keene linked it to a jade belt fitting from the second half of the fourteenth or the early fifteenth century. He suggested that such jades may have been created earlier than previously thought, during the reign of the Timurid ruler Shah Rukh (1405–47). See Keene 2008, p. 336.
5. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 1987.8).
  6. See, for example, the carved jade ornaments from the tomb of the Princess of the Chen State (1001–18) in Inner Mongolia Institute 1993.

PROVENANCE: Heber R. Bishop, New York (until 1902)

### 134. Signet Ring

Iran or Central Asia, late 15th–early 16th century  
Gold, cast and chased; nephrite, carved  
H. 1 3/8 in. (3.5 cm); Diam. 1 in. (2.5 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1912 12.224.6

Inscriptions in Arabic in *thuluth* script on stone:

At center of seal:

عز من لا يموت

Glorified be [He] who will not die.

Surrounding seal, in four segments:

ناد علياً مظهر العجائب  
تجده عوناً لك في النوائبي  
كل هم و غم سينجلي  
بولايتك يا علي يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Ali, the revealer of miracles made manifest,  
You will find him a comfort to you in times of misfortune  
All care and sorrows will disappear through your companionship,  
O 'Ali, O 'Ali, O 'Ali

Inscription in Persian in *thuluth* script, around bezel:

جانانداي ترا بجاهست كه حديث گويم عالم هر دو در ننگين جانبخش لعل شباست  
سليمان خوان از اين خاتم عالم بود در كشف كه مهر جانم هست محبت سانم؟  
O my Lord! Instead of writing Thy name, I say the following words.

O my soul! In consequence of my love Thy image is everywhere with me.  
O my soul! Be as wise in conversation as Solomon. My world and heaven are  
in this ring.”<sup>1</sup>

Inscription in Persian in *kufic* script on interior of bezel:

مبارك باد  
Be fortunate

Inscription in *kufic* script underneath stone:

محمد  
Muhammad

One of a group of metal and jeweled objects attributed to the turn of the sixteenth century, this ring has a flat, light green nephrite stone set into a gold shank that is cast in the shape of two dragons' heads. The stone is in the form of a seal, with its inscriptions carved in reverse. Inscriptional stone seals of a circular, flat-cut format, divided into halves or quarters and sometimes framed within a square at the center, can be historically traced to the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

protruding tongue, was emphasized. The tongue remained until about the early fifteenth century. Again, the iconography gives a time range compatible with that of the occurrence of black jade.

A more general but useful consideration is the beginning of the fine craft of jade carving in Central Asia. The Khitans may have brought craftsmen with them to work with jade when they moved west in the twelfth century from northeastern China to establish the Qara Khitai (Western Liao) empire, but this assertion is difficult to validate owing to meager archaeological evidence. However, the Khitans' love of jade is indisputably demonstrated by numerous objects discovered in Khitan tombs of the Liao dynasty (907–1125) in northern China.<sup>6</sup> These Liao jades far outnumber, and are technically much more accomplished, than any discovered in other parts of China. It is unimaginable that, when the Khitans settled in Balasagun, with the jade-producing areas of Khotan and Yarkand under their control, they would not employ the material to fashion ornaments, vessels, and even sword guards. Fine jade working would thus have begun in Central Asia, in centers that included Yarkand and Khotan, the workers being later taken over by the Timurids—possibly beginning with Shah Rukh and Ulugh Beg, who were known for their love of jade.

So far we are able to delineate only the perimeters of our knowledge of this beautifully worked piece. The essential questions—its exact date and place of manufacture, who made it and for whom—must remain until new evidence comes to light. JCYW

1. I am grateful to Stuart Pyhrr for information on the terminology of sword parts and general advice on other aspects of this entry.
2. For the most famous black jade object, the wine bowl Khubilai had made for his new palace in Dadu (Beijing), see Hansford 1950, pp. 74–78, and Hansford 1968, p. 89. See also Sun 2010–11, p. 49. Of the jade objects attributed to the Timurids, some assigned an earlier date (first half of the fifteenth century) are black or very dark green, colors not seen in later versions.
3. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 30.65.2).
4. New research on Iranian jades, however, has yielded new evidence for the dating of this piece. Judging from the shape of the dragon heads,

Although the dragon-shaped shank and nephrite seal point to Timurid patronage, the content of the Arabic and Persian inscriptions can also link the ring to the early Safavid period. Comparing it to a brass jug in the Museum's collection (cat. 132), Linda Komaroff argued that this specific Shi'i invocation to 'Ali (the only legitimate successor to the Prophet, according to Shi'is) appears on both works as well as on coins dating to the years 1501–24 of Isma'il I's reign.<sup>3</sup> She contended that this invocation is not seen on objects of the Timurid period and is rarely found on works immediately following the rule of Shah Isma'il. Other scholars, however, believe that it is equally possible for a Shi'i or even Sunni patron under Timurid rule to have commissioned a ring inscribed with an invocation to 'Ali.<sup>4</sup> In fact, both Sunnis and Shi'is were devoted to 'Ali and—given the increasing wave of sufi beliefs and rituals during the second half of the fifteenth century—it is not unusual for a Timurid object to contain invocations to 'Ali and other Shi'i personages. Thus, this ring could tentatively be dated somewhere between the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century.

A close reading of the inscriptions has been instrumental in shedding light on the intention and meaning of the ring. The *thuluth* inscription on the bezel underneath the stone, where it touches the wearer's skin, most probably contains a reference to the Prophet and adds another talismanic element to the object.

Associated with Central Asia for centuries, nephrite (*yashm*) was highly prized at the Timurid and Safavid courts. It was believed to have apotropaic properties capable of protecting its wearer from harm and the deadly effects of poisons. The dragons that form the gold shank here constitute yet another protective element. These beasts appear frequently as decorative elements in Timurid and Safavid art and were traditionally regarded as symbols of royalty and divine power. When combined with the talismanic content of the many inscriptions, the dragons holding the bezel of this ring strongly suggest that one of its primary functions was to empower the owner and protect him from harm.

AG/ME

1. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, p. 253, pl. 142.
2. See Wenzel 1993, pp. 258–59, nos. 426, 434.
3. Komaroff 1979–80, pp. 13–14.
4. Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 253, 358.

PROVENANCE: [Indjoudjian Frères, Paris, until 1912; sold to MMA]

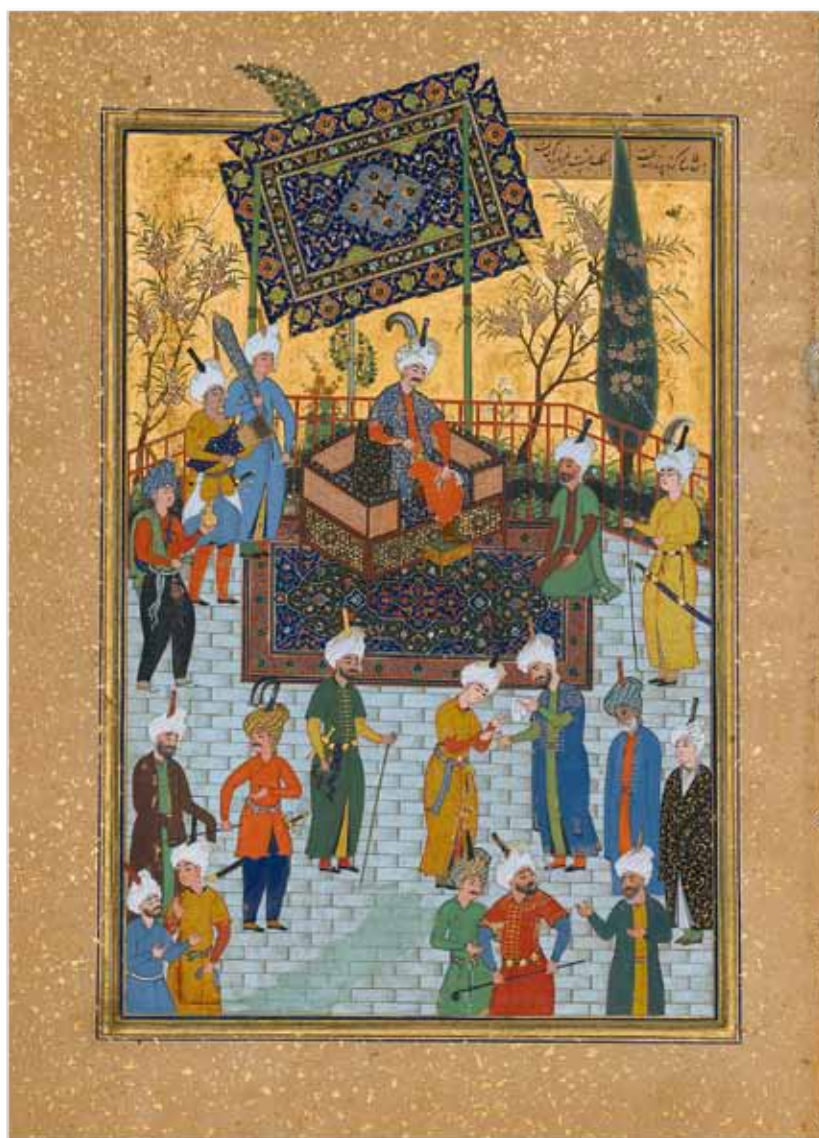
### 135. *Folio from the Khamsa (Quintet) of Nizami*

Calligrapher: Sultan Muhammad Nur (ca. 1472–ca. 1536)  
 Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, dated A.H. 931/1524–25 A.D.  
 Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (32.1 cm × 22.2 cm)  
 Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.7.4



The colophon of the manuscript from which this folio comes establishes that the book was copied by Sultan Muhammad Nur in A.H. 931/1524–25 A.D., a date that also appears in an architectural inscription on one of its paintings. This concurrence suggests that the work was copied and illustrated at almost the same time.<sup>1</sup> Since Sultan Muhammad Nur spent most of his life in Herat, the manuscript was probably produced there. The Timurid dynasty had officially ended in 1506 with the death of its last effective ruler, but aspects of its artistic and literary culture survived for several decades. While some of the illustrations in the manuscript are formulaic, others continue the interest in portraiture initiated in Timurid Herat.

Two scenes from the life of Khusrau Parviz, the hero of the *Khamsa*'s second section, are of particular interest. In the one shown here (fol. 64a), depicting an open-air court reception, the importance of the enthroned ruler is stressed by the colorful canopy over his head and the elaborately patterned carpet under his throne. The faces of some of the courtiers who stand beside or below his throne



have a portraitlike specificity, including that of the bearded man holding a piece of paper in his raised left hand while a youth applies ink to the ring on his extended right hand. These actions identify the man as a chancery scribe entrusted with the transcription and sealing of official correspondence. His unusual prominence implies that he may have been the patron of the manuscript, but further research is needed to link either him or the seated ruler with any specific person.

The other painting of particular interest (fol. 104a) contains the date of A.H. Rajab 931/April–May 1525 A.D. and celebrates the union of Khusrau and Shirin, who are seated within an ornately decorated palace. The facade of the building is inscribed with verses appropriate to the occasion that extol the “lofty chamber of nuptial bliss.” In addition, the inscription contains puns on the name *Shirin*, which means “sweetness,” comparing Khusrau’s bride to rosewater and sugar.<sup>2</sup>

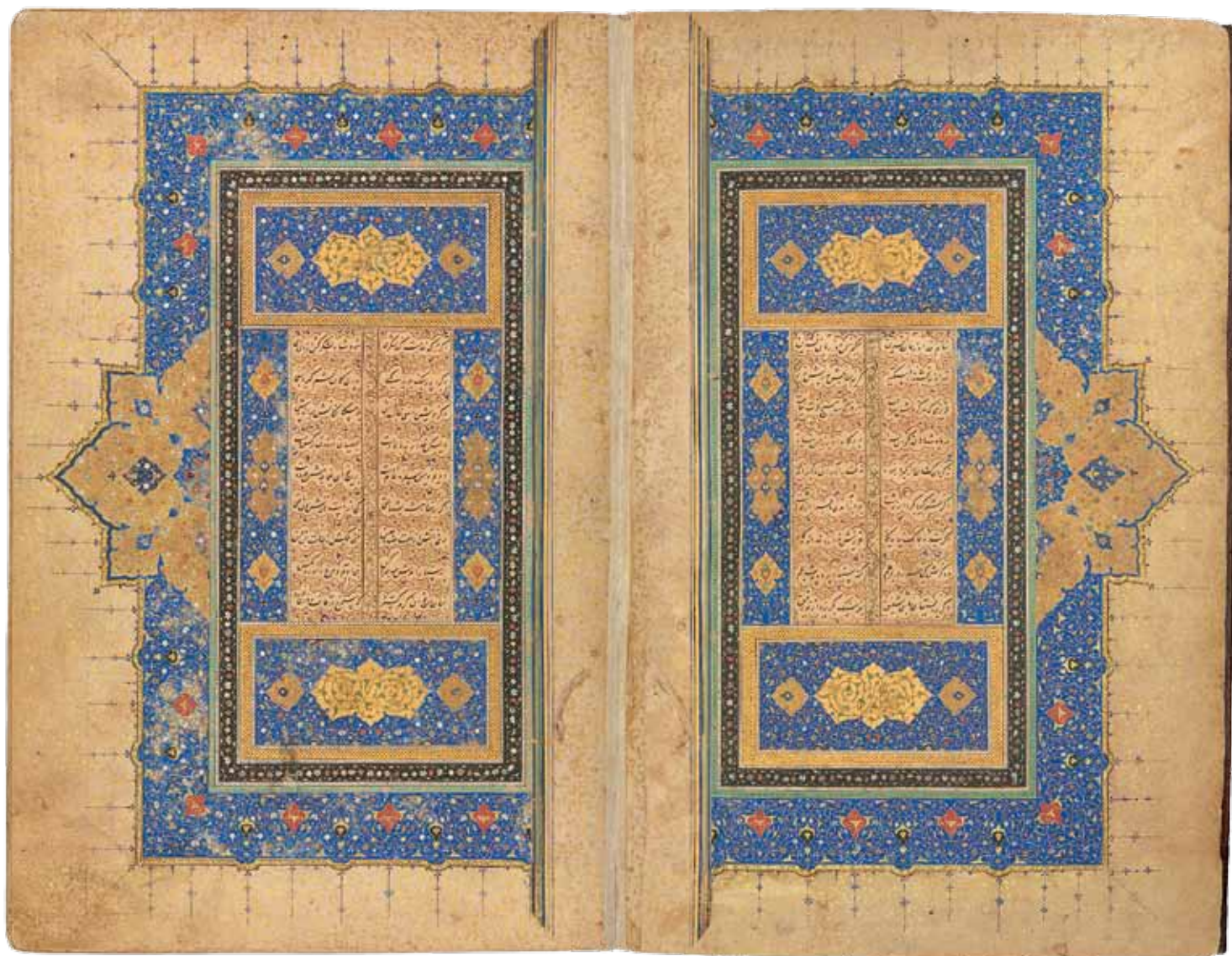
The elaborate leather binding of the manuscript also links it to the bookmaking traditions of Timurid Herat. The exterior covers depict a landscape inhabited by birds and animals, a common theme on book bindings since the mid-fifteenth century. Inscriptions impressed in cartouches around the periphery of the outer binding allude to the text it encloses, the *Khamsa* of Nizami. Geometric and vegetal filigree patterns of cut-leather, silhouetted against a blue paper ground, appear on the interior of the covers.<sup>3</sup>

PS

1. The date appears on fol. 104a; see Williams Jackson and Yohannan 1914, pp. 58–67, no. 8.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
3. For similar bindings, see Aga-Oğlu 1935, pls. 1, 2, 5, 11; Jenkins, ed. 1983, p. 135; and Chelkowski and Soucek 1975, cover ill.

PROVENANCE: Alexander Smith Cochran, Yonkers, N.Y. (until 1913)





A

### 136A, B. Two Folios from the *Bustan* (*The Orchard*) of Sa'di

Calligrapher: Sultan Muhammad Nur (ca. 1472–ca. 1536)

Copied in present-day Afghanistan, probably Herat, dated A.H. 920/1514 A.D.;  
illustrated in present-day Uzbekistan, Bukhara, ca. 1530–35

#### A. Frontispiece

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 7½ × 5 in. (19 × 12.7 cm)

Purchase, Louis V. Bell Fund and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 1974  
1974.294.1

#### B. "The Night Journey of Muhammad (the Mi'raj)"

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 7½ × 5 in. (19 × 12.7 cm)

Purchase, Louis V. Bell Fund and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 1974  
1974.294.2

One of the most widely admired works of Persian literature, the *Bustan* of Sa'di (1257) combines moral advice with illustrative anecdotes. This copy, dated to 1514, was probably made in Herat, but its illustrations appear to have been added in the 1530s for an Uzbek patron, possibly in their capital, Bukhara. Its calligrapher, Sultan Muhammad Nur, was trained by the famous Timurid calligrapher Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi, and his work was appreciated by both the Safavids and the Uzbeks.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript opens with a richly illuminated frontispiece (cat. 136A)

It is well known that painters active in Herat under the Timurids used pictorial models or templates for many of their pictures. The folio illustrated here (cat. 136B) continues that practice, but each of its halves draws on a distinct compositional source and each reflects a theme discussed by Sa'di in this section of the *Bustan*. The top portion, showing the Prophet Muhammad seated on Buraq and surrounded by angels, is modeled on *mi'raj* pictures





B

such as the one in a Nizami manuscript from Herat dated to 1495. Both works depict the Prophet's ascension to heaven against the background of the Haram al-Sharif in Mecca.<sup>2</sup>

Here, Muhammad has one hand raised as if in speech, and the text panel in the upper-right corner recounts his conversation with Buraq. The steed explains that he will take Muhammad only part of the way toward his destination because he himself would be burned by the intensity of the divine presence. Sa'di describes the Prophet's luminosity as the source of all light, a concept conveyed by the swirling golden clouds that frame Muhammad and Buraq.<sup>3</sup> The lower section of the painting celebrates the revelation of the Qur'an, shown as a book surmounted by flames and enshrined in a mihrab niche. The mosque courtyard, probably intended to represent the Haram al-Sharif in Mecca, is occupied by three sleeping men. This composition appears to be inspired by Sa'di's praise for the Qur'an as superior to the sacred texts of Christianity and Judaism.<sup>4</sup>

A pictorial and thematic antecedent to the present composition is provided by a painting, executed in Herat about 1485,<sup>5</sup> that is also concerned with the transmission of the Qur'an. It depicts the Prophet Muhammad, who sits adjacent to the mihrab in a mosque, as well as the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and their companions, who are placed before him in the courtyard. One of the caliphs, probably 'Uthman, is shown transcribing a text, which recalls his role in the compilation of the Qur'an, and another, probably 'Ali, appears to be commenting upon it to the assembled group.<sup>6</sup>

In the Bukhara version, the manuscript of the Qur'an is emphasized: its physical isolation and flaming halo reinforce the idea of its religious predominance and divine origin. Here, the group of spectators has been reduced to three, probably by eliminating 'Ali, and all are shown asleep, thereby denying them any part in the Qur'an's replication or interpretation. By reducing peripheral detail and placing the focus on the twin miracles of the Prophet's nocturnal journey and the Qur'an's miraculous origin, the Metropolitan Museum picture carries a more focused religious message than do most depictions of the *mi'raj*. PS

1. Bayani 1967–71, vol. 1, pp. 272–80; Soudavar and Beach 1992, pp. 158, 190.
2. Stchoukine 1954, pl. 69.
3. Sa'di 1974, pp. 6–7; Sa'di 1989, pp. 25–26, esp. p. 26, lines 80–83.
4. Sa'di 1989, p. 26, lines 75, 79; Sa'di 1974, p. 7.
5. Bodleian Library, Oxford (Ms. Elliot 287, fol. 7).
6. Stchoukine 1954, pl. 72.

PROVENANCE: [Nasli Heeramanek, New York, until 1937; sold to Kahn]; Kahn family, by descent [1937–74; sold to MMA]

### 137. Folio from a *Divan* of Hafiz

"Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness"

Painter: Sultan Muhammad (active first half of 16th century)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1531–33

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

Image: 8½ × 6 in. (21.6 × 15.1 cm); page: 11⅜ × 7⅞ in. (28.9 × 18.1 cm)

Promised Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Cary Welch Jr.

Partially owned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, 1988 1988.430

Signature in Persian in *naskhi* script, on door:

عمل سلطان محمد

The work of Sultan Muhammad

This painting of a drinking party at a tavern, which includes ecstatic dancing, full-throated singing, and figures who have overindulged in wine to the point of collapse, could pass as a simple illustration of debauchery were the roof of the pavilion not







inhabited by angels. The presence of these heavenly creatures, daintily partaking of wine themselves, casts the scene in a different light, one in which the state of mind achieved through drunkenness can be likened to enlightenment<sup>1</sup> rather than surrender to one's base desires. The manuscript of the collected poems of Hafiz, one of Iran's greatest mystical poets, was most likely illustrated in two phases. This page belongs to the second period, from about 1531 to 1533, when Sam Mirza, who is named in another illustration signed by the artist, had left Herat and spent the winters in Tabriz at the court of his brother, Shah Tahmasp.

The artist of this exceptional work, Sultan Muhammad, is thought to have directed the first phase of the illustration of the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, which commenced about 1524 and ended about 1527. Sultan Muhammad was raised in Tabriz and taught Prince Tahmasp painting. While the vibrancy of his palette harks back to the royal Turkmen painting style of late fifteenth-century Tabriz, the structure of his composition demonstrates the ongoing synthesis of late Timurid painting, with its logical spatial organization, and the more emotionally intense Turkmen school. Sultan Muhammad's work is characterized by a sense of humor, communicated through pose and expression, and painterly touches such as impasto used for turbans and extraordinarily fine brushstrokes for fur.

Here, the arrangement of the figures in the foreground follows the contours of the hexagonal pavilion. The three musicians at the left, their faces grotesque and bodies nearly bare except for their animal-skin capes, contrast with the men of all ages in their turbans and robes. Yet their music infuses both the occasion and the dancers with wild abandon. As one's gaze rises to the second floor of the pavilion, the actions of the figures become more subdued—men pulling a jug up with a rope, a pair of youths sipping wine together, a bearded elder curled up and reading. Finally, the angels on the roof imbibe and blush but maintain their innocence.

SRC

1. Soucek 1990, p. 60, noted, "The painting illustrates an important theme in the poetry of Hafiz, drawing a parallel between drinking wine and the source of creative inspiration behind the writing of poetry."

PROVENANCE: [Tabbagh Frères, Paris and New York]; Arthur Sambon, Paris (until 1914; sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, May 25–28, 1914, lot 189); Louis J. Cartier, Paris; Stuart Cary Welch, Warner, N.H.

## 138A—G. *Seven Folios from Shah Tahmasp's Shahnama (Book of Kings) of Firdausi*

A. "Firdausi's Parable of the Ship of Shiism," fol. 18v

Attributed to Mirza 'Ali (active ca. 1525–75)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1530–35

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 12½ × 9 in. (31.7 × 22.7 cm); page: 18½ × 12½ in. (47 × 31.8 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.1

B. "The Feast of Sada," fol. 22v

Attributed to Sultan Muhammad (active first half of 16th century)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1525

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 9½ × 9 in. (24.1 × 23 cm.); page: 18½ × 12½ in. (47 × 31.8 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.2

C. "Tahmuras Defeats the Divs," fol. 23v

Attributed to Sultan Muhammad (active first half of 16th century)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1525

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 11½ × 7¾ in. (28.3 × 18.6 cm); page: 18½ × 12½ in. (47 × 32.1 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.3

D. "The Besotted Iranian Camp Attacked at Night," fol. 241r

Attributed to Qadimi (active ca. 1525–65)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1525–30

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 11½ × 9½ in. (28.2 × 23.2 cm); page: 18¾ × 12½ in. (47.5 × 32.1 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.36

E. "Isfandiyar's Third Course: Isfandiyar Slays a Dragon," fol. 434v

Attributed to Qasim ibn 'Ali (active ca. 1525–60)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1530

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 11 × 10¾ in. (27.9 × 26.2 cm); page: 18⅝ × 12½ in. (47.3 × 31.8 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.51

F. "The Angel Surush Rescues Khusrau Parviz," fol. 708v

Attributed to Muzaffar 'Ali (active late 1520s–70s; d. ca. 1576)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1530–35

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 13½ × 11 in. (34.3 × 27.9 cm); page: 18⅝ × 12¾ in. (47.3 × 31.4 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.73

G. "The Assassination of Khusrau Parviz," fol. 742v

Attributed to 'Abd al-Samad (active ca. 1540–95)

Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1535

Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, and gold on paper

Image: 11½ in. × 10¾ in. (28.4 × 27.3 cm); page: 18½ × 12½ in.

(47 × 31.8 cm)

Gift of Arthur A. Houghton Jr., 1970 1970.301.75

Although not the largest royal manuscript produced for Shah Tahmasp of Iran, the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) from which these seven illustrations come ranks as the most important. Its 258 paintings by fifteen artists, working from the early or mid-1520s until the mid-1530s, form a compendium of Safavid painting from the first third of the sixteenth century. A veritable classroom for the great and lesser masters of Iran, the *Shahnama* project brought together artists from East and West who subsumed their regional styles into a Safavid idiom defined by perfect brushwork, complex, multifigure compositions, brilliant color, and lively characterization.

Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch have described a scenario for the circumstances surrounding the commission of the manuscript, proposing that Shah Isma'il I ordered a deluxe *Shahnama* for his first-born son, Tahmasp, in 1522, when the prince returned to Tabriz after six years in the former Timurid capital at Herat.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, Shah Tahmasp may have ordered the manuscript in 1524 to commemorate his accession to the throne in that year, for the commissioning of opulent illustrated manuscripts to mark the coronation of a new ruler was a long-established practice in Iran.<sup>2</sup> Qadi Ahmad, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, states that as a prince, Tahmasp studied painting with the preeminent Tabriz artist, Sultan Muhammad.<sup>3</sup> Assuming this student-teacher relationship developed from 1522 on, Shah Tahmasp himself may have arrived at the idea of commissioning an imperial *Shahnama* at the suggestion of Sultan Muhammad. Since by 1522 Isma'il I had succumbed to the alcoholism that killed him, his motivation for ordering such a manuscript is more difficult to divine. Welch claimed that an earlier royal *Shahnama*, on which Sultan Muhammad had begun production at the behest of Shah Isma'il as a gift for Tahmasp, was never finished because its style was too foreign to the young Tahmasp, who had been reared in Herat and was familiar with the painting of the great Bihzad and other late Timurid artists.<sup>4</sup> However, such a supposition relies not only on dating the earlier, unfinished manuscript to about 1520, rather than five years earlier,<sup>5</sup> on the basis of style but also on accepting the notion that Tahmasp at the age of eight could tell the difference between the Herat and Tabriz schools of painting and prevail upon the artists at the Safavid court to abandon their project.

Dickson and Welch have posited three phases of production for the manuscript. During the first, Sultan Muhammad would have been director of the project, followed in 1527 by Mir Musavvir, who was in turn succeeded in the early 1530s by Aqa Mirak, a contemporary and close friend of Shah Tahmasp. While the sequence of paintings generally follows this chronology—the earliest works appearing at the beginning of the manuscript—some were added later near the beginning or replaced earlier versions of the same scene.<sup>6</sup> Thus, “Firdausi’s Parable of the Ship of Shiism” (cat. 138A), which appears near the start of the poem, can be

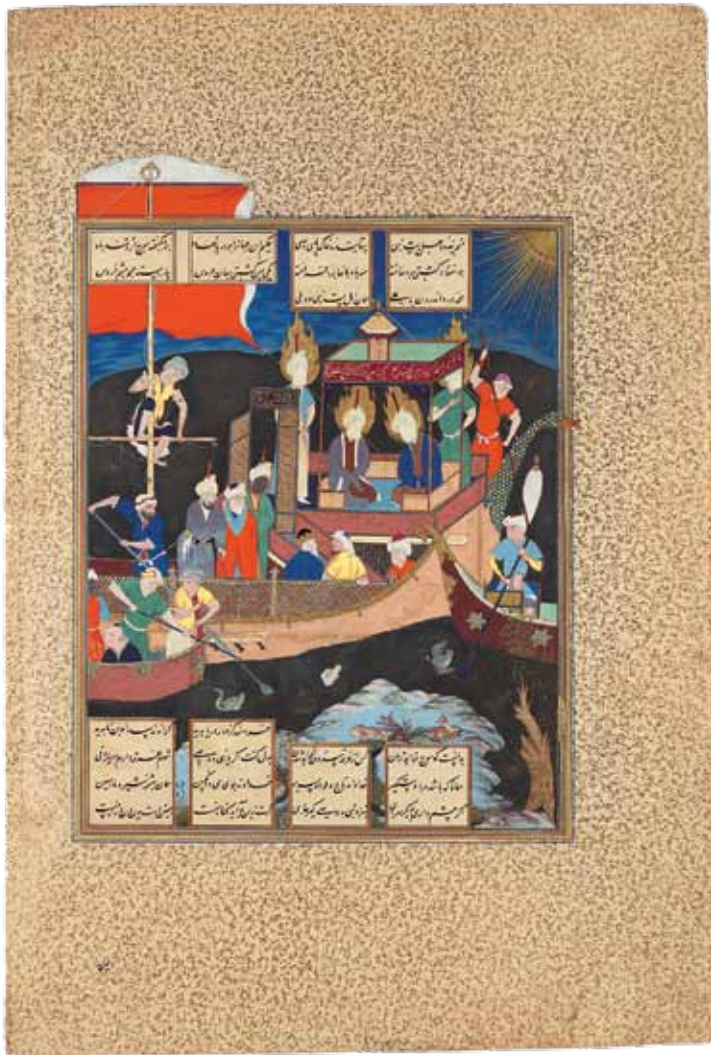
attributed to Mirza ‘Ali, one of the second generation of painters working on the manuscript, and most likely dates to the first half of the 1530s.

Taken from Firdausi’s introduction to the poem, the story concerns the seventy ships that God launched into a stormy sea and the “single broad ship in the shape of a bride, embellished like the eye of a rooster. The Prophet is in it with ‘Ali / and also the *ahl-i bait-i nabi* and *vasi*.”<sup>7</sup> The two sons of ‘Ali, Hasan and Husain, stand to either side of the roofed forecastle pavilion in which Muhammad and ‘Ali are seated. Although the ship carrying the Prophet and the first three Shi‘i imams is not exactly “in the shape of a bride,” it is lavishly adorned with inlaid wooden panels bearing intricate geometric patterns and has a strikingly decorated prow in the shape of a duck’s head and neck. The passengers include a crowned figure, depicted seated, his back to the viewer, and two men wearing the Safavid turban with its characteristic *taj*, the red vertical extension of the turban cap. Between these two stands a white-bearded elderly figure in a red coat with a fur collar. Dickson and Welch have suggested that this is Firdausi himself.<sup>8</sup> The clever man realized that even if all the ships were doomed to sink and their passengers drown, the best place to be would be beside the Prophet and ‘Ali.

In addition to Firdausi’s text, the artist has included a couplet on the canopy of the forecastle that reads, “Muhammad is here to fortify our inner state! Why heed the waves when Noah is piloting our Ship of State?”<sup>9</sup> As Raya Shani has noted, the mention of Noah as the pilot of the ship of state implies a parallel with the Safavid head of state, the shah. In addition, she mentions a hadith, or tradition of the Prophet, in which the Prophet likens the *ahl-i bait-i nabi* to Noah’s Ark, which will safeguard those who choose to ride in it.<sup>10</sup>

Details such as the inlaid stars on the two smaller boats and the very small elliptical pupils of the figures’ eyes appear in other works attributed to Mirza ‘Ali, including “Khusrau Listening to Barbad Playing the Lute” from the 1539–43 *Khamsa* of Nizami and “Nushirwan Receives an Embassy from the Ray of Hind” from this manuscript.<sup>11</sup> The son of Sultan Muhammad, Mirza ‘Ali would have been in his twenties at the time he painted this work. His meticulous brushwork, pictorial elements that are slightly larger in scale than his father’s, and groupings of figures are all characteristic of the work of the second-generation artist in Tahmasp’s *Shahnama*.

“The Feast of Sada” (cat. 138B) represents the annual celebration of the discovery of fire, which is commemorated fifty days before Nauruz, the Persian New Year. It is said that Hushang, the grandson of the first king, Gayumars, threw a stone at a horrible monster that missed its target but hit another stone and caused sparks to fly. Realizing that he had discovered flint, the means to start fire, Hushang introduced fire worship to mankind, a form of reverence that continues among Zoroastrians to this day.



A



B

This painting depicts Hushang seated in the center of a meadow and holding a cup of wine as he turns to one of his men, who offers him a pomegranate. A third figure, at the left, is seated on a rug and also drinking wine. Before them blazes the fire that Hushang had lit to celebrate the feast. This particular arrangement of figures and rocky outcrops soaring into the upper margin is typical of Sultan Muhammad and is most brilliantly realized in his masterpiece, “The Court of Gayumars” from this manuscript.<sup>12</sup> While the level of detail here is far less complex than in the Gayumars image, the painting also displays other features characteristic of this artist: the facial types, the sympathetic portrayal of animals (Hushang was the first to domesticate them), and the melding of intense colors in the rocks. Sultan Muhammad’s figures are smaller in scale than those of the second-generation *Shahnama* artists, but they concur with the late fifteenth-century style found in the few known examples of royal Turkmen painting, most particularly a

*Khamsa* of Nizami to which Sultan Muhammad and other artists added illustrations in the early sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

On the folio following “The Feast of Sada,” Sultan Muhammad contributed another illustration, “Tahmuras Defeats the *Divs*” (cat. 138c). Raising the tempo, he depicts Shah Tahmuras, the son of Hushang, as he gallops across a meadow and bashes a black demon (*div*) with an ox-headed mace. The shah, who taught humans various useful skills such as weaving, was bedeviled by the evil Ahriman and his army of *divs*. Although he defeated Ahriman, he spared the lives of the *divs* in exchange for their teaching him the alphabet and all the languages of the known world, from Greek to Chinese. At the lower left, a clutch of captured *divs* sits panting but neutralized, while one of their number is led away by a horseman as one of his fellow demons pulls his tail. The humor of the *divs*’ ghastly faces and gestures and the painterly treatment of their spotty skin are typical of the work of





C



D

Sultan Muhammad. Moreover, the spatial illogic of the horseman and his white mount at the upper right, who are seemingly walking on air, recalls the Turkmen roots of Sultan Muhammad's style. Under the influence of the Herat artists who joined the royal library at Tabriz, the artist would rein in such charming excesses over the course of the *Shahnameh* project.

One of the turning points in the *Shahnameh* concerns the division of the world by Shah Faridun into three parts to be assigned to his three sons. Salm received Rum, Byzantium, and the western world; Tur was assigned Turan, the lands of the Turks to the east; and Iraj was given Iran, much to the envy of his brothers. In time, they murdered Iraj, thus setting in train the blood feud between Iran and Turan that consumes much of the epic. "The Besotted Iranian Camp Attacked at Night" (cat. 138D) shows one of the many battles between the two foes. At the urging of the Turanian king, Afrasiyab, his general Piran had gathered an army of thirty

thousand men and set out toward the Iranian camp. Instead of encountering troops prepared to fight, the Turanians came upon an encampment of revelers, most of whom were drunk and utterly unprepared for battle. A rout ensued that left two-thirds of the Iranian army annihilated.

In this scene, the artist has interpreted the Iranian army's devastation as a melee in which white tents punctuate the confusion and slaughter. Attributed by Welch to Qadimi,<sup>14</sup> one of the lesser artists on the *Shahnameh* project, the painting teems with so many figures that the hillocks rising toward the night sky are nearly invisible. Thanks to the distinctive Safavid turban, the Iranians are distinguishable from the Turanians. At the right, the soldier Giv, who tried to rally his drunken troops, is shown on horseback looking the worse for wear. While not the most refined artist at Tahmasp's court, Qadimi was recognized as a talented portrait painter. According to Qadi Ahmad, Shah Tahmasp "kept him in





E



F

the *kitabkhana*<sup>15</sup> (royal library cum workshop), which suggests that he was well liked at court and did not leave Tabriz to serve other patrons in the mid-sixteenth century.

The dramatic image “Isfandiyar Slays a Dragon” (cat. 138E) illustrates the third of seven courses, or tests, that the prince underwent on the route to Turan, where he had been sent by Shah Gushtasp to free his sisters. As virtuous, brave, and loyal as Isfandiyar was, his father set increasingly difficult challenges for him to meet before he would agree to abdicate and raise him to the throne. Accompanied by the Turanian general Gurgsar as his prisoner and guide, Isfandiyar learned that he would encounter a dragon upon the direct but difficult route to Turan that he had chosen. The prince ordered a two-horse chariot to be built with a box in which he and protruding swords could fit. As the chariot approached the dragon’s lair, the beast advanced toward it, sucking the terrified horses and the chariot into its maw. With the swords now stuck in the dragon’s throat, Isfandiyar climbed out of

the box and delivered the coup de grace by plunging his sword into its brain.

The artist to whom Dickson and Welch attribute this painting, Qasim ibn ‘Ali, has chosen to illustrate the moment of confrontation between the horses and the dragon. Flames issuing from the beast’s open mouth cause the dappled horse to pull away in fear. Aside from the pikes pointed at the dragon, the swords described as protruding from the chariot are absent from this image. The dragon itself, a picture of compressed energy, is tightly wedged into the rocky mountain. The S-curved bare shrubs and large-headed, small-bodied figures conform to the Turkmen style and characterize the work of Qasim ibn ‘Ali, also called Painter B by Welch. Although the artist is not mentioned by Qadi Ahmad or Dust Muhammad, his name appears in the treatise on poets by Sam Mirza, Shah Tahmasp’s brother, which notes that he came from Shiraz and accords him the same rank as Qadimi (see cat. 138D).<sup>16</sup> Many similarities in figural types exist between his works in the







Tahmasp *Shahnama* and a signed illustration to the *Ahsan al-Kibar* (The Best of the Greats: On the Knowledge of the Immaculate Imam), dated September 1526.<sup>17</sup> In “Isfandiyar Slays a Dragon,” the composition relies on that of Aqa Mirak’s “Faridun in the Guise of a Dragon Tests His Three Sons.” However, the dramatic tension generated by the range of reactions in Aqa Mirak’s image is invested only in the dragon in Qasim ibn ‘Ali’s picture, since the protagonist is mostly hidden in the chariot box and the other figures are bystanders. A competent, careful painter, Qasim ibn ‘Ali lacked the flair of the masters whom he assisted on the *Shahnama* project.

The sixty thousand couplets that constitute Firdausi’s *Shahnama* chronicle the reigns of both the historical pre-Islamic kings of Iran and their legendary predecessors. Thus, the Sasanians appear in the final chapters. Certain underlying aspects of Iranian kingship remained the same for the later kings as for their forebears, including the belief that each legitimate ruler was imbued with the kingly aura, or *farr*. The next painting shown here (cat. 138f) illustrates that principle. Khusrau Parviz, escaping from a potential usurper, Bahram Chubina, has fled up a narrow gorge. Reaching an impasse, Khusrau prayed to God for help and instantly the angel Surush appeared on a white charger and whisked him to safety. After he witnessed this rescue, Bahram Chubina realized that his quest for the throne was doomed.

Dickson and Welch have attributed this painting to a great-nephew of Bihzad, Muzaffar ‘Ali, who spent his whole career working for Shah Tahmasp.<sup>18</sup> His earliest paintings appear in the *Shahnama*, but he went on to contribute to all the major royal commissions during Tahmasp’s reign. He “died not long after the Shah,”<sup>19</sup> around 1576, having not only produced illustrations for manuscripts but also having helped, in the 1550s, to decorate the walls of Tahmasp’s new palace in Qazvin. A masterful painter of horses, Muzaffar ‘Ali produced compositions such as this one that appear to fly apart, with rocks jutting every which way. Unlike his meticulous uncle Bihzad, Muzaffar ‘Ali was extremely painterly in his brushwork, particularly on the rocks, almost as if he were experimenting with wash technique rather than conforming to the more typical Safavid penchant for saturated colors.

The penultimate painting in Shah Tahmasp’s *Shahnama*, “The Assassination of Khusrau Parviz” (cat. 138g), is the only work in the manuscript that can be assigned to ‘Abd al-Samad, one of the artists who left Iran for India and helped found the Mughal school of painting. The formerly just king, Khusrau Parviz, had grown corrupt, and eventually rebels overthrew him and placed his son Shiruya on the throne. Khusrau was permitted to live for a time under house arrest, but his enemies eventually prevailed upon Shiruya to order his father’s murder. The result is shown here—a hired assassin stabbing the king in the heart, while courtiers and ladies slumber or converse.

Many elements of this composition look ahead to the 1539–43 *Khamsa* of Nizami, which Shah Tahmasp commissioned after the

completion of the *Shahnama*, and this work may have been added at the end of the 1530s, after the manuscript was virtually complete. The architecture, while imposing and decorative, stands like a house of cards, with little substantiality or recession in space. Unlike similar, earlier paintings of interiors in the *Shahnama*, this illustration places the figures close to the picture plane; their scale has also increased. Nonetheless, the careful brushwork and range of nonreactions to the shah’s plight, from unconsciousness to unawareness, add interest to the scene. When ‘Abd al-Samad reached the court of Humayun in 1549, he built his reputation on his ability to paint in minuscule detail, and abandoned the style he had developed while in Iran, which was more consistent with that of his peers, Mirza ‘Ali, Mir Sayyid ‘Ali, and Aqa Mirak. SRC

1. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, p. 4; New York 1972, p. 53.
2. Robert Hillenbrand contended that, by the early sixteenth century, illustrated *Shahnama* manuscripts had gone out of fashion as commemorative volumes for new rulers. However, his suggestion that fifteenth-century rulers commissioned only illustrated books of mystical or love poetry did not take into consideration the major works on the wars of Timur, the *Zafarnama*, or the religious manuscript, the *Mi‘rajnama*, produced for the Timurid sultan, Abu Sa‘id. Hillenbrand, R. 1996, pp. 54–56. Both Shah Tahmasp’s successor, Shah Isma‘il II, and his successor, Shah ‘Abbas, commissioned illustrated *Shahnamas* at the start of their reigns, which suggests that the choice to embark on such a project was connected to their identity as Safavid rulers, distinct from their Turkmen and Timurid predecessors.
3. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, pp. 180–81.
4. New York 1972, pp. 48–54, 60; Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, pp. 34, 45.
5. Canby 1993, pp. 79–80, dates the painting to about 1515–22.
6. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, p. 5; New York 1972, pp. 62–63, 84.
7. From the *Shahnama* as translated and quoted in Shani 2006, p. 35. The *ahl-i bait-i nabi* (People of the Prophet’s House) are ‘Ali and his two sons Hasan and Husain, and *vasi* refers to Muhammad and ‘Ali, although in this couplet the term would appear to be redundant.
8. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 2, no. 6.
9. Shani 2006, p. 28. The lines were composed by the poet Sa‘di.
10. Ibid., pp. 28–29. *Ahl-i bait* is given as the Arabic *ahl al-bait* in the hadith.
11. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 2, fig. 180 and pl. 15.
12. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva.
13. Topkapı Palace Library (no. H762).
14. London, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass. 1979–80, p. 83.
15. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 185.
16. Mentioned in London, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass. 1979–80, p. 76.
17. New York and Milan 2003–4, p. 108.
18. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, p. 155.
19. Beg Monshi 1978, vol. 1, p. 271.

PROVENANCE: Possibly Sultan Selim II, Istanbul (from 1568); Sultan Selim III, Istanbul (by 1800); Baron Edmond de Rothschild, Paris (by 1903–d. 1934); his son, Baron Maurice de Rothschild, Paris (by 1955–d. 1957); [Rosenberg and Stiebel, New York, until 1959; sold to Houghton]; Arthur A. Houghton Jr., New York (1959–70)

## 139A, B. Two Folios from a *Falnama* (Book of Omens)

### A. "Muhammad Revives the Sick Boy"

Iran, Qazvin, 1550s

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

23 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 17 in. (58.6 × 43.2 cm)

Purchase, Francis M. Weld Gift, 1950 50.23.1

### B. "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus"

Iran, Qazvin, 1550s

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

23 × 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (58.4 × 45.1 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1935 35.64.3

Massumeh Farhad, Serpil Bağci, and others have substantially clarified the context and meaning of the manuscript of the *Falnama* (Book of Omens) from which these large illustrations come.<sup>1</sup> Farhad and Bağci have identified four *Falnama* manuscripts from Safavid Iran and Ottoman Turkey, produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the dispersed copy attributed to Iran during the reign of Shah Tahmasp (1524–76).<sup>2</sup> The images from this *Falnama*, including the present works, differ from other Safavid manuscript illustrations most obviously in their large size and in the scale of their pictorial elements. Yet, the use of these pictures for bibliomancy (fortune-telling with books) also affected the format of the manuscript and the relationship of images to text. As Farhad and Bağci have noted, each illustration in the dispersed *Falnama* precedes the text, which contains poetic couplets and prognostications in prose—an indication that the pictures could be interpreted with or without the aid of the text on the facing page. Although each image essentially stands alone and is not linked by a narrative thread to the text and image that precede or follow it, the subject matter of the dispersed *Falnama* illustrations does fall into definable categories, including "Muhammad and his descendants; tombs and sanctuaries; the Abrahamic prophets; sages, heroes, and villains; and eschatological themes."<sup>3</sup>

The practice of bibliomancy involved first making a wish or asking for guidance, then opening the book at random to a picture and the text facing it, which the seeker would interpret in light of his question. Seventeenth-century travelers describe diviners in public places in Iran and Turkey using images (but not text) to make prognostications for passersby. The arrangement of the *Falnama* from which these images come would have instead enabled an individual to consult both image and text without the need for an intermediary. According to Farhad and Bağci, Shah Tahmasp, the likely patron of this *Falnama*, was known to hold divination sessions with the women of the Safavid court. Such a large-scale *Falnama* would have suited these gatherings, since a group would have no trouble seeing whatever details were being employed to interpret the omen.

"Muhammad Revives the Sick Boy" appears in the section of the *Falnama* that Farhad and Bağci call "Islamic Traditions."<sup>4</sup> The painting, which has suffered from abrasion and being folded in half, depicts a figure whose face is veiled and encircled in a flaming aureole standing at the feet of a shrouded, gray-skinned youth in a coffin. The boy leans one arm on the side of the coffin while a bearded man supports his head. This scene has been described as Christ raising Lazarus,<sup>5</sup> but when images of the biblical prophets appear in the *Falnama*, they do not have veiled faces, while the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams do. The iconography accords better with one of the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. The story concerns Umma Mabid, the old woman shown here squatting before Muhammad and beseeching him to cure her son, which through prayer he succeeded in doing. As with other *Falnama* illustrations, the bystanders, including a bearded king, gesture and observe with amazement the main event, here the "miracle" Muhammad has performed.

Stuart Cary Welch and others have attributed the paintings in the dispersed *Falnama* to Aqa Mirak and 'Abdul 'Aziz, two of Shah Tahmasp's court painters, but their authorship cannot be confirmed by any text or inscription. Nonetheless, many details of the ruined architecture, complete with storks' nest and snakes, recall a painting from Shah Tahmasp's *Khamasa* of Nizami (1539–43) assigned to Aqa Mirak by Welch.<sup>6</sup> Painted ten to fifteen years after the *Khamasa*, the *Falnama* marks a change in style that accompanies its distinct function. Not only are the folios significantly larger than those of earlier royal Safavid manuscripts, but so too are the figures and other pictorial elements, which are also closer to the picture plane than in either Tahmasp's *Shahnama* or his *Khamasa*. Likewise, landscape elements have been simplified, as if to provide a backdrop and not a source of distraction from the main subject.

A similar principle has been applied to "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus," also known as "The People of the Cave." Here, the Sleepers and their dog form an arc against the black ground of the cave ringed by rocky outcrops. Along the horizon, soldiers look and gesture toward a king on horseback being led by a dark-skinned figure, who can be identified as the devil. As in the previously discussed painting, figures dot the landscape, but here only a few gaze in the direction of the Sleepers. Welch has connected hook-nosed figures such as the soldier to the right of the tree in the foreground with the work of 'Abdul 'Aziz, but the attribution of this work to him is not certain.

According to the story, seven youths—either Christians or believers from before the time of Christ, depending on the version—and the dog Qitmir, all of whom were seeking God, were hiding from their persecutors in a cave when God ordered the angel of death to visit them. A pagan king, most likely the equestrian figure at the upper right, blockaded the opening to the cave, but after three hundred years God breathed life into the Sleepers



A

and they awoke. Appearing in both Syriac sources and the Qur'an (*Ahl al-Kahf*), this story resonated with Shi'i Muslims, who believed the twelfth Imam (the Mahdi) would return to the world in the same way as the Sleepers. Recitation of all or part of the *Surat al-Kahf* would protect the faithful against liars and cheats.<sup>7</sup> SRC

1. Washington, D.C. 2009–10.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 34.
4. Ibid., p. 117.
5. According to Metropolitan Museum records, a label on the back of the frame reads, "Jésus, la tête nimbée de la flamme prophétique,





B

ressuscitant Lazare qui sort de son tombeau, en présence du roi des Juifs et de nombreux personnages qui témoignent leur stupéfaction de ce miracle." See also Tokatlian 2007, pp. 56–57.

6. London, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass. 1978–80, pp. 138–41.

7. Porter, V. 2007, pp. 124–25.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 139A: [E. Hindamian, Paris, until 1950; sold to MMA]

Cat. 139B: [Demotte, Inc., New York, until 1935; sold to MMA]



## 140. Folio from a *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Firdausi

"Luhrasp Hears from the Returning Paladins of the Vanishing Kai Khusrau"

Painter: Siyavush (b. ca. 1536; d. before 1616)

Iran, Qazvin, 1576–77

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

18½ × 12⅝ in. (47 × 32.1 cm.)

Rogers Fund, 1935 35.48

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script:

سیاوش  
Siyavush

In a rocky landscape Shah Luhrasp gesticulates toward the aging Zal and his son Rustam, who have come to brief him upon the disappearance of Kai Khusrau, his predecessor on the Iranian throne. Seated on a low-sided polygonal throne, Luhrasp sports a short beard and helmet-shaped crown decorated with feathers. Although the painting does not follow the text in matters of detail, the figures at the right do represent the few assembled



soldiers who escaped death in a snowstorm as they were searching for the king. The young crowned figure at the lower right may be Gushtasp, son of Luhrasp.<sup>1</sup>

The illustration is one of fifty-five dispersed pages from a *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) thought to have been commissioned by Shah Isma'il II, the son and successor of Shah Tahmasp who ruled for eighteen months in 1576–77. B. W. Robinson proposed that the manuscript was left unfinished at the time of the shah's death because none of the extant illustrations come from the later sections of the manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Nine artists contributed paintings to this *Shahnama*. Some, like Siyavush, had been attached to the royal library late in the life of Shah Tahmasp (d. 1576) and continued to work at the Safavid court after his death. As a child, Siyavush was brought as a slave from Georgia to the Safavid court, where Shah Tahmasp recognized his talent and assigned him to the *naqqashkhana* (royal atelier).<sup>3</sup>

By comparison to the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp (produced in the 1520s and 30s), the paintings from the 1576–77 manuscript contain simpler and far less original compositions. The scale of figures is generally larger in the later *Shahnama*, and they do not conform consistently to the long-necked, round-cheeked, slender silhouette that characterized the Qazvin style in this period. Details such as the rocks, which would have been lovingly depicted with subtly modulated colors and irregular shapes in the Tahmasp *Shahnama*, are thinly painted, with little attention to eye-catching features. This blandness is surprising, since the rocks in drawings by Siyavush assume lively, almost fungal shapes, suggesting that this *Shahnama* painting was left unfinished. SRC

1. London 1976b, p. 5. Robinson notes that the image was misidentified by Sotheby's when it was sold on February 5, 1935, lot 38, a mistake that was repeated in New York and Venice 1962, no. 60; and Welch, A. 1976, p. 21.
2. London 1976b, p. 1; Robinson, B. 2005.
3. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 191.

PROVENANCE: Sale, Sotheby's London, February 5, 1935, lot 38; to J. Brummer for MMA

## 141. Princely Hawking Party

Iran, Qazvin or Mashhad, ca. 1570

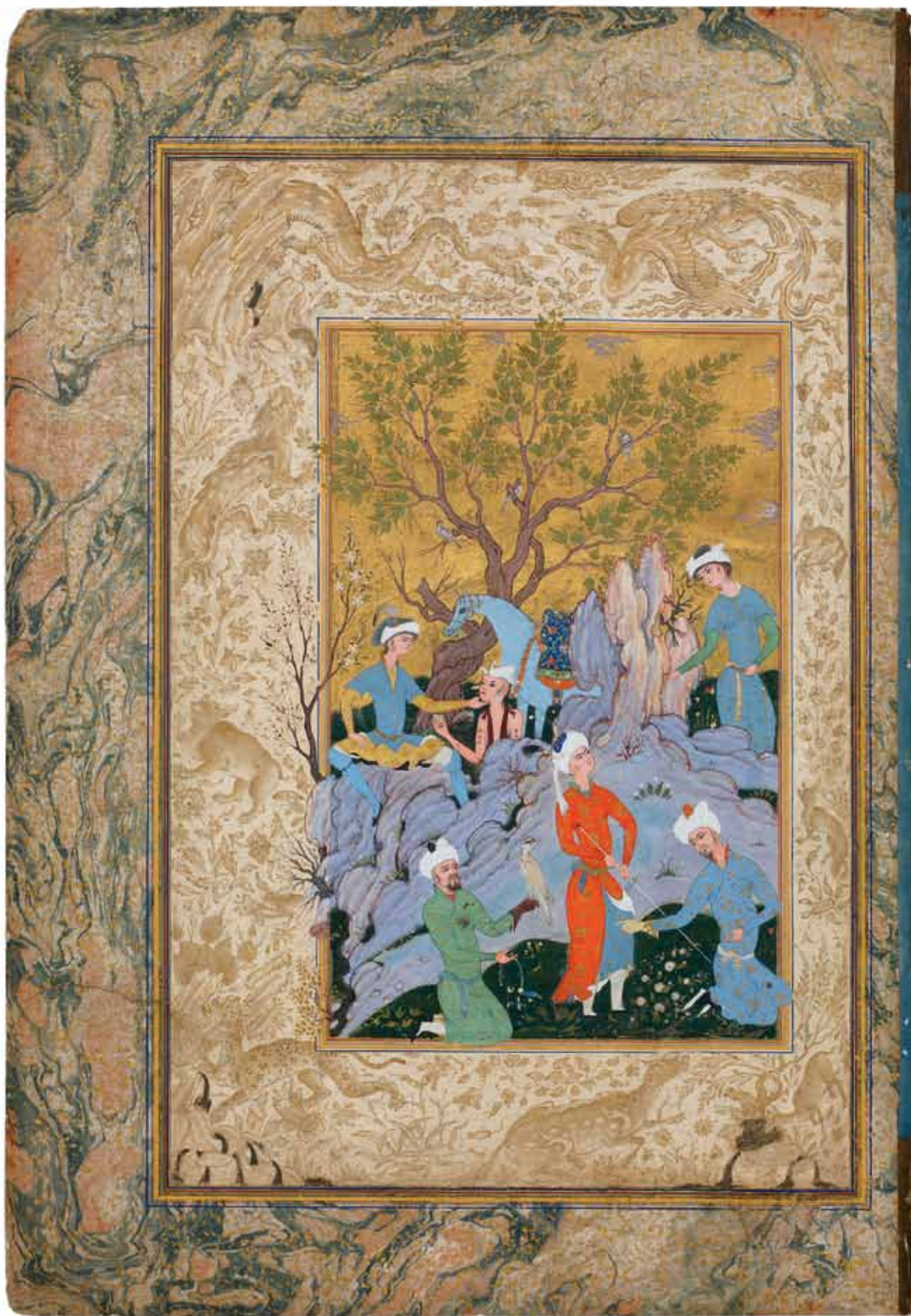
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 14¾ × 9¾ in. (37.6 × 24.9 cm); page: 18⅝ × 12¾ in. (47.3 × 32.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1912 12.223.1

This painting is the left half of a double-page composition that represents a pause during a hunt. Two falconers kneel in the foreground, one holding his bird of prey on his gloved left hand while







the other gestures toward him. The right-hand page, in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,<sup>1</sup> contains the key figure in the composition, a beardless princely youth who strokes a falcon's throat. Like the young admirer holding a white staff in the left-hand page, he wears a brilliant orange-red robe and a black feather in his turban, a sign of high status. The twisting tree in the background here echoes the more dramatically gnarled tree on the facing page. Both folios have been mounted as album pages with examples of poetry in *nasta'liq* script on their recto (Boston) and verso (New York) and with very fine gold-sprinkled marbled outer margins. Originally, the composition would have formed either the double-page frontispiece or endpiece of a manuscript.

By the 1530s court paintings in Iran had evolved to include vignettes not directly relevant to the main subject of the picture. Here, a youth straddling a rock cups the chin of a bare-chested boy whose upper arms are lined with burn marks. These wounds and the boy's state of undress indicate that he is a sufi, or follower of the mystical path. Sufis burned themselves to show their love for God and their ability to override carnal passions. Nonetheless, they are often depicted in Persian painting as the love object of other, less mystically inclined young men.

Stuart Cary Welch has attributed this work to Mirza 'Ali, who worked at the court of Shah Tahmasp and later under the patronage of Sultan Ibrahim Mirza in Khurasan in the 1550s and 1560s.<sup>2</sup> As the son of Sultan Muhammad, the most visionary of Tahmasp's artists, Mirza 'Ali had grown up at the Safavid court.<sup>3</sup> The figural style of this painting, marked by elongated, slender bodies, long necks, and double chins, is typical of this artist's work for Sultan Ibrahim Mirza. This mode remained current until the late 1580s, when Shah 'Abbas I came to the throne and revived the court atelier. Whether Mirza 'Ali was living in Mashhad or Qazvin is unclear, but the style—most often referred to as the Qazvin style—is that associated with the Safavid court in general in the period from 1555 to 1580. SRC

1. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 14.624). Coomaraswamy 1929, pp. 43–44, no. 63 a, b, pls. 36–37.
2. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, pp. 150, 153, fig. 205.
3. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 186.

PROVENANCE: [E. Kalebajian, New York, until 1912; sold to MMA]

## 142. Composite Camel with Attendant

Iran, Khurasan, third quarter of 16th century

Opaque watercolor and ink on paper

Image: 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (20 × 14 cm); page: 9 × 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (22.9 × 17 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1925 25.83.6

In the third quarter of the sixteenth century, an increase in the number of single-page paintings and drawings produced in Iran reflected a broadening of patronage and a decline in the preference for illustrated manuscripts. Additionally, subject matter shifted from the heroic to the lyrical, with genre scenes and portraiture gaining importance. A painting such as this, depicting a young groom leading a camel composed of human and fantastic creatures and bedecked with fancy textiles, combines the genre type with the suggestion of a mystical meaning. On the basis of style—particularly, the round face, long neck, and slender body of the groom—the painting can be attributed to Khurasan and dated to the 1570s or 1580s.

A late fifteenth-century prototype, attributed to the Timurid master Bihzad, depicts a groom spinning wool on a spindle while leading a camel.<sup>1</sup> Even if the artist of the present work was unaware of Bihzad's painting, he may have been familiar with a Safavid image of the same subject, signed by the court artist Shaikh Muhammad.<sup>2</sup> Couplets concerning taming the haughty camel, composed by the artist, appear in the border of that painting. While the work under consideration here differs from Shaikh Muhammad's painting in style and in details of the groom and camel, the general subject matter and composite makeup of the camel suggest that both artists were responding to a similar mystical impulse. Even if the artist here was inspired by Shaikh Muhammad's work or a copy of it, he has misunderstood the animal's trappings, transforming the metal bar that arches over the front of a camel's hump into a tear-shaped standard with bells on it. Likewise, the shape of the cloth covering the hump bears no relation to the form of either the hump or a saddle.<sup>3</sup>

Although composite animals have figured throughout the history of Iranian art, they enjoyed a notable revival in the last third of the sixteenth century. Unlike the harpies and sphinxes of medieval Iranian art, composites under the Safavids consisted of humans, real and fantastic animals, and demons (*divs*) combined into the shape of known animals such as horses and camels. These were especially favored in Khurasan, the northeast province of Iran, which encompasses the cities of Mashhad and Herat. In addition to the painting by Shaikh Muhammad, a key work for the understanding of this image is an illustrated *Hadiqat al-haqiqat* (The Walled Garden of Truth) of Sana'i, a mystical poet of the eleventh–twelfth century, that contains four illustrations of composite animals.<sup>4</sup> In the simplest terms, the composite aspect of the animals



alludes to the mystical idea of the unity of all creatures within God, while the animals themselves represent base instincts that must be overcome to achieve spiritual purity. SRC

1. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (no. F1937.22).
2. Dickson and Welch 1981, vol. 1, pp. 167–68.
3. An unfinished drawing of a composite camel and groom in mirror reverse is a copy, probably from a pounce, of this image. It is in album H2162 in the Topkapı Palace Library, illustrated on ARTstor, without further identifying numbers. A painting in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., reproduces the Metropolitan Museum's composite camel, but both the landscape background and the pose of the groom who looks back at the camel differ from the Metropolitan's example. See Simpson 1980, pp. 80–81.
4. The male figures in these illustrations wear Indian turbans, but the pictorial style is consistent with that of Khurasan. The manuscript contains four other illustrations: one appears to be by a Bukhara artist, and the other three conform to the Khurasan style. Possibly the manuscript traveled from Iran to India via Bukhara. Karin Rühdanz, in Düsseldorf 2003, p. 99, mentions two manuscripts of Sana'i's *Hadīqat al-haḡiqat*, one from 1569, copied in Herat, and the other from 1573, with composite images.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1925)

### 143. A Stallion

Painter: Habiballah (active ca. 1590–1610)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, ca. 1601–6

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 5 × 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (12.7 × 19.7 cm); page: 8 × 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (20.3 × 30.1 cm)

Purchase, Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art, The Edward Joseph Gallagher III Memorial Collection, Edward J. Gallagher Jr. Bequest and Richard S. Perkins and Margaret Mushekian Gifts, 1992 1992.51

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script:

راقمه حبیب الله

Habiballah painted it



Following the death of Shah Isma'il II in 1577, the centralized art patronage of the Safavid court fragmented. Artists attached themselves to provincial governors and other officials or moved to Qum and Mashhad, the shrine cities of Iran. One such artist, Habiballah of Sava, who painted this image of a dappled gray stallion, began his artistic career in Qum. There he joined the service of Husain Khan Shamlu, who had been governor of Qum from at least as early as 1591–92. In 1598 Husain Khan Shamlu was appointed governor of Herat, taking Habiballah with him. By 1606 the artist was working at the Safavid court in Isfahan.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the masterful precision of draftsmanship in the rendering of this elegant horse, the sumptuous gold cloth on its back suggests that this painting was completed after 1598, when the Safavid capital was established in Isfahan and Shah 'Abbas





had begun promoting the luxury silk industry. One hallmark of this business, textiles made of contrasting shades of precious metal wrapped around a silk core, is seen here. Additionally, not only the lotuses and *saz*-leaf motifs (the curved, serrated leaves swooping across the horse blanket) but also their large scale are typical of textiles produced during the reign of Shah 'Abbas after 1598.

The dating of the painting can be further narrowed by comparing the design of the horse blanket with that of the trousers depicted in *A Hunter Carrying a Musket*, which is signed "Mashhadi Habiballah."<sup>2</sup> The palette and the concept of large floral and vegetal elements in a vine scroll are the same in both works. As Abolala Soudavar has discussed, the presence of the word *Mashhadi* before the artist's name indicates that he had performed the pilgrimage to Mashhad, where the eighth Shi'i imam is buried.<sup>3</sup> The most likely time for this to have occurred would have been 1601, when Shah 'Abbas made the same pilgrimage and remained in the city for four months. The shah may well have taken Habiballah into his service at this time.

Habiballah's images of single figures appear old-fashioned, a throwback to the style of Qazvin at a moment when a new style was emerging in Isfahan. Yet in this painting, as well as in his exquisite "Concourse of the Birds," added to a *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds) (cat. 127D) probably between 1601 and

1606, his very conservatism works in his favor: every hair of the horse and feather of the birds is lovingly, perfectly painted. Unaffected by the fashions of his day, Habiballah presents a horse and birds that recall the precision and coloristic harmony of late Timurid painting at Herat. Only the gold textile, feather ornament, and clumps of gold vegetation and clouds firmly place his portrait of a horse at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

SRC

1. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 191. According to Qadi Ahmad, Shah 'Abbas "took him [Habiballah] away from the khan, and now [1606] he is in the capital, Isfahan, employed by the court department [*sarkar-i humayun*] as a painter."
2. Sakisian 1929, pl. 103. The depiction of patterns on textiles in paintings is invariably freer than on actual textiles because of the technical aspect of repeating motifs on the loom. Several examples from about 1600 contain similar motifs to those on the horse blanket, but none is identical to it. See Neumann and Murza 1988, pp. 262–63, nos. 3 and 7–10.
3. Soudavar and Beach 1992, p. 237.

PROVENANCE: Howard Hodgkin, London; [Terence McNerney, New York, until 1992; sold to MMA]





#### 144. Double-Page Folio from the *Shahnama* (*Book of Kings*) of Firdausi

Calligrapher: Muhammad al-Qivam al-Shirazi (active ca. 1560s)  
Illuminator: Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar Muzahhib Shirazi  
(active 1560s–80s)

Iran, probably Shiraz, ascribed to A.H. 970/1562–63 A.D. (main text block);

and A.H. 991/1583–84 A.D. (extended margins)

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

17 × 10 1/8 in. (43.2 × 25.7 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.9a, b

Banners flying, drums beating, and horns blaring, a pitched battle rages in this impressive double-page painting. In the thick of the battle, the larger-than-life Iranian hero Rustam, wearing a plumed

white leopard-skin headdress, neatly disposes of one of his opponents. Illustrating a scene from the Persian national epic, the *Shahnama*, this highly detailed painting depicts a confrontation between the Iranians and their archenemies, the Turanians. The Turanians, appearing at the left, are dressed in variations upon contemporary Ottoman garb, including voluminous turbans and headdresses similar to those worn by their elite Janissary corps. The presence of chained artillery also links these figures to the Ottomans, who were known to utilize such firearms on the battlefield as early as the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

While attributions for this painting have varied, a recent study places it within the sphere of sixteenth-century Safavid manuscript production in Shiraz.<sup>2</sup> It once illustrated one of the largest copies of the *Shahnama* produced in this period—a manuscript



now known only through its dispersed pages.<sup>3</sup> This manuscript originally was a smaller volume of which only the inner text block survives. The oversized margins, along with their elaborate paintings, appear to be later additions. Surviving colophons attest to these two different campaigns of work. First, the main text was written and signed, but not dated, by the calligrapher Muhammad al-Qivam al-Shirazi.<sup>4</sup> About twenty years later, in A.H. 991/1583–84 A.D., the composite manuscript is said to have been completed by the illuminator Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar Muzahhib Shirazi, who provided details of its complicated history.<sup>5</sup> He is known to have collaborated in this period with other calligraphers on two large-scale Qur'an manuscripts, now in the collection of the Topkapı Palace Library.<sup>6</sup> While we can be confident that Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar had some role in the enlargement and illumination of the 1562–83 *Shahnama* manuscript, his part in the creation of this double-page painting remains unclear. DMT

1. Elgood 1995, p. 33.
2. The folios previously have been published as Ottoman. See Grube et al. 1968, pp. 14–15, no. 31; and also Grube 1963a. Images of the double-page painting are to be found there on p. 241 (fig. 4) and p. 242 (fig. 5), with other details (figs. 9–12). For their reattribution to sixteenth-century Shiraz, see Uluç 1994, with images on pp. 58–59 (figs. 1–2), and additional details on p. 60 (figs. 3, 4, 5). See also Uluç 2006, pp. 326ff., and fig. 242.
3. Uluç 2006, p. 332.
4. His signature appears at the end of the text block, but without a date.
5. Uluç 2006, pp. 330–31, fig. 245 (color image of the colophon folios in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, nos. 14.692A verso and 14.491B recto).
6. Ibid., pp. 338ff.

PROVENANCE: Victor Goloubew, Paris; Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1934–d. 1951; his estate, until 1952; sold to MMA)

### 145. *Portrait of a Lady Holding a Flower*

Attributed to Muhammadi of Herat (active Qazvin, ca. 1570–78; Herat, ca. 1578–87)

Present-day Afghanistan, Herat, 1565–75

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (11.7 × 6.8 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1955 55.121.42

Inscribed in Persian in nasta'liq script, at lower right:

عمل استاد محمدی هروی

The work of Master Muhammadi of Herat

Seal impression, at upper left:

بنده شاه ولایت عباس ۹۹۵

Slave of the king of Holiness [Imam 'Ali], 'Abbas 995 [1587]

This charming portrait of a young woman lightly grasping a stalk of daisies has been ascribed to the Khurasan artist Muhammadi



and bears the stamp of Shah 'Abbas I. Despite these indications that the work was once in the royal Safavid collection, it has apparently been overlooked by the scholars who have published articles on Muhammadi in recent decades.<sup>1</sup>

In its conception, style, and execution, the painting is typical of pictures universally accepted as the authentic work of Muhammadi from about 1565 to 1575. The young woman stands facing right, holding both hands up in front of her and tipping the flowers toward her face as if to sniff their fragrance. Her stylish kerchief is decorated with a colorful floral scroll and a red lining over a band of cloth and gem-set gold that ties at the back of her head and is suspended down her back, perhaps covering her hair. Each of the several layers of her clothing is clearly delineated. A blue cloak with gold phoenixes and deer covers her red dress, which is modestly fastened up to her neck with gold buttons. Under the skirts of this dress, gathered up and tucked into the narrow multicolored sash at her waist, she wears a gold knee-length skirt with vertical stripes decorated with scrolling patterns and folded back to reveal its green lining. Trousers with blue, brown, and white stripes, a sort of fancy long underwear, cover her legs. Her weight appears to be firmly placed on her right foot, shod in a green slipper, while she lifts and tilts her left foot up slightly.

The finesse of Muhammadi's brushwork is most evident in the woman's face. He has painted both the brown irises and black pupils of her eyes, her eyebrows form perfect arcs, and with one stroke of the brush he has rendered her small, straight nose. Despite paint loss, the pearl band under the woman's chin is still visible. Many details of this figure, from her fingertips, blackened with henna, to her trousers, headdress, and lifted foot, can be found in the painting *A Pair of Lovers* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which bears the same attribution and seal as this painting.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Boston painting, the present work does not place the figure in a landscape, but its approach to single-figure portraiture is more typical of Muhammadi throughout his career. Although he worked on some commissions from the Safavid rulers in Qazvin, he appears to have spent his whole life in Herat. As Abolala Soudavar has noted, the later Safavid written sources are almost silent on the subject of Muhammadi, mostly likely because at the end of his life he worked for the Uzbeks who controlled Herat.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, artists such as Riza-yi 'Abbasi noted their debt to this painter, whose graceful style informed the school of Khurasan for the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> SRC

1. Robinson, B. 1992; Soudavar 2000.
2. Coomaraswamy 1929, no. 45, pl. 22; Robinson, B. 1992, p. 19; Soudavar 2000, p. 54.
3. Soudavar 2000, p. 69.
4. Canby 1996b, p. 151, no. 113.

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]

### 146. *Lady Applying Henna*

Iran, Qazvin style, late 16th century  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
14½ × 9 in. (36.7 × 22.9 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1955 55.121.21

Intended for inclusion in an album of pictures and calligraphies, this painting is a rare depiction of a young woman applying henna to her feet. It incorporates elements associated with the Qazvin school of painting, such as the woman's peaked cap, delicate facial features, and slender body, as well as the gold vegetation and clouds floating across the surface. The woman's dress has fallen back to reveal the decorative underwear that covers her thighs and knees. Despite this, her pose and expression are self-absorbed and not overtly erotic. Even though the painting is by an anonymous artist not connected to the Safavid court, it displays a noteworthy awareness of trends current in the work of court artists, such as the heightened interest in depicting commonplace activities and the increase in portraits of individual sitters.



Henna from the flowering plant *Lawsonia inermis* has been cultivated and used in Iran, the Arab world, and South Asia for dyeing hair, skin, and leather since the second millennium B.C. In most cultures of the Middle East, it is associated with celebrations and rites of passage, particularly marriage. The recipes and forms of decoration with henna vary from region to region. In northwest India and present-day Pakistan, for example, the leaves of the plant are crushed and mixed with lemon juice, oil, and water for painting lacy designs on the hands; in Iran the dried leaves are mixed with water or rosewater for application to the hands and feet for their color alone.<sup>1</sup> In this painting, the sitter's right foot rests on a bed of henna leaves, while the gold bowl on a small stand at the right contains the liquid with which the leaves are mixed. The depiction in Safavid paintings of tribal women with intricately patterned henna ornament on their hands and feet suggests that in the sixteenth century the difference in taste between urban and rural women extended beyond clothing and headgear.<sup>2</sup> SRC

1. Mirtaheeri 2005, p. 69.
2. For example, in *Nomadic Encampment* by Mir Sayyid 'Ali, from 1539–43 (Harvard University Art Museums, no. 1958.75), the women have arabesque designs in henna on their hands.

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]



### 147. *Man in a Fur-Lined Coat*

Painter: Riza-yi 'Abbasi (ca. 1565–1635)

Iran, Isfahan, ca. 1600

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image:  $5\frac{3}{8} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$  in. ( $13.6 \times 6.4$  cm); sheet:  $9\frac{3}{8} \times 6\frac{1}{8}$  in. ( $24.5 \times 15.5$  cm)

Rogers Fund, 1955 55.121.39

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script below figure's left knee:

مشقه رضا

Riza drew it

This tiny but elegant portrait of a young man in a fur-lined cloak epitomizes the work of the Safavid court artist Riza at the peak of his powers. Painted not long after Shah 'Abbas established his capital at Isfahan, the image captures the new wealth and leisure of the city. The youth has hooked his left arm over a cushion covered in gold brocade, one of the luxury products that impressed foreign visitors to Iran. While gazing at the pears arranged in a bowl near his feet, he inclines his head so that he can burrow his cheek into the soft fur of his cloak. The tactile quality of the fur, so finely depicted by Riza, is heightened by its contrast with the precisely rendered contours of the sitter's cheek, his draped green cloak, and his bent knee. The gold willow arching over the youth, a typical landscape element in Riza's work, echoes the curves of the feathers in his turban and the many curvilinear details, both large and small, of the composition.

By 1600 Riza had been working for Shah 'Abbas for nearly fifteen years. Qadi Ahmad had noted with admiration his finesse and talent for portraiture.<sup>1</sup> In addition to portraits of highborn men and women, Riza produced a large number of drawings in the 1590s that were executed in a highly original, calligraphic style. His subjects in these works ranged from courtiers to working men and religious pilgrims. With the move to Isfahan in 1598, Riza made more paintings of courtly figures, presumably in response to a broadening of patronage among the grandees in the circle of the shah. This group consisted of *ghulams*, the class made up of Armenians, Circassians, and Georgians taken prisoner as children and converted to Islam. Unlike the tribal factions in Iran, the *ghulams* gave their primary loyalty to the shah, who rewarded their allegiance with wealth and powerful positions in the government. Although the youth in this portrait may not have been a *ghulam*, his opulent cloak and cushion, the archer's ring on his thumb, his billowing turban and feathers, and the fruit before him all indicate his high status.

SRC

1. Ahmad ibn Mir Munshi 1959, p. 192.

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, until 1955; sold to MMA]





## 148. *The Lovers*

Painter: Riza-yi 'Abbasi (ca. 1565–1635)

Iran, Isfahan, dated Tuesday, 8 Shawwal A.H. 1039/May 21, 1630 A.D.

Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

Image:  $6\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$  in. ( $17.5 \times 11.1$  cm); sheet:  $7\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $18.1 \times 11.9$  cm)

Purchase, Francis M. Weld Gift, 1950 50.164

Signature and date in Persian in *nasta'liq* script:

در روز ۳ شنبه هشتم شهر شوال با اقبال سنه ۱۰۳۹ به اتمام رسید. رقم کمینه رضاء عباسی / هـ

Completed on Tuesday, eighth of Shawwal, from the fortunate year of

A.H. 1039 [May 21, 1630 A.D.]. Painted by the humble Riza-yi 'Abbasi

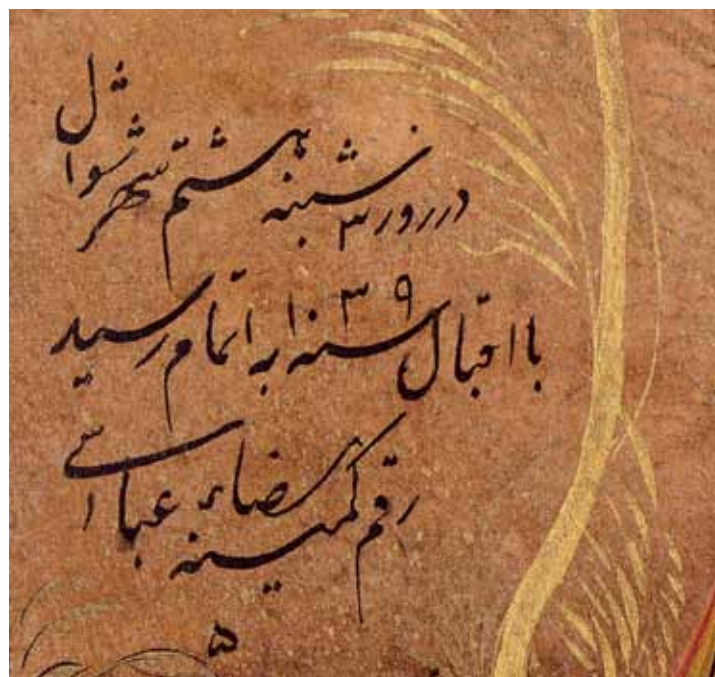
Reflecting the loosening of morals during the reign of Shah Safi (1629–42), Riza has portrayed a man and woman in an intricately composed amorous embrace. While the artist had notably depicted nude women in the 1590s, the inclusion here of a male partner shifts the nature of the image from a catalyst for erotic thoughts to a more explicit representation of sexual foreplay. As several scholars have noted,<sup>1</sup> the couple neither look at one another nor show any emotion in their faces. While Riza may have been conforming to the Persian artistic norm of masking sitters' feelings, he may also have been suggesting a state of reverie, in which the figures' actions are removed from a specific time and place.

As a ground for this composition, Riza has employed colored paper, which serves as a foil for the gold trees, bushes, and clouds of the landscape. In keeping with the style of the second half of his career, he has emphasized ovoid forms such as the woman's thigh and the arms and faces of both figures. The heavy, toffeelike drape of her shawl and his sash is also typical of Riza's later works. Many details underscore the erotic content of the painting. Aside from the man's caressing the woman's abdomen and catching her breast in the crook of his arm, her exposed navel and bare toes are signs of her sensuality. The wine cup poised on her knee, the half-empty bottle of red wine in the left foreground, and the plate with only a few pieces of fruit left suggest that the pair have already been enjoying themselves.

Although the woman is fully clothed and her hair covered by a turban, she was most likely a prostitute. Until the mid-1640s prostitution was not only tolerated but also taxed in Safavid Iran, thus serving as a good source of income for the government. The wealth and resulting leisure of seventeenth-century Safavid urban society allowed prostitutes to prosper, dress in elegant clothes, and entertain highborn clients. While the identities of these particular figures remain unknown, the man could presumably afford the services of his elegant lover. SRC

1. Stchoukine 1964, p. 194; Canby 1996b, p. 173.

PROVENANCE: Friedrich Sarre, Berlin (by 1910—at least 1931); his wife, Maria Sarre, Ascona, Switzerland (until 1950; sold to Paul H. Kempner for MMA)



## 149. *Groom and Rider*

Iran, Tabriz, 1540–50

Ink and watercolor on paper

Image:  $4\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{1}{8}$  in. (11.1 × 7.9 cm); page:  $4\frac{5}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{8}$  in. (11.7 × 8.7 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1925 25.83.5

The subject of the horseman and groom occurs on wall paintings, on metal objects, and on many album pages from sixteenth-century Iran. Some images show the pair preparing to ride to the hunt, while others present an idealized view of a nobleman and his servant. In this drawing a beardless youth wearing the Safavid turban with its high *taj* sits astride his mount, his sword suspended behind the raised skirt of his robe. Although the horse walks at a stately pace, the presence of the sword implies that these figures are proceeding toward the hunting field rather than simply parading. Despite his lower status, the groom stands out because the artist has drawn his fur cap in black and reddish ink. Red ink has similarly been used for part of the horse's bridle, its girth, its neck ornament, and its saddlecloth. Throughout the drawing the line is crisp, the contours unbroken.

Several details suggest that this work was a preliminary drawing and perhaps part of a larger composition. First, the medallion and borders of the saddle blanket have been left blank; normally these cloths would be opulently decorated. Also, both men look to the left of the page with smiling expressions, as if they are focused on something or someone humorous beyond its edge. Even the horse has an alert, almost grinning expression. Finally, the groom's right hand has been cut off by the left edge of the page.

The drawing can only tentatively be attributed to a specific Safavid artist. The proportions of the horse—the extreme narrowing of its neck just behind its ears and its very large rump and midsection—recall those of the animal in *A Horseman and Groom* attributed to Qadimi by Stuart Cary Welch.<sup>1</sup> In the 1520s this artist had contributed Turkmen-influenced squat human figures to the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp (cat.138A–G), but by the 1540s he would have adopted the newer court idiom of slender, taller ones. If this work is indeed by Qadimi, it exhibits the sense of humor, albeit somewhat muted, that was a hallmark of his earlier paintings.

SRC



1. London, Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass. 1979–80, pp. 202–3.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1925)



## 150. *Standing Youth in a Cape*

Iran, late 16th century

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Image: 7 × 4 in. (17.8 × 10.3 cm); page: 17<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (45.4 × 32.1 cm)

Louis V. Bell Fund, 1967 67.266.7.6r

This drawing of a turbaned man dressed in a cape contains subtle clues to the subject's station in life. The feather and floral spray tucked into his turban and the string of black stones draped over it indicate high social standing. Additionally, his short sword and flanged mace suggest that he is a soldier. As is evident from the illumination that surrounds and partly covers the turban feather, the niche in which the figure stands was added to the page after the drawing was completed.

Certain details, such as the line of varying thickness defining the hem of the robe and the nervous hooks forming the turban fringe, recall drawings from the 1590s by the Safavid court artists Riza-yi 'Abbasi and Sadiqi Beg. However, the treatment of the man's physical features—the straight line of his mouth, his thick, dark sideburns, and the placement of his feet—is incompatible with the work of those two artists. Although the maker of this drawing therefore remains unknown, only a very talented hand could have produced its flowing, undulating line and combination of solidity and movement.

This drawing is among those that have been mounted in the so-called Bellini Album. As David Roxburgh has proposed, this album was not assembled in the reign of the Ottoman sultan Ahmed I (1603–17), as stated by F. R. Martin, its first European owner, but was in fact concocted by Martin himself from paintings, drawings, calligraphies, and European prints of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Roxburgh has demonstrated that many of the most important Persian works that are said to be original to the Bellini Album were actually taken from the album that Dust Muhammad compiled for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza in 1545.<sup>2</sup> These works retain the characteristic attributions and illuminated decoration added at the time the Bahram Mirza Album was assembled. Although the style of illumination in the niche above the figure's head here copies that found on a portrait of Hatifi by Bihzad, once from the Bellini Album and now known to have come from the Bahram Mirza Album,<sup>3</sup> the late sixteenth-century style of drawing precludes the possibility of the drawing's having come from the Bahram Mirza Album. Instead, the addition of the illuminated niche indicates a later campaign of "improvement" to enhance the appearance of the works in the Bellini Album.

SRC



1. Roxburgh 1998, p. 32.
2. Ibid., pp. 33–41. The Bahram Mirza Album is in the Topkapı Palace Library (no. H. 2154). The works were removed from the Bahram Mirza Album and then placed in the so-called Bellini Album temporarily before being sold and removed from it.
3. Ibid., p. 34.

PROVENANCE: [Art market, Istanbul, before 1912]; F. R. Martin, Stockholm (in 1912); Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until d. 1962); his estate, New York (1962–67; sale Sotheby's London, December 6, 1967, lot 213, to MMA)

## 151. *Dragon and Clouds*

Attributed to Sadiqi Beg (1533/34–1609/10)

Iran, ca. 1600

Ink and watercolor on paper

Image:  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  in. (19.1 × 12 cm); page:  $14\frac{1}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{8}$  in. (35.9 × 23.3 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 2010 2010.309

In this drawing, a dragon strides across a landscape and twists its head toward the cloud-swept sky. A leafy tree with lightly tinted rectangular leaves rises to the right behind the dragon. In addition to the dramatic diagonal streak of the clouds, the fiery wings, purposeful advance, and torque of the neck all accentuate the movement of both nature and beast.

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in keeping with the increased production of single-page, finished drawings for inclusion in albums, numerous pictures were executed of dragons, either alone or in combat with men and other animals. The style of draftsmanship, marked by lines of variable thickness, was developed in Iran in the 1590s by Riza-yi 'Abbasi, the young prodigy of the Safavid court *kitabkhana*, or library cum artists' workshop, and Sadiqi Beg, his older contemporary and head of the royal library. Particularly well suited to the depiction of slithering reptilian forms, this calligraphic use of the pen diverged from the earlier style of drawing, in which all contours were enclosed by a sharp, deliberate line. The line in this image relies on the artist's varying the pressure on his reed pen, in the same way a calligrapher writing *nasta'liq* script would do when elongating letters.

While this type of draftsmanship may have developed as an outgrowth of elegant calligraphy, Ottoman Turkish drawings from the 1560s also include the use of strong black lines running along the backs of dragons.<sup>1</sup> By whatever means of transmission, the idea took hold at the Safavid court. Whereas Riza drew mostly human figures and domesticated animals, Sadiqi Beg produced many drawings and sketches of dragons. In one showing a horseman confronting a dragon,<sup>2</sup> the beast's neck and belly have been rendered in exactly the same fashion as they appear here, with short, rounded strokes of the pen forming the outline and striated lines suggesting the ridged skin. Given these similarities, the drawing can safely be attributed to Sadiqi Beg working about 1600.

SRC



1. San Francisco and Cambridge, Mass. 2004–5, pp. 50–51.

2. London, Cambridge, Mass., and Zurich 1998–99, p. 68.

PROVENANCE: Sevadjian Collection, Paris (until 1961; sale, Hôtel Drouot, October 31, 1961, lot 1); Manoukian Collection, Paris (1961–ca. 1995); private collection, Paris, by descent (ca. 1995–2010); [Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, Ltd., London, 2010; sold to MMA]



## 152. *Reclining Figure*

Iran, 1630–40  
Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper  
3 3/4 × 6 7/8 in. (9.5 × 17.5 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1912 12.223.3

Arms draped over a brocaded cushion, torso twisted toward the viewer, and knees bent, this individual has traditionally been identified as a woman.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the leggings with a decorative border were standard, though fancy, undergarments of Safavid women. However, the long, floppy cap, usually combined with a turban, is of a type favored by men in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The pose recalls that found in two works by Riza-yi 'Abbasi: one, a drawing of a sleeping woman based on an engraving after Raphael by Marcantonio Raimondi, and the other, a painting of a seminude sleeping woman adapted from that drawing.<sup>2</sup> While sleeping figures were not new to Persian painting, the depiction of a mostly nude reclining woman removed from any narrative context was highly novel in the 1590s and resulted in a spate of similar works produced for inclusion in albums by artists other than Riza.<sup>3</sup>

The clues to the identity of this figure may be found in European descriptions of Georgian, Circassian, and Armenian youths who

“dressed effeminately” and performed “immodest” dances intended to arouse the “libidinous desires” of the clientele of coffeehouses.<sup>4</sup> Although he traveled at a later date to Iran, between 1666 and 1677, Jean Chardin described the environment of coffeehouses during the reigns of Shah 'Abbas I and Shah Safi, noting that the boy dancers ranged from ten to sixteen years old, wore their hair in a feminine manner, and were essentially male prostitutes for coffeehouse customers.<sup>5</sup> The beardless face, feminine underwear and hair, and alluring pose of this figure suggest that he is one of the “coffee youngsters” who caught the eye, or inflamed the passions, of the anonymous patron of the drawing. If the artist had drawn a woman in this seductive pose, he would most likely have emphasized her breasts and portrayed her either partly nude or showing her navel. Here, the figure is fully clothed, and his arm covers his breasts. Despite his full thighs and long hair, the figure is sexually ambiguous and fits the descriptions by Europeans who observed such personages in the coffeehouses of Isfahan in the





1620s and 1630s. In the mid-1640s under Shah 'Abbas II, the coffeehouses were reformed and the lewd practices of previous decades were banned.

SRC

1. New York 1989, p. 50, no. 20.
2. Canby 1996b, p. 28, no. 8, fig. 1, and p. 31, no. 7.

3. Several of these are in albums in the Topkapı Palace Library (for example, no. H2155, fols. 23b, 24a, and no. H2158, fol. 27b); all of them depict men instead of women.
4. Matthee 1994, pp. 26–27.
5. Chardin, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 27.

PROVENANCE: [E. Kalebjdjian, New York, until 1912; sold to MMA]

### 153. *Chastisement of a Pupil*

Painter: Muhammad Qasim (active ca. 1600–d. 1659)

Iran, Mashhad, dated 114 (A.H. 1014/1605–6 A.D.)

Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Image:  $9\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  in. (24.8 × 16 cm); page:  $13\frac{5}{8} \times 9$  in. (34.6 × 22.9 cm)

Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1911 11.84.14

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at right-hand side of drawing:

رقم خاکسار محمد قاسم سنه ۱۰۱۴

The humble Muhammad Qasim drew it [in the] year A.H. 1014 [1605–6 A.D.]

If the date of 114 inscribed on this painting refers to A.H. 1014 (1605–6 A.D.), it would mean that Muhammad Qasim was already established as an artist by the middle of the reign of Shah 'Abbas I. Thanks to a reassessment by Adel Adamova, Muhammad Qasim is now considered a slightly younger contemporary of Riza-yi 'Abbasi.<sup>1</sup> Massumeh Farhad's study of the art patronage of *ghulams* (slaves from the Caucasus who converted to Islam and formed a cadre loyal to the shah) has reasonably proposed that Muhammad Qasim, Muhammad 'Ali, and Muhammad Yusuf were all active in Mashhad in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> Most likely, Muhammad Qasim found patrons in Isfahan as well, since his portrait *Shah 'Abbas I and a Pageboy* from 1627 suggests that the artist was well known at the Safavid court.<sup>3</sup> Yet, his absence from the early seventeenth-century texts of Qadi Ahmad and Iskandar Beg Monshi implies that he was working in a city other than Isfahan and did not have a reputation in court circles until the 1620s. According to Farhad, the artist's death date of A.H. 1070/1659 A.D. is mentioned in the *Qisas al-khaqani* (The Imperial Annals) of Wali Quli Shamlu.<sup>4</sup>

As the earliest reliably dated work of Muhammad Qasim, this tinted drawing of the *bastinado*, the punitive beating of an unfortunate student's feet, contains many of the defining stylistic characteristics associated with the artist. Beardless youths have rounded cheeks, which become more pronounced over time. Large plane trees or variant species framing elements of the composition reappear in numerous works for the rest of his career, most notably in many of his illustrations to the 1648 Windsor *Shahnama*.<sup>5</sup>

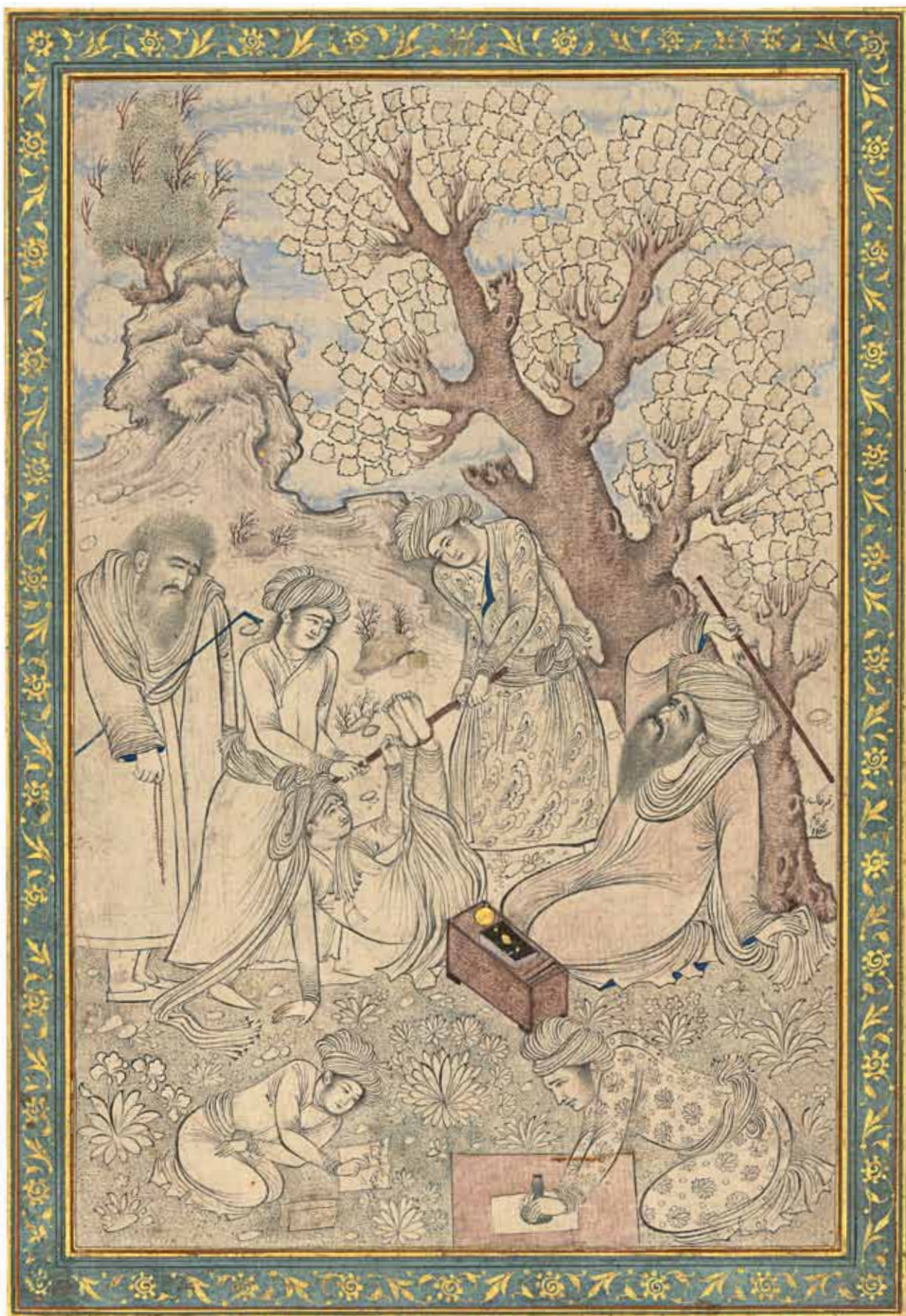
The stippled ground, fleshy clumps of low vegetation, jutting rocks with striated and cross-hatched contours, and even a fondness for blue linings on sleeves and skirts all recur throughout Muhammad Qasim's oeuvre. While evidencing some illusionistic European techniques such as modeling, Muhammad Qasim's style was far more conservative than that of the artists working in Isfahan, who embraced Indian as well as European influences. Over time his draftsmanship strengthened, and tentative passages were minimized.

A.-S. Melikian Chirvani has noted the allusion in this painting to the school scenes in Nizami's poem "Layla and Majnun." He suggests that the lines the young boy at the lower left is writing, "I say love and I weep bitterly / I am an ignorant student: this is the first lesson," remind the viewer of the lovelorn Majnun, even though they are not from the original text.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the literary reference and exaggerated facial expressions of the figures, the scene provides a small window into how children learned to read, write, and burnish paper, including those occasions when the lesson had to be beaten into them.

SRC

1. Adamova 2000, pp. 22–23.
2. Farhad 2004, pp. 129–33.
3. London 2009, pp. 250–51.
4. Massumeh Farhad in Geneva 1985, no. 89.
5. Robinson, B., and Sims 2007, for example pls. 2, 26, 96.
6. Paris 2007–8, p. 392.

PROVENANCE: Ph. Walter Schulz, Leipzig; [Gustav Crayen, until 1911; sold to MMA]







# 154. Folio from the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Firdausi

"The Div Akvan Throws Rustam into the Sea"

Painter: Mu'in Musavvir (active ca. 1630–97)

Iran, Isfahan style, 1660s

Ink, opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper

Image, including painting between text columns: 10 × 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

(25.3 × 14.2 cm); page: 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (36.5 × 20.5 cm)

Bequest of Monroe C. Gutman, 1974. 290.43

Signature in Persian in nasta'liq script:

رقم کمینه معین مصور غفر عنهم

Work of the humble Mu'in Musavvir, forgive his sins

Illustrated here is the story of the *div* Akvan, who discovered Rustam sleeping in a meadow. Having dug out the plot of earth upon which Rustam was resting, the *div* (demon) raised the hero and his "bed," shown here as a boulder, high in the sky. Akvan then gave him the choice of being tossed into the sea or dashed against the mountains. Understanding the *div*'s psychology, Rustam chose the mountains. Predictably Akvan threw him into the sea and he survived.

Of the artists working in Iran from the 1630s to the 1690s, Mu'in Musavvir was one of the most prolific. In addition to single-page drawings and paintings of a wide variety of subjects, he



## 155. Dish

Iran, possibly Mashhad, ca. 1635

Stonepaste; incised and painted under transparent glaze

H. 3 1/4 in. (8.3 cm); Diam. 1 7/8 in. (43.4 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1924 24.47.4

illustrated at least six *Shahnama* manuscripts during that period<sup>1</sup> as well as several versions of the *Tarikh-i jahangusha-yi khaqan sahibqiran* (History of the World-Conquering Lord of the Fortunate Conjunction).<sup>2</sup> Mu'in's distinctive style, which shows little of the European and Indian influences so popular at the Safavid court from the 1640s onward, featured painterly brushwork and a fondness for a particular shade of violet pink, evident here in the background. As has been noted elsewhere, the artist worked for nonroyal patrons, who were presumably more conservative in their taste than Shahs Safi (r. 1629–42) and 'Abbas II (r. 1642–66), and at certain times lived outside the capital, Isfahan.<sup>3</sup>

In this illustration Mu'in focuses on the essential elements of the story. Rustam, wearing his trademark tiger-skin cuirass and leopard-skin helmet, reclines on a boulder and gazes at the sea, now blackened, below him. The bright orange Akvan, a giant compared to Rustam, lifts the rock like a bodybuilder, his two-tiered blue and crimson skirt revealing a demon-sized male member between his calloused knees. In the 1650s and 1660s Mu'in Musavvir depicted this episode three times. While no reproduction of the scene from the undated manuscript in the National Library of Russia is available, the dispersed illustration from the 1650 David Collection *Shahnama* provides a close comparison. That painting differs from ours only in small details, such as the position of Rustam's arms and legs, the placement of his ox-headed mace, the length of the *div's* skirt, the treatment of his gold belt, and the vegetation along the shoreline. Presumably Mu'in considered his earlier formula to have worked and saw no reason to change it. Only much later, in 1693, did he return to the subject and alter the composition.<sup>4</sup>

SRC

1. Farhad 1990, pp. 126–27 n. 10. Farhad listed the manuscript from which this painting comes as dispersed and dated it to A.H. 1077/1666–67 A.D.; the source of her date is unclear. Three dispersed pages from the Metropolitan's manuscript were published by Ernst Grube in New York and Venice 1962, nos. 114–16. The Museum's registration documents for this manuscript state that it contains twelve illustrations but originally had twenty-one. Grube mentioned a total of nine pages in the Olsen Collection (of which he published three), one page in the Springfield Museum in Massachusetts, and three in the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection at the San Diego Museum of Art, which means a total of twenty-five illustrations, not twenty-one. The margins of the Metropolitan's manuscript were cut down when it was rebound.
2. Sims 2002, p. 54.
3. Farhad 1990, p. 114; Canby 2010, p. 55.
4. This version occurs in a *Shahnama* copied in 1669 but illustrated in 1693 (Metropolitan Museum, acc. no. 13.228.17).

PROVENANCE: Ph. Walter Schulz, Leipzig (by 1914); Professor O. Moll, Düsseldorf (until 1929); Monroe C. Gutman, New York (1929–d. 1974)

The tide of Safavid Persian taste in ceramics was turning at the time this large dish was produced. In 1607–8 Shah 'Abbas I deposited more than one thousand pieces of Chinese porcelain in his dynastic shrine at Ardabil. Although the ostensible reason for this charitable gift was a pious wish to honor the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shaikh Safi al-Din, it may actually reflect a waning fashion for Chinese porcelains, at least at the court level. For centuries, Chinese ceramics had enjoyed the highest status in courtly collections of valuable and rare items. The dates of the porcelains donated by Shah 'Abbas I—from the thirteenth to the early seventeenth century—indicate that they had been collected over a long period of time and were still entering the royal household during his reign.<sup>1</sup>

While blue-and-white ceramics had been produced in Iran during the sixteenth century, before the deposit at Ardabil, the volume of production expanded enormously in the first half of the seventeenth century. The intended markets for these wares are debatable; the largest consumers were probably Iranians themselves. The case for a direct connection between the Ardabil collections and the new production of blue-and-white wares in Iran,



considered tenuous by some, relies more on visual than textual evidence. Nevertheless, paintings from the first half of the seventeenth century depicting large blue-and-white vessels used by a range of social types, from dervishes to prostitutes, imply that the taste for such wares was society-wide and was satisfied by a more affordable source than Chinese imports. Just as the shah tired of the fashion for Chinese blue-and-white wares, his subjects woke up to and adapted this style for themselves.

In the center of this dish are two lions, the one above striding toward the left but looking back and down at the other one, who lies facing right, his left front paw overlapping his right leg and his head turning up and back as if to roar at the animal above. A black outline defines their forms, but they are reserved in white against the cobalt blue ground. Details such as their manes are drawn in black, as are the small dots along their backs and legs. Swirling around them are fleshy clouds that appear more vegetal than celestial. A repeating scroll fills the wider band around the central lobed circle, and a carved flower-and-wave pattern appears in the cavetto under the transparent bluish glaze. On the exterior, a band of reciprocal half-blossoms and S-scrolls has been painted in underglaze blue near the foot. The base bears a distinctive Chinese-style mark. Lisa Golombek, Robert Mason, and Patty Proctor have noted a very similar mark on the base of a saltcellar in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, dated A.H. 1037/1627–28 A.D.<sup>2</sup> Although the petrofabric of the pieces with this type of mark can be traced to Kirman, the use of black outlines had ceased in Kirman by the mid-1630s, which suggests that this dish was, in fact, produced in Mashhad, where this device remained current.<sup>3</sup>

SRC

1. London 2009, pp. 120–21.
2. Golombek, Mason, and Proctor 2009, pp. 211–12, fig. 5. An almost identical mark appears on a dish in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. See Crowe 2002, p. 67, no. 37.
3. Golombek 2003, p. 261.

PROVENANCE: Frank Gair Macomber, Boston (until 1924; sale, American Art Association, New York, February 27, 1924, lot 175, to MMA)

## 156. Elephant-Shaped Water Jar (*Kendi*)

Iran, probably Kirman, second quarter of 17th century  
 Stonepaste; painted in shades of blue under transparent glaze  
 H. 9 1/8 in. (23.2 cm); W. 7 1/8 in. (18.1 cm); Diam. 4 5/8 in. (11.7 cm)  
 The Friends of the Department of Islamic Art Fund, 1968 68.180

This vessel from Safavid Iran in the shape of a seated elephant with cobalt blue, bluish gray, and white designs has been clearly modeled on a *kendi*, a Ming Chinese drinking vessel of the Wanli



period (1573–1620).<sup>1</sup> *Kendis* were exported from China to Europe, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire,<sup>2</sup> where they were often copied and adapted to suit local taste. While it is not clear how Iranians used such vessels, they could have been used as bases for water pipes, or *qalians*, or merely as decorative objects in the prestigious Chinese style.<sup>3</sup>

The original Chinese *kendis* belong to a category of porcelain known as *kraak*, after a type of large Dutch trading ship that transported such wares. Iran was one of the first places to produce *kraak* imitations.<sup>4</sup> The present example differs from the Chinese prototype in both material and execution: it is made of stonepaste rather than porcelain, and the elephant's features are rendered in low relief and less naturalistically. The coiled trunk found on Chinese *kendis* is also absent here. However, in both the Iranian and Chinese examples, the body is surmounted by a tall, cylindrical neck, by which the vessel was held, while the elephant's short trunk functioned as a spout.

Closely following the Chinese original, the decoration here is executed in cobalt blue, with grayish blue outlines, on a white ground under a clear glaze. A fringed saddlecloth with an elaborate key-fret design and trappings with long ribbons and tassels cover the animal's body and neck. The tubular neck is painted with floral sprays, birds, and butterflies. Lisa Golombek has applied the term *transitional style* to this type of blue-and-white ware, on which a blue design is outlined in bluish gray or black, and has assigned it to Kirman in the second quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Few Safavid animal-shaped *kendis* have come to light. A similar example of an elephant-shaped *kendi* from Safavid Iran is in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.<sup>6</sup> ME

1. The *kendi* was based on a Buddhist drinking vessel known as a *kundi*, which was introduced into China by Indian Buddhist monks who used it for ablutions during religious ceremonies. The Metropolitan Museum's collection contains a similar elephant-shaped porcelain *kendi* dating to the late sixteenth century (acc. no. 2003.232).
2. The Topkapı Treasury in Istanbul has several late sixteenth-century examples. In 1609 Shah 'Abbas I endowed a number to the Shrine of Shaikh Safi al-Din in Ardabil (now in the Islamic Collection at the National Museum of Iran in Tehran).
3. London and Lisbon 2008, p. 321. Also see Allan 1991a, pp. 54–55.
4. London and Lisbon 2008, p. 321.
5. Golombek 2003. See also Golombek, Mason, and Proctor 2001. Golombek's attribution is based on archaeological evidence and petrographic analysis of shards unearthed at Kirman and Mashhad as well as on extant signed examples with potter's marks in various museums and private collections. Since our *kendi* does not have a potter's mark, the attribution is solely based on stylistic and historical evidence.
6. Allan 1991a, p. 54, fig. 32.

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Silvana Aliati Elliot, Milan (until 1968; sold to MMA)

## 157. Dish

Iran, Kirman, 1670s

Stonepaste; polychrome-painted under transparent glaze

H. 2½ in (6.4 cm.); Diam. 14¼ in. (36.2 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.92

## 158. Bottle

Iran, Kirman, 1650s

Stonepaste; polychrome-painted under transparent glaze

H. 13¼ in. (33.7 cm.); Diam. 6¼ in. (15.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1914 14.64.2

A recent study of the petrography of the large group of seventeenth-century polychrome ceramics to which these pieces belong has confirmed their Kirman provenance.<sup>1</sup> The fortunes of this city in southeastern Iran rose under Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) when he appointed Ganj 'Ali Khan governor of Kirman Province and moved large numbers of Kurds there. Ganj





‘Ali’s commissioning of a number of major monuments led to the development of a new quarter in the city. To decorate the new buildings and cater to the needs of new patrons, many artisans, including skilled potters, moved to Kirman.

According to Lisa Golombek, ceramics produced in Kirman in the early seventeenth century consisted primarily of stonepaste decorated with cobalt blue under a transparent alkaline glaze in close imitation of Chinese blue-and-white porcelains.<sup>2</sup> By the 1640s, though, a new style of Kirman ceramics had arisen that combined blue-and-white elements loosely based on Chinese floral and vegetal motifs with polychrome plant forms, medallions, escutcheons, and other devices unconnected to Chinese porcelains. The decoration of this dish (cat. 157) incorporates spiky foliage and orange-red flowers typical of Kirman, partial cartouches containing polychrome vegetation, and fleshy blue tulips and sprays of other flowers. In the cavetto, double vine scrolls, formed by scratching through the underglaze black, appear in seven cartouches. While this technique was not new to Safavid ceramics, in the 1660s and 1670s it is associated with Kirman wares, which are often inscribed with poetic verses.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the repeating-lozenge motif on the rim of the dish resembles that found on pieces dated by Golombek to 1660–1710, the latest period of Kirman wares. Since the quality of this dish is quite high but its decoration features details corresponding to those from the later period of production, it should be dated to the 1670s.

The large size of the dish, while not unusual for Kirman wares, calls attention to the purpose for which it was made. These dishes would have been used for serving foodstuffs such as pilau from which diners would scoop portions with long-handled spoons—quite unlike Chinese food, which was eaten from small bowls. Over the course of the seventeenth century, as banquets and official receptions grew increasingly formal and extravagant, multiple dishes of this sort would have been necessary.

While the long-necked bottle (cat. 158) incorporates the same combination of polychrome and cobalt blue underglaze for its decoration, certain aspects of its composition suggest that it was produced earlier than the dish. On either side of the pear-shaped body, a single blue crane floats on a white ground while twisting its head back and down, as if it has spotted its prey below it. Small, stylized clouds dot the “sky” around the bird. Separating the cranes are two escutcheon-shaped medallions outlined in blue and containing an ocher interlaced arabesque; above each of these is a lobed elliptical medallion enclosing a small leaf-shaped ornament with ocher vine scrolls. Arabesque designs in low relief, formed by carving away the body under the glaze, surround the neck. Below the slightly everted white rim are two rows of lap-pets, the lower one directly derived from the plaitain-leaf borders found on Chinese ceramics. The faithful use of Chinese motifs and the lack of crowding in the composition of this bottle

support a dating to the 1650s, near the beginning of production of this group of wares in Kirman. Unlike Chinese wares of this shape, which were employed as vases, this bottle would have been used for wine or water served at banquets. SRC

1. Mason 2003.
2. Golombek 2003, p. 253.
3. Ibid., fig. 16; Canby 1999b, fig. 147.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 157: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

Cat. 158: [George R. Harding, London, until 1914; sold to MMA]

### 159. Bowl

Iran, second half of 17th century or later  
Stonepaste; incised under transparent glaze (Gombroon ware)  
H. 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (8.6 cm); Diam. 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (20 cm)  
Gift of W. R. Valentiner, 1911 11.137.1

### 160. Bottle

Iran, first half of 18th century  
Stonepaste; incised under transparent glaze (Gombroon ware)  
H. 14 in. (35.6 cm)  
Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.131

These two objects belong to a group of Safavid Persian ceramics known as Gombroon ware, named after a trading post on the south coast of Iran.<sup>1</sup> Such wares represent a revival of the incised white-body ceramic vessels that first became popular in Iran in the twelfth century. Like much of Iranian ceramic production from the ninth century onward, both Gombroon wares and their twelfth-century stylistic ancestors sought to emulate Chinese ceramics. Chinese porcelain was especially prized in Iran, not only for its aesthetic appeal but also for its unique technical qualities, since kaolin, the white clay used to create this porcelain, was unavailable in the region.

The bowl (cat. 159), with its rounded sides, plain lip, and short foot, is probably modeled on Chinese *lien-tzu* (lotus seed) bowls.<sup>2</sup> The bottle (cat. 160), with its globular body and thin neck ending in a flared lip, also accords with known porcelain



shapes, though the neck is perhaps more elongated than those found on most Chinese examples. Both objects are decorated with incised lines that form stylized lotuses (on the bowl) and scrolling cloud bands (on the bottle). Light shining through these lines creates a subtle play of translucency and opacity, light and line. The incised areas also serve to emphasize the thinness of the walls—a characteristic of Chinese porcelain that Iranian craftsmen hoped to emulate. The lightness and transparency of these ceramics result from centuries of refinement that began with the heavier, more opaque white ceramics of Seljuq Iran. The potters of

the seventeenth century, while drawing upon these older prototypes, were able to approximate more closely the look and feel of porcelain.

The revival in production of white ceramics in Iran may have been a response to the discontinuation of porcelain exportation from China between 1643–45 and 1683. Depending on the date of the wares, their popularity could also be due to the oversaturation of the long popular blue-and-white ceramics in the Western market as the Dutch produced great quantities of imitation wares and as the Chinese porcelain trade resumed in 1683.<sup>3</sup>

Gombroon was a point of export rather than a place of production, and the eponymous white wares discussed here were only a fraction of the goods shipped from that port. Textiles and spices as well as other types of ceramics, including Iranian blue-and-white wares and lusterwares, were also exported in large numbers from Gombroon. Ideally situated, the port was frequented by both the Dutch and English East India Companies and served as an entrepôt for ceramics and other luxury goods into Europe.<sup>4</sup> The style of Gombroon ceramics and their role in international trade reflect the significant artistic, cultural, and economic ties that existed between China, Iran, and Europe in the seventeenth century.

ME/KW

1. The trading post of Gombroon is alternately called Bandar Abbas. See Froom 2008, p. 118.
2. Blue-and-white *lien-tzu* bowls are common, as are white examples closely related to the Museum's Gombroon bowl. See, for example, Pope, J. A. 1956, pl. 113 (two white *lien-tzu* bowls with incised floral decoration).
3. By the late seventeenth century, blue-and-white wares of various kinds were being produced and exported in huge numbers by Persian, Chinese, Japanese, and Dutch kilns (Rogers 1992).
4. Crowe 2002, p. 44.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 159: [George R. Harding, London, until 1911]; W. R. Valentiner, New York (in 1911)

Cat. 160: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

### 161. Bottle

Iran, second half of 17th century

Stonepaste; luster-painted on opaque white glaze

H. 10 in. (25.4 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.168

Very few pieces of Iranian lusterware survive from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although, according to Oliver Watson, the technique never died out completely.<sup>1</sup> For reasons that are not well understood, the know-how required for making lusterware—for mixing the luster glaze, painting it on a once-fired piece, and refiring it in a reducing kiln at the right temperature to fuse the luster glaze to the surface—was revived or rediscovered in the seventeenth century. The few signed pieces of Safavid lusterware<sup>2</sup> do not include dates or other information that would help place the wares geographically. Thus, the analysis of this bottle and other Safavid lusterwares rests on comparisons of their shapes and decoration with those of objects produced in different



techniques. Additionally, a few pieces that combine the lusterware technique with underglaze painting provide a bit more information on dating the wares.

This lusterware bottle is decorated on its long neck with an uppermost wide band of dark brown luster, a row of four acacia-like trees, and a band of fringe. Arranged on the walls of its ovoid body are a zebu bull, two cypress trees, stacked pairs of outsized seed pods, a peacock, and a deer, interspersed with floral and foliate sprays. While Arthur Lane has remarked that the compositions “with their fussy crowding of trivialities” approach Kirman pottery “in spirit,”<sup>3</sup> the animals and vegetation are also reminiscent of the illumination of Safavid manuscript borders. To date, no thorough study has been conducted to explain the connection between the two media, if one actually exists.



Compared with Safavid blue-and-white ceramics, lusterware was produced in a relatively limited range of shapes. These include elegant bottles, such as the one here, dishes, bowls, small cups, larger stem cups, ewers with bent spouts, tulip vases, squat ewers with lids, and sand-shakers. Some of the sand-shakers may have functioned as spittoons, but most of them would have been used by scribes to blot ink by dusting sand on it. The many surviving examples of these pieces suggest that the clientele of lusterware potters may have included people, such as calligraphers, who worked in libraries with artists and illuminators. If so, the potters would have had access or good cause to mimic the designs of the illuminators on their pottery.

While many Safavid lusterwares are hastily drawn, a few are decorated with carefully composed scenes that are often derived from Chinese sources. Thus, a stylistic development can be posited from the more precisely rendered early pieces to the increasingly sketchy, derivative later pieces. With its wealth of detail and recognizable motifs, this bottle falls near the beginning of the range. A dish in the British Museum, London,<sup>4</sup> contains a scene in blue and white with luster details showing a male figure in a garden with a distinctive bridge based on a Chinese prototype; its exterior walls have lusterware decoration on a cobalt blue ground. Yolande Crowe has dated works with the same figure and bridge

motif to the reign of Shah Sulaiman (1666–94).<sup>5</sup> Assuming this bottle falls near the beginning of the introduction of lusterware in the seventeenth century, one can suggest a fifty- to seventy-year span in which the wares were produced. In this scenario the bottle would have been made about 1660–70, at the end of the reign of Shah ‘Abbas II or during the reign of Shah Sulaiman.<sup>6</sup> In both Isfahan and beyond, the reign of Shah ‘Abbas II was a period of heightened artistic activity in which new ideas from Europe and India found favor. These ideas eventually would have filtered to the potters. Thus, the meeting of the Indian zebu bull, the Persian peacock, and the Chinese deer on one bottle would have been admired as much as the elegant shape and lustrous glaze of the piece.

SRC

1. Watson 1985, pp. 160–63.
2. Ibid.
3. Lane 1971, p. 105.
4. British Museum, London (no. 1970,0207.2, unpublished).
5. Crowe 2002, p. 188, nos. 307–8.
6. Lane 1971, p. 104 and n. 1, mentioned a bottle, now lost, that was illustrated by Henry Wallis and bore a date that has been read variously as 1006/1597, 1062/1651, and 1084/1673. Lane proposed that 1673 was the most plausible date, but it is possible, depending on the style of the piece, that it could date to 1651.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

## 162. Tile Panel

Iran, probably Isfahan, first quarter of 17th century  
 Stonepaste; painted and polychrome-glazed (*cuerda seca* technique)  
 41 × 74 in. (104.1 × 188 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1903 03.9c

The gardens of Isfahan have delighted their visitors for centuries.<sup>1</sup> In the Safavid period, English and French visitors compared the city to a forest with innumerable trees and extolled its verdant Chahar Bagh, a broad boulevard lined with gardens, parks, and pavilions.<sup>2</sup> The establishment of this garden district was initiated by the ruler Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) as he transformed Isfahan into his new capital city.<sup>3</sup> This charming tile panel permits a glimpse into these seventeenth-century gardens, with all their “sense-ravishing” delights.<sup>4</sup> In a verdant landscape of flowering trees and plants, a small gathering enjoys a picnic, with bowls laden with fruits and long-necked bottles filled with libations.

The corpulent figures are wrapped in the luxurious textiles popular during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas I. Their voluminous patterned robes, silk sashes, and striped turbans are similar to costumes depicted in Persian drawings and paintings of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup> Yet, European dress is found here, too, in the man’s dark cloak and hat. The woman—striking a languid pose and making somewhat immodest eye contact with the viewer—also displays a hairstyle, facial features, jewelry, and bodice in an “Occidental” mode. Such imagery was increasingly prevalent in seventeenth-century Isfahan.<sup>6</sup> The contemporary Roman traveler Pietro della Valle, for example, observed architectural decoration in the city featuring men and women in lascivious poses; some



of the figures, shown wearing hats, were intended to represent Europeans.<sup>7</sup>

Mirroring the landscapes and lifestyles they depicted, such panels likely adorned the walls of the garden pavilions and palaces of Isfahan. A few panels survive today in museum collections throughout the world.<sup>8</sup> While it is difficult to pinpoint the original location of this particular set of tiles, a photograph published by Friedrich Sarre about 1910 supports a garden context.<sup>9</sup> In Sarre's image, a group of tiles with a design similar to this one appears in situ upon the walls of a pavilion located at the north end of the Chahar Bagh.

DMT

1. Barbaro and Contarini 1873, esp. the fifteenth-century traveler Ambrosio Contarini (p. 131).
2. Tavernier and Chardin, as cited in Stevens 1974, p. 429.
3. McChesney 1988, esp. pp. 110ff.; and Babaie 2008, esp. pp. 82–85.
4. Thomas Herbert, as quoted in Stevens 1974, p. 436.
5. The treatment of the drapery, approach to physiognomy, and interest in depiction of volume compare well with features found in the work produced by Riza-yi 'Abbasi in the early decades of the seventeenth century. See Canby 1996b, esp. chapter 9 and nos. 110, 119.

6. Ibid., pp. 174–76.
7. Pietro della Valle, as quoted in Stevens 1974, p. 437.
8. Metropolitan Museum (acc. nos. 03.9a and 03.9b). See Paris 2007–8, p. 359, no. 120; and New York 1993, p. 40, no. 35. Other panels are found in London (Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 139-1891), Paris (Musée du Louvre, no. OA 3340; Istanbul 2008, pp. 221–22, no. 97), and Berlin (published while still in Sarre's collection in *Denkmäler persischer Baukunst* [Sarre, Schulz, and Kreckler 1901–10], vol. 2, pls. 71 and 72; and Sourdél-Thomine et al. 1973, fig. 351a and b).
9. The Museum's records for cat. 162 note similar imagery on a tile panel in Sarre, Schulz, and Kreckler 1901–10, vol. 1, p. 90, fig. 117. Sarre's caption for the photograph reads, "Pavilion am Nordende des Tschahar Bagh." This photograph is reproduced in Luschey-Schmeisser 1978, pl. 97, fig. 201. The Museum's tile panel is reproduced in the same plate. In Istanbul 2008 (see pp. 221–22, no. 97, and esp. n. 8), an entry cites a photograph in *Denkmäler* (Sarre, Schulz, and Kreckler 1901–10, vol. 1, p. 92, fig. 120), which is identified by Sarre as the *Ainsh-Khaneh*, but it does not appear to display tile panels similar to the present piece.

PROVENANCE: [Louis Chardon, New York, until 1903; sold to MMA]

## 163. Lamp Stand

Iran, probably 16th century  
Brass; cast, engraved, and inlaid with black compound  
H. 11 7/8 in. (30.1 cm); Diam. (base) 7 1/4 in. (18.4 cm)  
Gift of Joseph W. Drexel, 1889 89.2.197

## 164. Lamp Stand

Iran, dated A.H. 986/1578–79 A.D.  
Brass; cast, engraved, and inlaid with black and red pigment  
H. 13 1/4 in. (33.7 cm); Diam. (base) 6 5/8 in. (16.8 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1929 29.53

Cat. 163

Persian inscriptions in *nasta'liq* script<sup>1</sup>

In cartouches around top (verses from Ahli Turshizi):<sup>2</sup>

چراغ اهل دل را روشن از روی تو می بینم همه صاحب‌دلان را روی دل سوی تو می بینم  
توئی سلطان عالم کم مبادا از سرت موئی که عالم طفیل یک سر موی تو می بینم  
I see the lamp of the true believers is illuminated by your presence;  
All the true believers, I see them turn their hearts toward you;  
You, O Sultan of the World, may not even a single hair fall from your head;  
[For] I see that the world [is but] a speck, upon one strand of your hair.

In cartouches around middle (a rhyming couplet from an unidentified Persian poet):<sup>3</sup>

شمعی را بگفتم به گرد رخت پروانه چیست گفت من سلطان حسنم مراد پروانه چیست  
I said to the candle: what is this moth around your face?  
It said: I am the sultan of beauty—what is the desire of the moth?

Followed by a line, written in prose:

سعادت باد و دولت باد و فرصت باد الهی عاقبت محمود گردان  
May there be happiness and [good] fortune and opportunity.  
O God, make the end praiseworthy.

In cartouches around bottom (two rhyming couplets by Muhtasham Kashani):<sup>4</sup>

رخش شمع‌بست دود آن کمند عنبر آلودش عجب شمع‌ی که ز بالا پائین می‌رود دودش  
چو گنجشک‌بست مرغ دل بدست طفل خونخواری که پیش من عزیزش دارد اما می‌کشد زودش  
His face is a candle, its smoke that ambergris-soaked lasso [of curls].  
What a candle! [That] its smoke flows from above to below . . .  
The heart is like a sparrow in the hand of a cruel-hearted child  
Who appears to me [at first] to treasure it, but [then] soon kills it.

On base, in cartouche:

حسن علی بن علی معصوم  
Hasan 'Ali, son of 'Ali-yi Ma'sum

Cat. 164:

Persian inscriptions in *nasta'liq* script

Around top rim (verses from the *Bustan* of Sa'di):<sup>5</sup>

شبی یاد دارم که چشمم نخفت شبی یاد دارم که چشمم نخفت  
که من عاشقم گر بسوزم رواست ترا گریه و سوزباری چراست  
I remember one night as my eyes would not sleep  
I heard a moth speaking with a candle  
[Said the moth:] "Because I am a lover, it is [only] right that I should burn.  
"[But,] why should you weep and burn yourself up?"

Around shaft, top band (repetition of previously cited verses by Sa'di, followed by brief continuation of same verses and the date):

بگفت ای هوادار مسکین من . . .  
سنه ۹۸۶

[The candle.] replied, "Oh, my poor lover . . ."  
[In the] year A.H. 986 [1578–79 A.D.]



Around shaft, middle band (repetition of first line of previously cited verses by Sa'di, followed by two couplets from Amir Khusrau Dihlavi):<sup>6</sup>

زمانی نیست کز عشق تو جان من نمی سوزد      کدامین سینه را کان غمزه پر فن نمی سوزد  
There is not a moment that my soul is not burning from love for you.  
Which heart is not burning from that artful coquetry?

ز غیرت سوختم جانان چو درغیر زدی آتش      تو آتش می زنی درغیر و غیر از من نمی سوزد  
I am burning from jealousy, my dear, because you set fire to another.  
You set fire to another, yet no one else is burned but me . . .

Around shaft, bottom band (verses from Katib-i Turshizi):<sup>7</sup>

شبیهی که ماه رخت شد چراغ خلوت ما      گداخت شمع و نیاورد تاب صحبت ما  
That night, when the moon of your face became the lamp of our solitude,  
The candle melted, unable to bear our conversation . . .

This couplet is followed by the same verses by Ahli Turshizi found on the upper portion of cat. 163 (see above for full verse and translation), beginning:  
چراغ اهل . . .

With a wide base and a slightly flared lip, the distinctive tall, cylindrical shape seen in these two examples is characteristic of a group of Safavid lamp stands sharing a similar silhouette.<sup>8</sup> After its emergence in the early sixteenth century, it became a recurring metalwork form, as evinced by numerous extant examples from the Safavid period.<sup>9</sup> The rhythmic, repeating ornamentation adorning the surfaces of the present pieces includes interlaced vegetal scrollwork, geometric patterning, and calligraphic inscriptions—all closely related to contemporary manuscript illumination and tilework.

The calligraphic passages, executed in a *nasta'liq* script, are taken from the works of classical and contemporary Persian poets, including Sa'di, Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, and Muhtasham Kashani. Metaphors of lamps, candles, and light abound in these verses, which echo the nature of the objects they adorn. Favored lines appear again and again, sometimes repeated more than once on the same piece. While many of these verses extol physical attributes, Persian poetry typically embodies multivalent meanings. For example, the comparison of the beloved to a candle, and the lover to a moth enraptured by its light, may be understood as a spiritual metaphor in which the moth represents the human soul, longing to be reunited with its ultimate Beloved—God. Whether enjoyed simply as playful puns referring to the objects at hand, as lyric poems extolling the beauty of an earthly beloved, or as expressions of spiritual yearning, the verses on these lamp stands provide a glimpse into the sophisticated interactions between Persian poetry and the visual arts.

Such lamp stands were undoubtedly used within secular settings, but at least two examples displaying similar poetic content have inscriptions linking them to Shi'i shrines.<sup>10</sup> While such evidence is limited, other similarly shaped lamp stands may also have been destined for religious foundations and shrine complexes. Historical sources tell us that lighting fixtures were considered

appropriate gifts to religious institutions, and many types of lamps may have been crafted for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> Some remain within the holdings of such institutions.<sup>12</sup>

DMT

1. The translations and poet identifications in this entry are based primarily on the unpublished work of Annemarie Schimmel and the numerous publications of Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani concerning inscribed metalwork. Additional English translations, Persian transcriptions, and identifications of poets not already noted by Schimmel and Melikian-Chirvani have been provided by Abdullah Ghouhani and Denise-Marie Teece. My thanks to Sina Goudarzi for his assistance with these transcriptions and translations.
2. Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, p. 263 n. 24 (referring to a piece in Mashhad), and pp. 326–27, no. 148. Melikian-Chirvani indicated that the *divan* of this poet, also known as Ahli Khusani, has not been published, but this poem appears in a manuscript copy of his work (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, inv. Suppl. Pers. 1408, fols. A, B). It should be noted, however, that the same lines have been attributed elsewhere to the poet Ahli Shirazi. See Allan 2003–4, p. 217, no. 8.12.
3. The text on the middle portion of the candlestick has been published elsewhere as a quatrain (*rubai*). However, the first portion comprises a rhyming couplet, while the second is a prose text expressing good wishes that does not continue the end rhyme, or the meter, of the first two lines.
4. Abdullah Ghouhani first identified these lines as appearing in a single *ghazal* by Muhtasham Kashani (although they do not follow each other in sequence).
5. See Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, no. 137. The translation provided here is based upon Melikian-Chirvani's work. See also Allan 2003–4, esp. pp. 216–17, no. 8.12.
6. See Paris 2007–8, pp. 376–77 and n. 3, no. 136; and Melikian-Chirvani 2002, p. 87. (The Metropolitan's piece displays variations in the text.) Abdullah Ghouhani has identified these lines as couplets taken from two different *ghazals*.
7. The translation provided here is based upon Melikian-Chirvani's work. See Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, pp. 312–15, no. 140, and p. 315, no. 141; Melikian-Chirvani 2002, p. 87; and Melikian-Chirvani in Paris 2007–8, pp. 374–75, no. 135. Also see Allan 2003–4, pp. 216–17, no. 8.12.



164

163

8. In the secondary literature, a number of different Persian terms have been used to refer to these lamp stands, including *sham'dan* and *mash'al*. For cat. 163, see Schimmel and Rivolta 1992, pp. 41, 43; Berlin 1981, pp. 216–17; and Houston 2010, pp. 18–19, no. 4. For cat. 164, see Canby 1999b, ill. p. 85; Rome 1956, p. 259, no. 457; Dimand 1944a, pp. 154–55; Harari 1938–39, vol. 3, pp. 2512, 2524; vol. 6, pl. 1384a; Dimand 1930, pp. 118, 120.
9. For a discussion of this form, see Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, pp. 263ff., and p. 276 n. 20. See also Zebrowski 1997, p. 115, figs. 130–31. The Metropolitan Museum collection contains five lamp stands of this shape, including the two published here as well as acc. nos. 91.1.554a, 91.1.573, and 91.1.579. All are attributed to either the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Further examples are published in Melikian-Chirvani 1982b and Paris 2007–8.

10. Examples with poetic as well as dedicatory inscriptions connecting them with religious foundations are published in Paris 2007–8, nos. 135, 136; see also London 2009, p. 86, no. 48.
11. See Melikian-Chirvani 1987a, esp. pp. 118ff., for a discussion of historical sources and descriptions of lamp stands with dedications to religious foundations.
12. For example, see the lamp stand described in Melikian-Chirvani 1982b, pp. 236ff., and p. 276 n. 20; an oil lamp published in Zebrowski 1997, p. 110, fig. 120; and a hanging lamp published in London 2009, no. 88.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 163: Joseph W. Drexel, New York (until d. 1888); his wife, Lucy W. Drexel, New York (1888–89; gift to Museum in Joseph's name)  
 Cat. 164: Mrs. Daniel Z. Noorian, New York (until 1929; sold to MMA)

## 165. Planispheric Astrolabe

Maker: Mahammad Zaman (active 1643–89)

Iran, dated A.H. 1065/1654–55 A.D.

Brass and steel; cast and hammered, pierced and engraved

8½ × 6¾ × 2¼ in. (21.6 × 17.1 × 5.7 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1963 63.166a–j

Arabic inscriptions in *nasta'liq* script, on *rete* on inner circle:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

On back:

صنعه محمد زمان المنجم الاطرلابي ١٠٦٥

Made by Muhammad Zaman the astrologer the astrolabe-maker A.H. 1065

[1654–5 A.D.]

Common to both Islamic lands and Europe during medieval times, portable scientific instruments such as this served as analog computing devices for astronomical, astrological, and topographical calculations, and even to tell time.<sup>1</sup> The surviving European astrolabes from the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods that resemble this example suggest that ideas concerning science, astronomy, and mathematics were transmitted with some frequency from the Islamic world to Europe in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and that the passage of ideas assumed an east-to-west pattern.<sup>2</sup> Planispheric astrolabes were generally employed for solving three main interests of Islamic astronomy: charting astrological bodies, finding the direction of the *qibla*, and determining the times of prayer. Numerous astrolabes from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iran survive. In his detailed account of Safavid astrology and astronomy, the seventeenth-century French traveler Jean Chardin noted that Iranians valued their astrolabes as much as their jewelry.<sup>3</sup>

This astrolabe, like other examples of its type, has a main case (in Latin, *mater*; Arabic, *umm*) bearing Arabic letters along the rim that divide it into equal hours. Five plates engraved with lines for different terrestrial latitudes are fitted within the hollowed center of the case, and over it is a rotatable star-map (in Latin, *rete*; Arabic 'anqabut). The *rete* on the inner circle, inscribed with the twelve signs of the zodiac, is in the form of the Muslim invocation of faith, the *bismallah*; the outer segment bears an undulating vegetal design. The design elements of the *rete* serve as pointers representing a selection of fixed bright stars, the names of which are inscribed near the ends. The plates are held in place in the center with a horse-shaped pin. The back of the astrolabe is engraved with various astronomical lines and includes the names of Basra, Isfahan, Sabzavar, Tus, Qandahar, and Kashmir. A triangular, undecorated *kursi* with a suspension ring near the top of the instrument is attached to the *mater*. In order for the astronomer to take an observation, he had to suspend the astrolabe either from a strap attached to the ring or from his thumb passed through it.<sup>4</sup>

The name of the maker and the date of this piece are also inscribed on the back. Muhammad Zaman, who worked in Mashhad in the



second half of the seventeenth century, is known to have made five other astrolabes, three of which are dated between 1641 and 1678.<sup>5</sup> Chardin also reported that while there were professional instrument-makers in Iran, devices made by scientists themselves were more accurate, and he added that an astronomer was not considered sufficiently learned unless his skill at instrument-making surpassed that of a craftsman.<sup>6</sup> On this example, Muhammad Zaman identifies himself as both an astrologer and an astrolabist. QA

1. Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, p. 186.

2. Saliba 2007, pp. 221–26; Saliba 2004; and Saliba 2002, p. 360.

3. Jean Chardin, a jeweler by profession, visited Turkey, Iran, and India in 1664–70 and 1671–77. Winter 1986, p. 595.

4. For more technical details, see King 2005 and Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997.

5. Mayer, L. 1956, pp. 78–79.

6. Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, p. 189.

PROVENANCE: I. G. Sargis, New York (until 1963; sold to MMA)





### 166. Plaque

Iran, probably late 17th century  
Steel; forged and pierced  
6½ × 15 in. (16.5 × 38.1 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1987 1987.14

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script:

و بزهرآ بتول و بأم ولدتها

And by Zahra' the Immaculate One and the Mother who bore her

Executed in polished steel, a bold calligraphic inscription courses across a field of swirling vine scrolls on this cartouche-shaped plaque. The effortless quality of the finely finished letters, suspended in a trellis of cutwork arabesques, belies the density of the material and the skill required to produce this masterful work. Similar gold and silver plaques are known from important Shi'i shrines in Iran, where they served as inscriptions on entryway doors and on the grilles (*zarīh*) surrounding the cenotaphs of important personages.<sup>1</sup> The text and form indicate that this plaque may once have served a decorative and invocative function within a venerated tomb or other religious context.<sup>2</sup>

The Metropolitan's piece belongs to a group of eight related plaques, each containing a hemistich (*misra'*) of an Arabic poem identified as a versification of the *Chahardah Ma'sum*, written in praise of the Fourteen Infallibles, including Fatima, 'Ali, and the Twelve Shi'i Imams.<sup>3</sup> The main text of the poem consists of four lines, comprising eight *misra'*. It reads as follows:

بنبي عربي و رسول مدني  
واخيه اسد الله مسمي بعلي  
و بزهرآ بتول و بأم ولدتها  
و بسطيته همانجل و زكي  
و بالسجاد و بالباقر و الصادق حقاً  
و بموسي و علي و تقي و نقي  
و بذى العسكر الحجة القائم بالحق  
الذي يضرب بالسيف بحكم ازلي

This plaque contains the third *misra'* of the poem, which refers to Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, and to his wife Khadija, mother of Fatima. While none of the known plaques in this group bears the first and eighth *misra'* of the poem, the remaining portions appear in published examples.<sup>4</sup> The duplication of the second and seventh *misra'* within the group suggests that at least two different sets of plaques of similar size and shape were produced.<sup>5</sup>

These plaques may have once formed a broader program of architectural decoration, being displayed along with other pierced-steel

plaques, of various shapes and sizes, containing other sacred texts.<sup>6</sup> Some surviving examples display dates in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century; at least one includes the signature of its calligrapher.<sup>7</sup> While many of these plaques appear similar at first glance, subtle differences in the calligraphy, vine-scroll density, and border profiles make it likely that multiple sets of finely wrought steel plaques once adorned important shrines and royal tombs throughout Persia during the Safavid period. DMT

1. A set of 166 pierced and inscribed gold plaques was ordered by Shah Tahmasp for the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad in 1550–51. Later, in 1606–7, another set of solid gold plaques was ordered by his grandson Shah ‘Abbas I. For more on these, see Canby 2007, esp. pp. 65–66; also London 2009, pp. 189–93; and London 1976c, p. 204, no 247. See also Samadi 1950 (three unnumbered plates). For the Shah ‘Abbas set, see Allan 1995. A somewhat similar set of plaques, executed in carved ivory, once adorned the cenotaph of Shah Isma‘il in Ardabil. See New York and Milan 2003–4, no. 8.26, and Hillenbrand, R. 2003 (thanks to Sheila Canby for this reference).
2. Melikian-Chirvani 1987b, p. 192, for discussion of its “history.” See also Allan and Gilmour 2000, pp. 294ff., esp. p. 296 n. 61, and Welch, S.C. 1987.
3. An identification, transliteration, and rough translation of the text first appeared in the Sotheby’s London catalogue of April 16, 1986, lot 182, with a reference acknowledging Melikian-Chirvani’s forthcoming publication. See Melikian-Chirvani 1987b, pp. 190–91, for his transcription and English translation of the inscription as found on a tombstone in a mausoleum near Ardistan. Ghouchani has provided a transcription here of the poem that varies slightly from the one published by Melikian-Chirvani.
4. See Allan 2004, pp. 296–97 and n. 61, and the following enumeration of eight closely related pieces: *Misra’ 2*: London (Victoria and Albert Museum, no. M 5.1919; in London 1976c, p. 199, no. 234); and Copenhagen (David Collection, no. 25/1994; in Copenhagen 1996, no. 265). *Misra’ 3*: New York (Metropolitan Museum, acc. no. 1987.14; in Sotheby’s London, October 12, 1982, lot 71, and Riyadh 1985, no. 96). *Misra’ 4*: location unknown (Riyadh 1985, no. 96). *Misra’ 5*: location unknown (Sotheby’s London, April 16, 1986, lot 181). *Misra’ 6*: location unknown (Sotheby’s London, October 15, 1985, lot 218). *Misra’ 7*: Malaysian collection (Sotheby’s London, April 16, 1986, lot 182; Geneva and other cities 1988–89, no. 25); another in the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Washington, D.C. (no. 1997.21).
5. In addition to variations in calligraphic composition and the thickness of their borders, the spirals are more tightly drawn on the David Collection piece than on the Victoria and Albert example. Comparable differences are seen between the Freer and Malaysian pieces.
6. Allan and Gilmour 2000, pp. 294ff.
7. Paris 2007–8, p. 421, no. 166, for the British Museum vertical oval plaque dated A.H. 1105/1693–94 A.D. (no. OA + 368). In the same catalogue, see the previously unpublished plaque no. 61, dated A.H. 972/1564–65 A.D. See also the horizontal oval plaque sold at Sotheby’s London, April 1, 2009, lot 111, and again at Christie’s, April 23, 1996, lot 224 (with restoration) signed “written by Muhammad Riza.” He has been identified with the seventeenth-century calligrapher Muhammad Riza al-Imami. For more on this calligrapher, see Pickett 1984 and London 2009, p. 235, no. 114.

PROVENANCE: Sir Charles Marling, England (early 1900s—at least 1931); Marling family, England, by descent (until 1987); [Ahuan U.K., Ltd., London, 1987; sold to MMA]

## 167. Beggar’s Bowl (*Kashkul*)

Iran, dated A.H. 1130/1717–18 A.D.

Maker: Yar Muhammad

Silver and gilded silver; pierced and engraved, and nut (coco-de-mer)

H. 5 in. (12.7 cm); length 12¼ in. (31.1 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1909 09.202.2

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script, around rim [Prayer to the Fourteen Infallibles]:

اللهم صل على النبي المصطفى والمرضى والبطل فاطمة سيدتين سبطين والحسن  
والحسين و صل على زين العباد الباقر محمد الصادق جعفر والكاظم موسى و  
الرضا و على التقي محمد و النقي الحسن العسكري الهادي المهدي صلوات الله و  
سلامه عليه اجمعين

O God, may thy grace descend upon the Prophet (the Chosen One and the one with whom He is most pleased) and the Lady Fatima and the two offspring, al-Hasan and al-Husain. May God’s grace descend upon Zain al-‘Abid[in] Muhammad al-Baqir, Ja‘far al-Sadiq, Musa al-Kazim, and ‘Ali al-Rida and Muhammad al-Taqi al-Hasan al-‘Askari al-Hadi al-Mahdi—May God’s prayers and peace be upon them all.

On silver frame covering opening on left, in Persian:

بنوش آب بیاد لب تشنه حسین

Drink water in memory of Husain’s thirsty lips

صاحبه عباس الحسینی

Owned by ‘Abbas al-Husaini

عمل یار محمد فی سنة ۱۱۳۰

The work of Yar Muhammad [in the] year A.H. 1130 [1717–18 A.D.]

The *kashkul*, or beggar’s bowl, is the most emblematic accoutrement of the wandering dervish. This typically boat-shaped vessel was made from a variety of media, including coco-de-mer shell, wood, metal, and ceramic. Dervishes used them primarily to collect and store alms (their main source of sustenance) and occasionally as drinking vessels. Pictorial representations of dervishes often depict them with a *kashkul* and sometimes with a cudgel (*mantasha*), to defend themselves against animal attacks, an ax (*tabarzin*), and a conical woolen cap.<sup>1</sup>

Made of coco-de-mer shell (one half of the shell of a Seychelles nut), the body of this *kashkul* is completely uncarved. The only decorative element is the silver frame around the rim, which partially covers the top and contains an inscription in fine *naskhi* script, a prayer to the Fourteen Infallibles (The Prophet Muhammad, Fatima, and the Twelve Shi‘i Imams), whom Twelvers Shi‘is believe are infallible, that is, “divinely bestowed with freedom from error and sin.” A second inscription encourages the owner of the *kashkul* to drink in memory of the thirsty Husain, who fought his foes in the arid desert of Kerbala with no source of water in sight—an act that Twelver Shi‘is consider the ultimate in sacrifice and devotion.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription was skillfully pierced into silver and then placed on a gilt-silver ground in order to create a striking contrast. The date on the metal frame at the top was altered to read A.H. 1230, but close examination reveals that it was originally

A.H. 1130, which corresponds to 1717–18 A.D. Stylistic comparisons with earlier (late seventeenth to eighteenth century) manuscript and album illumination, with metalwork such as ‘alam elements and implements and engraved silver bowls, and with arms and armor confirm the earlier dating.<sup>3</sup> Since Qajar *kashkuls* do not typically include metal frames and are often intricately carved with figures of dervishes, animals, vegetal designs, and inscriptions, it is unlikely that this *kashkul* was produced during that period. Inscribed with the names of the maker, Yar Muhammad, and the owner, ‘Abbas al-Husaini, the Metropolitan example is among the earliest known dated and signed *kashkuls*.<sup>4</sup> A double-chain of flat rings, original to the piece and used to suspend it, is fastened by two large rings at either end.

Boat-shaped drinking vessels have a long history in Iran.<sup>5</sup> Although the earliest extant examples of *kashkuls* date to the fourteenth century, they continued to be produced through the nineteenth century in Iran, Central Asia, and India. Many were probably marketed as decorative objects, since a devoted dervish would be highly unlikely to carry an elaborately carved *kashkul*. Such an object would obviously contradict his belief in the renunciation of worldly goods in favor of unconditional devotion to the Divine.

The *kashkul* has a number of metaphorical associations. As a symbol of the sufi quest for union with the Divine, it represents the cleansing of a sufi’s soul of all extraneous earthly desires in preparation for the acceptance of divine love. Dervishes subsisted solely on offerings given to them by pious Muslims and thus associated the *kashkul* with their life of poverty. This example, recently cleaned and prepared for exhibition, is unique in its decorative features and in the extraordinarily sophisticated execution of its metal frame.

ME

1. Brooklyn 1998–99, pp. 259–60.
2. Houston 2010, pp. 26–27.
3. Allan and Gilmour 2000, pl. B22, fig. 41, pl. E3, figs. 14a, b.
4. Houston 2010, p. 20.
5. Melikian-Chirvani 1990–91. See also Houston 2010, p. 26.

PROVENANCE: [Mallett & Son, Bath, England, until 1909; sold to MMA]





## 168. Textile Fragment

Iran, ca. 1540

Silk; cut and voided velvet with continuous floats of flat metal thread

23½ × 18¼ in. (59.7 × 46.2 cm)

Gift of V. Everit Macy, 1927 27.51.1

## 169. Textile Fragment

Iran, ca. 1540

Silk; cut and voided velvet with continuous floats of flat metal thread

40 × 17 in. (101.6 cm × 43.2 cm)

Gift of V. Everit Macy, 1927 27.51.2

Along with several other pieces in museums and private collections,<sup>1</sup> these two fragments were once elements of a royal tent and belonged to the Sanguszko family of Poland until 1920.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars have put forward the hypothesis that all the pieces reached eastern Europe after the defeat of the Turks outside Vienna in 1683.<sup>3</sup> Part of the same tent is now preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.<sup>4</sup> Figured with an elaborate depiction of the hunt, it is cut in a circular shape with a hole at the center, where the tent pole was fitted, and was employed as an element of the ceiling. In the history of textiles, Safavid velvets represent the zenith of structural technique and decorative complexity. They are very densely woven, with hundreds of threads per square centimeter, and the silk is always of the highest quality. The complicated structure of these two examples accounts in part for the richness of their texture and design. Three structural characteristics are noteworthy: luxury silk warps and wefts forming the foundation weave; supplementary warps creating the velvet pile and allowing for an intricate pattern and lush texture; and supplementary metal-thread wefts giving the textile its shimmering silvery surface. All these elements together produce a thick, heavy material suitable for furnishings, cushions, interior hangings, tent panels, and ceremonial robes.

The first fragment (cat. 168), cut in the form of a polylobed ogival medallion, portrays a young man hurling a rock at a dragon, as two birds watch from a nearby tree. The image may depict a popular scene from the Persian epic, the *Shahnama*, in which Hushang “grasps a rock and flings it with all his royal strength at a beast,” an act that leads to the discovery of fire.<sup>5</sup> The rich color scheme of this velvet textile was achieved by introducing short warps of different hues into various parts of the repeat units.<sup>6</sup> The velvet would originally have had an even stronger visual impact, since each individual silver thread of the background had been gilded. The gilding created a golden luminosity that has been lost with age.

This shimmering effect is better preserved in the second tent fragment (cat. 169), in areas where the edge was folded under and

some of the gilded threads were thus protected from damage caused by light and wear. Here, two mirror-image fragments have been joined to make an oblong panel decorated with a stylized peony at the center as well as with ogival palmettes containing rosettes. Sinuous spotted ribbons with dark blue edges intersect four lotus flowers; smaller rosettes and stylized tulips complete the composition.

During the reign of the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp (1524–76), a number of professional artists worked side by side in the royal atelier in Tabriz to produce works of art commissioned by the court.<sup>7</sup> Paintings by the royal miniaturists were used as the basis for making technical repeat units known as *naqsha*,<sup>8</sup> which would be reproduced in continuous patterns to be woven into the velvet by the highly skilled *naqshband*.<sup>9</sup> A highly favored motif was the hunt, but many Safavid textiles, including the first velvet discussed here, featured scenes from popular poetry, which was considered by the court to be the highest form of cultural expression.

EGM

1. Dimand 1927, p. 108, explains that “our two panels with twenty-eight others were used for the interior decoration of a tent.”
2. Ackerman 1938–39a, p. 2090.
3. Dimand 1927, p. 108.
4. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 28.13).
5. Ferdowsi 2006. For a study of the image of “Hushang and the Dragon,” see Lassikova 2010, pp. 37–40.
6. Sondag 1987–88, p. 79.
7. Other centers of silk weaving under the Safavids were Yazd, Kashan, Herat, Rasht, and Isfahan. See Ackerman 1938–39b, p. 2080.
8. Thompson 2003–4, p. 275.
9. “The *naqshband* takes the drawing to be woven and weaves an exact scale model of every thread involved in the formation of the design.” Ibid., pp. 275–76.

PROVENANCE: Sanguszko family, Poland (until 1920); V. Everit Macy, New York (until 1927)



168



169



## 170. Panel with Lattice Pattern

Maker: Ghiyath (born ca. 1530)

Iran, second half of 16th century

Silk; cut and voided velvet with continuous floats of metal strip

25¾ × 13¼ in. (65.4 × 33.7 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.13

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script, repeated four times in each compartment:

عمل غیاث

The work of Ghiyath

Despite some fading of color (the ecru pile was once salmon pink), the loss of velvet pile in certain areas, and the deterioration of most of the metallic strips, this textile retains a quiet majesty. The harmonious pattern features paired vertical reciprocating vines in black that meet at regular intervals to form ogival compartments. The satin ground, now beige but formerly covered by metal strips, bears an elegantly drawn pattern of symmetrically arranged blossoms, leaves, and scrolling vines. The points at which the reciprocating vines meet, as well as the midpoints between, are marked by elaborate, deeply lobed eight-pointed blossoms. A later, unsigned but similar velvet was part of a 1639 diplomatic gift from the Persian king to Friedrich III, Duke of Holstein, and now belongs to the collection of Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen.<sup>1</sup>

Close examination reveals the presence of a brief inscription in Persian characters four times in each compartment (twice in correct orientation and twice in mirror image), to the far right and left near the large blossoms marking the junction points in the lattice. The inscription provides the name of Ghiyath, a famous textile designer and poet from Yazd who lived from about 1530 until very late in the century. His work was in great demand, and a significant number of textiles bearing his name still survive.<sup>2</sup> Displaying a variety of patterns (many figural but others not) as well as a range of techniques, these pieces reflect a broad versatility and suggest the absence of a signature style. In his later years, Ghiyath seems to have had an official position at the court of Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), perhaps as a participant in running the royal workshops. His involvement was such that he drew a proper salary and was also singled out as the master weaver responsible for fifty of the three hundred brocades sent as an ambassadorial gift to the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1598.<sup>3</sup>

DW

1. Bier and Bencard 1995, p. 53, fig. 25.

2. For a list of published examples, including signed works, see Skelton 2000, p. 262 n. 9.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–52.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1908–d. 1951); his estate, New York (1951–52; sold to MMA)





## 171. Panel with Scene of Horseman and Prisoner

Iran, mid-16th century  
Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas  
47½ × 26½ in. (120.7 × 67.3 cm)  
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.12

Accompanied by a child riding pillion, a Safavid prince on horseback leads a prisoner with bound hands through a landscape in this elaborately patterned silk. A *simurgh*, the fabulous bird of Iranian lore visually modeled on the Chinese phoenix, observes the passing scene from his perch in the tree. The textile is a compound weave known as lampas, which combines a satin ground and a twill pattern to produce an effect with two contrasting surface textures. Particular details, including the captor's shirt and horse in the top row and the captive's costume in the middle and bottom rows, were once enhanced with the glint of metallic threads. Both sides are selvages, slightly cut, so the textile is almost full loom width. The pattern unit is repeated horizontally and, in the opposite direction, in adjacent rows. Other fragments of the same textile belong to the State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow, and the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon.<sup>1</sup>

Figural patterns were popular for sixteenth-century Persian textiles, just as they were in carpets. Images were often drawn from famous literary works such as the story of Layla and Majnun or Khusrau and Shirin, which were well known also from illustrations in manuscripts. The imagery here is unusual in that it is not found in contemporary manuscript painting. Thirteen extant textiles from the period involve variations on the theme of a Safavid captor leading men and especially women and children taken prisoner. Various identities have been proposed for the captives—Turkmen, Uzbeks, or even Mongols—but they have more recently been convincingly identified as Georgians held hostage during the four campaigns waged by the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp between 1540 and 1553. This conclusion is based on physical attributes (mustache and cap types) depicted in paintings and described in contemporary observations, which mention the unusually large number of women and children taken captive at this time.<sup>2</sup> Whether they functioned as furnishing fabrics or, more likely, as garments, these textiles surely played a propaganda role in society as celebrations of Safavid military might.<sup>3</sup>

DW



1. The Moscow piece is illustrated in Pope, A. U., and Ackerman, eds. 1938–39, vol. 6, pl. 1014A. The Lyon fragment is published in d'Hennezel 1930, pl. 11, top center.
2. McWilliams 1987.
3. Ibid., p. 19; Thompson 2003–4, p. 284.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1908–d. 1951); his estate, New York (1951–52; sold to MMA)



172. *Textile Fragment with Figural Scenes and Poetic Inscriptions*

Iran, 16th–17th century  
Silk, metal-wrapped thread; double-cloth  
25 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 14 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (65.4 × 36.5 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.7

Inscriptions in Persian in *nasta'liq* script, in cartouches:

Horizontal:

جلوۂ قد تو ز زیبائی      کرده جان را بدین (؟) عبائی  
The splendor of your figure [comes] from beauty.  
It has given life to this outer cloak.<sup>1</sup>

Vertical:

گوئی از رشتۀ جان بافته اند      نبود جامه بدین (؟) زیبایی  
There has never been a garment of such beauty.  
One might say it has been woven from the threads of your soul.<sup>2</sup>

Through its graceful poetic inscriptions, the creators of this textile speak to us across the centuries, proclaiming “there has never been a garment of such beauty.” Indeed, with its shimmering silver-wrapped threads and delicate weave of soft red and white silk, this intricately drawn textile is a testament to the weavers’ art, deftly combining poetry, calligraphy, and figural imagery into a complex yet cohesive design. While the anonymous poetic inscriptions speak primarily to the qualities of the cloth, comparing it to the physical beauty of the beloved, these verses alternate with figural scenes illustrating a well-known story from the *Khamasa* (Quintet) of Nizami.<sup>3</sup>

One of these five tales tells the love story of King Khusrau and Princess Shirin. While this narrative centers on its two title characters, the princess has yet another devoted admirer, the talented sculptor Farhad. Shirin asks Farhad to cut a channel to her palace from a distant pastureland, so that she and her servants might enjoy milk from the goats that graze there. Farhad complies by making not only the channel but also a pool near the palace for the milk to collect.

One section of the textile (detail at right) shows Shirin riding out to visit Farhad upon learning that the channel has been completed. The sculptor appears above, ax in hand, as if still hard at work.<sup>4</sup> Nizami's text describes Farhad filling the channel with fish upon completing his task, and close examination reveals a red fish swimming in the white, milk-filled channel. In another portion of the textile, a lofty, mosaic-covered tower—most likely Shirin's palace—is shown. At the foot of this structure, a small basin with swimming ducks perhaps represents the milk-filled pool. The two elegant figures flanking a cypress tree may be Shirin's servants (*parastaran*), carrying containers of milk from the pool to the palace. Finally, the small spotted, gazellelike creatures flanking these scenes may symbolize the *gusfandan* (sheep or goats) that produce the sweet milk for Shirin.



While revealing the weaver-designer's intimate knowledge of Nizami's text, these minute details also demonstrate the intricate interaction of poetry, calligraphy, drawing, and weaving required to create this sophisticated Safavid textile. D M T



1. Since the inscription is unclear in this portion of the textile, ours is only one possible reading. Another might be, "It makes of the soul a cloak for the body." My thanks to Abdullah Ghouchani, Maryam Ekhtiar, and Sina Goudarzi for their assistance with the interpretation of this inscription and its translation.
2. Translation by Denise-Marie Teece and Maryam Ekhtiar, based upon one by the late Jerome W. Clinton published in Washington, D.C. 1987–88, p. 184, no. 25. The precise ordering of the lines is unclear from their placement on the textile, but they appear to form a *rubāʿi*; their order has been further adapted in the English translation for a better reading.
3. Examples of the same textile are in the Museo Civico, Turin (no. 544; see Venice 1993–94, no. 276); Yale University Art Museum, New Haven (no. 1937.4625; see New Haven 1981, p. 24 n. 17); the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (see Weibel 1952, no. 127); and the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (no. 3.280; New York 1979, pp. 136–37, no. 54). See also Washington, D.C. 1987–88, pp. 184–85, no. 25. The present piece has been published recently in Phipps 2010, p. 42, fig. 72 (detail).
4. New York 1979, p. 136, identifies the figures of Shirin and Farhad, but does not link the other images to Nizami's text.

PROVENANCE: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, until 1946; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles; sold to MMA]

### 173. Textile Fragment

Iran, Kashan, second half of 16th century  
Silk; cut and voided velvet with continuous floats of flat metal thread  
21 1/2 × 13 3/8 in. (54.5 × 33.9 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1972 1972.26

This exceptionally well preserved Safavid velvet from Kashan is immediately striking for its outstanding workmanship and the bright colors of its pile silks. Some of its decorative elements, including the lotus flowers, palmettes, and birds, are typical of the workshop production of Tabriz carpets and textiles; these found their way into Kashan velvets through the artistic exchange and collaboration among artisans of the two cities. This exchange, along with further innovations in velvet production, led to the creation of a truly distinctive Kashan style in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The scrolling-vine motif, common throughout Persian art at this time, is continuously repeated in the velvet. The vines are embellished with leaves, blossoms, rosettes, and palmettes, each outlined in dark blue.<sup>1</sup> The pheasants that perch on the vines with bowed heads convey a sense of vitality and concentration. Each closely observes the row below, where the birds are parallel, staggered, and arranged in a mirror image. With their distinctive polychrome feathers, long tails, beaks, crests, and clawed feet, the pheasants directly reflect the style and technique found in miniature paintings by Sultan Muhammad,<sup>2</sup> head of the royal studios in



the 1520s.<sup>3</sup> The same birds are also seen on two other textiles: the lampas in the Metropolitan Museum decorated with a Safavid noble surrounded by rocks, cypresses, animals, and birds,<sup>4</sup> and the velvet with a "standing princess and keening attendant" in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha.<sup>5</sup>

Velvet is a textile that has a highly complex structure. With Safavid velvets, the technique reached a new level of sophistication, a high point in the history of weaving that has not been equaled since.<sup>6</sup> In cut and voided velvets, the foundation weave is not immediately evident because it is covered by the thick pile that produces the pattern. Here, a supplementary warp of flat silver strips was woven between one pile and the other to create a shiny, metallic effect. The pile silks—in blood red, bright yellow, ash blue, deep blue, salmon pink, and ivory—blend harmoniously in a symphony of elegant sophistication.

EGM



1. Ettinghausen and Yarshater, eds. 1979, p. 282.
2. Ibid., p. 273.
3. Doha 2004, p. 36.
4. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 08.109.3). See Ettinghausen and Yarshater, eds. 1979, p. 272.
5. Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (no. TE.09.98). See Doha 2004, pp. 36–37.
6. Ackerman 1938–39b, vol. 5, p. 2217.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1944–d. 1951); [Charles D. Kelekian, New York, 1951–72; sold to MMA]

### 174. *Velvet Fragment with Falconer*

Iran, early 17th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet, bouclé

11 1/2 × 8 1/2 in. (29.2 × 21.6 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1946 46.156.5

Standing in a languid pose amid flowers, a young falconer seems to adjust the neckband of the falcon that sits on his gloved hand. Because of the interest in falconry among the princely and wealthy classes, several such themes related to the royal hunt became embedded in Iranian culture. There are numerous illustrations or evocations of falconry in painting and, to a lesser extent, in figural textiles. Although somewhat tattered in appearance owing to its reduced size, the loss of velvet pile in places, and the deterioration of the metal thread that once covered the satin ground, this fragment nevertheless is still impressive for its graceful drawing and luxury materials. A metallic shimmer comes not only from the flat ground against which the figure is posed but also, in a more textured way, from the loops of foil-wrapped supplementary wefts (bouclé) that embellish the youth's collar, the hilt of his dagger, and details of the flowers to the side. It is possible that the "curl'd" velvets mentioned by a European observer may refer to such loops.<sup>1</sup>

The two other known fragments of this textile—one in the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the other in the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup>—are helpful in understanding the Metropolitan Museum's fragment because they are larger and display more of the pattern. Each one shows two young men holding falcons, standing back-to-back in mirror image. At the sides are arrangements of flowers (again, in mirror image) that match the one seen along the left edge of the present piece. The central axis between the two figures also has some floral elements, but damage has made these difficult to decipher. It has been suggested that the full loom width would have featured at least four



falconers in a row.<sup>3</sup> However, it seems equally possible that such a pattern would have been produced in a narrower strip, with only two figures per row, as in a number of other velvets.<sup>4</sup> In the latter case, each row of two figures would have repeated vertically, or there might have been an alternation of rows of figures facing in and facing out.

DW

1. McWilliams 1987–88, p. 167, citing Jean Chardin.
2. The Berlin piece (no. 91.71) is published in Neumann and Murza 1988, pp. 141, 264, no. 17. The Washington fragment (no. 3.320) is illustrated in Washington, D.C. 1987–88, p. 155.
3. McWilliams 1987–88, p. 154.
4. See, for example, a vertical strip in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, published in London 1976c, p. 110, no. 83; and another in the Art Institute of Chicago, published in Cambridge, Mass., and New York 1973–74, pp. 44–45, 67, no. 21.

PROVENANCE: [Giorgio Sangiorgi, Rome, until 1946; to Loewi]; [Adolph Loewi, Venice and Los Angeles, 1946; sold to MMA]



### 175. *Cope*

Iran, first half of 17th century (velvet)  
 Silk, cotton, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet, brocaded, embroidered, with engraved metal fittings  
 44½ in. × 8 ft. 7 in. (113 × 261.6 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1914 14.67

A splendid convergence of cultures can be seen in this cope, a semi-circular cape and hood worn in processions during Christian liturgical services. The form itself is thus Christian, as is the Eastern Orthodox subject matter of the embroidered orphrey, or ornamental border, that embellishes each of the straight sides, which would have met at the front of the wearer. The orphrey has ten decorated panels, five per side. Six show figures, among them the Virgin Mary and three early saints—Nicholas of Myra and two Armenian patriarchs, Nerses I and Sahak I—identified by inscriptions in Armenian.<sup>1</sup> The other four panels contain crosses. Worn inscriptions in Armenian appear beneath the embroidered saints.

The main body of the cope consists of joined pieces of Persian velvet patterned with rows of swaying flowers, the rows alternating in direction. The stylized flowers are distinguished by the grace and clarity of their drawing and by the broad palette of their colors. A single velvet blossom shows in the “window” of the

hood. The voided satin ground between the areas of pile was originally completely covered with supplementary wefts of yellow silk wrapped in a silver-gilt strip, or lamella, with some space left in the wrapping so that the core still showed. This may have been done to soften the glittering effect of the metal or to reduce the amount of silver required, and hence the cost.

The presence in the velvet area of small fragments with diagonal or curved sides indicates that the various joined pieces were previously parts of garments that had been deconstructed to be reassembled here in a form of “adaptive reuse.” Since the embroidery of the orphrey represents a somewhat later date than the velvet itself, the main body of the vestment may have been assembled from the older velvet, and the orphrey and hood added at the same time, probably in the early eighteenth century. Two closely related pieces are worthy of note: an almost identical cope exhibited in Munich in 1910 (present whereabouts unknown) and a







stray piece of the same velvet material acquired in 1986 by the David Collection, Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup> The two copes, which appeared in the West at about the same time early in the last century, probably derive from one of the Armenian churches built in the Isfahan suburb of New Julfa during the seventeenth century. Also, in the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., there is a cope without orphrey fashioned from three full-width lengths of Safavid brocade.<sup>3</sup> DW

1. I am indebted to Amy Landau of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, for providing the identifications.
2. The piece exhibited in Munich, then in the collection of Dr. Roden of Frankfurt, is illustrated in Munich 1910–12, vol. 3, pl. 202. The Copenhagen velvet is published in Copenhagen 1993, p. 113.
3. Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (no. 3.150). For a piece of the same textile, see Washington, D.C. 1987–88, pp. 172–73.

PROVENANCE: [Tabbagh Frères, Paris and New York, until 1914; sold to MMA]

### 176. Textile Fragment

Iran, late 17th–early 18th century

Silk, silver- and gilt-metal-wrapped thread; compound twill weave, brocaded  
44<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 27<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (113.3 × 70.5 cm)

Anonymous Gift, 1949 49.32.99

Thanks to the stimulus of Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), the business of luxury-silk production expanded markedly in Iran during the early seventeenth century. While silk was cultivated in the majority of regions, it was most intensively farmed in the Caucasus and particularly in the provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. In the Safavid period, production reached its peak around 1650 and declined dramatically after the Afghan invasion of 1722. In addition to domestic use, raw silk was exported, mainly to Turkey, Russia, Central Asia, India, and Europe.<sup>1</sup> As for silk weaving, this was practiced throughout Iran both in rural and urban settings. The primary urban centers of luxury-silk production during the seventeenth century were Kashan, Yazd, and Isfahan, where manufactories employed weavers to work on the full range of fabrics. While existing data for trade between Iran and the English and Dutch East India Companies does not support the notion that the luxury-silk industry was sustained by, or even substantially represented in, commerce with Europe, travelers to Iran did remark on fabrics, such as this one, woven with gold and silver.

The design of this piece—an outsized rosebush in which a parrot perches, a small deer approaching, and a bird of a different species on the wing—falls into a popular group of bird-and-flower textiles that were first produced in the seventeenth century and continued to be fashionable for the next two hundred years. The

decorative device is repeated horizontally here, with each row facing the opposite direction from the one above and below it. Mary McWilliams has suggested that European treatises on natural history may have supplied the inspiration for such a grouping,<sup>2</sup> though the unnatural relationship of scale among the deer, the rosebush, and the birds is most likely the silk weaver’s invention. Close examination of the piece reveals that originally the colors were more intense and varied and that the silvery tone of the background, produced from silver-gilt strips around white silk, was complemented by the gold hue of the deer. Two other fragments are in the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City. SRC

1. Floor 1999, pp. 14, 61.
2. McWilliams 1987–88, p. 178.

PROVENANCE: Anonymous gift

### 177. Sash with Five Flowering Plants

Iran, probably Kashan, 17th century

Silk, silver- and gilt-metal-wrapped thread (metal strip, silk core); *taqueté*, brocaded  
13 ft. 8 in. × 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (416.5 × 62 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1933 33.80.18

With its complex weaving technique and superb craftsmanship, this sash was most likely produced for royalty. It exhibits a rich repertoire of precisely organized floral motifs executed with subtle coloring and defined with dark outlines against a gold background, making it a remarkable example of Persian weaving of the Safavid period.

The layout of this sash is characteristic of many silk sashes of the period. Composed of three units, it has end panels framed by a floral border edged with fringe, a main field with horizontal bands, and borders along the sides. Each end panel features a row of five flowering plants depicting an unusual combination of flowers such as poppies, thistles, and carnations.<sup>1</sup> The main field consists of alternating bands in two different patterns that run across the width of the sash: one band displays a geometric floral motif, the other a scrolling vine with blossoms of iris and rose. The side borders depict various other flowers arranged in sprays.<sup>2</sup>

Sashes such as this one were worn by Safavid royalty and nobility and were produced for export to Europe. It was common practice in the Safavid courts for a robe of honor and a luxurious sash to be granted to a person of high rank. According to the observation of Thomas Herbert, traveling in Persia between 1627 and 1629, “Dukes and other of the noble sort have them woven with gold, merchants and *coozelbashaws* [soldiers in the army of Shah



‘Abbas I] with silver; of silk or wool those of inferior rank.’<sup>3</sup> Not only the type of sash but also the manner of girding the sash around the waist would indicate the social status of its wearer. Frequently, a long, richly patterned sash was worn with another, or even with two other shorter, narrower monochromatic sashes.

This type of sash was fashionable in Iran in the late sixteenth century and soon appeared in eastern Europe as the most prized accessory of a man's ensemble. The sashes were brought there along with other luxury products from the East (particularly from Turkey and Persia), either as traded goods or through diplomatic relationships. Armenian merchants played a significant role in the import and distribution of these sashes throughout the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795). From the first half of the eighteenth century, such sashes were used as the prototype for Polish domestic production, begun by Armenian weavers. This led to the creation of the elaborate sashes of silk and metal thread that became an essential element of a nobleman's national attire.<sup>4</sup>

The outstanding quality of this sash is achieved in part by the use of a large number of silk wefts in varying shades of color, all interwoven with gold and silver thread. The majority of those wefts in orange-salmon, green, citrus-green, brown, and gilt-metal thread are bound together in the weave structure. They are carried from selva to selva, giving the back of the sash a polychromatic appearance and making it seem finished on both sides. Short floats of brocaded, discontinuous wefts in white, pink, purple-gray, and silver-metal thread occur only in small areas of blossoms, enriching the elegant pattern.<sup>5</sup> These technical features testify to the exceptional quality of this textile and to the great skill of its weavers.

J P

1. In Persian sashes, the number of design units in end panels can range from four to seven. In contrast, Indian sashes have three to six motifs;

- Armenian sashes have two or three. The majority of Polish sashes feature two design units; some have either one or three.
2. A sash with an almost identical pattern, in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, is illustrated in Loukonine and Ivanov 1996, pp. 50, 239.
3. Herbert 1928, p. 232. Also, a detailed description of the Persian male attire is provided by Floor 1999.
4. In Poland, the largest collections of Polish and Eastern sashes are found in the Muzeum Narodowe, Cracow; the Muzeum Narodowe, Warsaw; the Muzeum Narodowe, Poznan; the Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa, Lodz; and the Muzeum Diecezjalne, Plock. For a brief description of Persian sashes in Polish collections, see Biedrońska-Słota 2010b.
5. For technical descriptions of Persian textiles, see Reath and Sachs 1937.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1933)

### 178. *Inscribed Banner*

Iran, probably Kashan, dated A.H. 1107/1695–96 A.D.  
Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas  
70½ × 35 in. (179.1 × 88.9 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1938 38.167

Inscriptions in Arabic and Persian in *thuluth* and *nasta'liq* scripts (from top to bottom):

Top right cartouche: (Qur'an, 37:172–73)

Top left cartouche, in Arabic:

وَكُنِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلاً

And, God suffices for a Guardian<sup>1</sup>

Large central cartouche: (Qur'an 110 and the date 1107)

Small yellow cartouche, in Arabic:

يَا مُفْتِحِ الْبَابِ

O, Opener of Doors!

Central and outer portions, respectively, of two-color cartouche, in Arabic:

عمل العبد اسمعيل كاشاني  
Work of the servant Isma'il Kashani

And in Persian:

رایت فتح آید      کردند تاریخ شروع  
رایت نصر من الله      بهر اتمامش علم ۱۱۰۷

The banner of triumph, the date of commencement [*shuru'*] of work  
The banner of God-given victory, the completion of the flag (*'alam*) 1107

Bottom cartouche, in Arabic:

يا رفيع الدرجات  
O, Sublime of Rank!

This large, luxurious silk banner with sweeping lines of gold calligraphy displays Qur'anic verses that convey assurances of victory for the faithful and invocations to God for protection and assistance.<sup>2</sup> The content of these inscriptions suggests that this textile may have had a military function, to protect and assist the army that carried it, or was perhaps used in religious processions.<sup>3</sup> Similarly inscribed banners from the Ottoman Empire are well published—some were intended to be carried into battle, others to be borne by the faithful on pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> Surviving Persian banners, however, are extremely rare.<sup>5</sup>

Visual evidence for the presence of inscribed banners in Persia is found from at least the fifteenth century onward.<sup>6</sup> In the early sixteenth century, numerous images of heavily embellished banners—many displaying Arabic inscriptions—appear in battle-scene paintings of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76). One example, on a folio in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, exhibits a triangular banner with calligraphic invocations similar to those found on the present textile.<sup>7</sup> A century later, the Persian military continued to use inscribed banners, as witnessed by the seventeenth-century French traveler Jean Chardin. While visiting Persia, he observed, “Their ensigns [banners] are cut in points, like our pennons, and are made with all colors and of all kinds of rich fabrics. They have no other ensigns, either for cavalry or for infantry. As legend and in place of a device, they put on these flags their credo, or a quotation from the Qur'an.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Qur'anic verses, however, this banner also contains inscriptions describing its fabrication. One of them, found in the center of the light blue cartouche, identifies the banner as the work of (*'amal-i*) Isma'il Kashani. Around his name, specially composed verses provide the dates of the weaving of the banner using the *abjad* system, in which individual letters have numerical equivalents. The letters in a portion of each verse total 1,106 and 1,107, representing the years in which work on the banner was commenced and completed.<sup>9</sup> This careful coordination of dedicatory verse, elegant calligraphy, and intricate weaving reveals the significant forethought and resources lavished upon this masterful textile. DMT

1. This phrase appears in five different Suras, including 4:81, 4:132, 4:171, 33:3, and 33:48. The translation is taken from Arberry.



2. Published in Pope, A. U., and Ackerman, eds. 1938–39, vol. 3, pp. 2124–25, and vol. 6, pl. 1070a; Dimand 1940b, ill. p. 143, fig. 2, pp. 143–44; and Reath and Sachs 1937, example 15, p. 74, pl. 15.
3. A solely religious context may be possible as well, as similar verses and invocations are found on tomb covers and other textiles used within religious settings.
4. See Denny 1974a.
5. Among them, a triangular-shaped banner inscribed with Qur'anic verses and the name of the fifteenth-century Aq Qyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan, in the collection of Istanbul's Topkapı Palace. Uzunçarsili 1984, cover and fig. 49. A later Qajar example is in London 1976c, p. 113, no. 91. Two uncut nineteenth-century 'Ashura banners are in Munich 2010–11, p. 22, fig. 9. For more on the textual and visual evidence for Persian banners, especially those with figural and calligraphic decoration, see Melikian-Chirvani 1988 and Shahbazi 1999.
6. See cat. 127b.
7. See fol. 496r, published in Paris 2002–3, p. 231, no. 196.
8. As quoted by Ackerman 1938–39a, p. 2780. My thanks to Ariana Muessel for her kind assistance in locating images for this entry.
9. Abdullah Ghouchani provided the interpretation of this chronogram.

PROVENANCE: E. Beghian, London, by 1931–38; sold to MMA







## 179. Carpet with a Compartment Design

Iran, first half of 16th century  
Silk (warp and weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
16 ft. 4 in. × 11 ft. 2 in. (497.8 × 340.4 cm)  
Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1910 10.61.3

Specific evidence is lacking, but this is a carpet that can surely be considered of court quality, so luxurious are the materials (silk and fine sheep wool), so tight the weave (about 550 knots per square inch), and so refined and assured the drawing. The field pattern consists of a lattice formed by staggered rows of two eight-lobed medallions in dark blue and brown and smaller radiating compartments, or cartouches, in green and red. An elaborate interlace pattern is created by the continuous narrow band that outlines each compartment. Color alternation in the fields of the compartments allows for different readings of the pattern.

That this type of pattern is widely associated with designs for painting, illumination, and bookbinding associated with the eastern Iranian city of Herat in the late fifteenth century<sup>1</sup> offers additional evidence of a connection to a court workshop, at least for the design. Apart from the use of arabesques and split leaves, many of the individual motifs in the pattern are taken from Chinese sources: dragons and phoenixes, supernatural lion figures, geese, cloud bands, even lotus palmettes, and other blossoms.<sup>2</sup> Such borrowings had been popular in Iran since the time of the Mongols in the second half of the thirteenth century, and Chinese influences were seen there even earlier as a result of trade in ceramics, glass, and textiles.

Although its state of preservation is otherwise remarkably good, the Metropolitan Museum carpet has been reduced in dimensions, and the field pattern is a somewhat truncated version of the original. The full effect can be seen in a carpet with the same pattern at the Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon, that measures 26 feet 3 inches by 13 feet 1½ inches (8 by 4 meters) and has not been reduced.<sup>3</sup> The two carpets may have been a pair in the sense that they were made at the same time and place, had very similar patterns and colors, and perhaps had similar dimensions, although this can no longer be ascertained.

It is not known where this work and other sixteenth-century luxury carpets were produced. A number of cities and provinces have been cited by contemporaneous travelers and historians, including Kirman, Jaushaqan (near Kashan), Hamadan, Dargazin (in Khurasan), Khurasan, Khuzistan, Sabzavar (in Khurasan), and Yazd,<sup>4</sup> but apart from their judgments about quality or comments that certain places were known for carpets with gold thread or brocading, there is little to go by in making attributions. Carpets may also have been produced in the first two Safavid capital cities of the sixteenth century—Tabriz and Qazvin. DW

1. The compartment, or cartouche, design is associated in particular with the painter Bihzad. See especially the *Bustan* of Sa'di, dated 1488, in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles 1989, pp. 190, 260, 294, no. 146.
2. For the use of Chinese symbols in Islamic art, see Cammann 1972, esp. pp. 51ff., and Rawson 1984.
3. The two main publications for this carpet, including further citations, are Bennett 1987a, p. 43, pl. 11; and London 1983, no. 61.
4. Walker, D. 1990.

PROVENANCE: [Vincent Robinson & Co., London, until at least 1882; to Thiem]; Adolph Thiem, Berlin (after 1882–ca. 1895); Charles Tyson Yerkes, New York (until d. 1905); his estate, New York (1905–10; sold to MMA)

## 180. The Anhalt Medallion Carpet

Iran, probably first half of 16th century  
Cotton (warp), silk (weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
26 ft. 5½ in. × 13 ft. 11 in. (806.5 × 424 cm)  
Gift of Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1946 46.128

Dubbed the “Anhalt Carpet” after a former German princely owner, this magnificent yellow-ground carpet has survived in remarkable condition, apart from its areas of black wool pile, which have been almost completely eroded away by a corrosive dye. (The pile in these areas was replaced by a purple-brown wool in early twentieth-century restorations.) The carpet’s enduring colors, superb condition, unusual golden-yellow ground, and relative simplicity of design compared to many Safavid medallion carpets at one time caused some scholars to question its authenticity. However, recent research on Safavid weaving methods as well as careful analysis of the construction, materials, and dyestuffs of the carpet suggests that the Anhalt Carpet is one of the great treasures both of early Safavid carpet weaving and of the Metropolitan Museum’s Islamic collections.<sup>1</sup>

The Anhalt Carpet represents an early stage in Safavid court-sponsored weaving of the first half of the sixteenth century: the central medallion is only slightly elongated vertically, and the cartouches and pendants above and below the medallion are very large; there are no spandrels or corner-pieces in the design, as commonly found in later Safavid medallion carpets. The design has close parallels in early Safavid architectural decoration, especially the twelve large peacocks (the peacock had well-established paradisaical associations in Persian art) that ornament the field amid a design structure of vine whorls and large split-leaf forms known in

Persian as *islîmi*. Depicted with brilliant multicolored feathers, the peacocks stand at the head of a long tradition depicting peafowl in Safavid carpets; later examples are seen in such carpets as the celebrated Schwartzberg medallion carpet formerly in Vienna and now in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar. A close comparison of symmetrical elements in the Anhalt Carpet has determined that, like many other classical Persian carpets, it was almost certainly created by skilled weavers who followed a paper cartoon, rather than a detailed knot plan that determined the color of each of the millions of knots in the carpet. Some design details in the adaptation from the curvilinear paper cartoon to a knotted-pile carpet's rectangular grid indicate that its weavers were embarking on a new and perhaps somewhat unfamiliar method of creating the carpet on the loom; similar design anomalies are seen on many other early Safavid medallion carpets. The carpet's design itself has close parallels in early Safavid ceramic tile decoration; especially striking are the parallels to be seen in the Harun-i Vilayat in Isfahan, a structure completed about 1513. The carpet's large scale, great simplicity, repeating design elements, and striking color combinations are hallmarks of a burst of creativity and innovation in Safavid carpet weaving between 1500 and 1550.

Before its sale by Joseph Duveen to Samuel Kress, the carpet is reputed to have belonged to the Anhalt princes of Dessau, whose ancestors may have acquired it through military campaigns against the Ottoman Turks in the late seventeenth century. The carpet would have entered Ottoman hands as booty or as a gift. In the eighteenth century the Anhalt family ruled from Cöthen, whose Prince Leopold was an important patron of Johann Sebastian Bach: could the great composer have seen, or even performed upon, this magnificent carpet? WBD

1. Recently, an analysis of some of the dyes utilized in the carpet was undertaken through a collaborative initiative involving the Department of Islamic Art, the Textile Conservation Department, and the Department of Scientific Research. The results suggest that all are naturally occurring dyestuffs, available to weavers as early as the sixteenth century.

PROVENANCE: Dukes of Anhalt, Germany (after 1683); Sir Joseph Duveen, London (by 1931–d. 1939); [Duveen Brothers, London, by 1940]; Samuel H. Kress, New York (until 1946)





## 181. *The Emperor's Carpet*

Iran, second half of 16th century

Silk (warp and weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile

24 ft. 11 in. × 11 ft. 1 1/2 in. (759.5 × 339 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1943 43.121.1

Inscriptions in Persian in *nasta'liq* script on inner, minor border  
(verses by Zahir al-Din Faryabi [d. 1202])

بیا که عهد چمن تازه کرد باد بهار که باز گشت چمن را طراوت رخ یار  
Come, for the breeze of spring has renewed the promise of the meadow,  
for the freshness of the beloved's cheek has returned to the meadow.

چمن هنوز لب از شیر ابر نداشتسته چو شاهد آن خط سبزش دمید گرد عذار  
No sooner had the meadow washed the milk of the cloud from its lips  
than those green whiskers sprouted around its countenance  
as on the lip of an adolescent.

مخدرات چمن جلوه میکنند امروز عروسیست نبات نبات را پندار  
The cloistered ladies of the meadow display themselves today.  
You would think it was a wedding for their daughter-sprouts.

و گر نه بهر چه گردون شکوفه گل را سفیده بر زده گلگونه کرده بر رخسار  
If not, why did the celestial sphere bring out dawn of the rose blossom with  
rouge on its cheek?

همه جواهر لعلست غنچه را در تنگ همه بضاعت مشک است لاله را در بار  
The rosebud holds ruby gems tightly in its embrace;  
the tulip has merchandise of musk in store.

ولی ز تنگ دلی گل بخود فرو شده بود نمی گشود دهان و نمی نمود عذار  
But the rose had closed itself over in distress and  
would not open its mouth or show its face.

فراز تخت زمرد نشست از شبنم بتاج لعل در آویخت لؤلؤ شہوار  
It sat atop an emerald throne of dew  
and hung regal pearls on its ruby crown.

بیاض دیده نرگس نگر تعالی الله که هست خیره [ازو؟] دیده اولو الأَبصار  
Look at the whiteness of the narcissus' eye. Goodness!  
The eyes of those of insight are dazzled by it.

[...]

چمن ز غنچه نباید هزار خرگه سبز سفیده دم که زند ابر خیمه بر گلزار  
The meadow displays a thousand green tents of rosebuds  
at dawn, when the cloud pitches a tent over the rose garden.

شکوفه هر درمی را که داشت داد بیاد سحاب هر گهری [را] که یافت کرد نثار  
The blossom gave every dirham it had to the wind;  
the cloud scattered every pearl it found.

مذاکران چمن چون مقدسان فلک فراز سدره اشجار بین که در اسجار  
See the reciters of the meadow, like the holy ones of the celestial sphere  
atop the Lote-Tree at dawn—

دعای شاه جهان میکنند و میگویند که باد تا ابد از عز و جاه برخوردار  
They pray for the king of the world and say,  
"May he enjoy glory and high position forever!"

This very famous classical Persian carpet is known as the Emperor's Carpet. It is actually one of a pair, each having taken this name because they are said to have once belonged to Czar Peter the Great of Russia and then, after 1698, to the Habsburg emperor Leopold I. After the fall of the Habsburgs, the carpets came in 1921 to the predecessor of the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna. In 1925, to raise funds, that museum sold one of the pair, the carpet now in the Metropolitan Museum, to the London dealers Cardinal and Harford. The second carpet, as famous as the first, remains in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> A surprising number of classical Persian rugs survive in pairs, suggesting that the practice of making carpets in this manner must have been fairly widespread.

The Emperor's Carpets belong to a group distinguished by a field pattern of symmetrically disposed scrolling vines embellished with palmettes, blossoms, and cloud bands. Animals are incorporated in the floral patterns of several of the choicest examples. The ground of the field is typically red, that of the main border, dark green. Warp and weft are silk in the finest pieces and, in others, a blend of wool, silk, and cotton, sometimes, and unusually, plied together. The pile fiber is sheep wool in most examples, although three fragments of a once-magnificent shaped carpet have a pile of *pashmina*, fine goat hair.<sup>2</sup> About a dozen surviving pieces of the group incorporate brocading of metal thread. Seemingly contemporaneous carpets similar in pattern and style survive in multiple grades of quality,<sup>3</sup> a feature seen also in later production in northern India.

The period of production for this class was essentially the second half of the sixteenth century, extending into the very early years of the seventeenth. A related group with similar but simplified patterns without animals or birds, made in commercial sizes and quality on a cotton foundation, was produced through most of the seventeenth century and survives in several hundred examples. Many versions have been depicted in European paintings, indicating the popularity of the type in the West. These carpets have long presented problems in terms of attribution. Known a hundred years ago in the trade as "Isfahans," despite a lack of evidence for carpet production in that city until about 1600, both early and later groups were subsequently linked to the city of Herat, famous in the Iranian world as a center for the arts and carpet manufacture. Periodic suggestions of Indian origin, largely set aside by now, resulted in other identifying names, such as Indo-Isfahan and Indo-Persian. In summary, there are two related but distinct groups of carpets with essentially floral patterns, they are Persian in origin, and the weaving center(s) cannot be identified with any certainty.<sup>4</sup>

Within their class, the Emperor's Carpets are both the supreme and probably the earliest examples. They exceed the high standards of their peers in the overall balance of the pattern and particularly in the complexity of pattern detail, made possible by the

fineness of materials and weave (about 300 per inch). Animals leap and attack in the dense garden foliage, much as they do in the small silk Kashan (cat. 182) of the same vintage, mid-sixteenth century or a little later. Highly detailed cloud bands with interior stripes of color and attached cloud wisps populate the field and especially the border. Concealed animals abound: many blossoms in the field and the border bear lion masks, perhaps influenced by Renaissance prints brought to Iran, and animal heads peek around cloud bands. The inner, minor border contains an inscription of verses describing a flower-filled meadow and referring in the last couplet to the king, for whom the carpet must have been made.<sup>5</sup> DW

The Emperor's Carpet is one of the most spectacular pile-woven carpets of its type. The carpet's intricate design has been finely woven with wool pile on a silk foundation. It shows a high concentration of knots: approximately 5,230 per square decimeter.

The outstanding quality of the materials, dyes, and woven structure of the carpet has contributed to its overall good state of preservation. It displays a vivid palette dominated by red, green, and yellow. During its history the carpet was exposed to considerable physical and chemical stress, which affected its condition. The ends of the carpet are especially damaged, probably from exposure to areas of high traffic. The carpet also shows evidence of pile damage, particularly at its center, in both warp and weft directions. This indicates that the carpet was folded for storage before it entered the Metropolitan Museum. The brown-dyed wool pile, notably on the inner border area containing an inscription, is very fragile and either partially or completely effaced. Nevertheless, these various damages have not diminished the spectacular appearance and generally good condition of this magnificent example of Persian carpet art.

Prior to its acquisition by the Museum in 1943, the carpet had been crudely repaired and restored. The fabric and the distribution of patches indicate at least three consecutive campaigns of previous restoration. More than seven hundred patches were added to stabilize many of the fragile areas. Rough embroidery stitches applied over the patches attempted to reconstruct missing areas. Layers of cloth tape were used to encase and protect the carpet's edges. Although this previous restoration may have reinforced the structure of the carpet, it caused overall distortion, especially serious at the corners and in the center, where damages and losses were concentrated.



The carpet entered the Museum's collection with two overlapping linings made of silk; they were most likely added for its protection at Vienna's imperial workshop. It appears that after the older lining had deteriorated, the carpet was relined with another red silk woven fabric without removing the first. Both linings were found to be in poor condition.

To achieve the most effective preservation and preparation for display, the carpet needed major conservation work to eliminate problems created by inappropriate restoration and to stabilize fragile areas. The carpet was then prepared for horizontal installation on a platform, not for hanging vertically on a wall. By restricting it to horizontal display, we were able to minimize treatment interventions as well as avoid stress caused by hanging.

The conservation work was performed by a team in the Museum's Department of Textile Conservation over a three-year period. Before the work was begun, as preparation for treatment and for future reference, thorough documentation was performed; this consisted of condition evaluation, analytical study of structure, fibers, and dyes,<sup>6</sup> and a section-by-section obverse and reverse photographic documentation.<sup>7</sup> Color measurements were also made.

Initially, the two old linings were removed and documented. Because the tape around the edges, the patches, and the previous restoration embroidery all had a negative effect on the carpet's physical structure and aesthetic preservation, they were all removed and documented individually. Following this treatment, the carpet regained its original shape. The carpet's front and back were cleaned by the macro-vacuuming method.

A wool fabric was used to support and protect the carpet's back, covering it almost entirely to compensate for the small missing areas and to stabilize the fragile ones. This fabric was specifically dyed to match the carpet's background colors of red, green, and yellow. The assemblage of the fabric and its attachment to the back of the carpet were especially challenging given the carpet's large dimensions and the need for a perfect match with the carpet's original colors. Stabilization of fragile areas with couching stitches completed the conservation process.

With treatment completed, this exceptional carpet has regained some of its integral splendor and strength. The specific treatments chosen for the Emperors' Carpet assure its future preservation, and once again allow it to be displayed and shared with the Museum's visitors.

FZ

We would like to thank Professor Wheeler Thackston for his transcription and translation of the carpet's inscription.

1. Völker 2001, no. 80.

2. New York 1997–98, p. 91, fig. 90.

3. Ellis, C. 1965, pp. 42, 43, figs. 1, 2, and p. 52, fig. 15.
4. The difficulty is that one needs to call them something, if only for convenience, and providing a name based on pattern description is in this case cumbersome and inaccurate, since the pattern is found in carpets of other groups. My solution is to call the first group "Herat" and the second "Indo-Persian." Further discussion can be found in Walker, D. 1990, pp. 869–70, 873.
5. The only other "Herat" bearing an inscription that is known to me is a border fragment in the Brooklyn Museum (no. 36.213), illustrated in Ellis, C. 1965, p. 50, fig. 11.
6. Dye analyses were performed by the Department of Scientific Research at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
7. Overall photography was done by the Museum's Photograph Studio; macrophotography and details were photographed by conservators in the Department of Textile Conservation.

PROVENANCE: Czar Peter the Great (by tradition, until 1698); Austrian Imperial House, Vienna (1698–1921); Vienna Museum für Kunst und Industrie (1921–25); [Cardinal and Harford, London, 1925–28; sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, July 5, 1928, lot 146]; [International Art Gallery, London, 1928, sold to Arthur U. Pope for Rockefeller McCormick]; E. Rockefeller McCormick, Chicago (1928–d. 1932); her estate (1932–43; sold to Arthur U. Pope for MMA)

## 182. *Silk Animal Rug*

Iran, probably Kashan, second half of 16th century  
Silk (warp, weft, and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
94<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 70<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (241 × 178 cm)  
Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 14.40.721

This celebrated rug was donated to the Metropolitan Museum in 1913 by Benjamin Altman, along with two others of the same class but with different patterns (see cat. 183 for one of the others). A fourth carpet was added to the Museum's holdings in 1958. Together these pieces form the largest cluster of so-called Kashan silk rugs in any collection.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the class of silk rugs associated with sixteenth-century Kashan consists of twenty examples. Four of them are large, the two most famous being the great hunting carpets in the Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which combine centralized medallion designs with figural representations of humans and animals engaged in a hunt. The other sixteen are much smaller. Two main pattern types appear in the small rugs: one is figural, with rows of animals, while the other features central medallions of various shapes—quatrefoil, quatrefoil framed by a band, octafoil, and ogival, occasionally with figural elements used in a secondary way.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, the Metropolitan's cluster includes one animal rug and three different medallion types.







The Altman animal carpet has a field pattern consisting of rows of natural and mythical or supernatural animals and animal combats set amid an array of plants and landscape elements. The arrangement is pictorial, meaning that it is intended to be viewed from one side or end. The main border features two palmettes alternating with birds, probably golden pheasants, arranged to provide the same reciprocal rhythm as the more common vine-scroll patterns. Three other small animal carpets survive, all of which use part of this same pattern for the field, sometimes repeating entire rows of figures.<sup>3</sup> In fact, there is an interchangeability of pattern elements and specific designs in all of the small Kashan rugs: similar border or medallion forms appear several times, suggesting the use of a pattern book of designs.

The hunting carpets possess the sumptuous materials (silk brocaded with metal thread), fine weave, and superb drawing and balance that one would expect in court furnishings. Furthermore, the theme of the hunt itself is associated with kings, and specific pattern elements have been linked to particular artists working in the royal book atelier.<sup>4</sup> These hunting carpets can be dated to 1530 or 1540, when artistic production at and for the court of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76) was at its peak. The small rugs have enough features in common with the hunting carpets—materials, structure, medallion forms, secondary border patterns, and individual motifs—that they probably come from the same looms although somewhat later, over the course of the second half of the sixteenth century. Although the small rugs have long been said to lack the brocading of metal thread abundant in the hunting carpets, at least one of them includes metal thread (see cat. 183). The animal rugs probably date from closer to mid-century, while the rugs with a central medallion framed by a band are more likely to come near the century's end, as the same pattern appears in a Polonaise rug dating from the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, there are significant differences between the two subgroups—in size, in the complexity of the patterns, even in the colors. The hunting carpets have a softer palette based on salmon pink and green, with similar value and little contrast (an effect heightened by fading), while the small rugs have a brighter palette and greater contrast. But the coloring of the small rugs is consistent with the palette used in sixteenth-century Persian carpets in general, while the more pastel hues of the hunting carpets seem exceptional (it should be noted that the salmon pink and green of the hunting carpets are in fact present in the small later rugs, but never in such a predominant way).

The hunting carpets were surely made on order for the Safavid court, perhaps to satisfy some special need. There is no evidence that there was any export market for Persian carpets until about the middle of the century. Yet at the same moment that Shah Tahmasp's patronage of the arts waned and many of his court artists

sought employment at other courts, imported Persian carpets appear in European inventories for the first time, probably as high-end producers adjusted to market realities. Medici inventories in Italy as well as Braganza inventories in Portugal indicate that Persian animal rugs made of silk and gold and silver thread, in sizes consistent with the small Kashan rugs, were imported during the 1560s and 1570s.<sup>6</sup> Two rugs of this class have been in Italy and Portugal since at least the nineteenth century and perhaps much longer.<sup>7</sup> The small silk Kashans thus likely represent the evolution of court furnishings into a more commercial product that satisfied both local and foreign demands.

DW

1. The four Metropolitan Museum rugs are published in Walker, D. 1994.
2. Discussions of the small rugs are found in Riefstahl 1916, pp. 147ff.; Erdmann 1970, pp. 61–65; Herrmann 1987; and Walker, D. 1994.
3. The other small animal rugs belong to the Detroit Institute of Arts (no. 25.23), the Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. 6741), and the Carpet Museum of Iran, Tehran.
4. For the Vienna hunting carpet, see Völker 2001, pp. 198–203. For the Boston hunting carpet, see articles by Ettinghausen, Dimand, Salmon, and Welch (all 1971) in the *Boston Museum Bulletin*. Regarding the identification of artists' hands, see Welch, S. C. 1971, in the same bulletin.
5. Pope, A. U., and Ackermann, eds. 1938–39, vol. 6, pl. 1245.
6. For the Medici inventories, see Spallanzani 2009, pp. 206–9. For the Braganza records, see Hallett 2010, pp. 97–103.
7. The medallion rug with animals now in the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, was acquired by Bode in Milan in 1890, and the banded medallion rug in the Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro, Coimbra, may well have come to Portugal long ago.

PROVENANCE: Prince Princezza, Evora, Portugal; Édouard Chappéy, Paris (until 1907; sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, June 5–7, 1907, lot 1912, to Altman); Benjamin Altman, New York (1907–d. 1913)

### 183. *Silk Medallion Rug*

Iran, probably Kashan, second half of 16th century  
Silk (warp, weft, and pile), metal-wrapped thread; asymmetrically knotted pile  
8 ft. 9½ in. × 76½ in. (268 × 194.3 cm)  
Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 14.40.715

In this classic example from the group of small silk Kashan rugs, the field pattern has a central deep-blue quatrefoil medallion with four lobes that contain a palmette flanked by forked leaves. At the corners of the field are yellow quarter medallions that mirror the central one in form but not in color or exact content. Between these medallions in the red field is a symmetrically distributed array of palmettes, leaves, and cloud forms connected by a scrolling-vine system. The main border pattern consists of a row of two palmettes,



alternating in type and direction, each flanked by a pair of curved leaflike bands containing a string of blossoms. Adjacent curved bands overlap, creating a striking and unusual reciprocal pattern with a silhouette effect. The field pattern is closely matched in a rug in the Mobilier National (Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins) in Paris,<sup>1</sup> but the two are not a true pair, as they have different colors and main border patterns as well as slightly different dimensions overall. The field pattern also resembles that of a rug in the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon,<sup>2</sup> though the latter incorporates a figural component—dragons and phoenixes in the central medallion and animal combats in the field. In surveying the similarities and variations within this group, one has the overall impression of a stock vocabulary of patterns, motifs, and colors that are employed interchangeably.

Of the four silk Kashan rugs in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (see also cat. 182), this one has the finest weave, with about 620 knots per inch. It has been said that the small silk rugs of the group, unlike the large ones, lack any brocading of metal thread, but here metal thread (in this case a thin silver strip

wrapped around a white silk core) can be seen in the cloud forms in the field and centers of some of the palmettes in both field and border. It may be that other objects in the group do possess the metal thread, but it simply hasn't been observed, or it may be that the metal thread brocading was reserved for the pieces of highest quality (and cost).

The attribution of this group to the city of Kashan, while not implausible, has acquired a level of near certainty through years of repetition, but it rests on circumstantial evidence.<sup>3</sup> The use of the place-name is thus a matter of convenience for identification, not necessarily the actual origin of the rugs. DW

1. See Gans-Ruedin 1978, p. 79.
2. New York and Milan 2003–4, p. 293.
3. The attribution is discussed in sources cited under cat. 182 in notes 1, 2, and 4, and also in Walker, D. 1990, p. 869.

PROVENANCE: Benjamin Altman, New York (until d. 1913)

### 184. *Fragment of Carpet with a Compartment Design*

Northeastern Iran, Khurasan, second half of 16th century  
Cotton (warp), silk (weft), wool (weft and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
9 ft. 5/8 in. × 31 1/8 in. (276 × 79 cm)  
Fletcher Fund, 1991 1991.154

This large fragment and another, slightly smaller piece in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, are all that survive of a once magnificent work that is probably the earliest of all carpets belonging to the group associated with the northeastern Iranian province of Khurasan.<sup>1</sup> Both fragments were acquired in 1898 in Istanbul by the Swedish diplomat and antiquarian F. R. Martin. No trace of border remains on either fragment, but the field pattern, consisting of staggered rows of cartouches and lobed medallions, has been reconstructed in drawings that show the fragments in their proper relationship.<sup>2</sup> The absence of a uniform underlying ground color here is unusual; each cartouche, medallion, and interstitial void has its own. The floral, arabesque, and cloud band elements contained within the cartouches, medallions, and voids are also colored differently from one to another, adjusted to suit the particular ground color chosen for that unit. Such virtuoso coloristic refinement and variety reflect a supreme mastery of the craft made possible by a particularly broad palette of twenty or more colors.

The Khurasan group of carpets has been isolated and pinned down only over the last thirty years or so.<sup>3</sup> Thirteen different pattern types have been identified, and many are familiar from other





carpet groups. The principal feature that distinguishes them from other types is the widespread use of *jufti* (paired) knotting, in which knots are looped around four warps instead of the usual two. This technique results in a distinctive appearance and feel that are also present in nineteenth- and twentieth-century carpets known to derive from Khurasan. Perceived by some as purely a labor- and time-saving method, the high quality of drawing and weave in historical examples suggest that it was simply the local custom rather than a shortcut. The Metropolitan fragment has a knot count of about 420 per square inch, an exceptionally high number for a rug with standard wool pile (as opposed to silk or *pashmina*; see cat. 265). The complex flower clusters partially covered by curving leaves, found paired in the voids, belong to the so-called *saz* style, deriving from drawings made with reed pens, which became broadly popular in Turkey and Iran during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> DW

1. For the fragment in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, see Spuhler 1987, p. 218, no. 75.
2. Klose 2010, p. 81, fig. 16 (drawing with both fragments), following Lefevre and Thompson 1977, p. 25 (incorporates only the Metropolitan fragment but with larger and clearer pattern reconstruction).
3. Thompson 1977, p. 73; Milan 1982, pls. 28–31; Franses 1993a; Walker, D. 2006.
4. Denny 1983.

PROVENANCE: [Art market, Istanbul, until 1898]; F. R. Martin, Istanbul and Stockholm (1898); Spanish Consul to Istanbul (from 1898); by descent to his son, Spain, and his grandson, London (until 1977; sale, Lefevre, London, October 7, 1977, lot 1; to Dall'Oglio); Marino Dall'Oglio, Milan (1977–91; sold to the Textile Gallery for MMA)

### 185. *The Seley Carpet*

Iran, late 16th century

Silk (warp), cotton (weft), wool (weft and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
23 ft. 4 in. × 10 ft. 1 in. (711.2 × 307.3 cm)

Presented in memory of Richard Ettinghausen, Gift of Louis E., Theresa S., Hervey, and Elliot Jay Seley, and Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick and Fletcher Funds, 1978 1978.550

The Seley Carpet exhibits a superbly balanced and beautiful example of a classical Persian medallion design. It belongs to the same group as the Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181) but is slightly later in date. The Seley employs somewhat humbler materials (both carpets have silk warps, but it has wefts of cotton and wool



instead of silk, as in the Emperor's) and is less finely woven (slightly less than 200 knots per square inch versus the Emperor's 300). The field pattern in both consists of scrolling-vine systems highlighted with palmettes and blossoms, but the field in the Seley is dominated by a massive central medallion and four corner medallions, each framed by a broad collar. Reflecting a shift in taste away from figural representation by the end of the sixteenth century and also perhaps a decline in quality when compared to the Emperor's, the animal life found in the Seley seems relatively subdued. Single full-length animals and little heads quietly inhabit the border, while the field is devoid of wildlife apart from two pairs of peacocks filling the pendants attached to the central medallion. The animal combats so popular earlier in the century (see cats. 179, 181, 182) have vanished.

One of only a handful of large-format "Herat" carpets to feature central medallions, the Seley Carpet is closest in terms of pattern and style to a large, fragmentary, and probably contemporaneous carpet in Cincinnati.<sup>1</sup> A bit larger than the Seley when new but now reduced to slightly less than half its original size, the Cincinnati fragment preserves one edge of its central medallion as well as two corner medallions that show broad surrounding collars similar to those in the Seley. A pair of peacocks occupies the pendant attached to the central medallion. Although without animals, the field is enriched with birds and a few blossoms bearing animal masks. The Seley Carpet's border pattern, composed of lobed compartments, is found in numerous examples of the group; the Cincinnati fragment has a similar but unusually elaborate version of the same pattern.<sup>2</sup> DW

1. New York 1997–98, p. 32, fig. 20.

2. Variations of this pattern are illustrated in Ellis, C. 1965 and in Klose 2010, esp. illustrations pp. 82–84.

PROVENANCE: V & L Benguiat Collection, Turkey (until 1932; sale, American Art Foundation, New York, April 23, 1932, lot 22); Louis E., Theresa S., and Hervey Seley, New York (by 1961–78); Elliot Seley, New York (by 1961–87)





## 186. *The Czartoryski Carpet*

Iran, probably Isfahan, 17th century

Cotton (warp), silk (weft and pile), metal-wrapped thread; asymmetrically knotted pile, brocaded

15 ft. 11 1/2 in. × 85 3/8 in. (486.4 × 217.5 cm)

Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Harris Brisbane Dick Fund,  
by exchange, 1945 45.106

About the turn of the seventeenth century or just before, during the time of the Safavid Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629), a new aesthetic appeared in a carpet type that has come to be known as *Polonaise*.<sup>1</sup> Most rugs in the class have strictly floral design elements such as palmettes, curving leaves, and vines organized in about a dozen different field patterns. The new designs largely replaced the figural motifs and centralized medallion patterns favored in the sixteenth century, reflecting the decline of the royal book atelier's influence. The palette of most of these rugs is now rather sweet and muted owing to the use of pastel tones and to substantial fading, especially of red. Visible materials are luxurious, even ostentatious, and include silk pile and abundant metal-wrapped brocading, but economies were also made by including the widespread use of cotton in the foundation instead of the silk that was used in earlier deluxe weavings (see cats. 181–183), the attachment of silk fringes to conceal the use of cotton warps, and a relatively coarse weave (typically 125 to 225 knots per square inch) for rugs with silk pile. *Polonaise* rugs must have been produced in large quantity, for over two hundred examples survive. They were made for local consumption and also for presentation and sale to Europeans. Unlike the small silk Kashan rugs, which have many similarities to each other but never match completely, at least twenty-five pairs of *Polonaise* exist, including two pairs in the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>2</sup>

The Czartoryski Carpet belongs to this group. It occupies a special historical niche because it was mistakenly identified as Polish, hence "*Polonaise*," when displayed at the Paris Exposition of 1878 along with other carpets belonging to Prince Władysław Czartoryski, scion of a noble Polish family, some of whose carpets were allegedly taken as booty in the siege of Vienna in 1683.<sup>3</sup> The coat of arms, repeated five times, was thought to be the prince's own, but it is probably a pastiche and not Polish at all.<sup>4</sup> The term *Polonaise*, a misnomer, continues to be used for convenience. DW

1. Spuhler, Mellbye-Hansen, and Thorvildsen 1987, pp. 30–35.

2. For these carpets (acc. nos. 50.190.1–4), see Dimand and Mailey 1973, nos. 19–20.

3. See Paris 1878, pp. 63–64. Other *Polonaise* carpets belonging to Prince Czartoryski were donated to the Muzeum Narodowe, Cracow; see Biedrońska-Słota 2010a, pp. 81–82, figs. 10, 11, 13.

4. Correspondence noted in Dimand and Mailey 1973, p. 103, no. 17.

PROVENANCE: Prince Władysław Czartoryski, Cracow, Poland (in 1878); [Mr. Larcade, Paris, until 1927; sold to Rockefeller]; John D. Rockefeller Jr., New York (1927–45)





## 187. "Portuguese" Carpet

Northeastern Iran, Khurasan, 17th century

Cotton (warp, weft, and pile); wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile

13 ft. 5¾ in. × 70⅝ in. (410.8 × 179.4 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1944 44.63.6

This carpet is one of twelve whole or fragmentary pieces in the enigmatic class known as Portuguese carpets. Here the typical field pattern of a central medallion is treated in a distinctive and unusual manner: roughly diamond-shaped with an irregular contour, it sits amid a series of serrated concentric bands in bright and highly contrasting colors. Almost filling the field, the concentric medallions leave only small corner areas that contain maritime scenes featuring European sailing vessels, sailors thought from their costume to be Portuguese (hence the name for the class), and humans and creatures in the water. The group was carefully reviewed by carpet scholar Charles Grant Ellis, who distinguished two subgroups.<sup>1</sup> He placed the Metropolitan Museum's carpet in the second subgroup, which he considered to have less elaborate and more regularly drawn diamond medallions, no birds incorporated into the field pattern, less complex corner scenes that contain one sailing vessel instead of two, and a coarser weave. Ellis was also the first to notice that small floral motifs in the field and border stand out from the sheep-wool pile of this rug because they are woven in white cotton, a feature not yet observed in other so-called Portuguese carpets.

The origin of this class has been the source of controversy for years, with various places in Iran and India proposed. While Ellis argued for India, authorities now generally attribute the group to Khurasan in northeastern Iran, based mainly on structural features such as the use of four-ply warps typical of Persian production and the widespread reliance upon *jufi* knotting, as discussed under cat. 184, a feature only exceptionally seen in Indian carpets but a hallmark of Khurasan weaving.<sup>2</sup> Attempts to link the maritime scene to Indian painting have not found general acceptance; the source is more likely to be Western prints of a generic sort that suited a Persian taste for the exotic.<sup>3</sup> Although its heritage is obscure to us today, the main field pattern of Portuguese carpets was influential in its time, spawning a host of imitations in later generations of rugs among other Persian classes—Kurdish, Caucasian, Polonaise, and Indo-Persian.<sup>4</sup> DW

1. Ellis, C. 1972.

2. Franses 1993a, pp. 96, 101–2; Cohen 2001; Walker, D. 2006, p. 74.

3. Cohen 2001, p. 77.

4. Ellis, C. 1972, figs. 13–16, 19–22.

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Chauncey J. Blair, Chicago; [P. W. French and Co., New York, until 1944; sold to MMA]





## 188. *Pictorial Carpet*

Iran, 17th century

Silk (warp, weft, and pile), metal-wrapped thread; asymmetrically knotted pile, brocaded

91 1/2 × 68 in. (22.4 × 172.7 cm)

Gift of C. Ruxton Love Jr., 1967 67.2.2

The extraordinary quality and true age of this magnificent carpet were correctly assessed by the antiquarian F. R. Martin as early as 1908 and corroborated by others during the first half of the twentieth century, yet the carpet was then virtually forgotten. Donated to the Metropolitan in 1967, it was not included in Dimand and Mailey's 1973 catalogue of the Museum's carpets, perhaps because of uncertainties about its date and place of origin. Over the last forty years or so there has been some confusion about whether finely woven silk carpets made in a Persian style but not conforming to the standard *Polonaise* characteristics (see cat. 186) were actually sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Persians or late nineteenth-century productions from Hereke, part of modern-day Istanbul, where fine silk rugs have also been woven. With its all-silk foundation and incredibly fine weave (at about 1,025 knots per square inch, perhaps the finest weave known in a classical Persian carpet), as well as its pictorial scene of a landscape with small buildings and border compartments featuring standing figures in European dress, reclining deer, and vases of flowers, this carpet has little in common with conventional *Polonaise* pieces with nonfigural patterns. Martin insightfully proposed a date of about 1640 based on the style of the European costumes, and speculated that an English tapestry had been the model.<sup>1</sup> The specific source for these border designs has yet to be identified.

A handful of other rugs, some previously identified as *Polonaise* and others as Indian but all woven in Iran during the seventeenth century, have similar qualities. A famous cope in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has an all-silk foundation, very fine weave, and Western subjects (scenes from the Annunciation and the Crucifixion).<sup>2</sup> A carpet in Lyon with similar materials and quality of weave has a field pattern consisting of rows of flowering plants and birds depicted pictorially in a schematically drawn style.<sup>3</sup> Most important, though least known, is a finely woven silk carpet with a pictorial design in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.<sup>4</sup> Its field pattern marries the shrub types seen in the Lyon and Metropolitan pieces with the landscape elements and little buildings of the latter alone. Whether the carpets of this small but special group come to be seen as an elite subclass of *Polonaise* or as a class of its own is ultimately a semantic issue; unquestionably they represent an apogee of carpet weaving in seventeenth-century Iran, at least on technical grounds. DW



1. Martin 1908, p. 68.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (nos. T.477-1894, T.30-1926, and T.211-1930), published in Bennett 1987b.
3. Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyon (no. 24.620), published in Bennett 1987a, p. 49, pl. 18.
4. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (no. VT 823), published in Marg 1965.

PROVENANCE: Baron Franchetti, Venice; Comte Cahen d'Anvers, Paris (in 1907); [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York]; Mrs. Henry Walters, New York and Baltimore (until 1941; sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, April 23-26, 1941, lot 756); Berenice C. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until d. 1950; sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, October 27, 1950, lot 173); C. Ruxton Love Jr., New York (until 1967)

## 189. Garden Carpet

Iran, Kurdistan, second half of 18th century

Cotton (warp and weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile

10 ft. 3½ in. × 75 in. (313.7 × 190.5 cm)

The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 22.100.128

Most of the literal representations of gardens that appear in Persian carpets combine an aerial or bird's-eye view of the classic four-part garden (*chahar bagh*) with bands and squares of pavilions, trees, flowers, and birds shown in vertical projection. The oldest surviving and most beautiful carpet of this type is a very large example (almost 29 feet long) that belongs to the Albert Hall Museum in Jaipur.<sup>1</sup> It shows the four quadrants of a garden separated by two large channels filled with rippling water teeming with fish, waterfowl, turtles, and fantastic animals. The channels meet at the center of the rug at a large square pool, where an elaborate pavilion and throne appear to float. Each quadrant contains secondary water channels and square beds of trees and flowers bordered by bands of more trees and flowers, all presented in vertical projection. The Jaipur carpet was probably woven between 1622, the accession date of the Jaipur ruler who built the palace at Amber, and 1632, the date recorded for the earliest inventory of the carpet. On the inventory label the carpet is described as being of foreign manufacture. This is correct because, by virtue of materials, structure, colors, and details of pattern, the carpet belongs to the group of so-called vase carpets conventionally associated with the Persian city of Kirman.<sup>2</sup>

The Jaipur carpet, and others like it but now lost, served as the prototype for a series of garden carpets woven during the eighteenth and even early nineteenth centuries in northwestern Iran, in Kurdistan.<sup>3</sup> Earlier and larger examples of the Kurdish group show a stronger connection to the Jaipur carpet pattern than do later pieces, whose vegetal elements shown in profile are more heavily stylized and arbitrary.<sup>4</sup> The relatively modest dimensions of the Metropolitan Museum's garden carpet have resulted in a truncated version of the full *chahar bagh* pattern: the main water channels and central crossing are present in very large scale, but the multiple beds in each quadrant have been reduced to a few token squares. Note also the meaningless addition of trees to the water channels and central pool as well as the replacement of bands of landscape elements in profile with decorative arrangements of highly stylized trees and flowers in the zones separating water channels from garden squares. The pavilion has disappeared from the central pool, though a white platform remains. One can see the vestigial traces of the marine life depicted in the water of the central pool of the Jaipur carpet here better than in any other rug of the Kurdish group, but they are only inarticulate scribbles, and they are contained in the narrow white band around the



water, not in the water itself. It seems that the weaver, either because of further removal in time from the model or due to the extreme truncation in the overall pattern, did not fully grasp the original meaning of its design.

DW

1. Dimand 1940a.
2. Sheffield and Birmingham 1976.
3. Various members of the Kurdish group are noted and illustrated in Klose 1978 and also in Ellis, C. 1982.
4. For an early example of the Kurdish group, see Jenkins, ed. 1983, p. 143. For a late example in the Harvard University Art Museums, see Hanover and other cities 1991–92, cover (no. 34).

PROVENANCE: Carl Robert Lamm, Sweden; James F. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until 1922)



## 190. Folio from the Davis Album

"A Nighttime Gathering"

Painter: Muhammad Zaman (active 1643–89)

Iran, Isfahan, 1664–65[?]

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Page:  $13\frac{1}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{4}$  in. ( $33.3 \times 21$  cm)

Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915 30.95.174.2

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at lower right:

رقم کمینه غلام محمد زمان

The humble slave Muhammad Zaman drew it

At lower left:

فی سنه ۷

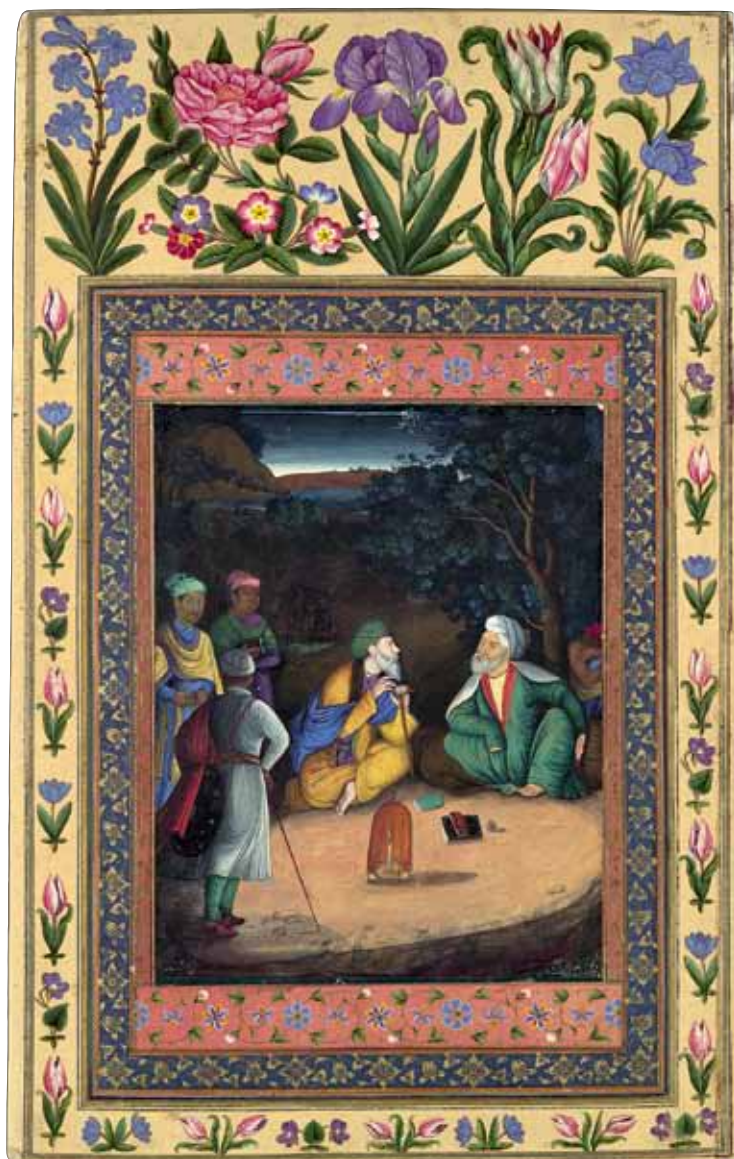
In the year 7 [1664–65 A.D.]

So influential was the distinctive and innovative style fostered by the late Safavid artist Muhammad Zaman that the works of his many followers are sometimes difficult to distinguish from his own—particularly since they are often inscribed, in the manner of the master, with the words *ya sahib al-zaman* ("O master of the Age," a pious exclamation). Although this nighttime visitation scene is signed by Zaman in a different formula, the eclectic style and Indian-influenced subject matter are characteristic of his hand.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Zaman's career spanned the second half of the seventeenth century, a period during which he was in favor at the Persian court of Shah Sulaiman (r. 1666–94) at Isfahan. Scholarly interest in the artist goes back almost a century, with various theories posited to explain his hybrid idiom and interest in foreign painting styles.<sup>2</sup> Speculations as to the origins of European elements in Zaman's work included early suggestions that he was sent to Rome to study painting or, alternatively, that European sources were available to him in Isfahan. More recent scholarship has suggested that his *farangi-sazi* (European mode) reflects his own interpretive response to the text being illustrated.<sup>3</sup> Less explored, however, are the sources of the distinct Indian elements also seen in his painting style and subject manner.

Loosely based on an Indian Mughal-style composition, this painting shows a group of figures (possibly two learned astronomers and their attendants) meeting in a glade. It belongs to a group of compositionally interrelated nocturnes by Zaman that demonstrate how the artist developed a favorite technical device, that of the play of light and shadow.<sup>4</sup> Here, in a *chiaroscuro* effect, the light thrown off from the lamp at the center creates a strong contrast between the figures in the foreground and the dark landscape behind.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most remarkable features of this work is the presence of a comet with a long trail in the night sky. Barely discernible in the dark background landscape are three figures, one with a raised hand, who seemingly observe the celestial phenomenon. Two such comets are known to have traversed the northern hemisphere



in this period, one in December 1664 and the other in April 1665.<sup>6</sup> The date of the first comet coincides with the seventh regnal year of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), which ended on March 7, 1665, and supports Robert Skelton's claim that the "year 7" written at the lower left refers to that emperor's reign (the second comet would have been seen in Aurangzeb's eighth regnal year). This is partly the basis for his speculation that Zaman, and perhaps a larger group of Persian painters, may have been in Kashmir during the mid-1660s.

Zaman's Indianized mode also reflects a wider taste for such motifs and styles at Isfahan, as apparent in the painted works of at least five other artists of the period: Shaikh 'Abbasi, his sons 'Ali Naqi and Muhammad Taqi, Bahram Sufrakish, and 'Ali Quli Jabbadar. In addition, this vogue extended into contemporaneous architectural decoration and textile design. Much remains to be determined about the circulation and influence of Mughal paintings, as well as about the wider patterns of Indian-Persian patronage in Isfahan during the period.

The Davis Album, from which this painting comes, contains a similar composition by 'Ali Quli Beg Jabbadar that, although not an exact copy, illustrates the same subject matter in a closely related style. The album consists overall of thirty-three miniature paintings and one drawing, several mounted in bold floral borders,

that were once bound in nineteenth-century Persian lacquer covers. Among the notable works in the album are paintings attributable to Persian artists, including 'Ali Quli Beg Jabbadar and Shaikh 'Abbasi in addition to Muhammad Zaman; a group of folios from a dispersed sixteenth-century *Akbarnama* manuscript (the bulk of which is in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin); and a collection of mid-seventeenth-century Mughal-style paintings depicting courtly scenes.<sup>7</sup> NNH

1. See, for example, Makariou, ed. 2002, pp. 91–93, no. 55, pl. 18.
2. Landau 2006 and Sims 2001 list much of the scholarship on the artist, which also includes Martinovich 1925, Skelton 1972b, Ivanov 1979, Zuka 1962, Diba 1994, Qaisar 1996, and Adle 1980.
3. Landau 2011; also Canby 1996a.
4. Makariou, ed. 2002, pp. 91–93, no. 55, discusses a similar work at the Musée du Louvre, Paris.
5. Landau 2011, p. 19.
6. Kronk 1998, pp. 10–11, describes the 1664 comet, which was also observed by Isaac Newton. Tavernier 1889, vol. 1, p. 309, describes the second comet.
7. The Davis Album itself and other evidence relating to it are presently being researched by the author, with a forthcoming publication intended.

PROVENANCE: Theodore M. Davis, New York (until d. 1915); on loan from his estate during settlement of estate (1915–30)

## 191. Book of Prayers (Including *Surat al-Yasin* and *Surat al-Fath* ["Victory"])

Iran, probably Isfahan, dated A.H. 1132/1719–20 A.D.

Calligrapher: Ahmad Nairizi (active 1682–1739)

Illuminator: Attributed to Muhammad Hadi (d. ca. 1771)

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; lacquer binding

9¾ × 6⅞ in. (24.8 × 15.6 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 2003 2003.239

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on front cover:

عن النبي صلى الله عليه وآله ألدكم على سلاح ينجيكم من اعدائكم ويدر ارزاقكم قالوا/ بلى قال تدعون ربكم بالليل و/ النهار فإن سلاح المؤمن الدعاء/ و قال

The Prophet (May peace be upon him and his family) said: "Do you want me to show you the weapon [that] will protect you in the face of adversity and relieve your ailments?" They said: "Yes." The Prophet said: "Pray to God night and day, as the [most powerful] weapon of the faithful is prayer . . ."

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script on back cover:

قال الرضا عليه السلام لأصحابه/ عليكم بسلاح الانبياء قيل/ و ما سلاح الانبياء قال الدعاء/ و قال الصادق عليه السلام الدعاء/ انفذ من السنان الحديد/ حرره العبد احمد النيريزي في ١١٣٢

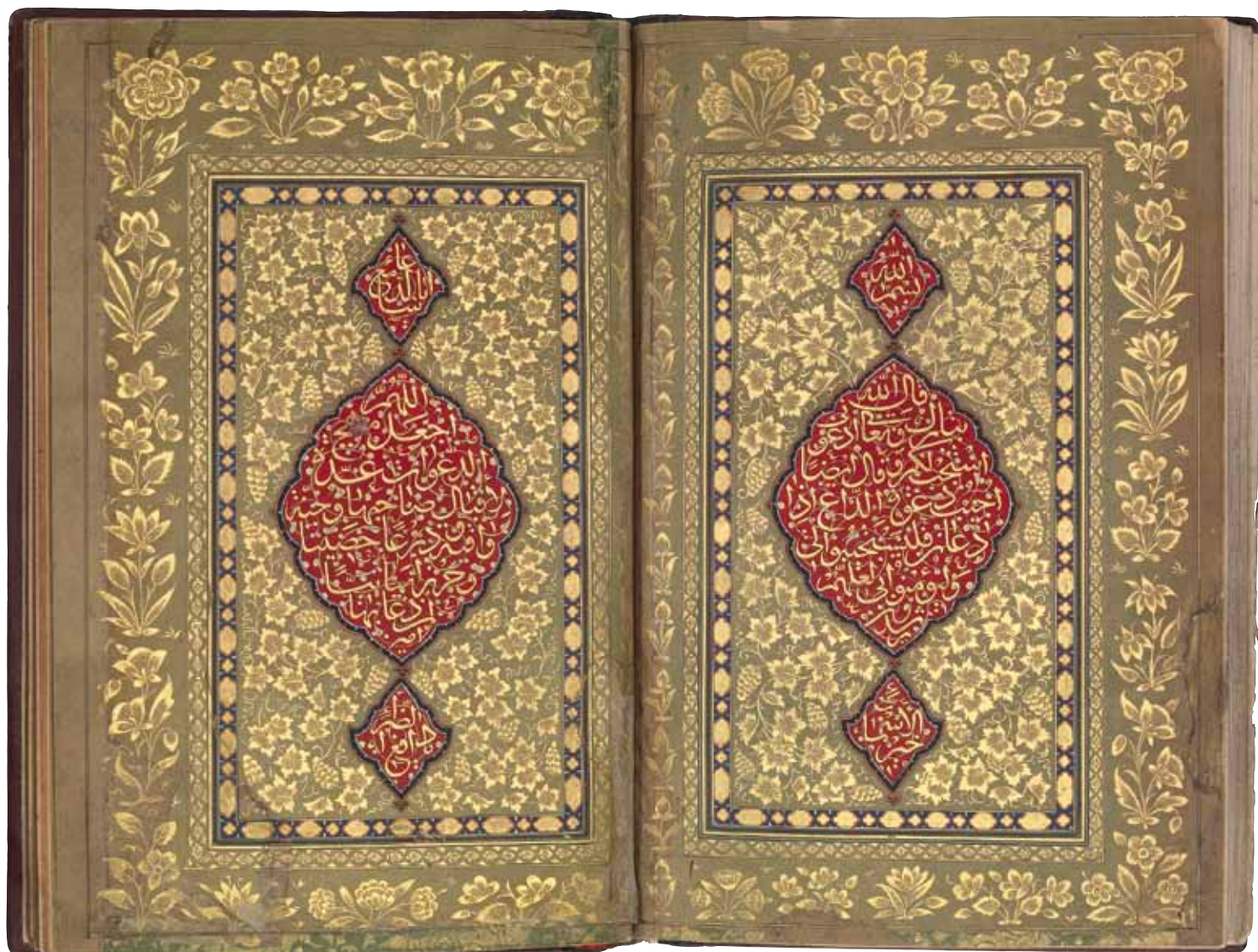
Al-Riza (May peace be upon him) said to his companions: "For [protection], use the weapon of the prophets." They asked: "What is the weapon of prophets"; he said: "prayer." And al-Sadiq (May peace be upon him) said: "Prayer is sharper than an iron spear." Signed by the humble slave, Ahmad al-Nairizi in

A.H. 1132 [1719–20 A.D.]

This illuminated manuscript is a book of prayers containing the *Surat al-Yasin* and *Surat al-Fath* ("Victory") copied by the celebrated calligrapher Ahmad Nairizi (active 1682–1739). The illuminations are attributed to Muhammad Hadi (d. ca. 1771), who

created the lavish borders in the famous St. Petersburg Album (now in the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg).<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is signed twice, once in a colophon and once on the very fine lacquer binding.





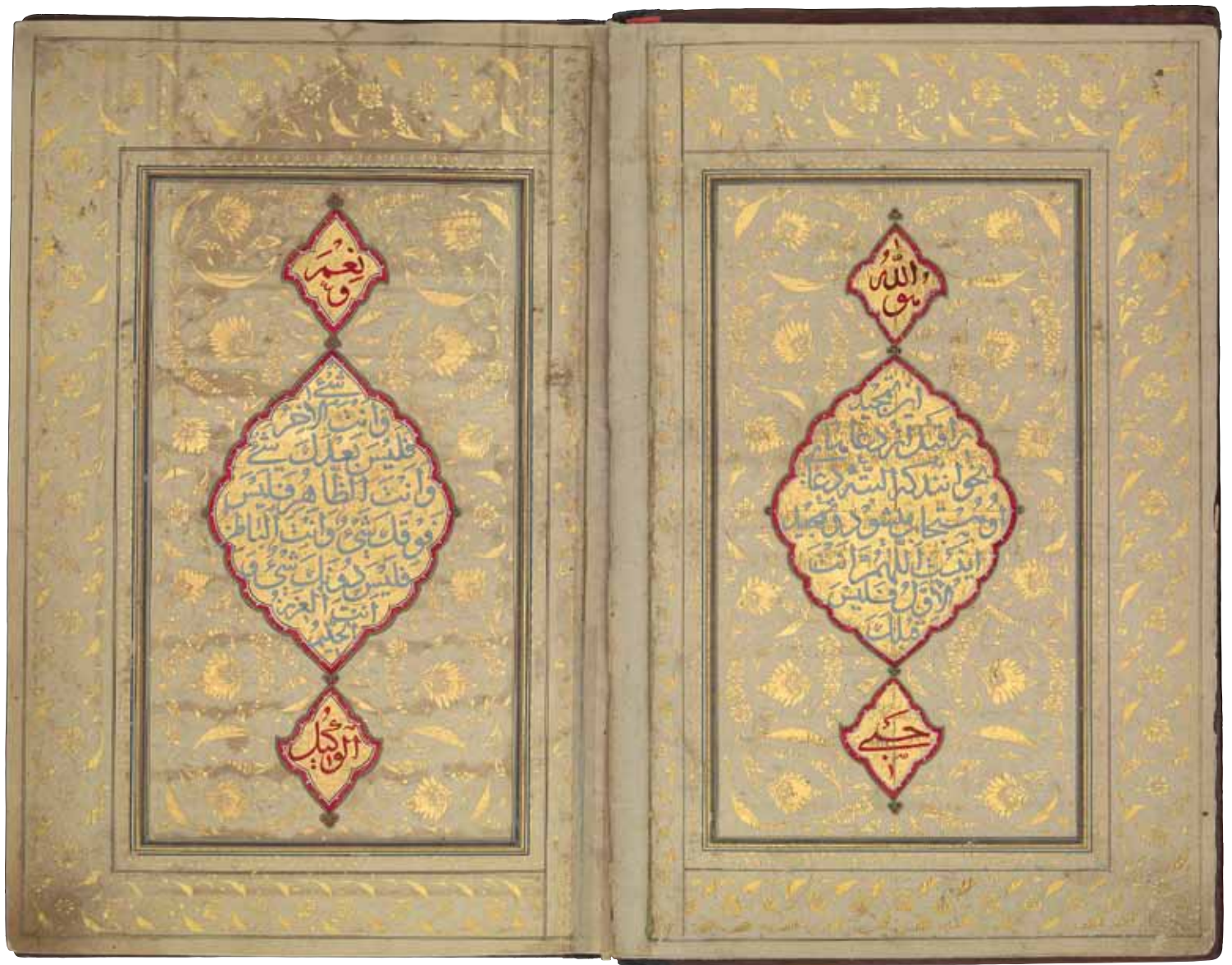
The Museum's book of prayers has eighty-one leaves, with fourteen lines of text on each page, written horizontally and diagonally in fine *naskhi* script in black ink on a wide array of rich colors. Some pages contain interlinear Persian translations in red or purple *nasta'liq*, while others have interlinear illumination in gold. It contains four finely illuminated carpet-pages with central medallions. The lacquer binding is decorated with gold-stemmed flowers in the Mughal style of the Jahangir and Shah Jahan periods on a dark brown ground framed by calligraphic borders with verses in *naskhi* about the benefits of prayer signed by Nairizi and dated A.H. 1132/1719–20 A.D.

Copied in Isfahan, the manuscript reflects the collaboration of two prominent late Safavid masters, Ahmad Nairizi and Muhammad Hadi. Nairizi is considered the uncontested master of

revival *naskhi*, also sometimes referred to as Iranian *naskhi*, and was responsible for popularizing the script at the end of the seventeenth century. He served at the court of the last Safavid ruler, Shah Sultan Husain (r. 1694–1722), as well as at those of subsequent Afsharid rulers. His work became a model for generations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iranian calligraphers.<sup>2</sup>

A distinguishing feature of this prayer book is the extraordinary quality of the illuminations of the carpet-pages (see above and p. 274) by Muhammad Hadi, who clearly poured all his talents into these folios. The presence of a dense pattern of grape-bearing vines and vegetal scrolls in gold against a variety of rich backgrounds of pistachio green, deep crimson red, and shell white makes for a stunning contrast. These illuminations have a distinct Indian flavor. Fruit-bearing vine scrolls of this type are a characteristic





feature of Kashmiri design. While they can be seen on several borders from the St. Petersburg Album, they also appear with great frequency in eighteenth-century manuscripts, lacquer, wood-carving, and metalwork from Kashmir.<sup>3</sup> The *chinar*, or Oriental plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), has long historic associations with various regions in India, particularly Kashmir. Persian painters and illuminators such as Muhammad Hadi's master, 'Ali Ashraf (active 1727–56), are known to have used this motif and other densely painted floral motifs in lacquer.<sup>4</sup> However, it is also possible that Muhammad Hadi drew direct inspiration from eighteenth-century modes of Indian manuscript illumination and surface decoration, as artistic exchanges between Iran and India were pervasive during this period, and talented Persian artists traveled to India in the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century (spending time at

centers in the Deccan and as far north as Kashmir). This prayer book is an extraordinary example of the Indo-Persian aesthetic in the early decades of the eighteenth century in Iran. ME

1. See Lugano 1994.
2. Khalili, Robinson, and Stanley 1996–97, pt. 1, pp. 125–31. See also Ekhtiar 2006.
3. This connection was also confirmed in a recent correspondence with Dr. Asok Das. I am grateful to him for his advice. See also New York and Cincinnati 2007–8.
4. Diba 1989. A signed and dated lacquer mirror case in the National Museum of Scotland by 'Ali Ashraf is covered with dense floral scrolls similar to those of the Museum's prayer book. See Scarce 1996, p. 72.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Switzerland; [Hamid Atigetchi, London, until 2003, sold to MMA]





## 192. Album Leaf

"Lion and Dragon in Combat"

Painter: Muhammad Baqir (active 1750s–60s)

Iran, second half of 18th century

Ink and watercolor on paper

Image: 5½ × 9 in. (14 × 22.9 cm); page: 8½ × 12½ in. (20.6 × 30.8 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1974 1974.20

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at lower right:

دربلده ساری مشق شد کمینه محمد باقر

In the town of Sari, this was drawn by the humble Muhammad Baqir.

Located in the province of Mazandaran, which skirts the south-eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, the town of Sari mentioned in the inscription above was near the palaces at Ashraf and Farahabad constructed by the Safavid Shah 'Abbas I (r. 1587–1629). Following the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, Mazandaran came under the control of the Qajars, the Turkmen tribe that would come to rule all of Iran from 1779. Presumably Muhammad Baqir (active 1750s–60s) found patrons in northern Iran in the period of political dissolution after the demise of Nadir Shah while the Zands were gaining control of the south.

Muhammad Baqir, as Layla Diba has shown, was a student of 'Ali Ashraf, who, in turn, claimed artistic descent from Muhammad Zaman, one of the most important late Safavid artists, who died before 1700.<sup>1</sup> Along with his teacher and several other artists, Muhammad Baqir painted the borders of the St. Petersburg Album, compiled between the 1730s and 1758–59 for one Mirza Mahdi, whom Diba has tentatively identified as a high-ranking official under Nadir Shah. Since Mirza Mahdi was not implicated in Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747, he continued to enjoy a privileged position and patronized the pictorial arts. A significant number of works by Muhammad Baqir survive, including several borders and single-page paintings, dated 1764, that come from a dispersed album.<sup>2</sup> Some of these are based on European prototypes while others depict flowers, reflecting the vogue for bird and flower paintings that developed in the eighteenth century and was especially popular in nineteenth-century Iran.

While the subject of dragons in combat with real or imaginary animals has a long history in Persian painting, originating with the Mongols in the thirteenth century, the more immediate inspiration for this composition is most likely in the work of the seventeenth-century Safavid artist Mu'in Musavvir. His numerous

drawings of lions depict the beasts with large, expressive eyes similar to those of Muhammad Baqir's creature.<sup>3</sup> What differentiates the eighteenth-century drawing from its Safavid forebears is the use of ink wash, a technique borrowed from European sources, to define the musculature of both lion and dragon. Finally, the iconography of this drawing is novel since customarily both dragons and lions are shown defeating a weaker foe. Here, the two are face-to-face, with the lion drawing first blood but the outcome of their struggle forever uncertain.

SRC

1. Brooklyn 1998–99, p. 149.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
3. London, Cambridge, Mass., and Zurich 1998–99, p. 86; Farhad 1990, p. 119.

PROVENANCE: [Adrienne Minassian, New York, until 1974; sold to MMA]

### 193. Pen Box (*Qalamdan*)

Iran, early 19th century

Papier-mâché; painted and lacquered

1 1/2 × 10 1/8 × 1 7/8 in. (3.8 × 25.7 × 4.8 cm)

Purchase, Elizabeth S. Ettinghausen Gift, in memory of Richard Ettinghausen; and Stephenson Family Foundation Gift, 2006 2006.523a, b

This pen box, which has a sliding compartment, is painted on all sides, including the rounded ends, in an unusual palette of cream-colored beige and pastels with touches of gold. The top depicts one of the battles that took place between the Safavid ruler Isma'īl I (r. 1501–24) and the Ottoman Turks in the second decade of the sixteenth century (possibly the battle of Chaldiran in 1514). The scene shows the two armies in fierce combat in the foreground against a row of cannons, weapons that the Ottomans increasingly used in battle during the early Safavid period. Regarded as the most advanced form of European-style weaponry, the cannon was considered as an emblem of military modernization. A similar pen box in the Brooklyn Museum collection contains a depiction of the same battle.





The two sides of the pen box show men on horseback accompanied by dogs hunting bears and gazelles against a Europeanizing landscape and architecture. The bottom contains finely painted gold floral scrollwork on a deep red ground. This box has been lightly varnished. For this reason, and unlike other examples of the period, the painting is not obscured under thickly coated lacquer.

The figures, horses, and landscape are delicately rendered in harmonious colors with some use of gold. It is an unusual example of lacquer painting from the dawn of the nineteenth century, possibly by the master court painter Mirza Baba (active 1780s–1810) or an artist in his circle. Its similarity in style, composition, and palette to a signed pen box by Mirza Baba dated 1794 A.D. now in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection in London supports this attribution. The details of landscape as well as the rendition of the figures demonstrate the continuation of the late Safavid Perso-European style of painters such as Muhammad Zaman (active 1643–89) and ‘Ali Quli Beg Jabbadar (active 1657–1716) into the early nineteenth century.

ME

PROVENANCE: Private collection, England (until 2006); sale, Christie’s London, April 7, 2006, lot 210, to Nader; [Massoud Nader, 2006; sold to MMA]

### 194. Mirror Case

Painter: Fathallah Shirazi (active 1850s–80s)

Iran, dated A.H. 1295/1878 A.D.

Papier-mâché; painted, gilded, and lacquered

2½ × 6⅞ × 3½ in. (6.4 × 15.4 × 8.9 cm)

Gift of Irma B. Wilkinson, 1979 1979.460.2a, b

Inscription in Persian in *nasta’liq* script on one side:

بر حسب فرمایش جناب جلالت مآب اجل اکرم آقا دام مجده العالی سمت اتمام یافت  
Completed by the order of the most exalted excellency, the great honorable ‘Aqa’,  
may his glory continue forever

Signature in Persian in *nasta’liq* script on back:

رقم کمترین بنده درگاه فتح الله شیرازی سنة ۱۲۹۵  
Painted by the most humble servant of the court, Fathallah Shirazi,  
in the year A.H. 1295 [1878 A.D.]

During the Nasiri period (1848–96), Iran witnessed a proliferation in the production of a wide array of lacquer objects. Regarded as desirable possessions and status symbols, painted lacquerwares were commissioned by royal and elite patrons, sold commercially, and exported abroad in quantity. Lacquer painters took great pride in their individual styles, which they demonstrated by signing and dating their works.

This finely painted mirror case consists of two separate unhinged semicircles. It is signed by Fathallah Shirazi (active 1850s–80s), a lacquer painter at the court (*naqqashbashi*) of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96), and dated A.H. 1295/1878 A.D. The case is rendered in the artist’s distinct style, which incorporated an unusual palette of tan, gold, and black. Many of his works consist of *gul-u-bulbul* (bird-and-flower) designs in gold with touches of black on a tan ground. The decoration here includes birds perched on the branches of rosebushes with blossoms and buds, as well as butterflies hovering over hazelnut and fruit trees.

The inscription along the curvature of the rim features the signature of Fathallah Shirazi and the date A.H. 1295/1878 A.D. It also alludes to the patron, a certain ‘Aqa’, and refers to him as the most exalted and most honorable excellency.<sup>1</sup> Inscriptions on analogous lacquer objects signed by this artist state that he was commissioned by a number of princes, governors, state officials, and noblemen of the period.<sup>2</sup> Two such items are part of a lacquer set with a pen box and a spectacle case that contain an inscription dedicated to Nasir al-Din Shah’s second chief minister, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (d. 1852).<sup>3</sup> The set is painted in the same delicate palette as this mirror case; its inscription attests to the role of fine lacquerwares as cherished possessions at the highest levels of Qajar society.

ME

1. For details, see Karimzada Tabrizi 1990, pp. 497–99.
2. Ibid. A Qur’an lacquer binding in the collection of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, is dedicated to Aqa Mirza Farajallah Khan and dated A.H. 1302/1884–85.
3. See Pierre Bergé and Associés, Paris et Bruxelles (Antoine Godeau and Frédéric Chambre), *Arts d’Orient, archéologie*, sale, Paris, June 17, 2010, lot 25.

PROVENANCE: Irma B. Wilkinson, Sharon, Conn. (until 1979)



## 195. Fan

Iran, Tehran, dated A.H. 1301/1883–84 A.D.

Wood; painted, gilded, and lacquered

H. 9¼ in. (23.5 cm); W. (open) 18½ in. (47 cm)

The Moses Lazarus Collection, Gift of Josephine and Sarah Lazarus,  
in memory of their father, 1888–95 90.2.65

Inscription in Persian in *naskhi* script on top medallion of each blade:

در دارالخلافه تهران صورت اتمام گرفت  
Completed in the capital city of Tehran

On bottom medallion:

رقم یافت

۱۳۰۱/ 1883–1884

Dated A.H. 1301/1883–1884 A.D.

Verses by Hafiz on each blade (not in original sequence):

دوش آگهی ز یار سفر کرده داد باد	من نیز دل به یاد دهم هر چه باد باد
کارم بدان رسید که همراز خود کن	هر شام برق لامع و هر بامداد باد
در چنین طره تو دل بی حفاظ من	هرگز نگفت مسکن مالوف یاد باد
امروز قدر پند عزیزان شناختم	یارب روان ناصح ما از تو شاد باد
خون شد دلم به یاد تو هر گه که در چمن	بند قبای غنچه گل می گشاد باد
از دست رفته بود وجود ضعیف من	صبحم به بوی وصل تو جان باز داد باد
حافظ نهاد نیک تو کامت برآورد	جان ها فدای مردم نیکو نهاد باد

Last night the wind reminded me of my distant beloved.

I, too, shall give my heart to the wind; whatever happens, happens.

I reached the point where I made my confidants

Every evening's glittering light and every morning's wind.

In the curls of your tresses, my unprotected heart

Never yearned for home.

Today I cherish the advice of the dear ones.

O lord, bless the spirits of our advisers.

My heart bled, remembering you

Whenever the wind untied the cloak of the blooming rosebud in the meadow.

My frail body had almost died

Before the wind rejuvenated it with the scent of reunion with you.

Hafiz, your good nature will fulfill your wish.

May many souls be sacrificed for good-natured people.

As the patronage of manuscripts and large oil-on-canvas portraits declined in the mid-nineteenth century, artists poured their talents into painting on lacquer. The repertoire of lacquer objects grew beyond pen cases, mirror cases, and caskets to include spectacle cases, bows, tables, playing cards, and fans. Fans like this one are very rare; only a few comparable examples have come to light.<sup>1</sup> An inscription repeated on each blade mentions that the fan was made in Tehran in A.H. 1301/1883–84 A.D.

Consisting of twenty wooden blades painted with floral and vegetal scrolls and inscriptions, the fan is joined at the base by a peg of metal and mother-of-pearl and bound by a red ribbon (both later replacements). The reverse contains a simple floral scroll in gold on a red ground. Eighteen of the twenty blades bear Persian

verses in revival *naskhi* set into rectangular cartouches and medallions. The verses, which consist of couplets from a *ghazal* (ode) by the renowned fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz of Shiraz, are out of sequence, suggesting that the blades were restrung incorrectly at a later date.<sup>2</sup>

Although the fan is of European design, its construction is related to nineteenth-century Cantonese fans, which were exported to Europe in quantity. Objects like this fan were status symbols and collected by the elite as luxury objects. As with many lacquer objects, they were made for export and were tailored to the demands of the European market. A mid-nineteenth-century European renaissance in fan production and consumption, later fueled by the influx of goods during the international expositions in London and





Paris, created an ideal environment for the production of fans such as this. These were not always as sophisticated as lacquer objects made for rulers and princes at the height of the Qajar period, but were exotic and novel enough to impress European consumers.<sup>3</sup>

The nonfigural painting on the fan recalls contemporaneous manuscript illumination (*tazhib*). This style gained popularity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and can be seen on all manner of lacquer, including pen boxes, book covers, caskets, and other similar objects. The most renowned and prolific painter of this style was Muhammad Taqi Muzahhib (the Illuminator) Isfahani (active 1853–54 to 1881–82), who headed a workshop in Tehran in the 1880s and was patronized by Nasir al-Din

Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96). This fan along with a pen box in the Metropolitan's collection and a number of lacquer objects at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg were likely produced in that workshop.<sup>4</sup> ME

1. Khalili, Robinson, and Stanley 1996–97, pt. 2, pp. 104–5, nos. 312, 313.
2. Metropolitan Museum, Islamic Art Department files.
3. New York 2008, pl. 31.
4. Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 67.206.4a, b); St. Petersburg 1996, pp. 342–43, pls. 99–100.

PROVENANCE: The Moses Lazarus Collection, New York (until 1890)

## 196. Swan-Neck Bottle (*Ashkdan*)

Iran, possibly Shiraz, probably 18th–19th century  
Glass, amber-colored; dip-molded, blown, folded foot  
H. 13¾ in. (34.9 cm); Diam. 4⅝ in. (11.6 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.1577

Starting at the concave tip of the opening, this amber-colored bottle “turns” in the direction of the spiral ribs and gains volume as it moves down; the tear-shaped opening flows into a thin, curvilinear neck, which expands to accommodate a globular body resting on a low foot. The sculpted eye-cup at the top was tooled to achieve its unusual shape.

This bottle belongs to a larger group of glass vessels tinted in hues of amber, blue, green, and rose in the collections of the Metropolitan and other museums.<sup>1</sup> There has not been a satisfactory explanation for the unusual shape of this bottle in terms of its function, but its visual resemblance to the curved and attenuated neck of a swan has inspired its name. According to folklore, these bottles were used as rosewater sprinklers or as “containers for tears,” *ashkdan* in Persian, meant to collect the tears of wives separated from their husbands.<sup>2</sup>

Dating this group of glass bottles presents a challenge. Glassmaking in Persia has had a long albeit sporadic history that dates back to pre-Islamic times. In the Safavid period, foreign travel sources mention that glass production was revived in centers such as Shiraz and Isfahan during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas I (1587–1629).<sup>3</sup> During this period high-quality glass vessels were imported from Venice, which not only satisfied local demand but also stimulated local production, unfortunately of a decidedly lower quality.<sup>4</sup> Safavid album pages and wall paintings feature elegant glass bottles of various shapes with narrow necks, often filled with wine or other beverages. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether the bottles in these paintings were imported or produced locally.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, similar bottles were produced in Shiraz for utilitarian purposes as containers for wine, perfume, and rosewater. The contemporaneous evidence of historical and visual documentation of Persian glass produced during these later periods has helped us attribute this swan-neck bottle and other similar examples to nineteenth-century Shiraz.<sup>5</sup> ME/EC

1. Other examples are found in the David Collection in Copenhagen as well as in the Victoria and Albert and the British museums in London.
2. Layla Diba mentions them by their French name, *bouquetières*, and notes that they feature prominently in paintings of the Qajar period. Diba 1983, p. 191.
3. Charleston 1974.
4. Ibid.
5. Diba 1983, p. 191.

PROVENANCE: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)







### 197. Coat

Present-day Turkmenistan, mid-19th century or earlier

Ground fabric: hand-spun red plain-weave wool (warp and weft); embroidery: silk; facing: *ikat* silk (warp), cotton (weft); lining: roller-printed Russian cotton  
 $50\frac{3}{4} \times 72\frac{1}{2}$  in. (129 × 184 cm)

Purchase, Hajji Baba Club and The Page and Otto Marx Jr. Foundation Gifts, in memory of Newton Foster, 1998 1998.244

Renowned for their vibrant knotted-pile carpets and storage bags, Turkmen weavers also produced magnificent examples of wearable art.<sup>1</sup> Living in the regions north of the border of Iran and Afghanistan, these diverse and distinctive tribal groups, referred to collectively as Turkmen, are known for their bold silver jewelry and richly colored textiles. With its simple lines and elegant construction, this stunning coat is among the finest and best-preserved examples of Turkmen embroidery.

Unlike the more familiar Turkmen silk *chyrpy* robes—traditionally worn shawl-like, draped over the head and shoulders, with trailing vestigial sleeves—this fully functional woman's coat is one of only a small group of known embroideries of this type.<sup>2</sup> Upon its rather dense plain-weave wool foundation fabric, delicate chain-stitch embroidery is executed in a sophisticated palette in silk thread. A silk and cotton *ikat*—a textile created through a multi-step resist-dye process—lines the inner borders of the coat. This

complex dye technique was particularly well developed in Central Asia. In contrast to the fine *ikat* edging, the main body of the coat is lined in a bright contemporary Russian floral-printed cotton.

A small number of coats exhibiting similar form, materials, and embroidery technique have been published, but their attribution is uncertain. The present piece has been described as the work of the Chodor or Yomud Turkmen.<sup>3</sup> Yet, until more securely attributed examples come to light, the ultimate source of these textiles remains elusive.

The Museum's collection contains a rich diversity of Turkmen materials, including jewelry, costume, carpets, storage bags, tent door coverings, tent bands, and animal trappings from regions

where the many distinct Turkmen tribes made, and continue to make, their home.

DMT

1. For more on the art of the Turkmen, see Washington, D.C. 1980 and Thompson 2008, Chapter 6: "The Turkmen." See also Diba et al. 2011.
2. Carboni, Walker, and Moore 1999, p. 13, and Phipps 2010, p. 45 (entry with color plate). Similar pieces are published in Gillow 2010; Sychova 1981, p. 126, no. 9, fig. 9 (color); and Beresneva 1976, p. 10, nos. 58–59, pls. 58–59 (color).
3. Carboni, Walker, and Moore 1999, p. 13 (entry with color plate).

PROVENANCE: [James W. Blackmon, San Francisco, until 1998; sold to MMA]

### 198A, B. Storage Bag (*Chual*) Faces

Central Asia, early 19th century

Wool (warp, weft, and pile), cotton (weft); asymmetrically knotted pile<sup>1</sup>

A. (22.100.40a): 29½ × 54½ in. (74.9 × 138.4 cm)

B. (22.100.40b): 31 × 55 in. (78.7 × 139.7 cm)

The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 22.100.40a, b

Lauded as among the most magnificent examples of all Turkmen weavings, these textiles are among the few early works attributable to Arabatchi Turkmen weavers.<sup>2</sup> The Arabatchi are one of several formerly nomadic tribal groups living in the regions north of the joined borders of Iran and Afghanistan, within an area known as the Gurgan Plain.<sup>3</sup> While these groups are often referred to collectively as Turkmen, each tribal unit—including the Ersari, Saryk, and Tekke—is a distinctive entity, with its own characteristic artistic traditions. The Museum's pieces have been attributed to the Arabatchi due to their unique design vocabulary, weaving technique, and distinctive color palette.<sup>4</sup> Each measuring nearly five feet in width, the deep reddish-brown fields of these thick, densely knotted pieces are punctuated by repeating rows of traditional *gul* medallions, alternating with fret designs in an unusual green color. The repeating borders harmoniously complement the field pattern, echoing its palette of reddish brown, green, white, and salmon.

Admired for their deep, rich hues and the strength of their design, the textile arts of the Turkmen weavers combine a stark, dramatic beauty with absolute functionality. The seasonal migrations of the tribes required that their every possession, even their homes, be collapsible and portable. Although entirely executed in knotted pile, a technique traditionally used for carpet weaving,

these large fragments were never intended as floor coverings. Rather, they once formed the faces of a deep storage bag known as a *chual*. Such bags were suspended from the trellislike structure of Turkmen tent interiors—their use somewhat akin to a wardrobe or cupboard, but eminently more portable.<sup>5</sup> Their presence added further warmth, color, and comfort to a living space already replete with soft, richly hued carpets, cushions, and other laden storage bags.

DMT

1. See Nobuko Kajitani's analysis of one of these bags in Washington, D.C. 1980, p. 229, no. 54. While Kajitani uses the term *animal hair* in her analysis, the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Textile Conservation prefers the term *wool*.
2. See Jon Thompson's comments in *ibid.*, pp. 130–31.
3. See the description of their forced settlement in New York and Washington, D.C. 2008–9, pp. 133–34.
4. See Jon Thompson's comments in Washington, D.C. 1980, pp. 130–31. See also Dimand and Mailey 1973, p. 291, no. 184 (with black-and-white illustrations of both A and B before conservation); Washington, D.C. 1980, p. 131, pl. 54 (cat. 198A; color), with technical analysis by Nobuko Kajitani on p. 229, no. 54. See also Teece 2000.
5. For images of such bags hanging within tent interiors, see Washington, D.C. 1980, p. 12, fig. 3; and also New York and Washington, D.C. 2008–9, p. 138, fig. 6.6, and p. 139, fig. 6.7.

PROVENANCE: James F. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until 1922)





B



A



### 199. Pectoral Ornament

Central Asia, Khotan, late 19th–early 20th century  
 Silver; filigree and decorative wire with cabochon turquoise and table-cut imitation turquoise  
 $4\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$  in. (11.6 × 12.2 cm)  
 Gift of Marshall and Marilyn R. Wolf, 2005 2005.443.7

By the end of the nineteenth century the Turkmen nomads living in northeastern Iran and what is now Uzbekistan had suffered fierce suppression at the hands of the Russians. The forcible settlement of the Turkmen people resulted in the loss of a traditional way of life that had given meaning to such manifestations of their material culture as carpets and jewelry. In order to survive they began to sell the heirloom jewelry that had been worn on special occasions, including weddings and other important rites of passage.

Although the design of this pectoral is abstract, the silver piece that forms the lower portion of it most likely represents stylized ram's horns. Mountain goats are highly symbolic to the Turkmen and thus appropriate for use in jewelry that was intended to protect its wearer. The large imitation turquoise set in the center of a filigree ground and the four smaller turquoise stones above it were meant to ward off the evil eye. Turkmen jewelry makers also

favoring carnelians and often combined them with turquoise to decorate their silver pieces.

The two loops at the top of the pendant indicate that this piece would have been suspended either on a chain, to be worn alone on a woman's chest, or at the bottom of a longer pectoral that could reach all the way to the wearer's waist. While filigree is commonly found on Turkmen jewelry, its swirling forms lend a delicacy to the pectoral that contrasts with the striking, stylized horn element. Such filigree suggests a familiarity with nineteenth-century jewelry made in an urban environment. Of interest is the fact that the piece comes from Khotan, in Chinese-controlled Xinjiang—a place of origin that demonstrates the broad reach of the Turkmen, who could be found from the shores of the Caspian to the city of Khotan in the nineteenth century.

SRC

PROVENANCE: Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Wolf, New York (until 2005)





## *Art of the Ottoman Court*

WALTER B. DENNY

Shortly before the year 1300, the puppet Seljuq sultan of Anatolia granted a tiny frontier principality to an impoverished Turkic warrior named Osman (1258–1324) and to his nomadic clan and military followers. The village of Söğüt, in the no-man’s-land between the terminally afflicted Byzantine Empire and the fractured remains of the Seljuq sultanate of Rum (Rome), was the urban center of Osman’s realm, a place so small it rarely appears on today’s maps. In 1453, scarcely a century and a half later, Osman’s heirs, known in Europe as the Ottomans, having already carved out a large part of the Balkans for their expanding empire, conquered Constantinople and made it into

their cultural and administrative capital. The new Ottoman capital became widely known by the new Turkish name for the city, Istanbul. A century after the establishment of Istanbul as the administrative capital, the Ottoman dynasty, more than two and a half centuries old, had turned the Mediterranean Sea into a virtual Turkish lake and governed domains on three continents.

The heirs of Osman ruled with varying degrees of control substantial parts of the Balkans, northeastern Africa, and the Middle East until the early 1920s. Alternately reviled and admired by Europeans (as “terrible Turks” and “Muslim heretics,” or as enlightened and effective rulers, respectively), the

Ottomans created a unique state governed by a meritocracy of Christian-born converts to Islam. These officials, in the best of Ottoman times, owed their careers and advancement to their competence and efficiency as recognized by the sultan.

There was little time for or interest in the finer points of material culture in the earliest years of the Ottoman rule, but as members of the Ottoman patron class gained in power and economic resources, they quickly grasped the importance of artistic patronage, as a means both of governing and of enhancing the image of Ottoman power to impress the empire's neighbors, allies, and enemies. Newly conquered Christian lands acquired mosques with distinctive Ottoman minarets and lead-covered domes as part of the Ottomans' symbolic appropriation of their new territories. Economic infrastructure—bridges, highways, fountains and aqueducts, hotels, warehouses, and ports—was enhanced and expanded throughout the Ottoman realms. The gift-giving culture of monarchies at the time required lavish presents that carried with them the message of the cultural and economic power of the giver. Trade in luxury goods brought lucrative taxes into governmental coffers, and in the early fifteenth century the new Ottoman capital of Bursa (in present-day Turkey) served as the main entrepôt for the silk trade between the mulberry groves of the regions around the southern Caspian Sea and the ravenous markets of western and central Europe. In Istanbul merchants, artists, diplomats, and adventurers brought together the traditions and goods of China, Central Asia, Iran, the Arab world, and the Mediterranean ports of Italy and France.

The Ottoman state whose cultural accomplishments we acknowledge today was largely a creation of the conqueror of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451–81). In his time the Istanbul royal court and central government administration were established in the Topkapı or Cannon Gate Palace on the tip of the city's triangular peninsula. At the palace, from the later fifteenth century, a special group of individuals was brought together. Known as the *Ehl-i Hiref*—the People of Talent—they served the court as salaried employees producing beautiful things for court consumption and for royal gift giving. Surviving from the sixteenth century are a number of complete registers of artists working in the various ateliers—designers, calligraphers, weavers, ceramic artisans, armorers, goldsmiths, jewelers, and the like—together with their salaries.<sup>1</sup> Drawn by generous pay and good working conditions, they came from many places. The Turkmen and Safavid courts of northwestern Iran and Fars in particular were the source of many designers and miniature painters. On one occasion rug weavers and a supply of their dyed wool were summoned from Egypt by the sultan. The sobriquets of artists indicate origins from Hungary, Georgia, Tabriz, and Baghdad, and some carried the designation “Frenk”—that is, western European. This rich mixture of artists and artistic

goods, culminating in the arrival at the Istanbul courts of booty from the sack of Tabriz (1514) and the conquest of Cairo (1517) in the early sixteenth century, led to the period of greatest Ottoman artistic and cultural achievement under sultans Süleyman I (r. 1520–66), Selim II (r. 1566–74), and Murad III (r. 1574–95).

The products of the People of Talent were enormously varied, but they all demonstrate links to a common source in the Ottoman court design atelier. For example, as a part of the governance system, the Ottoman chancery produced many official documents of various types that bore at the very top a curious sort of symbolic signature or royal imprint known as a *tughra*. This device carried entwined in its exquisite illumination and sinuous calligraphic forms the name of the reigning sultan and his father together with the formula “May he reign forever.” It was affixed to the headings of royal documents by an artist, a court official known as the *tughrakes*. *Tughras* on dated documents, each decorated according to the artistic fashion at the time of its creation, provide the art historian with an important guide to the changing, developing styles at the Ottoman court. Paintings in dated manuscripts, tile decorations made for particular buildings, and costumes created for members of the royal family, court officials, and foreign ambassadors, all carefully dated, catalogued, and preserved in the Topkapı Palace, today help us to understand the complexity and the evolution of the Ottoman court style as well as the bureaucracy of salaried artists and official patronage administered by the Ottoman court.

By the early sixteenth century the nascent Ottoman court art establishment shared with the courts of Cairo, Tabriz, and Herat elements of a common stylistic vocabulary, a sort of Middle Eastern “International Style,” including split-leaf forms, vine whorls, small floral palmettes, and geometric interlace. Among these early works in the Metropolitan are a small silver jug covered with finely drawn interlaced vines and tiny lotus flowers, a small ceramic jug (cat. 209) and a ceramic vessel in the shape of a mosque lamp (cat. 208) covered with small-scale spiraling vines reminiscent of the decoration on the Museum's early *tughra* of Süleyman the Magnificent (cat. 205), a ceramic bowl with mittenlike curled-in oak leaves, and a magnificent carpet from Ushak (cat. 235) whose design of deeply indented starlike medallions relates closely to the architectural decoration and bookbinding arts of Anatolia, Egypt, and Iran at the time.

In the 1520s, in the wake of the Ottoman defeat of the Safavid Persian armies at the battle of Chaldiran and the subsequent sack of Tabriz, the Safavid capital, a number of important artists from the Iranian region moved westward to Ottoman courts in Anatolia and Istanbul. Chief among them was the painter Shah Qulu, who was largely responsible for the introduction of a new style into the Ottoman court design atelier. Its hallmark was a





Fig. 33 Tile panel, Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, 1459–73. Photo: Walter B. Denny

virtuoso, technically extravagant draftsmanship, an artist's command of the drawing pen seldom seen in any epoch. Using a repertoire of favorite motifs—dragons and mythical *simurgh* birds from Chinese and Persian mythology; angels; peris and houris, the fairylike denizens of Paradise; and above all a turbulent world of writhing, curling, featherlike leaves and elaborate composite floral palmettes—Shah Qulu and his followers created what we today call the *saz* style, a name that derives both from the Ottoman term for the marsh reed out of which the artists' pens were crafted and from an enchanted forest found in Turkic mythology. Another name for this style—*hatayi* (literally, from Cathay, or even chinoiserie)—recognizes the Chinese origins of many of its subjects, such as the lotus flower and the Chinese-style dragon. A drawing of such a dragon amid foliage attributed to Shah Qulu (cat. 202) epitomizes the style, with its exquisite

command of both outline and texture and its animated and energetic subject. Another drawing in the Museum, this time of a large leaf inhabited by a tiny dragon (cat. 203), also gives us an example of the *saz* style at its finest.

The *saz* style was quickly adapted to many different media. We see the curving leaves, lotus blossoms, and the same energy and animation in the great Ottoman court carpets (cat. 236) woven in Egypt, in the ceramic tablewares and tiles (cat. 217) made in the Ottoman ceramic center of Iznik, and in the textiles (cat. 225) and velvets woven in Bursa and Istanbul. The attributes of the *saz* style are also magnificently summed up in one of the finest masterpieces of the armorer's art in the Metropolitan, the *yatagan* sword (cat. 221) created in the 1520s by the great Ottoman artist Ahmed Tekelü. On its curved gilded-steel blade, with the distinctive *yatagan* feature of the sharpened edge on the convex side, a dragon and a *simurgh* confront one another, each of their angry red eyes made from a tiny ruby. The ivory hilt, typically without quillons, shows a beautiful vegetal arabesque of curling vines and floral palmettes; the inscription on the blade invokes God's protection, gives the date of completion, and names the patron and the artist.

According to Ottoman documents, Shah Qulu's most talented pupil in the *nakkashane* (royal atelier), and his successor as its head, was an artist of Anatolian origin known as Kara Memi (literally, dark Mehmed). Shortly after the middle of the sixteenth century, Kara Memi introduced yet another set of motifs to the stylistic repertoire that was in many ways to become the permanent hallmark of Ottoman Turkish art—a virtual artistic garden of stylized flowers, among them tulips, carnations, honeysuckles, hyacinths, cherry blossoms, and roses. These emblematic flowers now constitute perhaps the most distinctive and familiar aspect of Ottoman style in every artistic medium. They appear on Ottoman carpets of all kinds (cat. 237), a variety of silk textiles (cat. 228), Iznik tiles and tableware (cat. 214), metalware, and the arts of the book, from illumination and bookbinding to miniature painting.

A great impetus for the production of arts in the Ottoman Empire in its economic and political heyday was the extensive patronage of architecture. The seven hills of Istanbul were eventually crowned with mosques, many of them created through imperial sponsorship, whose construction, decoration, and furnishing involved not only masons and builders, carpenters, and transporters of materials, but also designers and calligraphers, tile makers and wood-carvers, carpet weavers and metalsmiths. The surviving payment registers of construction workers for the greatest work of sixteenth-century architecture in Istanbul, the mosque complex of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent finished in 1559 by the architect known to posterity as Sinan the Great, give detailed information about a multiethnic and varied

workforce comprising artists and artisans of every kind of specialty and level of accomplishment, from apprentice to master.<sup>2</sup>

Arts at the Ottoman court show a number of affinities with the traditions of their neighbors. Trade with Venice and Genoa meant that early on Ottoman artists were familiar with the pictorial traditions of Europe. In the 1470s the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini visited Istanbul at the invitation of Sultan Mehmed II, and his sojourn had a lasting effect on the art of both Venice and Istanbul. Some early Ottoman manuscript illustrations show, especially in architectural depictions, knowledge of European experiments in linear perspective (cat. 200). Others demonstrate clear ties to the Persian painting traditions of Shiraz and Tabriz. Venetian silk weavers and Paduan ceramic artists were influenced by the silks of Bursa and the ceramics of Iznik; by the nineteenth century Ottoman ceramics of Iznik were regarded in Europe as the epitome of that art form and were emulated in the works of French, English, Hungarian, and Italian studio potters.

Rare imported Italian velvets were favored by the Istanbul court over the domestic Bursa velvets that were available in shops in the Istanbul bazaar to anyone who could afford them. In Moscow high clergy of the Russian Orthodox church wore gorgeous vestments made of silk woven in Istanbul and Bursa, while in Istanbul the Ottoman sultans wore winter caftans lined with Russian fur. Egyptian ateliers produced some of the greatest carpets designed at the Istanbul court, while today Ottoman-style fountains and mosques form an integral part of the urban style of Old Cairo. Meanwhile, the Ottoman arts of the Istanbul court exerted a constant influence on the production of luxury items for sale in the bazaar, and the court style even found its way into works of secular and religious art produced for both Christian and Jewish communities within the Ottoman Empire. As the economic power—and the patronage associated with it—ebbed from the court in the seventeenth century, the purchases of a growing urban mercantile middle class, craving prestige, began to replace it.

The center of Ottoman patronage was in Istanbul, but the vast empire itself benefited from the art that had its genesis in the rarefied atmosphere of the imperial court. Among the hundreds of buildings designed and built by the architect Sinan (including the Selimiye Complex, Edirne), dozens are in the Asian and European provinces. Court patrons, men and women

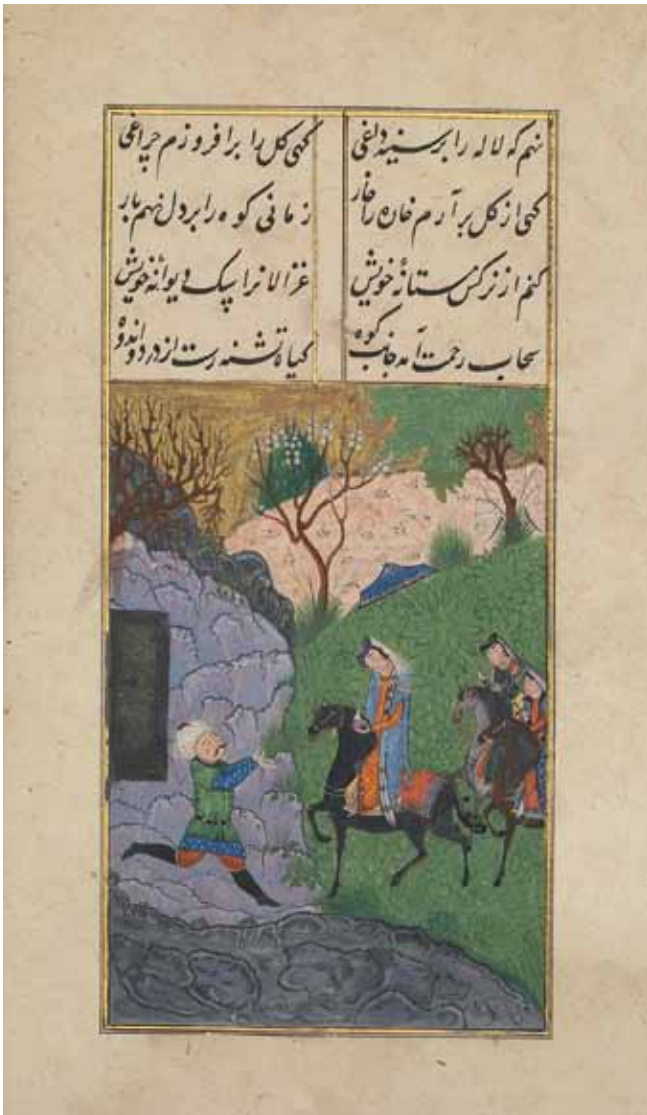
alike, were responsible for the construction throughout the empire of mosques, hotels, bridges, highways, law courts, and colleges. Important works of art were made for patrons as diverse as Armenian merchants, Greek Orthodox prelates, Jewish physicians, and, of course, the numerous European diplomats, Levantine traders, and adventurers who made Istanbul their home away from home.

If the capital was where many of the most significant artistic ideas had their genesis, the production of art itself was often undertaken at a distance from Istanbul. The primary centers of commercial carpet manufacture in the Ottoman Empire included what are today known as Konya Province in the central Anatolian plateau and Ushak Province near the Mediterranean in the west. The most prestigious of the carpets produced on commission from the court itself appear to have been woven in Cairo. Silk textiles were woven in Istanbul, of course, but the main commercial center for the trade was Bursa, first vital as a transshipment center for Iranian cocoons and raw silk, then by the seventeenth century as the major center for sericulture within Ottoman borders. While the most important ceramics were produced in Iznik, a few days' journey from Istanbul, where the kilns were under at least nominal court control, other centers of Ottoman ceramic production included Kütahya, Diyarbakir, and Damascus. Spectacular Ottoman embroideries were produced in all reaches of the empire, though most notably in Epirus, where today Greece and Albania share a border. Distinctive local traditions in wood carving, metalware, carpets, and domestic architecture, epitomized by the Metropolitan's famous Damascus Room (cat. 238), flourished for centuries throughout the Ottoman Empire, owing greater or lesser debts to the style of the Istanbul court. Indeed, the brilliance of the enduring traditions of Ottoman art established in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however dazzling, should not obscure the fact that a vibrant and self-renewing artistic tradition continued in the Ottoman realms right down to the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923—a tradition that had an impact not only on the art of the Islamic world but also on Europe around the Mediterranean and beyond.

1. Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York 1987–88, pp. 29–36.

2. See Barkan 1972–79.





## 200. Manuscript of Hatifi's *Khusrau and Shirin*

Turkey, probably Istanbul or Amasya, dated A.H. 904/1498–99 A.D.

Main support: ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

Binding: leather

9½ × 6½ in. (24 × 16.4 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1969 69.27

Complete illustrated Ottoman manuscripts are very rare outside Turkey. Never pillaged by conquests of foreign powers, Turkey's great libraries today still hold the vast majority of illustrated books created for Ottoman monarchs and court officials over the centuries. Even in Istanbul itself, however, early Ottoman illustrated manuscripts such as this one from the reign of Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512), firmly dated by chronogram—a short poem the numerical value of whose letters add up to a date in the Islamic system, in this case A.H. 904/1498–99 A.D.—are a phenomenal

rarity. Much studied and often cited, the Metropolitan's Hatifi manuscript is a vital link in the history of early Ottoman Turkish painting.<sup>1</sup>

The text, illustrated by seven miniature paintings, is *Khusrau and Shirin*, a romantic narrative poem in the Persian language from a *Khamisa* (Quintet), a suite of five poems written by the contemporary Persian court poet Hatifi (d. 1521), whose fame in Ottoman Istanbul attests to the popularity of Persian as the literary language of the Ottoman court. Adapted from a well-known earlier telling of the same tale by the Persian poet Nizami (d. 1209) in his *Khamisa* completed shortly after 1200, the text of Hatifi's poem, in rhymed couplets, is written in Persianate *nasta'liq* script in two columns on each folio of the manuscript.

The miniatures are among the earliest examples of Ottoman pictorial art to have survived. Of very small scale and only distantly related to the court painting style of Timurid Herat then dominant in the Persian world, these paintings reflect two sources. The high horizons, tightly curled clouds, small, round heads of the figures, and the landscapes of yellow-green on green, all recall a painting style popular at the Tabriz court of the Turkmen, the Ottomans' immediate neighbors to the east. By contrast, an emerging Ottoman interest in the use of orthogonals—receding diagonals—in paintings depicting architecture is probably derived from Ottoman exposure to paintings or prints from Europe employing the new technique of spatial representation known as linear perspective.

W B D

1. The most complete discussion of the manuscript is found in Yoltar-Yildirim 2005.

PROVENANCE: Osman Ata'ullah, Turkey; Sir Gregory O. Page-Turner, England (until 1827); his sale, March 1827, lot 190, to Phillips; Sir Thomas Phillips, England (1827–d. 1872); Bibliotheca Phillippica, England (1872–1968); its sale, Sotheby's London, November 25–26, 1968, MS 3127, to MMA

## 201. Illustrated Folio from the *Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet) of Mustafa al-Darir al-Erzerumi

"The Angel Gabriel Meets 'Amr ibn Zayd"

Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1595

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

14⅝ × 10¼ in. (37 × 26 cm)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1994 1994.141

Mustafa al-Darir al-Erzerumi spent most of his career at Cairo in service to the Mamluk sultans for whom he composed a biography of the Prophet, *Siyer-i Nebi*, completed in 1389. Perhaps because it



was written in Anatolian Turkish, this work found its most receptive audience not in Egypt but in Ottoman Turkey, where it spawned both literary imitations and a lavishly illustrated six-volume copy produced for the Ottoman sultans Murad III (r. 1574–95) and Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603) from which this painting derives. Darir's account of the Prophet's life combines a narrative drawn from Arabic authors such as Ibn Hisham (d. 833) and the thirteenth-century Abu'l Hasan al-Bakri with tales of the Prophet's miraculous exploits that are believed to have circulated in the Anatolia of his day. Many of the latter are colored by Christian and Jewish traditions.<sup>1</sup>

In Darir's text, the angel Gabriel performs varied services for the Prophet, his family, and the young Muslim community. Here he offers a shepherd named 'Amr ibn Zaid his own spear and instructs him to use it to produce water by striking it on the ground. A picture of 'Amr employing Gabriel's spear is this manuscript's

next illustration, which is preserved in the text's fourth volume (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin).<sup>2</sup> Only knowledge of Darir's text permits Gabriel to be identified as an angel, as he has no special attributes such as wings or a halo. Perhaps, due to the ambiguity of this image, someone has added to it the names of Gabriel and 'Amr ibn Zaid.

According to Ottoman court records, at least five painters were responsible for the *Siyer-i Nebi* manuscript's 814 illustrations. Of those artists, just the painter of the first volume, Hasan Nakkaş, is identified by name. This page, illustrating the conversation of Gabriel and 'Amr, displays a simplified composition and uses a large-scale script, a feature characteristic of the manuscript as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Although the circumstances surrounding the production of this royal manuscript commission are well documented, the stimulus for Sultan Murad to order such a lavishly illustrated version of Darir's text has yet to be established. PS

1. Tanındı 1984, pp. 28–30.
2. Minorsky 1958, no. T. 419, fol. 74a, p. 35. Minorsky identifies this painting as "Two Youths . . . by a Spring."
3. Tanındı 1984, pp. 26–37.

PROVENANCE: Princess Se'adetlü Bâsh-Rûkhshah, Turkey (in 1753); Major R. G. Gayer-Anderson Pasha, Cairo (in 1939); sale Drouot-Richelieu, Paris, April 15, 1994, lot 2, to MMA

## 202. Drawing of a Dragon in Saz Foliage

Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1540–50  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
Image: 6 7/8 × 10 3/4 in. (17.3 × 27.2 cm)  
Mat: 16 × 22 in. (40.6 × 55.9 cm)  
Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 57.51.26

## 203. Drawing of Saz Leaves with Dragons

Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1550–70  
Main support: ink on paper  
Border: gold, ink, and opaque watercolor on paper  
Image: 12 × 7 3/8 in. (30.5 × 18.6 cm)  
Mat: 22 × 16 in. (55.9 × 40.6 cm)  
Anonymous Gift, 2000 2000.424

By the middle of the sixteenth century, in the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), the Ottoman *nakkaşhane*, or court design atelier in Istanbul, was flourishing under the leadership of Shah Qulu, an émigré artist from Iran. Shah Qulu is thought to have been largely responsible for the development of





the new *saz* or *hatayi* style, inspired at once by the art of China and of Iran, which by midcentury had become the new emblem of imperial Ottoman artistry. His drawings in black ink on paper, sometimes with small touches of color, were sought after by Ottoman patrons and incorporated into a number of royal albums created at the court.

The Metropolitan's drawing of a dragon in foliage (cat. 202) bears an inscription stating that it is the work of Shah Qulu "as an exercise"; while this is more likely an attribution added later rather than an artist's signature, Shah Qulu's authorship is entirely credible. The inscription "as an exercise" illuminates the relative simplicity of this drawing as compared with another, probably later, dragon drawing of enormous complexity, also by Shah Qulu, in the Cleveland Museum of Art.<sup>1</sup> Here the entire composition is generated from a thick black line, like a steel spring, that forms the back of the dragon, which is shown moving energetically to the left while treading on a furiously churning bed of feathery leaves. Like the dragon, the leaves are defined by the broad tapering lines of their spines; the textured veining and serrated edges of the leaves, as with the dappled skin of the dragon, are depicted with incredible delicacy.

On the vertical album page (cat. 203), the roles of dragon and leaves are in a sense reversed. Here the main actors are two large leaves, one of which, in a dramatic gesture, pierces the other. The tail of a tiny dragon is visible at the top of the composition, while the head of another is seen at bottom right. This drawing, which



bears the partially legible impression of a seal of a former owner (another, less legible impression is found on the album border), is in fact an artistic combination of two other works in the *saz* style. One is a drawing in a royal Ottoman album now in Istanbul's Topkapı Palace Museum; the leaves in the Metropolitan's drawing are an exact mirror image of those in the Istanbul drawing.<sup>2</sup> The other source exists in two versions, one in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art,<sup>3</sup> the second a recent addition to the Islamic collections of the Musée du Louvre, Paris.<sup>4</sup> In both of these drawings two small dragons are clearly shown, head and tail, twined around a single large leaf with a swordlike spine.

Drawings such as these are virtuoso exercises—imagine them as Chopin études for the reed pen—that allowed artists to demonstrate

their skill and imagination outside the more restricted arena of the illustrated book. In the aftermath of the death of Shah Qulu, sometime after the middle of the century, his followers continued his style, which influenced tile making, ceramic tablewares, arts of the book, textiles, and carpets.

W B D

1. Denny 1983, pl. 1.
2. Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul (no. H 2147, fol. 33A). Ibid., pl. 11.
3. The Los Angeles drawing was formerly in the collection of Edwin Binney 3rd; see Portland and other cities 1979, pp. 18–21.
4. Paris 2001a, p. 115.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 202: Cora Timken Burnett, Alpine, N.J. (by 1940–d. 1956)

Cat. 203: [Anonymous]

## 204. *Folios from an Album of Calligraphy*

Calligrapher: Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede (d. 1520)

Turkey, probably Istanbul, about 1500

Main support: ink, watercolor, and gold on paper

Margins: ink, watercolor, and gold; marbled paper

Binding: leather and gold

12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (32.1 × 23.8 cm)

Purchase, Edwin Binney 3rd and Edward Ablat Gifts, 1982 1982.120.3

Mounted within colorful *ebru* (marbled) papers and surrounded by parti-colored inner borders, these two pages of graceful calligraphy form part of a leather-bound album composed of six folios. Album making was a popular practice in many parts of the Islamic world, including Persia and the Ottoman Empire, with regional examples following their own distinct style and trajectory of development.<sup>1</sup> Such albums—sometimes referred to as *muraqqa'*—often incorporated paintings, calligraphies, illuminations, colorful decorated papers, and embellished borders.

The earliest Ottoman albums appeared in the fifteenth century, prefiguring the later proliferation of such collections.<sup>2</sup> In Turkey these *murakkaalar* (singular, *murakkaa*; in Arabic, *muraqqa'*) often included calligraphic exercises based on Arabic poems, prayers, and Qur'anic verses—as in this example—and typically were bound in a horizontal format. While many of these Ottoman calligraphy albums have survived, this one is of particular importance as it contains the work of the most celebrated early Ottoman calligraphy master, Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede (d. 1520).<sup>3</sup>

Hamdullah, who would come to be known as “Shaikh” Hamdullah, was born and raised in Amasya in north-central Turkey. There he studied the “six scripts,” following in the style of the great thirteenth-century calligraphy master, Yaqut al-Musta'simi. During his career Shaikh Hamdullah became associated with the governor of the region, Prince Bayezid (1450–1512), son of the Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. When the prince became Sultan Bayezid II in 1481, Shaikh Hamdullah was asked to join him in Istanbul, where he became a royal calligrapher at the Topkapı Palace and perhaps master of the imperial atelier.<sup>4</sup>

In this capacity the prolific artist penned a staggering number of manuscripts, among them a magnificent Qur'an dedicated to Sultan Bayezid.<sup>5</sup> Shaikh Hamdullah is best known, however, for the innovative modifications he applied to the calligraphic scripts, particularly his achievements in *nesih* (*naskhi*) and *sülüs* (*thuluth*) styles. The new proportions he introduced became the canon for Ottoman calligraphy, studied by students and adopted by masters of Ottoman art over subsequent centuries.

DMT





1. For more on album making in the Persian tradition, see Roxburgh 2005b. For the Mughal period, see New York 1987–88, esp. pp. 23ff.; and, more recently, Washington, D.C., and other cities 2008–9.
2. See the New York and Los Angeles 1998–99 section devoted to “Murakkaalar,” pp. 29–30.
3. Other albums containing the work of this important calligrapher are found in Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace Museum (nos. E.H. 2078 and E.H. 2092) and the Turkish and Islamic Museum (no. 2458; see Istanbul 1998a, pp. 44–49, nos. 29–31); in the Khalili Collection, London (see Geneva 1995, pp. 233–35, nos. 161, 162); and in the Sakip Sabancı Museum, Istanbul (see New York and Los Angeles 1998–99, pp. 46–47, no. 1).

4. For a general background on Shaikh Hamdullah’s life, see Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York 1987–88, pp. 44ff.; Raby and Tanındı 1993, pp. 96–100.
5. See Raby and Tanındı 1993, p. 96. They suggest that the Qur’an in question is likely their no. 40 (Topkapı Palace Library, MS A.5). See also Blair 2006, pp. 479–81 and nn. 16–26.

PROVENANCE: Philip Hofer, Cambridge, Mass. (until 1982; sold to MMA)

## 205. *Tughra of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*

Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1555–60  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
Image: 20½ × 25⅜ in. (52.1 × 64.5 cm)  
Rogers Fund, 1938 38.149.1

The Ottoman Turkish sultans controlled one of the most efficient, well-organized, and effective governmental bureaucracies of early modern times; at the apex of this governmental structure was the Ottoman Imperial Chancery, which created, copied, and recorded all official governmental orders or decrees, known as *firman*, as well as treaties and official correspondence. The documents created by this elite agency, housed in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, were specifically designed to reflect the power and magnificence of the ruler in whose name they were issued. The script used in imperial *firman*s, known as *divani*—literally, of the (imperial) council—utilized a mixture of black and costly gold ink; it was intricate, beautiful, and extremely difficult to read. At the top of every *firman* was a calligraphic device specific to each sultan, known as the *tughra*, which not only indicated the source of the order but, as a combination of royal seal and royal signature, served as the visual public representation of the ruler, in the same way that representations of throne or crown symbolized monarchs in Europe. The earliest surviving Ottoman *tughras* were executed in black ink only. Although the ancient origins of the form are shrouded in mystery, it may have been created by an illiterate sovereign dipping three fingers in ink.

The illuminated *tughras* dating from the early sixteenth century onward that are more typically found on important Ottoman documents are the work of a specially trained court official known as the *tughrakes*, whose job, equivalent to the Lord Privy Seal in English royal bureaucracy, was to affix the *tughra* incorporating the sultan's name and ancestry to the top of each document. By the time of the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66), the *tughra* had attained its classic proportions and form. These include, to the left, three large loops; at the top, a plume of three ligatures; on the right, two horizontal ligatures that eventually merge; and, at the bottom, an intertwined inscription, which usually follows a set formula: the name of the sultan, his father's name, and the invocation “may his reign endure forever.” In many important documents, the first line or lines of text below may expand on the sultan's sobriquets, possessions, and lineage, listing among other things his domains on three continents and his titles, including “the shadow of God on earth.”<sup>1</sup>

The Metropolitan's *tughra* of Süleyman the Magnificent is a work of calligraphy and illumination created at the height of Ottoman classicism in the 1550s. Its illumination is restrained, unlike the exuberance of later examples, and employs the classical



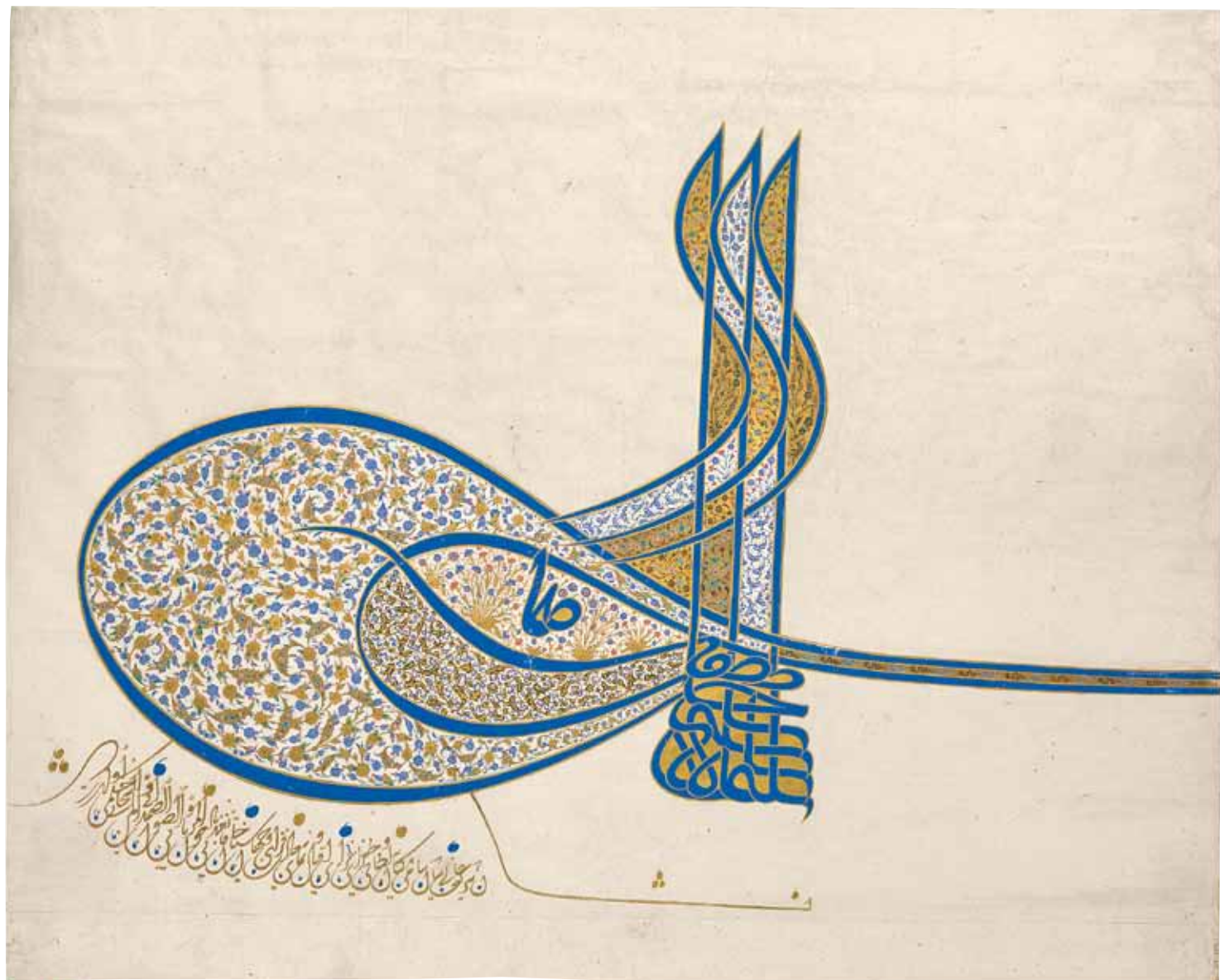
repertoire of featherlike, curved *saz* leaves and vegetal arabesques incorporating the split-leaf form termed *rumi* in Turkey. The inscription reads “Sultan Süleyman Khan, the son of Sultan Selim Khan, may his reign endure forever.”<sup>2</sup> WBD

1. McAllister 1939.

2. Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York 1987–88, p. 41, no. 4.

PROVENANCE: [E. Beghian, London, until 1938; sold to MMA]





## 206. Calligraphic Galleon

Turkey, dated A.H. 1180/1766–67 A.D.

Calligrapher: 'Abd al-Qadir Hisari

Ink and gold on paper

17 × 19 in. (43.2 × 48.3 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund, 2003 2003.241

Inscription in at upper-left corner:

كتبه الفقير المذنب عبد القادر الحصري في الساكنين (؟) اناطولى سنة ١١٨٠

Written by the poor sinner 'Abd al-Qadir al-Hisari living in [?] Anatolia [in the] year A.H. 1180 [1766–67 A.D.]

Inscription in gold, forming the hull and deck of the ship, the names of the Seven Sleepers along with their dog Qitmir;  
on the stern within a gold disk, the *tughra* of the Ottoman sultan

Inscription below the *tughra*:

السلطان بن السلطان مصطفى خان بن السلطان احمد خان

The Sultan, son of the Sultan, the Sultan Mustafa [III] Khan, son of the Sultan Ahmad [III] Khan

Inscribed in Arabic on the flagpole: [Qur'an 2:255 (the "Throne Verse")]

Inscription in Ottoman Turkish on the waves of the sea, a prose text relating to navigation and the sea;<sup>1</sup> in larger script,  
framing the image, poetic verses in Ottoman Turkish

Inscription in Arabic in smaller script, framing the image:

اللهم صل على سيدنا محمد و على آل محمد سيد الفائزين

May God bless our Master Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, Master of the Victors<sup>2</sup>

Sweeping golden calligraphy forms the hull of this galleon, at sail upon a sea composed of miniscule *ghubar* (dustlike) script. Referred to as calligrams, images composed entirely from calligraphy were created in many regions of the Islamic world, including Persia and India, but were especially popular in Ottoman Turkey.<sup>3</sup> These images take on a wide variety of forms, such as lions, horses, storks, peacocks, dervish headgear, mosques, and ships.<sup>4</sup> Among certain sufi orders of Turkey, some of these word pictures were considered to have mystical significance and often adorned the walls of dervish lodges and other ritual spaces.<sup>5</sup>

Additional examples of calligraphic vessels are known, including a late seventeenth-century drawing of an oared ship signed and dated by Isma'il Derdi, today in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul.<sup>6</sup> In the Metropolitan's galleon, the golden inscriptions of the hull comprise the names of the Seven Sleepers, referred to in Arabic as the *Ashab al-Kahf* (The Companions, or People of the Cave).<sup>7</sup> The story of the Sleepers is found in pre-Islamic Christian sources. It tells of a group of six young Christian men, a shepherd, and the shepherd's dog, who sleep for centuries within a cave, protected by God from religious persecution. In the Qur'an the story is recounted within Sura 18 (*al-Kahf*, "The Cave"); verses 9–26.

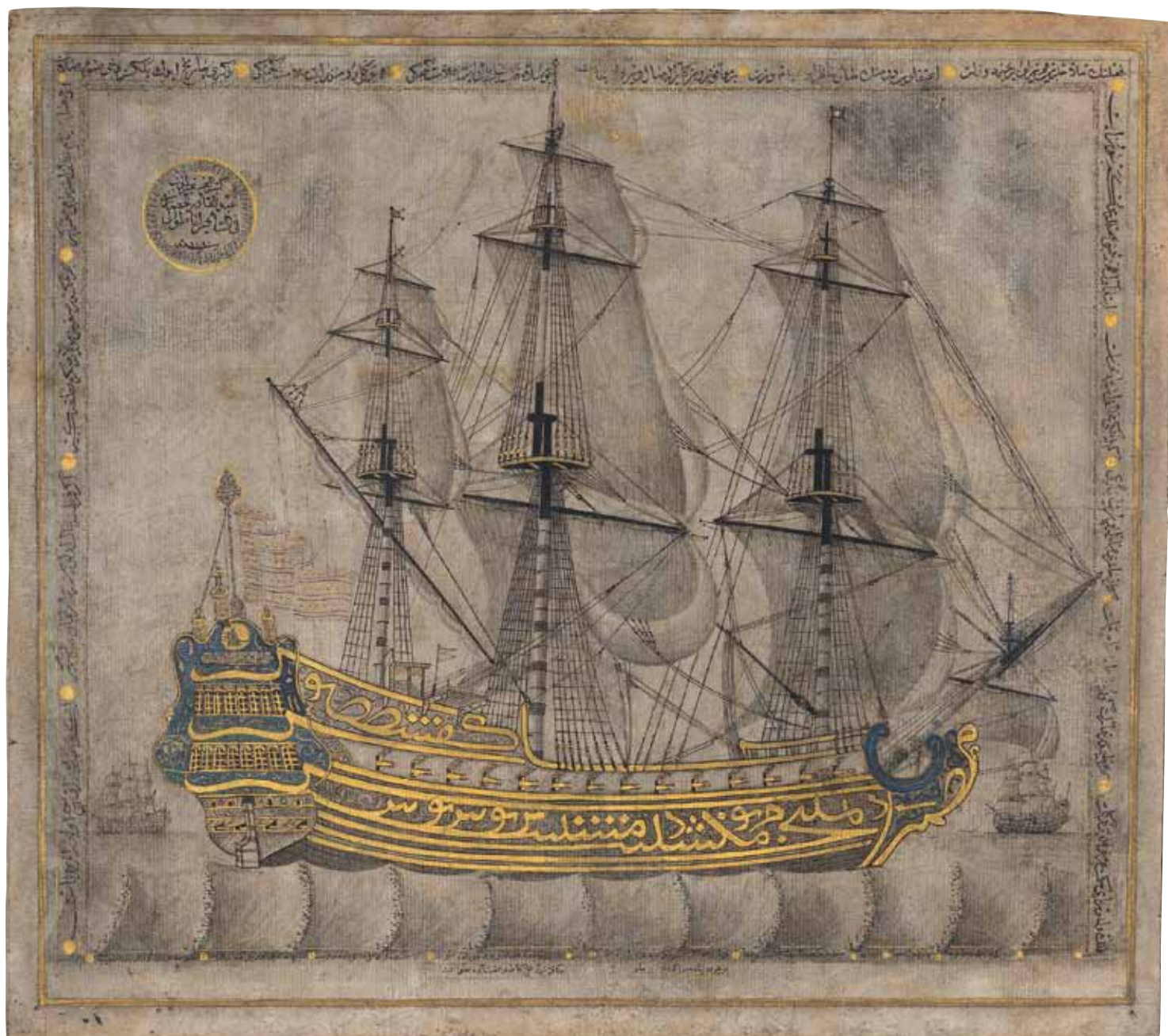
While no mention of a ship is made in the story, Ottoman artists have incorporated the Sleepers' names into the depiction of ships since at least the seventeenth century. The names of the Seven Sleepers also appear on talismanic pendants and amulets, even under inkwell lids.<sup>8</sup> This practice may be due to the apotropaic qualities associated with these names. According to recent

scholarship, both *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and *tafsir* (commentaries on the Qur'an) describe the protective qualities associated with the Seven Sleepers and related Qur'anic verses—among them, the belief that if the names of the Sleepers were inscribed upon a ship, it would be protected from sinking.<sup>9</sup> The Ottoman navy is said to have been dedicated to the Seven Sleepers.<sup>10</sup> And, the image at hand likely represents one of the Ottoman fleet's newly fashioned military galleons, outfitted with numerous cannons for battle and shielded from harm by the *Ashab al-Kahf*.

DMT/KZ

1. Thanks to my colleague Deniz Beyazit for kindly reviewing the Ottoman Turkish inscriptions on this piece, and also to Rifat Günalan and Faruk Biliçi, who kindly consulted with her on these readings.
2. This text is repeated several times, each time with a different final descriptor. The same repeating phrase is also to be found surrounding the signature of the calligrapher on the upper left.
3. For a summary of "pictorial writing" in Persia, see Blair 2006, pp. 449–56 (and related footnotes), which includes an image (p. 450, fig. 10.15) of perhaps the best-known Persian example, a lion composed of verses of the Nad-i 'Ali (an invocation of 'Ali). For more on the use of pictorial writing on the Indian subcontinent, see *ibid.*, pp. 558–59. For more on Ottoman pictorial calligraphy, see *ibid.*, pp. 506–8.
4. The Metropolitan's collection also contains a peacock calligram dedicated to an Ottoman ruler (acc. no. 67.266.7.8r); for the Bellini Album, of which the peacock calligram is part, see cat. 150.
5. See Schimmel 1992; see also DeJong 1992 in the same volume and Frembgen 2010–11.
6. For an illustration of this work, see Istanbul 1998a, p. 83. Another calligraphic ship, dated to the nineteenth century, was sold at Bonhams





in 2000 (see Bonhams Knightsbridge, London, *Islamic and Indian Works of Art*, October 11, 2000, lot 634).

7. Paret 1960.

8. See Porter, V. 2007. For an image of an inkwell with the names of the Seven Sleepers incised onto the underside of the lid, see Acar 1999, p. 90. See also a similar inkwell lid in Kayaoğlu 2000, p. 359.

9. See Porter, V. 2007, p. 126.

10. Ibid.

PROVENANCE: [Ciancimino & Co., London, in 1965]; [Francesca Galloway, London, until 2003; sold to MMA]



### 207. Ceramic Bowl

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1500–1525  
 Stonepaste; painted in blue under a transparent glaze  
 H. 5 1/8 in. (13.1 cm); Diam. 10 in. (25.4 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1932 32.34

Iznik, the Ottoman name for the old Byzantine city of Nicaea incorporated into the early Ottoman Empire in 1331, had been a center of ceramic production from later Byzantine times onward, but only at the end of the fifteenth century did ceramists at Iznik first make what art historians call “fine ceramics” (from the German *Feinkeramik*) of high artistic quality. This bowl exemplifies the first period of Iznik production, when new techniques and a new style influenced by the Istanbul court began to be reflected in the work; the close ties that the artisans at the Iznik kilns developed to court designs and court patronage in Istanbul were to endure for well over a century.

The style of the bowl’s decoration, executed in light and dark blue under a clear glaze, closely parallels drawings in black ink discovered in an album in Istanbul’s Topkapı Palace Museum. These drawings are thought to have been made by a designer named Baba Naqqāş (literally, Father Designer), who worked in Istanbul’s imperial design atelier in the fifteenth century. As a consequence, Iznik blue-and-white ceramics in this style have been dubbed the “Baba Naqqāş group.”<sup>1</sup> The curved side of the interior





of the bowl is decorated with four stylized cypress trees with bifurcated tops; cypress trees are a recurring motif in Ottoman art, where they may either symbolize sanctity (such trees are often planted in cemeteries and mosque courtyards) or function as a metaphor for a beloved (Ottoman poetry frequently uses the trope of a cypress for a beautiful woman). These alternate with ogival blue-ground cartouches bearing white flowers in reserve; the curled petals of these flowers, ornamented with tiny dark blue

teardrop-shaped forms, are characteristic of the Baba Naqqas style. The exterior of the bowl shows an arabesque of blossoms connected by vines in the same style, in blue and light blue, on a white ground.

W B D

1. See Atasoy and Raby 1989, pp. 96–100.

PROVENANCE: [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York, until 1932; sold to MMA]

## 208. Ceramic Vessel in the Shape of a Mosque Lamp

Turkey, Iznik, 1525–40

Stonepaste; painted in blue under a transparent glaze

H. 6¾ in. (17.1 cm); Diam. 5⅞ in. (14.9 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1959 59.69.3

Inscription in distorted Arabic in *thuluth* script:

[sic] لا فتا إلا علي / لا سيف إلا ذو الفقار

No brave youth except 'Ali, no sword except Dhu'l faqar

Below this, in distorted Arabic in *kufic* script, repeated two times:

المـ[لك] لك الله الواحد

Dominion [belongs to] God, the One

Below in *naskhi* script:

عيش

The pleasure of life

## 209. Ceramic Spouted Jug

Turkey, Iznik, 1525–40

Stonepaste; painted in blue under a transparent glaze

Pitcher (a): H. 8⅞ in. (22.5 cm); Diam. 5½ in. (14 cm)

Lid (b): H. 1½ in. (3.8 cm); Diam. 3½ in. (8.9 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1966 66.4.3a, b

Iznik ceramics with spiral decoration of the type seen on these two objects were once erroneously thought to have been made in workshops situated on the inner harbor of Istanbul, the famous Golden Horn. They have more recently been dubbed the *tugra*kes or *tughra*-illuminator group, after the court officials who illuminated the sultan's ceremonial signature on official documents, using similar spiral decoration, in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Such wares fall into two distinct groups: an earlier group executed entirely in cobalt blue (with occasional accents of turquoise); and a later group embellished with a fine black line with blue accents. Among the best-known examples of the earlier group, the Metropolitan's two small vessels, one in the shape of a glass mosque lamp and the other in the shape of a metal coffeepot, demonstrate the propensity of Iznik artists to borrow forms from other media, especially in

the formative years of the Iznik manufactories in the earlier sixteenth century.

The lamp is of special interest because it bears elegant Arabic religious inscriptions and good wishes in *kufic* script, which, in common with inscriptions on some other examples of Iznik ware, demonstrate significant spelling errors. On the body is written *al-mu(l)k lillah* (Dominion belongs to God) and *al-wahid* (the One), referring to God. Below this text on the body is the word 'aish (the pleasure of life). On the flare of the lamp is the phrase "No brave youth except 'Ali, no sword except Dhu'l faqar," referring to the son-in-law of the Prophet and his famous weapon. While such an inscription can plausibly be found within the Sunni Muslim orbit (the sword of 'Ali is frequently depicted on the *sanjak* parade banners of the rigorously Sunni orthodox Ottomans), in the early sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, at a time of bitter struggle



208

between Sunni and Shi'i in Anatolia, such mention of 'Ali and his sword might have carried a specifically Shi'i religious connotation.

No inscriptions complicate the vessel in the shape of a spouted jug (*güze*) or coffee pot. Compared with later Iznik vessels in lamp or ewer form, both of these objects are very small. Exquisite miniatures, they capture the elegance of highly prized blue-and-white Ming porcelain but remain distinctively Ottoman in form and decoration.

WBD

1. Atasoy and Raby 1989, pp. 108–11.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 208: Octave Homberg, Paris (by 1903–8; sale, Galerie George Petit, Paris, May 11–16, 1908, lot 226); [Brimo de Laroussilhe, Paris, until 1959; sold to MMA]

Cat. 209: Ferdinand Adda Collection, Egypt (by 1959–65; sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, December 3, 1965, lot 803, to Marthe Baschet for MMA)





209

## 210. Ceramic Plate

Turkey, Iznik, mid-16th century

Stonepaste; painted in turquoise and two hues of blue under a transparent glaze

H. 3 in. (7.6 cm); Diam. 15½ in. (39.4 cm)

Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 14.40.727

Unique in the history of Turkish ceramics, the design of this rimless dish is executed in turquoise together with two values of blue. The sources for the reticulated central field and the arabesque of lotus blossoms around the cavetto, or curved part of the dish, were long a mystery, until it was pointed out in 1972 that the dish was in fact an ingenious and highly creative adaptation of a famous and familiar Chinese Ming porcelain design.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the original Chinese design, with a similar geometric grid and an arabesque of lotus blossoms, vines, and leaves, is found in Ming celadon wares, those pale gray-green ceramics so highly sought after by patrons of the Middle East in part because of their purported ability to detect poison added to food. So different in color is the Ottoman work from the Chinese prototype that the relation between the two traditions had long gone unnoticed.

In the artistic culture of Iznik ceramic wares, the concept of a set of identical objects was almost entirely absent. Each plate, each tankard, each vase, bottle, and jug was individually decorated, and even when a paper template was used the colors and details were never the same. In the middle third of the sixteenth century, in an extremely dynamic artistic atmosphere, Iznik artists were experimenting with new techniques (a polychrome palette), new shapes (expanding on the traditional repertoire of forms taken from Chinese porcelain or Islamic metalwork), and, above all, with new designs. When the Altman dish was created, an underglaze gray-green was available to Iznik artists, but it was a thin and uneven pigment totally different in effect from the thick and creamy pea-soup green of the Chinese celadons. Thus, the artist of the Metropolitan Museum's dish took his design from a celadon prototype but chose to realize the conception in a painterly, delicate, and masterfully executed composition using a translucent blue and turquoise together with a darker cobalt blue. The Altman dish vividly illustrates the maxim that acts of artistic creation often begin with acts of creative seeing.

W B D

1. Pope, J. A. 1972, pp. 135, 138.

PROVENANCE: Henry G. Marquand, New York; Benjamin Altman, New York (until d. 1913)

## 211. Ceramic Dish

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1560

Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze

H. 2¾ in. (7 cm); Diam. 12¾ in. (32.4 cm)

Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917 17.120.19

This magnificent polychrome dish, with its design of flowers on a blue ground, documents a crucial moment in the history of Iznik ceramics, when the use of an underglaze red color was first attempted about 1560. Within a traditional shape directly inspired by a Ming Chinese prototype, consisting of a cusped flat rim, a quarter-round cavetto (the curve from the rim to the bottom of the dish), and a flat central tondo, the Iznik artist responsible for this plate created a masterpiece of innovative design in three colors—reserve white, red, and turquoise—on a dark-blue ground. The design reflects the brand-new floral style that emerged in Ottoman court art in the mid-sixteenth century, created by the recently appointed chief of the royal design atelier, an artist known by the nickname Kara Memi (literally, dark Mehmed).<sup>1</sup> The thinness of the red pigment made from an iron-rich clay, known as Armenian bole, and the zigzag red ornaments on the two tulips in the lower half of the central tondo help us to date this work to about 1560, when tile panels designed by Kara Memi, of an almost identical style, were being affixed to the walls of the just-completed Rüstem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul.<sup>2</sup>

The rim is decorated with small white tulips and five-petal blossoms, which impart to the design a sense of rotational movement. Following a practice common by the middle of the sixteenth century, the curved cavetto and flat bottom of the plate are used as a single design surface. The stems of the central floral spray—which consists of two white tulips and two complex, imaginary floral palmettes, one decorated with a *rumi* split-leaf arabesque and the other with smaller flowers—typically originate from a single point at the bottom of the composition. A closer look at this animated design reveals the artist's individual featherlike brushstrokes in the blue background, which contribute a three-dimensional visual texture to the surface.

W B D

1. On Kara Memi and his style, see Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York 1987–88, pp. 55–56; see also Denny 2004, pp. 79 and 117.
2. Discussed in Denny 2004, pp. 79–92; see also Denny 1998, pp. 37–56.

PROVENANCE: Isaac D. Fletcher, New York (until d. 1917)





210



211



212. *Large Footed Blue-and-White Ceramic Dish  
in Tazza Form*

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1570–80

Stonepaste; polychrome painted in blue under a transparent glaze

H. 4½ in. (11.3 cm); Diam. 14¼ in. (36.2 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1966 66.4.2

213. *Blue-and-White Ceramic Dish with Three  
Bunches of Grapes*

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1570

Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze

H. 2⅞ in. (7.3 cm); Diam. 13½ in. (34.3 cm)

Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 91.1.102

The great British ceramics scholar Arthur Lane first set out the basic chronology of Iznik ceramic production, in which the earliest period, from about 1490 to 1525, was characterized by, among other things, a blue-and-white palette and a propensity to draw inspiration from Chinese Ming porcelain.<sup>1</sup> Thus, at one time both of these striking blue-and-white Iznik dishes in the Metropolitan were conventionally assigned to the first quarter of the sixteenth century; more recent scholarship, however, has placed them more than fifty years later.

The larger dish (cat. 212), clearly drawing its footed profile from an Italian form known as a *tazza*, is certainly one of the most successful Ottoman attempts at re-creating a well-known type of Ming ceramic decoration. Its blue-black color and the artist's remarkable sensitivity to the texture of Ming floral ceramic decoration show a full understanding of the nuances of the Chinese original, unlike the Ottoman copies of the same original made early in the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Such technical mastery, including the very dark blue-black, is not evident in the early group of Iznik blue-and-white wares of the so-called Baba Naqqāş style, but was well within the abilities and technical repertoire of Iznik artists by the 1580s.<sup>3</sup>

Also inspired by Ming blue-and-white ceramics, the other Iznik dish here (cat. 213) is a fairly close Ottoman interpretation of a Ming design consisting of three bunches of grapes, a motif that continually appeared in Iznik ceramics from the 1530s to the early seventeenth century. The earliest Iznik works with this design utilize a cobalt blue in two values, light and dark, with a dark-blue outlining. Later examples of the 1550s add black and touches of turquoise, and by the 1580s the grapes are sometimes depicted in tomato red and the leaves in bright green. Consisting of tight little whorls executed in black line, the conventionalized border on the rim is a very common Ottoman adaptation of the original Chinese wave-and-rock rim design. The cusped edge and the small





bunches of flowers in the cavetto show a continuing Ottoman fascination with the costly Ming originals, huge numbers of which were found in the royal porcelain collection in Istanbul's Topkapı Palace.

WBD

1. See Lane 1957.
2. See Denny 1974b.
3. A very similar *tazza* from Copenhagen was published in Atasoy and Raby 1989, fig. 445.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 212: S. Sevadjian, Paris (until 1927; sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 1–3, 1927, lot 112); Ferdinand Adda Collection, Egypt (by 1959–65; sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, December 3, 1965, lot 800, to Marthe Baschet for MMA)

Cat. 213: Edward C. Moore, New York (until d. 1891)

## 214. Ceramic Dish

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1575–90

Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze

H. 2 3/8 in. (6 cm); Diam. 11 1/8 in. (28.4 cm)

Gift of James J. Rorimer in appreciation of Maurice Dimand's curatorship, 1933–1959, 1959 59.69.1

By the 1580s the Iznik potters began to produce original pottery with a wide variety of highly innovative and sometimes quite mannered or quirky designs that often had little to do stylistically with the professional design atelier in Istanbul. This polychrome Iznik dish with a scene of birds among flowers, contained within the familiar late rim design of tight spirals, is such a work, but in all likelihood there is an implied narrative behind the simple floral



composition that is not readily apparent to the twenty-first-century viewer.<sup>1</sup>

The central tondo contains five main “actors”: a bird, probably a nightingale, facing right; a rose immediately to the right of the bird; a honeysuckle to the right of the rose; a spray of hyacinths below the honeysuckle; and a tulip in the center of the plate—all growing from the same clump of leaves. A smaller bird and a spray of six-petaled flowers, both bit players, round out the cast. The lead characters are most likely the rose and the nightingale, which together were popular allegorical subjects of love poetry for Ottoman poets of the fifteenth through the eighteenth century. Other flowers, such as tulips, carnations, honeysuckles, and hyacinths, also frequently played roles in such poetry, and it seems highly plausible that the Metropolitan’s dish represents a visualization of this popular Ottoman literary trope. In his “The Rose and the Nightingale” of about 1563, the poet Fazlî (d. 1563) evoked the realm of the King of Springtime: “Midst his blest dominions none uttered wail, / Save it were ‘mongst the flowers the sad nightingale.”<sup>2</sup> The seventeenth-century poet Neshatî (d. 1674) wrote: “We are desire hidden in the love-crazed call of the nightingale / We are blood hidden in the crimson heart of the unbloomed rose.”<sup>3</sup>

Because of their great cost and beautiful decoration, Iznik dishes like this one were seldom used for serving food and were instead displayed in the built-in cupboards found in many Ottoman domestic living rooms (such as the Damascus Room in the Metropolitan; cat. 238), where their poetic meanings would doubtless have served as a subject of conversation. WBD

1. See Denny 2004, pp. 173–97.

2. This rather quaint nineteenth-century English translation was taken from Gibb 1901, p. 99.

3. Andrews et al., eds. 1997, p. 131.

PROVENANCE: [Brimo de Laroussilhe, Paris, until 1959; sold to MMA]

## 215. Ceramic Dish

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1575–90

Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze

H. 2 in. (4.9 cm); Diam. 10¼ in. (25.9 cm)

Gift of William B. Osgood Field, 1902 02.5.55

New economic pressures and market forces, among them a drastic inflation known in history as the “price revolution,” meant that by the last quarter of the sixteenth century ceramic artisans of Iznik were increasingly exploring new frontiers in design. These artistic innovations were not the result of new templates sent from the



court in Istanbul for the production of tiled decoration of royal buildings but rather focused on attractive and expensive items of one-of-a-kind decorative luxury tableware meant either for sale in local bazaars or for shipment to foreign markets in Europe. While the borders of dishes such as this, ultimately derived from a Ming prototype depicting foamy waves dashing against a rocky shore, became increasingly conventionalized as a pattern of tight spirals punctuated at intervals by S-shaped volutes, by the 1580s the designs of the central fields demonstrated a burst of artistic originality. Here the two components of the *chintamani* amulet motif beloved of Ottoman artists—pairs of tapered wavy stripes and groups of four circular eyelike spots—have been arranged to form a lattice pattern. Usually the spots appear in groups of three, but this artist has taken the unusual liberty of grouping them in fours.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, dishes such as this one were made in increasingly large numbers for the free market, where higher prices could more accurately reflect the new economic realities brought about by inflation, and the ceramic artisans could realize a decent profit from their labors. By contrast, the makers of tiles ordered by the royal court in Istanbul were compensated by a fixed price set at least as early as 1558, which eventually barely covered the cost of manufacture. A document sent in 1585 from Istanbul to an official in Iznik complains that the potters of Iznik “do not work for the State, but rather go away and prepare ceramic tablewares for the pottery merchants.”<sup>2</sup> This brilliantly colored and technically flawless dish is therefore not only



an example of great artistry but a document of a struggle for economic survival by its makers. WBD

1. On *chintamani*, see Paquin 1992, pp. 111ff. Another variation on this theme, almost certainly by the same artist but with the more conventional triple spots, is in the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; Ribeiro 2009, p. 86, no. 48. See also Atasoy and Raby 1989, pls. 762, 763.
2. This document and many others on Iznik production were first collected, translated into German, and published by Robert Anhegger as an appendix in Otto-Dorn 1941.

PROVENANCE: W. B. Osgood Field, New York (until 1902)

## 216. Tile

Turkey, Bursa, early 15th century  
Tempered earthenware; molded; polychrome glazed using the *cuerda seca* technique, gilded  
11 1/2 × 6 3/4 × 1 1/2 in. (29 × 17.2 × 3.8 cm)  
Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 1998 1998.246

Four deeply molded interlaces of foliated scrolls, which lie along a central axis, embellish this polychrome-glazed border tile. The sophisticated rendering of the design was achieved through the use of a contrasting palette of white, turquoise, and dark blue with yellow and gold accents that highlight the axis of the ogee-shaped vine scrolls.

This tile once belonged to a group that decorated a wall of the Green Tomb (Yeşil Türbe) in Bursa, the mausoleum of Sultan Mehmed I (r. 1413–21),<sup>1</sup> and matches the border friezes decorating the left side of the entrance portal of the tomb. Enriching the

decorative program of the tomb, this interwoven pattern is used repeatedly along with tiles bearing similar patterns that cover other surfaces, such as the outer border friezes of the exterior windows and the columnar borders of the tomb's *mihrab*. Tiles in this technique are among the earliest produced under Ottoman patronage. The decorative program of the Yeşil Türbe in Bursa was supervised by the designer Nakkaş 'Ali, a native of Bursa who was trained in Timurid Samarqand (Transoxiana).<sup>2</sup> The tilework has been attributed to the Masters of Tabriz based on an inscription on the mosque's *mihrab*. The vertical arabesque design of the tiles as well as the entire decorative repertoire of the tomb exhibit affinities with Iranian tilework of the same period.<sup>3</sup>

Tilework techniques used in the complex built for Mehmed I include tile mosaic, monochrome tiles, polychrome tiles in the *cuerda seca* technique, and carved and molded tiles. Such a rich variety of techniques and patterns—including polygonal, vegetal, calligraphic, and three-dimensional decorations—provides the tomb complex with a unique and somewhat eclectic character that exploits the full range of contemporaneous tilework. Furthermore, the tile's deeply molded decoration, which parallels that of tiles from fourteenth-century Kashan and Timurid Central Asia, demonstrates the complexity and universality of the decorative repertoire. The connection to Iran and Central Asia can be explained by the fact that either foreign ceramic artisans were brought to Bursa, where they worked in their native idioms, or local artists such as Nakkaş 'Ali went there and learned new techniques, enriching the production in Bursa. Other tiles and tile elements from this tomb complex with the same technical and stylistic characteristics as the Metropolitan's example are preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London<sup>4</sup> and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.<sup>5</sup> ME/PG



1. The tomb was a part of larger complex of a mosque and other buildings (an *imarethane* and a *medrese*) that were built between 1419 and 1424 to commemorate the revival of the Ottoman Empire right after Timur's defeat of Bayezid I in 1401.
2. According to Tashköprüzade, a sixteenth-century Ottoman biographer, 'Ali ibn Ilyas 'Ali was a native of Bursa and was carried off to Transoxiana by Timur. See Tashköprüzade 1985, p. 437, as cited in Necipoğlu 1990, p. 136.
3. For more on the *mihrab* inscriptions of the Yeşil Mosque, see Riefstahl 1937. For more on the Timurid connections with the tilework of the Yeşil Mosque and Yeşil Türbe, see Carswell 1998; Denny 2004; Necipoğlu 1990; and O'Kane 1987, pp. 64–72.
4. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (nos. 1617–1892, 1620–1892, and 1621:1–2–3).
5. The lower part of a *muqarnas* panel is in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (no. M.85.237.79). The technique of this tile's molded relief decoration is similar to that of another tile in the same collection (no. M.73.5.1), probably from Kashan and assigned to the early fourteenth century.

PROVENANCE: Yeşil Türbe, tomb of Sultan Mehmed I, Bursa (until at least 1855); [Momtaz Islamic Art, London, until 1998; sold to MMA]

## 217. Ceramic Tile with Saz Leaves

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1545–55  
 Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze  
 11 7/8 × 11 7/8 in. (30.2 × 30.2 cm)  
 Gift of Richard Ettinghausen, 1978 1978.350

In the mid-sixteenth century Iznik tile makers were still developing both the artistry and the technological capacities that were to result in the large-scale production of high-quality polychrome ceramics in the last four decades of the century. Crucially, tile makers abandoned the hexagonal format that had previously dominated their output in favor of square tiles such as this superb example. They also adopted a black line to outline artistic motifs and developed repeating modular patterns such as this one, which flowed smoothly from tile to tile both vertically and horizontally. Made before a standard square format approximately 10 3/8 inches (26.5 cm) on a side became the norm at Iznik, this tile is slightly larger and grander than tiles from later in the century.

The design, incorporating the complex floral palmettes and curved, decorated leaves of the Ottoman  *saz*  style, is deceptively simple. A complete panel of these tiles could not be made from identical examples, because the right and left half palmettes (as illustrated) are not identical: one has an edge of round lobes, whereas the other is deeply serrated. Thus, there must be a second mass-produced pattern to complete the design, an exact mirror image of this tile (indeed, examples of both designs are found in various museum collections). Providing us with an example of the overall effect is a group of similarly patterned tiles that was at some later time placed together on the exterior wall of the Rüstem Pasha Mosque in Istanbul (completed about 1561).<sup>1</sup> Shortly after this tile was made, in about 1550, the underglaze red color made its debut at Iznik, and although Iznik artists repeatedly returned to the earlier palette of blue and turquoise on white for ceramic wares, tiles in this coloration and size were not to be made again in the sixteenth century. Larger and rarer than the bulk of Iznik



modular tile production and striking in their simplicity, tiles such as this mark a crucial phase in the ever-changing and dynamic relation between designer and tile maker, Istanbul and Iznik. WBD

1. Illustrated in Denny 1977, fig. 113.

PROVENANCE: [Charles D. Kelekian, New York]; Richard Ettinghausen, Princeton, N.J. (until 1978)



## 218A, B. Two Ceramic Tiles

Turkey, Iznik, ca. 1578

Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze

A.  $9\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{7}{8} \times \frac{3}{4}$  in. (24.9 × 25.1 × 1.7 cm)

Gift of William B. Osgood Field, 1902 02.5.91

B.  $5 \times 9\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{7}{8}$  in. (12.7 × 24.1 × 1.6 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1971 1971.235.2

Major renovations undertaken about 1578 in the private quarters (or harem) of Istanbul's Topkapı Palace during the reign of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95) spurred extensive orders for the production of tiles by the ceramic ateliers of Iznik. Some of the new decorations were unified-field panels—works with a single design executed from a large paper cartoon over a field of many tiles—but the majority, used in the private bedroom of the sultan, consisted of repeating designs based on a single tile. The tiles for the royal bedroom appear to have been produced in numbers more than sufficient for the original project, and some of the extras were used in a small Istanbul mosque built by Hajji Hüsrev, the palace's chief procurement officer (many others are today found in museums all over the globe). A quarter century later, the Iznik ateliers were commissioned to make more tiles using the same design; these can be identified by their noticeably lower technical quality.<sup>1</sup>

The repeating-field tiles commissioned for the sultan's bedroom, stemming from the most splendid period of ceramic production in Iznik in the 1570s, are archetypically represented by the Metropolitan's square tile (cat. 218A): a central double-curved cloud band of Chinese origin in brilliant red relief under the clear glaze is flanked by two serrated leaves, while half palmettes are centered on each of the four sides, forming whole palmettes when placed next to the identical forms on the adjacent tiles. Similarly, four halves of red cloud bands radiate from the corners, to be continued on neighboring tiles. As a complement to these brilliant white-ground tiles that covered the walls of the sultan's private quarters, the Iznik artisans created a highly original border consisting of split-leaf forms known as *rumi*, executed in reserve white and blue on a rich tomato-red ground (cat. 218B). Border tiles from this production run, the first such tiles from Iznik to use bright red as a ground color, were also dispersed widely, and the Metropolitan's example has parallels in many other museum collections.

W B D



A



B

1. Other examples of both field and border tiles are found in, among others, the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon; the Benaki Museum, Athens; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Musée du Louvre, Paris. Unpublished examples of the later copies are found in several collections, including the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass. See Denny 1998, pp. 146–47, 150; and Denny 2004, pp. 109, 113.

### PROVENANCE

Cat. 218A: W. B. Osgood Field, New York (until 1902)

Cat. 218B: [Charles D. Kelekian, New York, until 1971; sold to MMA]



### 219. Panel of Underglaze-Painted Tiles

Syria, probably Damascus, 16th–17th century  
 Stonepaste; polychrome painted under a transparent glaze  
 22 × 33 in. (55.9 × 83.8 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1922 22.185.13a–f

As demand for the ceramic production of Iznik increased by the end of the sixteenth century, especially in the area of tile decorations for public and private monuments, Iznik itself fell victim to a series of calamities, including catastrophic fires, the debilitating effects of silicosis (from the dust of the ground flint used for the white ceramic body), lead poisoning (lead is the flux used in the clear glaze that covers Iznik ceramics), the malaria endemic to the Iznik lakeshore that affected the ceramic artisans, and, as we have

seen (cat. 215), a price structure that forced Iznik artists to sell tiles at a price that did not cover the costs of labor and raw materials. As Iznik declined, however, new manufactories in the Ottoman Empire sprang up to meet the continuing demand for tiles. One of these, at Diyarbakir in southern Turkey, was briefly active at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Another arose in the sixteenth century in the provincial Ottoman city of Damascus in Syria, where tiles were produced for over a century.<sup>2</sup>

The Metropolitan Museum's Damascus tile panel utilizes a distinctive palette of dark blue, light blue, turquoise, and touches of pale green, with a black line, painted on a white slip and covered with a transparent glaze. The size of the six individual tiles, each almost a foot square, is slightly larger than the standard square tile used at Iznik. The panel combines two tile designs, each effectively



a mirror image of the other, to create a repeating design of parallel undulating grapevines ornamented with distinctive dark-blue grape leaves, vine tendrils, and small bunches of grapes. Differences in the individual tiles suggest that the overall design may have been executed freehand over a large field of tiles, rather than each individual tile having been painted from the same paper template. Such variations, almost never found in Iznik production, are a common feature of Damascus tiles in the seventeenth century. Virtually identical tiles are found in the Darwishiyya Mosque in Damascus, erected in 1571.

WBD

1. See Raby 1977–78.
2. Porter, V. 1995, pp. 116–19.

PROVENANCE: Lockwood de Forest, Santa Barbara, Calif. (until 1922; sale, American Art Association, New York, November 24–25, 1922, lot 443, to MMA)

## 220. Metal Mirror with Gilded Ornamentation

Probably Bursa or Istanbul, early 16th century  
 Iron, inlaid with gold; ivory  
 H. 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (23.8 cm); Diam. 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (12.1 cm)  
 Fletcher Fund, 1972 1972.24

The austerity and puritanism of early Islam have left an enduring and recurring impact on Islamic art, just as that of early Christianity has returned again and again in Europe to affect art over the centuries. The tension between the intrinsic sensual appeal of beautiful things, epitomized in the luxury objects created for royal courts, and a religion focused on the eternal life of the Hereafter is shared among all of the cultures dominated by the Abrahamic religious tradition. An ivory-handled hand mirror such as this one is the perfect expression of visual sensuality. Created about 1500 for a patron in the Ottoman court, its two circular surfaces—the back covered with a cast-and-gilded *rumi* split-leaf arabesque, and the front, once highly polished—served the end of visual delight.

The tradition in Islam of creating beautiful mirrors, first from cast-and-polished bronze and later from other metals, or of materials such as ivory or jade to which polished metal panels were added, can be considered from a number of perspectives.<sup>1</sup> In early Islamic courts, where royal power and splendor were projected through luxurious costumes, a hand mirror such as this was, apart from looking into a pool of water, the sole means then available for any person in the court to view the end result of an extremely costly investment in wearable symbols of power.

In addition to this practical function, the mirror is also a powerful symbol in Islamic religious prose and poetry, and the concept

of reflection is found in many different art forms. Bilateral symmetry in textile design, mirror-image calligraphy, the idea of a carpet as a pool reflecting the medallion-like sunburst of the heavens, and countless poetic tropes about the Beloved, all demonstrate that the concept of the mirror occupies an important place in Islamic thought as well as in Islamic art. The Metropolitan's iron mirror, taking its shape from a thirteenth-century Seljuq steel example now in the Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, is probably one of the earliest such mirrors to survive from Ottoman times.<sup>2</sup> The austere split-leaf or *rumi* decoration is typical of the period.

WBD

1. See Denny 1996; on Ottoman mirrors (in Turkish), see Istanbul 1998b.
2. The early steel mirror is discussed in Istanbul 1998b, pp. 74–75.

PROVENANCE: [Charles Ratton, Paris, until 1972; sold to MMA]



## 221. *Short Sword (Yatagan)*

Attributed to Ahmed Tekelü

Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1525–30

Blade: crucible steel; forged and inlaid with gold, pearl, and rubies

Hilt: ivory; inlaid with gold, turquoise, and ruby; gold collar, chased and punched

L. overall 23 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (59.4 cm); L. of blade: 18 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (46.7 cm)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1993 1993.14

An outstanding example of the luxury arts created at the court of Sultan Süleyman I the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), this *yatagan*, or short sword, is an opulent work incorporating rare and precious materials fashioned according to a sophisticated design. It bespeaks the talents of inspired and inventive artists as well as the demanding taste of a wealthy and indulgent patron. Though designed as a weapon, this *yatagan* can also be appreciated as an object of personal adornment and symbol of wealth and rank for one of the world's most powerful rulers.

The hilt consists of a grip and pommel carved from a single piece of walrus ivory, the surface inlaid flush with cloud bands of gold and, near the top, with foliate tendrils set with rubies and turquoise. The gold ferrule at the base of the grip is worked in relief with tiny foliate arabesques. Fashioned from crucible steel (also called watered or Damascus steel), the recurved blade with its distinctive downward-arched back edge is typical of the Ottoman *yatagan*, which was worn thrust through the waist sash. The blade is decorated on each side near the hilt with a panel of raised gold ornament consisting of dense foliate scrolls inhabited by a battling dragon and a *simurgh* (a mythical Iranian bird, like a phoenix). Both creatures have ruby eyes, and the dragon has silver teeth, while the *simurgh* has a seed pearl set into its head. A gold-inlaid Persian inscription, worn and still undeciphered, is inlaid flush along the back edge of the blade.

The Museum's *yatagan* compares closely with a famous example in the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul, which was made for Sultan Süleyman by Ahmed Tekelü in 1526–27. Indeed, the Metropolitan's *yatagan* was surely made by the same master and for the same patron. Little is known about Ahmed Tekelü other than that he was recorded in a court document as having been rewarded with a substantial payment and a robe of honor, suggesting that he was particularly esteemed among Süleyman's court artists. It has been speculated that his name may derive from that of a Turkmen tribe called Tekelü, which was eventually conquered by the Safavids; Ahmed thus may originally have served in the Persian court at Tabriz before it fell to the Ottomans in 1514 and subsequently followed other Persian artists to the Ottoman court at Istanbul. The appearance of the dragon-and-*simurgh* motif and cloud-band ornament, design elements of Chinese and Central Asian origin that were incorporated first into Persian art and later into the Ottoman decorative vocabulary, tends to support this





theory. Having signed his name in gold on Süleyman's *yatagan*, Ahmed Tekelü can probably be identified as the goldsmith who fashioned the precious metal mounts and who coordinated the work of the bladesmith, ivory carver, and jeweler in the creation of both *yatagans*. Signed Ottoman goldsmiths' work of this period is extremely rare. DGA / SWP

PROVENANCE: Rex Ingram, Los Angeles; his estate sale, A. N. Abel Auction Company, Los Angeles, 1989; Rifaat Sheikh el-Ard, Riyadh

## 222. *Saber*

Turkey, mid-16th century

Blade: steel; forged and inlaid with gold

Guard: iron; forged, chiseled, damascened in gold

Grip: wood overlaid with fish skin, gold nails

L. overall 37<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (96.2 cm); L. of blade 30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (78.1 cm); L. of quillons 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (15.6 cm)

Bequest of George C. Stone, 1935 36.25.1297

This saber is fitted with one of the most beautiful and best-preserved Ottoman blades in existence. Long and gently curved, the blade of dark steel is single-edged, with a wide, double-edged point. Both sides are covered overall with Arabic inscriptions within cartouches, which are arranged in two rows down the blade's length. The decorative technique is an unusual one: the inscriptions are left in dark steel, whereas the background is cut away and inlaid in gold flush with the surface. Between the cartouches the surfaces are inlaid with gold tendrils and flowers. The opulence of the blade was originally matched by that of the hilt, of which only the guard survives (the green-dyed fish-skin grip is a nineteenth-century replacement). The cruciform guard of blackened iron has straight quillons with cut-and-pierced palmette-shaped tips, the surfaces chiseled in low relief and damascened in gold with petaled rosettes and meandering stems. This raised ornament is set against a secondary design of floral scrolls in gold, inlaid flush with the surface. The rosettes were originally inlaid with rubies, of which only one fragmentary example remains. Several mid-sixteenth-century swords in the Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul, have comparably decorated guards. Judging from these examples, the grip of the Museum's sword would have been of leather-covered wood capped with an angled pommel decorated to match the guard.

While Qur'anic inscriptions are a commonplace embellishment on Islamic sword blades, the extensive and exquisitely rendered





verses chosen for this blade must have had special significance for its owner. The inscriptions specially emphasize the sovereignty of God and the wisdom and power of his servant Solomon. Included are the “Throne” verse (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255) and “Victory” verse (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:1–11), as well as the popular war cry “Help from Allah and a speedy victory” (*Surat al-Saf*, 61:13), all frequently encountered on Islamic arms. The references to Solomon (*Surat al-Naml*, 27:17–19, 29–31), the wise ruler, are, by contrast, unusual to find in this context and may be interpreted as allusions to Sultan Süleyman I the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), for whom such an exceptionally rich and sophisticated weapon was very likely made.

DGA / SWP

PROVENANCE: Haim, Istanbul; George C. Stone, New York (until d. 1936)

### 223. Helmet

Turkey, early 17th century  
Copper; hammered, engraved, punched, and gilded  
10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 9 in. (27.5 × 23 cm)  
Gift of Mrs. Ruth Blumka, in memory of Leopold Blumka, 1974 1974.118

### 224. Shaffron

Turkey, 16th century  
Copper; hammered and gilded  
23<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (59.1 × 22.2 cm)  
Bequest of George C. Stone, 1935 36.25.496

In the sixteenth century Ottoman metalworkers developed a novel class of wares fashioned from gilt copper, *tombak* in Turkish.

Intended for use both in the mosque and the home, these wares included mosque lamps and incense burners, candlesticks, bowls, ewers, tankards, and rosewater bottles as well as door hinges and other decorative appliques, all fashioned from cast or hammered copper often embellished with engraved, punched, or pierced decoration and richly gilt overall. Gleaming *tombak* vessels were widely used well into the nineteenth century.

In addition to being crafted into religious and domestic objects, *tombak* had an important military application. Ottoman armorers appreciated the visual appeal of the material, which was also much easier to work than iron, and so fashioned from it large numbers of helmets, shields, shaffrons, and standard finials (*alam*). Although it provided no effective defense in battle, lightweight *tombak* armor was ideal for parades and other ceremonial use and effectively enhanced the pomp and colorful impression of the Ottoman army.

The Museum’s helmet is an unusually elaborate *tombak* example. Its pointed bowl is divided into twelve tapering vertical panels, each slightly raised, with alternating panels engraved with a large split-leaf arabesque against a stippled ground; the panels are outlined with rivet holes, suggesting appliques now lost. Also no longer extant are the horizontal brim, large cheek pieces, nape defense, and textile lining with which the helmet would originally have been fitted. The stylized foliate ornament points to an early seventeenth-century date.

The shaffron—armor for the horse’s head—has a simple yet bold form that typifies the so-called plain style in sixteenth-century Ottoman decorative arts. Hammered from copper sheet, the shaffron’s central plate is shaped around the eyes and expands down the nose with a decoratively scalloped edge; the surface is articulated by a single groove extending down each side and fanning out over the nose. The center is occupied by a large plume tube and a raised triangular plate placed horizontally across the forehead as a defense against glancing weapons, a feature carried over from iron shaffrons of war. Hinged at the sides by rings of iron are narrow





*tombak* plates to which were originally affixed the straps and buckles that secured the shaffron around the horse's head.

Both pieces are incised with the *tamga* mark applied to pieces stored in the Ottoman arsenals.

DGA / SWP

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 223: Theron J. Damon, Istanbul (until 1925; sold to Dean); Bashford Dean, Riverdale, N.Y. (1925–28, sale, American Art Association, New York, November 23–24, 1928, lot 302, to Duveen for Mackay); Clarence Mackay, Roslyn, N.Y. (1928–d. 1938; his estate, from 1938); Leopold and Ruth Blumka, New York (until 1974)

Cat. 224: [Clapp and Graham, New York]; George C. Stone, New York (until d. 1935)

## 225. Fragment of a Kaftan Back

Turkey, probably Istanbul, mid-16th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; *taqueté* (*seraser*)

52 × 27 in. (132.1 × 68.6 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.15

Artists who, in the mid- to late sixteenth century, created the distinctive luxury silk fabrics with silver- or gold-colored grounds known in Turkish as *seraser* and in French (the standard textile terminology today) as *taqueté*, were a breed apart. They favored a repertoire of eccentric and even bizarre large-scale designs, such as this three-lobed form based on peacock feathers.

Used in the Ottoman Empire to produce silver- or gold-colored silk fabrics by wrapping white or yellow silk yarns with very thin strips of silver or gold foil, the *seraser* technique was practiced by a relatively limited number of weavers, and the earliest surviving examples show small-scale designs adorning narrow stripes (cat. 226A, B). By the middle of the sixteenth century Ottoman cloth-of-silver fabrics began to appear in unusual designs, such as the one seen here. By the mid-seventeenth century the scale of the designs had grown even larger, but the quality of the fabric seriously declined; the surviving *seraser* robes of honor given to foreign ambassadors by the Ottoman court during the eighteenth century are coarse in weave and artistically less than exciting. It appears that the periodic enforcement of legal restrictions on the use of gold and silver in luxury fabrics had an undue impact on *seraser* production and ultimately led to its decline.<sup>1</sup>

The Metropolitan's *seraser* fabric is the back panel from an Ottoman ceremonial kaftan that evidently survived in fine condition until entering the art market in the last century: the two panels constituting the halves of the front of the garment are in the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;<sup>2</sup> the sleeves are in a private collection; and the small diamond-shaped underarm gussets briefly appeared in private hands in the early 1990s, only to vanish again shortly thereafter. *Seraser* was favored for the vast baggy pants (*shalvar*) sometimes worn by the sultans, outstanding examples of which survive in Istanbul's Topkapı Palace Museum. The most remarkable surviving Ottoman *seraser* fabric, with designs depicting Christ Enthroned, was sent from Istanbul as a gift to a sixteenth-century Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow.<sup>3</sup>

W B D



1. See Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 220–22, 260–63.

2. Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (no. 1.60); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 08.387).

3. Atasoy et al. 2001, pl. 10.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1908–d. 1951; his estate, until 1952; sold to MMA)



## 226A, B. Two Fragments of Ottoman Silk

### A. Small Fragment of Ottoman Silk with Banded Chintamani Design

Turkey, probably Istanbul, early 16th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; *taqueté* (*seraser*)

16½ × 6¼ in. (41.9 × 15.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1915 15.125.7

### B. Small Fragment of Ottoman Silk with Banded Design

Turkey, probably Istanbul, first half of 16th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; *taqueté* (*seraser*)

17⅞ × 5¾ in. (45.4 × 14.6 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund, Louise E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art,  
and The Page and Otto Marx Jr. Foundation Gift, 2003 2003.519



A



B

The overwhelming majority of surviving early Ottoman silk fabrics are in one of two techniques, what the Ottomans called *kemha* (known today by the French term *lampas*) and velvet. Much rarer are Ottoman silk fabrics such as these, woven of metal-wrapped silk thread in an ancient technique called *seraser* (head-to-head) by the Ottomans and today known by the French term *taqueté*. Ottoman *seraser* usually features a silver-colored ground with decorative motifs in two (or rarely three or more) colors. The artists of Ottoman times who designed and wove this particular type of fabric seem to have been highly independent; their works are unusual in that they often do not follow the major stylistic trends in Ottoman art that appear in *lampas* and velvet fabrics. Most of the relatively few surviving early Ottoman *seraser* fabrics seem to have been made for ceremonial costumes and feature surprising, sometimes even peculiar designs on an enormous scale; the Metropolitan's famous kaftan back (cat. 225) with its huge peacock-feather design is typical.

Specimens of Ottoman *seraser* thought to date from the first half of the sixteenth century, all of which exhibit narrow horizontal bands of small-scale decoration, are extremely rare,<sup>1</sup> and they have survived only in very small vertical fragments. None remain in the Topkapı collections in Istanbul, which is quite exceptional, and no surviving pieces indicate by their cut that they were intended for garments. The characteristic large-scale designs and broad areas of silver ground of most Ottoman *seraser*, ideal for projecting an image of power in ceremonial robes, make the intended use of these small-scale *seraser* fabrics all the more enigmatic. The first of the Metropolitan fragments (cat. 226A) shows a design of tightly drawn *chintamani* forms, small crescentlike pearls in groups of three, in alternating rows of red, blue, green, and black on a gold ground. The fabric forming the ground is yellow thread wrapped

with extremely thin strips of silver foil, known in Ottoman times as *sim*, giving it a shiny gold appearance.

The other fragment (cat. 226B) has a more elaborate design, composed of both broad and narrow horizontal bands. In the broader bands, blue diamondlike rectangles, each bearing eight-petaled silver blossoms, are framed by red borders composed of two intertwined silver ribbonlike forms. These wider bands alternate with narrower white-ground bands containing a blue undulating vine. The overall effect results from the richness of colored silk accented with the silvery sheen of the metal-wrapped thread. Only a few of these banded *seraser* fabrics exhibit designs showing the impact of the Ottoman floral style after 1550, which suggests that the majority may date from the first half of the sixteenth century.

We may never know why many of the most beautiful surviving sixteenth-century Ottoman fabrics in the Topkapı Palace collections have come down to us in the form of small fragments, the remainder of the bolts of silk from which they originally came having vanished, possibly due to a catastrophic fire.<sup>2</sup> This being the case, the surviving *seraser* fragments with banded layouts such as those in the Metropolitan constitute both an artistic treasure and an intriguing mystery.

WBD

1. Doha 2004, pp. 26–31.

2. See Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 217–19.

#### PROVENANCE:

Cat. 226A: [Indjoudjian Frères, Paris, until 1915; sold to MMA]

Cat. 226B: [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York; to Beshir]; [Karekin Beshir, Inc., New York, ?1952–87, to Textile Gallery]; [The Textile Gallery, London, 1987–88]; The Wher Collection, Lugano, Switzerland (1988–2001; sale, Christie's South Kensington, October 19, 2001, lot 156); [The Textile Gallery, London, 2001–3; sold to MMA]



## 227. *Kaftan Back*

Turkey, probably Istanbul, first half of 16th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas (*kemha*)

50 × 25½ in. (127 × 64.8 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.18

A striking design of blue and yellow large-scale floral roundels in staggered rows on a red satin ground ornaments this loom-width piece of Ottoman brocaded silk fabric that probably served as the back of a ceremonial kaftan robe. The technique, a combination of two different weaves, is called *lampas* in French and *kemha* in Turkish. It combines a red shiny satin ground, whose surface is composed only of vertical warp threads, with vegetal and floral design motifs executed in variously colored supplementary wefts in twill weave, including metal-wrapped silk.<sup>1</sup> The layout allows the design to repeat both horizontally and vertically if the designs are matched when one loom-width is sewn to another loom width from the same bolt.

The tiny, upright, circular pomegranate forms on top of each floral roundel in this silk and metallic-thread textile indicate that the layout was designed with a definite top and bottom. Two networks of thick stems link the roundels and surround them—one stem pattern notionally on a level above the other—and are in turn ornamented with smaller roundels bearing flowers whose six petals are arranged in spirals. The complete absence in the design of the Ottoman stylized flowers that became popular in the second half of the sixteenth century, together with some Italianate features of the layout, suggests that this beautiful fabric was probably woven in Istanbul in the first half of the sixteenth century.

When he visited the Ottoman Empire in the late 1550s, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, serving as ambassador for the Habsburg ruler of Vienna, wrote eloquently about the richness and beauty of the fabrics that he saw in ceremonial robes worn on the occasion of a great state audience. He noted the great dignity they conferred on their wearers and commented on the contrast between the complexity, color, and beauty of the fabrics themselves and the simplicity of the cut of each robe, a comment borne out by the minimal tailoring evident in this panel.<sup>2</sup>

WBD

1. On lampas, see Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 224–25.

2. See Busbecq 1927, p. 61.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (by 1908–d. 1951; his estate, until 1952; sold to MMA)





## 228. *Length of Fabric*

Turkey, probably Istanbul, ca. 1565–80  
Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas (*kemha*)  
48 × 26½ in. (121.9 × 67.3 cm)  
Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.21

One of the more popular layouts with Ottoman textile artists, and one that eventually found its way into other media such as ceramic tile decoration, the pattern on this fabric fragment features parallel undulating vines adorned with leaves and flowers. This example, almost certainly from the later 1560s and deservedly among the most famous Islamic textiles in the Metropolitan Museum, is a beautiful and early demonstration of Ottoman *kemha*, a complex brocaded silk weave. The design, featuring compound floral palmettes and leaves decorated with the newly invented motifs of stylized flowers—tulips and carnations (see detail)—as well as traditional stencil-effect lotus blossoms, is executed in gold twill on a brilliant red satin ground. The combination of superb drawing, the impression of animated movement, and the simplicity of color palette typifies the very best of Ottoman textile design at a time when the classical brilliance of the Ottoman floral style was at its peak, before it evolved into the more individualistic and often mannered style of the 1580s and beyond.

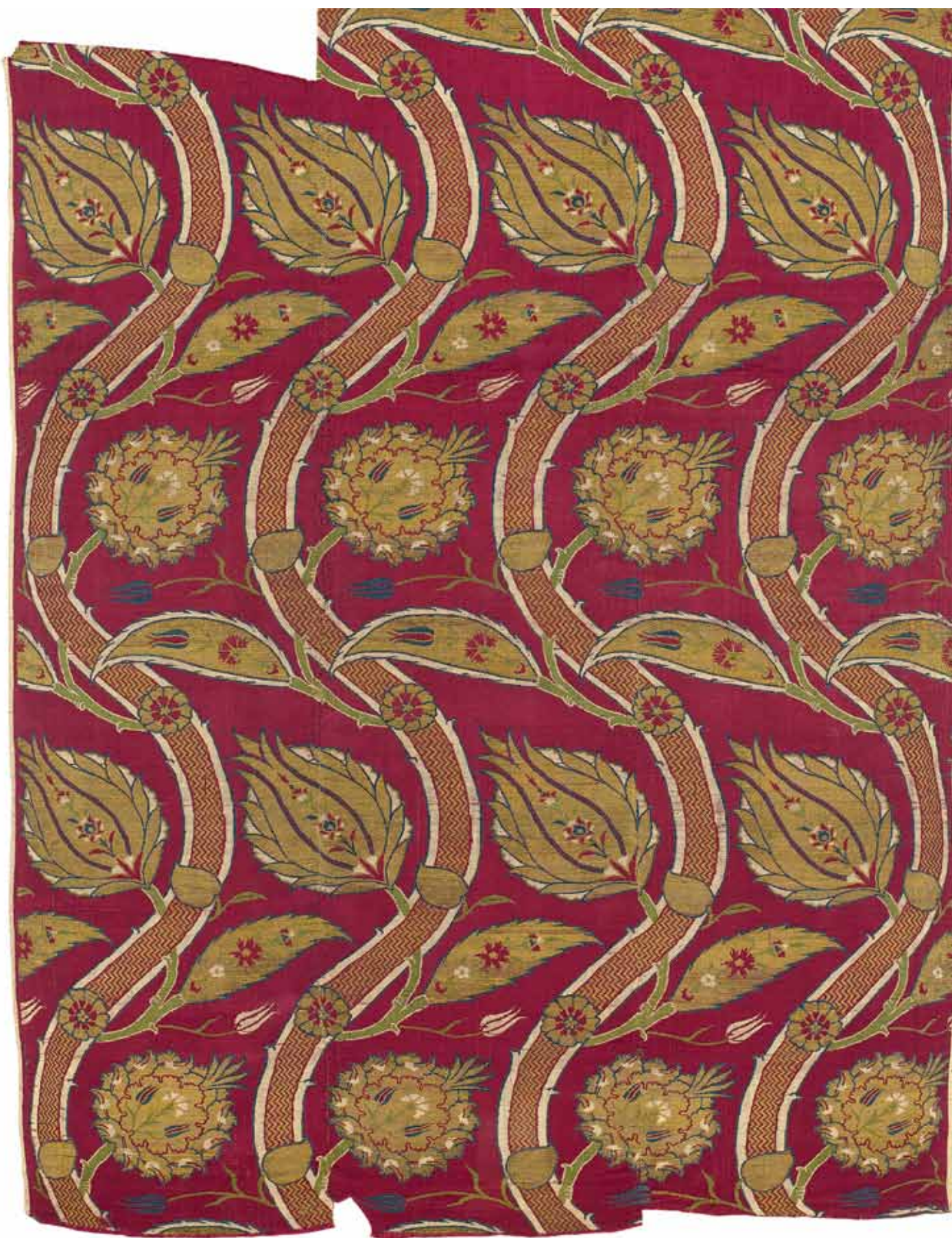
Several artistic decisions have resulted in the aesthetic success of this loom-width panel. The first involved visual texture: the decision to decorate the wide bands of swaying vines with a small pattern of zigzag lines (rather than executing them in white) makes them the basic structure of the design without overwhelming the two different kinds of palmettes growing from them. The second decision concerned scale: the new motifs, the stylized tulips and carnations, are subordinated to the large-scale palmettes that they decorate, with a single small tulip making a periodic solo appearance on the red ground. The third artistic decision was one of layout: how to make a horizontal connection between the vertical vines only once in every repetition of the design. This was accomplished by making a left-leaning leaf decorated with a single carnation and tulip overlap the adjacent vine. The result is the epitome of the Ottoman classical style: a combination of richness and simplicity, large-scale grandeur and subtle detail.<sup>1</sup> WBD

1. On the layout, and this textile, see Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 282–85, and pl. 42.

PROVENANCE: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (until d. 1951; his estate, until 1952; sold to MMA)







## 229A–C. Three Textile Fragments with Ogival Patterns

### A. Loom-Width Fragment of Silk Fabric with Blue Ground

Turkey, probably Istanbul, mid-16th century

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas (*kemha*)

24 × 26½ in. (61 × 67.3 cm)

Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1952 52.20.22

### B. Loom-Width Fragment of Silk Fabric with Red Ground

Turkey, probably Istanbul, ca. 1570–80

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas (*kemha*)

123½ × 26½ in. (313.7 × 67.3 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1944 44.41.2

### C. Loom-Width Fragment of Silk Fabric with Purple Ground

Turkey, probably Istanbul, ca. 1570–80

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas (*kemha*)

56¼ × 26 in. (142.9 × 66 cm)

Anonymous Gift, 1949 49.32.79

Seen in these three colorful pieces of Ottoman silk from the sixteenth century, the ogival lattice became the most emblematic of all Ottoman design layouts for both lampas and velvet fabrics. Similar layouts were used first in Chinese silk cloth and later in fifteenth-century Mamluk silks from Egypt as well as European velvets, but throughout the second half of the sixteenth century the Ottomans produced an astonishing variety of ogival-design textiles utilizing the famous Ottoman stylized flowers as decorative motifs.

The blue-ground fragment (cat. 229A) with pale orange and gold ornamentation is both the smallest and the earliest of the three; its design consists of staggered rows of ogival medallions, each with a central tulip amid leaves that appear stencil-like in form, surrounded by a cusped collar decorated with small leaves, surrounded in turn by a more complex leafy margin decorated with honeysuckle blossoms. The blue ground between the medallions is ornamented with more orange and gold tulips and with round pomegranates, each decorated with a rosebud, on a network of thin, sinuous stems. Overall, the effect is restrained and elegant in its simplicity.

By the time Ottoman textile artists created the designs for the other two ogival-layout silk fragments seen here, more adventurous ideas had begun to prevail. The red-ground fabric (cat. 229B), with both selvages intact, is unusually long for a surviving piece of

Ottoman silk and was probably used for furnishings, since it has not been cut in a shape to make a garment. Tightly drawn lotus blossoms and tulips in the gold medallions contrast with the size and boldness of the interlocking interstitial motifs, which are decorated with tiny jewel-like ornaments with a scalelike texture. Details of the design have been related to Italian damasks.<sup>1</sup>

The purple-ground fragment (cat. 229C), with its central leaf-edged medallions bearing sprays of tulips, carnations, and rosebuds on a rich gold ground, uses a more conventional ribbonlike device to delineate the ogival areas; the ribbon is decorated with tiny rosebuds and tulips. Relatively uncommon among Ottoman fabrics is the rich purple ground, and the use of a dark-brown silk warp lends a deeper and richer effect to the design.<sup>2</sup> The pattern of cuts at the top and bottom of this piece suggests it was used in a garment, probably an Ottoman ceremonial kaftan, where its rich colors, large areas of gold, and impressive scale would have made a striking effect.

WBD

1. See Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 104, 105, and 332, fig. 208, pl. 57.

2. Ibid., p. 332, pl. 58.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 229A: Dikran G. Kelekian, New York (until d. 1951; his estate, until 1952; sold to MMA)

Cat. 229B: [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York, until 1944; sold to MMA]

Cat. 229C: Anonymous (by 1935–49)



A



C



B







### 230. Velvet Fragment

Turkey, Bursa, second half of 15th century  
 Silk, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet (*catma*), brocaded  
 29½ × 28 in. (74.9 × 71.1 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1908 08.109.23

Silk velvets woven in Bursa, the Ottoman Empire's first major capital city and its center for the trade in Iranian and domestic raw silk as well as for luxury silk weaving, reached their zenith in quality by the later fifteenth century. This small fragment, probably originally from the back of a garment, exhibits a dense silk velvet pile dyed dark purple-red with expensive insect-based dye. The areas without pile were originally densely brocaded with ivory silk yarns wrapped in very thin strips of silver, most of which has over time tarnished to a dark gray. Early Bursa velvets were woven on looms with a standard width of about twenty-nine and one half inches (75 cm), and this loom-width

example has a selvage on both sides. Other examples from this bolt are found in many museums.<sup>1</sup>

The pattern is known as *chintamani*, a Sanskrit term translatable as "auspicious jewel." In an amazing design migration, the original Buddhist artistic form—three flaming pearls set in the headdress of a bodhisattva—entered the Islamic world as early as the ninth century, where it appeared in the Abbasid pottery of Samarra in Iraq. Recognized as a good-luck symbol of great power, it appeared again quite prominently around 1400 in Timurid coinage struck in Iran and Central Asia, and by the later fifteenth century the form began to appear in almost every medium of Ottoman art, from ceramics, manuscript binding and illumination, woven textiles, and carpets to metalware, carved stone architectural decoration, leatherwork, and embroidery.<sup>2</sup>

The three-spot design is often referred to in Ottoman sources as *benekli* (spotted) or *pelengi* (leopardlike).<sup>3</sup> Over time, the form appears to have gathered, in addition to its associations with good luck and the warding off of evil spirits, a distinctly masculine aura,



probably because of its association with the spotted leopard-skin helmet and striped tiger-skin coat worn by the popular Persian epic hero Rustam. Ottoman art with this motif usually appears in the secular sphere, but by the later seventeenth century the *chintamani* motif was prominently used on the facade of an imperial house of prayer, the Yeni Valide Mosque, in Istanbul. WBD

1. Among others, the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
2. See Paquin 1992.
3. Denny 1972; see also Washington, D.C. 1973, p. 21 and pl. 1.

PROVENANCE: [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York, until 1908; sold to MMA]

### 231. Velvet Cushion Cover (*Yastık*)

Turkey, Bursa, ca. 1600

Silk, cotton, metal-wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet (*catma*), brocaded

Side a: 50 × 26½ in. (127 × 67.3 cm)

Side b: 50½ × 26½ in. (128.3 × 67.3 cm)

Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917 17.120.123

Standard furnishings of an Ottoman domestic interior included platforms around the edge of a room—called *sofa*, from the term *suf*, meaning wool, with which their upholstery was usually stuffed—that were upholstered with mattresslike cushions for seating. Flat bolster pillows known as *yastık* were placed against the wall to form a back to lean against. Such built-in furniture, common in both the *harem*, the private family quarters of an Ottoman residence, and the *selamlık*, or area where guests could be entertained, was commonly decorated with lavish textiles that proclaimed the prosperity, social standing, and good taste of the household. Often these textiles were made in matching sets. Some were covered with needlework (embroidery), especially in later Ottoman times; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, the wealthiest households, up to and including the sultan's palace itself, frequently employed Bursa silk velvet fabrics, often enriched with metallic brocading, for upholstery and wall hangings.

The silk velvets woven in Ottoman Bursa were in the main destined for use as furnishing fabrics, and the Bursa weavers skillfully developed velvet patterns that were ideally suited for interior decoration. As can easily be seen, the design of this loom-width *yastık* bolster cover was adapted from a conventional bolt of velvet cloth with staggered rows of upright palmettes to incorporate a



repeating series of identical cushion or bolster covers, with as many as eight or more such covers, or panels, that could be cut from a single bolt of cloth.<sup>1</sup> Each panel was a bit more than two feet wide (the width of a typical Bursa velvet loom during this period), and the length was usually about double the width. At both ends of the panel pattern, we see flaps or lappets consisting of an arcade of six small arched forms whose background color alternates between silver and white. WBD

1. Atasoy et al. 2001, pp. 212–13.

PROVENANCE: Isaac D. Fletcher, New York (until d. 1917)





## 232. *Silk Banner (Sanjak)*

Turkey, probably Istanbul, dated A.H. 1235/1819–20 A.D.

Silk, metal-wrapped thread; lampas, brocaded

115<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 85<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (294 × 217.2 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1976 1976.312

Inscriptions in Arabic in *thuluth* script:

Around the edge, in green fabric, repeated several times: [Qur'an 112]

In the central roundel at top (upside down):

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم يا حافظ

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, O Guardian

In circles to left and right of the flag, repeated (read from right): [Qur'an 11:88]

On the handle of flag (read from right):

يا حضرت خالد

O your highness Khalid (Probably Khalid Ibn al-Walid,  
the leader of Muslims in battle)

On the field of the flag:

أبي أيوب انصاري

For Abu Ayyub Ansari ([in Turkish, Eyup] a companion of the Prophet  
who died in an unsuccessful Arab siege of Constantinople in 674 A.D.)

In the central crescent-moon arc, a hadith of the Prophet and a date:

رُوي عن أبي هريرة رضي [الله عنه] قال رسول الله/ صلى الله عليه وسلم/ ١٢٣٥

It is reported by Abu Hurayra, [may God be] pleased [with him], that the  
messenger of God, blessings and peace be upon him, A.H. 1235 [1819–20 A.D.]

Inside the moon arc continuing the hadith:

عدل ساعة خير من عبادة سبعين سنة

One hour of justice is better than seventy years of worship

In six circles to left and right of the sword, the name of God, the Prophet,  
and the first four caliphs:

Left side from top:

الله محمد ابو بكر

God/Muhammad/Abu Bakr

Right side from top

عمر عثمان علي

'Umar/'Uthman/'Ali

On the octofoil sword, appearing four times, two of which are in  
mirror image (*muthanna*) to the other two:

يا ديان يا برهان

O judge, O proof

On the sword (read from left, written backward in mirror writing):  
[Qur'an 4:95–96]

Ottoman shield-shaped woven-silk banners such as this, known by the term *sanjak* (in Turkish, *sancak*), have long been used for military and religious purposes in the Ottoman Empire. A small example said to have been carried on the battlefield of Kosovo in 1389 is preserved in the Military Museum in Istanbul; a sixteenth-century French engraving depicts such banners carried by Muslim pilgrims; and a German account dating to about 1600 of an embassy to Istanbul presents a number of woodcuts showing *sanjak* banners being carried in various Ottoman processions.<sup>1</sup> Banners with dates woven into the fabric are known from as early as the later seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Metropolitan's banner, dated to the early nineteenth century, thus represents the continuation of a

long tradition, whose earlier examples have largely perished, doubtless through hard use.

Woven into the fabric is the representation of a double-bladed sword. It refers to Dhu'l faqar, a double-edged (misunderstood as double-bladed) weapon that, according to Muslim legend, belonged to 'Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, and the fourth "Rightly Guided Caliph" of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. The inscriptions on the Metropolitan's banner, found on many other such banners of this and earlier periods, show a self-conscious attempt both to stress the symbolism of the sword of 'Ali and to avoid any hint of Shiism, the sect of Islam that denies the legitimacy of the first three caliphs.

The sudden appearance of significant numbers of such traditional *sanjak* banners in early nineteenth-century Turkey is hard to explain. In a period of tension between traditional and modernizing factions before the violent suppression of the Janissaries in 1826, these banners may reflect one side of the coming confrontation between tradition and modernity in the Ottoman army.

W B D

1. On Ottoman banners, see Denny 1974a.
2. Ibid.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, France (at least since before 1939);  
[Ahuan Islamic Art, until 1976; sold to MMA]

## 233. *Cover*

Probably Turkey, 16th–17th century

Linen, silk; plain weave, embroidered

73<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 59<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (187.3 × 151.4 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1929 29.39

With its fresh palette, bold patterning, and engaging asymmetries, this charming textile embodies characteristics common to a number of Ottoman embroideries in the Metropolitan's collection. Embroideries were produced in many contexts throughout the far-reaching Ottoman Empire, from the imperial court ateliers of Istanbul to the provincial private sphere. Domestic embroideries such as this typically were made within the home for personal consumption, or for limited sale. It has been suggested that these large embroidered pieces may have served as coverlets or wall hangings.<sup>1</sup> Surviving examples date from as early as the sixteenth century, with production continuing well into the nineteenth century.

The pattern of this piece—a meandering red, yellow, and green garland lattice enclosing floral-filled medallions edged with blue flamelike borders—finds its echo on a similar textile in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.<sup>2</sup> Such ogival designs were likely inspired by the patterning of more luxurious Ottoman silk lampas textiles of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the contemporary

## 234. Early Animal Rug

Turkey, 14th century

Wool (warp, weft, and pile); symmetrically knotted pile

65 × 54½ in. (165.1 × 138.4 cm.)

Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, Louis V. Bell Fund and Fletcher, Pfeiffer and Rogers Funds, 1990 1990.61



silks, however, where the design was woven into the fabric through the use of a complex drawloom system, the patterns of these embroideries were created entirely by hand, stitch by stitch with needle and thread, worked in colored silk on a simple loosely woven plain-weave linen ground.

This cover is composed of three separate pieces; only a subtle color variation in the blue thread reveals the divisions. Since the linen foundation fabrics for these pieces often were woven on small looms, making larger covers required joining several loom widths to achieve the desired size.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps to enable a division of labor, the embroidery of the individual panels was completed separately before they were assembled. To ensure alignment of the final design, an underdrawing—still visible on this piece—was provided to guide the hand of the embroiderer.

DMT

Early animal rugs of Anatolia have long held a special fascination for Western scholars, perhaps because the type has such strong historical ties to Europe as objects of high status. The two best-known examples are the Berlin dragon-and-phoenix rug, acquired by Wilhelm von Bode in 1886 in Rome but said to come from a church in central Italy, and the Marby rug, discovered in a small church in Marby, Sweden, in 1925, featuring pairs of birds confronting a central tree.<sup>1</sup> Numerous versions of animal rugs were depicted in European paintings (most notably Italian) dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and usually shown in exalted circumstances.<sup>2</sup> There are also scattered fragmentary animal rugs lacking a specific European context but which add to the range of known pattern types.<sup>3</sup>

The picture changed considerably in 1990, when a series of animal rugs started to appear in the market, reportedly from Tibet.<sup>4</sup> This rug, acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, was the first. It features bold coloring and a highly stylized pattern consisting of two pairs of confronted quadrupeds of indeterminate type—forelegs are raised, jaws agape, and they seem to be performing a kind of dance. Each animal contains a smaller version of itself, in a play on the stock image of an animal within a compartment found in many ancient and medieval textiles. The existence of the Metropolitan's rug proved that two paintings, one from the great Ilkhanid *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of about 1330, the other an Italian rendition of *The Marriage of the Virgin* dating from about 1410, showing representations of carpets featuring animals with raised forelegs, were based on actual rugs.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the distinctive *kufic* borders of at least two of the rugs in the group match up in specific details with the outer border of the rug represented in the Persian painting.<sup>6</sup>

Palette, materials, structural features, and certain design elements link this animal rug to material that is ascribed to Anatolian production in a generic rather than specific way, including the other “early” animal rugs. These pieces do not make up a homogeneous group and thus do not represent the production of a single weaving center. An attribution to Anatolia says little about the cultural context of production. In this regard, it has recently been proposed that the Museum's animal rug and its close relatives might well represent Ilkhanid production, given the very similar attributes seen in the Ilkhanid *Shahnama* painting of about 1330. It has also been posited that the trade network of the Ilkhanids can explain the simultaneous movement of the animal rugs between

1. Washington, D.C. 2000, p. 71.

2. See Ellis, M., and Wearden 2001, pl. 3, p. 33, and entry on p. 16. See also what appears to be a third piece with similar pattern published in Wace 1935, pl. 109.

3. See, for example, cats. 229b and 229c in this catalogue. These, along with other ogival-pattern silks of the period, are published in Atasoy et al. 2001, pls. 57, 58.

4. Washington, D.C. 2000, p. 35.

PROVENANCE: George D. Pratt, New York (until 1929)







Anatolia and Italy, on the one hand, as testified by representations in paintings, and between Anatolia and Tibet, on the other, as indicated by the rugs themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Although an earlier date of production cannot be ruled out altogether, assignment of all the animal rugs in the Tibetan group to the fourteenth century is consistent with the *Shahnama* date and also aligns with the very early fifteenth-century dating of the Italian painting. That dating also falls within the range of carbon-14 results for the “Tibetan” group of animal rugs.<sup>8</sup> Both the Marby rug and the Berlin dragon-and-phoenix rug represent somewhat later production, with the manufacture of the Berlin piece coming no earlier than 1486.<sup>9</sup>

DW

1. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (no. 1–4); Statens Historiska Museet, Stockholm (no. 17786). Both were published in Sarre and Trenkwald 1926–29, vol. 2, pls. 1 and 2.
2. Mills 1978, with references to earlier studies.
3. See Ettinghausen 1959; see also Lamm 1985.
4. These are enumerated in Franes 1993b, pp. 266–69; and in Thompson 2010, p. 52 and n. 54.
5. Ettinghausen 1959, figs. 4 and 6; *Hali* 1990, p. 155.
6. The carpet in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, was published in Hamburg and Stuttgart 1993, p. 15. The rug in the Bruschettini Collection is unpublished.
7. Thompson 2010, pp. 52–54.
8. Franes 1993b, p. 373 n. 318.
9. Rageth 2004, pp. 106–8.

PROVENANCE: Fred Cagan, Nepal; [Lisbet Holmes Textiles, London, until 1990; sold to MMA]

### 235. *Star Ushak Carpet*

Turkey (western Anatolia), late 15th century  
Wool (warp, weft, and pile); symmetrically knotted pile  
13 ft. 10 in. × 91½ in. (421.6 × 232.4 cm)  
Gift of Joseph V. McMullan, 1958 58.63

Of the many surviving fifteenth- and sixteenth-century carpets with the so-called star pattern woven in the western Anatolian district of Ushak (in Turkish, *Uşak*), this example from the McMullan collection is widely acknowledged to be the preeminent masterpiece because of its large size, good condition, and excellent draftsmanship and execution. Carpets of this type were at one time attributed exclusively to the sixteenth century; the earliest example illustrated in a European painting appears in Venice in a work by Paris Bordone from the year 1534.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarship has made a strong case that the best and earliest Ushak carpets from two design groups—those with star medallions, such as the McMullan example, and those with ogival medallions—must in fact have been made in the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>



The McMullan Star Ushak carpet is probably one of the earliest Anatolian carpets to demonstrate the effect of what the German scholar Kurt Erdmann called the “carpet design revolution” of the fifteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Briefly stated, the design revolution marked a historical transition from carpets with relatively low knot density and highly geometric designs deeply rooted in traditional weaving traditions to carpets with higher knot density and curvilinear designs based on the arts of the book practiced in Islamic courts. The design of the Metropolitan’s carpet is infinite: the Star Ushak pattern of eight-lobed stars and smaller diamonds, which closely resembles the tile wall decoration of contemporary buildings in



northwestern Iran and Anatolia from which it is probably derived, is arbitrarily cut by the four borders of the carpet but could be repeated indefinitely. A carpet of this size, after all, is usually employed as an architectural decoration on a horizontal surface—a floor. Like all Ushak carpets, this one is woven with a wool warp, weft, and pile; the limited range of brilliant colors, the symmetrical knot, and the medium knot density are all characteristic of early western Anatolian carpet weaving. WBD

1. Denny 2006–7, p. 177.
2. See McMullan 1965, pp. 230–32, no. 67; the fifteenth-century dating is proposed by Walter B. Denny in Washington, D.C. 2002–3, pp. 38–43. Comparative material is found in Ölçer and Denny 1999, pp. 36–45 and pls. 71–74.
3. Erdmann 1976, pp. 31–33.

PROVENANCE: Joseph V. McMullan, New York (by 1954–58)

### 236. Large Ottoman Court Carpet

Egypt, Cairo, last quarter of 16th century

Silk (warp), wool (weft and pile); asymmetrically knotted pile

164¾ × 95¼ (top)–102⅞ (bottom) in. (418.5 × 241.9–260.7 cm)

The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 22.100.57

Carpets such as this splendid rug from the Ballard Collection document an unusual Ottoman artistic collaboration between the imperial design atelier in Istanbul and an Egyptian carpet-weaving tradition with roots in Mamluk times in pre-Ottoman Cairo. Known to art historians as Ottoman court carpets, these works occupy an artistic world of their own, far different from the indigenous carpet-weaving tradition of Anatolian Turkey itself. They reflect the Ottoman Empire's role as an artistic crossroads between three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The Ballard carpet is crafted from expensive and luxurious materials: the warp and weft are made of silk; the red wool pile is dyed with expensive insect-derived lac dye; and the pile is finely knotted using an asymmetrical knot open to the left, a form of knotting virtually unknown in the Anatolian tradition, taken directly from the weaving tradition of Egypt. The palette of colors—including purple-red, dark and light blue, yellow, and green—is likewise one derived from Egyptian rather than Turkish tradition. In addition, white accents in the design utilize a pile yarn of bright white cotton, another departure from Turkish custom. The design of the carpet is the product of a template or knot plan created in the Ottoman court design atelier in Istanbul. One small round medallion in the center of the carpet is echoed by four quarter medallions in the same design in the corners of the field. The red-ground field and the red-ground areas of the border are covered with a complex vine network bearing stylized lotus

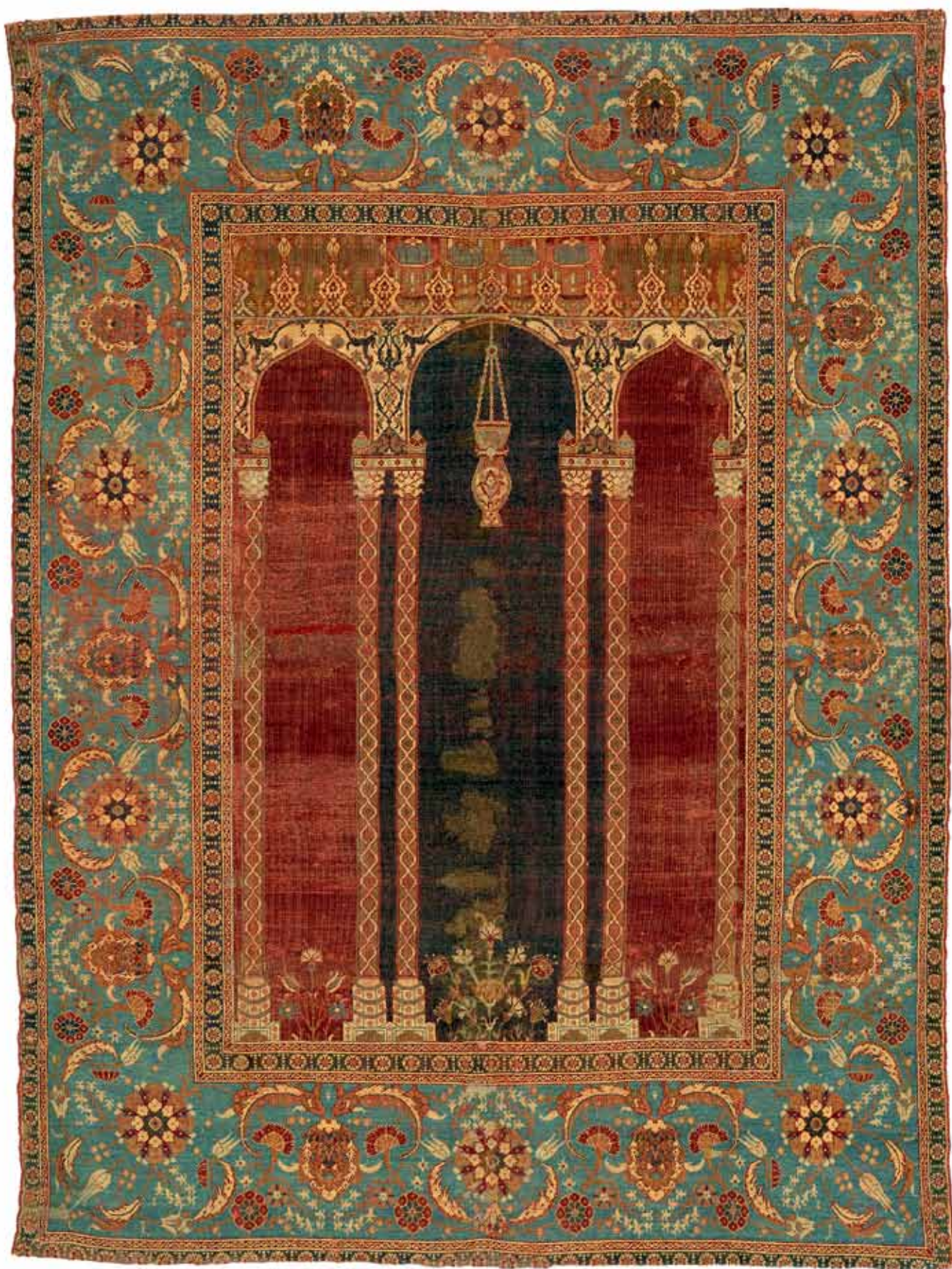


flowers and other imaginary blossoms together with sinuous, featherlike, sawtooth-edged leaves. These motifs reflect the *saz* style popular in the Istanbul design atelier, named after a mythical enchanted forest from Turkish folklore. But in the blue-ground medallions and quarter medallions of the field there appear the double stripes of the *chintamani* amulet, together with fanlike carnations and Ottoman tulips, while in the blue-ground shieldlike cartouches of the border we also see the stylized tulips, hyacinths, and rosebuds that derive from the new floral style that emerged in Istanbul in the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> WBD

1. A thoughtful recent summary of the “Cairene” carpet question is given by Jon Thompson in Milan 2006, pp. 160–75.
2. See Washington, D.C. 2002–3, pp. 44–46.

PROVENANCE: James F. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until 1922)







### 237. The Ballard Ottoman Prayer Carpet

Probably Turkey, Istanbul, ca. 1575–90

Silk (warp and weft), wool (pile), cotton (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
68 × 50 in. (172.7 × 127 cm)

The James F. Ballard Collection, Gift of James F. Ballard, 1922 22.100.51

One of the most famous *sajjada* (for prostration) prayer carpets in the world, the Ballard Ottoman prayer rug, with its design of a triple-arched gateway to paradise, was probably created in or near Istanbul in the later part of the sixteenth century. Woven in a technique that originated in Ottoman Cairo and was later transplanted to Istanbul, it was made with a silk warp and weft and an asymmetrically knotted pile of wool with accents in white cotton. Its perfect corner articulation, exquisite draftsmanship, fine weave, and expensive materials clearly indicate its origins in a workshop under court control, where luxury objects for royal consumption or royal gifts were made, following designs first created with pen on paper by artists in the royal Ottoman design workshop. Both size and design indicate that the carpet may have had two functions: first, as a wall hanging indicating the *qibla*, or direction of prayer toward Mecca in a palace or private residence; and, second, as a ritually clean place for the daily Islamic prayers, during which Muslims first stand, then bow, kneel, and briefly touch their foreheads to the ground in a gesture of humility before God.<sup>1</sup>

The carpet's design, which in the ensuing four centuries served as a prototype for countless hundreds if not thousands of Anatolian carpets, presents a number of intriguing questions. Depicted is a triple-arched gateway to paradise, with pairs of slender columns with faceted bases and foliated capitals separating the three portals. A lamp symbolizing divine light hangs from the central arch, and small Ottoman domes are clearly portrayed on the parapet above, while flowers at the base of the central arch also indicate that paradise awaits the pious Muslim who discharges the religious duties that include praying five times a day. Such slim coupled or paired columns that here separate the three portals do not occur in Ottoman architecture, and their origin has long been considered obscure. Recent scholarship suggests that the design of coupled columns may have originated in Islamic Spain and traveled east to Cairo and Istanbul along with the emigration of Sephardic Jews. These refugees from Spain, invited by the Ottoman sultan, settled in large numbers in Istanbul in the early sixteenth century and almost certainly used similar designs for *parokhet* (Torah curtains) employed as furnishings in Iberian synagogues.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Ballard prayer rug is the sole surviving example of a sixteenth-century carpet from the royal Ottoman manufactory that utilizes this design, several other carpets from the royal workshop with different designs are known in various museums. The triple-arched design, here appearing in a knotted-pile carpet for

the first time, later enjoyed enormous popularity in carpets woven in towns, villages, and even in nomadic encampments throughout Anatolia. The Metropolitan also possesses a large number of these descendants of the Ballard rug, which from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries show the evolution of the triple-arched design as it was passed from mother to daughter through many generations. WBD

1. Dimand and Mailey 1973, pp. 158–59, 233, no. 105.
2. Washington, D.C. 2002–3, p. 107, no. 44.

PROVENANCE: Félix Doistau, Paris; Edouard Chappey, Paris (until 1907; sale, Galerie Georges Petit, Paris, June 5–7, 1907); James F. Ballard, St. Louis, Mo. (until 1922)

### 238. Reception Room (Qa'a)

Syria, Damascus, dated A.H. 1119/1707 A.D.

Wood (poplar) with gesso relief, gold and tin leaf, glazes and paint; wood (cypress, poplar, and mulberry), mother-of-pearl, marble and other stones, stucco with glass, plaster ceramic tiles, iron, brass

H. Antechamber 22 ft. (6.7 m), seating area 19 ft. 11 in. (5.17 m);

L. 26 ft. 2 in. (7.9 m); W. 16 ft. 8 in. (5 m)

Gift of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, 1970 1970.170

This interior, a splendid example of a wood-paneled reception chamber (*qa'a*) from a private house in Damascus, is among the earliest extant, nearly complete interiors of its kind, dated by an inscription to A.H. 1119/1707 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Its refined decoration and large size indicate that it was once part of a house belonging to an important and affluent family. The exact residence from which this room came is unknown, but archival sources suggest that it was located within the walled city of Damascus, southwest of the Umayyad Mosque.<sup>2</sup> Judging from the layout of the room, it functioned as a winter reception salon, located on the north side of the building's internal courtyard, where it would have been warmed by its southern exposure.

In the early 1930s the room was removed from its setting and, along with another interior from a house in Damascus said to be owned by the Quwatli family, sold to Hagop Kevorkian. Both interiors were shipped to New York in 1934, but neither was installed until the 1970s, when the Hagop Kevorkian Fund donated one to the Metropolitan Museum and the other to New York University's Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies. When the Museum installed the room in the new Islamic galleries in the mid-1970s, some of the features from the Quwatli house interior were incorporated. A few further architectural components from both interiors—including two vertical wall panels and the riser of the seating area originally belonging to the room's

interior—were obtained by Doris Duke and installed at Shangri La, her villa in Honolulu.<sup>3</sup>

Characteristic of Ottoman-period reception rooms in Damascus, the space is divided by an imposing arch into two areas: a small antechamber (*ataba*) with a fountain, accessed from the courtyard of the house, and a raised square seating area (*tazar*). Integrated within the wall paneling are several display niches with shelves, cupboards, shuttered window niches, the entryway with a pair of doors, and a large decorated niche (*masab*). The wall paneling is crowned by a concave cornice, above which is a plaster wall that incorporates pierced-stucco windows with colored glass. The rectangular ceiling in the *'ataba* is composed of exposed beams and coffers, framed by a cornice with a three-tiered *muqarnas* (honeycomb-like) frieze. The *tazar* ceiling comprises concentric squares of varied patterns, framed by a concave cornice. Carved and painted squinches extend down from the four corners of both ceilings.

As is typical for Syrian reception rooms, the woodwork is elaborately decorated in gesso relief, called *'ajami*, incorporating gold and tin leaf, transparent colored glazes, and bright egg tempera paints to create variously textured and richly patterned surfaces—most of which appear darkened today by layers of later varnish.<sup>4</sup> All the elements decorated in this *'ajami* technique are made of poplar wood, while the unpainted framework of the wall paneling is composed of cypress. The ornamentation consists mainly of floral designs, fruit arrangements, geometric patterns, and calligraphy. Tulips, carnations, hyacinths, roses, and other flowers are gathered in vases within cartouches or strewn over brightly colored backgrounds; bowls overflow with fruit and vegetables; and astral motifs and geometric patterns serve as frames and borders. An oversize fruit bowl flanked by small architectural vignettes appears on the panel above the entrance. On the *tazar* ceiling, the wall cornice, and the wall panels are poetic verses. Those on the two cornices contain an extended garden metaphor—especially apt in conjunction with the surrounding floral imagery—that leads into praises to the Prophet Muhammad. Aside from an independent couplet on the east side, the verses on the wall panels praise the strength of the house and the virtues of its anonymous owner and conclude with an inscription panel above the *masab* containing the date of the woodwork.<sup>5</sup> The presence of fruit-bowl and flower-vase motifs in this room clearly demonstrates the rapid appropriation in Damascus of iconography popular in early eighteenth-century Istanbul, while the execution of these motifs in the local *'ajami* technique gives it a distinctly Syrian character.<sup>6</sup>

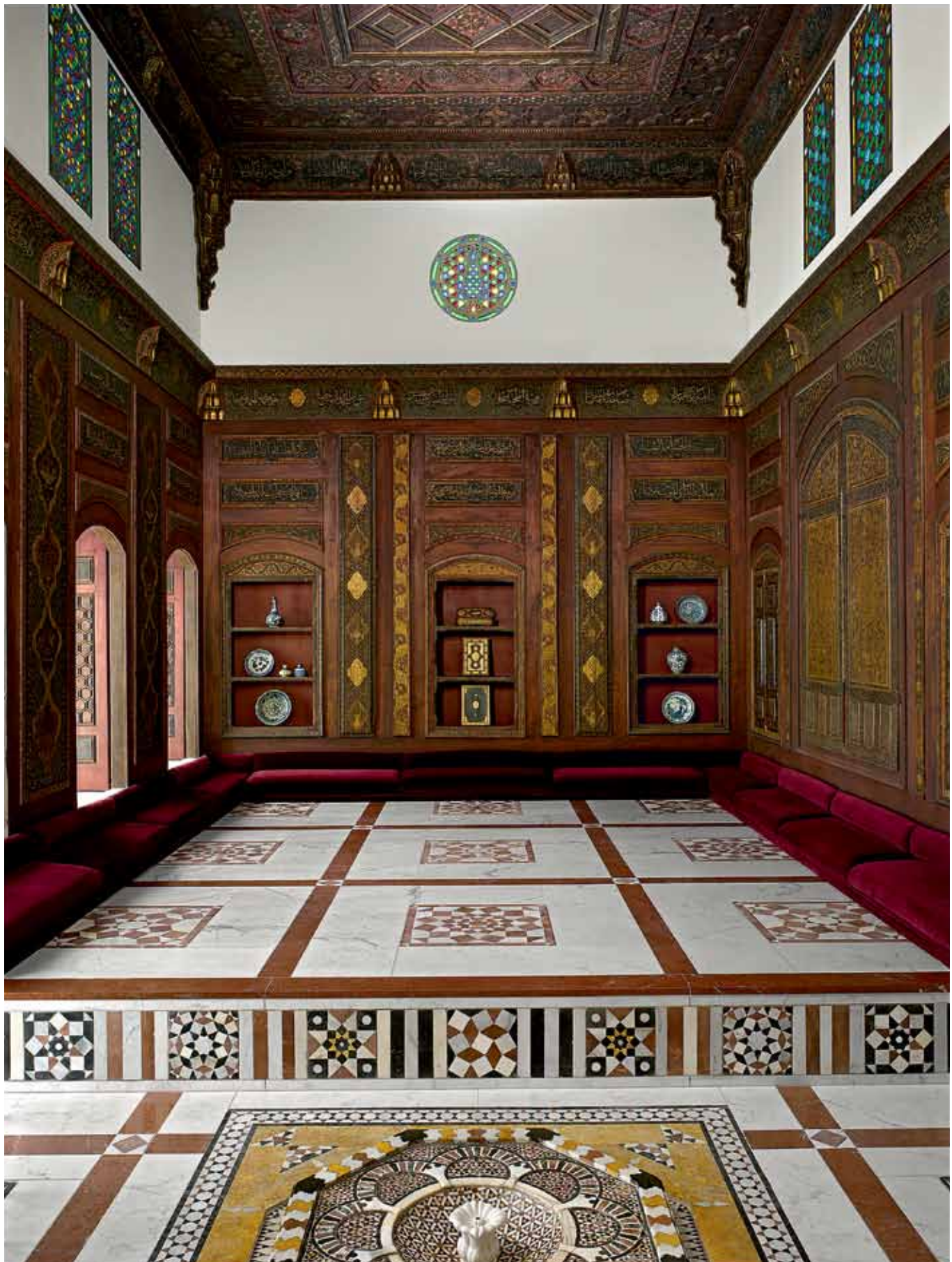
Like many period rooms, this interior reflects changes that it underwent over time in its original historical context as well as adaptations to its museum setting, though the overall dimensions have been retained. Two sets of photographs taken in the early 1930s document the appearance of the room in its original house prior to

its dismantling. The most dramatic change has been the gradual darkening of the layers of varnish that were applied periodically while the room was in situ; these now obscure the coloristic brilliance of the original palette and the exquisite nuance of the decoration.<sup>7</sup> Some elements of the room belong to restorations of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and reflect the shifting tastes of Damascene interior decoration: for example, the cupboard doors on the south wall of the *tazar* bear architectural vignettes in the Turkish Rococo style along with large central calligraphic medallions characterized by heavy gilding.<sup>8</sup> The *opus sectile* riser and *'ataba* dado documented in a historical photograph of the room in Damascus in the 1930s probably represent a modernization of the space in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. It was customary for wealthy Damascene homeowners to refurbish important reception rooms periodically, sometimes in honor of a special event.<sup>9</sup> The *'ataba* fountain, which also appears in the early 1930s photograph, may predate the woodwork, and the question of whether it came from the same reception room has been posed.<sup>10</sup> Comparable fountains from Syria and Egypt date to the sixteenth to seventeenth century and earlier.<sup>11</sup>

Other elements in the room relate to the pastiche of its installation in the 1970s. The square marble panels with red-and-white geometric patterns now placed orthogonally in the *tazar* floor actually come from the flooring of an *iwan*, or hall, in the Quwatli house courtyard, where they were arranged diagonally. Sections of two stone risers from the Quwatli interior were combined to replace the previous *tazar* riser, which was obtained by Doris Duke. The two *opus sectile* marble panels flanking the fountain in the *'ataba* floor once decorated the dado zone of the *'ataba* walls.<sup>12</sup> The tile ensemble on the back of the *masab* niche was selected from the Museum collection, while the lateral ceramic tiles in the niche appear to have come in with the Kevorkian Fund donation. The rectangular stained-glass windows on the north wall resemble those captured in the 1930s photograph but are not identical and come, like the other stained-glass windows, from an unidentified setting.

In 2008 the room was dismantled to be moved from its previous location off the introductory gallery to a new space adjoining the galleries devoted to Ottoman art. Its deinstallation presented an opportunity for in-depth study and conservation.<sup>13</sup> Investigation of the individual components of the dismantled room revealed aspects of the original joinery of the wooden elements, a painted numbering system applied in the 1930s that confirmed the historic arrangement of the architectural sections, and eighteenth-century notations that indicated the correct sequence of the calligraphic panels. This evidence, together with study of the two sets of photographs from the early 1930s, has allowed the layout in the new installation to be adjusted to better reflect the historic arrangement of the architectural elements and to correct the order of the calligraphy. The two missing panels now installed in Honolulu





were photographically reproduced, printed on fabric, and mounted in the new installation on boards of the original size and shape. One more missing element came to light during this investigation: a series of flat cornice boards, originally attached to the top of the entire wall cornice. These boards, which projected into the room with polychrome decoration on the visible underside, served both as shelves for the display of objects and as a visual framing element for the *'ataba* and *tazar* ceilings. They were recently discovered at the Kevorkian Center at New York University, where they now adorn the steel framework of the library's mezzanines. Although this reception room has undergone many changes, it still conveys the richness and profusion of decorative detail intended to welcome and impress guests of one of the grand residences of eighteenth-century Damascus. EK/MB

For the reading and translation of this inscription, we thank Dr. Abdullah Ghouchani and Dr. W. M. Thackston, respectively. A full translation was published for the first time in Daskalakis-Mathews 1997.

1. This room is published in Daskalakis-Mathews 1997 and in a chapter by Daskalakis-Mathews in Peck et al. 1996 (pp. 287–95). It is discussed extensively in her dissertation, Daskalakis-Mathews 2004.
2. The sales contract stated that the “Nourredin House” was located “in Soukel Harir and Soukel Kayatin, in the ancient quarters of the City of Damascus.” The Arabic words *Nur al-Din jihat al-shamal* (Nur al-Din north side) are written on the reverse of one of a set of photographs taken of the room in the early 1930s, before it was disassembled (Shangri La Historical Archives, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu). Since recent research reveals no house of this name in the old city, it most likely refers to the nearby tomb of Nur al-Din, the famous twelfth-century ruler. Previously called the Nur al-Din Room in the Museum's 1970s installation, the space is now referred to as the Damascus Room, better reflecting its unspecified provenance.
3. The two wall panels and the *opus sectile* stone riser of the elevated *tazar* of the Museum's room were installed in the late 1970s in the Baby Turkish Room, an architectural pastiche at Shangri La. The present riser in the Metropolitan Museum's room is composed of inlaid stone elements from the risers of the Quwatli house interior. One of the window grilles in the Museum installation is documented to have come from this interior as well (the others are matching reproductions).
4. On this technique and its conservation, see Scharrahs 2008, pp. 918–23, Scharrahs 2011, and Baumeister et al. 2010.
5. The independent couplet in the center of the eastern wall was composed by the fourteenth-century Moroccan poet Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib (identification made by Dr. Abdullah Ghouchani). The authorship of the other poetry has not yet been identified. It is possible that a large niche (*yuk*) used for the storage of bedding was originally present in the center of the east wall and that the current display niche with the couplet above and two flanking panels on each side were added during a modernization campaign.
6. For a study of Turkish and Syrian interiors, see Renda 2008.
7. Varnish was traditionally applied to treat the *'ajami*-decorated woodwork in Damascus. Although removing or reducing the varnish layers would be desirable, the technical challenge presented by the interaction of the original materials with the varnish layers, especially as they affected the colored glazes applied to the tin-leaved surfaces, requires further investigation before any steps are taken. However, given that the surface appearance of the decoration has been compromised by these

darkened varnishes, a focus of the recent technical study of the room was to identify the original materials and techniques to understand better the original appearance of the decorated woodwork (see Baumeister et al. 2010 and Rizzo et al. forthcoming). Aspects of the scientific analysis of the surface decoration applied in the room are discussed in Arslanoglu and Schultz 2009, and Rizzo et al. 2010.

8. On the tastes that developed in later Ottoman Damascus, see Weber 2002. For the broader context of these residences, see Weber 2009.
9. Daskalakis-Mathews 1997, p. 133.
10. The fountain probably belonged to an earlier phase of the same room or residence from which the interior came. However, analysis of the ca. 1930 photograph raised speculation that the fountain in the *'ataba* may have been moved from another location, and a slightly earlier photograph of the fountain shows it with a different surround (Department of Islamic Art files).
11. For example, see Duda 1971, pl. 75, discussed pp. 63–65. See also Daskalakis-Mathews 2006.
12. The white marble lining the walls of the dado zone and surrounding the historic floor panels and fountain as well as the red marble strips forming the grid pattern on the floor are new.
13. See Baumeister et al. 2010 and Rizzo et al. forthcoming.

PROVENANCE: [Asfar and Sarkis, Damascus, Syria, early 1930s; sold to Kevorkian]; Hagop Kevorkian, New York (early 1930s–d. 1962); The Hagop Kevorkian Foundation, New York (1962–70)

#### Tazar Ceiling Text

رأى البرق تعبيس الدجا فتبسّمًا • و صافح ازهار الربا فتنبسّا  
The lightning saw the darkness frown and smiled. It skimmed and wafted  
over the flowers of the hills.

ولاح جبين الصبح في طرة الدجى • فخلت بياض الثغر في ثمرة اللّما  
Dawn's forehead shone through the forelock of darkness, and it pierced  
the whiteness of the teeth in the fruit of red lips.

ورفّ لواء البرق لما تلاعبت • سوابق خيل الرّيح في حلية السّما  
Lightning's banner fluttered when racing horses of the wind dallied in the sky.

وأفتر رامي الجوّ قوس سحابه • وأرسل نحو الأرض بالقطر سهما  
The archer of the air loosened the bow of his cloud and sent toward the  
earth a downpour of sun rays.

وقد بلّ أردان الثرى دمع مزنه (؟) • تناثر في أسلاكها فتنظّمًا  
The tears of the rain cloud have moistened the cuffs of the earth's sleeves—  
[the pearly tears] that were scattered on their threads were restrung.

وجرّ على هام الرّبا ذيل زيله (؟) • فدبّج اثواب الربوع وسهّما  
[The rain] dragged the skirt between its legs over the head of the hills  
and adorned the garments of spring encampments with stripes.

وشاب لجين الظّل عسجد بارق • فدثر أزهار الربيع ودرهما  
And the silver of the shade mixed with the gold of lightning, and it covered  
the spring flowers with a blanket and produced round leaves.

وشمّر كفّ الرّوض اكمام نوره • ووشّح اعطاف الغصون وعمّا  
And the hand of the garden gathered up the sleeves of its blooms and  
embellished the shoulders of the branches and wrapped them in turbans.

وقبّل ثغر الزهر وجنة وردّه • فأحسن به خدّا وأحب به فها  
The mouth of the flowers kissed the cheek of its rose. What a beautiful cheek!  
What a lovely mouth!

و... ق الغصن استحالّة جدول • كما سوّر التجعيد للنهر معصما  
... as the curling put bracelets on the river's wrist.



مَالٌ قَوْلٌ (قوار؟) البان يرقص نشطة • لبرقي ترأى او حمام ترأى  
Does the willow tree dance gaily because of lighting that became visible  
or because of warbling doves?

وعانق من خوط الأراكمة معطفًا • وقبّل من زهر الأقاحه ميسما  
It embraced a cloak of the thorn tree's green branches and kissed a mouth  
made of the blossoms of chamomile.

#### Wall Cornice Text

وخط بطرس الجوّ سطرًا مذهّبًا • فنفضّضه قطر الغمام وعجّبا  
And it wrote on a palimpsest of air a gilded line and then drops of clouds  
dotted it with silver.

وكحلّ بالياقوت جفنًا وناظرًا • وخضبّ بالحناء كفًا ومعصما  
It lined with ruby an eyelid and an eye, and it daubed with henna a hand  
and a wrist.

ولا حاجة في النفس إلا امتداحها • ابا القاسم الهادي النبي المعظّم  
The soul has no need but to praise him, Abu'l-Qasim, who guides aright,  
magnificent prophet.

بشيراً نذيراً صادق القول مرسلًا • حبيباً خليلاً هاشمياً مقدّما  
Bringer of glad tidings, warner of the hereafter, true in his words, emissary,  
beloved and friend [of God], of Hashimite descent, preferred by all.

تقيّاً نقيّاً أبطحياً مبيّلاً • سراجاً منيراً زمزماً مكرّماً  
Pious, pure, Abtahi [Meccan], revered, a shining lamp from Zamzam, honored.

نبي تردّ المجد والبأس حلية • مفوّقة فيها الجمال تجسّما  
A prophet who dons glory and power as striped finery in which beauty  
is embodied.

نبي هدى لولاه ما أشرق الدجى • ولا ازهر! الداجي ولا اغتسب الحما  
A prophet who has guided aright. Were it not for him, the dark would not be  
illuminated, night would not blossom, and slime would not bring forth greenery.

هو المجتبى المبعوث للناس رحمة • فله ما أحيأ وأحمى وأرحما  
He is the elect mercifully sent to the people. By God, how many are the  
lives he has given, how protective is he, and how merciful!

هو الذروة العليا التي لا ترتقى • هو العروة الوثقة التي لن تفصما  
He is the highest summit that cannot become higher. He is the firm bond  
that will never break.

ايا خاتم ارسال يا فاتح العلى • حنانيك قد وافيت بابك محرّما  
O seal of prophecy, O opener of highest heaven, I beg mercy, coming to  
thy gate as a sinner.

فيا رب يا الله كن لي ولا تكن • علىّ فقد ضاق الفلا و أظلم  
O Lord, O God, be for me, and be not against me, for the world has  
become narrow and dark.

سألتك بالهادي اجب دعوتي وجد • بما أرنجي يا مالك الأرض والسما  
I ask Thee by him who guides aright, answer my prayer and be generous  
with what I hope for, O master of the earth and sky.

وسامح ونعم والذي تطولا (؟) • ولا تحرق اللهم بالنار مسلما  
And be tolerant, respond favorably, and he who . . . , and, O God, do not  
burn any Muslim in hellfire.

وصلّ على المختار والصحب كلما • رأى البرق تعيس الدجا فنبّسا  
And pray for the Chosen One and his companions whenever lightning sees  
the darkness frown and smiles.

#### Wall Panels Text

بيت المحامد والمفاخر والندى • دامت بك الأفراح تهتّف سرمد  
House of praiseworthy and glorious deeds and generosity, may rejoicing  
in you be praised eternally.

شادتك ايد[ي] المجد في شرف العلى • لللائذين حيّ يصون من الردى  
Hands of nobility erected you in the highest dignity. Those seeking refuge  
have an abode that protects them from destruction.

وترنّمت ورق الحمايم بالهنا • بعلاك والداعي المتوّب غرّدا  
Turtledoves sing congratulations on your sublimity, and the well rewarded  
summoner (?) warbles.

بشارك بالعليا فبانك الذي • سامي الكواكب والدرار[ي] سوددا  
Rejoice in your loftiness, for he who built you surpasses the planets  
and stars in glory.

ندب له في كلّ صعب راحة • تأتي لها الأسد الضراغم سجّدا  
For it comfort is given in every difficulty: ferocious lions come to it prostrate.

ويذّ تمدّ السائلين بسببها • ما البحر عند نوالها إن أزيّدا  
A hand that assists with gifts those who implore, as the sea yields  
when it froths.

فرعُ ناه إلى الأكارم عصبه • نالت من المجد المؤثّل مقصدا  
A family branch which traces its root to the most noble of men derives  
more significance from high-born glory

من كلّ من لبس المعالي بردة • وبكلّ عزّ في الأنام قد ارتدا  
Than anyone who wears nobility as a cloak and is clothed in all splendor  
among mankind.

جعلوا الوزارة والصدارة خادماً • والوقت قنّاً والمفاخر اعبدا  
They have made the office of vizier and that of the comptroller subservient,  
time a slave, and the proud has been enslaved.

دُم بالمسرة يا فريد زمانه • واهناً بما لك بالعناية شيّدا  
Remain in happiness, O unique one of your time, and enjoy what has  
been erected with such care for you.

متنعمًا في ظلّ عيش ارغد • تقتاد ما تبغي على رغم العدى  
Luxuriating in the shadow of a life of easy, you achieve what you desire  
in spite of enemies.

ما جاء[ء]نا تاريخ ما أحكمته • بيتاً يصيخ له النهى ان انشدا  
What has come to us is the date of what you have built so strongly as  
a house for which wisdom cries out, "Recite!"

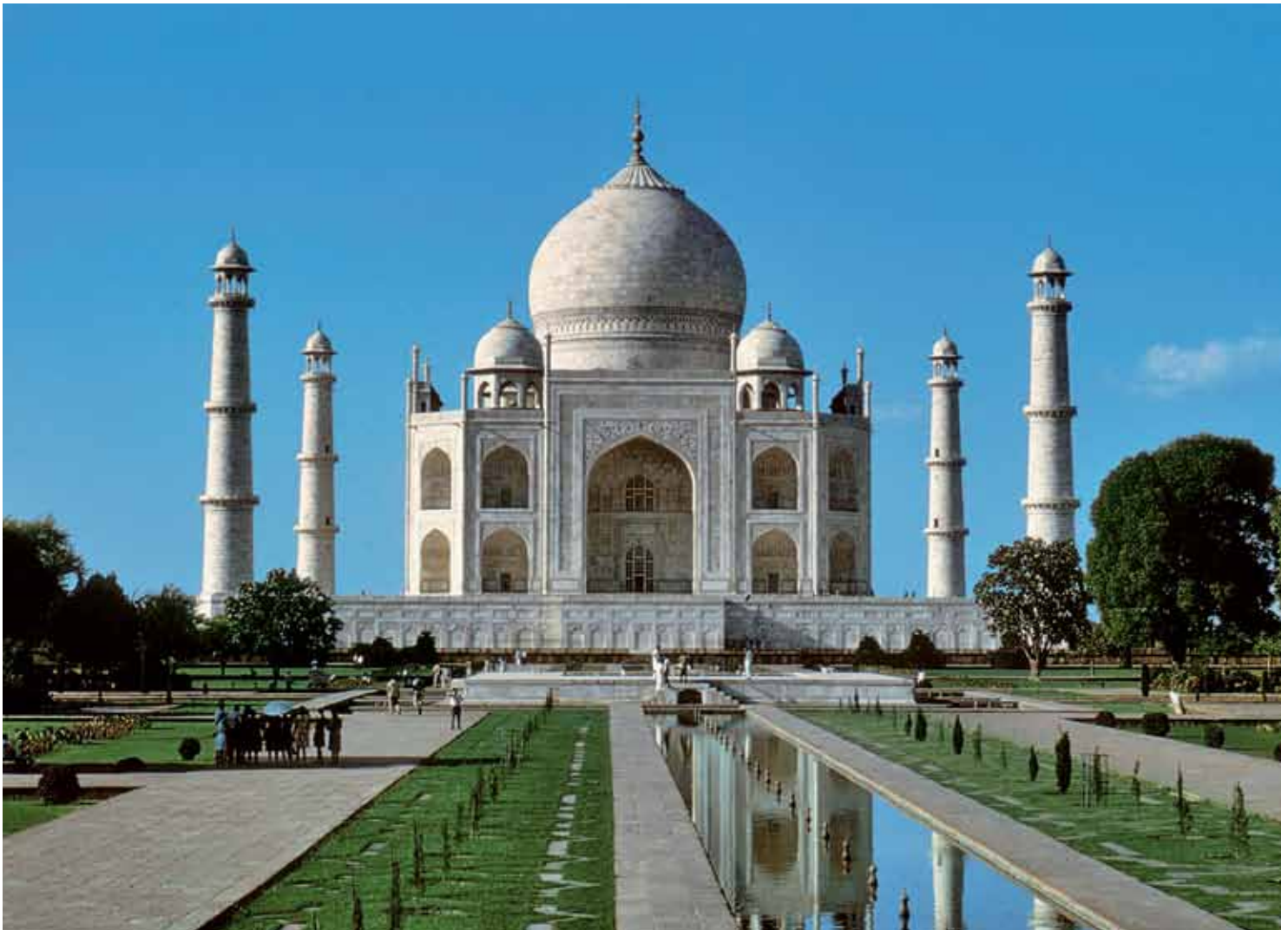
نادى البها والجود في أبراجه • محمد ربيع المكارم اطلّدا  
سنة ١١١٩  
In its towers are assembled splendor and generosity. Through Muhammad,  
the abode of noble qualities was established.  
Year 1119 [A.D. 1707-8].

#### Independent Couplets

يا مصطفى من قبل نشأة آدم • والكون لم تفتح له اغلاق  
أبروم مخلوق ثناؤك<sup>2</sup> بعدما • اثنى على أخلاقك الخلاق

O you who were chosen before Adam sprouted, before the locks  
of existence were opened, Can a creature desire to praise you after  
the Creator has praised your qualities?

1. For sense, read ازهد azhara for the ازهد of the inscription.
2. The word appears thus on the panel, but it should be ثناءك, not ثناؤك.



## *Art of South Asia (14th to 19th Centuries)*

NAVINA NAJAT HAIDAR

The spread of Islam in South Asia took place over a dynamic period of almost thirteen hundred years, extending across a vast territory containing what is arguably the most diverse ethnic, linguistic, and multireligious society in the world. Indo-Islamic cultural traditions within this context evolved not only through the establishment of a variety of Muslim courts and centers, but also through the interactions of artists, poets, writers, travelers, mystics, traders, craftsmen, and immigrants at every level. While the court arts and royal patronage form the principal context for the Indo-Islamic collections in the

Metropolitan Museum, these objects must also be considered within the wider cultural framework of South Asia, which remained a multicultural society throughout its Islamic period.

The later arts of South Asia reflect the profound intermixing of traditions, tastes, techniques, and styles from a wide variety of sources. The resulting rich mosaic of artistic expression has become a hallmark of the subcontinent. Modern societies of South Asia, which include the countries of India, Pakistan, eastern Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and, farther north, Nepal and Bhutan, are inheritors of the hybrid art



and culture of this Indo-Islamic age, and its deep impact continues to be seen in many spheres of life, from costume and cuisine to language, music, dance, and contemporary art.

### *The Arts of the Sultanate Period*

The earliest appearance of Islam in South Asia came soon after the birth of the religion in seventh-century Arabia as traders and travelers plied ancient routes of the Indian Ocean to the Malabar coast. The subsequent conquest of Sind by the Arab general Muhammad bin Qasim in the early eighth century made India the easternmost frontier of the Umayyad caliphate.<sup>1</sup> This initial Islamic presence was later followed by invading armies of Turkic, Persian, and Afghan dynasties, whose successive inroads into northern India from the eleventh to the thirteenth century paved the way for the eventual establishment of its first major Islamic states. The main Sultanates founded were in Bengal (1198–1576), Delhi (1206–1555), Jaunpur (1394–1483), Malwa (1402–1562), Kashmir (1339–1588), and Gujarat (1403–1573).

Sultanate architecture is characterized by the combination of long-established northern Indian architectural forms and modes of ornament with those derived from the architecture of Iran and Central Asia, giving Indo-Islamic art its distinctive and evolving character. Architectural remains from Sultanate sites constitute some of the most exceptional in South Asia, notably Delhi's iconic Qutb Minar complex (1192), the imposing battered profile of the Tughlaqabad Fort (1321), the Sidi Sayyid Mosque of Ahmedabad in Gujarat with masterful pierced screens (1573), and the enchanting city of Mandu in central India with its elegant pools and inventive buildings. A pair of fifteenth-century tiles in the Metropolitan's collection from a sufi shrine in Multan, Sind, are examples of the Central Asian-derived tradition of glazed ceramic cladding (cat. 241A, B).<sup>2</sup> From the eastern Sultanate world is a carved calligraphic gabbro panel dated 1500 from a mosque in western Bengal, executed in the characteristic bow-and-arrow *tughra* script of the region (cat. 240).

There are fewer surviving paintings from the Sultanate period than there are contemporaneous objects from western Asia. Two folios from the *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi show strong influences from the existing tradition of Gujarati Jain painting and the early Rajput palette, essential elements in the synthesis of art styles that emerged in this period (cat. 247A, B).<sup>3</sup> The contemporary Persianate tastes of this early era are reflected in the folios of a *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) manuscript illustrating the Iranian epic in a Shiraz idiom but with a brighter color scheme and bolder style that indicate its local origins (cat. 239A, B).<sup>4</sup>

### *The Age of the Mughals*

The sixteenth century saw the dawn of a new and magnificent era in northern India, with the emergence of a branch of the Central Asian Timurid dynasty, the Mughals (derived from the word *Mongols*, reflecting the origins of this widespread clan). Displacing the Lodis (1451–1526), the last of the Sultanate rulers who had governed the area for almost three centuries, the Mughals by 1555 had established themselves at Delhi. Under the rule of a brilliant succession of leaders the empire grew to encompass much of the northern and central subcontinent during the rule of Akbar (1556–1605), reaching new pinnacles in the mid-seventeenth century. The constant movement of the court led to shifting capitals—Delhi, Lahore, and Agra—with royal reach into centers in Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Bengal, all of which came into the cultural fold. Mughal power diminished during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, independent regional and provincial states rose to prominence, and colonial rule took hold. The Mughals remained the nominal rulers of India until the displacement of Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857 by the British.

Under Mughal patronage the arts flowered in almost all media, leaving behind a great wealth of objects that are well represented in the Museum's holdings. Court workshops drew talent from all backgrounds and assimilated the many vibrant cultural and artistic streams of South Asia, creating a distinct and influential Mughal idiom. Artists from Europe and Iran (famously, the painters Mir Sayyid 'Ali and 'Abd al-Samad, who joined the Mughal emperor Humayun's atelier from the Safavid court in the 1550s) were also included in the mix, and the period saw the integration of many artistic styles and techniques as a result.<sup>5</sup> As with many Islamic rulers, the Mughals placed a high value on the arts of the book and the enrichment of the imperial library. The illustration of classic Persian texts began at the very outset of the Mughal period, with Akbar commissioning the dynamic *Hamzanama* (Story of Hamza) project in the late 1550s, of which the Metropolitan has five pages (cat. 244).<sup>6</sup> Of particular cultural significance and artistic importance were the translation and illustration of Hindu epics at the Mughal court, represented in the Metropolitan's collection by pages from the *Harivamsa* (cat. 245) of the 1590s and the subimperial *Ramayana* (cat. 249A–D) of the same period.<sup>7</sup> Deluxe manuscripts of the 1590s reflect the appropriation of Europeanizing elements by painters such as Basawan, many of whom were now in their mature prime and whose paintings can be seen in the Museum's *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (cat. 247A, B). Patronage and workshop practice in the production of such varied and complex works are now better understood in the light of recent scholarship.<sup>8</sup>

The art of portraiture, an innovation that emerged in the time of Akbar under his personal encouragement, is exemplified in the folios of the so-called Emperors' Album, made for his son Jahangir and grandson Shah Jahan (cat. 250A–D).<sup>9</sup> These portraits include studies of powerful Rajput rulers who were part of the Mughal court and administration and with whom the Mughal family was intermarried. This imperial album (*muraqqa'*) also contains celebrated bird and animal studies by the famed naturalist painters Mansur and Abu'l Hasan; formal floral borders, several signed by the illuminator Daulat; and calligraphy by the Persian master Mir 'Ali Haravi. The court arts of the Mughal period included as well the production of precious objects for which the royals had a particular appreciation and which also held great dynastic meaning. A jeweled dagger in the Museum's collection shows stylistic and technical characteristics indicating that it was likely to have been made in the workshop of Jahangir (cat. 255). A slightly later rock-crystal mango-shaped flask combines a quintessentially Indian form with Persianate arabesque inlay decoration in gold and gems (cat. 257).<sup>10</sup> A rare hunting portrait of Aurangzeb from a later album by the painter Bhavanidas (cat. 252) demonstrates the continuing strength of the high Mughal tradition into the early eighteenth century, a period that also witnessed the rise and further development of styles of painting (*qalams*) at regional courts in Rajasthan and the Punjab Hills.

The glories of Mughal architecture are well known, from the great red sandstone palace city of Fatehpur Sikri built by Akbar (about 1571) to the Taj Mahal commissioned by Shah Jahan (about 1632) as a mausoleum for his wife, in addition to many other forts, hunting lodges, palaces, pavilions, public buildings, and gardens.<sup>11</sup> Forts and palaces in all parts of Rajasthan and central India were in a state of continual inhabitation and growth during the Mughal period. These spaces were richly furnished with a variety of objects and textiles, of which only a fraction survive. A pictorial carpet probably woven in Lahore in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century might have been made for a great *darbar* (royal assembly) hall, judging from its notable length of twenty-seven feet (cat. 262).<sup>12</sup> While deriving inspiration, in terms of both design and technique, from Safavid precedents, Mughal carpets introduced their own distinctive palette, motifs, and technical features. Their painterly and lyrical style can be seen in the drawing and shading of the leaves of a tree in the Metropolitan's fragment of the famous Frick Carpet (cat. 263). Fine fixtures such as a late seventeenth-century carved floral-style door further indicate the shared artistic vocabulary across media, as similar motifs appear in manuscript illustrations, carpet designs, and border illuminations, and most famously in the *pietra dura* inlay and carved marble dadoes of the Taj Mahal and Red Fort in Agra (cat. 259).



Fig. 34 Window and calligraphic screen, Ibrahim Rauza tomb, Bijapur, ca. 1627. Photo: Amit Pasricha

### Trade and Travel

The accounts of travelers to the Indian subcontinent from the fifteenth century onward reveal existing intercultural and trade links, particularly around the Indian Ocean, and include descriptions from the Russian merchant Afanasii Nikitin, the Timurid ambassador 'Abd al-Razzaq, and the Ottoman admiral Seydi 'Ali Reis.<sup>13</sup> Surviving works of art, particularly textiles and furniture, similarly illustrate ties with Europe, western Asia, and Southeast Asia. Gujarati *kalamkaris*, cotton textiles painted and printed with wooded landscape designs as well as figural motifs, were traded from Fustat to Indonesia, where examples in the Museum's collections date from as early as the fourteenth century up until the nineteenth century (cat. 242A, B).

Europe and Turkey offered markets for luxury furniture, which was also produced for local consumption. An Indo-Portuguese ivory inlaid box was almost certainly intended for a buyer in Lisbon, the Metropolitan's example being a particularly charming member of a larger group of such objects made in late



sixteenth-century Gujarat (cat. 267). Another type of production from Gujarat is seen in a *sadeli* box that shows a decoration involving the gluing of geometrically shaped strips made of various materials that are sliced transversely and assembled to create repeating geometric patterns (cat. 268). Such surface decoration had connections stretching westward toward the Mediterranean, where this masterful technique originated in antiquity and was still being practiced.<sup>14</sup>

The Europeanized decoration on a seventeenth-century Goa stone and gold container exemplifies the influences that came inland through western coastal sites such as Goa, where the Portuguese were stationed through the course of the sixteenth century (cat. 277).<sup>15</sup> The magnificent gold outer case, which is worked, chased, and layered, encloses a talismanic object much sought after in Europe for its protective and medicinal powers. In the same period goods from India's eastern coast went in other directions, such as the Deccan carpets carried by Dutch traders to Japan, where they continue to be exhibited on floats during festivals.<sup>16</sup>

### The Deccan

The Deccan plateau of India, an area bound by the Vindhya Mountains to the north and bordered by mountain ranges on each side, had a markedly separate cultural character from that of the north and the south, but showed influences from each. The ruling Bahmanids of the region, who flourished alongside the Vijayanagara Empire farther south, splintered into five successor states in the early sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup> These dynasties, the 'Adil Shahis of Bijapur, the Barid Shahis of Bidar, the Qutb Shahis of Golconda, the Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar, and the 'Imad Shahis of Berar, although mostly engaged in internecine fighting, were able to form a coalition to overthrow Vijayanagara in 1565. While these two hundred years in the Deccan were characterized by battles over territory between the Sultanates and Vijayanagara as well as skirmishes with the Portuguese off the western coast and the ever-looming Mughal threat of the north, there remained significant cultural exchanges during this period between all sides.<sup>18</sup>

The unique character of Deccan art combines influences from Iran, Turkey, Europe, and East Africa with long-standing Indian traditions of the region.<sup>19</sup> New interpretations of the opulent decoration on the seventeenth-century tomb of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah of Bijapur examine this multiplicity of sources and their meaning.<sup>20</sup> Portraits from the Deccan courts picture the ruling nobility, who were drawn from various ethnic groups and whose factional politics were a feature of Deccan life. A dynastic composition from seventeenth-century Bijapur expresses the strong

Shiism of the region and the ruling family's claim of legitimacy drawn from the Safavids of Iran (cat. 269).

The Deccan states were overthrown in the late seventeenth century by the Mughals of the north, who had from the middle of the century established themselves at northern Deccan centers such as Burhanpur and Aurangabad. These centers became the meeting ground for Mughal, Deccan, and Rajput traditions, and the production of textiles flourished, among other arts. *Kalamkaris*, painted and printed textiles made in the region and also on the eastern coast, were precursors of the later popular export to Europe of chintzes, of which the Museum has a notable collection (cats. 279, 281).<sup>21</sup> A portable *bidri* ware writing box with gilt-copper and silver overlay was probably made in the northern Deccan under strong Mughal influence (cat. 276). Objects in this technique often show the pervasive influence of the Mughal flower style, as seen in a *hugqa* base in the Metropolitan's collection (cat. 274).<sup>22</sup>

### The Eighteenth Century

Despite the realization of the Mughal dream of Deccan conquest, the eighteenth century saw the weakening of the Mughal state, as its overreaching embrace over large parts of the subcontinent depleted its power. While the later Mughal rulers continued the traditional support of art and culture, they were politically ineffective, opening the door to outside attacks, such as the decisive strike by the Persian Afsharid Nadir Shah in 1739. Muhammad Shah's court survived the blow, but great Mughal treasures were lost to Iran, including the famous jeweled imperial Peacock Throne. While the Delhi court was increasingly mired in political instability, centers in Avadh, chiefly Lucknow, rose to take the cultural mantle from the imperial center.<sup>23</sup> From late Delhi and Lucknow, a fine group of paintings in the Metropolitan's collections show the work of Mir Kalan Khan (cat. 253), Chitarman II, and Nidhamal.<sup>24</sup> In the south the newly powerful Deccan court of Hyderabad, evolving from the remains of the earlier Sultanates, became famed as one of the richest Islamic states in the world.<sup>25</sup>

Concurrently at the northern Rajput and Pahari courts in the eighteenth century, the arts flowered, infused in some part with Mughal- and Deccan-trained artists looking for employ elsewhere. Dating back to the pre-Mughal period, their arts provide evidence of the earliest traditions of Indian painting and represent an essential element in the formation of the Mughal style with which they shared constant exchanges. In the new installation, later Indian art from both the Asian and the Arms and Armor departments, which include Rajput and Pahari painting, Gujarati trade textiles, and some later South Asian arms and armor, are

presented in an adjoining gallery, thus uniting the Museum's holdings of later South Asian art in one interconnected area.

### *The Colonial Period*

Although British presence in India dated back to the seventeenth-century traders and officials of the East India Company, British colonial power was decisively established by the second half of the eighteenth century in Bengal, from where it continued to grow.<sup>26</sup> For many artists, musicians, dancers, and poets, the consequent effect on the court system that had sustained them for centuries was significant, although some found new support in British patronage. Painting provided certain opportunities, particularly as British patrons introduced several new genres to which Mughal-trained artists and others were able to adapt, assimilating fresh techniques and working on a much larger scale. The illustration of local fauna, flora, craftsmen, and buildings was one such development of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as demonstrated by a famous series of natural studies produced for Lady Impey of Calcutta. Painted about 1780, the depiction of a fruit bat with folded wing in the Museum's collection is probably by an artist in this circle (cat. 285).<sup>27</sup> From a later period of about 1840 at Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), a city that recently marked the tercentenary of its British phase, came Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya's study of a groom holding two horses (cat. 287).<sup>28</sup> Sita Ram's evocative series of views on the river Ganges, documented for Francis Rawdon in the 1820s, shows the degree to which Indian artists at this time had learned English watercolor techniques (cat. 286).<sup>29</sup>

The nineteenth century also saw continuities and revivals of styles of the past within the context of great social and cultural changes in South Asia. Jewelers and lapidaries in nineteenth-century Jaipur and Delhi left examples of painting and decorative arts, such as an enameled ram's-head dagger (cat. 288), that were descended from an earlier and more distinguished Mughal tradition of such forms in weapon making. Kashmiri textiles in particular flourished under Afghan and Sikh patronage, with high standards achieved in double-twill tapestry weaving, as in the case of a hanging depicting weeping willow branches within a niche (cat. 283).<sup>30</sup> Such works were possibly among the final expression of an artistic vocabulary and sensibility whose roots go back to the dynamic and creative idioms of the Mughal period.

While modernization and globalization have redefined the visual and cultural landscape of South Asia today, the region continues to preserve aspects of the arts of its premodern past—perhaps more so than many other parts of the developing world—as contemporary artists usher in a new phase of artistic expression.

1. Flood 2009, pp. 15–59, offers recent perspectives on the period and region; see also Shokoohy 2003.
2. Khan 1983.
3. Brend 2002, pp. 79–81, 84–89.
4. See Adamjee forthcoming; Shovelton 2009.
5. Literature on individual Mughal artists goes back to the early contributions of Welch, Skelton, and Beach (see bibliography) and two compilations by Marg (Pal, ed. 1991a, b, and Das, ed. 1998a, b). More recent work includes Beach, Fischer, and Goswamy, eds. 2011.
6. Washington, D.C. 2002 gathers together most folios in a recent exhibition.
7. Skelton 1970; Seyller 1999, pp. 33–34, 43.
8. Brend 2002; Baltimore 2001.
9. New York 1987–88, pp. 81–83, 108, 122–23, 202–3; Leach 1995; Washington, D.C., and other cities 2008–9, pp. 107–39, 366–411.
10. London and other cities 2001 publishes a major private collection of Mughal jeweled arts.
11. Koch 2006.
12. New York 1997–98, pp. 42–43, no. 4, fig. 31.
13. Alam and Subrahmanyam 2007.
14. London 2004; Jaffer 2002.
15. Lisbon 2004.
16. Kamada 2011.
17. Philon, ed. 2010, pp. 14–16.
18. Gilmartin and Lawrence, eds. 2000.
19. Deccan art was the focus of a recent symposium at the Metropolitan Museum, the proceedings of which are published as Haidar and Sardar, eds. 2011. For other recent scholarship on Deccan art, see Parodi forthcoming; Ali forthcoming; see also Robbins and McLeod, eds. 2006.
20. Michell 2011 and Wannell 2011.
21. Guy 1998, pp. 22, 171–72.
22. Zebrowski 1997, pp. 234–35.
23. Llewellyn-Jones, ed. 2003.
24. Losty 2002, pp. 49–51.
25. London 2009–10.
26. London 1990–91.
27. Archer, M. 1992, p. 97.
28. New York and other cities 1978–79, pp. 69, 71.
29. Losty 1996; see also Losty 1995, p. 84 n. 2.
30. New York and Cincinnati 2007–8, pp. 202–5.



## 239A, B. Two Folios from an Illustrated Manuscript of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings)

### A. "Kai Kavus Attempts to Fly to Heaven"

India, mid-15th century

Image: Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; margins: ink and gold on dyed paper

Image:  $6\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  in. (16.5 × 19.1 cm)

The Grinnell Collection, Bequest of William Milne Grinnell, 1920 20.120.239

### B. "Kai Khusrau, Farangis, and Giv Crossing the River"

India, mid-15th century

Image: Ink, opaque watercolor, silver, and gold on paper; margins: ink and gold on dyed paper

Image:  $7\frac{3}{8} \times 7\frac{5}{8}$  in. (18.7 × 19.4 cm)

The Grinnell Collection, Bequest of William Milne Grinnell, 1920 20.120.241

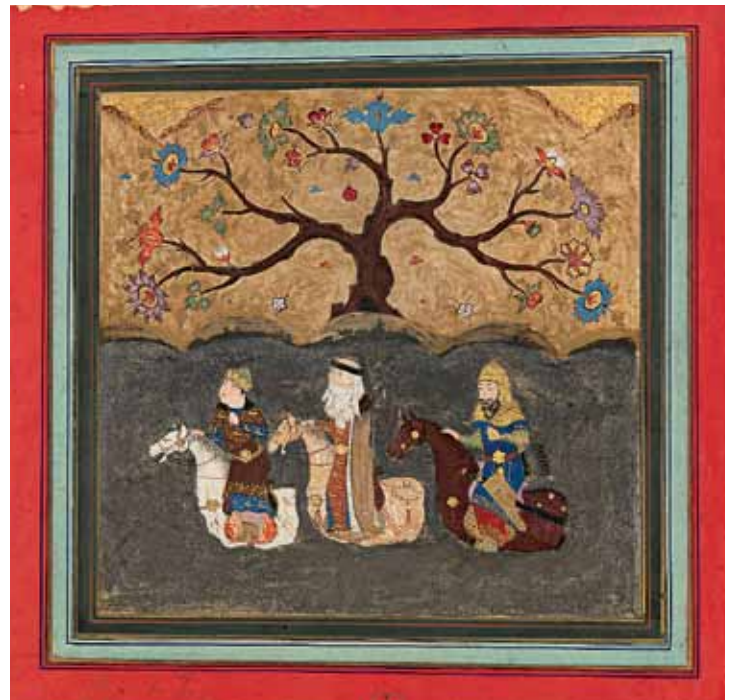
These two folios belong to a set of twelve paintings that were detached from a *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) manuscript and remounted in an almost square format on heavy paper with no text on either side. The size and quality of the two paintings suggest that the original manuscript was large and impressive. In the first (cat. 239A), the skyward flight of Kai Kavus is depicted as he is lifted on the wing strength of four hungry eagles that have been enticed by chunks of meat suspended out of their reach. Identified by a title, the painting shows the confident Kai Kavus seated on a gold-domed throne at the center and holding a hunk of meat attached to a rope. Four large birds, resembling parrots rather than eagles, are arranged below the throne in energetic poses. A human-faced sun appears near the upper-left corner, and the swirling cloud forms that fill the picture give the painting its movement and dynamism.

The second painting (cat. 239B) illustrates a later episode in the epic: the escape from Turan of Farangis, widow of Siyavush, and her son Kai Khusrau, the future king of Iran, under the protection of the hero Giv. They are shown crossing the river Oxus in flight from the Turanian army. Identified by his princely robes, Kai Khusrau leads the group; Farangis rides behind him, and Giv, with his warrior's armor, brings up the rear. The composition is divided into two nearly equal zones so that the river, in now-oxidized silver, occupies the lower half. The upper half is marked by a horizon with undulating hills dominated by a prominent tree, with branches that terminate in large, stylized flowers. In departures from the textual description, Kai Khusrau's horse, formerly Siyavush's black steed, is shown here as white, and Farangis, said to be dressed in armor so as to escape notice, is depicted veiled.

The attribution of these paintings has long been the subject of scholarly debate. Based on stylistic comparisons with fifteenth-century Timurid manuscripts, opinions have varied from Mazandaran,<sup>1</sup> Herat, or Shiraz,<sup>2</sup> to India.<sup>3</sup> Historical evidence suggests that India



A



B

during the fifteenth century had several flourishing centers of learning,<sup>4</sup> even if securely attributable illustrated manuscripts from the pre-Mughal period are relatively scarce. Yet, important cosmopolitan centers in India, including Bidar in the Deccan, that had strong cultural, social, and political connections with Iran, could be possible places of production for a manuscript such as this decontextualized *Shahnama*.<sup>5</sup>

QA

1. Basil Robinson compared them with the Dunimarle *Shahnama* (Robinson, B. 1993).
2. Maurice Dimand changed his opinion from Herat to Shiraz (curatorial records, Department of Islamic Art, dated April 1956).
3. Fraad and Ettinghausen 1971; Swietochowski 1978; Welch, S. C., et al. 1987, p. 130. See also Brac de la Perrière 2008, p. 367.
4. Eaton 2005, pp. 33–77; Welch, A. 1996; Melikian-Chirvani 1969; Titley 1983; Brend 1986; Robinson, B. 1991, pp. 61–75.
5. Brend 1986, p. 91; Eaton 2005, pp. 33–77.

PROVENANCE: William Milne Grinnell, New York (until d. 1920)

## 240. Dedicatory Inscription from a Mosque

India, Bengal, dated A.H. 905/1500 A.D.

Gabbro; carved

16 1/8 × 45 3/8 × 2 3/4 in. (41 × 115.1 × 7 cm)

Purchase, Gift of Mrs. Nelson Doubleday and Bequest of Charles R. Gerth,  
by exchange, 1981 1981.320

Inscribed in Arabic in Bengali *tughra*-style script:

قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم  
من بنى مسجداً لله بنى الله له  
قصرًا مثله في الجنة في عهد السلطان علاء الدين  
ابو المظفر حسين شاه السلطان خلد الله ملكه وسلطانه  
بنى هذا المسجد الجامع شاهزاده دانيال دام عزه في العشر من ذي الحجة  
سنة خمس وتسعين

The Prophet—God's blessings and peace be upon him—said:

"He who builds a mosque for God, God builds a palace the like of it in paradise." In the reign of the Sultan 'Ala' al-Dunya wa'l din Abu'l-Muzaffar Husain Shah al-Sultan, may God perpetuate his dominion and sovereignty. Shahzada Daniyal, may his glory endure, built this congregational mosque on the tenth of Dhu'l-Hijja in the year A.H. 905 [July 7, 1500].<sup>1</sup>

This inscription panel, made of grayish-black speckled stone (gabbro), is written in the distinctive Bengali *tughra*-style script, frequently described as "bow and arrow." The body of the text appears at the base of the panel, the sixty vertical shafts of the letters occupy approximately the upper two-thirds of it, and the arrangement of the rounded forms of select words near the top completes the elegant pattern. Elaborate interlacing of letters in the lower register makes the inscription seem difficult to read, but the similarity of its content to epigraphs across the Bengal region facilitates the task. The inscription, a hadith (saying) of the Prophet Muhammad, is found fairly commonly on mosque dedicatory panels in India, especially among those from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Bengal and elsewhere in the Islamic world.<sup>2</sup>

Stone sculpture from the pre-Islamic Buddhist Pala and Hindu Sena dynasties of Bengal is well known for its workmanship. It is likely that inscriptions were first designed by calligraphers, then carved by skilled local craftsmen who outlined them on stone either in charcoal or as lightly incised marks.<sup>3</sup> Numerous inscription panels in variations of the Bengali *tughra* style are found from the Sultanate period during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> This calligraphic style is largely replaced with *nasta'liq*-script inscriptions during the Mughal period, which follow the types seen elsewhere in north India. *Tughra*-style inscriptions appear later in the Deccan.<sup>5</sup>

Very little is known about Prince Daniyal, who is commemorated here. His name appears on another inscription, dated A.H. 903/1497–98 A.D., on the tomb of Shah Nafa in the fort of Monghyr (Munger), Bihar. He is also reported in medieval Persian histories as representing his father, 'Ala' al-Din Husain Shah of Bengal (r. 1493–1519), during negotiations with Sultan Sikandar Lodi of Delhi (r. 1489–1511) held about 1495 on the Bengal-Bihar frontier, which forestalled a possible invasion.<sup>6</sup> Husain Shah is





reported as having eighteen sons, but only two others—Nusrat Shah (r. 1519–31) and Ghiyath al-Din Mahmud Shah (r. 1532–38)—are known by name, as they later attained the throne. QA

1. A variation of the translation found in Digby 1973, p. 589.
2. Hasan 2007, pp. 60–61.
3. Siddiq 2009, pp. 36, 39 nn. 22–23.
4. See *ibid.*, chapter 6, pp. 107–90, and appendix 2, pp. 250–59, for dated examples of Sultanate-period inscriptions from Bengal.
5. One such example is in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 1985.240.1).
6. Digby 1973, p. 592.

PROVENANCE: Possibly Thomas Hope of Deepdene, England; [David Drey, London, before 1962; sold to Hodgkin]; Howard Hodgkin, London (from before 1962–81); [Terence McNerney, New York, 1981; sold to MMA]

### 241A, B. *Two Tiles from Multan*

A. Present-day Pakistan, Multan, late 15th century  
Stonepaste; polychrome painted under transparent glaze  
7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (20 × 20 cm)

Purchase, Elizabeth S. Ettinghausen Gift, in memory of Richard Ettinghausen,  
2008 2008.461

B. Present-day Pakistan, Multan, 18th century  
Earthenware; molded decoration and glazed  
14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 2 in. (36.8 × 26 × 5.1 cm)  
Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 2007 2007.291

Together, these two works represent the continuing tradition of architectural tile production in the area of Multan, in present-day Pakistan. Although they were made over a span of centuries and incorporate different techniques, they both hew to a unified aesthetic that identifies them as having come from this particular area, where tiles glazed white, cobalt, and turquoise were once a common feature of architectural decoration. Tiles such as these would have been arranged in horizontal bands that alternated with bands of plain brick to create a striking visual effect, heightened by the undulating surfaces and varying shapes of the tiles. While the square tile may have belonged to an interior,<sup>1</sup> the larger, vertical tile may have been part of a frieze either at the base or along the top of an exterior wall, as seen in photographs of the Multani tombs of Yusuf Gardizi (twelfth century; date of revetment unknown) and Rukn-i 'Alam (fourteenth century).<sup>2</sup>

The square tile here was crafted with a clever detail: the central cross is actually the unglazed clay body of the tile, which contrasts with the white slip that covers the rest of the flat surface.<sup>3</sup>



A



B





B

The rectangular tile, on the other hand, has molded decoration in the form of a cusped arch enclosing a smaller foliate motif.

Ceramic tiles are relatively rare in architectural decoration in the Indian subcontinent, but the region of present-day Pakistan is known for consistently using them. This is partly because brick, which has a surface compatible with the application of tiles, was the most common building material there, as opposed to the ashlar masonry or stucco-covered rubble stone employed elsewhere on the subcontinent. Within Pakistan there were at least two distinctive regional traditions of tile making, one based in the area around Sind and the other near Multan. The one based in Multan seems to derive from Central Asian (rather than Iranian) traditions of tile decoration, both in the choice of colors and in the sparing use of tiles in combination with another material, such as brick.<sup>4</sup>

MS



A

1. Tiles with the same design have been dispersed across many collections. Identical examples can be found in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (no. M.86.339.2-b) and in a private collection in California (purchased at the same time as the LACMA tiles); in the Keir Collection; and in the David Collection, Copenhagen (see Folsach 2001, p. 197, no. 291). An additional tile was offered for sale in 2003 (present whereabouts unknown; see Simon Ray, London, catalogue, April 4–May 17, 2002, pp. 46–47). In discussing the Keir Collection tile, Oliver Watson suggested that it came “from the tomb of a Sufi family dated c. 1480, twenty miles outside Multan” (Watson in Robinson, B., ed. 1988, p. 232, no. C91, pl. 52). Subsequent publications of this group of tiles all follow Watson’s attribution, although there does not seem to be any definitive documentation linking them to such a source. Other architectural elements said to have come from this building are a *mihrab* in the Linden-Museum, Stuttgart (see Kalter and Pavaioli 1987, p. 39), and a tile spandrel sold at Christie’s London (April 27, 2004, lot 150).
2. As suggested by the reconstruction of the *mihrab* in the Linden-Museum, Stuttgart; see note 1 above.
3. See Gaube 1994, pp. 345–46, although it should be noted that the tilework on the Yusuf Gardizi tomb has been repaired and/or changed in several historical and recent campaigns of restoration.
4. See illustrations in Degeorge and Porter 2002, p. 131.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 241A: Private collection, Europe (1992–2007); [art market, England, 2007]; [Alexis Renard, Paris, 2007–8; sold to MMA]

Cat. 241B: Private collection, New York (from 1970s); [Paul Anavian, New York, until 2007; sold to MMA]

#### 242A, B. Two Textile Fragments

A. India, Gujarat, 14th century  
Cotton; block-printed and resist-dyed  
16 × 12¼ in. (40.6 × 31.1 cm)  
Gift of V. Everit Macy, 1930 30.112.42

B. India, Gujarat, 14th century  
Cotton; plain weave, block-printed and resist-dyed  
38⅞ in. × 16 ft. 2⅞ in. (98.7 × 494.5 cm)  
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 2005 2005.407

Western India has been supplying dyed and painted cotton textiles to the world since antiquity, as witnessed by the first-century Greek geography *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. The Gujarati trade in dyed cotton textiles to the Red Sea markets of western Asia can be traced archaeologically to the ninth and tenth



centuries. The largest finds have been at Fustat, the first capital of Egypt under Arab rule, which was established in 641. The city prospered until the conquering Fatimids replaced it in 969 with Cairo, immediately north of Fustat. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, under the Mamluks, the early Red Sea port of Qusair al-Qadim was revived and linked to trade centers such as Qasr Ibrim and Gebel Adda in Nubia. That these sites have all yielded fragments of Indian cotton confirms an active trading system that linked the ports of Egypt with western India. The additional excavation at Qusair al-Qadim of shards of burnished earthenware inscribed in Tamil points to early commercial links with southern India, the principal source of the world's black pepper.

The largest corpus of Gujarati textiles abroad has been recorded from the two extremities of the Indian Ocean trading system—Fustat in Lower Egypt and the islands of eastern Indonesia engaged in the Moluccan spice trade. Tomé Pires, the Portuguese writer and diplomat, reported that this trade was still prospering in the early sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Such an extraordinary geographical distribution of a single trading commodity was achieved through the agency of Muslim Gujarati merchants, who traded systematically across the Indian Ocean, exchanging Indian cotton goods for the Indonesian spices so in demand. These spices were in turn traded on to the great marts of the Arab and Mediterranean worlds, as well as to China.

The first textile fragment from Fustat (cat. 242A) once formed a burial shroud, along with numerous other such fragments retrieved from the Fatimid-period burial grounds of Old Cairo early in the twentieth century. The second example (cat. 242B), measuring a spectacular sixteen feet in length, was collected in eastern Indonesia, where it served an entirely different function, as an exhibition cloth to be displayed at ceremonies marking rites of passage.

Both works can be dated to the fourteenth century on the basis of associated radiocarbon-14 dating,<sup>2</sup> a dating compatible with stylistically analogous art forms from Gujarat. Contemporaneous

dated manuscript paintings, principally Jain, share the stylization conventions for trees and leaves, the clearly differentiated species, and the white-pearl frames. The textiles are limited in their color range, with (mordant-dyed) madder red and (resist-dyed) indigo, combined with resist-reserved white, completing the designs. J G

1. "Cambay [Gujarat] chiefly stretches out her two arms, with her right arm she reaches out towards Aden, and with the other towards Malacca . . . the trade of Cambay is extensive and comprises cloth of many kinds." Pires 1944, pp. 42, 46.
2. Guy 1998, appendix p. 186.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 242A: V. Everit Macy, New York (until 1930)

Cat. 242B: [Thomas Murray, Mill Valley, Calif., 1993–2005; sold to MMA]

### 243. Textile Fragments

India, 15th–16th century  
Silk; samite

Largest fragment 11 1/2 × 7 in. (29.3 × 17.8 cm)

Gift of Michael and Jacqueline Franses, 1993 1993.2a–m

Fifteen fragments of varying sizes constitute what once would have been a fairly large textile. The design, woven in the warp direction, shows two alternating forms of the mythical beast *vyala* (or *yali*), a composite winged creature with a leonine body. Rendered in yellow against a dark blue background, they are enclosed within rectangular compartments and surrounded by a pearl border. A narrow band of floral design separates the compartments. The two largest fragments retain a selvage, much of their surrounding borders, and enough of the central figure to indicate that the original design consisted of at least two parallel registers with a continuously repeated lattice pattern. Of the other



thirteen fragments, five are portions of the *vyala* design and the remaining eight are from borders that run parallel to the warps.

The *vyala*, depicted with heads in various animal forms, has enjoyed longevity in Indian art.<sup>1</sup> One of the creatures here has a lion's head with snarling fangs and a small deerlike quadruped perched on its raised foreleg. The other, with a head terminating in an elephant's snout, exhibits a gentler aspect. Both have taut, sinuous bodies pinched near the middle, flaming wings and manes, and long tails terminating in a lotus or stylized leaf.

Several aspects of these textile fragments are unusual. It is more typical to see the *vyala* motif organized within pearl-bordered roundels or ogives—a layout similar to those of Islamic textiles in this technique—than within the pearl-bordered rectangular compartments seen here.<sup>2</sup> Another uncommon feature is the dark blue background, rather than the red usually found in Indian textiles of this type.<sup>3</sup>

Little is yet known about complex silk draw-loom weaving in India before the Mughal period, and such textiles appeared on the

international art market from Tibetan sources only in the 1980s and 1990s. This silk, a rare example of its type, is among the earliest in a small group of medieval silks from India, the production of which has been attributed to the important textile centers of Gujarat, the Deccan, and the Assam–North Bengal region.<sup>4</sup>

QA

1. For sculpture, see Dhaky 1965; for metalwork, see Zebrowski 1997, pls. 106–13; for textiles, see Galloway 2009, nos. 2–5, and Riboud et al. 1998, pp. 66, 71, 75, 79. See also New York 1985–86 and Rahul Jain 2011, pp. 22–25, no. 3A.
2. Galloway 2009, nos. 2–6. This layout in rectangular compartments also recalls the form of the square tiles with molded animal designs and pearl borders attributed to the late twelfth and early thirteenth century from Ghazni, Afghanistan (Metropolitan Museum, acc. nos. 1975.193.4–6).
3. Crill 1995, p. 41; Riboud et al. 1998; Galloway 2009; Dye 2001, p. 458.
4. Cohen 1995, pp. 29, 31; Rahul Jain in Galloway 2009, p. 6; Galloway 2011, no. 1.

PROVENANCE: [Jeremy Pine Fine Arts, Hong Kong]; Michael and Jacqueline Franses, London (until 1993)

## 244. *Folio from the Hamzanama (Story of Hamza)*

“Umar Walks around Fulad Castle, Meets a Foot Soldier,  
and Kicks Him to the Ground”

Painters: Attributed to Keshav Das (active ca. 1570–1604) and  
Mah Muhammad (active 1570s)

India, ca. 1570

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on cloth; mounted on paper

28¾ × 22¼ in. (73 × 56.5 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1923 23.264.2

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at bottom:

سیر کردن عمر بر گرد حصار فولاد و پیاده دیدن و جفت لگدی برو زدن و افتادن پیاده که او عیار فولاد بود

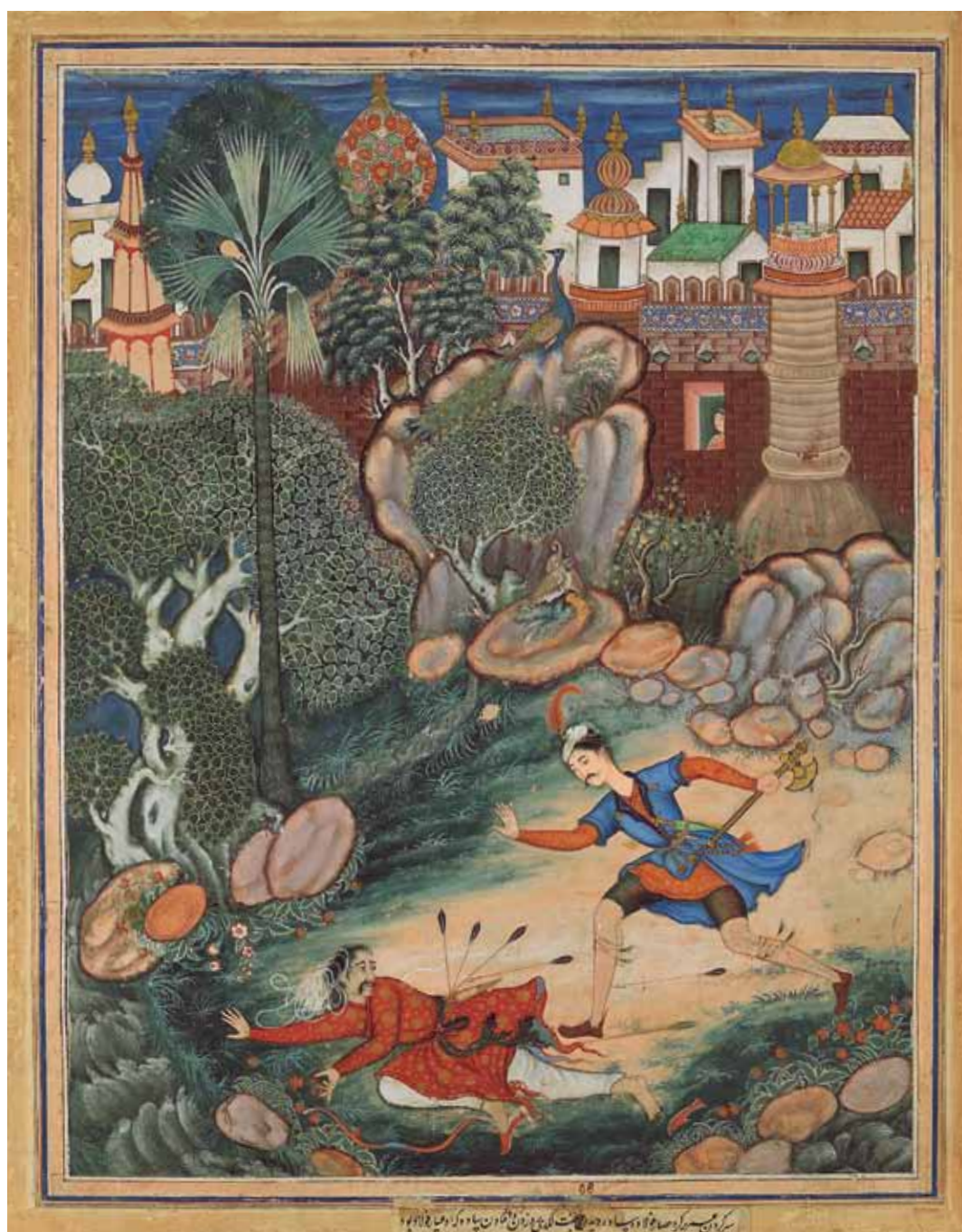
‘Umar walks around Fulad castle, meets a foot soldier, and kicks him to the ground . . .

The illustrated *Hamzanama* (Story of Hamza) made for the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) has been noted for several remarkable qualities. The original number of painted leaves—1,400, of which about 140 survive—is far greater than for most projects; the size of each folio is almost three times that of any other manuscript of the Mughal period; the illustrations have text on the reverse, stimulating yet-unanswered questions about the manuscript's practical use; and, finally, the dynamic hybrid painting style indicates the variety and number of talented artists in the royal workshop at this early date.

Although Akbar is believed to have been unable to read, he is known to have enjoyed being read to, and he maintained a library of more than twenty-eight thousand volumes. This folio from the

*Hamzanama* illustrates an episode involving ‘Umar, a spy loyal to the Prophet Muhammad's uncle Hamza, who learns of a secret tunnel into the castle of Fulad from a foot soldier whom he has knocked down. A caption below the image identifies the subject and the characters depicted. The painting of the figures has been attributed to the artist Keshav Das, while the upper part of the work is thought to have been executed by another artist, Mah Muhammad; such collaborations were typical of the Mughal workshop practice.<sup>1</sup> The fallen soldier's staring eyes, undone turban, and sprawling body illustrate the expressive energy that characterizes the entire manuscript. In contrast, the spy figure of ‘Umar is more classically restrained, representing another stylistic thread woven through the paintings. As in other folios,





nature—denoted here by birds, lush foliage, and a lively flowing stream—is a strong element of the composition. The thickly applied paint has worn off in some places, exposing the woven cotton support below. Recent scholarship on the extensive palette has found that a variety of sources were used to achieve the color gradations, which can be seen here particularly in the many tones of green and the shading of the modeled areas.<sup>2</sup>

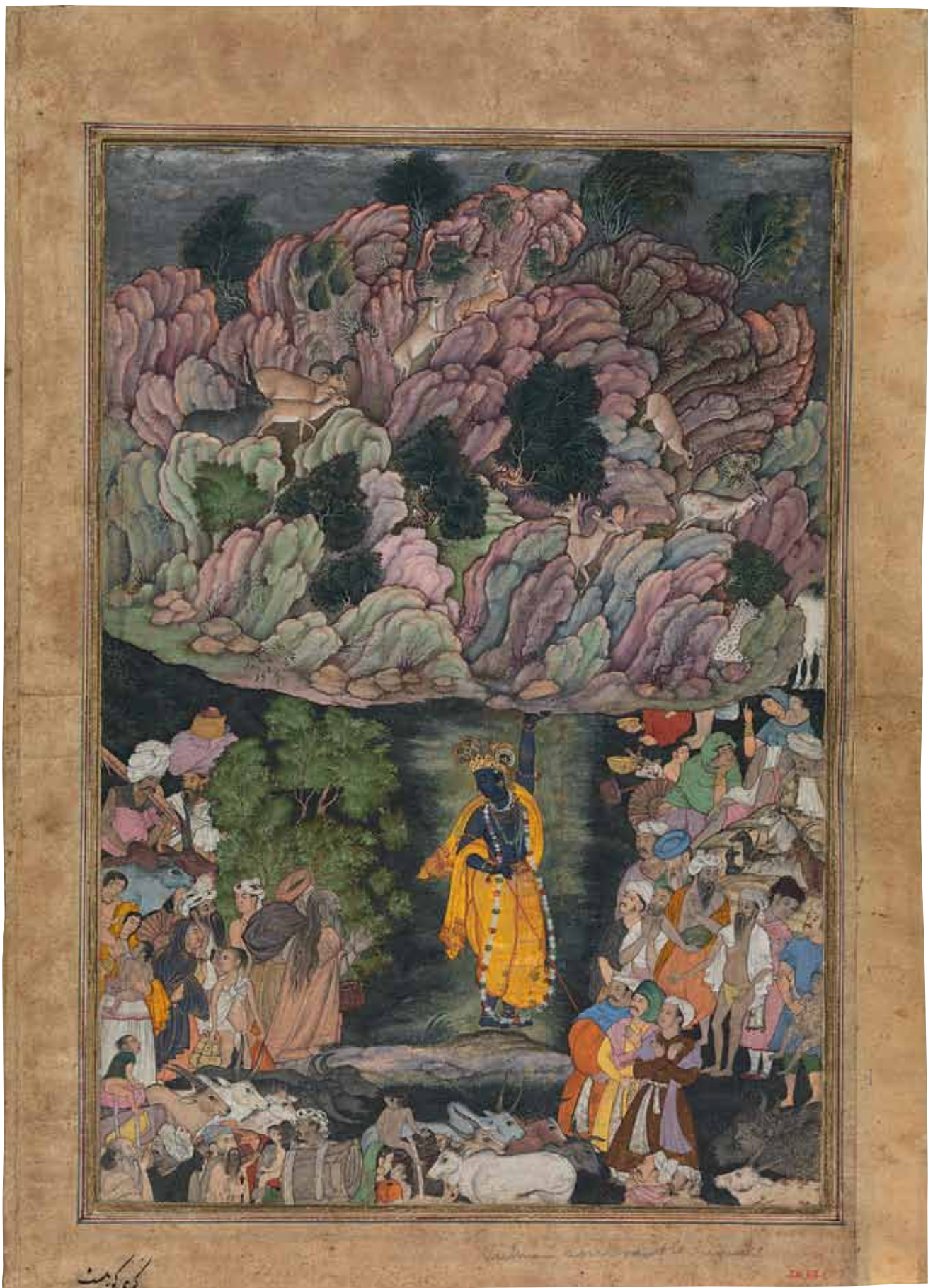
The Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna has the greatest concentration of surviving *Hamzanama* folios, with many others

dispersed in major museum collections around the world. The Metropolitan Museum holds five.<sup>3</sup> NNH

1. Washington, D.C. 2002, pp. 171–72, no. 55.
2. Owen 2002, p. 284.
3. Acc. nos. 18.44.1, 18.44.2, 23.264.1, 23.264.2, and 24.48.1.

PROVENANCE: [sale, Anderson Galleries, New York, December 17–23, 1923, lot 242; sold to MMA]







## 245. Folio from the *Harivamsa* (Legend of Hari)

"Krishna Holds Up Mount Govardhan to Shelter the Villagers of Braj"

Present-day Pakistan, probably Lahore, ca. 1590–95

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

11 3/8 × 7 7/8 in. (28.9 × 20 cm)

Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr. Gift, 1928 28.63.1

The translation of historical and mythological texts from various languages into Persian for Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) was an established practice by 1574 at his capital, Fatehpur Sikri, and involved leading nobles whose contributions reflected the high literary culture of the court. Among the major projects undertaken were the translation and illustration of the Hindu classics the *Mahabharata*—known in Persian as the *Razmnama* (Book of Wars)—and the *Ramayana*. The surviving paintings represent the first known illustrated versions of works of Hindu epic literature on paper, an innovation that was brought about by the Mughal love of the arts of the book. The new translations were virgin territory for the Mughal court artists, who, in most previous painting projects, worked within an inherited tradition of iconography, subject matter, and even style. Remarkably, rather than the tentative first steps that one might have expected, the illustrated Hindu texts are among the most powerful of Mughal works.

The *Harivamsa* (Legend of Hari) is, in large part, a chronicle of the exploits of Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu; Hari is one of Vishnu's many names. The translation into Persian was undertaken in 1585 by Maulana Shiri (d. 1586) during Akbar's last year at Fatehpur Sikri. Thirty-three miniatures survive from the dispersed manuscript.<sup>1</sup> The present folio shows Krishna holding up Mount Govardhan to protect the villagers of Braj from destructive rains sent by the god Indra. Most later versions of the same scene in painting and sculpture depict the deity lifting up the mountain (sometimes reduced in scale to a symbolic hillock) on his little finger, but early Indian sculpture shows the mountain resting on the flat palm of his hand, as in this image.<sup>2</sup>

The anonymous artist has largely drawn on a Persian landscape style to depict the mountain, although here the multicolored crags are filled with wildlife native to the subcontinent. Below, the assembly of villagers evokes the timelessness of rural life, present even to this day in parts of India, with almost as much attention paid to the characterful depiction of the animals as to the human subjects. The central figure of Krishna bears the attributes of the deity, including his peacock crown, floral garland (*vanamala*), and draped *dhoti*; the brilliant color of his garment is derived from so-called Indian yellow, an early use in Mughal painting of a traditional Indian pigment.<sup>3</sup> A subtle but distinct reddening of the corners of Krishna's eyes, which later became common in paintings of the deity, reflects a convention seen in enameled eye inlays in devotional sculpture.<sup>4</sup>

NNH

1. Several other pages in the Museum's collection are associated with this manuscript (acc. nos. 28.63.2–.3; 67.266.5). The group is discussed in Skelton 1970.
2. Hawley 1979, pp. 206–7, fig. 2, discusses the Govardhan motif in sculpture.
3. Chandra, M. 1949, p. 27.
4. New York 1997b, p. 85, no. 49, shows a later Pahari-school Krishna image with this feature.

PROVENANCE: [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, until 1928; sold to MMA]

## 246. Folio from the *Chingiznama* (Book of Genghis Khan)

"Tumanba Khan, His Wife, and His Nine Sons"

Painters: Basawan (active ca. 1565–98), Bhim Gujarati (active 1590s)

Present-day Pakistan, probably Lahore, ca. 1596

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

15 × 10 in. (38.1 × 25.4 cm)

Purchase, Francis M. Weld Gift, 1948 48.144

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script on border at lower right:

طرح و چهره بساون عمل بهیم گجراتی

Sketch and faces Basawan, work Bhim Gujarati

This late sixteenth-century Mughal painting comes from a copy of the *Chingiznama*<sup>1</sup> (Book of Genghis Khan; also known as the *Genghisnama*), the text of which is an extract from Rashid al-Din's fourteenth-century *Jami' al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles) that describes the life of Genghis Khan and his descendants. The *Chingiznama* was one of a group of historical manuscripts that the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) commissioned in the 1590s with the intention of situating his dynasty in the course of world history.

This particular illustration depicts the ruler Tumanba Khan and his wife enthroned in the courtyard of a palace.<sup>2</sup> As an ancestor of both Genghis Khan (through his sixth son, Qabal Khan) and Timur (through his third son, Qajuli), Tumanba Khan was also an illustrious forebear of the Mughals. He is shown in an anachronistic Mughal-inspired palace with his nine sons (five from one wife, four from another),<sup>3</sup> but the adjacent text does not mention why they were gathered together. The artists appear to have



taken the liberty of composing a scene of their own imagination to accompany the text, which simply lists each of the nine sons and their descendants. Perhaps some deeper meaning is intended by the woman at the right who points at one of the sons, or the woman at the left who holds a glass model of a building, but the significance of these details is unclear.

An inscription in red ink at the bottom ascribes the painting to two of the most accomplished early Mughal painters. Basawan was a master portraitist of Akbar's time; here he has carefully shown the descending age of the nine sons, from fully bearded to mustachioed to bare-cheeked. Bhim Gujarati, who is also known from other Akbar-period works (which he usually signed 'amal), completed approximately four of the sixteen folios Basawan designed in the *Chingiznama*.<sup>4</sup>

MS

1. This folio comes from a copy of the *Chingiznama* in the Gulistan Library, Tehran. The manuscript once had a colophon (now apparently missing)

stating that the calligraphy was completed on A.H. 27 Ramadan 1004/ May 25, 1596 A.D. See Marek and Knížková 1963, p. 29. There are 304 folios with 98 paintings remaining in Tehran, but several additional pages are known in outside collections, as identified in Washington, D.C. 1981–82, pp. 101–2.

2. The subject of this painting had previously been identified as "Genghis Khan Dividing His Empire among His Sons." Philippa Vaughan first suggested the identification supported here in 1994 (letter, curatorial file, Department of Islamic Art), although the painting continued to be published with the earlier title.
3. Abu'l Fazl's *Akbarnama* (Book of Akbar) includes an account of these Mughal ancestors but, in contradiction to the text here, states that seven of Tumanba Khan's sons were from one wife and that Qajuli and Qabal were twins, born to a second wife.
4. See Verma 1994, pp. 100–101, and Washington, D.C. 1981–82, p. 224.

PROVENANCE: [Heeramanek Galleries, New York, until 1948]

## 247A, B. Two Folios from the *Khamisa* (Quintet) of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi

A. "A Muslim Pilgrim Learns a Lesson in Piety from a Brahman"  
Calligrapher: Muhammad Husain Kashmiri (active ca. 1560–1611)  
Painter: Basawan (active ca. 1565–98)  
India, 1597–98  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (25.1 × 15.9 cm)  
Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.29

Inscribed in Persian in *nasta'liq* script:

گفت چو دل در ره بت باختم  
پا برهش نیز ز دل ساختم

[He] said his heart is lost to his idol, my heart took a step on his path

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at bottom left-hand corner of frame:

عمل پساون  
Work of Basawan

B. "Bahram Gur and the Princess of the Blue Pavilion"  
Calligrapher: Muhammad Husain Kashmiri (active ca. 1560–1611)  
Painter: Manohar (active ca. 1582–1624)  
India, 1597–98  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (24.8 × 15.9 cm)  
Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 13.228.33

Signature in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at bottom right-hand side of frame:

عمل منوهر  
Work of Manohar

Among the many splendid manuscripts produced during the 1590s in the court workshops of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) was an illustrated version of the *Khamisa* (Quintet) of the medieval sufi poet Amir Khusrau Dihlavi. Twenty-nine illustrated folios,





A



B

several inscribed by leading court artists of the period, are now shared between the Metropolitan Museum and the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; the bulk of the text block and the painted lacquer binding are also in Baltimore. The flawless *nasta'liq* calligraphy is by the hand of Muhammad Husain Kashmiri, whom Akbar titled Zarin Qalam (Golden Pen) and who wrote out the text at the rate of sixteen and a half lines per day.<sup>1</sup> The luxurious illustrations, some signed, are surrounded by richly decorated borders, with figures, plants, animals, and birds outlined in gold.<sup>2</sup>

While modeled on the *Khamsa* of Nizami (d. 1209) and thus paying homage to the Persian master's classic text, Amir Khusrau's quintet thoroughly localizes the form by rooting several of the stories in an Indian idiom. This illustration, taken from the *Matla' al-anwar* (Rising of the Luminaries) section, depicts one such tale, that of a meeting between a Muslim pilgrim and a Brahman devotee. Here, the pilgrim, on his way to Mecca, meets the

prostrate Brahman, clad in a simple white *dhoti* (draped garment) and traveling to a Hindu temple inch by inch along the ground. When asked the reason for his actions, the Brahman replies that he has turned his heart into a symbolic foot on which he makes his way to his idol. Impressed by this religious zeal, the Muslim removes his own shoes and continues his pilgrimage barefoot.

In the hands of the Mughal master Basawan, the subject is executed with the virtuosity of a painter in his prime. From the multilayered landscape setting, filled with observed and imagined vignettes, to the convincing manner (despite the unusual pose) in which the tensed toes of the Brahman are drawn, Basawan's skill in rendering both composition and detail is manifest.<sup>3</sup> His interest in Europeanizing elements can be seen in the modeling of the tree, the depiction of the architecture, and the Portuguese-style figures in the distance. The palette of pale, melting colors is another hallmark.

Taken from the *Hasht bihisht* (Eight Paradises) section of Amir Khusrau's *Khamasa*, the painting by Basawan's son Manohar illustrates a variation on the well-known allegorical tale of the Persian hero Bahram Gur, who makes a nighttime visit to a garden pavilion where he is entertained by a lovely fairy princess and her attendants. The couple are shown here resting against a brocade bolster rendered in two shades of gold, while, all around, winged creatures play musical instruments and present platters of delicacies. In the starry sky above, a figure covered in delicate feathers descends bearing a golden tray, and in the foreground, outside the garden walls, the prince's attendants slumber beside a wakeful horse.

Manohar, a far greater conservative than his father, imbues the scene with all the traditional sweetness of the Indo-Persian tradition while retaining the formal reason of Mughal painting. The poetic, blooming night garden, enchanting fairies, and carefully

observed waterwheel combine to create a Mughal vision of Amir Khusrau's celebrated mystical verses. NNH

1. Baltimore 2001, pp. 39–40, suggests that the writing must have begun in early 1596 and been completed by regnal year 42 (March 1597–March 1598). Most scholars use the colophon date (1597–98), but the total production time would be 1596–98.
2. The manuscript contains the names of twelve artists and four illuminators, with further attributions. The inscribed names are those of the painters Basawan, Narsingh, Lal, Manohar, Sanwala, Farrukh Chela, 'Ali Quli, Dharamdas, Farrukh, Jagannath, Mukund, Miskin, Madhav, and Surdas Gujarati and of the illuminators Mansur Naqqash, Khwaja Jan Shirazi, Lutfullah Muzahhib, and Husain Naqqash.
3. Brend 1988–89, p. 283, points out that the Brahman's pose here may have been adapted from a standing figure, accounting for the stiffness of the knees.

PROVENANCE: Alexander Smith Cochran, Yonkers, N.Y. (until 1913)

## 248. *Buffaloes in Combat*

Attributed to Miskin (active ca. 1570–1604)  
India, late 16th century  
Ink, watercolor, and gold on paper  
6⅞ × 9½ in. (17.5 × 24.1 cm)  
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1983 1983.258

Muscles straining as they propel themselves against one another, the hulking masses of two bulls fill the center of this drawing, while a group of men, caught up in the action, swirl around the perimeter of the composition.

The drawing has been completed in the *nim qalam* style, in which elements are outlined in black and highlighted in certain areas with thin washes of color—here, white for the *jamans* and turbans and tiny dashes of red for lips and the ends of *patkas* and turban sashes. This style enjoyed popularity in the Mughal court in the late sixteenth century, when it was used for single-page works, for various illustrations in an *Akbarnama* of about 1596–97 (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin), a *Tutinama* (Beatty Library), *Darabnama* (British Library, London), *Baburnama* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London), *Anvar-i suhaili* (Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum, Varanasi), and the dispersed 1598–1600 *Razmnama*.<sup>1</sup> The *nim qalam* drawings have been characterized as an approximation of the European grisaille paintings and drawings brought to India in the sixteenth century, but this type of drawing has more

in common with examples produced in Iran at about the same time, particularly from Khurasan in the work of Muhammadi of Herat, which in turn may have been inspired by Chinese works.

This drawing has been attributed to the Mughal artist Miskin,<sup>2</sup> whose father, Mahesh, and brother Asi also worked for Emperor Akbar on several of the royal manuscript projects of the 1580s. At first Miskin was a colorist (a junior position in the hierarchy of the Mughal workshop), but by the end of the decade he had risen to the position of designer. In this role he created several famed animal compositions,<sup>3</sup> including another animal combat depicting a bull and a lion,<sup>4</sup> on the basis of which the present drawing has been assigned to him. Although this attribution is still debated, various aspects of the drawing tie it to Miskin's known works: a certain amount of space separates the buffaloes from the rest of the otherwise full composition, and the outthrust arms of the figures accentuate the action. In addition, several *nim qalam* works are attributed to Miskin, who appears to have been particularly interested in the expressive possibilities of this technique.<sup>5</sup>





The size and shape of the drawing, as well as the abbreviation of the figures along the edges, indicate that it was probably part of a larger composition. Miskin's bull and lion combat includes several other elements around the two central animals—a group of spectators, a rocky landscape with a city in the distance, and a group of Hindu ascetics in the woods. Similarly, the *Buffaloes in Combat* may have been surrounded by additional vignettes. MS

1. Listed in Seyller 1985.
2. Stuart Cary Welch in Welch, S. C., Jenkins, and Kane 1983–84, pp. 6–7. When sold earlier, the drawing had been identified as “Indian School, 17–18th century” (Sotheby's New York, December 15, 1962, lot 285) or attributed to Farrukh Chela (Sotheby's London, June 20, 1983, lot 143).
3. Miskin's other animal compositions are a double-page hunting scene in the *Akbarnama* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. IS. 2-1986, fols. 55, 56), two paintings in the *Anvar-i Suhayli* (Bharat Kala Bhavan

- Museum, Varanasi, no. 9069), and the detached folio, *The Raven Addressing the Assembled Animals* (British Museum, London, no. 1920, 0917, o.5).
4. First illustrated in Welch, S. C. 1963, p. 224 and fig. 7 (now Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Mass., no. 1999.297). See San Francisco and Cambridge, Mass. 2004–5, pp. 86–87.
5. These include *Prince Salim Being Attacked by a Wounded Lion*, which is signed by Miskin (discussed in Welch, S. C. 1963, p. 224), and two others attributed to him: *Beasts, Real and Mythological on a Rocky Hillside* (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 73 [I]) and *The World of Animals* (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., no. 45.29).

PROVENANCE: Lt.-Col. Wingate Wemyss-Muir (until 1952; sale, Sotheby's London, November 24, 1952, lot 107); Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until d. 1962; sale, Sotheby's New York, December 15, 1962, lot 285, to Heeramanek); [Nasli and Alice Heeramanek, New York, from 1962; sold to Humann]; Christian Humann (Panasian Collection), New York (until 1983; sale, Sotheby's London, June 20, 1983, lot 143, to MMA)

## 249A–D. Four Folios from the *Ramayana*

### A. “Rama Receives Sugriva and Jambavat, the Monkey and Bear Kings”

Reverse: Four lines of Sanskrit and one line of Bundeli Hindi; evidence of a red ink seal or stamp (reportedly the Datia Palace imprint)

India, ca. 1605

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

11 1/8 × 7 1/2 in. (28.2 × 19.1 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.503

### B. “The Death of King Dasharatha, the Father of Rama”

Reverse: Eight lines of Sanskrit text; four lines of Sanskrit and one line of Bundeli Hindi

India, ca. 1605

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

11 1/2 × 7 1/2 in. (29.2 × 19.1 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.506

### C. “The Court of Ravana”

Reverse: Eight lines of Sanskrit text.

India, ca. 1605

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

10 7/8 × 7 1/2 in. (27.6 × 18.9 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.505

### D. “The Awakening of Kumbhakarna in the Golden City of Lanka”

Reverse: Twelve lines of Sanskrit text and one further, extensively damaged, line at bottom of page; ink stamp reading: *tasvir-khana datia* [state 48?]

India, ca. 1605

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

10 7/8 × 7 1/2 in. (27.6 × 18.9 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.504

The Indian epic poem *Ramayana* recounts the tale of the legendary prince Rama and his battle against Ravana, the king of the demons, which Rama fought and won with the aid of the monkey and bear armies. In contrast to other *Ramayana* manuscripts of this period, which were translated into Persian at the order of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), this particular series retains its original Sanskrit text, an indication that it was probably made for a Hindu patron.<sup>1</sup> Its provenance from the Datia collection and the existence of pale traces of drawings on the reverse in a Datia style suggest that the patron may have been the wealthy Bundela Rajput noble Bir Singh Deo Bundela (d. 1627). Bir Singh was prominent at the Mughal court, supporting Prince Salim in his rebellion against Akbar and infamously remembered as the assassin of Abu'l Fazl. As a court noble he was able to patronize Mughal-trained artists (although ones of lesser fame than those in the employ of the emperor) in the practice known as subimperial patronage, which is confirmed here by the characteristic simplified Mughal style of these paintings.

These painted folios were never bound with a continuous text; rather each illustrated leaf had selected passages written on the reverse. Damage from a fire soon after the completion of the series explains the irregular shape of the pages, but their essential compositions and palpable liveliness still survive. The series contained

an unknown number of painted folios executed by a group of minor artists, who have been associated with other subimperial projects and who may have been dismissed from the imperial atelier at the end of Akbar's reign.<sup>2</sup> The multiple hands involved drew upon a variety of sources—both from the imperial Mughal style and from farther afield—and contributed an inventive approach to pattern and space. As a result, the manuscript has a richly flavored character, which is reflected in the Metropolitan's folios, some of which show influences from Persian models as well as Indian styles.

The brilliant red color and oversized Chinese ribbon cloud seen in “Rama Receives Sugriva and Jambavat” (cat. 249A) reflect the strong palette and forms of Rajput painting and contrast with the more classically restrained Mughal approach in “Kumbhakarna in the Golden City of Lanka” (cat. 249D). Understated emotion is conveyed in “The Death of King Dasharatha” (cat. 249B), which shows the blind king's three wives pulling their hair loose in an expression of grief. Also seen on other folios, the juxtaposition of patterns here appears to be a throwback to Mughal projects of an earlier period such as the *Hamzanama*.<sup>3</sup> Oversized clouds and the employment of the figure style suggest that the artist might have been the same as in the previous folio depicting Rama. “The Court of Ravana” (cat. 249C), which shows the ten-headed demon and his son Indrajit holding *durbar*, is the most unusual in style, with a bolder, less refined handling of the demons, who are nonetheless appealingly characterized. The Persianate *div* models upon which the demons are ultimately based, the blue-and-white-tiled *iwan* arch in the background, and, more remotely, the tiered composition indicate that the artist was aware of Shiraz and other Persian painting styles. In the folio depicting Ravana's brother, the giant Kumbhakarna, being awakened by demons, similar *div* figures are treated in a far more refined manner.

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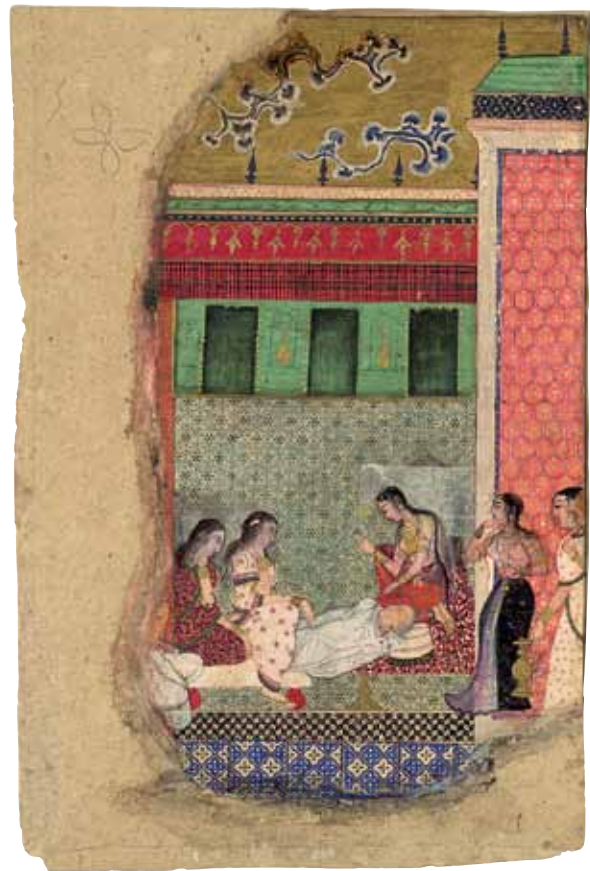
1. All four folios here are published: Navina Haidar in New York 2004–5, pp. 360, 367, figs 159–62. Further pages from the same series are on pp. 354–55, figs. 157–58. Further leaves from the same series are illustrated in the following: Chandra, P. 1957–59; Chandra, P. 1960, fig. 16; Gairola 1970, no. 8; Portland and other cities 1973–74, nos. 24, 34; Washington, D.C. 1981–82, p. 130, fig. 18; London 1982a, nos. 6–7; London 1982b, pp. 82–83, 205, no. 382; New York and other cities 1984–87, no. 15; London, Washington, D.C., Zurich, and Oxford 1991–93, no. 4; Pal 1993, nos. 83 a–b; Pal 1997, no. 38; Goswamy and Bhatia 1999, pp. 46–47, no. 36 and front cover ill.; Seyller 1999, figs. 12–13; Philadelphia 2001, no. 16; Turin 2010, p. 156, no. 142.
2. John Seyller in Philadelphia 2001, no. 16, discusses this series and speculates on artists.
3. Seyller, *ibid.*, points this out.

PROVENANCE: Datia Royal Collection; private collection, Calcutta (from 1947); private collection, Europe; [Terence McInerney, New York, until 2002; sold to MMA]





A



B



C



D



## 250A–D. Four Folios from the Emperors' Album

### A. Rosette Bearing the Names and Titles of Shah Jahan

India, ca. 1645

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

15¼ × 10¾ in. (38.6 × 26.5 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955 55.121.10.39

Inscription in Arabic in *tughra* script at center:

حضرت شهاب الدین محمد شاه جهان پادشاه غازی خلد الله ملکه و سلطانه

His Majesty Shihab al-Din Muhammad Shah Jahan, the king, the vanquisher,  
may God perpetuate his dominion and sovereignty.

### B. "Study of a Nilgai (Blue Bull)"

Painter: Mansur (active ca. 1589–1626)

Calligrapher: Mir 'Ali Haravi (d. ca. 1550)

India, ca. 1620

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

10½ × 15¼ in. (25.6 × 38.9 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955 55.121.10.13

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at top:

جهانگیر شاهی

From the reign of Emperor Jahangir

In front of animal's leg:

عمل بنده درگاه منصور نا در العصر

Work of the servant of the palace, Mansur, "Wonder of the Age"

### C. "Shah Jahan on Horseback"

Painter: Payag (active ca. 1591–1658)

India, ca. 1630

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

15¼ × 10¾ in. (38.9 × 25.7 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955 55.121.10.21

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script:

عمل پایاگ

Work of Payag

### D. Page of Calligraphy Illuminated with Animals and Plants in a Field of Flowers

Calligrapher: Mir 'Ali Haravi (d. ca. 1550)

Calligraphy: Iran, 16th century

Illumination: India, 17th century

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper

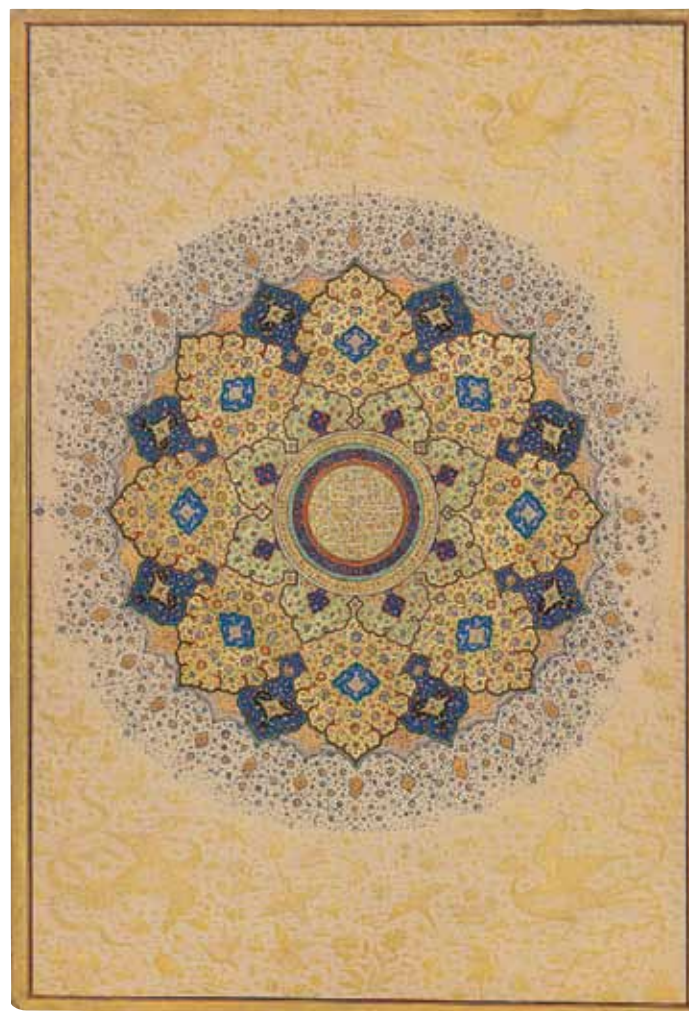
15½ × 10¼ in. (38.3 × 26.2 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955 55.121.10.4r

Inscription in Persian in fine *nasta'liq* script, three couplets by Ibn Yaqmin:

عزت خویشتن نگهدارد	مرد باید که هر کجا باشد
هر چه کبر و منیست بگذارد	خود پسندی و ابلهی نکند
سر مویی ز خود نیازد	بطریقی رود که مردم را

A true man should, wherever he is / Preserve his honor well;  
Show no conceit or foolishness / Or selfish pride in life  
And act so that nobody's hair / Is touched or hurt by him  
Mir 'Ali



A

This celebrated imperial Mughal album (*muraqqa'*), known as the Shah Jahan, or Emperors', Album originally consisted of fifty leaves containing paintings, illuminated pages, and calligraphy. Thirty-nine of these date from the seventeenth century, while the remaining eleven date from the early nineteenth century. Of the earlier folios, the first few were commissioned by Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27), but it was under the patronage of his son Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58) that most of the leaves were added. The nineteenth-century folios contain copies of the earlier subjects as well as some new compositions. This album belongs to a family of related imperial albums that share similar formats and subject matter, most notably the so-called Wantage and Minto albums in British collections, particularly the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

Most of the calligraphic panels in the Shah Jahan Album were executed by the sixteenth-century Persian master Mir 'Ali Haravi, who first practiced his art at Herat and later at Bukhara. His writing was so prized in Mughal India that it was collected, mounted in albums, and illuminated. Here (cat. 250D), the illumination





B



C



D

takes on a special character, departing from the more usual arabesque-based motifs seen in Indo-Persian ornament and moving toward a naturalism typical of Mughal painting.<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of natural life as part of the decoration of text pages is also seen in an earlier Mughal *Gulistan* of Sa'di in the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London, which contains over two thousand bird images.<sup>2</sup> In the Museum's folio, six lines of Persian poetry written out by Mir 'Ali in *nasta'liq* script are set against a burnished gold ground that contains landscape features as well as various animals and birds, including a pair of sambar deer, nilgai antelope, white goats, mynah birds, robins, starlings, egrets, and shrikes. The lyrical poetry framing the composition is by the poet Hilali Chughata'i (two couplets are in Chagatai Turkish).

Recorded observations of the emperors Babur (r. 1526–30) and Jahangir reflect the Mughal interest in the natural world; indeed, modern science has recognized the latter as having made at least two original contributions to zoology.<sup>3</sup> Jahangir's remarkably acute interests in the flora and fauna of India are expressed in the sensitive natural studies produced by his leading artist, Mansur, as demonstrated in this album by the nilgai, or blue bull (cat. 250B), one of several such works therein.<sup>4</sup> This beast may have roamed in Jahangir's zoological garden, where Mansur, a multifaceted artist who earlier in his career had been trained in the art of illumination, would have been able to record details such as the broken horn and the whorl of hair at the base of the animal's neck (the slightly less detailed brushwork on the body of the beast, however, may indicate the hand of an assistant). While this natural study depicts a relatively humble subject, a local animal, other works by Mansur portray more exotic creatures, including a zebra (which arrived at court as a gift in 1616), a turkey-cock (arriving in 1612), and a chameleon.<sup>5</sup> Although Mansur was not the only artist who addressed such natural themes, he was an acknowledged master of the genre, gaining mention in Jahangir's memoirs and earning the title *Nadir al-'Asr*, Wonder of the Age.

Grand compositions such as cat. 250C, which shows a bejeweled Shah Jahan with a radiating nimbus astride a magnificent piebald stallion, were part of the imperial Mughal image disseminated around the world.<sup>6</sup> The ruler's firm black ink inscription names the artist as Payag, further confirmed by a recently discovered artist's signature in a minuscule inscription located on the extension of the saddle.<sup>7</sup> In many ways the hard-edged formality of this composition epitomizes the Shah Jahan painting style, yet demonstrated equally is Payag's facility with royal portraiture, a somewhat rare genre for him. This crystalline imperial likeness and the

layering of patterns and shapes in the area of the saddlecloth stand in contrast to the artist's use of smoky landscapes, dark tones, and washy colors in the *Padshahnama* (Royal Library, Windsor).<sup>8</sup> Of note is the subtle radiance around the point of the emperor's spear. Also appearing in folios of that royal manuscript is the emperor's same piebald steed.<sup>9</sup> This particular formula of Shah Jahan in equestrian mode proved to have lasting popularity, judging from the number of later copies made, including one in the Emperors' Album itself.<sup>10</sup>

A *shamsa* (sun or sunburst in Arabic) traditionally opened or closed imperial Mughal albums. Worked in bright color, predominantly lapis, and several tones of gold, this meticulously designed and unerringly precise radiating medallion from the Shah Jahan Album (cat. 250D) is enriched by painted arabesques, fantastic flowers, cloud bands, birds, and insects. The Emperors' Album contains two such masterpieces, this one centered around the name of Shah Jahan written in an elaborate *tughra* (cipher) style and its companion containing the seal imprint of his successor and later owner of the album, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707). Specifically trained masters of ornament painted such illuminations. Although many Iranian prototypes for this rosette can be cited, the Mughal *shamsa* differs from them in its heightened three-dimensionality and warm coloring.<sup>11</sup> The importance of solar symbolism in many aspects of Indian and Islamic visual representation and courtly life made such radiating motifs particularly meaningful to their royal patrons.<sup>12</sup>

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1. New York 1987–88, pp. 124–25, no. 22.
2. London 1982c, p. 87, no. 58.
3. Alvi and Rahman 1968, p. 5.
4. Published in New York 1987–88, pp. 178–81, no. 47; New York 1985–86, p. 216, no. 142; Welch, S. C., et al. 1987, p. 145, no. 111.
5. Williamstown, Mass., Baltimore, Boston, and New York 1978–79, pp. 137–43, provides a list of the artist's major works; see also Blunt 1948.
6. Published in New York 1987–88, pp. 202–3, no. 59.
7. A recent examination of the painting by Robert Elgood resulted in this new discovery.
8. See Welch, S. C. 1995 for a discussion of Payag's style.
9. New Delhi and other cities 1997–98, p. 52, no. 17, pp. 72–75, no. 29.
10. New York 1987–88, p. 257, no. 86.
11. Ibid., pp. 80–81, no. 1; Welch, S. C., et al. 1987, p. 149, no. 114; New York 1985–86, pp. 236–37, no. 156.
12. Skelton 1988, pp. 181–82.

PROVENANCE: Jack S. Rofe, Scotland (1929; sale, Sotheby's, London, December 12, 1929, to Kevorkian); [Hagop Kevorkian, New York, 1929–55; gift and sale to MMA]



## 251. Portrait of the Elephant 'Alam Kaman

Painter: Attributed to Bichitr (active ca. 1610–60)

India, ca. 1640

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 17 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (30.2 × 44.1 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1996 1996.98a

Inscription in Persian in *naskhi* script in gold cartouche:

شبهه عالم کمان کجراج / قیمت یک لک روپيه

Likeness of 'Alam Kaman Gajraj (the arrogant one of the earth, king of elephants), whose value is one lakh [100,000 rupees]

The famous elephant immortalized here fell into the hands of the army led by Prince Khurram, the future Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58), during the Mughal campaign to annex the maharana of Mewar's territories. Along with seventeen other elephants from Mewar, 'Alam Kaman was presented to Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) on March 21, 1614, during the celebration marking the commencement of the ninth year of his reign. In his memoirs, the emperor makes mention of his pleasure: "On the second day of the New Year, knowing it propitious for a ride, I mounted ['Alam Kaman] and scattered about much money."<sup>1</sup>

Another portrait of 'Alam Kaman in the National Museum, New Delhi, depicts him on cloth, with a number of his calves.<sup>2</sup> The more informal presentation suggests an earlier date in the Jahangir period, although the practice of identifying the subject with an inscription between its legs, characteristic of Shah Jahan-period elephant portraits, is already in place.<sup>3</sup> An image of

the royal elephant Mahabir Deb is similar in pose and layout to this work and bears an inscription comparable in style and formula, which has been attributed to Shah Jahan, and on the basis of which this inscription, in its gold cartouche, is also believed to be by the emperor's hand.<sup>4</sup>

The present portrait conveys the monumentality of the animal both in the contrasting size of its rider and in the sober coloring of its dark body. The face and trunk are sensitively handled, and particular attention is paid to the luxurious trappings, which are typical on formal portraits of royal elephants; here, they include medallion- and leaf-shaped pendentives, a jeweled headdress, tusk bands, and a bell on a heavy chain of long, closely set links affixed around the elephant's middle. Bichitr is best known for his portraits of human royals dating to the 1630s, but he also captured animal likenesses on paper.<sup>5</sup> Among his works from that period is one showing Prince Dara Shikuh on an albino elephant.<sup>6</sup>



Elephants were among the most prized possession of the Mughal, Deccani, and Rajput courts and were central to Indian culture. While portraits of individual elephants were known from the period of Akbar (r. 1556–1605), it was under Shah Jahan's patronage that a formula for elephant portraits was established, in which the beast, sometimes shown with rider, dominates the composition, filling the picture space, and in which an accompanying inscription gives its name, its value, and, occasionally, how it was acquired.<sup>7</sup> These images may have served as a visual inventory of the elephant stables, but their production also falls into the broader Mughal practice of meticulously recording the treasures of the court. The enduring popularity of the genre is demonstrated by the rich range of elephant portraits that continued to be produced in the post-Mughal period in almost every major Indian painting tradition.<sup>8</sup> NNH

1. Jahangir 1909–14, vol. 1, p. 260; Jahangir 1999, pp. 156–57.
2. New York 1963–64, p. 36.
3. Das 1999 discusses this subject and also illustrates the National Museum's portrait of 'Alam Kaman (p. 46, fig. 10).
4. London and other cities 1983, fig. 17.
5. Williamstown, Mass., Baltimore, Boston, and New York 1978–79, pp. 101–2, for a discussion of Bichitr.
6. Ibid., fig. 33.
7. London, Washington, D.C., Zurich, and Oxford 1991–93, p. 36 n. 4, for a list of related important imperial Mughal elephants; Williams-town, Mass., Baltimore, Boston, and New York 1978–79, p. 105 n. 4.
8. Sotheby's New York, September 20, 2005, p. 88, lot 101, attributed to Mihr Chand or Bahadur Singh at Lucknow, ca. 1770, shows an elephant wearing very similar jewelry.

PROVENANCE: [Terence McNerney, New York, until 1996; sold to MMA]



This elaborate hunting scene depicting the emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) and his hunting party is among the last imperial subjects of such grandeur created at the close of the age of the great Mughals. The artist is the master Bhavanidas, who spent his early career at the Mughal court and moved to the Rajput court of Kishangarh in 1719.<sup>1</sup> The inscription in black ink identifies the subject and the artist; there is also a hidden signature in pale gold against the green middle ground.<sup>2</sup>

The multitiered composition shows the Mughal emperor seated on a gilded palanquin held aloft by numerous red-coated attendants, among whom are two noblemen in green (whose similar beardless faces suggest a familial relationship) serving as symbolic bearers in a show of respect. All the figures are treated with great individualism, and the lavish background parade includes a *mahi-o-maratib*, or fish ensign, held up high—a signature detail that Bhavanidas included in several other works.<sup>3</sup> Standing before the emperor are a Mughal prince (possibly his son and successor, Bahadur Shah I; r. 1707–12) and the prince's son, while the foreground contains a line of readied hunters and deer. Bhavanidas's

## 252. *The Emperor Aurangzeb Carried on a Palanquin*

Painter: Bhavanidas (active ca. 1700–48)

India, ca. 1705–20

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

22<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 15<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (58.1 × 38.4 cm)

Louis V. Bell Fund, 2003 2003.430

Inscriptions in Persian in *nasta'liq* script at center:

شبيه حضرت عالم گير پادشاه

The likeness of his majesty the Emperor 'Alamgir

Below horse:

عمل بهوانی داس

Work of Bhavanidas

In faint gold in front of first four attendants carrying imperial palanquin:

عمل بهوانی داس

Work of Bhavanidas



sensitive handling of the ethereal white horse in the middle ground heralds his interest in equine subjects, which became a particular specialty of his at Kishangarh. The painting is notable for its degree of detail and observation, expressed, for example, in the costumes and weapons, facial characterizations, and richly filled background. The dramatic rocky landscape indicates that the scene is likely to have been set in some part of the Deccan, where the emperor devoted the last twenty-six years of his life to the pursuit of regional conquests.

Although treating a Mughal subject, the painting relates more closely to Bhavanidas's later work at Kishangarh in terms of its greater naturalism, softer palette, smaller figures, and more sensitive detailing, as seen particularly in comparison with an illustration of the *Rukmini mangala* of about 1720–25.<sup>4</sup> The hunting scene also relates to a posthumous portrait of Maharaja Sahasmal of Kishangarh (r. 1615–18) that has been attributed to Bhavanidas, in which a similar composition shows rows of hunters in the foreground, a comparable palette, and an elaborate background.<sup>5</sup> The figure style here, however, is markedly different, with more stylized and attenuated forms. The present work may have been made at the very end of Aurangzeb's life or during the brief reign of Bahadur Shah I, perhaps for Raj Singh of Kishangarh (r. 1706–48) while the artist was still in service at the Mughal court; therefore, the span of possible dates for its execution could range from about 1705 to 1720.

NNH

1. The artist and his career are discussed in more detail by the author in Haidar 1995 and in Beach, Fischer, and Goswamy, eds. 2011.
2. The presence of this signature was first noted by John Seyller (personal communication). See also Haidar in Beach, Fischer, and Goswamy, eds. 2011, vol. 2, p. 537.
3. Irvine 1903, pp. 31–33. The term is translatable as “fish and dignities.” The ensign is usually made in the shape of a fish, four feet in length, and fixed horizontally on a pole. It can be accompanied by gilded balls, silk trimmings, or the image of a man's head.
4. Archer, W. 1960, pl. 59; Dickinson 1949, p. 35; Sumahendra 1995, among endplates.
5. Dickinson and Khandalavala 1959, p. 35, pl. 8.

PROVENANCE: Ardeshir family, Mumbai, India, and London, England; [Terence McInerney, New York, until 2003; sold to MMA]

## 253. A Gathering of Holy Men of Different Faiths

Painter: Mir Kalan Khan (active ca. 1730–80)

India, Lucknow, ca. 1770–75

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

10½ × 7½ in. (26.7 × 19.1 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 2009 2009.318

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script in front of central figure:

عمل میر میران

Work of the Lord of Lords

Based on a well-known work of about 1655 in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, this painting presents an established theme in Mughal painting: a mystical gathering of holy men of different faiths.<sup>1</sup> In the present composition, most of the figures were copied directly from the London painting and, on the basis of inscriptions on the earlier work, they can be identified as (from left to right) Kabir, the great early fifteenth-century mystic, poet, and social reformer; Kamal, the son of Kabir; Aughar, a follower of Gorakhnath; Namdev, a late fourteenth-century devotee of Vitobha from Maharashtra; Sena, a barber who performed menial tasks for holy men; and Ravidas (active ca. 1470), a cobbler from Varanasi and the guru of Mirabai. The saints are accompanied by



four *chelas* (followers) playing musical instruments (these figures are based only loosely on the earlier painting).

Among the most influential and individualistic painters of the eighteenth century, Mir Kalan Khan first came to prominence in the 1730s as one of the painters in the employ of Muhammad Shah at Delhi (r. 1719–48). The disarray in the Mughal capital after the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 compelled many artists to abandon the court; evidence shows that Mir Kalan Khan left Delhi for Lucknow, although the exact date of his departure is not known.<sup>2</sup> At Faizabad and Lucknow, he became the leading court painter of the nawabs Shuja' al-Daula (r. 1754–75) and Asaf al-Daula (r. 1775–97), producing a substantial body of work in an eclectic style that was widely imitated.

Mir Kalan Khan incorporated Europeanizing elements into both his motifs and his technique, as is apparent here in the washy watercolor background. His distinctive handling of foliage and light effects may be seen in the softly rendered trees and the golden sky behind them. His subjects range from gatherings in bucolic settings to copies of Deccani paintings and elements from European prints, sometimes with his own additions, as in this case.<sup>3</sup> The title “Lord of Lords” was likely awarded to him late in his career; its inclusion here, probably by a court scribe, is a sign of distinction for the work.

NNH

1. Gadon 1986, pp. 155–57.

2. Leach 1998, pp. 168–69.

3. R. W. Skelton, personal communication: judging by Mir Kalan's interest in and access to Deccani works, his father may have been a Deccani artist.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, England (ca. 1960); [Terence McInerney, New York, until 2009; sold to MMA]

## 254. *Princesses Gather at a Fountain*

India, Farrukhabad, ca. 1770

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

9 × 13<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (22.9 × 34.6 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2001. 2001.421

Scenes of courtly pleasure, garden settings, and long-legged female figures dressed in high-waisted, flowing *angarkhas* typify paintings attributed to the northern Indian court of Farrukhabad. A cultural satellite of Lucknow, Farrukhabad, under the rule of the Rohilla chieftains of the Bangash tribe, developed the influential Avadhi idiom into its own stylistic expression, which flourished during the later part of the eighteenth century. The painting style at Farrukhabad essentially grew from the distinctive hands of Muhammad Faqirullah Khan and Faizullah Khan, who painted at Lucknow and Faizabad in the third quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The present work depicts twelve courtly ladies and a child gathered around a fountain. A partial view of a palace is seen at the left, with a canopy extending over the fountain and some of the figures. The principal woman seems to have been introduced into the painting from a model in which the figure would have been seated on a chair, but little care was taken to adapt it to its present use. She therefore rests somewhat awkwardly on the edge of the fountain, with a hand and a foot extended into the water. An open background of rolling hills, trees, and a lake contains numerous birds and animals, mostly in pairs, as is typical in Indian painting. The necks of the swans are looped around each other in a feature that is sometimes seen in Deccani painting.<sup>2</sup> The





composition may be connected to a larger group that includes a similar painting in the India Office Library (now in the British Library, London) and another in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.<sup>3</sup> The India Office Library folio has been identified as part of a *ragamala* (musical modes) series. That classification is, however, less suited to the present work, which, although stylistically similar, does not bear inscribed or obvious iconographical evidence of being such an illustration. NNH

1. Leach 1995, pp. 618–19, fig. 6.354.
2. This feature can apply to trees as well as birds, as seen in a *Futuh al-haramain* manuscript in the Metropolitan Museum (acc. no. 2008.251), in which the imagery is probably connected to descriptions in the text.
3. Falk and Archer 1981, no. 362, pl. 11; Los Angeles County Museum of Art painting (no. M.87.278.9), published on that museum's website.

PROVENANCE: [Natesan Galleries Ltd., London, until 2001; sold to MMA]

### 255. Dagger

Northern India, ca. 1605–27

Blade: crucible steel; hilt: gold, rubies, colored glass

Length overall: 14 in. (35.4 cm); blade: 9 1/8 in. (23.2 cm)

Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 1984 1984.332

Dagger hilts such as this one, in the form of a split pommel, first appear in imperial Mughal painting of the early seventeenth century and are also seen in Deccani painting by the end of that century.<sup>1</sup> The motifs in the hilt of the dagger and in the chape of the scabbard include stylized lotuses and medallion blossoms, with scale-like elements along the quillon. Slender lines of green and red gems in channel settings along the edges, borders, and in the field are among the distinguishing features of the ornamentation.

This jeweled dagger belongs to a group of objects attributed to the workshops of the Mughal emperors Jahangir (r. 1605–27) and Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58). These pieces are characterized by the distinctive style and technique of the *kundan* setting of the gems, whereby their flattened surface is flush on all sides with the surrounding gold ground.<sup>2</sup> In this technique gold is purified until it becomes malleable at room temperature, at which point the gemstones can be pushed into place relatively easily. Also, as is typical of this style, the surface gold between the stones is incised with scrolls, foliate ornament, and the figures of birds and animals.

The group includes a ceremonial spoon and an archer's thumb ring in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and a dagger



with jeweled hilt in the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait City, among others.<sup>3</sup>

A portrait of Jahangir of about 1615 wearing a similar, if not the same, dagger as the example in the Kuwait collection provides evidence for dating this group of jeweled works to his period.<sup>5</sup> Given its technique and high quality, it seems most likely that the present dagger is also from his royal workshop.<sup>6</sup> DGA/NNH

1. See, for example, daggers of this type in a miniature painting of about 1680 from Bijapur in the Deccan; New York 1985–86, p. 310, no. 208 (acc. no. 1982.213).
2. Described by Manuel Keene in London and other cities 2001, p. 18; see also Keene 2004.
3. The daggers include one each in the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, Kuwait City, al-Sabah Collection (no. LNS 25J; see New York 1985–86, p. 198, no. 127; and London and other cities 2001, pp. 56–57, fig. 5.2), the Wallace Collection, London (no. OA 1409; see Norman 1982, p. 12, no. 2), and the British Museum, London; the locket from the scabbard of a punch dagger, also in the al-Sabah Collection (no. LNS XIX SH; see London and other cities 2001, pp. 56–57, fig. 5.1); and the spoon and thumb ring in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (nos. I.M. 173.1910 and I.M. 207.1920; see New York 1985–86, pp. 200–201, nos. 128–29; and Bradford and London 1988–89, no. 93). A related but probably slightly later piece is a pendant in the British Museum (no. OA. 14178; see *ibid.*, no. 63). Also related are another dagger (with associated scabbard) in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (no. OR-452), recorded in the Treasury of Peter I in 1730, and a bracelet and an archer's ring (nos. VZ-720 and VZ-703) presented as gifts from Nadir Shah in 1741 and certainly booty from his conquest of Delhi in 1739 (see Kuwait 1990, nos. 112, 95, and 93, respectively). Manuel Keene (London and other cities 2001, p. 56) attributed the group to the early seventeenth century by comparison with an archer's ring.
4. London and other cities 2001, pp. 56–57.
5. New York 1987–88, p. 110, no. 16.
6. See, for example, the *Padshahnama* of Jahangir in New Delhi and other cities 1997–98, pls. 12, 24, 37, 39.

PROVENANCE: Private sale, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 1984; to David Wille for MMA

## 256A–E. Coins with Signs of the Zodiac

India, Agra, 1619–25

Gold

Diam. ca. 7/8 in. (21 mm)

Bequest of Joseph H. Durkee, 1898

A. Taurus, dated A.H. 1028, 14th regnal year (April 20–May 20, 1619) 99.35.7402

B. Leo, dated A.H. 1033, 19th regnal year (July 23–August 22, 1624) 99.35.7403

C. Libra, dated A.H. 1034, 19th regnal year (September 23–October 22, 1625) 99.35.6552

D. Capricorn, dated A.H. 1031, 16th regnal year (December 22, 1621–January 19, 1622)<sup>1</sup> 99.35.7401

E. Pisces, dated A.H. 1028, 13th regnal year (February 19–March 20, 1619) 99.35.2391

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script on obverse of each coin:

یافت در اگره روی زر زیور از جهانگیر شاه، شاه اکبر

The face of gold was decorated in Agra by Jahangir Shah, [son of] Shah Akbar.<sup>1</sup>

These gold coins were minted in India during the reign of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27). On the reverse of each there is an image of the constellation corresponding to the month of issue, and on the obverse a poetic inscription, a number for the year of Jahangir's reign, and the corresponding year in the *hijra* calendar.<sup>2</sup> The Metropolitan Museum owns ten of these rare coins, five gold and five silver; shown here are the gold *mohurs* corresponding to the months Urdibihisht (Taurus), Murdad (Leo), Mihr (Libra), Day (Capricorn), and Isfand (Pisces).<sup>3</sup>

Jahangir took a strong interest in the coins to be minted during his reign, specifying their names, denominations, weights, and inscriptions. In his memoirs, one can find mention of several decrees he issued regarding the designs of new coins,<sup>4</sup> including the following, which relates to his decision in April 1618 to create this unique issue:

Prior to this, it has been the rule that on one side of gold coins my name has been engraved, and on the other side the name of the minting place, the month, and the regnal year. Around this time it occurred to me that instead of the month a figure of the constellation representing the month should be depicted. For example, for the month of Farvardin a figure of Aries could be made, and for the month of Urdibihisht the figure of Taurus, and so on for every month in which a coin was minted, one side would bear a picture of the constellation in which the sun rose. This method is peculiarly my own and has never been used before.<sup>5</sup>

There are slight variations in the zodiac coins issued between 1618 and 1625 (when production stopped), which indicates that different dies were used to strike them.





These coins are quite unusual in the context of both Indian and Islamic numismatics because those issued by Muslim rulers tend to have no figural decoration, and no other Indian coins have astrological imagery. Together with the portrait and figural coins issued during Jahangir's reign, these specimens provide a fascinating complement to the other works of art related to this emperor's exacting patronage.

MS

1. Translation from Codrington 1904, p. 108.
2. The dates provided here differ slightly from those given in earlier publications because determining exact Gregorian equivalents for the dates that appear on Jahangir's zodiac coins is complicated by several factors. The dies used to create them were reused over several years, and the regnal and *hijra* years were not always accurately or identically updated. In addition, the coins appear to have been minted in each city only when Jahangir was present; therefore the obverse and reverse dies were sometimes incorrectly matched to keep up with his itinerant schedule. See Kulkarni 2004.
3. Other examples are held by the British Museum, London; the Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen; the National Museum, New Delhi; the Indian Museum, Kolkata; and the State Museum, Lucknow.
4. See, for instance, Jahangir 1999, pp. 27, 123–24, 241.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

PROVENANCE: Joseph H. Durkee, New York (until d. 1898)

### 257. *Mango-Shaped Flask*

India, mid-17th century

Rock crystal; set with gold, enamel, rubies, and emeralds

H. 2 1/2 in. (6.5 cm)

Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, 1993 1993.18

During India's Mughal period, the jeweled arts were greatly patronized by the ruling family and nobility who often appear in paintings holding or handling precious objects. Various exquisite rock-crystal inlaid objects were created for courtly use, with a notable group surviving in a private collection in Kuwait.<sup>1</sup> Mughal taste for such treasures had deep roots: in India, carved and polished rock crystal had been used from ancient times to create Buddhist and Hindu religious artifacts. Within an Islamic context, hardstone carving of vessels and luxury items also had a long tradition in parts of the Near East.

This diminutive curved flask is created by two halves of rock crystal fitted together to form its body and held in place in part by a cage of meandering scrolls in gold wire.<sup>2</sup> The finely balanced, elegantly drawn arabesques, inset with rubies and emeralds in gold mounts, recall the Mughal debt to Safavid Iran, where similar networks of scrolling vines with palmettes, blossoms, and



## 258. Bowl with Bud Handles

Central Asia, second half of 18th century

Nephrite; carved

H. 2 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (6.7 cm); W. at handles 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (21.6 cm); Diam. of rim 6 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.

(17.1 cm), of foot 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (7 cm)

Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 1902 02.18.762

This cup is carved from translucent green jade (nephrite) in what is generally known as the Mughal style. Each of its lobed sides bears a leaf (a simplified version of the acanthus) at the bottom. Two of the leaves, at opposite sides, rise to meet hanging buds that form lugs for the cup. The carved decoration on the base is in the shape of a chrysanthemum. On the upper part of the exterior is inscribed a poem, dated 1771, by the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) of the Qing dynasty of China, that may be translated as follows:

This bowl of chrysanthemum pattern from Hindustan,<sup>1</sup> measuring about a foot across and more than three feet around,<sup>2</sup>

Is fashioned in a style different from that of our ancient work.<sup>3</sup>

The handles hang down suspended like two swelling buds

And the foot is carved beneath with serried ranks of petals.

Such offerings come to us not only as tribute from Yülong,<sup>4</sup>

There is constant traffic along Quxu [or Qu and Xu].<sup>5</sup>

The chrysanthemum is still, as of old, the flower of the autumn holiday.

And this is a fitting gift for Yuanming<sup>6</sup> in his five-willow retreat.

leaves were in vogue in the sixteenth century, although in different media, including tilework and illumination. The Mughal penchant for natural shapes is demonstrated in the mango-shaped profile of the bottle and in the bud form of the enamel stopper. Red leaves on a white background create the decoration on the stopper, and a delicate gold chain connects it to the collar.

The bottle may have been meant to hold lime, an ingredient of *pan*, a mildly intoxicating narcotic popularly used in India. Alternatively, this object may have been used as a container for perfume, which was worn by both men and women in the Mughal period. Two other rock-crystal flasks (one recorded in 1690) of this shape and size are known in European collections.<sup>3</sup> In other media, a mango-shaped *bidri*-ware flagon and a silver flask are comparable vessels.<sup>4</sup> The gently curving mango shape also appears widely as a repeating motif in textile patterns. NNH

1. London and other cities 2001, pp. 32–33, nos. 2.5–2.8.

2. Published: Walker, D. 1993; Mexico City 1994–95, pp. 240–41.

3. Folsach 2011, p. 238, fig. 370, p. 332, fig. 537; also in Boston and Chicago 2006–7, p. 171, no. 96; Leatham 2000, p. 170, recorded in 1690.

4. New York 2004–5, p. 239 and n. 2, no. 99, for a silver and fabric example; Folsach 2011, p. 332, fig. 537.

PROVENANCE: [Spink & Son Ltd., London, until 1993; sold to MMA]

In 1755 the Qianlong emperor initiated a series of military campaigns in eastern Turkestan, first in Ili, north of the Tianshan Mountains, and later in the Muslim region of Kashgaria.<sup>7</sup> The territories newly gained for the Qing empire included the cities of Yarkand and Khotan, each by a river running down the northern slope of the Kunlun Mountains, the chief sources of jade for all of Asia. In these areas there was also a tradition of jade working that can be traced ultimately to Iranian and Chinese origins. For want of archaeological evidence, it is not known when this tradition started. In more recent centuries, the craft of jade working, or the craftsmen themselves, migrated to serve the Timurids and afterward the Mughals of India. And it was at the Mughal court in the seventeenth century that the tradition of Central Asian jade carving reached its highest artistic and technical expression. When the Mughal court rapidly declined in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Central Asian jade carvers found new customers—the Chinese, and the Chinese emperor in particular.

From 1756, a year after the beginning of Qianlong's campaigns in Central Asia, large quantities of jade boulders and pebbles began to arrive in interior China together with a number of carved jades, most of which entered the emperor's collection as tribute. This would continue through the reign of Jiaqing (1796–1820). The present cup is among the most common types of jade objects sent as tribute to the Qing court. About a dozen pieces of this type are known from publications, and all can be ascribed to the





Mughal style, as the craftsmen continued to work in the fashion favored by Mughal rulers of the previous century. Pieces that arrived later at the Qing court, during the Jiaqing reign, would show some Chinese influence.

After about 1820, tributes of jades ceased to arrive at the Qing court, mainly because of political and economic developments in Central Asia but also because of the impoverishment of the Qing court. There remain a total of about eight hundred jades from Central Asia in the Palace Museum, including pieces in Beijing and Taiwan. This collection provides a unique and well-documented record of jade carving in Central Asia for a seventy-year period, from about 1750 to 1820.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly all Mughal-style jade carvings are ornamented with vegetal motifs, of which the acanthus and the “chrysanthemum” are among the commonest. Jade craftsmen in India, particularly those working for the imperial Mughal court, were masters at exploiting the translucency of jade to special effect. This element remained a characteristic of jade working in Muslim Central Asia even after the decline of Mughal patronage, as can be seen in the present example.

JCYW

1. Transcribed phonetically by the four characters *Hen du si tan*.
2. This poem might have been originally written for another, much larger piece that also bore the “chrysanthemum” motif on the base, as commonly seen on Mughal-style jade cups.
3. Literally, “from that of the Kao gongji,” the name of the ancient book on handicrafts of the late Zhou dynasty (ca. fifth–third century B.C.).
4. Contraction of Y’urung Kash, a river of Khotan in Chinese Turkestan.
5. In Qianlong’s own annotation, this is a reference to “Hindustan, beyond the Hindu Kush.”
6. Tao Yuanming (365–427), a Chinese pastoral poet known for his love of chrysanthemums.
7. For a brief account of Qianlong’s campaigns in eastern Turkestan, see Fletcher 1968, pp. 218–24, 358–68.
8. For a detailed study of the Islamic jade collection in these museums, see Teng 2004.

PROVENANCE: Heber R. Bishop, New York (until 1902)

## 259. *Pair of Flower-Style Doors*

Northern India, second half of 17th century

Wood; carved with residues of paint

73 × 30 × 3 in. (185.4 × 76.2 × 7.6 cm)

Gift of Harvey and Elizabeth Plotnick, 2009 2009.376a, b

The flower style associated with the height of Mughal taste finds expression in this pair of carved-wood doors with alternating square and rectangular panels that have cusped cartouches enclosing flowering plants. A frieze of stylized leaf motifs borders the top and outer edges of the doors, and individual floral medallions decorate the astragal(?) that covers their junction. The doors turn on hooks that extend from iron straps attached across each leaf and fit into sockets on the surrounding frame; they probably also had pivots at the bottom, now missing.

The use of complete flowering plants as a decorative motif appears to have had its genesis in works on paper produced during the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605–27). In 1620 the emperor requested that his artist Mansur paint the many types of flowers he observed in Kashmir (see also cat. 264). The three surviving studies by Mansur show such strong affinities with European botanical studies that it is very likely that he and the other Mughal artists who later took up this theme were using them as a model. Herbals known to have been presented by European visitors to the Mughal court are usually identified as the source of inspiration.<sup>1</sup> Flowering plants were also used to decorate the borders of album pages—and for these another source has been recently suggested, namely, royal English charters, which were also decorated with flowering plants.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime during the reign of Jahangir’s son Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58), the plant studies were transformed into decorative motifs and arranged in rows to cover textiles, carpets, luxury objects, and architectural spaces.<sup>3</sup> Individual plants carved in low relief are found in several buildings at the Agra Fort (such as the



Mussaman Burj, the Shah Burj, the Diwan-i Khas, and on the *jharoka* of the Diwan-i 'Am) as well as in the tomb, mosque, and Mihman Khana of the Taj Mahal complex.<sup>4</sup> Such features were also found at the contemporary palaces of the Rajput royal families, including the Shish Mahal at the Amber Fort. Doors with this motif are rare, however, perhaps known only from one other example in the David Collection, Copenhagen.<sup>5</sup> MS

1. This connection was first made in Skelton 1972a, pp. 147–52. Vivian Rich later identified the European books known to be in India during the period of Jahangir in Rich 1987.
2. Brend 2004.
3. Veronica Murphy, however, has suggested that the use of the flowering-plant motif on textiles may have been fashionable from the time of Jahangir, if not earlier (Murphy 1987). For a discussion in relation to carpet design, see New York 1997–98, pp. 87–117.
4. For the transfer of this motif to architecture, see Koch 2006, pp. 218–19.
5. David Collection, no. 15/1987.

PROVENANCE: Dr. William K. Ehrenfeld, San Francisco (until about 2002, to McInerney); [Terence McInerney, New York, about 2002–4; sold to Plotnick]; Elizabeth and Harvey Plotnick, Chicago (2004–9)

### 260. Panel with Rows of Flowers

India, mid-17th century

Silk, cut and voided velvet, with continuous floats of flat metal thread

65<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 29<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (167.4 × 76 cm) overall

Rogers Fund, 1930 30.18 (upper fragment)

The Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Alice Heeramaneck, 1991 1991.347.2 (lower fragment)

Velvets patterned with rows of flowers were employed in India from about 1630 on in the context of palace interiors, where blossoms were seen virtually everywhere—in wall paintings, marble panels and other elements decorated with *pietra dura* inlay, carved marble dado panels on walls, and furnishing fabrics.<sup>1</sup> Even the individuals who passed through these spaces were dressed and accessorized in accordance with the prevailing taste for the flower style. Velvets were prized as furnishing fabrics, used chiefly as hangings, window curtains, and floor-spreads. Lahore and Gujarat are known to have been production centers for velvet since the time of the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605),<sup>2</sup> and the material was probably also produced at royal workshops in the capital cities of Delhi and Agra.

This panel has a pattern of alternating rows of seminaturalistic roses and lilies. An additional fragment of the same fabric belongs to the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.,<sup>3</sup> and a number of variations of this pattern type are also known.<sup>4</sup> Several small surviving





areas of original selvage, showing two red stripes, occur along the left edge. The satin ground in the areas lacking pile—now beige or pale golden yellow, but originally perhaps peach or pink from safflower—contain passes of flat (ungilt) silver strips, now turned black. These were woven with enough space separating them that the ground color would have shown through. The velvet pile has two whites, one bright, the other bluish, which are employed in such a way that subtle diagonal bands slanting down to the right are formed in the pattern. This velvet differs in several respects from Persian examples, even ones with similar patterning (see cat. 175). First, in terms of style and aesthetic, the flowers here do not shift direction from row to row even though the species change; the flowers are therefore inherently more naturalistic, while the pattern is more static. Second, in terms of structure, most noteworthy here is the use of flat metal strips instead of the thin metal sheet wrapped around a silk core found in Persian examples. These strips are passed from edge to edge, running behind the areas of pattern, because Indian weavers found this method more efficient.

The panel is made up of two pieces of velvet that fit together perfectly. By a remarkable stroke of luck, the second piece was donated in 1991 by Alice Heeramaneck, who had no knowledge of the existence of the contiguous piece, purchased from the dealer Joseph Brummer in 1930, which was already in the Metropolitan Museum's collection.

DW

1. Two paintings from about 1635 that illustrate the impact of the flower style on Mughal palace interiors may be found in New Delhi and other cities 1997–98, folios 5 and 10.
2. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami 1977, vol. 1, pp. 98–99.
3. No. OC6.150, acquired by museum founder George Hewitt Myers in 1949 from Nasli Heeramaneck.
4. A classic variation is published in Spuhler 1978, pp. 202–3, no. 123. Another important example is the velvet railing hanging in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, illustrated in Smart 1986, p. 19, fig. 23. The Chester Beatty velvet bears an inscription indicating that the piece was first inventoried in Amber in February 1648.

#### PROVENANCE

Acc. no. 30.18: [Brummer Gallery, Inc., New York, until 1930; sold to MMA]

Acc. no. 1991.347.2: The Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck Collection, New York (by 1963–91)



## 261. Waist Sash (*Patka*)

India, second half of 17th century  
Cotton, silk; plain weave, embroidered  
10 ft. 5 in. × 27 in. (317.5 × 68.6 cm)

The Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Alice Heeramaneck,  
1983 1983.494.9

The *patka*, an elaborate sash tied around the waist, was a distinctive piece of clothing worn by the Mughal emperors—and by those upon whom the emperors conferred it.<sup>1</sup> The word itself may come from either the Sanskrit *patta*, which means “a bandage, ligature, strip, fillet” of textile, or *pataka*, meaning “girdle, . . . ribbon, piece of cloth.”<sup>2</sup> The evolution of the iconography of the *patka*’s decoration reached its zenith after the visit by Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) to Kashmir in 1620. The emperor described this place as the “garden of eternal spring,”<sup>3</sup> and Kashmiri flowers inspired the decorations that became the distinctive element of all artistic Mughal expression, including *patka*,<sup>4</sup> during the reign of his son, Shah Jahan (1627–58).

This sash is representative of the production during Shah Jahan’s reign. It is distinctive in its concentration of decoration on the end panels,<sup>5</sup> where a repeated sequence of eight identical poppylike flowers is found. The great naturalistic detail is evident in the thin roots at the bottom of the plant, which fan out below five mint green lanceolate leaves with creamy veining. Five slender intertwining stems rise from the leaves—three opening out into glorious red, pink, and orange corollas, each with a tiny green pistil surrounded by white stamens, and the remaining two bent over with their buds closed. The eight flowers are surrounded by a border with a flowing motif that repeats around the entire outline of the sash. The decoration features the same flowers on a smaller scale, between two narrow bands decorated with small cream-colored beading on a green background and bordered with a red line.<sup>6</sup> This white cotton plain-weave band runs the entire length of the sash. The decoration is embroidered in silk with satin, chain, and stem stitches.

The Mughal *patka* of the Shah Jahani type, with the end panels characteristically decorated with flowering plants on a plain ground, is also found in the Deccan late in the seventeenth



century. A number of Deccani paintings of this time from Bijapur and Hyderabad portray figures wearing this type of *patka*.<sup>7</sup> The Mughal style seen here was held in great esteem and strongly influenced the nearby courts, reaching as far as the Rajput courts in Rajasthan and the Punjab Hills.

EGM

1. These belts or girdles become in fact something of a marker, as noted in this passage relating to dress from Jahangir’s *Tuzuk*: “Having adopted for myself certain special cloths and cloths-stuffs, I gave an order that no one should wear but he on whom I might bestow them” (Jahangir 1909–14, p. 384).
2. Goswamy and Jain 2002, p. 7.
3. Ibid., p. 44.
4. Okada 1995, pp. 5–6.
5. Goswamy and Jain 2002, p. 45.
6. Irwin and Hall 1973a, p. 201, provides a description of silk dyeing in Indian embroidery: “Indigo predominates as the basis for blue, but by double dyeing firstly in indigo and then in one of the many vegetable yellows a glowing dark green is achieved. . . . The range of reds and pink in silk-dyeing derive not from madder, but from *kermes*, a small insect of cochineal type which yields a crimson colorant of soft luminosity.”
7. The *patkas* worn by both Muhammad ‘Adil Shah and Ikhlas Khan in their double portrait, attributed to the third quarter of the seventeenth century (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), are undoubtedly “northern” (Goswamy and Jain 2002, p. 60, fig. 55). The same *patka* can be seen in portraits from Golconda/Hyderabad (ibid., pp. 62, 65, fig. 56).

PROVENANCE: The Alice and Nasli Heeramaneck Collection, New York (until 1983)

## 262. Carpet with Pictorial Design

Present-day Pakistan, Lahore, late 16th–early 17th century  
Cotton (warp and weft), wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
27 ft. 4 in. × 9 ft. (833.1 × 274.3 cm)  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 17.190.858

Although the advent of carpet weaving in India predates his reign, it was the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) who established imperial workshops for carpets, as well as a pattern of royal patronage. Carpet workshops were set up first at Fatehpur Sikri,



the imperial capital only from 1571 to 1585, then at Lahore and Agra, and then, before 1640, at Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> Not all Indian carpets surviving from these early times necessarily suggest imperial manufacture, so commercial workshops must also have been in full production. Masters and workmen, many undoubtedly Iranian, are known to have come to India to help establish the workshops, and Persian carpets also clearly continued to be imported despite the high quality of local production.<sup>2</sup>

It should not be surprising, then, that this large carpet, representing production dating from late in the reign of Akbar, displays strong Persian influence. The most popular Persian convention was the symmetrical arrangement of scrolling vines with blossoms and leaves, but another approach was the use of pictorial patterns similar to those produced for paintings in royal manuscripts (the two conventions are combined in some examples). The field pattern here combines animals, birds, and vegetation in a pictorial way, that is, they are meant to be seen from one direction and without the matrix of a vine-scroll pattern to connect everything. Pictorial designs can be found in Persian carpets in a few examples of the small “Kashan” rugs and even more in a couple of pieces of the “Sanguszko” group; direct contact of some sort is also implied by the use of certain colors. Counterparts of several animals represented here may be seen in one of the Museum’s Persian rugs (cat. 182), notably the leaping ibex, the combat between lion and ibex, and the leaping lion. Flames at the shoulders, indicating supernatural qualities, betray the ultimate Chinese origin of some of these figures, as transmitted to Iran in preceding centuries.

In many respects, however, this carpet is unmistakably Indian. In terms of structure, the cotton warps are eight-ply instead of the four-ply typically found in Persian carpets. As for color, the palette has a brightness, especially in the red, lacking in most Persian pieces, and there is a heavy use of *ton-sur-ton* coloring, juxtaposing similar colors such as red and pink, light and dark blue, and ocher and beige or off-white. The interlocking compartment design of the main border is related to borders found in Persian carpets (see cat. 185), but here it takes a particularly Indian form in its geometrized compartments and the particular silhouette effect of the un-outlined red palmettes and vines set against the white ground. And the palm trees strike an Indian chord. As large as this carpet is, far larger ones are known to have come from Indian looms, including a pair of mid-seventeenth-century audience carpets, each about sixty-three feet long (approximately 19 meters).<sup>3</sup>

Careful observation reveals a feature most unusual in a carpet—the field design consists of a pattern unit of approximately square dimension that is shown four times, each unit reversed in direction. The palm tree marks the top corner of each pattern unit. That the pattern unit at the top of the carpet was unfinished when the border was woven suggests the carpet was woven to a prescribed length. It is important to note that the use of a repeating pattern





unit is a feature of draw-loom weaving (see cat. 171) because the elaborate preparation of the loom figure harness can be used again and again. But it is of no value as a labor-saving procedure in pile weaving, since all the knots still have to be tied by hand, meaning that the choice of this type of pattern was based on aesthetic preference and not on labor, time, or cost considerations. DW

1. New York 1997–98, pp. 7, 12.
2. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami 1977, vol. 1, p. 57.
3. New York 1997–98, p. 120, fig. 118.

PROVENANCE: Lady Sackville, Knole Park, Kent, England; J. Pierpont Morgan, New York (until 1917)

### 263. *Pashmina* Carpet Fragment

Northern India, first half of 17th century  
 Silk (warp and weft), *pashmina* wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
 13½ × 5¼ in. (34.3 × 13.3 cm)  
 Rogers Fund, 1908 08.109.20

*Pashmina* is a type of fine wool made from the undercoat of the Himalayan mountain goat. Exquisite carpets woven of this wool in northern India during the seventeenth century were valued highly not only in India but also in Iran. For instance, two examples dating to this period are preserved in the shrine of Imam Riza in Mashhad.<sup>1</sup> In total, about forty *pashmina* carpets are thought to have survived worldwide, and half of them probably date to the reign of Shah Jahan (1627–58).<sup>2</sup>

This is a fragment of one such luxury carpet. Even in its present form, the delicate, painterly quality of the leaves is apparent. A gradational effect is accomplished by the two tones of blue and green *pashmina* pile set against the finely woven silk ground, which consists of alternating warp bands of white, off-white, green, and blue. The insect-derived vivid red dye used as a background color makes the piece even more attractive.

The fragment once belonged to a famous carpet now in the Frick Collection in New York, and the complete original design of the work has recently been reconstructed. Once extraordinarily large, the carpet had alternating rows of flowering trees and trees in leaf. Surprisingly, in spite of the repetitive design and symmetrical arrangement, the weavers carefully avoided creating identical details.<sup>3</sup> Considering its quality and the luxurious materials used in its production, the carpet is likely to have been made in one of the Mughal royal workshops.



This magnificent carpet was cut up before 1889. Many pieces were then dispersed, and the present fragment was purchased by the Museum in 1908. In 1918 Henry Clay Frick purchased the Frick piece from the dealer Joseph Duveen. Other fragments are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Brooklyn Museum; Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; and private collections.<sup>4</sup> YK

1. See Gans-Ruedin 1984, pp. 130–33; Cohen and Kajitani 2006, p. 15.
2. New York 1997–98, p. 80.
3. Cohen and Kajitani 2006, pp. 9, 10, 35.
4. Ibid., pp. 9, 11, 15, 19, 26 n. 2.

PROVENANCE: [India, 1880s]; [Dikran G. Kelekian, New York, until 1908; sold to MMA]



## 264. *Carpet with Flower Pattern*

India or present-day Pakistan, Kashmir or Lahore, ca. 1650

Cotton (warp and weft); wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile

14 ft. 2 in. × 81 3/4 in. (431.8 × 207.6 cm)

Purchase, Florance Waterbury Bequest and Rogers Fund, 1970 1970.321

When the emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) made his first spring trip to Kashmir in 1620, he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the flowers coming into bloom. A man with a keen eye and a sensitive soul, Jahangir wanted to record the experience, so he tasked his leading natural-history painter, a gifted artist named Mansur, with painting one hundred flower “portraits.”<sup>1</sup> Jahangir’s interest in the aesthetics of flowers was perhaps stimulated further by the appearance at court of European herbals; elements of these works, including formal presentations in profile and complementary butterflies and dragonflies, found their way into Indian representations. By about 1630, under Jahangir’s son and successor, Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58), the flower style had become the new fashion at the court and appeared in all aspects of the decorative arts—architectural decoration, manuscript binding and illumination, textiles, and objects in various media. The flower style became dominant in carpets a little later, by about 1650. It largely supplanted the Persianate taste for scrolling vines and arabesques, which had previously dominated court circles in India.

This carpet is an excellent example of the type. It has a conventional field pattern consisting of rows of profiled flowers, some identifiable (irises, tulips), others not, but all drawn with a sense of naturalistic individualism and detail. The border is unusual in that it represents a naturalistically drawn and slightly Indianized version of a classic Persian pattern instead of the more expected profiled flowers. Flower carpets with rectangular shapes are outnumbered by arched ones, some of which were made in pairs that may have flanked a raised dais; one circular and one octagonal example are also known. More than fifty examples of such carpets survive.<sup>2</sup> A good number remain in Jaipur and were originally purchased for use in the Amber Fort, ancestral home of the Jaipur rajahs, while others have been acquired over the course of the last hundred years by institutions and collectors in the West. Some of the examples now in the West can be traced to Jaipur; this carpet, for example, was observed in Jaipur in 1929, when it still had an inventory label stating that it had been purchased in Lahore in 1656.<sup>3</sup> But it is possible that the royal stores of princely states other than Jaipur also possessed such material.

DW



PROVENANCE: Maharaja of Jaipur, India (1656—at least 1929); Hagop Kevorkian, New York (until d. 1962; estate sale, Sotheby’s, London, December 11, 1970, lot 8, to MMA)

1. Jahangir 1966, vol. 2, pp. 143–45.

2. New York 1997–98, pp. 86–117, with many illustrations.

3. Ibid., p. 95.



## 265. Carpet Fragments with Pattern of Lattice and Blossoms

India or present-day Pakistan, Kashmir or Lahore, ca. 1650  
Silk (warp and weft), pashmina wool (pile); asymmetrically knotted pile  
12 ft. 11 3/4 in. × 55 1/4 in. (395.6 × 140.3 cm)  
Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 14.40.723

Among all traditional carpet-weaving societies, northern India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was unique in using the fine underhair of a breed of domesticated goat (*Capra hircus laniger*) over silk as the preferred pile material for the highest grade of carpets.<sup>1</sup> *Pashmina* had a number of advantages over silk as a pile fiber: it was strong, it allowed for an unparalleled fineness of weave, and it absorbed and reflected color at least as well as sheep's wool. The idea for using *pashmina* for carpets, and not only for shawls, seems to have originated in Iran during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The earliest surviving Indian example dates from about 1620 to 1625, around the time of Jahangir's initial infatuation with the flowers of Kashmir (see cat. 264). The majority of seventeenth-century examples thus reflect variations of the flower style favored at court after 1630. Late in the century and throughout the next, the fussier *millefleur* style came into fashion, and floral elements became much finer in scale, sometimes clustered in repeating units.<sup>3</sup>

The field pattern of these fragments represents a popular variation of the classic flower style, in which rows of flowers are presented in profile. Here the field is divided into compartments, with a lattice formed by reciprocating serrated vines. Large fantastical blossoms are placed at the points where the vines meet, and smaller blossoms appear in the compartments as part of a

secondary vine pattern. The extremely fine weave (just over 1,000 knots per square inch) allows for sublime refinement in drawing and detail. The masterful weavers came to use the pile fiber just as painters use pigments, blending or juxtaposing different colors to create mottled or even shaded effects, as in the leaves of some of the large blossoms or the little hillocks and scudding cloud wisps in the border. Elements in the pattern allow us to estimate the original length at more than twenty-three feet (seven meters), a great size for a carpet of this quality.

Benjamin Altman, the department store magnate who left the Metropolitan Museum his superb collections of old master paintings and Chinese porcelain, should also be remembered for the refinement of his taste in carpets. Not only did he own three of the Museum's small silk "Kashan" rugs (of sixteen known worldwide; see cats. 182 and 183 for two of them), but he collected seven superb examples of Indian *pashmina* carpets, the largest group in any collection.

DW

1. New York 1997–98, pp. 22–23.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–92.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–29.

PROVENANCE: Benjamin Altman, New York (until d. 1913)





## 266. *Bed Cover or Wall Hanging (Fragment)*

India, Gujarat, 17th century  
Cotton, silk; plain weave, embroidered, originally quilted  
76½ × 45 in. (194.3 × 114.3 cm)  
Gift of Victoria and Albert Museum, 1954 54.21

Over the centuries, Gujarat has produced outstanding embroideries both for sale in India and for export. As early as the 1500s, Dutch, English, French, and Portuguese traders brought Indian textiles into the European market, where they continued to be fashionable for the next three centuries.<sup>1</sup> Some of the finest examples of Gujarati embroideries come from the Mochi community; the Cambay area in particular perfected the art of chain-stitch embroidery.<sup>2</sup>

Among the oldest surviving embroidered panels attributed to this seventeenth-century Gujarati production center are those now preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, as well as those in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.<sup>3</sup> Other panels have been attributed to the same place of production,<sup>4</sup> and one of them bears an inscription in Gujarati on the selvage, further confirming the provenance of the group.<sup>5</sup>

The decorative motifs found on these textiles resulted from a process that began with a request from exporters, who sent prints and drawings from Europe. These artworks were then used by the Indian artists, who sometimes altered the original design to such a degree that the final results were virtually unrecognizable. When the finished pieces were sent back to Europe, customers appreciated them for the exotic allure they had acquired.<sup>6</sup> This is the case with the decorative motifs on the Museum's panel, which feature flowers, birds, cats, and a monkey. These fantastical animals barely resemble their original counterparts. Flowers spread naturalistically across the surface of the textile; the animals, sometimes fanciful and unreal, seem to sit on slender branches.

The silk chain-stitch embroidery—executed in red, pink, yellow, blue, and green silk on a thin white plain-weave quilted cotton background—is of a type produced by the Mochi community. It was done with a special tool (the *ari*), a fine needle hooked at one end that was fitted into a round wooden handle. The *ari* was easy to use, and with it the embroiderer could produce very fine loops to control the progress of the design,<sup>7</sup> thus allowing for a greater degree of detail and refinement.

EGM



Detail

1. Irwin 1949, p. 51.
2. Crill 1999, p. 8, links Duarte Barbosa's quotation in 1518 regarding the "very beautiful quilts and testers of beds finely worked" with the production of Gujarat chain-stitch embroidery of the Mochi community that was shipped from the port of Cambay.
3. These pieces were part of the Lady Ashburnham Collection in Ashburnham Palace, and at least five of these are mentioned in *The Catalogue of The Important English Furniture etc.* auctioned by Sotheby and

- Co. on Tuesday, July 7, 1953. It is interesting to note that one of the pieces was purchased by the Museum for the Arts of Decoration of the Cooper Union, as reported in Cooper Union 1954, p. 184.
4. John Irwin (1949, p. 54) has identified other panels that undoubtedly belong to this same place of production.

5. The Gujarati inscription is in seventeenth-century characters, and according to Moti Chandra it reads as follows: "Astar jhahmamak na patar ga.9. Khulat ga. 1 1/4 (The lining of jhahmām [?]. Length 9 gaz. Breadth 1 1/4 gaz)" (from India Office Archives, Court Book IV, 135 [London] as published in Irwin 1949, pp. 55–56 n. 10, pl. 8).
6. The specific request from the European customer who ordered the present piece is referenced in a note attached to the fragment by Sir Leigh Ashton, who in 1954 oversaw its donation to the Metropolitan Museum by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: "One panel retained by the Victoria and Albert has an inscription in Gujarati: 'which is the first time that anyone has thought that this particular kind of embroidery for the European market was made so far north.' These hangings are completely un-Indian as they never used this kind of thing. They are an example of what English people ordered in the Orient through the East India Company." (Department of Islamic Art curatorial files, gift receipt no. 5947).
7. For an accurate description of the way in which the Mochi community used the *ari* to execute chain stitch, see Irwin and Hall 1973a, pp. 201.

PROVENANCE: Lord Ashburnham, Sussex, England (by descent from late 17th century–1953; sale, Ashburnham Palace, Sussex, through Sotheby's, London, July 7–9, 1953, lot 479; to V&A); Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1953–54; gifted to MMA through Sir Leigh Ashton)

To create the lively decoration on this box, ivory was cut into very thin strips and shaped into tiny flowers and leaves—some stained with color—then inlaid into ebony veneer. The top and sides depict Portuguese hunters riding elephants and horses in a forest setting, and the borders are filled with scrolls, roundels, and stylized bird and animal heads. Such hunting scenes were adapted from Indo-Persian painting to decorate exported furniture, where they depicted European patrons in a princely Indian manner. In this example, the exuberant treatment of foliage, with repeating scrolling vines springing from tree branches and flowers, imbues the decorative scheme with a particular lyricism. The fact that the geometric frieze along the bottom edge is inlaid in lac rather than wood is somewhat unusual and suggests a time of manufacture when craftsmen were shifting from the older technique of lac inlay, for the Ottoman and Persian markets, to hardwood inlay, for the European consumer. During the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, such inlaid hardwood items were produced for the Portuguese market, possibly in Gujarat and Sind, and exported from Goa and other coastal towns in western India.

### 267. Box with Drawer

India, probably Ahmedabad, Gujarat, ca. 1600  
 Wood (teak); veneered with ebony, inlaid ivory, and lac  
 3 1/4 × 13 3/8 × 5 3/4 in. (8.3 × 34 × 14.5 cm)  
 Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2000 2000.301







## 268. Writing Box

India, Gujarat, or Pakistan, Sind, late 16th–early 17th century  
Wood; veneered with ebony, inlaid with ivory and bone (partially stained),  
brass (*sadeli* technique)

5 1/8 × 20 7/8 × 13 1/2 in. (13 × 53 × 34.3 cm)

Purchase, Pat and John Rosenwald Gift, 2004 2004.439

This box can be associated with a group of ivory-inlaid hardwood boxes and furniture that may have been made in the same workshop, the most notable examples of which are a small cabinet in the Cincinnati Museum of Art<sup>1</sup> and another in the Kuwait National Museum, Kuwait City,<sup>2</sup> that bear similar hunting scenes featuring Indian and European figures in a forest. The upper portion of a cabinet in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon,<sup>3</sup> exhibits an iconographic program similar to that of the Metropolitan's box, although the Lisbon cabinet's overall iconography is more complex. An altar converted to a tabletop in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,<sup>4</sup> has almost identical zoomorphic S-shaped motifs in the border pattern. In general, this group of related works reveals consistent decorative principles and details.

The long drawer and relatively simple form of the box are rare, however, and suggest that it may have held writing implements (as an abbreviated form of the larger, more elaborate writing cabinets that are known) or valuable trinkets and personal possessions. Comparable boxes may have been used in the Mughal court as containers for precious objects, but inlaid boxes of this type usually rank among the portable trappings of wealthy European travelers. This particular form of long box with a drawer at one end is found in lac inlaid with mother-of-pearl but not, with the exception of this work, in ivory-inlaid wood.<sup>5</sup>

NNH

The design on this ebony-veneered box, which is richly inlaid with ivory, bone, and *sadeli* (micromosaic), achieves a pleasing balance between vegetal vine forms in the borders and interspersed floral medallions in the middle ground; its stately geometric patterns include a central star motif, which dominates the main composition. The nature of the decoration, particularly the strong geometric forms, arabesques, and *sadeli* technique, links the box to the larger Islamic world in terms of style and taste, while also exemplifying western India's accomplished tradition of luxury furniture making, which was often oriented, in the late sixteenth century, toward export to Europe or western Asia. Although its



1. Cincinnati 1985, p. 81, no. 58.

2. Jenkins, ed. 1983, p. 123.

3. Brussels 1991, p. 145.

4. Lisbon 2004, p. 115, no. 84.S; also in Jaffer 2002, pp. 34–35.

5. Digby 1986, p. 221, fig. 12, shows a late sixteenth-century mother-of-pearl box with a scene of very similar composition; London 1982d, p. 162, no. 549.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Lisbon, Portugal; [Manuel Castilho Antiques, London, until 2000; sold to MMA]

interior is no longer entirely original, the piece is likely to have functioned as a writing box and would presumably have had a number of sections or divisions within to contain various tools and papers.

The *sadeli* technique, which has been in use since antiquity, is particularly associated with the lands of the eastern Mediterranean, from where it spread to Iran and India. The method consists of gluing together geometrically shaped rods or thin strips of diverse materials (such as tin, wood, ivory, horn, and brass), slicing the bundles transversely into thin sheets of repeating patterns, and adhering the sheets to a wooden support. Predating *sadeli* in western India was an earlier method of inlaying mother-of-pearl in wooden objects, which, in the sixteenth century, were destined primarily for the Turkish market.

This box is part of a larger group of related inlaid furniture, some examples of which may have been made in the same workshop. A cabinet on a table stand in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, regarded as one of the most important works of the type, shows similar radiating-star patterns in *sadeli* on its inner

doors and drawers, combined with an elaborate figural and vegetal decorative scheme on its outer surfaces.<sup>1</sup> A cabinet in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, contains a similar star pattern in *sadeli* in its inner section.<sup>2</sup> In these examples, however, the medallion-based patterns in *sadeli* are largely restricted to the interiors (probably because of the fragility of the technique), with the outer sections covered instead in figures and flowering plants. Here, in contrast, the medallion style and technique have been elevated to the main surface, and the box thus stands apart from the other pieces in its more archaic and Islamic character. NNH

1. Jaffer 2002, pp. 30–32, no. 8; also, pp. 20–21, no. 4, illustrates a reversible game board with a similar combination of *sadeli* and curving vine forms on the reverse, although, in that case, the areas of *sadeli* are more restrained and less varied.
2. Bordeaux 1998–99, pp. 10–11, 126, no. 83.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Scotland (by descent from at least 1900–2003); sale, Christie's South Kensington, October 17, 2003, lot 143, to McInerney; [Terence McInerney, New York, 2003–4; sold to MMA]

## 269. *The House of Bijapur*

Painters: Kamal Muhammad (active 1680s) and Chand Muhammad (active 1680s)  
India, Deccan, Bijapur, ca. 1680

Ink, opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper  
16¼ × 12¾ in. (41.3 × 32.5 cm)

Purchase, Gifts in memory of Richard Ettinghausen; Schimmel Foundation Inc., Ehsan Yarshater, Karekin Beshir Ltd., Margaret Mushekian, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Ablat and Mr. and Mrs. Jerome A. Straka Gifts; The Friends of the Islamic Department Fund; Gifts of Mrs. A. Lincoln Scott and George Blumenthal, Bequests of Florence L. Goldmark, Charles R. Gerth and Millie Bruhl Frederick, and funds from various donors, by exchange; Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund, 1982 1982.213

Inscribed in Persian in *naskhi* script along upper border:

شاه عباس پادشاه ایران  
Shah 'Abbas King of Iran

Inscribed in Persian in *naskhi* script vertically near left-hand frame:

عمل کمال محمد و چاند محمد  
Work of Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad

This image from Bijapur was made for the last of its rulers, Sikandar (r. 1672–86), shown at the far right as a boy, shortly before the fall of the kingdom to Mughal conquerors in 1686. It brings together all nine 'Adil Shahi sultans in a dynastic assembly that was probably inspired by Mughal paintings illustrating the same idea. The artists, Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad, incorporated the characteristic features of the Bijapur School in this period: great shifts in scale, varying perspectives, and a palette rich in a distinctive pink hue.<sup>1</sup> An “otherworldly” mood (a term often used to characterize Deccani painting) is conveyed by

inventive and sometimes illogical juxtapositions, such as the stairs leading up to the carpet with no supporting architectural elements and the soaring mountains of Safavid inspiration in the background. Distant views of water hint at Bijapur's former vastness; at its greatest extent, the kingdom stretched to the Arabian Sea and Goa, a coastal city that was contested several times with the Portuguese over the course of the sixteenth century.

This painting would have the viewer believe that the key of legitimacy, being handed over by Isma'il (r. 1501–24), founder of the Safavid dynasty of Iran (here erroneously identified as Shah





1. The Safavid artist Mu'in Musavvir (active ca. 1638–97) also used this color in his work.
2. New scholarship on Deccani carpets is forthcoming: see Cohen 2011 in the MMA conference volume *Sultans of the South* (Haidar and Sardar, eds. 2011). See also the Ph.D. dissertation by Yumiko Kamada at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (Kamada 2011). Thanks to Kurt Behrendt of the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Asian Art for information on the early sculpture of the region.
3. Robbins and McLeod, eds. 2006, p. 34, no. 26; Falk and Archer 1981, no. 404, illustrates a portrait of Ikhlas Khan signed by Chand Muhammad in a similar, though less accomplished, hand. See also, *ibid.*, p. 114, no. 101, illustrating a painting signed by Haidar 'Ali and Muhammad Khan, another example of a collaboration between painters.
4. Later versions include Sotheby's London, *Fine Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures*, November 21 and 22, 1985, lot 71 (a copy of the MMA painting dated ca. 1750). See also Strzykowski et al. 1933, pp. 42–43, fig. 37 (later, abbreviated version of the MMA painting, now in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna); Duda 1983, p. 266, fol. 20, fig. 458; Taylor 1866 (frontispiece, later version of the MMA painting); Manucci 1906–8, vol. 3, pl. 34.

PROVENANCE: Kevork Essayan, Paris (until d. 1980; estate sale, Nouveau Drouot, Paris, June 24, 1982, lot 67, to John R. Alderman for MMA)

'Abbas in a later inscription), to Yusuf (r. 1489–1510), founder of the Bijapur dynasty, symbolizes the unwavering allegiance of the 'Adil Shahi family to the Shi'i creed. However, Bijapur in its golden period was ruled by Ibrahim II (r. 1579–1626; shown seated third from the right), a self-professed freethinker, whose tolerance of Hinduism and sufism, as well as his formalization of Sunnism as the state religion in 1583, deviated from established tradition.

Certain historicizing details in the composition acknowledge the two-hundred-year span of the family. Two of the early rulers on the left wear hilted daggers—straight split-end western Asian and curving double-leaf South Indian—of an earlier style than the push daggers (*katars*) seen in the belts of the later rulers on the right. Local tastes are seen in the swirling blue carpet and the style of the flat ceremonial umbrellas, which are similar to those found in early Andhra sculpture.<sup>2</sup> Like most painters who were active in the Deccan, Kamal Muhammad and Chand Muhammad remain relatively unknown, with very few attested works, although collaborations such as theirs in the present work are seen elsewhere in Bijapur painting and were standard in Mughal painting.<sup>3</sup> The several later versions of this image that have made their way into notable collections and books illustrate its lasting significance.<sup>4</sup> NNH

## 270. *Buraq: The Celestial Beast*

India, Deccan, probably Golconda, ca. 1660–80

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper

8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (21.9 × 27.6 cm)

Purchase, Rogers Fund, Elizabeth S. Ettinghausen Gift, in memory of Richard Ettinghausen and Ehsan Yarshater Gift, 1992 1992.17

The Qur'an contains descriptions of Buraq, the fantastic mount that the Prophet Muhammad rode on his *mi'raj* (night journey) to Paradise. Depicted here without its rider, this hybrid beast has the face of a beautiful woman wearing jewels, the body of a horse with wings, and a knotted tail that terminates in a dragon's head. Buraq's body is inhabited by an assortment of animals, including elephants, lions, fish, and birds. Several lionlike beasts nibble other animals, while the dragon gnaws at Buraq's wings.

The figure is rendered in a subdued palette of beige and green, with gold outlines that show scattered plants in gold against a deep green ground. The combination of a somber palette with the bright natural color in Buraq's face is quite dramatic. The surrounding decorations in gold are related to a late sixteenth-century album border from Golconda;<sup>1</sup> the actual depiction of Buraq is



technically and stylistically akin to the painting of a composite horse inhabited by human figures and animals from the early seventeenth century in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, which also displays dark tones similar in feeling to this work.<sup>2</sup> However, in terms of composition, the present painting is closest to a seventeenth-century Mughal composite Buraq with its head turned back (Bodleian Library, Oxford),<sup>3</sup> although the latter, Mughal example differs in treatment and palette from the Museum's.

While composite animals have a long tradition in Iranian and Indian art, and other examples from the Deccan are known, there are few such portrayals of Buraq. Most involve elephants, horses, camels, and lions,<sup>4</sup> depicted with riders. The origins of such images are unknown, although some scholars believe that the concept originated in ancient Central Asia.<sup>5</sup> Several composite paintings of camels and young princes and princesses inhabited by human forms are attributed to sixteenth-century Iran and Central Asia (see cat. 142).<sup>6</sup> In India, there is a long history of similar imagery in Mughal, Deccani, and Hindu traditions. Nevertheless, the composite paintings of Buraq from the Deccan in this distinct style were the ones that served as models for later Indian/Deccan examples.<sup>7</sup>

As scholars have attempted to interpret these images, some have suggested that they reflect the dominion of the heavenly over

the natural world and, by implication, the power of a ruler over his land and people.<sup>8</sup> However, these are only hypotheses, and the meaning of these curious paintings remains ambiguous. What is certain is that their playful, enigmatic qualities entertained their patrons and owners in much the same way as they intrigue us today.

ME

1. Zebrowski 1983, pp. 170–72.
2. Ibid., p. 146, pl. 18.
3. MS. Pers. b. t, f 10r. See Topsfield 2008, pl. 59.
4. There is a composite painting of a lion attributed to the Deccan in the Dorn Album in the National Library of Russia (former Saltykov Shchedrin Library) in St. Petersburg. I would like to thank Navina Haidar for bringing this work to my attention.
5. Del Bontà 1999, p. 70.
6. The composite painting of a princess by Muhammad Shari Musavvir with margins by Muhammad Murad Samarqandi is in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington (no. S86.0304), reproduced in Lowry and Nemazee 1988, pl. 67. Its pendant, a composite painting of a seated prince is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris (no. OA 7109). See also cat. 142.
7. Düsseldorf 2003, pp. 153–63.
8. Del Bontà 1999, p. 81.

PROVENANCE: Richard Colley, Marquis of Wellesley (until d. 1842); by descent to his granddaughter-in-law, Mrs. Colley Wellesley (until d. 1941); by descent to the 7th Duke of Wellington (1947–d. 1972); [Terence McInerney, New York, until 1992; sold to MMA]



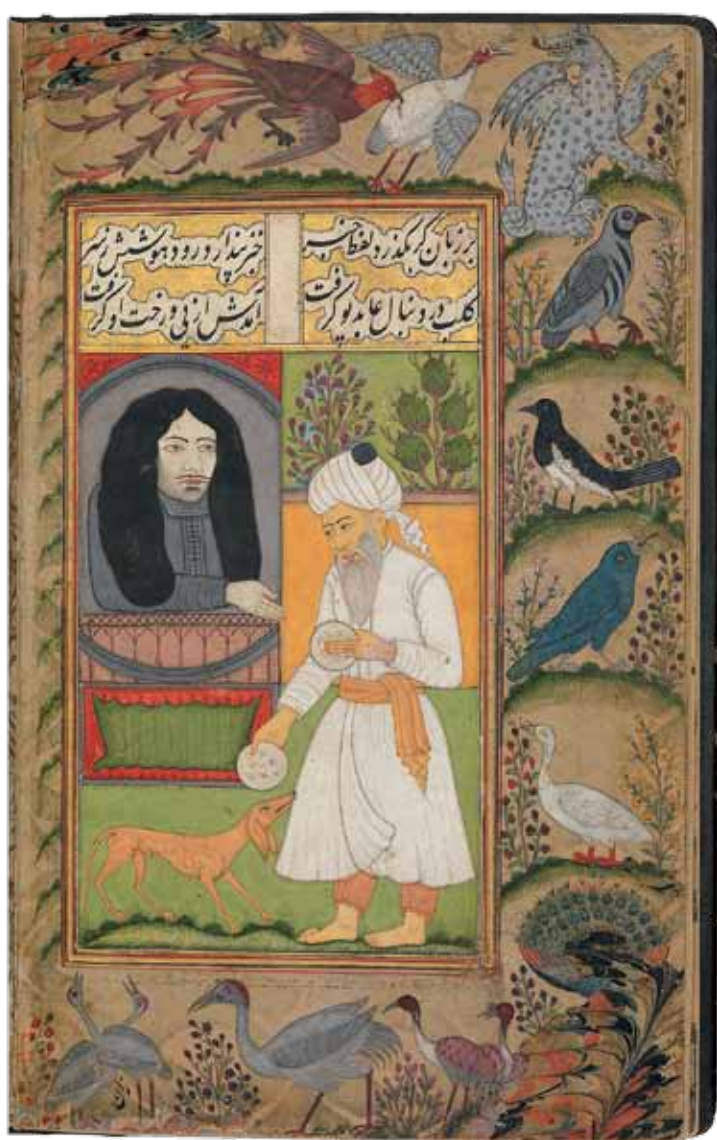
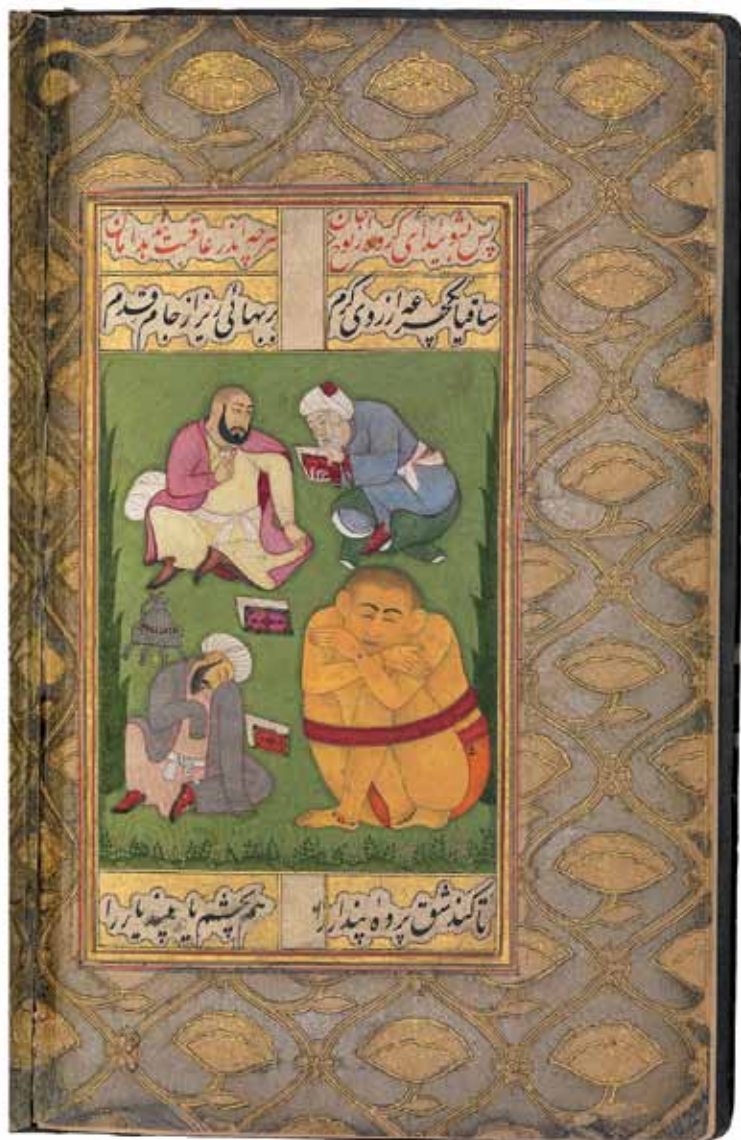
# 271. *The Nan va halva (Bread and Sweets) of Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili*

India, Deccan, Aurangabad, ca. 1690  
Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper; leather binding  
9 1/4 × 5 1/2 in. (23.5 × 14 cm)  
Purchase, Friends of Islamic Art Gifts, 1999.157

Written by Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili (1547–1621), also known as Shaikh Baha'i, the text of this manuscript is a *masnavi* poem on the merits of the ascetic life. After serving as the *shaikh al-Islam* of Isfahan, he left the post to travel and write, producing commentaries on the Qur'an, grammar, jurisprudence, and astronomy as well as other subjects.<sup>1</sup> Among the works written during this period was the *Nan va halva* (Bread and Sweets), of which the manuscript here is perhaps the only known illustrated

copy. The author's Arabic preface is written in black, with interlinear Persian translations in red, while the poem is given in Persian, in black, with Arabic headings in red. The text is outlined with gold clouds, and several pages have borders with gold lotus flowers in a grid on a silver background. Other borders include fantastical birds and animals in a rocky landscape. Vivid flowering plants flank many of the headings.

The subject of the poem would not seem to lend itself to illustration, but this unknown artist has found humor in the parables sketched by the author. Of his four charming paintings, the first accompanies a chapter on the regrets of a life spent learning things not useful on the day of resurrection. The artist shows a school in which only the sciences are taught, its teachers dozing, meditating, and drinking (opposite page). The second and third paintings illustrate a chapter that relates the story of a recluse who does not receive his accustomed daily bread. When he wanders into town



and hungrily accepts bread offered to him by an infidel, a dog scolds him for not having the faith or patience to see whether God would have provided for him. One painting depicts the recluse praying in the wilderness; the second shows the dog chiding him; the infidel in the background is depicted as the English king Charles II (above). In the final painting, the widow Bibi Tamiz sits on a prayer mat with her head turned away, attention diverted. It accompanies a chapter on hypocrisy, for although Bibi Tamiz is ostensibly devout, her real occupation is prostitution.

The manuscript was probably produced in Aurangabad soon after the Mughal conquest of the Deccan, when many northerners had moved into this new province of the empire. While little is known about the court art of this phase, it is assumed that the patronage of many nobles outside the court stimulated a new phase in Deccani art, which began to assimilate elements of Mughal and Rajput painting. MS

1. For Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, see Kohlberg 1989; Stewart 1991, pp. 563–67; Stewart 1996a; Stewart 1996b.

PROVENANCE: [Sam Fogg, London, until 1999; sold to MMA]

## 272. Pen Box

Painter: Manohar (active ca. 1582–1624)

India, possibly Deccan or northern India, late 17th–early 18th century

Papier-mâché; painted, gilded, and lacquered

1 1/8 × 9 1/8 × 1 1/2 in. (3 × 23.3 × 3.8 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.416a, b

Inscribed in Persian in *nasta'liq* script in upper right-hand corner of lid:

کمترین منوهر

[Work of] the most humble Manohar

The decoration on this lacquered pen box combines Indian, Persian, and European motifs in a hybrid style first seen in Iran in the late seventeenth century and subsequently in India, particularly in the Deccan. The central image is a young woman in Persian dress holding a branch above her head in the *dohada salabhanjika* (girl who fertilizes a tree) pose, familiar from ancient Indian art. Above her is an amorous couple in Indian dress, the woman standing beside a prince seated on a scalloped-back chair or throne. Below the main figure, a European gallant, perched on a rock, plays his flute as deer graze nearby. The sides of the box are painted with pastoral scenes copied from European masters, including groups of travelers, hunters, a pair of lovers, and views of distant architecture—conventions that were also popular in contemporary Safavid painting. Among the vignettes is one on the



lower end of the box that shows two men bearing an oversized bunch of grapes on a pole; this motif was drawn from Nicolas Poussin's allegory of autumn (ca. 1660).<sup>1</sup>

The previously unknown painter of this box, Manohar, is identified by an inscription in Persian near the amorous couple on the lid, at the upper right. He based the individual motifs in the decoration closely on those of a lacquered jewel casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, attributed to the artist Rahim Deccani.<sup>2</sup> The flute-playing figure is also seen in a lightly colored drawing in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, that bears an inscription ascribing the work to Rahim Deccani.<sup>3</sup> It is almost



certain, therefore, that Manohar had access to the works of Rahim, if not to the painter himself, although the place where those works were produced remains unknown. The *nisba* “Deccani,” following Rahim’s name, has led scholars to speculate that he must have been active outside the Deccan, although other works of the period attributed to the Deccan indicate that this distinctive style was being practiced there.<sup>4</sup>

Several well-known late-Safavid-period painters introduced both Indian and European motifs and styles into their work, although not necessarily always in combination.<sup>5</sup> These elements were expressed in a tinted drawing technique particularly evident in the works on lacquer of Shaikh ‘Abbasi and his sons, ‘Ali Naqi and Muhammad Taqi.<sup>6</sup> Contemporary and slightly later painting exhibits a predilection for shaded drawings in a similar style as well as for unusual shifts in scale, as seen in the work of the Persian painter Bahram Sufrakish. Manohar’s pen box displays the same exotic combination of motifs along with the shaded-drawing technique.

NNH

1. Haidar Haykel 2004, p. 183, fig. 10.
2. Ibid., pp. 179–80, figs. 5, 6, 7.
3. Ibid., p. 181, fig. 8.
4. Jaffer 2002, p. 61, gives an Iranian provenance for the Victoria and Albert Museum’s box by Rahim Deccani, suggesting the possibility that he may have been active in Iran.
5. The Safavid painters in question are Shaikh ‘Abbasi, ‘Ali Naqi, Muhammad Taqi, Bahram Sufrakish, Muhammad Zaman, and ‘Ali Quli Jabbar.
6. Skelton 1985.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, France; Francesca Galloway, London, until 2002; sold to MMA]

### 273. Box for Holding Pan

India, Deccan, Bidar, late 16th–early 17th century

Zinc alloy; cast, engraved, inlaid with silver and brass (*bidri* ware)

3 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (9.9 × 13.6 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund,  
1996 1996.3a, b

Decorated with silver flowers linked to a brass yellow scrolling lattice, this box with sloping sides belongs to a group of Indian octagonal boxes meant to hold *pan*, the *digestif* made of a rolled-up betel leaf filled with lime paste and spices. Since the Museum’s box has no interior compartments, it is surmised to have held the completed *pan* rather than the ingredients for making it.<sup>1</sup>

The process for decorating this object, known as *bidri*, is believed to have been invented in the city of Bidar, in the Deccan



region of India.<sup>2</sup> In this technique, an object was made from an alloy having zinc and copper as its main components and inlaid with silver and/or brass.<sup>3</sup> A special paste was then applied to the object to render the base material very dark, simultaneously enhancing the contrasting colors of the inlaid metals.

Scholars have long debated how and when this particular technique was developed—a question not to be resolved here—but the decorative forms on this box suggest that it may be one of the oldest surviving examples of *bidri* ware.<sup>4</sup> The sloping walls and low-slung, domed top have been compared to Sultanate and early Bahmani architecture. The scrolling lattice decoration, Persianate in spirit, differs from the friezes of flowering plants on numerous other *bidri* pieces, which are understood as the adoption of the Mughal flower style in the Deccan as a result of mid-seventeenth-century contacts between the two regions.<sup>5</sup> Another early *bidri* object, a footed bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,<sup>6</sup> is similar in decoration to this box, with flowers on scrolls within cartouches suggested by serrated leaves and bilobed half palmettes. These two examples may predate the earliest dated *bidri* object, a *hugga* base inlaid with silver and brass now in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, which combines the scrolling floral motif with the tall flowering plants so typical of Mughal portable arts.<sup>7</sup>

MS

1. Other octagonal *pan* boxes are illustrated in London 1982d, p. 143, and Zebrowski 1997, pp. 265 and 269.
2. The commonly advanced arguments for this are based on the name of the technique and an eighteenth-century map of Bidar that shows these objects as one of the products of the province (illustrated in London 1982d, p. 49).
3. Susan La Niece and Graham Martin discovered the importance of copper in the alloy for achieving the matte black patina. See La Niece and Martin 1987.

4. This dating was first suggested in Zebrowski 1984, p. 39.
5. See, for example, the *bidri huqqa* base (cat. 274) also discussed and illustrated in this volume.
6. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. IS 10-1973, dated to the early seventeenth century, illustrated in Stronge 1985, p. 39.
7. It has an inscription of A.H. 1044/1634 A.D. Published in Zebrowski 1997, p. 232, no. 384.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, England; [John Lawrence Fine Arts Inc., London, until 1996; sold to MMA]

## 274. Water Pipe Base

India, Deccan, Bidar, late 17th century

Zinc alloy; cast, engraved, inlaid with brass (*bidri* ware)

H. 6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (17.5 cm); Diam. 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (16.5 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund, 1984 1984.221

This object is the base of a water pipe, or *huqqa*. Originally, a pipe for inhalation and a long stem supporting a brazier would have

been connected to its neck, and the base would have nestled into a ring that kept it steady on the floor. Few if any complete *huqqas* survive from this period, and the bases (a few with matching rings) are what are preserved in museums today; the appearance of the full apparatus can be reconstructed only from paintings. Many of the known *huqqa* bases from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were made in the Deccan and decorated with the type of metal inlay known as *bidri*.

With its almost spherical shape, short neck, and everted rim, this object is typical of late-seventeenth-century *bidri huqqa* bases.<sup>1</sup> However, the refined frieze of flowering plants, set against a background lightly sprinkled with blossoms, sets it apart from other, more heavily decorated examples. One might be tempted to see the influence of Mughal aesthetics in the depiction and disposition of elements here. Flowers and plants were the most popular type of decoration for *huqqa* bases, although several examples depicting architectural fantasies and, later in the eighteenth century, Neoclassical motifs are also known. MS

1. See the discussion in Zebrowski 1997, pp. 225–45.

PROVENANCE: [Bashir Muhammad, London, until 1984; sold to MMA]

## 275. Fountain

India, Deccan, early 17th century

Brass; cast in sections, joined and engraved

38<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 36<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 26<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (97.7 × 93.2 × 67.6 cm)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1997 1997.150

An hourglass shape with a rhythmic arrangement of ribs, moldings, and chased designs guides the eye from top to base of this brass fountain in a single fluid motion. The projecting pipe is adorned with the lion mask known as a *kirtimukha* (literally, “face of glory”); this extension would have connected to another pipe that forced water into and through the fountain up to its apex, from which the liquid would have descended. The fountain was formed from seven separately cast parts soldered together in a fashion reminiscent of contemporary cannon construction, and it makes sense that such specialists would have been involved in the casting of such a large and heavy piece.<sup>1</sup>

The decorative motifs of the fountain combine the most distinctive aspects of metalwork from the Deccan, a fusion of strong architectural forms, articulated ribs, and animal motifs—known from numerous ewers and incense burners in the shape of lions, peacocks, geese, or fantastical combinations of the three.









Although no Deccani garden survives in its sixteenth- or seventeenth-century form, study of their physical remains, historical chronicles, and contemporary poetry reveals that they were an important feature of courtly architecture in this region of India.<sup>2</sup> These sources all suggest the importance of water both visually and aurally in the gardens of the period to which this fountain dates, a notion confirmed by studies of the sophisticated water systems that supplied the capitals of Golconda and Bijapur.<sup>3</sup> Two other fountains, both basins, appear to have come from the same garden; they also have petals with chased details, engraved lappets around the base, and a *kirtimukha* spout.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps fountains with different profiles were placed throughout this garden or in a line along a water channel to provide an eye-pleasing arrangement. MS

1. As noted by conservator Richard Stone, see report in curatorial files of the Department of Islamic Art.
2. See, for example, Husain 2000.
3. Among other studies, see Rötzer 2010.
4. One is in the David Collection, Copenhagen, no. 53/1998, published in Folsach 2001, p. 336; the other is in a private collection.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Europe; [Terence McNerney, New York, until 1997; sold to MMA]

### 276. Writing Box

India, Mughal or Deccan, possibly Burhanpur, mid-17th century  
Wood; overlaid with dyed wool, stamped silver and gilt-copper plaques  
5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (13.6 × 41.5 × 32 cm)  
Purchase, Gift of Dr. Mortimer D. Sackler, Theresa Sackler and Family,  
1998 1998.434

This portable box with internal compartments and drawers most likely originally held writing implements or other objects for the use of an Indian nobleman, although traces of sandalwood paste within indicate ritual use in a later period. The body of the box was constructed from several pieces of hardwood, probably from the indigenous *shisham* tree, and was outfitted with brass hinges and drawer pulls. In contrast with the unadorned interior, the exterior is sumptuously overlaid with amalgam-gilded copper sheets and ajouré silver plaques stamped with the “lattice-and-flower” pattern that had become popular in the Mughal decorative arts by about 1640. The silver plaques were secured with dome-headed silver nails against a plain-weave woolen backing—now largely lost—that was tinted red with madder lake, a dye derived from plant roots of the Rubiaceae family, which would also have been available in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The technique seen here is familiar from Gujarati wood caskets overlaid with small pieces of mother-of-pearl going back to the





sixteenth century, but such a technique in metalwork is far rarer.<sup>2</sup> It has been noted that a metal overlay tradition existed in sixteenth-century Ottoman Turkey, exemplified by a throne covered with gold sheets held in place by rivets.<sup>3</sup> Such a tradition also existed in Iran, but surviving examples are all later in date, as, for example, a cut-steel plaque of about 1700, backed with a panel of gilt copper.<sup>4</sup> Brass-clad doors embossed with flower-and-star patterns on the Bibi Ka Maqbara of 1661 in Aurangabad, another nearby Mughal center, provide evidence of metal overlay in local Deccani architecture.<sup>5</sup> Taking these points into account, then, the existence of a metal-overlay technique in furniture should not be surprising, even though the proposed box seems to be the sole surviving example.

The decoration and shape of the box have been compared to Indian architectural models, particularly in the integration of surface and form through the grid of strap bands.<sup>6</sup> The flat top and recessed sides recall the profile and elevation of classic Mughal buildings with flat roof, overhanging cornice, raised plinth, and symmetrical columns. While the nature of the decoration is largely Mughal, the taste for opulent gilded objects is associated with southern India. The box has been attributed to Burhanpur in the northern Deccan, an important center for the meeting of Mughal and Deccani traditions, particularly in the production of chintz textiles that share a comparable use of formal repeating flowers contained in lobes or niches.

NNH/JFL

4. Christie's London, April 23, 1996, lot 224.
5. Michell and Zebrowski 1999, p. 134, fig. 99.
6. Loukonine and Ivanov 1996, no. 223, illustrates a Safavid box of comparable shape.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, England; [Terence McNerney, New York, until 1998; sold to MMA]

## 277. Goa Stone and Container

India, Goa, late 17th century–early 18th century  
Container: gold; pierced, repoussé, with cast legs and finials  
H. 2 5/8 in. (6.7 cm); Diam. 5 5/8 in. (14.4 cm)

Goa stone: compound of organic and inorganic materials  
Diam. 1 1/8 in. (3 cm)

Rogers Fund, 2004 2004.244a–d

An intriguing talismanic object from India's western coast, this Goa stone with opulent gold container is named for the place where such objects are believed to have been manufactured by Jesuits in the late seventeenth century. Like the bezoar stones (natural gallstones of ruminants) of which they are man-made variants, Goa stones were known for their medicinal and protective powers. These treasured objects, encased in elaborate containers made of gold and silver, were often acquired by members of the European nobility; Queen Elizabeth I is said to have worn one as a finger ring. In a letter of 1580, Filippo Sassetti, a Florentine merchant, explained that Goa stones were customarily mounted in gold in order to enhance their powers; thus, there is usually some element of gold or gilding, even in the simplest examples.<sup>1</sup> The stone itself typically consists of a paste of bezoar, clay, silt, crushed shell, amber, musk, resin, narwhal tusk (believed to be unicorn horn), and crushed precious and semiprecious stones, all pressed into a ball and gilded. Scrapings from the ball were ingested as an antidote to poison.

The decorated gold container in this example exhibits an ornate mix of stylistic elements from western Asian, European, and Indian sources. Its globular body is made up of two gold hemispheres, each with an outer layer of pierced, chased, and chiseled foliate openwork. On the base, a scrolling vine arabesque is overlaid by an ogival trellis pattern, the cartouches of which are filled with Indian and Europeanized animals, including mythical beasts such as unicorns and griffins as well as stags, monkeys, gazelles, and foxes. Such elements indicate a diluted Iberian influence, probably due to the Portuguese presence along India's western coast and also are suggestive of European patronage. The tripod

1. Lapérouse 2003, pp. 1–3.
2. Folsach 1990, fig. 298, for a Gujarati penbox with comparable technique.
3. Rogers and Köseoglu 1987, pl. 2. Ottoman Turkey, with its close relations to the Deccan, can be considered a possible source for the technique in India. These are speculations and reflect research by Daniel Walker, who acquired this work for the Museum.



attributed to that period at the latest—though it was more likely made earlier, when there was an active production of such works.<sup>3</sup> The British Museum, London, has three Goa stone holders, including one comparable in shape and decoration to the present piece.<sup>4</sup> Two further examples are in the Henry Wellcome Collection, London, one in silver bearing animal forms and the other executed in gold openwork.<sup>5</sup> There is another smaller silver-gilt example in the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>6</sup> NNH

1. Lisbon and Vienna 2001–2, p. 154.
2. Ibid., p. 151, no. 47, illustrates an example in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, made for the Duke of Alba in the last quarter of the sixteenth century; also, p. 154, no. 49, shows an egg-shaped bezoar stone with an inventory record of 1750 from the Schatzkammer, Vienna.
3. Interest in these objects died out over the course of the eighteenth century as, with the rise of more modern medical practices, Goa stones came to be regarded as superstitious objects.
4. Tait, ed. 1984, nos. 407–10.
5. Arnold and Olsen, eds. 2003, nos. SM A 642467, A 642470.
6. The Department of Islamic Art has one other such Goa stone holder (acc. nos. 1980.228.1, .2, .3), but it is far smaller, with a case made mainly of silver. Another example may be seen in a sales catalogue from Bonhams, London, July 25, 2003, lot 60.

PROVENANCE: Gough and Hall families, England, by descent (from early 18th century); Humphrey Farran Hall, England, by descent (until d. 1910); George William Marshall, England (from 1910); sale, Bonhams, London, October 16, 2003, lot 349; [Sam Fogg, London, until 2004; sold to MMA]



stand can be related to fourteenth-century and earlier southern Indian metalwork models.

Goa stone holders are recorded in European treasuries from about 1750 onward, and one suspension-style holder in gold with floriated openwork scrolls for a bezoar stone has been securely attributed to the last quarter of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Gough family with whom the present piece is associated were in western India in the early eighteenth century, and it can therefore be

## 278A, B. Two Calligraphic Roundels

A. India, Deccan, probably Hyderabad, late 16th–early 17th century  
Sandstone, carved, traces of pigment  
Diam. 18½ in. (47 cm)

Edward Pearce Casey Fund, 1985 1985.240.1

Inscription in Arabic in *thuluth* script repeated eight times:

يا عزيز  
O Mighty

B. India, Deccan, probably Hyderabad, first half of 17th century  
Wood, gesso, painted and metal-leaved with gold and silver  
Diam. 19⅞ in. (50.5 cm)

Purchase, Richard S. Perkins and Alastair B. Martin Gifts and Rogers Fund,  
1991 1991.233

Inscription in Arabic in *naskhi* script repeated eight times, of which four appear in mirror image:

يا حي يا قيوم  
O, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting





A



B

Carved sandstone and painted-wood calligraphic roundels like these examples are typically found on the spandrels of the arched portals, niches, and interior walls of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings in the Deccan region of India. The carved inscription in *thuluth* script on cat. 278A repeats “Ya ‘Aziz,” one of the *asma al-husna* (ninety-nine names of God), eight times in mirror image. The roundel is stylistically related to several carved black basalt examples on the spandrels of the late sixteenth-century Qutb Shahi guesthouse Shaikhpet Sarai (*caravanserai*) in Hyderabad, built under Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580–1611).<sup>1</sup> Similar painted roundels in crimson, brown, and gold outlined in black are also found in the southern hallway of the Bahmanid tomb of Ahmad Shah Wali (r. 1422–36) at Ashtur, near Bidar, which may have served as an earlier source of inspiration for the later examples.<sup>2</sup> The presence of traces of red pigments on the Museum’s sandstone example suggests that it was also once painted in a similar palette.

A carved-wood roundel, cat. 278B, from the first half of the seventeenth century contains two of the *asma al-husna*, first written vertically and then in mirror image and repeated eight times around the roundel. The composition springs from two rows of flamelike lappets. Remains of red, blue, yellow, and green paint on this roundel, as well as gold and possibly silver leaf, indicate an originally vibrant palette of decoration, which was likely refinished periodically. While not many wood roundels survive, this one is related to a group of now heavily repainted examples affixed to the upper walls of the Badshahi ‘Ashurkhana in Hyderabad (a Shi‘i shrine commemorating the martyrdom at Karbala of Husain, the Prophet’s grandson, erected in 1593–96 with tiles added in 1611), also built under the patronage of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah.<sup>3</sup> The building is well known for its large, fine, cut-tile mosaic decoration, particularly the tear-shaped medallions and images of ‘alams (Shi‘i processional standards) in a distinct Deccani palette covering its interior walls. In fact, a number of the cut-tile mosaic calligraphic medallions on the two sides of the central niche containing the ‘alams resemble the carved sandstone and basalt roundels discussed here.

Although calligraphic roundels in mirror image are primarily found on architecture, they are also seen in other media, such as metal ‘alams, several of which are preserved in the Badshahi ‘Ashurkhana. In a few isolated cases, they appear as illuminations on album pages, as seen in a gold calligraphic roundel in mirror image that is outlined in black and framed by inscriptions containing a hadith of Imam ‘Ali in praise of fine penmanship.<sup>4</sup>

Calligraphic roundels are not exclusive to the Deccan or northern India. They are found on the exteriors and interiors of buildings as early as the fourteenth century as far west as Egypt and Turkey<sup>5</sup> and as far east as Iran. However, the compositional characteristics of Deccan examples distinguish them from the

others in their persistent use of calligraphy in mirror image (*muthanna*).<sup>6</sup>

Although the origins of this form remain unclear, the type probably entered the Deccan from Iran and Ottoman Turkey in the fifteenth century with the influx into the region of talented Iranian and Ottoman calligraphers, painters, and artisans. The work of these artists was eventually assimilated into the local aesthetic, giving rise to an extended period of creativity and intense artistic exchange that endured into the seventeenth century—as seen in these two Qutb Shahi roundels from Hyderabad. ME

1. I would like to thank Marika Sardar for sharing images of this building with me.
2. See Yazdani 1947. For a detailed discussion of this structure, see Philon 2000.
3. See, for example, Michell, ed. 1986, chapter on Gulbarga, fig. 17, chapter on Bidar, fig. 11, and chapter on Bijapur, fig. 10. I am grateful to my colleague Navina Haidar for sharing the photographs of these buildings, and her expertise, with me.
4. Sotheby’s Doha, *Hurouf: The Art of the Word*, December 16, 2010, p. 116, lot 89.
5. Calligraphic roundels and other architectural elements in mirror image are seen as early as 1385 in Artuqid buildings in Mardin, Turkey, and later in Ottoman mosque architecture, such as the Uç Serefeli Mosque (1438–47) in Edirne. For other Ottoman examples, see a carved marble panel from the *qibla* wall of a *sabil*, or fountain, and a woven silk textile panel with niches and suspended mosque lamps in O’Kane, ed. 2006, p. 217, fig. 184, and pp. 212–13.
6. See Yazdani 1947.

#### PROVENANCE

Cat. 278A: [Vipasha, Ltd., London, until 1985; sold to MMA]

Cat. 278B: [John Lawrence Fine Arts, Inc., London, until 1991; sold to MMA]

## 279. Hanging

India, Deccan, ca. 1640–50

Cotton; plain weave, mordant-painted and dyed, resist-dyed

8 ft. 4 in. × 78 in. (254 × 198.1 cm)

Gift of Mrs. Albert Blum, 1920–20.79

The impressive figural composition on this hanging, comprising two tiers of large-scale figures posed in an architectural setting with balconies and cupolas containing smaller figures surrounding them, appears to have been painted on the surface of its cotton support, but each element has actually been resist-dyed into the cloth. Reds and purples, for instance, were affixed by first covering those areas with a mordant, or fixative, and then applying a dye over the mordant. Blues were achieved by covering all the







areas not meant to be that color with a coating of wax and then submerging the entire cloth in an indigo bath. Greens were obtained by painting yellow over the blue areas.

Currently, the hanging consists of six separate parts sewn together, with a border made up of seven additional sections from an entirely different piece of fabric. This combination of so many different pieces suggests that the hanging was cut down from a larger work. Indeed, there is a similar piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,<sup>1</sup> that is believed to have once been attached to the Metropolitan Museum's hanging. They were probably joined, along with several other panels, to form a hanging such as one in the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad.<sup>2</sup> Displaying a similar arrangement of figures in an architectural framework, it measures, in its current, reduced condition, approximately seven by fourteen feet (213 × 426 cm), which suggests that its original length was at least twenty-eight feet (ca. 853 centimeters).<sup>3</sup>

To understand the composition of this hanging, it helps to look at the local tradition of wall painting, which similarly mixed several subjects in different scales on the same surface.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this hanging was made to imitate the extensive murals once found in palaces and aristocratic homes in the Deccan. Note, too, that this work prominently features European figures—subject matter that was in vogue during the Mughal period.<sup>5</sup> MS

1. No. 687-1898. See Crill 2008, p. 20.
2. Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, no. 403. An appliqué panel in the Victoria and Albert Museum (no. IS.16-1956), with figures very similar to the smaller ones in this hanging, perhaps indicates how other fragments were cut up or otherwise disposed of. See *ibid.*, p. 69.
3. See the discussion in Irwin 1959, pp. 19–27.
4. Nizam al-Din Ahmad 1961, pp. 60–65. This seventeenth-century chronicle describes the walls of the Qutb Shahi royal palaces in Hyderabad as covered with images of the sultan, kings from around the world, and characters from Persian literature.
5. Attesting to the popularity of such images is British Ambassador Sir Thomas Roe's mention that "pictures of the King of England, the Queene, my lady Elizabeth, the Countesse of Sommersett and Salisbury," given to Shah Jahangir by Roe's predecessor, William Edwards, could be found in the *darbar* hall of Mandu, decorated for the celebration of the Persian new year. Quoted in Jaffer et al. 2001, p. 111.

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Albert Blum, New York (until 1920)

## 280. Tent Panel

India, Deccan, 17th century

Cotton; plain weave, mordant-painted and -dyed, resist-dyed

8 ft. 7 in. × 4 ft. 2 in. (261.6 × 127 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1931 31.82.1

Framed within a cusped arch, a tall plant with purple and red flowers and green leaves, silhouetted against a white background and flanked by smaller plants, forms the central motif of this textile panel. Tiny stylized clouds float above and behind the plant. The size, shape, and design of the panel indicate that it was probably once joined to a series of similar units and used to enclose an outdoor space. The fact that an identical piece is held by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu,<sup>1</sup> supports this interpretation, as do several contemporary paintings depicting such enclosures, often made of textiles with this exact scheme of ogival frame and flowering plant. These textiles, known as *qanats*, were used in garden spaces within the palace compound and for encampments during journeys. The Mughal chronicle the *A'in-i Akbari* mentions that Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) owned several sets of *qanats* and that they were set up in advance of his arrival at each camping ground.<sup>2</sup>

The production of this textile is attributed to the Deccan region of India, known for the complicated dyeing technique, called *kalamkari*, used to create it. Elements of the drawing and color palette also suggest this place of origin. The panel, however, later found its way to the northern part of the country, as indicated by a seal on the back identical to those on textiles from the treasury of the Kachhwaha rulers at the Amber Palace in Rajasthan.<sup>3</sup> By studying the seals and marks on dozens of textiles, scholars have been able to reconstruct parts of the Kachhwaha collection, which was dispersed around the world in the early twentieth century, and to date many textiles that otherwise lacked a context.<sup>4</sup> This research has brought to light two facts relevant to the Museum's panel: first, that the Kachhwaha treasury contained many dyed textiles from the Deccan, which provide evidence of an Indian market for works otherwise best known in the context of trade with Europe and Iran; and second, that these textiles can be attributed to the seventeenth century or earlier, for that is the date by which they were recorded in the treasury. MS

1. Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Honolulu, no. DDFIA 83.13.
2. Abu'l Fazl 'Allami 1977, vol. 1, p. 47.
3. The Museum owns three other painted textiles from this collection, all *rumals* decorated with figural scenes (acc. nos. 28.159.1–3).
4. Smart 1986, and Thompson 1989, pp. 48–51.

PROVENANCE: Kachhwaha Royal Treasury, Amber Palace, Rajasthan, India (in 17th century); [Imre Schwaiger, London, until 1931; sold to MMA]









### 281. Cover (*Palampore*)

India, Coromandel Coast, 18th century

Cotton; plain weave, mordant-painted and -dyed, resist-dyed  
8 ft. 11 in. × 6 ft. 5 in. (271.8 × 195.5 cm)

Purchase, Bequest of George Blumenthal and Gift of Indjoudjian Freres,  
by exchange, and The Friends of the Islamic Department Fund, 1982 1982.66

At the center of this rectangular panel, a tree grows from a mound that is divided into thirteen segments, each framing a flowering plant. Each of the large flowers hanging from the twisting branches of the tree seems to represent a different species. In each corner of the border is a blue vase sprouting two branches that have tendrils, serrated leaves, and pink flowers with blue centers. This type of dyed cotton cloth, known as a *palampore* from the



## 282. *Qur'an Manuscript*

India, Kashmir, late 18th–early 19th century

Ink, opaque watercolor, gold on paper; leather binding

6¾ × 4⅝ × 2¼ in. (17.1 × 11.7 × 5.7 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art,

2009 2009.294

Hindi term for “bedcover,” was produced by the hundreds in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the European market. Its size and format conformed to tastes and bed sizes in Europe,<sup>1</sup> and the decoration combined patterns from English embroidery, Chinese decorative objects, and Indian textiles, also transformed to suit the intended market.<sup>2</sup> The particularly ripe depiction of the flowers on the Museum’s example, the sense of movement in the serrated leaves, and the bold color contrasts throughout are unique attributes and make it an exemplary illustration of the type.

MS

1. See the Garrick bed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. W.70-1916), for instance, for the display of such cloths as they were used in the eighteenth century.
2. The central motif on these *palampores* is often called the “tree of life,” but it was first shown by John Irwin and Katharine Brett to be a composite of many sources (Irwin and Brett 1970, pp. 16–21).

PROVENANCE: [Cora Ginsburg, New York, until 1982; sold to MMA]

In the eighteenth century, Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim province in northern India, reemerged as a major art center in the Indian subcontinent after a period of decline. Following the annexation of the province in 1586, talented Kashmiri artists emigrated to the Mughal court; then, in the eighteenth century, the conquest of Kashmir by the Durrani Afghans appears to have spurred a major revival of the arts.<sup>1</sup> Kashmiri artists of this period were actively producing fine Qur’ans, illustrated manuscripts, textiles, and a wide array of decorative objects for a variety of patrons and for the commercial market, including export to other regions of the subcontinent and beyond.<sup>2</sup> Their distinctive style and artistic ingenuity inspired artists elsewhere in the subcontinent and in Iran.





This manuscript is an outstanding example of a Qur'an from Kashmir. Produced in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, it has the typical Kashmiri-style gold and blue illumination within a broad frame overlaid by protruding lobed archlike interlacings (the hasp motif) that extend into the margins of the page. The Qur'an has eight lavishly illuminated double pages inserted at the beginning of eight Suras: *al-Fatiha*, *al-Ma'ida*, *Yunus*, *Isra'*, *al-Shu'ara*, *Qaf*, *al-Falaq*, and *al-Nas*. It is written in fine *naskhi* script, which is consistent in quality and evenness throughout the manuscript. The text contains Persian interlinear translations in red *nasta'liq*.

Although Qur'ans in this style were made before the mid-seventeenth century,<sup>3</sup> their production increased significantly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As with other Qur'an manuscripts, these examples are rarely signed, and many (supposedly intended for the local market) are crudely executed. The present work, however, is notable for its fine illumination and outstanding calligraphy. Other fine examples are in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, and in the Khalili Collection, London.

ME

1. Bayani and Stanley 1999. See also Adamova and Grek 1976.
2. New York and Cincinnati 2007–8.
3. Bayani and Stanley 1999, pp. 230–31.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, England (since 1940s); [Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, Ltd., London, until 2009; sold to MMA]



### 283. *Hanging with Design of a Prayer Niche*

India, Kashmir, ca. 1820–30

Wool, metal-wrapped thread; double interlocking twill;  
tapestry weave, embroidered

72 × 51 3/4 in. (182.9 × 131.4 cm)

Museum Accession x.103.4

Inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script in cartouche at center of upper frame:

یا حسین  
فرمایش نواب اشرف والا  
محمد عظیم خان

O Husain, Ordered by the most noble governor, Muhammad 'Azim Khan

At bottom left-hand corner:

برکت یا شاه نجف  
Blessing, O King of Najaf<sup>1</sup>

Of the vast and varied textile production of Kashmir, one of the finest, least common types of textile is the hanging with a design of an arch or niche.<sup>2</sup> This example was woven using the typical *kani* shawl technique, which involved three different weaving

structures: twill, tapestry, and double-interlocked weft.<sup>3</sup> It belongs to the time known as the Sikh period, when India gained control of Kashmir under Maharaja Ranjit Singh (r. 1801–39).<sup>4</sup> The decorative motifs typical of Kashmir shawls and hangings changed rapidly during this period. The orderly sequence of naturalistic single flowers typical of the Mughal period in Kashmir had previously been replaced during the Afghan occupation by exuberant bouquets that no longer rose from naturalistic roots but rather from a vase placed on a stand. During the Sikh period, the radial shape of the floral composition developed into a teardrop shape with a hooked tip known as the *buta*,<sup>5</sup> which was particularly popular in Iran during the Qajar dynasty.<sup>6</sup>

The *millefleurs* decoration on this *pashmina* hanging immediately brings to mind the shape of a *mihrab* niche, and the hanging may have been placed on a wall to indicate the direction of Mecca. In the central field is a polylobate arch on a plain blue background with a compact, intricate, and colorful pattern: a small stand holds a vase, from which green and red ferns pour in a manner reminiscent of a waterfall. A slender tree of life rises from the



mouth of the vase, while a kaleidoscopic effect is created by thin branches covered with a myriad of brightly colored leaves and petals growing out from the central stem. The rectangular field is framed by a sinuous, red vine border that, in turn, is surrounded by a border of large *butas*. By using four bands of white warps instead of blue ones, two at each side, the weaver has produced a ribbon effect that draws attention to the central field.

Directly above the niche, in the outer border, a medallion of loops and arabesques embroidered with loosely twisted *zari*<sup>7</sup> silver thread bears an inscription in white silk with the name of Muhammad ‘Azim Khan, who commissioned the hanging. A second inscription embroidered in white silk chain stitch lies at the lower left-hand corner between the two white bands, proclaiming ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib as the king of Najaf. EGM

1. This blessing refers to Imam ‘Ali, the first Shi‘a imam, buried in the holy city of Najaf in Iraq.
2. The Metropolitan Museum also owns a rare prayer hanging or mat (acc. no. 17.123.3) that can be attributed to the Afghan period. For other prayer hangings and mats from the Sikh and Afghan periods, see also Ames 1997, pp. 310–12, pls. 179–81; Nemati 2003, pp. 212–15, pls. 45–46; Ames 2007–8, p. 195.
3. Vial 1987, pp. 41–42.
4. Ranjit Singh held sway over Kashmir from 1819 to 1839.
5. Irwin 1973, pp. 11–14. According to Irwin’s “Glossary of Terms Used in Kashmir Shawl-Weaving,” *buta* is a generic term for the cone and literally means “flower.” Ibid., p. 41.
6. Ames 2010, p. 69.
7. The *zari* is a twisted metal (gold or silver) thread wound on silken yarn; Pathak 2003, p. 142.

PROVENANCE: Museum accession; provenance and date of acquisition unknown

## 284. *Child’s Coat*

India, Kashmir or Amritsar, late 19th century  
Wool; double interlocking twill tapestry weave  
28<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (72.7 × 54.1 cm)

The Alice and Nasli Heeramanek Collection, Gift of Alice Heeramanek,  
1983 1983.494.10

India has a long and rich history of male costume. Mughal and Deccani illustrated manuscripts and album pages provide examples such as the sleeved coat with flared skirt; later, in the nineteenth century, the assimilation of British clothing styles added fitted jackets and coats to the repertory of Indian costume.<sup>1</sup> Conforming to the Western silhouette, these coats are more tailored than the earlier traditional outer garment for men.<sup>2</sup> This coat, made for a boy, is one such example.



The rows of buttons and buttonholes here represent a marked change in Indian clothing. Additionally, in contrast to the tradition of flat, square sleeves attached to the main body, the sleeves of this coat were attached to round armholes with the aid of a sewing machine—an invention that significantly altered the style of Indian clothes.<sup>3</sup> The Western-looking collar and attached pockets of the coat represent further developments in Indian dress, and the entire garment is carefully lined with fabric made from silk and cotton.

The innovative style and method of the tailoring have been combined with a traditional weaving method. Employing the double interlocking twill tapestry technique, the weaver has filled the light yellow ground with stems bearing European-style vine leaves and grapes. Kashmir was famous for the production of this type of textile. However, during the 1830s, hardships and severe

taxation led Kashmiri weavers to leave the country for settlements in the neighboring Punjab Hills.<sup>4</sup> Their emigration might explain why the same type of textile was also made in Amritsar in the Punjab by Kashmiri craftsmen.<sup>5</sup> Men's coats in a similar style with the same kind of fabrics are in the collections of the Museum der Kulturen, Basel, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.<sup>6</sup>

YK

1. Kumar 1999, p. 201.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Mikosch 1985, p. 8.
5. New York 1985–86, p. 445.
6. Nabholz-Kartaschoff 1986, p. 24; Dye 2001, p. 463, no. 222.

PROVENANCE: The Alice and Nasli Heeramanek Collection, New York (until 1983)

## 285. *Fruit Bat*

Painter: Attributed to circle of Bhawani Das  
India, Calcutta, ca. 1777–82

Pencil, ink, and opaque watercolor on paper  
23½ × 32¾ in. (59.7 × 83.2 cm)

Purchase, Anonymous Gift, Cynthia Hazen Polsky Gift, Virginia G. LeCount Bequest, in memory of The LeCount Family, 2007 Benefit Fund, Louis V. Bell, Harris Brisbane Dick, Fletcher, and Rogers Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and Gift of Dr. Mortimer D. Sackler, Theresa Sackler and Family, 2008 2008.312

With its stark composition and subtle coloring, this striking painting transcends its original purpose as a scientific record to become a work of art in its own right. Its subject is the great Indian fruit bat (*Pteropus giganteus*), shown frontally with one wing outstretched and the other folded. The body is depicted in considerable detail, with the fur, claws, veins, and sexual organs articulated in shades of brown and gray. Although the artist is unknown, he is believed to have been among the circle of painters who







worked for Sir Elijah Impey, chief justice of Bengal from 1774 to 1782, and his wife, Lady Mary. In 1777 the Impeys hired painters to record specimens of flora and fauna that they collected at their Calcutta estate, and, over the next five years 326 paintings of various plants, animals, and birds were made for them.<sup>1</sup> The works tend to show their subjects as fully as possible and with an abundance of detail, against a blank background.

Three of the artists who worked for the Impeys are known: Bhawani Das, Shaikh Zain al-Din, and Ram Das. Their names appear directly on their paintings, alongside the identification of the subject. This painting has not been thus inscribed, but it is closely related to another painting of a bat by Bhawani Das,<sup>2</sup> and it has always been associated with Impey patronage. One can imagine Bhawani Das and the anonymous artist of this painting working side by side, observing the animals, but whereas Bhawani Das's work depicts a tawny-colored female bat centered on the page, with both wings outstretched, his fellow artist has created an asymmetrical composition of an emphatically male bat in shades of gray and black, one wing dramatically unfurled. MS

1. Archer, M. 1992, p. 97. The Impeys' collection was dispersed at an auction in 1810.

2. London 2001a, no. 1; sale, Christie's London, May 22, 2008, lot 7.

PROVENANCE: Niall Hobhouse, London (by 2001–8; cat., 2001, no. 2); Hobhouse sale, Christie's, London, May 22, 2008, lot 8, to MMA

## 286. *View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil, Bengal*

Painter: Attributed to Sita Ram (active 1814–23)

India, Bengal, ca. 1814–23

Opaque watercolor on paper

13 × 19¼ in. (33 × 48.9 cm)

Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky Fund, 2002 2002.461

Recently identified, the subject of this painting is the mosque and gateway of the Sang-i Dalan palace at Motijhil, outside Murshidabad, built in 1743 by Nawazish Muhammad Khan.<sup>1</sup> The artist was probably Sita Ram, an accomplished Bengali painter whose work has been admired since the 1970s, when three albums of his watercolors were sold at auction.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1995, however, that the patron of the watercolors and the circumstances of their creation were ascertained. Inscriptions in a group of eight albums acquired by the British Library, London, in that year explained that they, along with two albums that had appeared in 1974, had been made for Francis Rawdon (2nd Earl of Moira, later 1st Marquess of Hastings; governor-general of Bengal from 1813 to 1823) on a tour of northern India in 1814 and 1815. In his journal, Hastings had mentioned that, at one point on the tour, “a Bengal draftsman who accompanied us was directed to make a coloured sketch of the scenery,”<sup>3</sup> but the “draftsman” had not previously been identified

as Sita Ram, and the “coloured sketch” had not been connected with his magnificent watercolors.<sup>4</sup>

Sita Ram’s career can be followed only for the brief but intense span of time when he worked for Hastings, from about 1814 to 1823.<sup>5</sup> During that period, he created the ten albums of the 1814–15 journey and at least two more based on tours in 1817 and 1820–21; contributed to albums of natural history drawings; and made other studies that were later placed in scrapbooks.<sup>6</sup> From this body of work, two facets of Sita Ram’s work are apparent. His natural history drawings are characterized by crisp detail, but in his landscapes, he made use of low horizons and warm light and manipulated scale and perspective for greater effect. Like the other works made for Hastings, this painting no doubt captures what the traveling party saw, but it also suffuses both landscape and architecture with a sense of languor, evoking a timeless mood rather than a fleeting moment from a trip. This impression is further emphasized by the artist’s decision to depict the Motijhil site from behind, excluding the main palace and emphasizing the state of decay of the remaining buildings. MS

1. This identification was made by J. P. Losty based on a watercolor of an almost identical view in the Album of Bengal Drawings in the possession of the London booksellers Maggs Bros. in 2009. Personal communication to Navina Haidar, February 21, 2010 (curatorial files, Department of Islamic Art). Prior to this identification, Joachim Bautze (in San Francisco and other cities 1998–99, pp. 308–9) and Navina Haidar (in New York 2004–5, p. 218) had suggested that the painting was from a tour of the Gaur district in 1820–21. For Motijhil, see Dani 1961, pp. 276–77.
2. An album of paintings of fruits and plants was sold at Sotheby’s London, July 15, 1970. Two albums of views from Murshidabad to Patna and from Sikandra to Agra were sold at Sotheby’s London, July 9, 1974.

3. Hastings 1907, p. 133.
4. Losty 1995.
5. Losty has since revised his suggestion (*ibid.*, p. 84 n. 2) that Sita Ram may have worked for Dr. John Fleming before entering Hastings’s service; personal communication, September 1, 2010.
6. The albums from Bengal, natural history albums, and scrapbooks were also acquired by the British Library in 1995. See Losty 1995, p. 81. Selected paintings from the 1817 tour were published in Losty 1996.

PROVENANCE: Probably Francis Rawdon, 2nd Earl of Moira, later 1st Marquess of Hastings, governor-general of Bengal (1813–23); private collection, England; Dr. William K. Ehrenfeld, San Francisco (in 1998); [Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, Ltd., until 2002; sold to MMA]

### 287. *A Groom Holding Two Carriage Horses*

Attributed to Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya (active 1830s–40s)  
India, Calcutta, ca. 1845

Opaque watercolor on paper  
12 × 20 in. (30.5 × 50.8 cm)

Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund,  
1994 1994.280

This watercolor painting depicts an Indian groom, known as a *syce*, dressed in blue and holding the muzzles of two tall white horses. The trio appears in an almost desolate landscape on the bank of a river; on the opposite bank, a row of low shrubs and bushes is interspersed with small white structures. But these are minute





details, and a wide, blank sky constitutes most of the background. The ostensible aim of this painting (a type known from other examples) was to record the property of a British resident in India, but the work seems to have a more particular meaning, in light of the unsettling way in which the groom stares back at us with one eye raised, his two charges blindered.

The painting has been attributed to Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karraya, one of the three best-known artists working in Calcutta in the nineteenth century, when the city was the capital of the British government and a production center for many works made for British patrons. Whereas the artist Zain al-Din was noted for his plant and animal studies made for Sir Elijah and Lady Mary Impey, and Sita Ram primarily painted landscapes and monuments, Shaikh Muhammad portrayed the members and possessions of British households.

Although this painting does not bear the Persian ascription found on most of Shaikh Muhammad Amir's works, it compares directly with the numerous paintings by this artist that treat the same theme of grooms and horses.<sup>1</sup> He was active in soliciting patrons and created dozens of such works.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the way that the *syce's* right eye is cocked—a detail found in another painting by the artist of a hookah bearer—ties this work to his oeuvre.<sup>3</sup> MS

1. In the collections of the India Office Library and of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava (illustrated in *New York and other cities 1978–79*, pp. 69 and 71); and of Mildred and W. G. Archer (illustrated in *Washington, D.C., and other cities 1936*, no. 79); among others.
2. Pal, ed. 1990, p. 136.
3. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (no. IS 5-1957), illustrated in Archer, M. 1992, p. 103.

PROVENANCE: Robert Edward Master, Esq., England; [Terence McNerney, New York, until 1994; sold to MMA]

## 288. Dagger

India, probably Jaipur, 18th–19th century

Hilt: Gold; enameled and set with precious stones; *kundan* technique

Blade: steel

Overall 12¼ × 2¼ in. (31 × 5.7 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1970 1970.180

The sartorial code observed by the nobility of India included highly ornamented daggers that signified the bearer's social standing and prestige.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-seventeenth century, dagger hilts began to be decorated with animal heads, carved from materials such as jade, ivory, and bone, that took on increasingly eccentric



and colorful expressions; the trend gained currency throughout northern India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The hilt of this dagger, which is an example of the latter period, is fashioned in the image of a ram's head.<sup>2</sup> Various techniques have been used in its manufacture. Champlevé enameling and stone-incrustation in the *kundan* technique were employed to decorate

the guard and pommel, while the grip is studded with flat-cut stones aligned over red resin to form a lozenge pattern.

The art of enameling became established during the earlier Mughal period, most likely through contact with European traders and jewelers, and it quickly spread over the subcontinent in the following centuries. The enameled floral motifs found on this dagger exhibit a coloring and pattern that closely recall examples attributed to nineteenth-century Jaipur,<sup>3</sup> one of the most reputed centers of enameling. Therefore, the most probable provenance and dating that can be suggested for the hilt are northern India, eighteenth to nineteenth century. The blade, which is made of steel, appears to be a later replacement for the original. An almost identical dagger, certainly coming from the same workshop, was in the collection of James and Marilyn Alsdorf and now belongs to the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>4</sup> Ma B

1. Los Angeles and other cities 1989–91, p. 155.
2. For other examples of ram-headed daggers from the same period, see Pant 1978–83, vol. 2, pls. 97, 117, 174.
3. See Bala Krishnan and Kumar 1999, fig. 159; Antwerp 1997, no. 87.
4. Chicago 1997, no. 331.

PROVENANCE: Peter Marks, New York (until 1970; sold to MMA)

## 289. *Hip Wrapper (Sarung)*

Indonesia, Java, Pasisir (North Coast) region, mid- to late 19th century  
Cotton; plain weave, resist-dyed, painted  
44 × 84 in. (111.8 × 213.4 cm)  
Purchase, Rogers Fund, 1930 30.88.2

Indonesia, which today has the largest Muslim population of any nation, has long been a crossroads of cultural, religious, and artistic traditions. The center of these interactions is the island of Java, particularly the North Coast region, known as the Pasisir. Over the centuries, Buddhism, Hinduism, and finally Islam have each, in turn, become the dominant faith on the island as waves of Indian, Arab, Persian, Chinese, and, later, European merchants and settlers have visited or made their home on its shores. In the Pasisir, this diversity has resulted in the development of a multiethnic society with arts that reflect a multiplicity of cultural influences.<sup>1</sup>

The diverse cultural influences in Javanese art are evident in the imagery of the distinctive batik textiles made on the island. The term *batik* refers to the technique used to create the images on the cloths, a resist-dyeing process in which the designs are applied to both sides of the cloth in wax, which prevents the absorption of dye. To create the various colors that appear in the final



composition, the cloth is then immersed in a succession of dye baths. Between each dye bath, the portions of the designs that are either to receive, or be protected from, each succeeding color are left exposed or protected with wax, as required.<sup>2</sup>

The ends of this work, a hip wrapper, were originally sewn together to form a tubular garment (*sarung*), but the seam was later opened to reveal the complete design. Its imagery and layout indicate a Pasisir origin, and it was probably made in an Indo-European workshop. Operated by women of mixed Javanese and European descent, Indo-European workshops produced batik with imagery





drawn from a variety of sources.<sup>3</sup> The layout and designs on the broad band, called the *kepala* (head) of the cloth, seen at the bottom of the image on the left, reflect the influence of Indian trade textiles from the Coromandel Coast. Adorning the body (*badan*) of the *sarung* is a fantastic menagerie that includes motifs of Indian and Persian origin such as birds seated in a flowering tree and dancing peacocks, as well as images of felines and leaping deer from Chinese sources. These creatures are accompanied by more naturalistic depictions of two-humped Bactrian camels, lions, tigers, and apes (probably Indonesia's native orangutans). Perhaps the most unusual animal here is the cassowary, a crested ostrichlike bird found only in New Guinea and its adjacent islands and north-eastern Australia. The animals are interspersed with images of Europeans riding, leading horses, and hunting with spears; there are also soldiers carrying bayonets and other figures accompanying the elephants. Like Javanese culture itself, this eclectic composition combines a diversity of cultural and artistic influences within an overall Islamic context.

EPK

1. For a summary of the complex history of immigration and cultural influences on Java's North Coast, see Carey, P. 1996–97, pp. 21–29.
2. Detailed analysis of the present work by Christine Giuntini, conservator in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, has revealed that the designs were probably laid out with the aid of pencil guides, drawn on the fabric prior to waxing. The repeated motifs, which are similar but not identical, were likely created with the aid of sketches made on tracing paper that were pinned to the back of the textile, which was then held up to a light source to allow the designs to be copied in wax. The use of this technique in workshops on Java's North Coast is described by Heringa 1996–97a, p. 227. Further details of the designs and some of the smaller motifs were later painted directly onto the surface once dyeing was completed.
3. For discussion of the development, imagery, and production of Indo-European batik and the role of female entrepreneurs, see Legêne and Waaldijk 2001, pp. 43–45; Hout 2001, pp. 143–45; Heringa 1996–97b; and Veldhuisen 1996–97.

PROVENANCE: [Aalderink & Co., Amsterdam, until 1930; sold to A. Vecht for MMA]

## GLOSSARY

**‘alam** Processional standard used primarily in Iran and India.

**aya** A verse from the Qur’an.

**Buraq** Human-headed mount that carried Muhammad on his *mi’raj*, or nocturnal ascent to the heavens.

**caliph** Title of the Prophet Muhammad’s immediate successors as temporal and spiritual leaders of the Muslim community.

**caliphate** Office or dominion of a caliph.

**çatma** Turkish term for cut-and-voided silk velvet; it has a satin-weave ground often embellished with supplementary metal-thread wefts.

**chintamani** Sanskrit term meaning “auspicious jewel,” used to describe an attribute of a bodhisattva and also applied to a motif used in Ottoman art consisting of wavy stripes paired with groups of three or four circular spots.

**chupal** Knotted-pile storage bag of the Turkmen tribes.

**cuerda seca** Ceramic decoration technique in which glazes are applied within fields bounded by a wax border to prevent mixing; during firing, the wax carbonizes, leaving discrete zones separated by colored lines.

**dervish** Individual members of a sufi order, often practicing a type of Islam that stressed spiritual values rather than religious obligations.

**div** Persian term for a demon usually horned, variously colored, and sometimes furry.

**divan** Collection of poetry by a single author.

**durbar** Royal residence, audience hall, or the ceremony held in it.

**ebru** Marbled paper.

**ghazal** Short poem with an amorous or erotic theme.

**gul-u-bulbul** Literally, the rose and the nightingale; used to describe decoration combining birds and flowers that was popular in Iran during the eighteenth to nineteenth century, particularly on lacquerware.

**hadith** Pronouncement on a religious topic ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad.

**hajj** Pilgrimage to Mecca.

**hatayi** Literally, belonging to Hatay or northern China; used in Turkey to describe floral and animal motifs of Chinese origin.

**hijra** Emigration, specifically that undertaken in 622 by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Mecca to Medina; it marks the beginning of an era whose calendar is still in use by the Muslim community.

**ikat** Both a resist-dyed textile and the technique used to create it; to create a pattern, unwoven warps and/or wefts are bound in specific places to resist dye penetration.

**the Jazira** Literally, an island; a geographical term applied to the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

**juz’** Section comprising one-thirtieth of the Qur’an.

**Ka’ba** Islam’s most sacred building, the cubical structure at the center of the shrine in Mecca used as the focus of prayer.

**kalamkari** Technique in which cotton cloth is hand-painted to create a pattern.

**kani** Weaving technique with double interlocking joins that produces a double-sided pattern used particularly to make “Kashmir” or “Kani” shawls.

**kashkul** Boat-shaped begging bowl of a wandering dervish, used to collect and store alms.

**kemha** Turkish term for a silk textile woven in lampas with satin-weave ground and twill weave pattern, executed with supplementary wefts of silk and metal thread.

**khamisa** Five-part narrative poem, especially those written by Nizami Ganjavi and Khusrau Dihlavi.

**khil’a** Robe of honor bestowed by a ruler as a special favor or an emblem of office.

**lajvardina** Modern term, derived from the Persian word for lapis lazuli (*lajvard*), used for glazed ceramics, usually blue, with overglaze decoration in red, white, and gold.

**lampas** Textile woven in a compound structure, combining two different yet interconnected sets of threads (one for the ground, another for the pattern).

**laqab** Honorific title.

**luster-painting** Overglaze technique of ceramic decoration using silver and/or copper oxides that fuse with the glaze during a second firing in a low-oxygen atmosphere to produce a shiny metallic surface.



**madrasa** A school, especially one offering instruction in Islamic law and theology.

**mash'al** Columnar lamp stand popular in Iran during the sixteenth to seventeenth century.

**mashraba** Small drinking vessel, metal or ceramic, with a pot-bellied profile.

**masnavi** Narrative poem, often of considerable length, composed in rhyming couplets.

**mihrab** Niche in a mosque's *qibla* wall marking the direction of Mecca and of prayer.

**mina'i** Modern term, derived from the Persian word for enamel (*mina*), used to describe ceramics with multicolored under- and overglaze-painted decoration.

**minbar** Raised platform reached by a set of steps, usually situated in a mosque to the right of a *mihrab*; used by speakers to address an assembled group.

**mi'raj** The Prophet Muhammad's nocturnal ascent to the heavens.

**misra'** One-half of a poetic couplet.

**mulham** Fabric combining silk and cotton threads.

**muraqqa'** Composite book consisting of specimens of calligraphy, paintings, drawings, or designs.

**palampore** Dyed cotton cloth, from the Hindi word for bedcover.

**qibla** The direction Muslims face when performing ritual prayers toward the Ka'ba in Mecca.

**sadeli** Micromosaic technique in which rods of diverse materials are bundled together, sliced transversely, and glued to a wooden support.

**safina** Small-scale oblong manuscript designed to be held in the hand.

**sama'** Literally, an audition; a sufi gathering often featuring music and ecstatic dances.

**samite** Compound-weave textile with both ground and pattern woven entirely in weft-faced complementary twill; can also be enriched with supplementary wefts.

**seraser** Turkish term for cloth of gold and silver; a silk textile that combines a silk warp with wefts containing both silk and metal-covered threads. (See also *taqueté*.)

**shahada** Literally, testimony; the Muslim profession of faith: There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger.

**Shahnama** Versified history of pre-Islamic Iran composed in the eleventh century by Firdausi.

**shamsa** Literally, a sun or starburst; form of illumination found in manuscripts as well as in architecture.

**simurgh** In Persian mythology, a large bird with magical powers believed to nest on Mt. Elburz; sometimes represented in a sinicized form with long colorful feathers.

**stonepaste** White ceramic body that combines clay, quartz, and ground glass and that approximates the qualities of porcelain.

**taqueté** Compound-weave textile with both ground and pattern woven entirely in weft-faced complementary plain weave; can also be enriched with supplementary wefts.

**tiraz** Royal textile workshop or textiles inscribed with royal titles using embroidery, weaving, printing, or painting.

**tughra** Stylized royal signature containing an Ottoman ruler's name and patronymic along with the phrase "May he reign forever."

**yastik** Turkish term for a flat bolster pillow, placed against the wall to lean upon.

**ziliĵ** Architectural tilework used primarily in Morocco; tiles in various shapes are assembled face down and backed with plaster before being affixed to a wall.

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## INDEX

Page numbers in **bold** refer to main catalogue entries. Page numbers in *italics* refer to figures.

- Abaqa, Ilkhanid ruler, 121  
 'Abbas I, Safavid shah, 173, 188, 214, 216, 218, 220, 225, 226, 229–30, 231–32, 235, 246, 253, 254, 267, 275, 280  
 'Abbas II, Safavid shah, 226, 229, 235  
 Abbasid dynasty, 15, 21, 23–24, 27, 33, 35, 38, 42, 44, 45, 48–50, 52, 54, 86–87, 88, 92, 95, 101, 102, 109, 110, 117, 136, 137, 146, 163, 324  
 'Abd al-Malik, 22, 32–33  
 'Abd al-Mu'min, 27  
 'Abd al-Qadir Hisari, Ottoman calligrapher, 296–97  
 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, 176  
 'Abd al-Rahman I, Umayyad caliph, 54  
 'Abd al-Rahman III, Umayyad caliph, 53, 54, 72  
 'Abd al-Razzaq, 340  
 'Abd al-Samad, Nur al-Din, sufi shaikh, 120  
 'Abd al-Samad (painter), 208, 339  
 Abu al-Qasim 'Abdallah al-Kashani, 122  
 Abu 'Ali Mansur al-'Azizi al-Jawdhari, 50  
 Abu Bakr, caliph, 108  
 Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad, *minbar* patron, 105  
 Abu Dulaf, 23  
 Abu Ibrahim, Abbasid amir, 52  
 Abu'l 'Abbas Valkin ibn Harun, 127  
 Abu'l Fazl, 356  
 Abu'l Hasan, Mughal painter, 340  
 Abu'l Hasan al-Bakri, 290  
 Abu Sa'id, Ilkhanid ruler, 97, 98, 166  
 Abu Sir al-Malak, Egypt, 21  
 Abu Tahir, 124  
 Achaemenid Empire, 40  
 Adamova, Adel, 226  
 'Adil Shahi dynasty, 341, 380–81  
 Afghans, Afghanistan, 16, 86, 90–91, 128–29, 173, 183–84, 187–90, 194–95, 197–200, 215, 338, 339, 342, 397, 398  
 Afrasiyab, Samarqand, 101, 110  
 Afsharid dynasty, 273  
 Agha Muhammad Qajar, shah, 173–74  
 Agra, India, 338, 339, 340, 366–67, 369–70, 373  
 Ahmadnagar, India, 341  
 Ahmad Shah Wali, Bahmanid sultan, 392  
 Ahmedabad, India, 378–79  
 Ahmed I, Ottoman sultan, 223  
 Ahmed Tekeli, 287, 312–13  
*Ahsan al-Kibar* (The Best of the Greats: On the Knowledge of the Immaculate Imam), 208  
 'Ain al-Sira, Egypt, 43  
 'Ain-i Akbari, 394  
 Akbar, Mughal emperor, 183–84, 246, 339, 340, 348, 351–54, 356, 370, 372–73, 394  
 Akbarnama, 272, 354  
 'Ala' al-Din Aqsunqur, Mamluk amir, 160  
 'Ala' al-Din Garshasp, 105  
 'Ala' al-Din Husain Shah, sultan of Bengal, 344–45  
 Alawis, 64  
 Al-Azhar university, Cairo, 138  
 Alcaraz, Spain, 84  
 Alcazar, Seville, 55–56, 75, 84  
 Aleppo, Syria, 137, 158  
 Algeria, 77  
 Alhambra (Madinat al-Hamra), Granada, 13, 56, 56, 74, 75, 81, 82  
 'Ali Ashraf, 274, 275  
 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (the Prophet's son-in-law), 108, 172, 185, 197, 200, 203, 241, 299–300, 327, 392, 399  
 'Ali Naqi, 272, 385  
 'Ali Quli Beg Jabbadar, 272, 277  
 Alixares palace, Granada, 75  
 Allah, 21  
*Almagest* (Ptolemy), 176  
 Almohad dynasty, 55, 61  
 Almoravid dynasty, 55, 61  
 al-Rafiq, Syria, 42  
 Altman, Benjamin, 4, 4, 9, 261, 263, 302, 376  
 Alvand, Aq Quyunlu prince, 171  
 Amasya, Treaty of, 172  
 Amasya, Turkey, 289, 292  
 Amber, India, Fort and Palace at, 270, 370, 375, 394  
 Amid (Diyarbakir), 143, 158  
 Amir Kabir, Mirza Taqul Khan, 277  
 Amir Khusrav Dihlavi, 238, 339, 352–53  
 Amritsar, India, 399–400  
 Anatolia, 16, 158, 168, 169, 170, 171, 185, 193, 285, 286, 288, 328–31, 333  
 al-Andalus, 53–56, 67, 75, 77, 79–81  
 Andrew, Saint, 153  
 Anhalt Medallion Carpet (cat. 180), **257–58**  
 Ankara, Turkey, 106  
 Antioch, 21  
*Anvar-i suhaili*, 354  
 Aqa Mirak, 203, 208  
 Aq Quyunlu Turkmen, 171–72, 185, 193  
 Arabatchi Turkmen, 282  
 Aragon, 84  
 architecture:  
 Ottoman, 287–88  
 Sultanate, 339  
 Ardabil, Iran, 172, 229  
 Armenians, 220, 254  
 arms and armor:  
 daggers, cat. 255, 340, **365–66**; cat. 288, **403–4**  
 helmet (cat. 223), **314–15**  
 ram's-head dagger (cat. 288), **342**  
 saber (cat. 222), **313–14**  
 shaffron (cat. 224), **314–15**  
 short sword (*yutagan*; cat. 221), 287, **312–13**  
 sword guard (quillon block; cat. 133), 3, **195–96**  
 turban helmet (cat. 131), 171, **193–94**  
 Artuqid dynasty, 143, 158  
*Arzadasht* (Ja'far al-Tabrizi), 170–71  
 Asaf al-Daula, nawab of Avadh, 364  
*Ashab al-Kahf*, 296  
 Ashraf, Iran, 275  
 Ashtarjan, Masjid-i Jami', 108  
 Ashtur, India, 392  
 Assam, India, 348  
 Astak, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, 104–5  
 astrolabes:  
 cat. 107, **158–59**  
 planispheric astrolabe (cat. 165), **240**  
 'Attar, Farid al-din, 188–90  
 al-'Attarin, *madrasa*, Fez, 72–73, 74  
 Aughar, 363  
 Aurangabad, India, 341, 389  
 Aurangzeb, Mughal emperor, 272, 340, 360, 362–63  
 Avadh, India, 341, 364  
 Aydakin al-'Ala'i al-Bunduqdar, 160–61  
 Ayyubid dynasty, 137–38, 139, 148, 152, 161  
 Azerbaijan, 193  
 al-'Aziz, Fatimid caliph, 163  
 Baba Naqqash style, 298–99, 304  
 Babur, Mughal emperor, 360  
*Baburnama*, 354  
 Badshahi 'Ashurkhana, Hyderabad, 392  
 Bagci, Serpil, 209  
 Baghdad, 15, 23, 44–45, 55, 86–87, 92–94, 137, 158, 171, 179, 184  
 Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, Muhammad (Shaikh Baha'i), 383–84  
 Bahadur Shah I, Mughal emperor, 362, 363  
 Bahadur Shah Zafar, Mughal emperor, 339  
 Bahmanid dynasty, 341, 385, 392  
 Bahram Chubina, 208  
 Bahram Gur, Sasanian emperor (cat. 72), 133, 183–84, 354  
 Bahram Mirza, Safavid prince, 223  
 Bahram Sufrakish, 272, 385  
 Bahri Mamluks, 138  
 Baisunghur, Timurid prince, 171  
 Balasagun, China, 196  
 Ballard, James F., 4–5, 8, 84  
 Ballard Ottoman Prayer Carpet (cat. 237), 287, **332–33**  
 Bangladesh, 338  
 Barid Shahi dynasty, 341  
 Barry, Michael A., 9  
 Basawan, 339, 351–54  
 Basra, Iraq, 35, 145–46  
 Bayezid II, Ottoman sultan, 289, 292  
 Bellini, Gentile, 288  
 Bellini Album, 223  
 Bengal, India, 342, 344–45, 348, 401–2  
 Bengal Sultanate, 339  
 Bentarique, Spain, 77  
 Berar, India, 341  
 Bhairavi, 17  
 Bhavanidas, 340, 362, 363  
 Bhawani Das, 400–401  
 Bhim Gujarati, 351–52  
 Bhutan, 338  
 Bibi Ka Maqbara, Aurangabad, 389  
 Bidar, India, 341, 343, 385–86, 392  
*bidri*, 341, 368, 385–86  
 Bihzad, 171, 191, 203, 208, 214, 223  
 Bijapur, India, 341, 372, 380–81  
 Birch, Patti Cadby, 8  
 Bir Singh Deo Bundela, 356  
 al-Biruni, 128  
 Bishapur, Iran, 20, 49  
 Bishop, Heber Reginald, 3  
 Bloom, Jonathan, 58  
 Blue Mosque of Aqsunqur, Cairo, 138  
 Book of Gifts and Rarities, 137  
 Book of the Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife (al-Ghazali), 50–51  
 Bordone, Paris, 330  
 bottles:  
 cat. 13, **36**; cat. 19, **41–42**; cat. 111, 138, 139, **162**; cat. 158, **231–32**; cat. 160, **232–34**; cat. 161, **234–35**  
 mango-shaped flask (cat. 257), 340, **367–68**  
 swan-neck bottle (cat. 196), **280**  
 two zoomorphic bottles (cat. 144, 8), **37**  
 bowls and dishes:  
 cat. 11, **35–36**; cat. 12, **35–36**; cat. 15, **38**; cat. 67, **108–10**; cat. 68, 7, **110–11**; cat. 69, 87–88, **110–12**; cat. 74, **116–17**; cat. 84, **128–29**; cat. 97, 138, **149–50**; cat. 108, **159–60**; cat. 155, **229–30**; cat. 157, **231–32**; cat. 159, **232–34**; cat. 207, **298–99**  
 basin (cat. 87), **132–33**  
 beggar's bowl (*kashkul*; cat. 167), **242–43**  
 blue-and-white ceramic dish with three bunches of grapes (cat. 213), **304–5**  
 bowl with bud handles (cat. 258), 3, 368–69  
 bowl (charger; cat. 75), **117–20**  
 bowl with cobalt-blue inscriptions (cat. 10), **33–34**  
 bowl depicting Bahram Gur and Azada hunting (cat. 72), **114–15**  
 bowl with eagle (cat. 93), 137, **145–46**  
 bowl with hare (cat. 94), **145–46**  
 ceramic dish (cat. 211), **302–3**  
 ceramic dish (cat. 214), 287, **305–6**  
 ceramic dish (cat. 215), **305–6**  
 ceramic plate (cat. 210), **302–3**  
 Coello Plate, 76  
 dish (*brasero*; cat. 44), **76–77**  
 footed bowl (*tazza*; cat. 110), 139, **161–62**  
 large footed blue-and-white ceramic dish in *tazza* form (cat. 212), **304–5**  
 silver plate (cat. 6), **30**  
 boxes:  
 box (pyxis; cat. 37), **68**  
 box with drawer (cat. 267), 341, **378–79**  
 box for holding pen (cat. 273), **385–86**  
 gold container (cat. 277), 341  
 Morgan Casket (cat. 39), 15, **70–71**, 137  
 pen box (cat. 272), **384–85**  
 pen box (*qalamdan*; cat. 193), **276–77**  
 pyxis (cat. 95), **146–47**  
 pyxis (cat. 102), 138, **152–53**  
 writing box (cat. 268), 341, **379–80**  
 writing box (cat. 276), 8, **388–89**  
 Brahmans, 353  
 brazier (cat. 104), 139, **155–56**  
 British Raj, 17, 342, 403  
 Budai (Maitreya), 178  
 Buddhism, 178, 324, 344, 367, 404  
 Bu 'Inaiyya *madrasa*, Fez, 72–73, 74  
 Bukhara, Uzbekistan, 86, 172, 199–200, 358  
 Burgos, Spain, 55  
 Burhanpur, India, 341, 388–89  
 Burji Mamluks, 139, 168  
 Burnett, Cora Timken, 6  
 Bursa, Turkey, 286, 287, 288, 307–8, 324–26  
 Busbecq, Ogier Ghiselin de, 319  
 Bust, Afghanistan, 102  
*Bustan* (The Orchard; Sa'di), 180, 199–200  
 Buyid dynasty, 35, 86, 127  
 Byzantine Empire, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32–33, 46–47, 53–54, 58, 70, 94, 137, 152, 165, 285, 298  
 Caesarea, Israel, 152  
 Cairo, 15, 50, 136–40, 142, 145, 156, 160–66, 168–69, 170, 286, 288, 289, 331, 333, 347  
 Calcutta (Kolkata), India, 342, 400–401, 402–3  
 Cambay, India, 377  
 Canby, Sheila R., 9, 170  
 candlestick base (cat. 106), 139, **157–58**  
 capitals, cat. 20, **42**; cat. 40, **72**



- Carboni, Stefano, 9, 136  
carpets and rugs:  
  Anhalt Medallion Carpet (cat. 180),  
    **257–58**  
  Ballard Ottoman Prayer Carpet (cat. 237),  
    287, **332–33**  
  Berlin dragon-and-phoenix rug, 328, 330  
  carpet with a compartment design  
    (cat. 179), **256–57**  
  carpet with flower pattern (cat. 264),  
    369, **375, 376**  
  carpet fragments with pattern of lattice  
    and blossoms (cat. 265), **376**  
  carpet with pictorial design (cat. 262),  
    340, **372–74**  
  Czartoryski Carpet (cat. 186), **267**  
  early animal rug (cat. 234), 8, **328–30**  
  Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181), 6, 12, 14,  
    17, 172, **259–61**, 265–66  
  fragment of a carpet with compartment  
    design (cat. 184), **264–65**  
  garden carpet (cat. 189), **270**  
  "Kashan," 373, 376  
  large Ottoman court carpet (cat. 236),  
    287, **331**  
  lattice-design carpet (cat. 84), **84–85**  
  Marby rug, 328, 330  
  pushmina carpet fragment (Frick Carpet;  
    cat. 263), 340, **374**  
  pictorial carpet (cat. 188), **269**  
  Polonoise, 267, 269  
  "Portuguese" (cat. 187), **268**  
  prayer mat (cat. 28), **50–51**  
  "Sanguszko," 373  
  Seley Carpet (cat. 185), 8, 16, **265–66**  
  silk animal rug (cat. 182), **261–63**, 373,  
    376  
  silk medallion rug (cat. 183), **263–64**,  
    376  
  Simonetti Carpet (cat. 116), 7, 140,  
    **168–69**  
  star Ushak carpet (cat. 235), 6, 286,  
    **330–31**  
Castile, 84  
Cathedral of San Nicola Pellegrino, Trani,  
  54  
Cathedral of San Sabino, Canosa, 54  
Caucasus, 193, 253  
Central Asia, 28, 30, 170–74, 182, 195–97,  
  243, 253, 282–84, 286, 307, 324,  
  339, 346, 382  
Chahar Bagh, Isfahan, 235, 236  
chahar bagh pattern, 270  
Chahardah Ma'sum, 241  
Chaldiran, battle of, 286  
Chand Muhammad, 380–81  
Chanson de Roland, 55  
Chardin, Jean, 225, 240, 255  
Chasuble of San Juan de Ortega, 55  
Chefchaouen, Morocco, 83–84  
chess set (cat. 70), **112–13**  
China, Chinese, 21, 23–24, 33–34, 39, 47,  
  95, 121, 129, 134, 162, 166, 171,  
  173, 178, 179–80, 182, 194, 195,  
  229, 230, 232, 235, 247, 257, 278,  
  284, 286, 300, 302, 304, 306, 322,  
  347, 354, 373, 397, 404  
Chingiznama (Book of Genghis Khan; cat.  
  246), **351–52**  
Chirvani, A.-S. Melikian, 226  
Chitarman II, 341  
Chodor Turkmen, 282  
Christianity, Christians, 21, 53, 138,  
  152–53, 251, 288  
  *see also* Crusades, Crusaders; Jesus Christ  
Cid, 55  
Circassians, 220  
Clavijo, Ruy Gonzalez de, 134  
Cochran, Alexander Smith, 4, 11  
Coello Plate, 76  
coins:  
  coins with signs of the zodiac (cat.  
    256A–E), **366–67**  
  dinar (cat. 8), **32–33**  
  dirham (cat. 9), **32–33**  
Complex of Sultan Hasan, Cairo, 139  
Constantinople, 152, 285  
  *see also* Istanbul  
Copts, 15, 21, 137  
Cordoba, Spain, 53–54, 53, 55, 58, 68, 72  
Coromandel Coast, India, 396–97, 405  
cover fragment (cat. 24), **46–47**  
Crowe, Yolande, 235  
Crusades, Crusaders, 137, 138, 152  
Ctesiphon, Iraq, 2, 6, 23  
cups:  
  cat. 17, **40–41**; cat. 71, **113–14**; cat. 83,  
    88, **127**  
  goblet (cat. 16), **39**  
  Czartoryski, Wladyslaw, 267  
  Czartoryski Carpet (cat. 186), 173, **267**  
Damascus, Syria, 16, 22, 137, 139, 142,  
  149–51, 154, 158, 288, 310–11,  
  333–37  
Damascus Room (*qa'a*; cat. 238), 7, 11–12,  
  14, 16, 288, 306, **333–37**  
Daniyal, Bengali prince, 344  
Darabnama, 354  
Dar al-Islam, 54  
Dara Shikuh, Mughal prince, 361  
al-Darir al-Erzerumi, Mustafa, 289–90  
Darwishiyya Mosque, Damascus, 311  
Daulat, 340  
Davis, Theodore M., 5  
Deccan, 17, 274, 343, 344, 348, 363, 364,  
  365, 372, 380–89, 392–95, 399  
Deccan Sultanates, 341, 362  
Delhi, India, 170, 173, 339, 341, 342, 364,  
  370  
Delhi Sultanate, 339, 344  
De Materia Medica (Dioscorides; cat. 55), 6,  
  87, **94**, 143  
Diba, Layla S., 9, 275  
Dickson, Martin, 203, 206, 208  
Dijon, France, 69  
Dimand, Maurice Sven, 5, 6, 7  
Diocletian, Roman emperor, 78  
Dioscorides, 87, 94, 143  
dishes, *see* bowls and dishes  
Divan (Hafiz), 190–91, 200–202  
Diyarbakir, Turkey, 288, 310  
Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, 20, 21, 22, 25,  
  54  
doors:  
  pair of doors (cat. 23), **45–46**  
  pair of doors (cat. 113), 139, **163–64**  
  pair of flower-style doors (cat. 259),  
    **369–70**  
Duke, Doris, 334  
Durrani Afghans, 397  
Dust Muhammad, 206, 223  
Dutch, 230, 233–34, 341, 377  
East Africa, 341  
Eastern Orthodox Church, 251, 288  
East India Company, British, 234, 253, 342  
East India Company, Dutch, 234, 253  
Edirne, Turkey, 285, 288  
Egypt, 7, 14, 15, 21, 23, 36, 39, 41, 43–44,  
  46–47, 50, 75, 76–77, 116–17, 122,  
  134, 136–40, 141–43, 145–46, 149,  
  151–52, 155–69, 286, 322, 331,  
  334, 347  
Ekhtiar, Maryam, 20  
Elizabeth I, queen of England, 389  
Ellis, Charles Grant, 268  
Emperor's Album (cat. 250A–D), 340,  
  **358–60**  
Emperor's Carpet (cat. 181), 6, 12, 14, 17,  
  172, **259–61**, 265–66  
England, English, 234, 253, 342, 377  
  *see also* British Raj  
Epirus, Greece, 288  
Erdmann, Kurt, 330  
Ettinghausen, Richard, 12  
Europe, Europeans, 253, 278, 339, 340, 341,  
  369, 377, 378, 379, 384–85, 389,  
  394, 397, 404–5  
ewers, *see* vessels  
Faizabad, India, 364  
Faizullah Khan, 364  
Fahnama (Book of Omens; cat. 139A, B),  
  **209–12**  
fan (cat. 195), **278–79**  
Farahabad, Iran, 275  
Farhad, Massumeh, 209, 226  
Farrukhabad, India, 364–65  
Fars Province, Iran, 98, 286  
Fatehpur Sikri, India, 340, 351, 372–73  
Fath 'Ali Shah, Qajar shah, 174  
Fatima (the Prophet's daughter), 137, 241,  
  242  
Fatimid dynasty, 15, 50, 54, 55, 70, 75,  
  76–77, 116–17, 136–38, 139, 142,  
  145–46, 151–52, 159, 347  
Fazli, 306  
Fenggan, 178  
Ferdinand III, king of Castile and Leon, 55  
Fez, Morocco, 13, 16, 56, 72  
Firdausi of Tus, 4, 7–8, 89, 133, 185  
Fortuny, 75  
fountain (cat. 275), **386–88**  
France, French, 69, 94, 286, 377  
Francis I, emperor of Austria, 162  
Frick Carpet (cat. 263), 340, **374**  
Friedrich III, duke of Holstein, 246  
Friends of the Islamic Department, 7  
Fustat, Egypt, 39, 43, 142, 149, 152, 340,  
  347  
Ganj 'Ali Khan, 231–32  
Gebel Adda, Nubia, 347  
Genghis Khan, 121, 351  
Genghizid Mongols, 88  
Genoa, Italy, 288  
Georgians, 220, 247  
Ghars al-Din al-Tawrizi, 151  
Ghaybi al-Tawrizi, 150–51  
al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn  
  Muhammad, 50–51  
Ghazan, Ilkhanid ruler, 92  
Ghaznavid dynasty, 16, 86, 102  
Ghiyath, textile designer, 246  
Ghouchani, Abdullah, 161  
Ghurid dynasty, 16  
Gilan Province, Iran, 253  
Goa, India, 341, 378, 380, 389–90  
Goa stone and container (cat. 277), **389–90**  
Golconda, India, 17, 341, 381–82, 388  
Golombek, Lisa, 134, 230, 232  
Gombroon ware, 232–33  
Gough family, 390  
Grabar, Oleg, 54  
Granada, Spain, 55, 66, 75, 81, 82, 84  
Great Mosque of Cordoba, 53, 54  
Great Mosque (Umayyad Mosque) of  
  Damascus, 22, 25, 27, 142, 151, 333  
Great Mosque of Isfahan, 89  
Great Mosque of Qairawan, Tunisia, 26, 44,  
  58  
Great Mosque of Sana'a, Yemen, 43  
Greek Orthodox Church, 251, 288  
Green Tomb (Yesil Turbe), Bursa, 307  
Grinnell, William Milne, 4  
Grube, Ernst J., 7  
Gujarat, India, 340–41, 348, 370, 377–79,  
  388–89  
Gujarat Sultanate, 339  
Gulistan of Sa'di, 360  
Gurgan Plain, 282  
Habiballah of Sava, 188, 190, 215–16  
Hadiqat al-haqiqat (The Walled Garden of  
  Truth; Sana'i), 214  
hadith (sayings of the Prophet), 203, 296,  
  344  
Hafiz of Shiraz, 190–91, 200–202, 278  
Haidar, Navina, 2, 9, 10, 338  
al-Hajjaj, 128–29  
Hajji Husrev, 309  
al-Hakam II, 54, 72  
al-Hakim, Fatimid caliph, 146  
Hamadan, Iran, 110, 127  
Hamdullah ibn Mustafa Dede, 292  
Hamzanama (Story of Hamza), 339, 348–49,  
  356  
Haram al-Sharif, Mecca, 200  
al-Hariri, 143  
Hariwamsa (Legend of Hari; cat. 245), 339,  
  **350–52**  
Harun al-Rashid, Abbasid caliph, 42  
Harun-i Vilayat, Isfahan, 258  
Hasan, son of 'Ali, 203, 242  
Hasan Nakkas, 290  
Hatifi, 223, 289  
Hattin, battle of, 137  
Hauser, Walter, 6  
Havemeyer, Henry Osborn, 5  
Havemeyer, Horace, 5  
Heeramanek, Alice, 8  
Herat, Afghanistan, 88, 171, 172, 179,  
  183–84, 187–90, 194–95, 197–200,  
  203, 205, 214, 215–16, 257, 259,  
  286, 289, 343, 358  
Herbert, Thomas, 253–54  
Hereke, Istanbul, 269  
Hilali Chughata'i, 360  
Hindus, Hinduism, 344, 351, 353, 367, 381,  
  382, 404  
Hira, Iraq, 101  
Hisham, Umayyad caliph, 22  
Hispanic Society of America, 15  
Hoentschel, George, 3  
Houghton, Arthur, 7  
Hoving, Thomas, 7  
Humayun, Mughal emperor, 208, 339  
Husain, son of 'Ali, 203, 204, 242, 392  
Husain, son of Qawsun, 156–57  
Husain Baiqara, Timurid sultan, 171, 187,  
  190, 191–92  
Husain Khan Shamlu, 215  
Hyderabad, India, 341, 372, 390–92  
Iberia, *see* Portugal, Spain  
Ibn Aibak ibn 'Abdallah, Muhammad,  
  92–93  
Ibn al-Fadl, 'Abdullah, 94  
Ibn al-Suhrawardi al-Bakri, Ahmad, 92–93  
Ibn Bakhtishu, Abu Sa'id, 95, 142  
Ibn Hayyan, 54  
Ibn Zamrak, 56  
Ibrahim II, Bijapur sultan, 381  
Ibrahim 'Adil Shah, 341  
Ibrahim Mirza, Safavid prince, 172, 214  
Ibrahim Sultan, Timurid prince, 171  
al-Idrisi, 49, 50  
ikat textiles, 52, 281–82  
Ili, China, 368  
Ilkhanid dynasty, 16, 86, 92, 95, 97–99,  
  118, 121–22, 124, 132, 134–35,  
  138, 162, 166, 328  
'Imad Shahi dynasty, 341  
Imamzada Yahya, Varamin, 118  
Imarat-i Takht-i Marmar, Gulistan Palace,  
  Tehran, 173  
Impey, Lady Mary, 342, 401, 403  
Impey, Sir Elijah, 401, 403  
incense burners:  
  cat. 85, 6, **129–31**  
  spherical incense burner (cat. 103), 139,  
    **154**  
India, 17, 21, 129, 170, 172, 173, 183,  
  243, 253, 268, 271, 273–74,  
  338–404  
  British Raj in, 17, 342, 403  
  Sultanate period in, 17, 339, 341, 344,  
    385  
Indonesia, 347, 404–5  
Indus Valley, 23  
Injuidd dynasty, 98, 124  
inkwell (cat. 86), 88, **131**  
Iran, 15, 16–17, 28–30, 40–42, 44, 47–49,  
  86, 87, 89–91, 95–110, 112–34,  
  149–50, 158, 162, 169, 170–74,  
  176–82, 184–85, 188–90, 192–93,  
  196–97, 200–214, 217–18, 219–80,  
  286, 307, 324, 331, 339, 341, 354,  
  367–68, 373, 374, 378, 382, 389,  
  392, 394, 398, 404

- Iraq, 23–24, 26, 32–36, 38–39, 44–46, 47, 86–87, 92–94, 110, 128, 136, 137, 157, 159, 180, 185, 324
- Isfahan, Iran, 12, 16–17, 87, 89, 90, 99, 104, 106, 108, 120, 124, 170, 173, 188–90, 215, 216, 220–21, 225, 226, 228, 229, 235–36, 240, 253, 258, 259, 271–73, 279, 280, 383
- Isfahani, Zain(?) Hasan Sulaiman, 107–8
- Iskandar Beg Monshi, Persian author, 226
- Iskandar Sultan, Timurid prince, 171
- Isma'il I, Safavid shah, 171–72, 197, 203, 276, 380
- Isma'il II, Safavid shah, 212, 215
- Isma'il, seventh imam, 137
- Isma'il Derdi, 296
- Isma'il Kashani, 255
- Istabl 'Antar, Cairo, 50
- Istanbul, 16, 194, 269, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289–95, 299, 302, 306, 308, 309, 312–13, 316–23, 325, 326–27, 331, 332–33  
see also Constantinople
- Italy, 15, 54, 69–71, 122, 134, 263, 286
- Iznik, Turkey, 16, 287, 288, 298–311
- 'Izz al-Din Aybak, Mamluk sultan, 138
- Jackson, A. V. Williams, 4
- Ja'far al-Tabrizi, Persian scribe, 171
- Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali, 129
- Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Mukhtar, 161
- Jahangir, Mughal emperor, 273, 340, 358–60, 365–67, 369, 372, 375
- al-Jahiz, Arab author, 142
- Jains, 11, 339
- Jaipur, India, 342, 375, 403–4
- Jajarmi, Muhammad ibn Badr al-Din, 99
- Jalayirid dynasty, 171
- jali* screens, 12, 14
- Jami, 'Abd al-Rahman, 171, 180
- Jami' al-tawarikh* (Compendium of Chronicles; Rashid al-Din), 351
- Janissaries, 217
- Japan, 341
- jars, see vessels
- Jaunpur Sultanate, 339
- Java, 404–5
- Jawdhar, 50–51
- al-Jazari, Badi' al-Zaman ibn al-Razzaz, 143–45
- al-Jazira, 137, 158
- Jenkins, Marilyn, 8
- Jerusalem, 22, 54, 137, 138
- Jesuits, 389
- Jesus Christ, 138, 153
- jewelry:
- biconical bead (cat. 99), **151–52**
  - necklace elements, (cat. 45), **77–78**
  - necklace elements (cat. 88), 8, **133–34**
  - pectoral ornament (cat. 199), 9, **284**
  - pendant (cat. 101), **151–52**
  - signet ring (cat. 134), **196–97**
  - spherical bead (cat. 100), **151–52**
- Jews, Judaism, 21, 53, 137, 288, 333
- Jiaqing, Qing emperor, 368
- Jiménez de Rada, Rodrigo, 55
- jugs, see vessels
- juz'*, 26–27, 64, 66, 93
- Ka'ba, 54
- Ka'b al-Ahbar, 142
- Kabir, Indian poet, 363
- Kachhwaha dynasty, 394
- Kai Kavus, 343
- Kai Khusrau, 97, 212, 343
- kalamkaris*, 340, 341, 394
- Kamada, Yumiko, 190
- Kamal, Indian religious figure, 363
- Kamal Muhammad, Indian painter, 380–81
- Kara Memi, 287, 302
- Karbala, Iraq, 392
- Karim Khan Zand, 173
- Karwaih, Abu Sa'd ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan, 105
- Kashan, Iran, 15, 88–89, 114–16, 117–20, 249–50, 253, 260, 261–64, 267, 307
- kashkuls*, 242–43
- Kashmir, 272, 274, 342, 369, 372, 373, 375–76, 397–400
- Kashmir Sultanate, 339
- Keene, Manuel, 8
- Kelekian, Dikran, 5
- kemha* (lampas), 318, 319, 320
- kendi*, 230–31
- Keshav Das, 348
- Kevorkian Fund, 6, 7, 333, 334
- Kevorkian Fund Special Exhibitions Gallery, 15
- Khadija (the Prophet's wife), 241
- Khamsa* (Quintet; Amir Khusrau Dihlavi; cat. 247A, B), 339, **352–54**
- Khamsa* (Quintet; Hatifi), 289
- Khamsa* (Quintet; Nizami), 133, 180, 183–84, 197–98, 203, 204, 208, 209, 248, 289, 353
- Khavarrannama* (Book of the East; ibn Husam; cat. 125A, B), **185–86**
- Khayyam, Umar, 14
- Khirbat al-Majfar palace, Jordan, 22
- Khitans, 196
- Khotan, China, 195, 196, 284, 368
- Khubilai Khan, 195
- Khurasan, 48–50, 108, 110, 135, 171–73, 214, 264–65, 268, 354
- Khusrau and Shirin* (Hatifi; cat. 200), 288, **289**
- Khusrau and Shirin (Nizami), 180, 198
- Khusrau Parviz, Sasanian ruler, 197, 198, 203, 208, 247, 248
- King's Book of Kings*, A (Welch), 8
- Kirman, Iran, 230–32, 234, 270
- Kish (Shahr-i Sabz, Uzbekistan), 170
- Kishangarh, India, 362–63
- Kitab al-hayawan* (Book of Animals; al-Jahiz), 142
- Kitab dhikr al-mawt wa-ma ba'dahu* (Book of the Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife; al-Ghazali), 50–51
- Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* (Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Objects; al-Jazari; cat. 92), 6, **143–45**
- kitabkhana*, 171, 172, 173, 206, 224
- Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabita* (Book of Images of the Fixed Stars; al-Sufi; cat. 118), **176–77**
- Kolkata (Calcutta), India, 342, 400–401, 402–3
- Komaroff, Linda, 197
- Konya Province, Turkey, 106, 288
- Kosovo, battle of, 327
- Kröger, Jens, 39
- Kubad, shah of Khavaran, 185
- Kütahya, Turkey, 288
- Kutubiyya Mosque, Marrakesh, 55
- Lahore, Pakistan, 339, 340, 351–52, 370, 372–76
- lamps, mosque lamp (cat. 109), 139, **160–61**
- lamp stands, cat. 163, **237–39**; cat. 164, **237–39**
- Lane, Arthur, 234, 304
- lantern (cat. 96), 138, **148**
- Lashkari Bazaar, Bust, Afghanistan, 88, 102
- Las Navas de Tolosa, battle of, 55
- Lenin, Vladimir, 26
- Leon, 84
- Leopold I, Habsburg emperor, 259
- Liao dynasty, 196
- Lisan al-tair* (The Speech of the Birds; Nava'i), 190
- Lodi dynasty, 339
- Lohans, 178
- Louis E. Seley Foundation, 8
- Lucknow, India, 341, 363–64
- McMullan, Joseph V., 6, 7, 12
- McWilliams, Mary, 253
- Madinat al-Salam, Iraq, 23
- Madinat al-Zahra, Spain, 5, 53–54, 67, 72
- Madonna (Virgin Mary), 153
- Madrasa Imami, Isfahan, 12, 16–17, 124–26
- Maghrib, 55, 61, 63
- Mahabharata* (Razmnama), 351, 354
- Mahesh, 354
- Mahmud Shah, sultan of Bengal, 345
- Mah Muhammad, 348
- Maitreya, 178
- Majlis al-Khilafa, 53–54
- Majma' al-tavarikh* (The Assembly of Histories), 171
- Malaga, Spain, 74–75, 76
- Maldives, 338
- al-Malik al-Ashraf Musa, Ayyubid prince, 148
- Mallon, Paul, 43
- Malwa Sultanate, 339
- Mamluk dynasty, 7, 14, 15, 16, 134, 137, 138–40, 142, 148, 150, 155, 156–57, 160–63, 165–66, 168–69, 194, 289, 322, 331, 347
- Manafi' al-hayawan* (On the Usefulness of Animals; Ibn Bakhtishu; cat. 56), 89, **95**
- Mandu, India, 339
- Manises, Spain, 76–77
- Mannes, David, 9
- Manohar, 352–54, 384–85
- al-Mansur, Abbasid caliph, 42
- Mansur (Mughal painter), 340, 358–60, 369, 375
- Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds; 'Attar; cat. 127A–D), 171, **188–90**, 216
- Mantiq al-wahsh* (Speech of the Wild Animal; Ka'b al-Ahbar; cat. 91), **142–43**
- manuscripts:
- anthology of Persian poetry in oblong format (*safina*; cat. 126), **187–88**
  - book of prayers (including *Surat al-Yasin* and *Surat al-Fath* ["Victory"]) (cat. 191), **272–74**
  - folio from the *Chingiznama* (Book of Genghis Khan; cat. 246), **351–52**
  - folio from *De Materia Medica* (cat. 55), 6, 87, **94**
  - folio from the *Divan* of Hafiz (cat. 128), **190–91**
  - folio from a *Divan* of Hafiz (cat. 137), 9, **200–202**
  - folio from the *Hamzanama* (Story of Hamza; cat. 244), 339, **348–49**, 356
  - folio from the *Harivamsa* (Legend of Hari; cat. 245), 339, **350–52**
  - folio from the *Khamsa* (Quintet) of Nizami (cat. 135), 4, **197–98**
  - folio from the *Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya* (Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Objects; al-Jazari; cat. 92), 6, **143–45**
  - folio from the *Manafi' al-hayawan* (cat. 56), 89, **95**
  - folio from the *Mantiq al-wahsh* (Speech of the Wild Animal; Ka'b al-Ahbar; cat. 91), **142–43**
  - folio from the *Mu'nis al-ahrar fi daqa'iq al-ash'ar* (cat. 59), 6, 89, **99**
  - folios from an album of calligraphy (cat. 204), **292–93**
  - four folios from the *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds) of Farid al-Din 'Attar (cat. 127A–D), 171, **188–90**, 216
  - four folios from the *Ramayana* (cat. 249A–D), 339, **356–57**
  - illustrated folio from Mustafa al-Darir al-Erzerumi's *Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet; cat. 201), **289–90**
  - manuscript of Hatifi's *Khusrau and Shirin* (cat. 200), 288, **289**
  - Nan va halva* (Bread and Sweets) of Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili (cat. 271), **383–84**
  - St. Petersburg Album, 272, 274, 275
- three folios from the *Haft Paikar* (Seven Portraits) of the *Khamsa* (Quintet) of Nizami (cat. 123A–C), 4, 171, **183–84**
- two folios from a *Falnama* (Book of Omens; cat. 139A, B), **209–12**
- two folios from the *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi (cat. 247A, B), 339, **352–54**
- two folios from the *Khavarrannama* (Book of the East) of Maulana Muhammad ibn Husam al-Din (cat. 125A, B), **185–86**
- two folios from a manuscript of the *Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabita* (Book of Images of the Fixed Stars) of al-Sufi (cat. 118), **176–77**
- two folios from the *Zafarnama* (Book of Victory) of Sharaf al-din 'Ali Yazdi (cat. 124A, B), 171, **184–85**  
see also paintings and drawings; Qur'an; *Shahnama*
- Maqamat (al-Hariri), 94, 143
- al-Maqrizi, 50, 137
- Marinid dynasty, 56, 73, 74
- Marrakesh, Morocco, 55
- Martin, F. R., 6, 223, 269
- Marwan ewer, 21, 31
- Marwan II, Umayyad caliph, 21, 22, 47
- Mashhad, Iran, 172, 212–14, 226, 229–30
- Mason, Robert, 230
- Masters of Tabriz, 307
- Mas'ud I, Ghaznavid ruler, 102
- Maulana Azhar, Persian scribe, 184
- Maulana Shiri, Indian author, 351
- Mausoleum of Mumtaz Mahal, Taj Mahal, Agra, 338
- al-Mawardi, Saif al-Dunya wa'l-Din Muhammad, 129
- Mazandaran Province, Iran, 253, 275, 343
- Mecca, 21, 54, 63, 138, 159, 398
- Medina, 21, 63, 138, 159
- Mehmed I, Ottoman sultan, 307
- Mehmed II, "the Conqueror," Ottoman sultan, 286, 288
- Mehmed III, Ottoman sultan, 290
- Merv, Iran, 49, 50, 101
- metal mirror with gilded ornamentation (cat. 220), **311**
- Mewar, India, 361
- mihhrabs* (prayer niches), 88, 89, 105, 139, 200, 307, 398
- Madrasa Imami (cat. 81), 12, 16–17, 89, **124–26**
- tile from a *mihrab* (cat. 80), **123–24**
- minbars, 14
- pair of doors (cat. 113), 139, **163–64**
  - two fragments of a *minbar* (cat. 65A, B), 87, 102, **105–7**
- Ming dynasty, China, 34, 173, 194, 230, 300, 302, 304, 306
- Minto Album, 358
- Mir 'Ali Haravi, 203, 358–60
- Mir Kalan Khan, Indian painter, 341, 363–64
- Mir Musavvir, Persian painter, 203
- mirror case (cat. 194), **277**
- Mir Sayyid 'Ali, 208, 339
- Mirza 'Ali, 203, 208, 214
- Mirza Baba, 277
- Mirza Mahdi, 275
- Miskin, 354–55
- Mochi community, group in Gujarat, 377
- Moluccas, 347
- Monghyr (Munger), fort in Bihar, 344
- Mongols, 16, 88–89, 97–98, 134, 148, 166, 171, 194, 195, 257, 275  
see also specific dynasties
- Moore, Edward C., 2–3, 4, 6, 14, 161, 164
- Morgan, John Pierpont, 3, 71, 161
- Morgan, J. P., Jr., 3, 12
- Morgan Casket (cat. 39), 15, **70–71**, 137
- Moriah, Mount, 22
- Moroccan Court, 15
- Morocco, 63–65, 72–74, 83–84
- Moscow, Russia, 288



- Mosque of Abiyana, Isfahan, 106  
 Mosque of Abu Dulaf, Samarra, 23  
 Mosque of al-Aqmar, Cairo, 136  
 Mosque of Amir Qawsun, Cairo, 139, 164  
 Mosque of Bibi Khanum, Samarqand, 170, 175  
 Mosul, Iraq, 138, 158  
 Motijhil palace, India, 401–2  
 Mshatta palace, Jordan, 22, 44  
 Mu'awiya, Umayyad caliph, 22  
 al-Mufawwad, Ja'far, Abbasid prince, 48  
 Mughal Empire, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 172, 173, 183, 191, 246, 271–72, 273, 339–40, 341, 342, 348–75, 379–82, 384–86, 388, 394, 397, 398, 399, 403–4  
 Muhammad, Prophet, 21, 49, 51, 87, 124, 137, 197, 199–200, 203, 209, 242, 334, 344, 381  
 Muhammad V, sultan of Granada, 55–56  
 Muhammad XII (Boabdil), sultan of Granada, 66  
 Muhammad 'Ali, 226  
 Muhammad al-Qivam al-Shirazi, 217–18  
 Muhammad 'Azim Khan, 399  
 Muhammad Baqir, 275–76  
 Muhammad bin Qasim, 339  
 Muhammad Faqirullah Khan, 364  
 Muhammad Hadi, 272–74  
 Muhammad Husain Kashmiri (Zarin Qalam), 352–54  
 Muhammad ibn Taj al-Din Haidar Muzahhib Shirazi, 217–18  
 Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Nasr ibn al-Ahmar, sultan of Granada, 55  
 Muhammadi of Herat, 218–19, 354  
 Muhammad Qasim, 226  
 Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, Qutb Shahi sultan, 392  
 Muhammad Shah, Mughal emperor, 341, 364  
 Muhammad Siyah Qalam, 178, 182  
 Muhammad Taqi, 272, 385  
 Muhammad Taqi Muzahhib (the Illuminator) Isfahani, 279  
 Muhammad Yusuf, 226  
 Muhammad Zaman, 240, 275, 277  
 Muhtasham Kashani, 238  
 Mu'in Musavvir, 228–29, 275–76  
 al-Mu'izz, Fatimid caliph, 50–51  
 mulham textile, 50  
 Multan, Pakistan, 339, 345–46  
 Mumtaz Mahal, mausoleum of, 338  
 Mu'nis al-ahrar fi da'iq al-ash'ar (Free Man's Companion to the Subtleties of Poems; Jajarmi; cat. 59), 6, 89, 99  
 al-Muntasir, Abbasid caliph, 52  
 al-Muqaddasi, 50  
 Murad III, Ottoman sultan, 286, 290, 309  
 murakkaalar, 292  
 muragga', 173, 340, 358  
 Murcia, Spain, 76  
 Muslim ibn al-Dahhan, 145–46  
 al-Mustakfi, Abbasid caliph, 50  
 al-Mustansir, Fatimid caliph, 163  
 al-Mu'tadid, Abbasid caliph, 49–50  
 al-Mu'tamid, Abbaidid caliph, 48  
 al-Mu'tasim, Abbasid caliph, 35, 45  
 al-Muti', Abbasid caliph, 50  
 al-Muttaqi, Abbasid caliph, 95  
 al-Muwaffaq, Abu Ahmad, Abbasid prince, 48–49  
 Muzaffar 'Ali, 208  
 Muzaffarid dynasty (Iran), 124  
 al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf ibn 'Umar, al-Malik, Rasulid sultan, 156  
 Nadir Shah, Afsharid shah, 173, 275, 341, 364  
 Nairizi, Ahmed, 272–73  
 Nakkas 'Ali, 307  
 nakka'shane, 290  
 Namdev, 363  
 Nan va halva (Bread and Sweets; Baha' al-Din al-Amili), 383–84  
 Nasir al-Din Khusrau, 50  
 Nasir al-Din Mahmud, Artuqid ruler, 143  
 Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, Qajar shah, 277, 279  
 al-Nasir Muhammad, Mamluk sultan, 138, 156–57, 164, 166  
 Nasrid dynasty, 15, 55–56, 66, 73, 74, 77, 81, 82, 84  
 Natanz, Iran, 120  
 Nava'i, Mir 'Ali Shir, 190  
 Nawazish Muhammad Khan, 401  
 Nepal, 338  
 Nerses I, Armenian patriarch, 251  
 Neshati, 306  
 Nicholas of Myra, Saint, 251  
 Nidhamal, Indian painter, 341  
 Nikitin, Afanasii, 340  
 Nishapur, Iran, 2, 6–7, 11, 12, 14, 14, 16, 39, 49, 87, 100–101, 108–10, 113, 117, 126  
 Nizam al-Mulk, 51  
 Nizami, 133, 180, 183–84, 197–98, 200, 203, 204, 208, 209, 226, 248, 289, 353  
 Nizam Shahi dynasty, 341  
 Normans, 54, 69, 70  
 North Africa, 15, 25–26, 53–56, 137  
 Nubia, 347  
 Nusrat Shah, sultan of Bengal, 345  
 oliphants (signal horns), 54–55, 67  
 cat. 38, 54, 69–70, 137  
 Orientalism, 11, 15, 56  
 Osgood Field, William B., 3, 5  
 Osman, 285  
 Ottoman Empire, 13, 15–16, 56, 64–65, 139–40, 169, 171, 172, 191, 193–94, 209, 217, 223, 224, 230, 244, 255, 258, 276, 285–337, 378, 389, 392  
 Padshahnama, 360  
 Padua, Italy, 288  
 Pahari, 341  
 Pahari tradition, 11  
 paintings and drawings:  
 album leaf (cat. 192), 275–76  
 Buffaloes in Combat (cat. 248), 354–55  
 Buraq: The Celestial Beast (cat. 270), 381–82  
 Calligraphic Galleon (cat. 206), 296–97  
 Chastisement of a Pupil (cat. 153), 226–27  
 Composite Camel with Attendant (cat. 142), 214–15, 382  
 Dragon and Clouds (cat. 151), 224  
 Drawing of a Dragon in Saz Foliage (cat. 202), 6, 287, 290–92  
 Drawing of Saz Leaves with Dragons (cat. 203), 287, 290–92  
 The Emperor Aurangzeb Carried on a Palanquin (cat. 252), 340, 362–63  
 folio from the Davis Album (cat. 190), 271–72  
 Four Demons (cat. 122), 182  
 four folios from the Emperor's Album (cat. 250A–D), 340, 358–60  
 Fruit Bat (cat. 285), 17, 342, 400–401  
 A Gathering of Holy Men of Different Faiths (cat. 253), 341, 363–64  
 A Groom Holding Two Carriage Horses (cat. 287), 342, 402–43  
 Groom and Rider (cat. 149), 222  
 The House of Bijapur (cat. 269), 341, 380–81  
 Lady Applying Henna (cat. 146), 173, 219  
 The Lovers (cat. 148), 221  
 Man in a Fur-Lined Coat (cat. 147), 220–21  
 Portrait of the Elephant 'Alam Kaman (cat. 251), 361–62  
 Portrait of a Lady Holding a Flower (cat. 145), 218–19  
 A Princely Couple Embrace (cat. 121), 6, 180–81  
 Princely Hawking Party (cat. 141), 212–14  
 Princesses Gather at a Fountain (cat. 254), 364–65  
 Reclining Figure (cat. 152), 173, 225–26  
 A Stallion (cat. 143), 215–16  
 Standing Youth in Cape (cat. 150), 223  
 Two Lohans (cat. 119), 178  
 View of a Mosque and Gateway at Motijhil, Bengal (cat. 286), 342, 401–2  
 Wine Drinking in a Spring Garden (cat. 120), 6, 179–80  
 see also manuscripts  
 Pakistan, 338, 345–46, 372–76  
 Pala dynasty, 344  
 palampores, 396–97  
 Palmyra, Syria, 42  
 panels:  
 cat. 21, 43–44; cat. 22, 44–45; cat. 36, 67–68; cat. 41, 72–73; cat. 112, 136, 163  
 cornice panel (cat. 61), 7, 87, 101  
 dado panel (cat. 60), 7, 87, 100–101  
 dedicatory inscription from a mosque (cat. 240), 344–45  
 panel of four calligraphic tiles (cat. 42), 74  
 panel with rows of flowers (cat. 260), 370–71  
 panel of underglaze-painted tiles (cat. 219), 310–11  
 tile panel (cat. 162), 173, 235–36  
 Topkapı Palace tile panel, 287  
 two fragments of a minbar (cat. 65A, B), 87, 102, 105–7  
 wall panel with geometric interlace (cat. 114), 165  
 see also textiles  
 Panjikent, 28, 29  
 Parker, Katherine, 3  
 Parthian Empire, 129  
 pushmina, 374, 398  
 Pasisir (North Coast) region, Java, 404–5  
 patkas, 372  
 Payag, Indian painter, 17, 358–60  
 Peacock Throne, 341  
 Pedro I, king of Castile and Leon, 55–56, 75  
 Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, The, 346  
 Persia, see Iran  
 Peter the Great, czar of Russia, 259  
 Pires, Tomé, 347  
 plaque, steel (cat. 166), 241–42  
 Portugal, Portuguese, 263, 377, 378, 389  
 Poussin, Nicholas, 384  
 Pratt, George Dupont, 5  
 princely figure with jeweled crown (cat. 63), 88, 102–4  
 princely figure with winged crown (cat. 62), 88, 102–4  
 Proctor, Patty, 230  
 Ptolemy, 176  
 Punjab, Pakistan, 8, 17, 340, 372, 400  
 pyxis, pyxides, 67  
 box (pyxis; cat. 37), 68  
 cat. 95, 146–47  
 cat. 102, 138, 152–53  
 see also boxes  
 Qadi Ahmad, 175, 203, 205–6, 220, 226  
 Qadimi, 205, 206, 222  
 Qairawan, Tunisia, 58–61  
 Qaitbay, Mamluk sultan, 139  
 Qajar dynasty, 173–74, 243, 275, 277, 279, 398  
 Qalawun, Mamluk sultan, 138  
 qanats (tent panels), 394  
 Qarakhanid dynasty, 104  
 Qara Khitai (Western Liao) empire, 196  
 Qasim ibn 'Ali, 206–8  
 Qasr al-Hayr West, Syria, 22  
 Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Iran, 6  
 Qasr Ibrim, Nubia, 347  
 Qawsun, Mamluk amir, 139, 156, 164  
 Qazvin, Iran, 172, 173, 208–14, 219, 257  
 Qianlong emperor (China), 368  
 Qing dynasty, China, 34, 368–69  
 Qisas al-khaqani (The Imperial Annals; Wali Quli Shamlu), 226  
 Qiwan al-Daula wa'l-Din Hasan, 98  
 Qizilbash, 172  
 Qum, Iran, 215  
 Qur'an, 11, 15, 21, 22, 43, 87, 200, 210, 296, 381, 383  
 bifolio from the Mushaf al-hadina (Nurse's Qur'an; cat. 31), 60–61  
 bifolio from a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 52), 90–91  
 five fragmentary folios from a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 117A–E), 170, 175–76  
 folio from the Blue Qur'an (cat. 30), 54, 58–59  
 folio from a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 3), 27  
 folio from a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 32), 61–62  
 folio from a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 53), 90–91  
 monumental Qur'an folio (cat. 1), 25–26  
 Qur'an of Baybars al-Jashnagari, 142  
 Qur'an juze' (cat. 2), 26–27  
 Qur'an manuscript (cat. 34), 64–65  
 Qur'an manuscript (cat. 282), 397–98  
 segment of a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 33), 63–64  
 segment of a Qur'an manuscript (cat. 90), 141–42  
 two folios from the Anonymus Baghdad Qur'an (cat. 54A, B), 87, 92–94  
 Zangid Qur'an, 142  
 Qur'an case (cat. 35), 65  
 Qur'anic inscriptions, 87, 120, 160  
 coin (cat. 8), 32–33  
 coin (cat. 9), 32–33  
 folios from an album of calligraphy (cat. 204), 292–93  
 inscribed banner (cat. 178), 254–55  
 Madrasa Imami mihrab (cat. 81), 12, 16–17, 89, 124–26  
 saber (cat. 222), 313–14  
 tile from a mihrab (cat. 80), 123–24  
 tombstone of Abu Sa'd ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Hasan Karwahi (cat. 64), 104–5  
 two fragments of a minbar (cat. 65A, B), 87, 102, 105–7  
 Qusair al-Qadim, Egypt, 347  
 Qusayr 'Amra, Jordan, 22  
 Qutb Minar complex, Delhi, 339  
 Qutb Shahi dynasty, 341, 392  
 Rahim Deccani, 384–85  
 Raimondi, Marcantonio, 225  
 Rajasthan, India, 339, 340, 372, 394  
 Rajput dynasties, 11, 17, 339, 340, 341, 356, 362, 370, 372, 384  
 Raj Singh, maharaja of Kishangarh, 363  
 Ramayana, 339, 351, 356–57  
 Ram Das, 401  
 Ranjit Singh, Sikh Maharaja, 398  
 Raphael, 225  
 Raqqa, Syria, 15, 42, 138, 146–49  
 Raqqada, Tunisia, 58  
 Rashid al-Din, 92, 351  
 Rasulid dynasty, 15, 139, 155–56  
 Ravidas, 363  
 Rawdon, Francis, 1st Marquess of Hastings, 342, 401  
 Rayy, Iran, 101, 118  
 Razmnama (Mahabharata), 351, 354  
 reception room (qia; cat. 238), 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 288, 306, 333–37, see also Damascus Room  
 Red Fort, Agra, 340, 369–70  
 Ribat Sayyidna 'Uthman, Medina, 63  
 Riza-yi 'Abbasi, 219, 223, 224, 225, 226  
 Robinson, B. W., 212  
 Roland, epic hero, 55  
 Roman Empire, 20–23, 36–38, 44, 54, 70, 78, 94, 165, 235

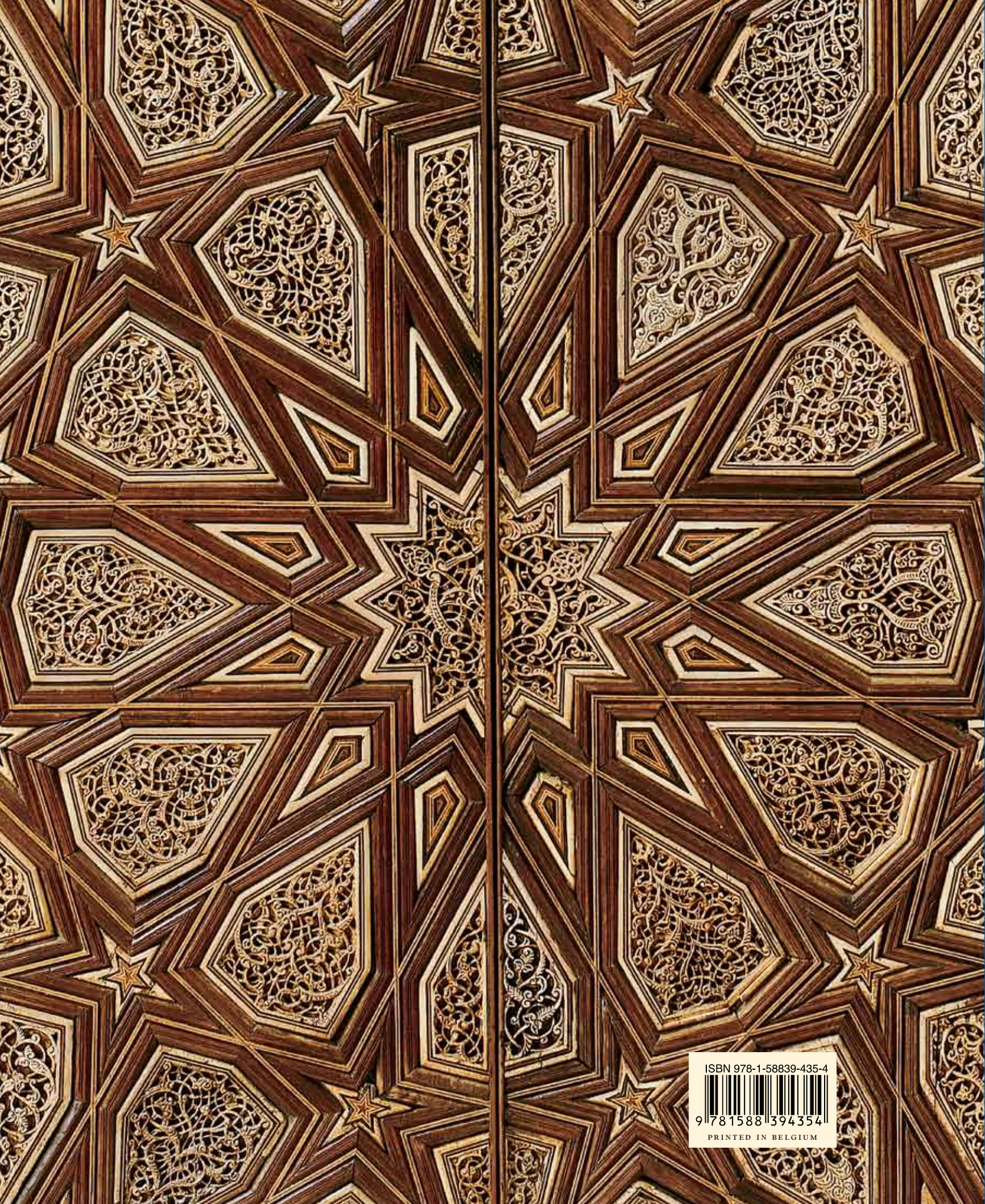
- Rorimer, James, 7  
 "Rose and the Nightingale, The" (Fazli), 306  
 roundels, calligraphic (cat. 278A, B), 8,  
**390–92**  
 Roxburgh, David, 223  
 rugs, *see* carpets and rugs  
*Rukmini mangala*, 363  
 Rukn-i 'Alam, 345  
 Rusafa, Iraq, 149  
 Russia, Russian, 26, 30, 253, 259, 282, 284,  
 288, 340  
 Russian Orthodox Church, 288  
 Rustem Pasha Mosque, Istanbul, 302, 308
- Sabzavar, Iran, 172, 240, 257  
 Sabz Pushan, Iran, 16  
 Sa'd al-Din Savaji, 92  
*sadeli* (micromosaic), 341, 379–80  
 Sa'di, 180, 199–200, 238, 360  
 Sadiqi Beg, 223, 224  
 Safavid dynasty, 16, 16, 17, 171–73, 188,  
 190, 191, 194–95, 197, 199, 203,  
 205, 208, 209, 212, 214, 215,  
 217–26, 229–32, 234–35, 238, 240,  
 242, 244, 247–49, 253, 257–58,  
 263, 267, 271, 273, 275–77, 280,  
 286, 312, 339, 340, 341, 367, 380,  
 384  
 Saffarid dynasty, 49  
 Safi al-Din, Shaikh, 229  
 Safi, Safavid Shah, 221, 225, 229  
*safina* (cat. 126), **187–88**, 192  
 Sahak I, Armenian patriarch, 251  
 Sahasmal, maharaja of Kishangarh, 363  
 Saint Laurent, B., 90  
 St. Petersburg Album, 272, 274, 275  
*sajjada* (prayer carpets), 333  
 Salah al-Din Ayyub (Saladin), 116, 137  
 al-Salih Najm al-Din Ayyub, sultan, 138  
 Salim, Mughal prince, 356  
 Samanid dynasty, 16, 86, 101, 108–10  
 Samanid mausoleum, Bukhara, 86  
 Samarqand, 26, 101, 102, 104, 108, 110–13,  
 170, 175, 192, 307  
 Samarra, Iraq, 15, 23, 35, 38, 39, 42, 44,  
 45–46, 54, 101, 110, 159, 324  
 Sam Mirza, 202, 206  
 Sana'a, Yemen, 25, 43, 52, 156  
 Sana'i, 118, 214  
 Sang-i Dalan palace, Motijhil, 401  
*sanjak* banners, 299, 327  
 Sanjar Shah, 138  
 Sari, Iran, 275  
 Sasanian Empire, 15, 20–21, 22, 23, 28, 29,  
 30, 32–33, 40, 44, 47, 54, 101, 102,  
 112, 126, 183–84, 208  
 Sassetti, Filippo, 389  
*saz* (*hatayi*) style, 16, 225, 287, 290–92,  
 294, 308, 331  
 Seley, Louis E., 8  
 Seley Carpet (cat. 185), 8, 16, **265–66**, 373  
 Selimiye Complex, Edirne, 285, 288  
 Seljuq dynasty, 16, 51, 86, 102, 105, 106,  
 113, 114, 118, 127, 129, 131, 171,  
 233, 285, 311  
 Sena, 363  
 Sena dynasty, Bengal, 344  
 Sephardic Jews, 333  
*seraser* (*taqueté*), 316, 318  
 Seydi 'Ali Reis, 340  
 Seyller, John, 184  
 Shaanxi Province, China, 39  
 Shah-i Zinda, Samarqand, 192–93  
 Shah Jahan, Mughal emperor, 183, 184, 273,  
 340, 358–62, 365, 369, 372, 374–75  
 Shah Nafa, 344  
*Shahnama* (Book of Kings; Firdausi), 89, 112,  
 114–15, 133, 185, 226, 228–29,  
 244  
 double-page folio (cat. 144), **217–18**  
 folio from the Great Mongol *Shahnama*  
 (cat. 57), 89, **96–97**, 134, 328,  
 330  
 folios, cat. 58, 89, **97–98**; cat. 140, **212**;  
 cat. 154, **228–29**  
 seven folios from Shah Tahmasp's *Shahnama*  
 (cat. 138A–G), 7, 17, 172, **202–8**,  
 209, 222, 255  
 two folios (cat. 239A, B), 4, 339, **343–44**  
 Shah Qulu, 286–87, 290–92  
 Shah Rukh, Timurid sultan, 171, 196  
 Shaibanid dynasty, 171, 172  
 Shaikh 'Abbasi, 272, 385  
 Shaikhi Naqqash, 178  
 Shaikh Muhammad, 214  
 Shaikh Muhammad Amir of Karayya, 342,  
 402–3  
 Shaikhet Sarai, Hyderabad, 392  
 Shaikh Zain al-Din, 401  
 Shajar al-Durr, 138  
*shamsa*, 360  
 Shani, Raya, 203  
 Shapur I, Sasanian emperor, 20  
 Shaikh Luftallah Mosque, Isfahan, 170  
 Shi'i, shi'a, 23, 108, 137, 172, 195, 197,  
 203, 210, 216, 238, 241, 242, 300,  
 327, 341, 381, 392  
 Shiraz, Iran, 6, 171–173, 179, 184, 185,  
 217–18, 278, 280, 288, 339, 343, 356  
 Shiruya, Sasanian king, 208  
 Shirvan dynasty, 193  
 Shuja' al-Dula, nawab of Avadh, 364  
 Sicily, 54, 55, 69, 77  
 Sidi Sayyid Mosque, Ahmadabad, 339  
 signal horns (oliphants), 54–55, 67  
 cat. 38, 54, **69–70**, 137  
 signet ring (cat. 134), 175, 195, **196–97**  
 Sikandar, Bijapur sultan, 380  
 Sikandar Lodi, sultan of Delhi, 344  
 Sikh empire, 398  
 Sikhs, 342, 398  
 Silk Road, 26, 47, 134  
 Simonetti Carpet (cat. 116), 7, 140, **168–69**  
 Sims, Eleanor, 185  
 Sinan, Ottoman architect, 287–88  
 Sind Province, Pakistan, 23, 339, 346, 378  
 Sinjar, Iraq, 158  
 Siraj al-Husaini (Ya'qub ibn Hasan), 184–85  
*Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar*, 50  
 Sistan, 129  
 Sita Ram, Indian painter, 342, 401–3  
 Siyavush, 212  
*Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet; Darir),  
 289–90  
 Skelton, Robert, 272  
 Soghdiana, 28, 30, 102, 129  
 Solomon (*Surat al-Nam*), 314  
 Soucek, Priscilla, 2, 86  
 Soudavar, Abolala, 216, 219  
 Spain, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 16, 21, 23, 24,  
 27, 53, 58, 61, 67, 74–78, 80, 83,  
 84, 105, 333  
 Sri Lanka, 338  
 stand for a Qur'an manuscript (*rahla*; cat. 66),  
**107–8**  
 Strzygowski, Josef, 5  
 sufi, sufism, 92, 120, 172, 190, 197, 214,  
 243, 296, 339, 352, 381  
 Sulaiman, Safavid shah, 235, 271  
 Süleyman I, "the Magnificent," Ottoman  
 sultan, 16, 286, 290, 312–14  
 mosque complex of, 287–88  
*tughra* of (cat. 205), 286, **294–95**  
 Sultan 'Ali al-Mashhadi, 187, 188–90, 192,  
 199  
 Sultanate period, India, 11, 15, 17, 339, 341,  
 344, 385  
 Sultan Hasan, Mamluk ruler, 138, 139  
 Sultan Husain I, Safavid shah, 191, 273  
 Sultan Muhammad, 9, 172, 202, 203–5, 214,  
 249  
 Sultan Muhammad Nur, 187, 197, 199  
 Sunni Muslims, 108, 137, 172, 195, 197,  
 299–300, 381  
*Surat al-Fath* ("Victory"), 272, 314  
*Surat al-Yasin*, 272  
 Syria, 2, 11, 13, 15, 21, 22, 27, 39, 42, 47,  
 53–55, 86, 116–17, 122, 134,  
 136–38, 142, 143, 146, 152, 155,  
 158–62, 165–66, 169, 170, 310, 334
- Tabriz, Iran, 92, 121, 151, 171, 172,  
 178–80, 202, 203, 205, 206, 244,  
 249, 257, 286, 288, 289, 307, 312  
*tafsir*, 296  
 Tahir, 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi, 118, *see*  
 also Abu Tahir  
 Tahirid dynasty, 100  
 Tahmasp, Safavid shah, 17, 172–73, 202–3,  
 205–8, 209, 212, 214, 222, 244,  
 247, 255, 263  
 Taj Mahal, Agra, 338, 340, 370  
 Takht-i Sulaiman, Iran, 97, 121, 122  
 Takrit, Iraq, 44, 45  
 Tamil language, 347  
 Tang dynasty, China, 33  
*Tarikh-i jahangusha-yi khaqan sahibqiran*  
 (History of the World-Conquering  
 Lord of the Fortunate Conjunction),  
 229  
 Tarim Basin, 195  
 Tehran, Iran, 30, 93, 127, 174, 186, 255,  
 278–79  
 Tell Minis ware, 146–47  
 Tellya-Shaikh Mosque, Tashkent, 26  
 Tepe Madrasa, Nishapur, 100, 101, 126  
 Tetouan, Morocco, 83  
 textiles:  
 bed cover or wall hanging (fragment;  
 cat. 266), **377–78**  
 child's coat (cat. 284), **399–400**  
 coat (cat. 197), **281–82**  
 cope (cat. 175), **251–53**  
 cover (cat. 233), **327–28**  
 cover (*palampore*; cat. 281), 341, **396–97**  
 fragments, cat. 24, **46–47**; cat. 25, **47–48**;  
 cat. 47, **80**; cat. 48, **81–82**;  
 cat. 49, **82–83**; cat. 89, **134–35**;  
 cat. 115, **166–67**; cat. 168,  
**244–45**; cat. 169, **244–45**;  
 cat. 173, **249–50**; cat. 176, **253**;  
 cat. 243, **347–48**  
 fragment of a kaftan back (cat. 225), 287,  
**316**, 318  
 fragments (vestments of Saint Valerius;  
 cat. 46A–C), 55, **78–80**  
 hanging (*arid*; cat. 50), **83–84**  
 hanging (cat. 279), 341, **392–94**  
 hanging with design of a prayer niche  
 (cat. 283), **398–99**  
 hip wrapper (*sarung*; cat. 289), **404–5**  
*ikat*, 52, 281–82  
 inscribed banner (cat. 178), **254–55**  
 kaftan back (cat. 227), **319**  
 length of fabric (cat. 228), 287, **320–21**  
 panel with lattice pattern (cat. 170),  
**246**  
 panel with rows of flowers (cat. 260),  
**370–71**  
 panel with scene of horseman and  
 prisoner (cat. 171), 172, **247**  
 sash with five flowering plants (cat. 177),  
**253–54**  
 silk banner (*sanjak*; cat. 232), **326–27**  
 storage bag (*chuval*) faces (cat. 198A, B),  
**282–83**  
 tent panel (cat. 280), **394–95**  
 textile fragment with figural scenes and  
 poetic inscriptions (cat. 172),  
**248–49**  
 three textile fragments with ogival  
 patterns (cat. 229A–C), **322–23**  
*tiraz*, 5, 15, 22–24, 49, 50, 55, 80, 102,  
 137, 143, 146  
*tiraz* textile fragments, cat. 26, **48–49**;  
 cat. 27, **49–50**; cat. 29, **52**  
 two fragments (cat. 242A, B), **346–47**  
 two fragments of Ottoman silk  
 (cat. 226A, B), 316, **317–18**  
 velvet cushion cover (*yastik*; cat. 231),  
**325**  
 velvet fragment (cat. 230), **324–25**  
 velvet fragment with falconer (cat. 174),  
**250**  
 waist sash (*putka*; cat. 261), **372**  
*see also* carpets and rugs
- throne leg in the shape of a griffin (cat. 4),  
**28**  
 Tiberias, Israel, 50  
 Tibet, 328, 330, 348  
 Tihama, Yemen, 156  
 tiles:  
 cat. 76, **117–19**; cat. 77, **120**; cat. 78, 89,  
**121**; cat. 130, **192–93**; cat. 216,  
**307–8**  
 ceramic tile with *saz* leaves (cat. 217),  
 287, **308**  
 Madrasa Imami *mihrab* (cat. 81), 12,  
 16–17, 89, **124–26**  
 panel of four calligraphic tiles (cat. 42),  
**74**  
 panel of underglaze-painted tiles (cat.  
 219), **310–11**  
 tile from a *mihrab* (cat. 80), **123–24**  
 tile panel (cat. 98), **150–51**  
 tile panel (cat. 162), 173, **235–36**  
 Topkapı Palace panel, 287  
 two ceramic tiles (cat. 218A, B), **309**  
 two star-shaped tiles (cat. 43A, B), **74–75**  
 two tiles from Multan (cat. 241A, B),  
**345–46**  
 Timur (Tamerlane), 170, 171, 175, 184–85,  
 191, 192, 351  
 Timurid dynasty, 14, 16, 16, 134, 170–71,  
 172, 175, 176, 183–85, 187, 190,  
 192–96, 197, 198, 199, 202, 203,  
 214, 216, 289, 307, 324, 339, 340,  
 343, 368  
*tiraz* textiles, *see* textiles, *tiraz*  
*tombak*, 314–15  
 tombstone of Abu Sa'd ibn Muhammad ibn  
 Ahmad ibn al-Hasan Karwaih  
 (cat. 64), 87, **104–5**  
 Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, 286, 287, 292,  
 294, 296, 298, 305, 309, 311–13,  
 316, 318  
 Topkapı Palace Library, Istanbul, 91, 134,  
 178, 180, 182, 218  
 Transoxiana, 110, 170, 172  
 tray stand (cat. 105), 139, **156–57**  
 Tughlaqabad Fort, 339  
*tughras*, 286, 294, 299, 339, 344, 360  
*tughra* of Süleyman the Magnificent  
 (cat. 205), 16, 286, **294–95**  
 Tulunid dynasty, 163  
 Tumanba Khan, 351  
 Tunisia, 22, 44, 54, 58, 61, 64, 137  
 Turkestan, 2, 26, 182, 368  
 Turkey, 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15–16, 84, 86,  
 172, 209, 253, 254, 265, 286,  
 288–90, 292, 294, 296, 310, 327,  
 331, 333, 340, 341, 389, 392  
*see also* Ottoman Empire  
 Turkmen, 9, 16, 171–72, 185, 193, 202,  
 204–6, 222, 247, 275, 281–84, 286,  
 289, 312, 339  
 Tutinama, 354  
 Twelver Shi'ism, 172, 242
- Uljaytu, Ilkhanid ruler, 92  
 Ulugh Beg, Timurid sultan, 171, 175, 194,  
 195, 196  
 'Umar, caliph, 108  
 'Umar Aqta', 175–76  
 'Umar ibn Yusuf (al-Ashraf), Rasulid prince,  
 158  
 Umayyad dynasty, 15, 21, 22–23, 31–33,  
 47, 49, 53–55, 58, 68, 72, 102, 128,  
 339  
 Umayyad Mosque (Great Mosque) of  
 Damascus, 22, 25, 27, 54, 142, 151,  
 333  
 Umm al-Rasas, Jordan, 21  
 Upton, Joseph M., 6  
 Ushak Province, Turkey, 286, 288, 330–31  
 'Uthman, caliph, 21, 63, 108, 200  
 Uzbeks, Uzbekistan, 86, 172, 192–93, 199,  
 219, 247, 284
- Valerian, Roman emperor, 20  
 Valerius, Saint, 78



- Valle, Pietro della, 235  
 Varamin, Iran, 118  
 Venice, Italy, 280, 288, 330  
 vessels:  
   beaker (cat. 18), **40–41**  
   ceramic spouted jug (cat. 209), **299–301**  
   ceramic vessel in the shape of a mosque  
     lamp (cat. 208), 286, **299–300**  
   elephant-shaped water jar (*kendi*;  
     cat. 156), **230–31**  
   ewers, cat. 5, **29–30**; cat. 7, **31**  
   *huqqa* (water pipe) base (cat. 274), 341, **386**  
   jugs, cat. 82, **126**; cat. 132, 171, **194–95**,  
     197  
   Marwan ewer, 21, 31  
   reticulated jug (cat. 73), **115–16**  
   storage jar (*albarello*; cat. 79), **122**
- Vienna, Austria, 5, 162, 180, 244, 258, 259,  
 261, 319, 349  
 Vijayanagara Empire, 341  
 Virgin Mary (Madonna), 153, 251  
 Visigoths, 54
- al-Walid ibn 'Abd al-Malik, 22, 32, 33  
 Wali Quli Shamlu, 226  
 Walker, Daniel, 8  
 Wantage Album, 358  
 Wardwell, Anne, 134  
 Watson, Oliver, 234  
 Welch, Stuart Cary, 8–9, 203, 205, 206,  
 208, 209, 214, 222  
 Whelan, Estelle, 27  
 Wilkinson, Charles K., 6, 7, 49  
 Wolf Foundation, 8, 9
- Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China,  
 195, 284
- Ya'qub Aq Quyunlu, sultan, 178  
 Yaqut al-Musta'simi, 292  
 Yarkand, China, 195, 196, 368  
 Yar Muhammad, 243  
*al-Yatima*, 54  
 Yazd, Iran, 87, 104–6, 246, 253, 257  
 Yazdi, Sharaf al-din 'Ali, 184–85  
 Yemen, 15, 23, 43, 52, 137, 139, 155, 156,  
 158–59  
 Yeni Valide Mosque, Istanbul, 325  
 Yohannan, Abraham, 4  
 Yomud Turkmen, 282  
 Yuan dynasty, China, 34, 95, 121, 178  
 Yusuf, Bijapur sultan, 381
- Yusuf Gardizi, 345  
 Yusuf III, sultan of Granada, 75
- Zafarnama* (Book of Victory; Yazdi;  
 cat. 124A, B), **184–85**  
 Zain al-'Abidin al-Tabrizi, 188  
 Zaman, Muhammad, 240, 271–72, 275,  
 277  
 Zand dynasty, 173–74, 275  
 Zanj rebellion, 49  
 Zarin Qalam (Muhammad Husain Kashmiri),  
 352–53  
*ziliq* tiles, 13, 74  
 Zoroastrianism, 21, 203







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