



When you first visit the Islamic galleries, which will open early in October, you will see one of the Museum's most exciting and varied collections. Produced over a huge area – Spain to India – for a dozen centuries, this material ranges from monumental architectural elements such as a richly paneled room to jewelry of exquisite fineness. The traditional delights of European art, easel paintings and sculpture, were curtailed in Islam by religious limitations on figural imagery; instead, the Islamic artist lavished his creativity on the decorative arts and became a master of decorative patterns of an extraordinary, dense, controlled richness.

But there is an intriguing phenomenon connected with this decoration: you may often find that an object's first impression gives way to a second, almost contradictory, one. For instance, close inspection can reveal that a carpet's bold and angular geometry depicts a garden lush with flowerbeds and fish-filled watercourses; another carpet's teeming animal population can freeze into the most formal of mirror-image designs. Look carefully at one of the ubiquitous star patterns: chances are that as you trace it outward, it blossoms into more and more elaborate shapes; as you follow it inward, it seems to dissolve into a network of simple, elegant forms. Patterns become alive; life becomes geometry: this play with shifting perceptions lends an extraordinary visual excitement to Islamic decoration.

The Islamic artist brought the same kind of subtlety to his book illustrations, and miniatures are a special highlight of this collection. Search out the details that underscore a composition's theme: while a king slays a monster, an observer calms his understandably skittish horse with a gentle hand on its mane; in the background of a funeral scene, a snake ominously slithers toward a bird's nest high in a tree.

The opening of these galleries is an important step in the progress of the Metropolitan Museum's comprehensive architectural plan, which includes not only new structures but the improvement and modernization of areas such as this. We had experimented with many of the innovations in previous, smaller exhibitions, which served as a "dry run" for new display ideas, and the installation has been carefully worked out to make an enormous variety of material both understandable and interesting; one of my favorite galleries, for example, contains areas where you can pull up a chair and study miniatures in comfort and at leisure.

This grand project could not have been achieved without Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., former President and Chairman of the Board of the Museum. Mr. Houghton, who has given the Metropolitan many miniatures from his famous *Shah-nameh* – one of the supreme collections of Islamic painting – has, as well, underwritten the major costs of this permanent installation.

The Islamic galleries provide visual pleasure of the simplest sort, and of the most sophisticated. When you go through them, I urge you to take enough time to savor the depth of visual experience that these dazzling works offer.

Thomas Hoving
Director

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

Spring 1975

Volume XXXIII, Number 1

Published quarterly. Copyright © 1975 by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue and 82 Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscriptions \$11.50 a year. Single copies \$2.95. Sent free to Museum members. Four weeks' notice required for change of address. Back issues available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 313 N. First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Volumes I-XXXVIII (1905-1942) available as a clothbound reprint set or as individual yearly volumes from Arno Press, 330 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, or from the Museum, Box 255, Gracie Station, New York, N.Y. 10028. Editor of the *Bulletin*: Katharine H. B. Stoddert; Associate Editor: Joan K. Holt. Art Director: Stuart Silver. Design: G. Woodford Pratt.

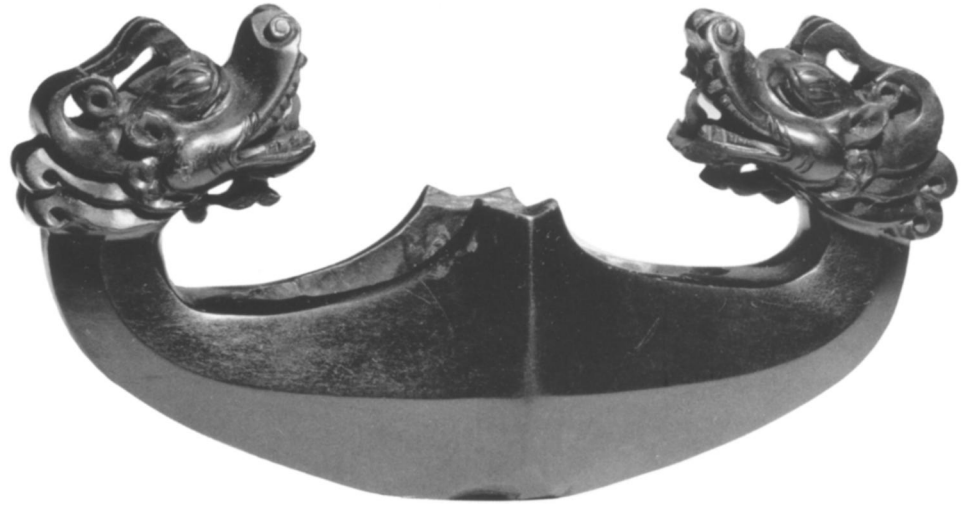
1

Islamic Art

This bronze throne leg shaped like the forepart of a griffin represents a Muslim continuation of a pre-Islamic tradition with a long history in the Near East: the identification of powerful, winged animals—real and imaginary—with the ruler. The griffin was a hybrid of two solar symbols, the lion and the eagle, and was seen as a vehicle of ascension, implying the ruler's semidivinity and his apotheosis. Although only a few actual examples survive, throne legs in the form of eagles, winged horses, and the forepart of griffins are often represented in Sasanian and Islamic art. The symbolic association with the ruler and more particularly with his throne has become manifest in this majestic example.

Iran, late 7th–early 8th century; h. 22⁷/₁₆ in.; Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1971.143.



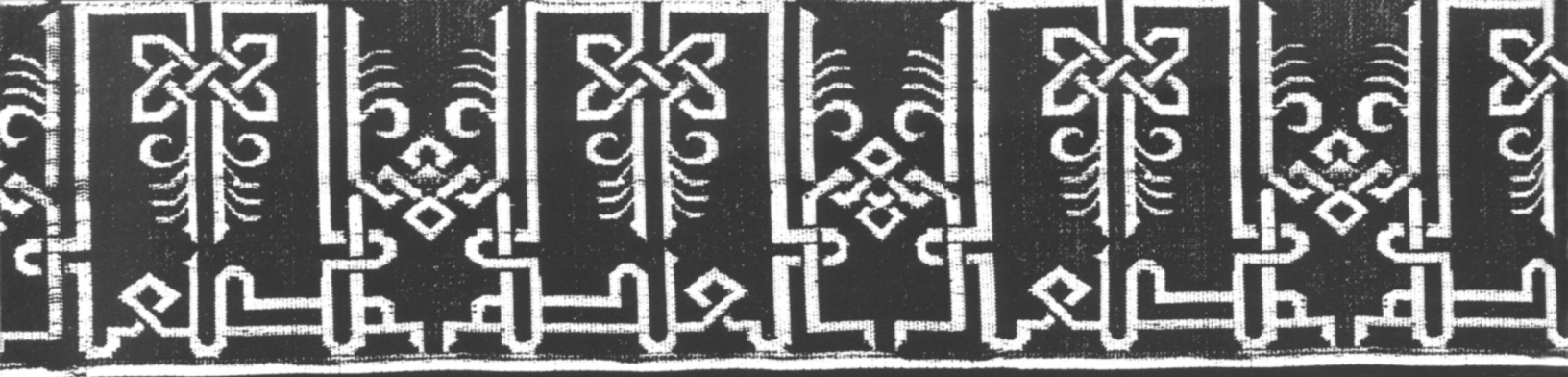


Many people envision Islamic art in terms of sumptuously elaborate decoration or delicately detailed miniature paintings. Rarer is the realization of the skill and sensitivity of the Islamic artist in the creation of three-dimensional or sculptural objects such as those shown here.

The sophisticated use of changing planes in the dagger hilt above attests to a high degree of artistic achievement, as well as the virtuosity that went into carving its hard, dark green jade. In the stylization of the dragon heads, which emphasizes their vitality, this 15th-century Persian piece has little in common with the soft sinuousness of the ultimate Chinese prototype.

Striking is the proud fierceness of the bird of prey shown at the left. Its success as a sculptural form is not diminished by the perforations, necessitated by its function as the upper half of a cast-bronze incense burner, and the star-shaped sun disk on the chest enhances its solar symbolism.

Nephrite handle: Iran, 15th century; l. 4½ in.; Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 02.18.765. Incense burner: Iran, 12th-13th century; h. 3¼ in.; Gift of Richard S. Perkins, 69.2.1.



Islamic art is one of the finest manifestations of Islamic civilization. Happily there is no language barrier, as in the case of the various Islamic literatures—primarily those written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish—nor is there the necessity of adjusting to different harmonies and tonal quality as in Near Eastern music. It is not even necessary to be familiar with a complex theology or elaborate symbolism to enjoy this sumptuously decorative art. Its immediate aesthetic appeal is the main reason why this art has always been readily acceptable to Westerners.

Islamic art was created in the enormous area between Morocco and Spain in the West, and Central Asia and India in the East, and it even goes beyond this frontier. Chronologically it covers the period from about 700 to the 18th and 19th centuries, when European modes of artistic creation greatly changed the indigenous arts and crafts. The first important creative centers were greater Syria, Egypt, and Iran with its Central Asian hinterland, and much of the later development owes its character to the art of these regions, with their classical, Byzantine, Coptic, and Sasanian heritage.

At first, under the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus and the early Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, Islamic art had an ecumenical character; but from about 750 on, the enormous realm of the caliphate started to break up, a political disintegration that accelerated in the course of the 9th century and continued at an ever more rapid pace in the next three and a half centuries. The universal caliphate came to an end when the Mongols conquered Baghdad in 1258 and abolished the Abbasid rule. Ever since then the Muslim world has been divided into various regional entities, of which Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and India were the more important parts.

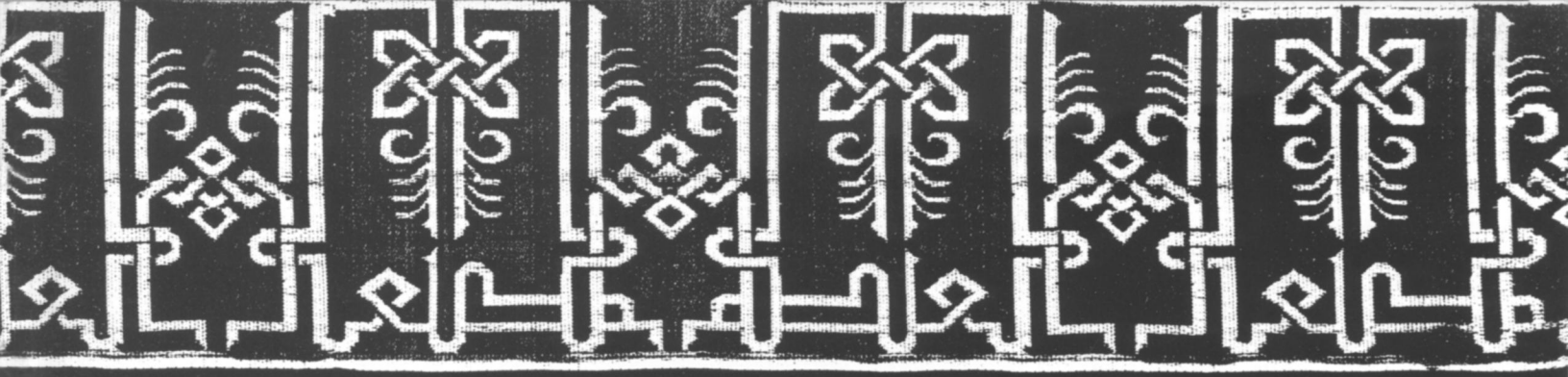
The characteristic aspect of Islamic art is its overall unity, while presenting a great deal of variety according to regional preferences during successive periods. The forces that molded this cultural identity were a universal religion, an autocratic form of government, the effects of a harsh environment and climate, and a uniformity of life style—especially the vitally important fact that there was hardly any differentiation between religious and secular areas, including the arts. In addition, there existed a great inner mobility, allowing the imposition of dynasties from different regions, the migration of large ethnic units, and the extensive transfer of artists and artisans from court to court. Caravans and ships distributed merchandise throughout this vast area, encouraging local imitations. The religious obligation to visit the central shrine of the Ka'ba in Mecca in Arabia at least once in one's lifetime also greatly contributed to a dissemination of ideas.

No single force affected the formation of Islamic art as much as the attitudes engendered by the religion of Islam itself. Although no official code was formulated with regard to artistic activities, certain principles were developed. The Prophet Muhammad regarded himself as an ordinary human being, so the most important religious motif was the divine message embodied in the language of the Koran. This caused the extensive use of pertinent Koranic sentences as decorative elements, as well as other religious and secular phrases. Since the Arabic alphabet was the universally used form of writing, and since its letters easily allowed artful variations, inscriptions were nearly always calligraphically composed. They therefore came to constitute a special Islamic art form that is applied not only to buildings but to every available medium.

As Islam was strictly monotheistic, no religious representational imagery developed, and artists were restricted to the use of many skillful variations of innocuously stylized plants or geometrical forms, particularly continuous star patterns, which usually appear in combination or conjunction with Arabic writing. A special Islamic creation was the arabesque, which consists of a succession of highly abstract leaves or half leaves, applied to gracefully winding stems. Their playful arrangement could fill any surface elegantly, no matter how large, small, or oddly shaped.

This restricted repertory influenced the secular arts as well. When they employed figures of animals or, more rarely, human beings (that is, outside the field of book illustrations), they usually rendered them in an abstract or two-dimensional fashion. The same applies to the even more infrequent use of sculpture, whose creation was mostly due to persisting pre-Islamic traditions or foreign influences. Naturalistic renditions of plants and animals, together with a greater realism in the portrayal of animal and human figures, appeared only from the 16th century on, especially in Iranian and Mughal Indian textiles and carpets and on Ottoman Turkish pottery, tiles, and fabrics.

Since there existed only a very limited range of the figural arts—which have been more appreciated by Western collectors than by art patrons through most of the Islamic world—the Islamic artist's main energy has not been directed into the two common major categories of painting (particularly murals and easel paintings) and sculpture. Instead, it was funneled into the decorative arts, where all the different media became highly developed. It is hard to say which of these various branches—pottery, tile making, metalwork, glass cutting and enameling, ivory carving, bookbinding, and so on—reached the highest artistic



peak, but the textile crafts—cloth making, carpet knotting, and tapestry weaving—had the widest geographical and artistic range and were economically the most important.

A special delight of viewing a large collection of Islamic art (and that of the Metropolitan Museum is now probably the largest of the comprehensive ones) derives from the fact that not all the arts flourished at the same time and in the same region. As one proceeds from gallery to gallery, a sense of excitement is constantly aroused by the sudden emergence of a medium that in previous periods had hardly been fostered and yet soon reached full artistic maturity.

Richard Ettinghausen
 Consultative Chairman of the
 Department of Islamic Art

The motif above consists of the Arabic word “happiness” (a common formula on Islamic objects) in Kufic script, repeated and alternately reversed. The style is particularly elaborate, with the shafts of the letters interlacing and bending over to form a kind of frame around the word.

From a silk textile: Spain, 15th century; Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 52.20.14.

The cover illustrations come from the Houghton Shah-nameh, whose miniatures are among the greatest masterpieces of Persian painting ever produced: in them the ideals of this exacting art seem to culminate. This manuscript was made for the Safavid ruler of Iran, Tahmasp, a dedicated and sensitive patron of the arts who reigned from 1525 to 1576. Its 258 miniatures include the work of the most distinguished artists of the period and probably took over ten years to complete.

The painting on the front cover presents the ideal king, elegant and assured on a magnificent steed, in daring combat against a monster who combines ferocity with a delightfully decorative appearance. The inside front cover shows Safavid painting at its most lyric, with a graceful youth in an idyllic setting of exquisitely drawn flowering plants and trees and spring-fed streams. Finally, on the back cover appears a love scene that includes, with the special sensitivity of the artists of this manuscript, such charming details as the lovers’ slippers neatly aligned beneath their couch.

Details from a Shah-nameh manuscript with a miniature dated 1527/28 (934 A.H.): Bahram Gur Slays the Rhino-Wolf, and Kay Khosrow Is Discovered by Giv; Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970.301.65,32, fol. 586r, 210v. Ardashir and the Slave Girl Gulnar; Collection of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., fol. 516v.



In many respects, the glass produced by medieval Muslim craftsmen has never been surpassed. These artists continued pre-Islamic glass traditions as well as developing totally new departures for the medium. An example of an ancient technique is the covered bowl at the left: the embedding of glass threads into a glass object and then combing them to form various patterns was popular in Roman times. Islamic artists revived this technique, and the bowl shown here is a particularly large and powerful illustration of this revival.

A completely new technique of glass decoration can be seen in the wide-mouthed beaker with palmette trees in roundels and arcades. It is painted in luster, the iridescent effect resulting from metallic particles fired onto the surface. Probably first used on glass in Egypt, luster painting was also used to decorate ceramics soon after its introduction. This innovation had a permanent influence on the pottery industry in general, passing from Iraq to Egypt, North

Africa, Syria, Iran, and Spain, and from the Islamic world to Italy, England, and America. An example of the earliest type of luster-painted pottery is the bowl illustrated second from the left, with a grid-like decoration imitating the effect of Roman millefiore glass.

Another new glass technique was used to produce the lovely beaker at the right, whose ornament is created by cutting away the whole outer surface except for the design, which is then in relief.

Covered bowl: Syria or Egypt, 13th-14th century; h. 7 in.; Purchase, Funds from various donors, 26.77. Luster-painted ceramic bowl: Iraq, 9th century; Rogers Fund, 52.114. Luster-painted beaker: Egypt or Iraq, 9th century; 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. Francis E. Keally, Hess Foundation, Mehdi Mahboubian, and Mr. and Mrs. Bruce J. Westcott, 1974.74. Relief-cut beaker: Iran or Iraq, late 9th century; Rogers Fund and Jack A. Josephson, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Balamuth, and Mr. and Mrs. Alvin W. Pearson Gifts, 1974.45.





Throughout the first Islamic centuries, the classical design of vine leaves and grapes continued to be the most popular decorative motif, but when Samarra on the Tigris became the temporary capital of the caliphate in the 9th century, a different, abstract pattern was suddenly employed. This pattern consists of forms created by curving lines, often in the shape of an S but also round, comma-like, or lyre-shaped. Each unit is beveled toward the line dividing the various parts of the design, so an undulating, sculptural surface resulted. In this so-called beveled style, the negative background is as important as the

positive design, and thus this kind of decoration is interesting on both large and small areas.

The technique was probably derived from carved wood or stone pieces, which might also have served as molds for large stucco panels or ceramics. But this style could easily be adapted to other techniques, as shown by the three examples below: a delicate pottery bowl covered with thick, creamy glaze; a repoussé bottle of partially gilded silver, and a dramatic dish on which the design becomes a purely linear pattern, boldly painted in red and black.

There has been extensive scholarly debate as to where the beveled style

originated. The Turkish regions in Central Asia as well as Byzantine, Coptic, and Migration arts have all been considered as a source. Recently it has been established that the style had long existed in Sasanian art, and suddenly spread from Iran and Iraq to other parts of the caliphate, particularly Egypt and Central Asia. The heyday of the style was in the 9th century, but it occurred in more elaborate versions until the 14th century.

Bowl: Iran, 12th century; h. 5½ in.; Purchase, Mrs. Samuel B. Grimson Gift, 1970.25. Dish: West Turkestan, 10th century; Rogers Fund, 28.82. Bottle: Iran, 8th century; Purchase, Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 69.224.

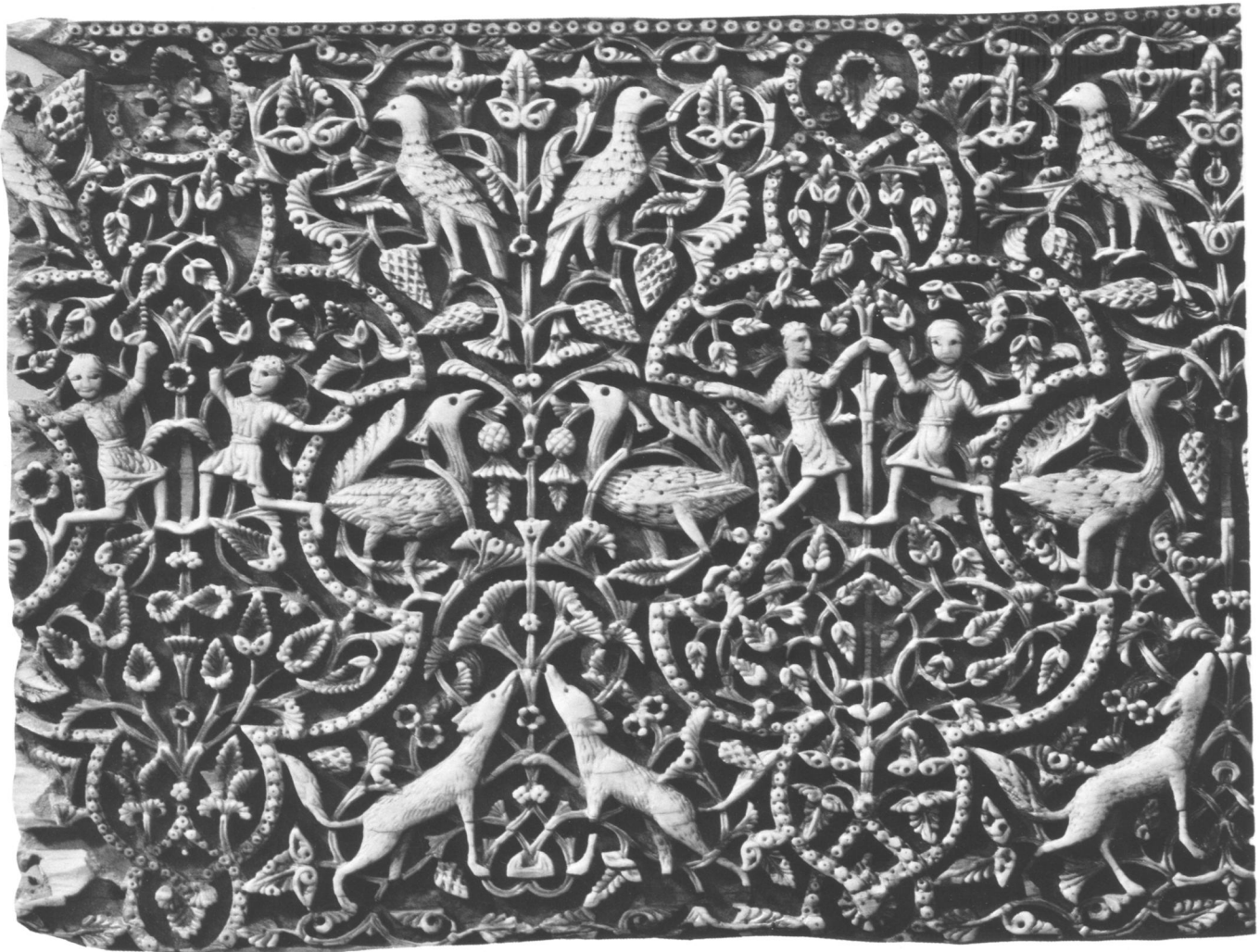


This charming plaque belongs to a group of ivories made in Spain during the reign of the Umayyad house. This dynasty ruled from Damascus between 661 and 750 and, when it was overthrown by the Abbasids, its sole survivor escaped to Spain. There he founded a new dynasty in 756, which lasted until 1031.

These ivories are among the Spanish Umayyad dynasty's most outstanding extant artistic achievements. Many are inscribed, so we know that most of them were made for the royal family or its entourage, and also that many were made in the capital, Cordova, or the nearby town of Madinat az-Zahra, the royal residence.

Because of this dynasty's Syrian roots, it is not surprising that many of the motifs found on these ivories can be traced back to that area. The leaf arabesques seen here are a stylized version of the vine and acanthus scroll so popular in late antique ornament, while prototypes for the animated figures can be found on early Islamic Syrian or Egyptian textiles, where birds, animals, and human beings of similar character are also paired on either side of stylized trees. Indeed, the influence of textiles in general can be seen in the overall design of this piece, in the way the decoration is repeated without change in alternating panels.

Plaque: Spain, 11th century; l. 8 in.; John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 13.141.



The school of art centered in Egypt during the reign of the Fatimids from Cairo (969-1171) is noted for a surprising increase in the use of human and animal motifs. They can be found on virtually all media, and in addition to their ubiquitousness when compared to earlier periods, the animals and figures now appear to be more alive and less spineless than their predecessors. The decoration on the deeply carved “oliphant” (a horn of ivory) comprises a veritable encyclopedia of creatures popular at the time. This piece was made in southern Italy, and exemplifies the important role played by Fatimid artists in the art of neighboring countries.

In addition to the introduction of new motifs to the iconographic repertory, this period is also noted for a high level of craftsmanship. The goldwork is especially fine, with elaborate designs such as those on the pendant above constructed in filigree on a gold grid. The use of crescent-shaped ornaments was borrowed by the Fatimids from Byzantine art, as was the technique of cloisonné enamel (employed here for the birds in the center). This pendant would have been framed by strands of pearls or beads of precious or semiprecious stones, laced through the gold hoops around the edge.

Proof that artists were held in high esteem under the Fatimids is supplied by the number of signed works from this period—a quite sporadic practice until then. This luster-painted bowl with a powerful heraldic eagle bears the artist’s signature beneath the left talon and on the back.

Oliphant: Southern Italy, second half of the 11th century; l. 23 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 04.3.177. Pendant: Egypt, early 12th century; h. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; The Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 30.95.37. Ceramic bowl, signed by Muslim: Egypt, about 1000; d. 10 in.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles K. Wilkinson, 63.178.1.









Now a small town, Nishapur began to assume real importance in the mid-9th century, and in the 10th, 11th, and early 12th centuries it was one of the great cities of the Islamic world. Richest oasis and chief city of the eastern Iranian province of Khorasan, it was a major center of art and learning, both religious and worldly.

The Metropolitan Museum carried out excavations at Nishapur between 1935 and 1939 and again in 1947, under the direction of Walter Hauser, J. M. Upton, and Charles Wilkinson. The finds were divided between the Teheran Museum and the Metropolitan, and include large numbers of objects in many of the materials used in early Islamic art: ceramic, glass, metal, stone, and stucco, as well as wall paintings. They are of the greatest significance for the history of Islamic art up to the 12th century.

Although the material found ranges in date from the 8th through the 12th centuries, it is the art of the 10th century, roughly the period of the rule of the Samanids, that is usually associated with the site. The single most important factor in the artistic fame of 10th-century Nishapur is a series of pottery types found there in great numbers. Among these, some of the finest—and indeed, among Islam’s finest—are the famous slip-painted wares in which elegantly painted Arabic inscriptions make up the main and frequently the sole decoration. The large bowl shown at the upper left is painted in tomato red and brownish black on an off-white ground, and its inscription wishes: “Blessing and beatitude and favor and peace and happiness.” More typical in general style and in the content of its inscription is the black and white plate nearby; it admonishes: “Whoever talks a lot, slips a lot.” One cannot fail to note that the man who designed this piece certainly was not “talking a lot”; its elegant simplicity could hardly be excelled.

Further exemplifying the vital sense of design in 10th-century Nishapur are stucco panels like the one above. Although organized on a rigorous geometry, the decoration exhibits constant variation in details and a playfulness in which, for example, leaves become birds’ heads.

10th-century material from the Museum’s excavations at Nishapur, Iran. Ceramic plates: d. 18 and 10¹/₁₆ in.; Rogers Fund, 40.170.15,25. Stucco panel that flanked a *mihrab* or prayer niche: L. 7 ft. 8³/₈ in.; Rogers Fund, 37.40.40.



Mounted warriors battle their way around the body of the large, colorfully enameled glass bottle at the left. The men wield swords, maces, and spears as well as bows and arrows, and their mounts and costumes are highly detailed. Such representational scenes preserved on medieval minor arts are very important for the history of Islamic painting since, except for fragments and a single, recently discovered early 13th-century manuscript, these scenes provide all we know of early Muslim figural styles. The Islamic artist's affection for arabesque designs is beautifully exhibited by the medallions on the bottle's shoulder, and a fantastic bird of Chinese inspiration curls around the neck.

Bottle: Syria, 14th century; h. 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 41.150.

In the early 13th century, the Mongols swept over northern China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and part of Europe. One branch became the Yüan dynasty of China, and another became rulers of Iran. During the Mongol period, influences from China and Central Asia are frequently reflected in Islamic art.

These small miniatures painted in early 14th-century Iran combine elements of the pre-Mongol painting tradition with innovations brought by the invaders. For example, the upper miniature continues the earlier style in the placement of the figures close to the ground line and in their relatively large size, almost filling the picture space. Some landscape elements, on the other hand, are all part of the new vocabulary: the thickly foliated tree with its split trunk and gnarled bark, the scattered stones along the edge of the carefully defined foreground plane, and the shading of the ripples in the pond.

In the battle scene, the simple ground line, balanced composition, flat planes, stylized fruit tree, and use of gold and silver are all part of the Iranian tradition. The sturdy Mongol ponies, type of armor, floral patterns based on lotus and peony, and pastel coloring place the miniature in the period of Mongol domination. (The ponies on the Mamluk bottle on the opposite page resemble those in the miniature, and the presence of a lotus design and the bird resembling a Chinese phoenix show similar Far Eastern influence, although the Mamluk sultans were never subjected to Mongol rule.)

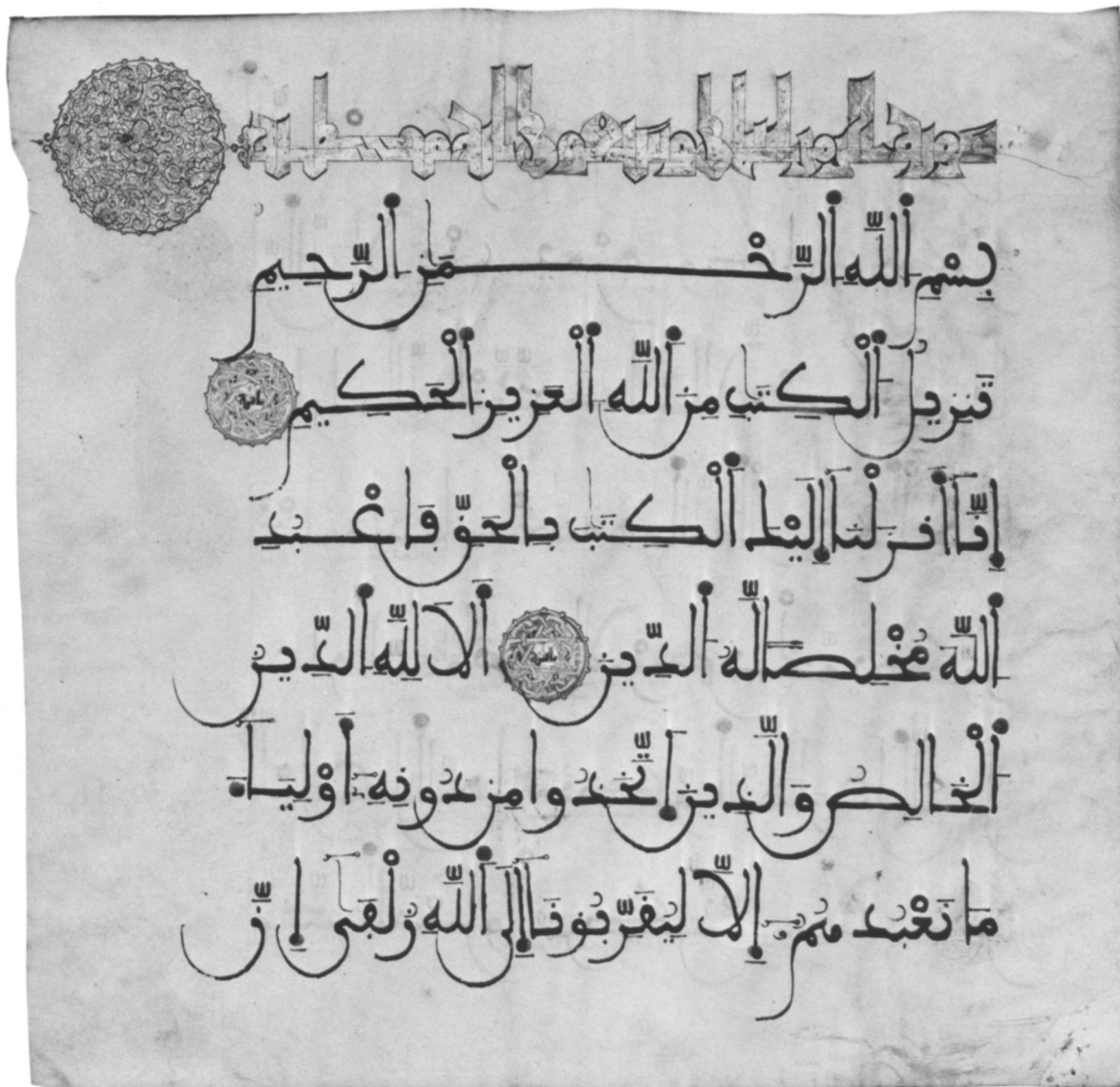
In both miniatures, the Far Eastern innovations are neither slavishly copied nor fully assimilated, but are used by the artist simply to enhance his painting.

Leaves from two *Shah-namehs*. Above: Esfandiyar and the Sorceress; Iran, early 14th century; 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.; Bequest of Monroe C. Gutman, 1974.290.27. Below: Gustaham Kills Lahhak and Farshidvard; Iran, early 14th century; 2 x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 69.74.4.



يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا
يا مومنانا

اللهم اني ارجو ان يكون
سعيي في الدنيا
كسعي في الآخرة
و ان يكون
موتى في الدنيا
موتى في الآخرة
و ان يكون
موتى في الدنيا
موتى في الآخرة



No other script has given rise to such a variety of high-art writing styles as has Arabic. One Persian calligrapher was even said to be able to write in seventy different scripts! This multiplicity, however, can be reduced to two basic categories: the formal scripts, usually called “Kufic” (after the town of Kufa in Iraq, where such script may have first been put to official use), and the cursive scripts.

A handsome example of Kufic from the 9th century — one of Arabic calligraphy’s very finest periods — is the Koran page at the upper left, which typifies how at this time calligraphers masterfully succeeded in giving the text an imposing grandeur. The style’s horizontality, austerity, and shape-consciousness is emphasized by monumental scale: here (and not untypically) the whole top line is formed by a single compound word. Such early calligraphy omits most of the diacritical marks, which differentiate between certain consonants of the same form, further enhancing the stately simplicity.

Although in certain ways self-consciously harking back to the 9th-century style (especially the writing in gold in the margin), the page at the lower left was

probably written in Iran during the 11th century. Typical features of the time and place are the elongated, elegant shafts and their blade-thin “serifs.” This style seems to have developed in the 10th century, and is a major early transformation of the proportions of Kufic writing.

The Islamic West — especially North Africa west of Egypt, or, following the Arabic term, the Maghreb — early on developed its calligraphy independently of the central and eastern Islamic regions. The example above dates from about 1300 and illustrates the retention of such features of 8th- and 9th-century calligraphic style as the peculiarly rounded shapes of some letters and their terminals, the placement of certain diacriticals, and the form of certain vowels. Finally and typically, it is written on parchment, which was supplanted in the East by paper in the 10th century, but seems to have been used for Korans in the Maghreb and Spain at least into the 14th century.

Koran leaves. Upper left: Egypt, 9th century; l. 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.; Gift of Rudolph M. Riefstahl, 30.45. Lower left: Iran, probably 11th century; h. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; Gift of H. K. Kevorkian, 37.111.2. Above: Morocco, about 1300; h. 22 in.; Rogers Fund, 42.63.



To an Iranian, living in a country with vast stretches of arid land and bare mountains, a beautiful garden is even more welcome than a fine house. A deep love of nature is reflected in early Persian poetry, and pleasure pavilions are often mentioned as favorite features in a garden setting. In the 12th and 13th centuries such kiosks were occasionally copied in the form of ceramic taborets, which are flat-topped although the buildings themselves were covered with a dome or a conical roof. The example at the left reflects a two-story hexagonal structure from whose arched niches one contemplated nature and enjoyed the wafting breezes, and yet was sheltered from the burning sun.

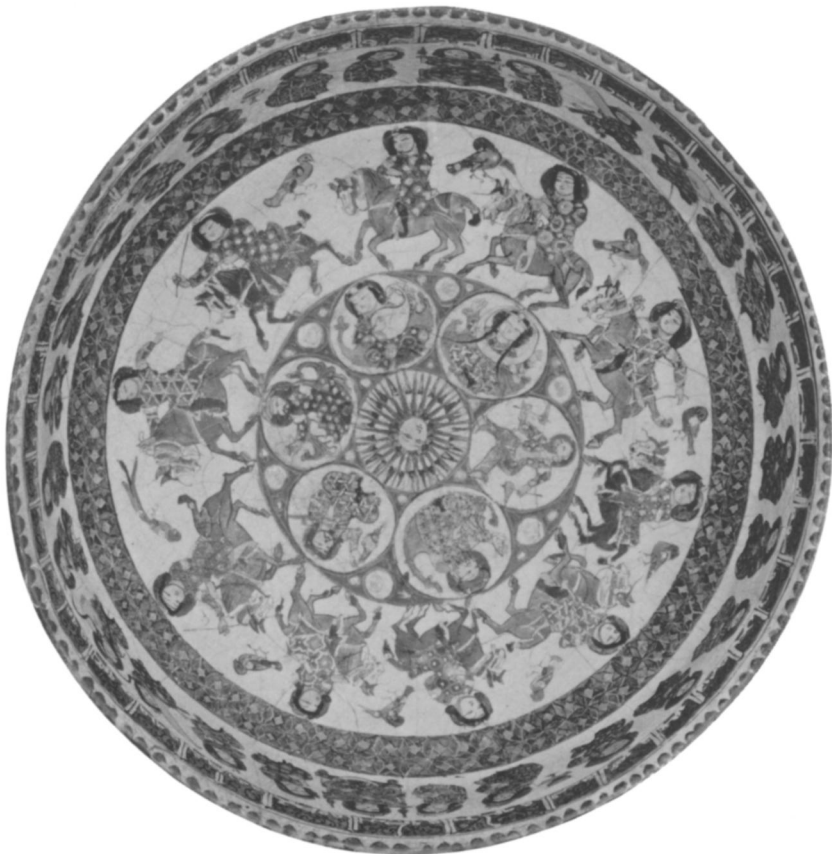
The earliest renditions of gardens in Persian carpets date from the 16th century and are of a formal character. The Museum's version of such an indoor garden dates from about 1800 and has been attributed to Kurdistan or north-



west Iran. It depicts a wide central stream of water intersected by narrower courses, all enlivened by fish that, like the water, are highly stylized. The composition as a whole should be read as two repeats of a garden type called "Four Gardens": at both ends, the center of each unit is the crossing of two watercourses, marked by a tree-studded island. From it large trees jut diagonally into the neighboring squares. Beyond these are more formal units representing an ornamental pool or flowerbeds (four in the center and two at the far right). Flowery paths border the water, and the center of the whole composition is marked by an island without projecting trees. In the carpet, a tripartite floral border takes the place of the high surrounding wall that excluded the dusty, barren outside.

Taboret: Iran, 12th century; h. 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.; Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 69.225. Carpet: Iran, about 1800; l. 18 ft. 3 in.; Gift of William R. Pickering, 67.156.





The human figure, although a subject of controversy, has played a widespread and diversified role throughout the long history of Islamic art. Here, human figures are shown on works from three areas of the Iranian world under the domination of the Seljuq Turks in the 13th century.

The first is a monumental stone tympanum from the Caucasus. The boldness of the relief carving, the naturalness of movement, and the realism of the warrior's accouterments are effectively set off by the decorative approach to details and surface patterns.

In the brightly painted ceramic bowl at the left, an enthroned ruler and his retinue of musicians, attendants, and mounted falconers are treated in a more relaxed and pictorial way. An astrological design—connoting good omens for the owner—dominates the center of the bowl: five planets and



the moon surround a rayed sun.

The ewer on the right—made of brass inlaid with silver, and an exceptionally fine example of this important Islamic technique—also features an astrological design. Its body is divided into twelve lobes, each topped by a pair of crowned harpies. Near the center of each lobe is a medallion enclosing a sign of the zodiac, generally shown with its ruling planet; the other motifs of the intricate decoration seem to reflect and support the astrological theme. Unusual, but popular in this period in eastern Iran, are the bands of cursive inscription on the neck, in which the vertical letters end in human heads.

Tympanum: Daghestan; l. 51 in.; Rogers Fund, 38.96. Bowl: Iran; d. $7\frac{3}{8}$ in.; Rogers Fund and Gift of The Schiff Foundation, 57.36.4. Ewer: Eastern Iran, h. $15\frac{1}{2}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 44.15.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله الذي جعل في كل شيء
دلالة على قدرته وقوته
ويعلم ما لا يعلمون

الحمد لله الذي جعل في كل شيء
دلالة على قدرته وقوته
ويعلم ما لا يعلمون

الحمد لله الذي جعل في كل شيء
دلالة على قدرته وقوته
ويعلم ما لا يعلمون



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



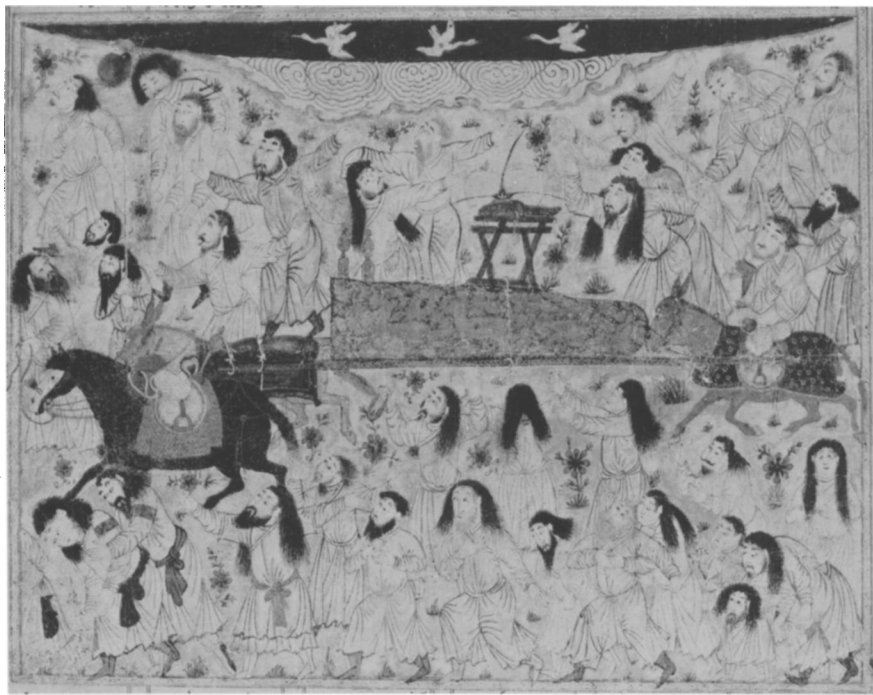
The most important single element in any Muslim house of worship is the *mihrab* or niche that indicates the direction of Mecca. Because it is the focal point in the mosque and in the ritual of prayer, a great deal of attention was devoted to its decoration in most periods and countries throughout the Islamic world. This superb example, from the Madrasa Imami in Isfahan, which was founded in 1354, is completely executed in small pieces of brilliantly glazed ceramic that have been fitted together to form geometric and floral patterns and inscriptions.

The word of God as revealed to his prophet Muhammad is recorded in the Koran, the Muslim holy book. Very large, sumptuous Korans, being too difficult to hold, had special stands built for them. The stand at the right was ordered made for a religious school in 1360 and was executed by a woodworker from Isfahan; its form is derived from a folding chair, and the decoration of the lower section, depicting a niche, is exquisitely carved on three levels.

In the Koran, God's light is likened to "a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, and the glass is as it were a brightly shining star." Because of the vivid simile, this verse was often placed on the richly enameled mosque lamps of the Mamluk period. The one above bears an inscription stating that it was made for the mausoleum of a Mamluk official (died 1285) who had served as bowman to the ruler—thus the meaning of the blazon in the roundels.

Mihrab: Iran; h. 11 ft. 3 in.; Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 39.20. Wooden Koran stand: West Turkestan, signed by Hasan ibn Sulayman; h. 4 ft. 3¼ in.; Rogers Fund, 10.218. Mosque lamp: Syria; h. 10½ in.; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.985.





Sculptural figures were occasionally employed in an architectural context, as guardians of the gate, for example, or in the reception rooms of a palace to symbolize the ruler's personal attendants. Nothing is known of the exact provenance of the little head at the far left, undoubtedly a fragment of a complete sculpture and originally painted. But the Mongolian steppe is alive in every inch of its form, from the fold at the eye, the small features, and the subtle planes of the broad face to the tight-fitting conical cap, with flaps coming down in front of the ear.

The pictures on the left show a miniature from a famous, now dispersed, *Shah-nameh* manuscript made about 1330-1340 in Iran. The man who commissioned it seems to have been particularly impressed by the episodes of the epic that underscore the universality of death and the blows dealt by the hand of fate, since so many of its illustrations concentrate on such scenes.

This miniature depicts the funeral of the young hero Esfandiyar, compelled by fate to duel with and be slain by the mighty Rostam. The linear, calligraphic character of the drawing and its wash colors betray the new artistic influences from China, while the striking variety of the mourners' faces and gestures in their expression of grief is exceptionally this artist's own achievement. The painter has also captured the range of ethnic types to be found in early 14th-century Iran, some resembling the nomad from the Mongolian steppes portrayed in the sculpture opposite. Such details as the slain hero's saddle placed backward on his horse, and his clothing and headdress tied to a folding stool on top of his cloth-draped coffin, follow the funeral customs of the Mongol rulers of Iran at this period.

Stucco head: Iran, 12th-13th century; h. 8 in.; Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 42.25.17. *Shah-nameh* leaf: Iran, about 1330-1340; 8 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.; Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 33.70.

Among the most popular of Persian illustrated texts was the *Khamseh* or “Quintet” of the great 12th-century poet Nizami. One of its five poems relates the story of the Sasanian King Bahram Gur and the seven princesses he married, visiting each on a successive night of the week. Each princess entertains him with storytelling. The tale illustrated here concerns a young man who owned an orchard and who, when he peered through the gate in the wall, was be-dazzled by the sight of nymphs playing in the garden and bathing in its pool. The painter has pictured the young man peeping through the shutter of a second-story window of a building that appears to be a garden pavilion.

In this miniature of about 1426, the artist follows the conventions of Persian painting that had been evolving since the late 14th century, and which reached one of the high points of its development under the patronage of the Timurid prince Baysonghor in Herat during the 1420s and early 1430s. The picture plane is tilted up so that all elements can be viewed with equal clarity, and each object is shown from whatever viewpoint makes its essential characteristics most easily perceived. For example, the pool is seen from a bird’s-eye view and the nymphs from slightly above the fence. The balance between architectural, landscape, and figural elements is harmoniously controlled, and the color is used to set off objects from one another and, at the same time, to unite them within the composition.

The lyrical mood—from the garden in the background, with its running stream surrounded by blossoming trees, to the scene in the foreground, with nymphs frolicking, playing music, and dancing in the tranquil setting—typifies the idealized vision of the Persian miniature.

Miniature: Herat school, Iran, about 1426; 9 x 5 in.; Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 13.228.13, fol. 47r.

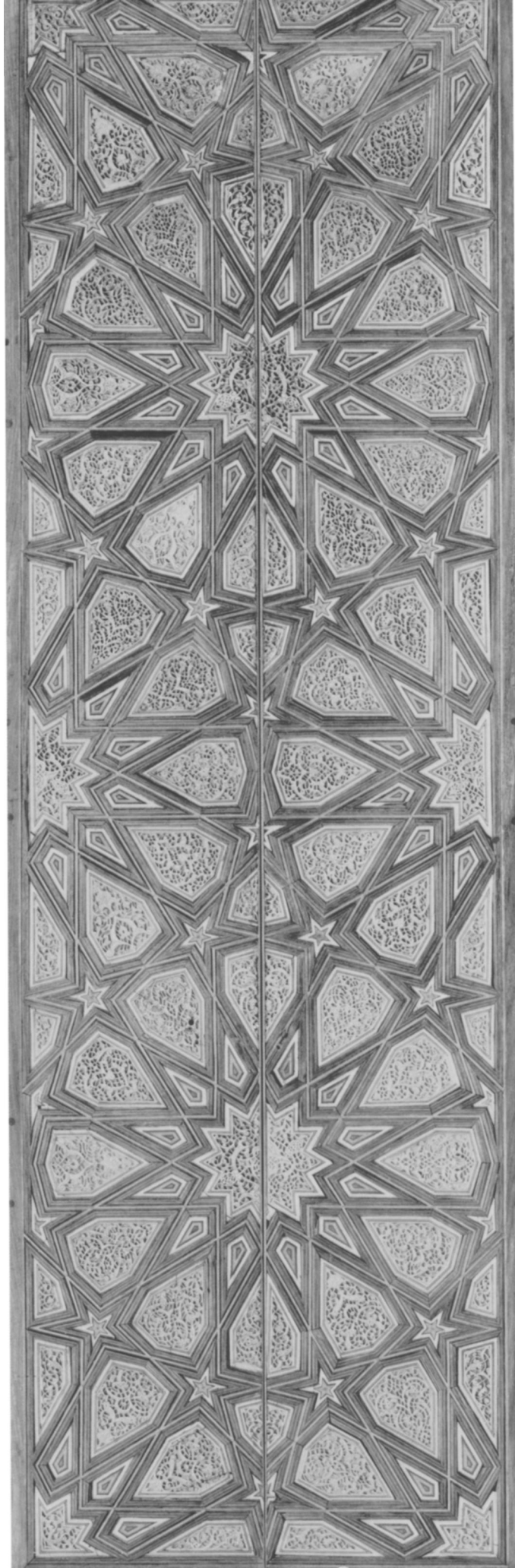




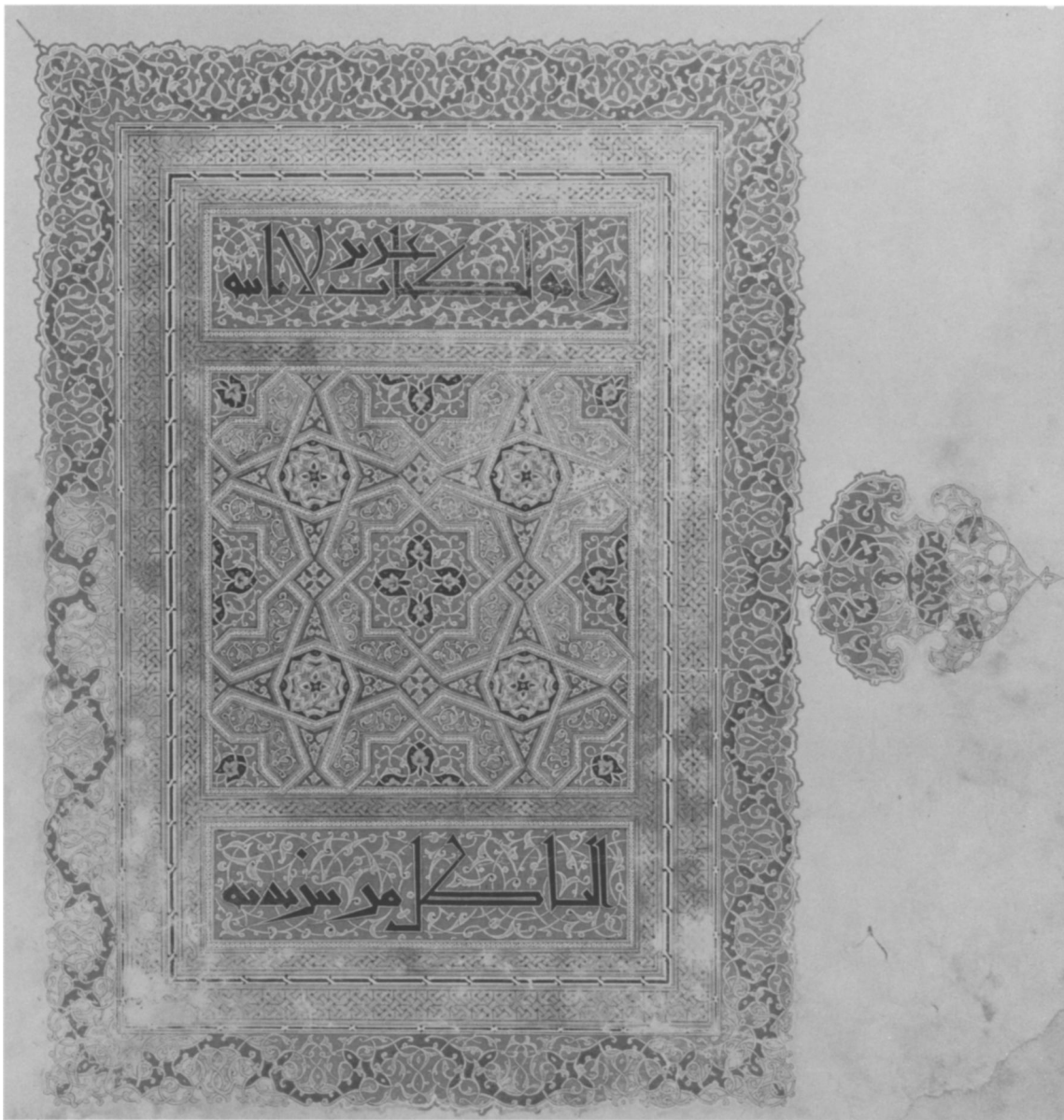
Death and mourning are subjects generally minimized by the Persian poet in favor of such themes as courtly life with its attendant pastimes and pageantry. When scenes of battle were required by the text, color and pattern were more important in the painting than any intrusive reality of war. The Persian miniaturist strove to present the world as it could be visualized ideally and poetically, eliminating all ugliness and harshness. However, in the face of the uncertainty of fortune, well understood in Iran, with its history of wars, invasions, and political upheavals, as well as droughts, earthquakes, and other uncontrollable disasters, the tenuous nature of life and the immanence of death were very real concerns. It is understandable, therefore, that mystic poets such as Attar, who offered spiritual unity and tranquility over material chaos and uncertainty, had such wide appeal.

This miniature of a funeral procession and preparation of a grave shows the development of Persian miniature painting from the Timurid court style in Herat under Baysonghor in the 1420s, as seen in the painting on the opposite page, to that of the last decades of the 15th century under Hosayn Bayqara, patron of one of the greatest of all Persian painters, Behzad. Working within the traditional canons of the art, Behzad brought a new realism to miniature painting and broadened the subject matter to include scenes from everyday life, such as the one shown here. The artists of Behzad's school studied their surroundings — the architecture, the people, the daily activities — and incorporated their observations into their miniatures rather than relying solely on the tradition of previous painters, as was customary. The internal harmony of compositions, range of architectural forms and richness of detail, poetic landscapes, variety of figural types, and unerring use of color of Behzad and his followers were striking even to their contemporaries, while in subsequent periods a great painter would be likened to Behzad and so gain in stature.

Miniature from the *Mantiq at-Tayr* ("Language of the Birds") by Attar, probably by Behzad: Herat school, Iran, dated 888 A.H./A.D. 1483; 9¼ x 5¾ in.; Fletcher Fund, 63.210.35.



Islam's rich decorative repertory was built primarily upon two pre-Islamic traditions: that derived from the classical world (Rome and Byzantium), and that of the ancient Near East, particularly Sasanian Iran. It is, however, a striking feature of Islamic art that it soon brought certain possibilities inherent in these traditions to remarkable new heights of development. The early geometric art of Islam, for instance, was based almost entirely on Roman tradition, which in turn developed out of that of the ancient Near East. But no other art tradition has approached in number, sophistication, and complexity the purely geometric motifs created and employed in Islamic art (especially those of the infinite-repetition



type), nor does any other tradition approach the Islamic in the importance given to such motifs in the overall decorative scheme.

Any rigorously geometric approach to design meets the unyielding givens, the universal geometric necessities and limitations. But the Islamic designer exercised greater freedom and imagination in his use of geometric structure than any of his predecessors, and it is this fact, more than any other, that explains the abundance and diversity of patterns in Islamic art. The central pattern of the Koran page shown at the right, for example, has its ultimate precedents in Roman mosaics and Coptic textiles, but here the sophisticated design is purely Islamic. And, although not unknown in

earlier art, the transformation of the structural lines of the pattern into interlacing straps is a particularly important Islamic practice.

Outstanding among Islam's contributions to geometric design is a whole family of patterns based on a five- and ten-part division of the circle, or on the juxtaposition of ten-sided and five-sided forms: the pattern on the bookbinding in the center is a classic of this type. Its earliest occurrences are in the 12th century, and it spread from its birthplace in Iran to become popular in most of the Islamic world.

The door panel at left, with its finely carved ivory polygons set between wooden straps, sumptuously typifies Cairo's woodwork of the Mamluk pe-

riod (1250-1517). The pattern itself, however, is part of Mamluk Egypt's inheritance from lands to the east, specifically Iran, probably by way of Anatolia; it is based on a grid of equilateral triangles, with twelve-pointed stars formed at the junction of their apexes. The pattern was used relatively rarely, although it is the basic one of its particular type.

Inlaid doors: Egypt, Mamluk period, probably 14th century; h. 65 in.; The Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 91.1.2064. Leather bookbinding: Egypt, Mamluk period, late 13th-14th century; h. 8½ in.; Gift of H. K. Kevorkian, 33.103.3. Koran leaf: Iran, Mongol period, early 14th century; h. 17 in.; Rogers Fund, 50.12.



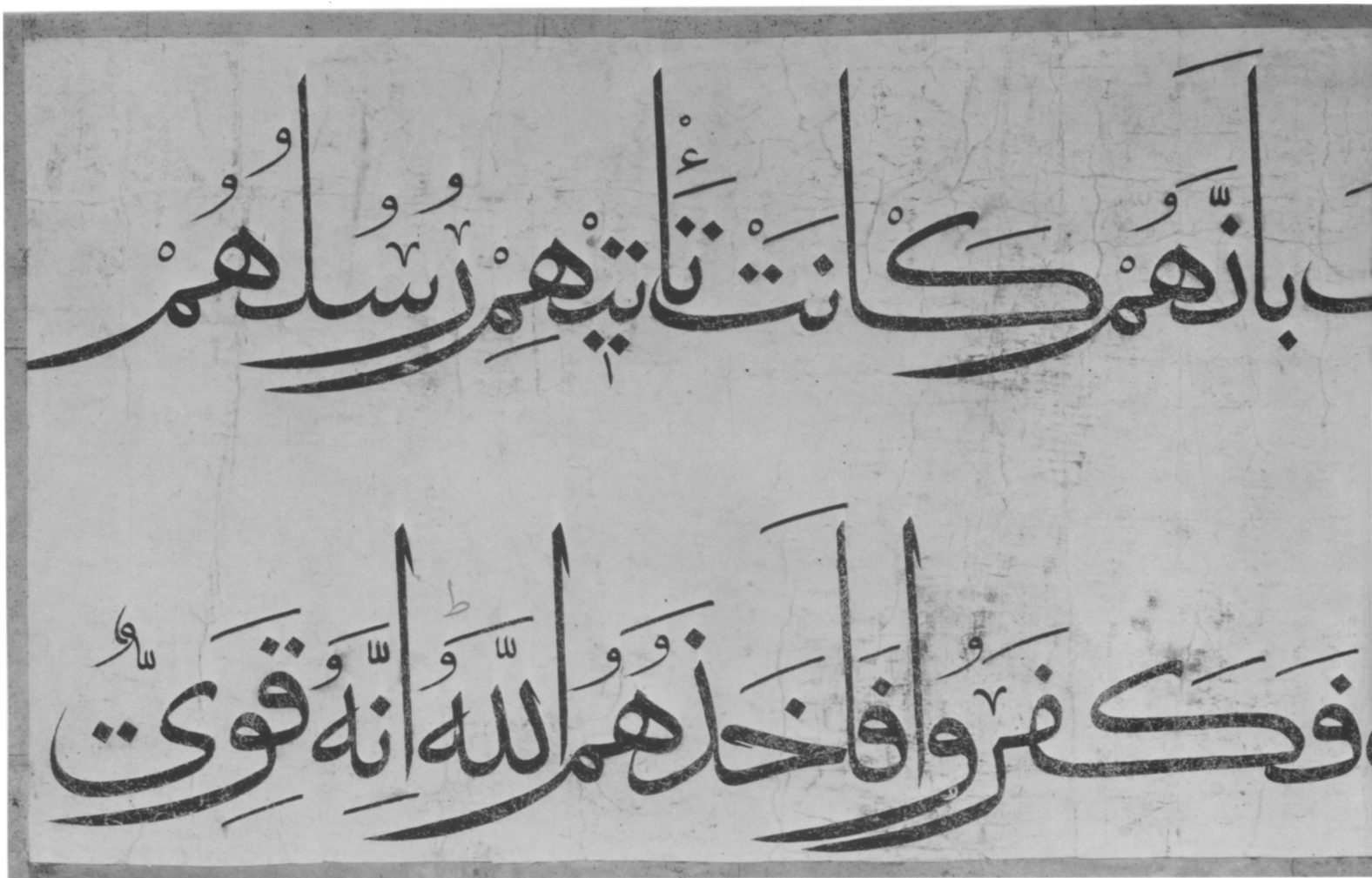


This carpet is one of the largest ever made using the Persian knot and was woven with about eighteen shades of wool. It is known as the “Emperor Carpet,” since it is one of a pair that was once the property of the Hapsburgs. Both carpets are the most complex of a novel group attributable to Khorasan—possibly to Herat, although they are popularly called “Isfahans.” They are the ancestors of many others that have the same major colors and follow the same decorative scheme, although on a less ambitious scale and without animals.

At first the design, on a wine-red ground, seems to be a bewildering mass of flowers, animals, and Chinese cloud bands (the undulating, ribbonlike motifs that also occur throughout the border). But this carpet, like the whole

group, is characterized by very specific patterning, skillfully arranged. The composition is based on a cross-axial system so that both halves and quarters correspond to each other as mirror images. The structure of the decoration is formed in each half by delicate vines, whose flow controls the placement and direction of the large leaves and flowers. Within the foliage, many of the animals are directed toward the ruler, who would have been seated in the center; they are felines, game animals, and Chinese mythical beasts either alone or stalking and attacking each other. The characteristic deep green border is also complex, and is again based on two vine systems, overlapped by cloud bands.

Iran, 16th century; l. 24 ft. 8 in.; Rogers Fund, 43.121.1.



Although cursive Arabic scripts, often very beautifully written, were in use for everyday purposes from Islam's beginning to the present day, it was only from around the early 11th century that they began to replace Kufic in serious artistic use. By the 13th century almost all Korans, except those of the Islamic West, were written in one of the two main cursive styles, *naskhi* or *thuluth*, which differ primarily in the height of their verticals.

The example above is a fragment of a giant Koran page, which originally had the usual vertical format and is over thirty-eight inches wide. It has been attributed to Baysonghor, a grandson of Timur (Tamerlane) and a great patron of art in his city of Herat (now Afghanistan). Dying in 1433/34 at the age of thirty-five, he is said to have lived in princely opulence. But he apparently did not waste his time, as he was accounted the master of *thuluth* calligraphy of his day, and making copies of the Koran would seem to demonstrate his piety. What we have here is a well executed example of standard *thuluth* script, if of a very uncommon size.

In the page at the right, from a book dated 1483, the calligrapher Sultan Ali of Mashhad has given us a beautiful example of *nasta'liq*. This slanted style – the name means “hanging” – is reputed to have been invented by Mir Ali of Tabriz (flourished early 15th century), although instances of slanted script date back to the 11th century. Affected and precious, this example indicates how far Islamic calligraphy had come since the 9th century's combination of grandeur, disciplined creative freedom, and boldness. It is, however, one must admit, very fine.

Fragment: Iran, about 1430; l. 38¼ in.; Anonymous gift, 1972.279. Leaf from Attar's *Language of the Birds*: Iran, dated 888 A.H./A.D. 1483; h. 7⅞ in.; Fletcher Fund, 63.210.53v.

وَأَمَّا خَلَلٌ

بِالْبَيْنَاتِ

اگر کاری بود در بان کار
کار باست با تو با جان کار
تو که کنی که اگر کنی بخت
کردن مکرده کن باشد بخت
نیازی من و پست من کار
خواه بطلب بزن خواهی کار
صد جانان چنان فرود بر پاک
وین با تنگی که بکس بفرود
پس کند آن تنگی بر پیش کار
هم نوم و هم بوج آرد پیش
چون سبب سگد که در خون کار
صورت تمام بوج پنج
بمهر روان آن چنان باشد
نست مرد یکدیگر و از آن کار
بانی در حال کشتای پرورد
هر کجا من شدم که انبیا
انبیا چون با انبیا
چون سبب مسترانی بپس پنج
سرجه که از مسلمانان بر سپرد
از نیک و حق اگر آگاهی
که تو در راه پستی ای در پست
آنکس می شد زین تر پست
شدن تو بی غسل و آلود
شیخ و صلح بر آید حسین
چون کسی را بپس اعدا کار

در نماست کار زرد آن کسی
چون نماست که بر تو شایست
برقی پستمانان چنان دوست
کرم کف آرد و در هم تن
هم قول و هم عروج آرد پیش
گفته آن گفت کیر و عدلان
ست چه صورت آن سخن پنج
از او و علم آن نشان شده
مهر کف آرد و در هم تن
هم قول و هم عروج آرد پیش
گفته آن گفت کیر و عدلان
ست چه صورت آن سخن پنج
از او و علم آن نشان شده
مهر کف آرد و در هم تن
هم قول و هم عروج آرد پیش
گفته آن گفت کیر و عدلان
ست چه صورت آن سخن پنج
از او و علم آن نشان شده

بوی کپری بود آنچه بسی
بو که بترانی شایست و کار ست
کرات او صد جانان نیست
که جان بود در او چو پاک
تخته زلی آورد در پیش خد
که بر آن بکشد که چوین
خانه دولت و ولایت بر کشد
دین ز شرفش بر کن بود
گرد این گرد و در کج شین
که کس کوی چوین کاه تو
پرورش از نام سوار باز
سرجه می خوی بخوار و کیر زود
انبیا آن همه در پیش بود
کاشش با عجز خودم که آری
منم نام بپس ازین
بجو کسکی بر زرافشا
چون واقفی کن که آگاهی
رو قدم زین تر پست
دید که وی غسل در کوش
از درون کند و در شام
از درون راه او شایستی
در چیدن سخنش بخدا

کار باست با تو با جان کار
کردن مکرده کن باشد بخت
خواه بطلب بزن خواهی کار
صد جانان چنان فرود بر پاک
وین با تنگی که بکس بفرود
پس کند آن تنگی بر پیش کار
هم نوم و هم بوج آرد پیش
چون سبب سگد که در خون کار
صورت تمام بوج پنج
بمهر روان آن چنان باشد
نست مرد یکدیگر و از آن کار
بانی در حال کشتای پرورد
هر کجا من شدم که انبیا
انبیا چون با انبیا
چون سبب مسترانی بپس پنج
سرجه که از مسلمانان بر سپرد
از نیک و حق اگر آگاهی
که تو در راه پستی ای در پست
آنکس می شد زین تر پست
شدن تو بی غسل و آلود
شیخ و صلح بر آید حسین
چون کسی را بپس اعدا کار

کار باست با تو با جان کار
کردن مکرده کن باشد بخت
خواه بطلب بزن خواهی کار
صد جانان چنان فرود بر پاک
وین با تنگی که بکس بفرود
پس کند آن تنگی بر پیش کار
هم نوم و هم بوج آرد پیش
چون سبب سگد که در خون کار
صورت تمام بوج پنج
بمهر روان آن چنان باشد
نست مرد یکدیگر و از آن کار
بانی در حال کشتای پرورد
هر کجا من شدم که انبیا
انبیا چون با انبیا
چون سبب مسترانی بپس پنج
سرجه که از مسلمانان بر سپرد
از نیک و حق اگر آگاهی
که تو در راه پستی ای در پست
آنکس می شد زین تر پست
شدن تو بی غسل و آلود
شیخ و صلح بر آید حسین
چون کسی را بپس اعدا کار



The idealization of landscape, of architecture, and of the human form remains a constant factor in most Persian painting throughout its history. In some periods this idealized world seems to reach into the realm of lyric poetry, as in this miniature in the style associated with the Safavid court and its capital, Qazvin, during the latter part of the 16th century. It is the left half of a double-page composition showing a mountain meadow with an elegant party of courtiers participating in a leisurely fashion in the aristocratic sport of hawking. The tall, slim figures take languid poses that emphasize the rhythmic curves and countercurves of their bodies and the unhurried tempo of their movements. Subtle colors enhance the softened mood of the scene, where the bird of prey is the only reminder of the existence of a harsher world. The composition spills over into the gold-illuminated border, where real and imagined beasts roam amongst foliage and rocks.

Miniature: Qazvin school, Iran, 1560-1580; 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 12.223.1.

In its early stages, painting under the Mughal rulers of India owed much to Persian painting, but it soon developed a style and point of view entirely its own. This phenomenon was probably in large measure due to the wide range of cultural interests of the Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), and his encouragement of the fusion of different artistic sources in his court ateliers.

One element of the Mughal style was a keen observation and loving depiction of nature, of trees and flowers and animals, less idealized and more intimately presented than in Persian art. Another aspect of Mughal painting that differed from Persian was the influence it absorbed from European painting, probably as a result of the many Westerners encouraged to visit the Mughal court, bringing goods and presents with them, including paintings and engravings. A modified attempt at European perspective comes into Mughal painting, and some modeling of the figures can be seen.

In the miniature at right, a nighttime scene showing Bahram Gur visiting a Persian princess in her purple palace, the vegetation seems faithful to that no doubt familiar to the artist from the palace gardens of the Mughal court; the architectural elements appear to be made up of real, rather than ideal, components; and the figures, especially in the foreground outside the wall, show some suggestion of rounded forms. While the perspective still varies, with objects being seen from different viewpoints, the contrasts are less extreme. There is a definite recession in space and a feeling of air and distance. The artist has also captured in a masterly fashion the romantic atmosphere of the poem he is illustrating.

Miniature from the *Khamseh* of Amir Khosrow Dihlavi: Lahore, India, 1595-1600; 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 13.288.33.



رفت رضوان میمانی خور	مجلسی بنیشت عالم نور	کشور زانک خوش حریف نورا	سر طرف لبتی بر شمشیر
در میان وورد و پستک انور	روی در روی یار جانی بود	پنج پر وانه پختی می پخت	کر نوشته در آمدی دماغ
ز آرزای پریشش و شیدا	چون پر خواجه کرم شد رسا	سر زمان بز لبر و بستنی	بانوی با نوان چهر بستنی
دزد و نادان با پاسبان	زان او شد عروس شریک	رعبت دل غمان و دسترس	شده پسر زنده شوئی که کرد

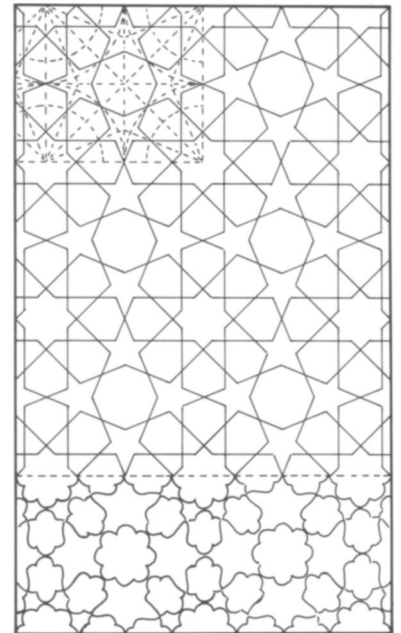


Many motifs used by 16th-century Iranian artists under the Safavids were borrowed from Chinese art but transformed into a purely Islamic idiom, as is the case with the bowl and rug shown here.

For example, the bowl follows Chinese blue and white porcelain prototypes in its color scheme, the drawing of the dragons, the wave patterns behind them and on the rim, and the lotus blossoms and leaf scrolls. In Chinese mythology, however, the dragon is a beneficent symbol, quite contrary to the Iranian concept of fearsome, poison-breathing creatures, here locked in combat, fang and claw sunk into each other's body. But with the Iranian decorative sense the snake-like bodies form graceful, intertwined triangles, the twisted necks, turned heads, looped tails a rhythmic counterpoise. This same dragon wreath appears on a number of 16th-century rugs, and no doubt had more than a decorative meaning — most basically, symbolizing power.

The magnificent jewel-colored carpet, with its elegant, curvilinear “compartments” based on a geometric star pattern, is filled with creatures borrowed from Chinese art, such as the dragon and phoenix in combat. The benevolent phoenix has its counterpart in Persian lore, where it is known as the *simurgh*, also a wise and protective bird. Other compartments contain decorative arrangements of Chinese *ch'i-lin* and flying geese, as well as the purely Islamic arabesque. While the overall pattern is a continuous repeat, the motifs in one half of the rug form a mirror image of those in the other, so the design is effective when viewed from either end. The border with its medallions and cartouches reflects those of Safavid bookbindings, which also make great use of the ribbonlike Chinese cloud band, by now thoroughly assimilated into Persian art.

Ceramic plate: Iran, 16th century; d. 17¼ in.; Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 65.109.2.
 Carpet: Iran, Tabriz, early 16th century; l. 16 ft. 4 in.; Purchase, Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 10.61.3.



The solid lines in the center of the drawing above indicate the underlying structure of the decoration of this carpet's field; its geometrical basis is shown by the dotted lines in the upper left. The curved lines at the bottom of the drawing show how the carpet's designer modified the usual pattern.

This star pattern is one of the earliest and most popular of its general type (where each major star has a complete corona of semiregular hexagons) that developed in Islamic art. This pattern occurs as early as the first half of the 12th century in Iran and Anatolia, and is frequently used in most Islamic regions thereafter. It is, however, unusual to find carpets with layouts of this rigor and complexity from any country or time.







The 16th century represents the culmination of the Turkish imperial power in Asia and Europe. It was then that the Ottoman armies reached Vienna, which they besieged, though unsuccessfully, in 1529. A correlation between this political eminence and the character of Turkish art may well be established by pointing to the boldly colored, monumental piece of silk shown at the left, probably manufactured in Istanbul in the mid-16th century. Its inner dynamics are established by the strong movements and countermovements of the large leaves and flowers, and by the grandiose, sweeping verticals to which they are attached. Even the individual units are brought to their highest pitch, for they combine the special qualities of several flowers (such as lotus and tulips) and are further enriched by superimposed, delicate floral sprays. Highly decorative as this design is, it nevertheless evokes a natural setting. The parallel chevron lines in the curving verticals are an age-old symbol of water, hence the image of a garden with watercourses is readily evoked.

The Ottoman fondness for flowers—tulips, anemones, carnations among others—is still more strikingly shown in the pottery plate at the right, which was made in Iznik (ancient Nicaea). Its main floral spray rises from the edge of the central roundel and then grows in a natural manner into a circular composition. The plate represents an early stage of this floral style, since it is still in the blue, green, and white color scheme that arose about 1525, originally inspired by blue and white Chinese ceramics; the more common, colorful style of Iznik ware does not begin until the middle of the 16th century.

Textile fragment: Turkey, 16th century; l. 48 in.; Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 52.20.21. Plate: Turkey, 16th century; d. 17 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.; Fletcher Fund, 1972.90.





The arabesque is the most distinctively Islamic of all forms of decoration. Invented and developed in the first centuries of Islam, it was used in a rich variety of forms and patterns in all areas of the Muslim world. Basically, it consists of vegetal ornament inorganically treated – tendrils terminating in bilateral leaves with more tendrils springing from their tips, in an infinite diversity of rhythmic repetitions.

The works shown here illustrate a favorite device: arabesques contained within distinctive forms that contrast with the rest of the design. In the Turkish “star Ushak” carpet on the opposite page, interlaced arabesques are dramatically set off by a deep red background, while the controlled rhythms of the arabesques on the Persian bottle at the left play against the freer rhythm of the crane flying among wispy clouds, the color contrast heightening the effect.

In the 15th-century Persian jug illustrated above, balanced arabesque designs in medallions punctuate a ground totally filled with arabesques. These are all inlaid in silver, with gold at the center of the medallions, the inlay shimmering against a brass ground darkened with bitumen. This dense design, with its subtle counterplay of form and ornament, of movement and stability, of glittering and matte surfaces on a pleasing shape, shows the Islamic artist at his most successful.

Carpet: Turkey, 17th century; l. 14 ft.; Gift of Joseph V. McMullan, 58.63. Ceramic bottle: Iran, 16th-17th century; h. 13 in.; Rogers Fund, 14.64.2. Jug: Iran, 15th century; h. 5½ in.; The Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 91.1.607.



This luxurious paneled room, built in 1707 (1119 A.H.), from the Nur ad-Din house in Damascus, is typical of traditional Syrian homes of the Ottoman period. Behind a nondescript outer wall hides an open-air courtyard with a central fountain surrounded by plants; attached to this courtyard are the high-ceilinged reception rooms. There are open ones for summer and closed ones with a narrow entrance, like the Museum's Nur ad-Din room, for the winter.

The first, courtyard-like area is where the servants stand; it contains a fountain and flooring executed in richly colored marble. A high arch and a step lead to the raised reception area: it is here that the master of the house welcomes his guests and asks them to recline on the divan along the wall.

The wooden panels in both areas are lavishly painted, usually on a gesso ground with raised designs of abstract and floral patterns, poetic inscriptions in Arabic, and architectural vignettes. The warm colors, especially a deep brown, are heightened with gilding.

The open niches are used for storing books, hubble-bubbles, and other objects, while the closed ones cover windows or serve as closets or doors. The stained-glass windows set high above the paneling permit filtered, tinted light to enter the room, while fresh air comes through the grilled windows in the lower level. Both ceilings are sumptuously ornamented, with decorated parallel beams in the courtyard, and a complex centralized design in the reception area.

The Nur ad-Din room, and a detail of the ceiling: Damascus, dated 1707 (1119 A.H.). Gift of The Hagop Kevorkian Fund, 1970.170.





The tradition of drawings of dragons in foliage, a theme derived from Chinese art, seems to have taken root in western Iran under the Jalayirid sultans in the latter part of the 14th century. The design underwent various stylistic modifications in Iran, and when it reached Turkey in the 16th century, a distinctly Ottoman version emerged and became popular.

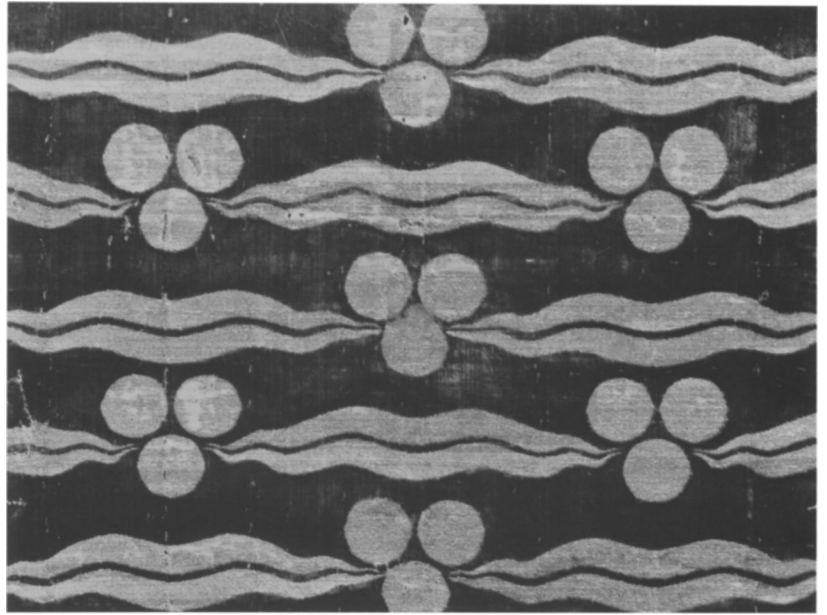
Drawings in wash colors with contrasting black, rhythmic, calligraphic lines—such as the one shown above—were a particularly Turkish development of this subject, resulting in works of compelling strength that still retain their intrinsic decorative quality. In the calligraphy in the rectangular panel, the drawing is attributed to Shah Quli, a Persian who became a leading painter at the court of the Ottoman Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent (1520-1566).

The designs of two wavy lines and a cluster of circles

(usually three) were another important Turkish theme, becoming almost a hallmark of the Ottoman court. They were used most frequently in combination, primarily on textiles but also on other arts such as carpets and ceramics: the pattern is shown here on a piece of velvet and a handsome plate.

There is still uncertainty about the origin of this design, but one plausible explanation is that it represents a combination of tiger stripes and leopard spots. The great Iranian epic hero Rustam is identified in miniature paintings by his tiger-striped cuirass, for which the leopard spots are sometimes substituted. In Ottoman eyes, the pattern may have connoted strength and courage.

Drawing: $6\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$ in.; Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 57.51.26.
Textile: Late 15th–early 16th century; l. 28 in.; Rogers Fund, 08.109.23.





The love of nature so evident in the art of Mughal India is one of its distinguishing qualities. The very abundance and variety of the trees, birds, and animals in the Mughal carpet on the right, as well as its overall pictorial impression, disguise the fact that its plan is similar to that of a textile with a repeat pattern which reverses direction in each unit of design. Certain motifs—the ibexes, the winged *ch'i-lins* (Chinese mythical beasts), the animals in combat—are derived from Safavid Iran, as is the border design. However, the palm trees, water birds, and above all the naturalistic drawing and sympathetic observation of nature are characteristically Indian.

Flowers and flowering plants occur everywhere in Mughal art: the man's court robe illustrated above is covered with tiny, delicate pink flowers with green stems and leaves, each individually hand painted (not dyed) and outlined in gold leaf. This perfection in the art of painting textiles is a particularly Indian achievement.

Wool carpet: India, 17th century; l. 27 ft. 4 in.; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 17.190.858. Cotton robe: India, 17th century; h. 55 in.; Rogers Fund, 29.135.



The exacting craft of jade carving seems to have been widely practiced by only two Muslim dynasties, the Timurids of Iran and Central Asia in the 15th century and their descendants, the Mughals of India, particularly in the 17th century. Islamic chronicles do not describe the source of the nephrite (the type of jade used), but it must have come to Iran and India from Khotan or Yarkand, sites in what is now Chinese Turkestan but which, during the relevant periods, were under the domination of various Muslim rulers.

This photograph shows a selection of pieces of superb Mughal jade. In the Timurid and early Mughal periods, the shapes of nephrite objects follow those of Iranian metalwork, and the preferred color was a green so dark as to appear almost black, such as the inkwell near the center, which was made for the Emperor Jahangir (1605-1628). Later in the reign of Jahangir and par-

ticularly in that of his successor, Shah Jahan (1628-1656?)—the ruler who built the Taj Mahal—the shapes were more influenced by Chinese jades, and colors vary from brilliant greens to smoky gray-greens and mottled shades to the especially admired, luminous white. Elegant lobed bowls were particularly favored by Mughal patrons, who also delighted in a graceful design of lotus blossoms on the outside of dishes that could be seen from the inside through the translucence of the stone. When appreciating these beautiful works of art, it should be remembered that these subtle, delicate shapes and designs were not really carved but were achieved by the arduous process of gently abrading the surface of the jade with tools.

Nephrite vessels: Mughal India, 17th and 18th centuries; d. of lobed dish at the right 6½ in.; Gift of Heber R. Bishop, 02.18.755, 758, 762, 763, and Anonymous gift, 29.145.2-4.



The game of chess, according to the Persian poet Ferdowsi in his epic *Shah-nameh*, was invented in India as a means of explaining to a bereaved mother how her favorite son, an Indian prince, could have died in a battle with his brother without having been killed by him; how, in the end, hemmed in on all sides, he died of exhaustion and despair (the words “*shah mat*”—Persian for “the king is at a loss”—became “checkmate”).

Ferdowsi states that the game was brought from India by an envoy to the Persian court during the reign of Khosrow I (531-578). The envoy came with an ultimatum that unless the Persians could name the pieces and figure out the moves of the game, India would not pay tribute. A counselor to the shah saved the day by recognizing that it was a game of war between symbolic armies commanded by the king and his vizier (queen in the West). Each army consisted of four branches: chariotry (rook—Persian *ruk*—or castle); elephant corps (bishop); cavalry (knight); and infantry (pawn).

All of these pieces are represented here. The king and his counselor (queen) are depicted by shapes that are variously interpreted as a throne, a stylized seated human figure, or a ruler on a throne on an elephant’s back. The rook, with its pronounced V-cut at the top, may represent a very stylized chariot. The bishops retain vestiges of elephant tusks in their two hornlike or rounded protrusions. The knights bear a horse head and thus are closest to their original form, while the pawns have been reduced to small dome-like shapes.

Combed glass king or vizier (queen): Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 1⁵/₁₆ in.; Purchase, Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 1972.9.3. Ceramic rook: Iran, 12th century; h. 1³/₄ in.; Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Jerome A. Straka Gift, 1974.27.1.

Ivory bishop: Eastern Islamic, 8th-9th century; h. 3¹/₂ in.; Gift of Alastair Bradley Martin, 49.36. Ivory bishop: Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 2¹/₈ in.; Purchase, Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 64.262.1. Jet knight: Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 2¹/₈ in.; Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Jerome A. Straka Gift, 1974.27.2. Stone pawn (?): Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 1³/₈ in.; Purchase, Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 1972.119.12. Rock crystal pawn: Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 1¹/₈ in.; Purchase, Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 1972.9.28. Bronze pawn: Medieval Islamic, before 1200; h. 1¹/₄ in.; Gustavus A. Pfeiffer Gift, 1972.119.2.





Islam's calligraphers very early began to develop the actual Arabic letters into decorative arrangements. The 9th century in Egypt—and surely not long afterward in Iraq and Iran—saw the introduction of more and more elaborate floral embellishments of Kufic letters. This ultimately came to include types of writing marked by wild flights of fancy in floral and even animal forms.

The illustration above is a detail of an 11th-century Iranian Koran page: the calligrapher's style is full of variety and imagination in the use of scale, in the shapes of the letters, and in the decorative treatment of the terminals. Here he obviously wanted to emphasize the words "Muhammad is the messenger of God," and we must marvel at the way he has done so.

Some Arabic inscriptions are wholly or partly made up of human figures and animals, a rather remarkable phenomenon that seems to stem mainly from two converging impulses: the general tendency to elaborate the letters, and the tendency between the 10th and 13th centuries to develop floral and other ornament into birds, animals, or human beings. This "animated" writing reaches its highest point in Islamic inlaid metalwork, particularly pieces made in eastern Iran between the late 12th and early 13th centuries, where whole meaningful phrases, made up entirely of animate forms, are to be found. The example at the right is not a fully animated one but is of the human-headed type of *naskhi*; it wishes, "Glory and prosperity and power and continuance."



The text was prepared by the following members of the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Islamic Art:

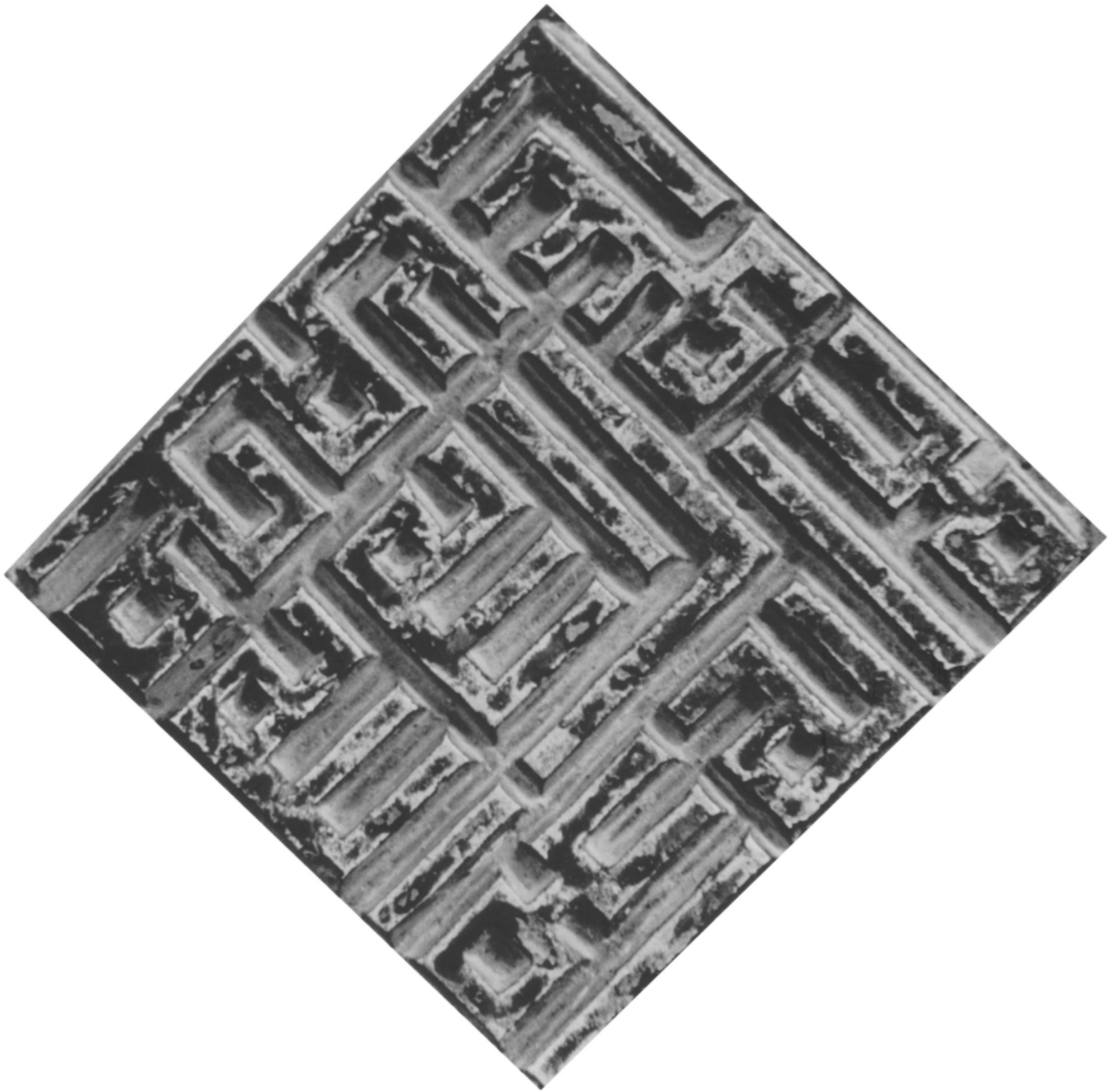
Richard Ettinghausen wrote on the beveled style; the garden carpet and taboret; the "Emperor Carpet"; the Ottoman textile and plate; and the Nur ad-Din room.

Marie Lukens Swietochowski discussed the miniatures; jade; the figural style; the Safavid dragon plate and carpet; the arabesque motif; the "tiger-stripe" motif; and the Mughal carpet and robe.

Marilyn Jenkins wrote about the throne leg; glass; the ivory plaque; the Fatimid material; the mihrab, Koran stand, and mosque lamp; and the chesspieces.

Manuel Keene contributed the discussions of the inscription on the Spanish textile; the Nishapur material; calligraphy; geometric patterns; the analysis of the dragon carpet's design; and the "Simonetti" carpet.

Koran leaf: Iran, 11th century; h. 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.; Rogers Fund, 40.164.2a. Inkwell: Iran, 12th century; brass inlaid with silver, h. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 59.69.2.



Combining the emphasis on calligraphy with the Islamic love of regular geometric pattern, of mazelike but totally ordered ornament, are inscriptions organized upon grids made up of identical squares (and rarely of equilateral triangles). Those on the square grid first appeared in 12th-century Iran and ultimately included a great variety of such layouts, many even being capable of infinite repetition as interlocking patterns. All known examples of “Kufic meanders” save one are religious in content. The inscription shown here proclaims the Muslim testament: “There is no God but God. Muhammad is God’s messenger.”

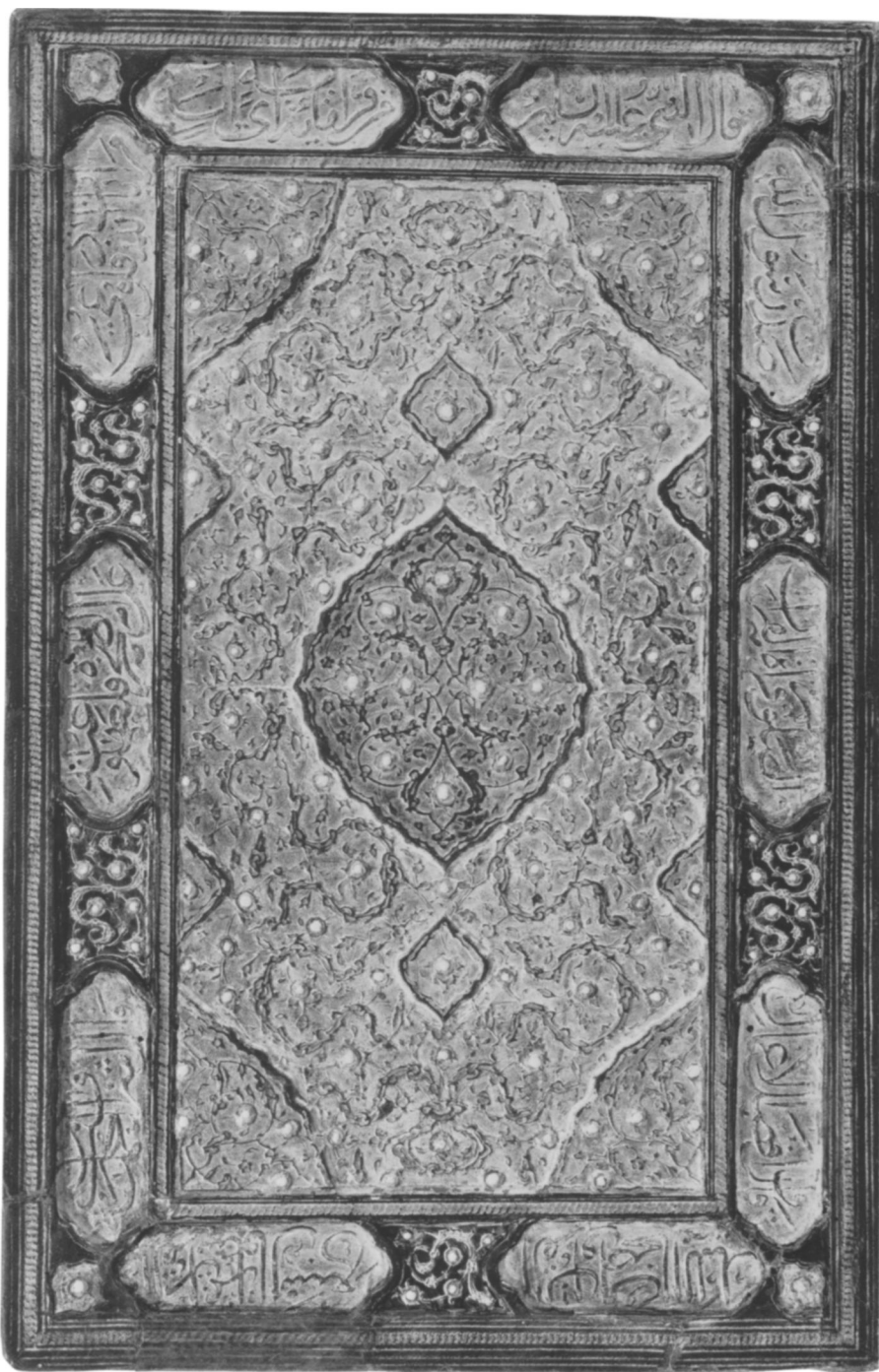
Detail of a marble tombstone: Iran, 14th century; h. 32½ in.; Rogers Fund, 35.120.

The design of this Persian 16th-century book cover shows how closely the art of the book and that of carpet weaving were interdependent at this time, with the artists of the court atelier designing the cartoons for the rug weavers. Similar are the center medallion with its pendants, the quarter-medallions in the corners, and the cartouches in the border.

The designs of such bookbindings were pressed into the leather with stamps; often, as seen here, the plate was engraved with half the design and reversed in the second impression, forming a mirror image. Smaller stamps were used for the border cartouches.

A very decorative all-over pattern is typical of Safavid bookbindings: in this example, cloud bands are used in the field and border, with arabesques in the medallions. More unusual is the addition of small turquoises spaced throughout the design and further enriching the effect.

Leather bookbinding: Iran, 16th century; h. 14 in.; Rogers Fund, 56.222.





Certainly one of the most beautiful Islamic works of art, this is known as the “Simonetti” carpet after a previous owner. In fineness, size, and preservation it may be regarded as one of the two best of its type in the world. Its design is seldom matched in carpets and its color balance – an uncanny combination primarily green and wine red – is marvelous, not to say miraculous. At once clashing violently and harmonizing sweetly, it embodies a drama that takes time to appreciate.

The Simonetti carpet belongs to a class often called “Cairene carpets,” a type now recognized as not only Egyptian but made in Cairo during the Mamluk period, specifically in the late 15th to early 16th centuries. Among the elements helping to establish their Egyptian origin is the use of papyrus motifs derived from ancient ones (the plants with umbrella-shaped leaves in the blue band in the detail above), and a series of compositional schemes that are very typical of certain Coptic textiles woven in the pre-Islamic period.

This employment of motifs and compositions long out of usage is just one of the puzzling, even astonishing, aspects of this group of carpets. They sometimes give the effect of being compendia of designs, both ancient and peculiarly contemporaneous. Among the latter are two star patterns that seem to have been little used in Egypt at all, and their known usages, aside from in these carpets, are all dated between 1466 and 1472/74. One of these patterns can be seen in the center of the detail; it also occurs on rugs with the second rare pattern, which in turn appears on rugs having Mamluk blazons that can be dated between the 1460s and around 1516. Furthermore, there exists an Italian traveler’s reference to a carpet industry in Cairo in 1474, and such carpets are represented in Venetian paintings of about 1530, probably reflecting the usual timelag of several decades between the manufacture of Oriental carpets and their appearance in European paintings. Thus one is tempted to date some of the finest of these Mamluk carpets roughly to the reign of the Sultan Qaytbay (1468-1496), which can be regarded as one of Egypt’s most brilliant, prosperous, and creative Islamic periods.

Wool carpet: Egypt, second half of the 15th century; l. 29 ft. 7 in.; Fletcher Fund, 1970.105.



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART BULLETIN INDEX

Spring 1975 to
Winter 1975/1976
New Series, Volume XXXIII

A

Affleck, Thomas. Chest on chest, 182
Amelung glassworks. Pokal, 190
American art, 165-244

B

Behzad. Miniature attributed to, 27
Bellows, George. Up the Hudson, 230-231
Bicentennial Treasury: American Masterpieces from the
Metropolitan, 165-244
Bierstadt, Albert. Rocky Mountains, 213
Bingham, George Caleb. Fur Traders Descending the
Missouri, 206-207
Birch, William. View of New York (engraving), 193
Book of the Dead. Egyptian, 91-95
Bronze. Islamic, 2-3
Burton, Harry. Egyptian excavation photographs, 53-112

C

Calligraphy. Islamic, 16-17, 29, 32-33, 44, 50-51
Carpets. Islamic, 18-19, 30-31, 36-37, 40-41, 46-47, inside back
cover
Carter, Howard. Work at the Tomb of Tutankhamun, 96, 99,
101, 103-104, 106
Cassatt, Mary
Letter (soft ground and drypoint etching), 220
Mrs. Robert Moore Riddle, 219
Ceramics
Chinese, 113-164
Islamic, 8-9, 11-13, 18, 20, 22-23, 36, 39, 41, 44-45, 49
Chase, William Merritt
For the Little One, 225
Reverie: A Portrait of a Woman (monotype), 222
Chess pieces. Islamic, 49
Chin dynasty, 133, 136-137
Ch'in dynasty, 120
Ch'ing dynasty, 150-161
Chou dynasty, 118-119
Church, Frederic. Heart of the Andes, 210-211
Cole, Thomas. Oxbow, 202-203
Copley, John S.
Augustus Brine, 188
Mrs. John Winthrop, 186

D

Davies, Norman de Garis. Tomb Paintings at Thebes, 108-110
Decorative arts
American, 165-244
Chinese (ceramics), 113-164
Islamic, 1-52
Digger's Luck, H. E. Winlock, 56-71
Doolittle, Amos. Federal Hall (engraving), 193
Dunlap, John. Chair, 185

E

Eakins, Thomas
Max Schmitt in a Single Scull, 214-215
Susan Macdowell Eakins, 222-223

Egyptian excavations, 53-112
Ettinghausen, Richard. Introduction to Islamic Art, 4-5
Exhibition. *A Bicentennial Treasury: American Masterpieces
from the Metropolitan*, 165-244

F

Far Eastern art. Chinese ceramics, 113-164
Feke, Robert. Tench Francis, 172-173
Five dynasties, 130-131
Flag made by Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, 167
French, Daniel Chester. Mourning Victory (marble), 232
Furniture. American, 165-244

G

Glass
American, 190, 234, 235
Islamic, 6-7, 14-15, 23
Gold. Islamic, 10

H

Han dynasty, 120-121
Harnett, William Michael. Music and Good Luck, 216-217
Hartley, Marsden. Portrait of a German Officer, 235
Hathaway, Rufus. Lady with Her Pets, 185
Hawes, Josiah Johnson. Boston Beauty (daguerreotype), 208
Herter Brothers
Vanderbilt table, 226-227
Wardrobe, 220-221
Highlights of Chinese Ceramics, S. G. Valenstein, 115-164
Homer, Winslow
A Wall, Nassau (watercolor), 231
Northeaster, 230
Prisoners from the Front, 214-215
Hopper, Edward. Lighthouse at Two Lights, 237, inside back
cover
Hoving, Thomas
A Bicentennial Treasury, 165
Excavating in Egypt, 1
Highlights of Chinese Ceramics, 113
Islamic Art, 1
Howat, John K. Curators' Note to A Bicentennial Treasury,
167

I

Inness, George. Autumn Oaks, 216
Islamic art, 1-52
Ivory. Islamic, 10-11, 49

J

Jade. Islamic, 2, 48
Johnson, Eastman. Hatch Family, 215

K

Kensett, John F. Lake George, 211
Kierstede, Cornelius. Silver bowl, 169

L

- Lannuier, Honoré. Pier table, 201
Leather bookbindings. Islamic, 28-29, 52
Lilyquist, Christine
Introduction to Excavating in Egypt, p. 3
Note on the Egyptian Galleries, pp. 111-112

M

- Mace, Arthur C. Work at the Tomb of Tutankhamun, 100-101
MacMonnies, Frederick. Bacchante and Infant Faun (bronze), 232
Mare, John. Jeremiah Platt, 181
McIntire, Samuel. Chair, 196
Meketra, models of, 56-71
Meryetamun, tomb of, 77-95
Ming dynasty, 144-149
Morse, Samuel F. B. Susan Morse, 204-205
Mount, William Sidney. Cider Making, 206-207
Mummy of Wah Unwrapped, H. E. Winlock, 72-76
Myers, Myer. Silver cake basket, 182-183

N

- Nakht, tomb of, 108-110
Nany, mummy of, 90-95
Neolithic pottery (Chinese), 115
Northern Sung dynasty, 132-137
Nur ad Din room, 42-43

P

- Paintings
American, 165-244
Egyptian, 108-110
Islamic, 5, 15, 25-27, 34-35
Peale, James. Balsam Apple and Vegetables, 196
Phyfe, Duncan. Couch, 201
Phyfe, Duncan, workshop. Table and chair, 204
Powers, Hiram. Andrew Jackson (marble), 209
Pratt, Matthew. American School, 181
Prendergast, Maurice. St. Mark's Square (watercolor), 228-229
Prints and Photographs. American, 193, 208, 212, 229, 236-237

R

- Rasch, Anthony. Silver sauceboat, 200
Reynolds, James. Chest on Chest, 182
Robinson, Theodore. Bird's Eye View—Giverny, 225
Roux, Alexander, shop. Etagère, 208
Ryder, Albert Pinkham. Moonlight Marine, 216

S

- Saint-Gaudens, Augustus. Mariana Van Rensselaer (bronze), 222
Sargent, John S.
In the *Generalife* (watercolor), 233
Madame X, 226
Sculpture
American, 209, 212, 227, 232
Egyptian, 56-71, 98-107, 111-112

Islamic, 20-21, 24-25, 51

- Shang dynasty, 116-117
Sheeler, Charles. Delmonico Building (lithograph), 237
Silver
American, 169, 170-171, 175, 182-183, 200
Islamic, 8
Six dynasties, 122-123
Soumain, Simeon. Silver tankard, 170-171
Southern Sung dynasty, 133, 137-139
Southworth, Albert Sands. Boston Beauty (daguerreotype), 208
Steichen, Edward. Flatiron Building (photograph), 229
Stieglitz, Alfred. Steerage (photograph), 229
Strand, Paul. Wheel and Mudguard (photograph), 236-237
Stuart, Gilbert
George Washington, 192-193
Man in a Green Coat, 189
Sui dynasty, 124-125
Swift, Reuben. Desk, 195

W

- Wah, mummy of, 72-76
Ward, John Quincy Adams. Indian Hunter (bronze), 213
Warner, Phebe. Coverlet, 198-199
Watkins, Carleton E. Mt. Starr King (photograph), 212
Wheeler, Candace. Portiere, 219
Whistler, James. Flesh Colour and Black: Portrait of Theodore Duret, 221
Winlock, H. E.
Digger's Luck, 56-71
Mummy of Wah Unwrapped, 72-76
Tomb of Queen Meryetamun, 77-95
Woodwork. Islamic, 23, 28, 42-43
Work at the Tomb of Tutankhamun, H. Carter, A. Mace, 96-107
Wright, Frank Lloyd. Coonley window, 235

T

- T'ang dynasty, 126-129
Textiles
American, 198-199, 219
Islamic, 5, 38-39, 44-46
Tiffany & Co. Loving cup, 227
Tiffany Studios. Lamp, 234-235
Tomb of Nakht, 108-110
Tomb of Queen Meryetamun, H. E. Winlock, 77-95
Tomb Paintings at Thebes, N. de Garis Davies, 108-110
Townsend, John. Block-front chest, 178-179
Tracy, Berry B. Curators' Note to A Bicentennial Treasury, 166
Tutankhamun, tomb of, 96-107
Twachtman, John Henry. Arques-La-Bataille, 218

V

- Valenstein, Suzanne G. Highlights of Chinese Ceramics, 115-164

Y

- Yüan dynasty, 140, 143





