

Arts and Archaeology  
of the Islamic World  
Volume 19



# Under the Adorned Dome

Four Essays on the Arts of Iran and India  
Ehsan Yarshater Lecture Series

Yves Porter

*Foreword by* Finbarr Barry Flood

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## Under the Adorned Dome

# Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World

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*By*

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Cover illustration: Lobed *mina'i* bowl with prince and attendants. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 21.6 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.120.41. Mr. and Mrs. Isaac D. Fletcher Collection, Bequest of Isaac D. Fletcher, 1917. OA Public Domain.

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*For Richard, of course*



بزرگ طاقش را کالبد فلک بوده  
بلند گنبد او را قضا زده پرگار

The sky worked as a mold for its great arch  
Destiny used its compass for the height of its dome.

'UNSURI-I BALKHI



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## Foreword

It is a great pleasure to preface this volume of Yves Porter's Yarshater Lectures, which reflect decades of pioneering scholarship on the arts of Iran and South Asia. Porter is one of few scholars to move easily between these worlds. It may be surprising, therefore, to see that he explicitly rejects the rubric of the "Persianate" under which the arts of both regions are often grouped, but this eschewal reflects an admirable skepticism about monolithic categories that permeates all four essays in this volume. Indeed, one of the most original contributions of the four essays is their insistence on the need to pay attention to regional conditions and traditions.

The essays offer a range of original observations concerning the arts of the book, ceramics and architectural ornament across a geography stretching from Fars to Bengal. They are peppered with reflections on historiographic anomalies, methodological peculiarities, and the gaps in the material archives that shape our capacity to reconstruct historical, social, and technical processes. The appendices, which range from a record of Persian poetry on ceramics to a comprehensive catalog of glazed ceramics documented in India's Archaeological Surveys, are a contribution in their own right.

The commitment to empirical research as the foundation of technical and theoretical insights is a cornerstone of Porter's methodology. This ranges easily between micro- and macro-aspects of art making, whether considering the economics of artistic production, manuscript production as a total process, the socio-cultural connotations of Kashan luster tiles, or the aesthetic valences of glazed tiles in the sultanate architecture of the subcontinent.

Along the way, we are treated to novel observations regarding a wide range of canonical and non-canonical topics. In Chapter 1, these include the *kitābkhāna* as network vs. place, the role of geometry in creating harmonious manuscript

layouts, the ways in which artisans may have deployed embodied knowledge of mathematical principles without knowledge of their theoretical underpinnings. Chapter 2 extends the discussion beyond manuscript production, considering figurative and textual narrative allusions on Kashan wares. The discussion inverts the privilege often afforded canonical texts, speculating on the ways in which non-canonical or non-textual variants of known tales drawn from the *Shāh-nāma* and other epics may have coincided in the creation of visual palimpsests, products of multiple narrative strata coinciding in the space of a single image. Additional asides on intermedial connections between narrative luster tiles from Kashan, wall-painting and textiles offer suggestive directions for future research.

Chapter 3 presents us with a highly original analysis of the reuse of luster tiles following the Mongol conquest of Iran. Beyond the obvious interest for a moment in which questions of reuse and spoliation loom large in art historical studies of many sorts, the chapter tackles the likely relationship between the use of figurative luster tiles in palatial architecture and their reuse in mosques and shrines. Against a contemporary tendency to emphasize the transregional circulation of commodities, a particular insight of the chapter is its suggestion that the rather limited circulation of Kashan luster tiles (despite a few outliers found in East Africa and elsewhere) may reflect the fact that their value was constituted not in general economic terms (as luxury goods) but by the specificity of their sociocultural connotations in Ilkhanid Iran.

The final chapter considers questions of rarity and value from another angle, moving us from Ilkhanid Iran to the sultanates of north India. Analyzing the remarkably scattered evidence for the production and use of glazed tilework in the sultanates of three distinct regions – Delhi, Malwa, and Bengal – the chapter offers the first

comprehensive survey of an ornamental medium often seen as a hallmark of Islamic architecture in general but used selectively in the subcontinent and with considerable regional variations.

In keeping with the iconoclastic tone of all the essays, which tilt at established orthodoxies even as they propose new ways of looking, this final essay is replete with challenges to scholarly shibboleths. Seen through Porter's eyes, the architecture of the Lodi period (1451–1526), so under-researched that it rarely merits more than a passing mention in surveys of Sultanate architecture, emerges, for example, as the apogee of architectural tilework in India.

Similarly, a priori assumptions that glazed tile technology was an import to north India from Iran fall by the wayside. Paying close attention to questions of fabric and technique, Porter demonstrates the lack of material evidence for the eastward diffusion of Iranian tile technology. Challenging diffusionist stories of transmission, with their implied hierarchies and unidirectional flows, the

chapter marshals the evidence for local production of glazed ceramics. Raising the possibility of a palimpsest technology forged from the meeting of local and trans local ceramic traditions, Porter signals the likely existence of inter-regional aesthetic and technological connections; between the tilework of Mandu in central India and Bidar, capital of the Bahmanid sultans of the Deccan region of the south, for example. Similarly, rather than linking the (rather sparing and selective) use of glazed tilework in the sultanate monuments of Bengal to Iran and Central Asia, we are invited to look east to Burma as a potential source of inspiration.

Such a sensitive reading of the material evidence is, perhaps, to be expected from a scholar whose knowledge of ceramics is more than theoretical, informed as it is by practical experience of the highs and lows of the ceramicist's craft.

The cumulative force of these engaging and provocative essays is to compel a rethink of much of what we imagined we knew. Which is surely the aim of the very best of scholarship in any field.

*Finbarr Barry Flood*

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# Introduction

The essays presented here are the revised, enlarged, and updated version of four lectures given in the Yarshater Lecture Series, at SOAS in London, from the 10th–15th January 2013, entitled *Images and Decoration in the Persianate World*.\*

Limited consensus exists regarding the existence and validity of the concept of Islamic art.<sup>1</sup> Beyond a mere condemnation of this concept – whose scope overran the frame of these lectures – I limited my contributions to a geo-cultural area termed, in their 2013 title, as the “Persianate” world. However, I have realized since then that the word “Persianate” implies a type of hegemonic cultural position of the “Iranian” domains over other regions and countries, thus eventually masking the specificities of these other territories (such as India or Central Asia).<sup>2</sup> Thus, giving to Caesar what belongs to him, I now prefer to use clearer denominations (“Iran” or “India”) rather than mentioning a nebulous *Persianate* world.<sup>3</sup> This is also why I have chosen a new, more distanced title for these collected papers. In a period during which appropriation is considered a major threat, distance is a fundamental parameter for any study

of a foreign culture.<sup>4</sup> The title *Under the Adorned Dome* thus borrows a *topos* evocative of Persian poetry, but not without acknowledgment of Paul Bowles’ *Sheltering Sky*.<sup>5</sup>

Undoubtedly, scholars often wish to classify and establish taxonomies, although this division of periods and disciplines might be subject to disagreements.<sup>6</sup> I am convinced that it is impossible to survey all the domains of Islamic Art (geographic, chronologic, but also discipline-wise, i.e., architecture, painting, calligraphy etc.) with an equal degree of accuracy and relevance. Even if one were restricted to Iranian art, the task would resemble confronting a Behemoth. Therefore, only four topics are chosen here, three of which belong specifically to the Iranian lands. Islamic art from India is often considered a mere offspring of Persian art, an opinion that is not shared here.<sup>7</sup>

\* Transliteration of Arabic and Persian is mainly based on the style guidelines used in *Muqarnas*. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

1 See for instance Avinoam Shalem, “What do we mean when we say ‘Islamic art’? A plea for a critical rewriting of the history of the arts of Islam,” *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, (2012), pp. 1–18.

2 J.Z. Smith, “What Difference a Difference Makes,” in *Relating Religion*, Chicago, University Press, 2004, pp. 275–276: “While the other may be perceived as being like us or unlike us, he is in fact most problematic when he is too much like us, or when he claims to be us (...) This is not a matter of the ‘far’ but, preeminently, of the ‘near.’ The problem is not alterity, but similarity – at times, even identity.”

3 Reference is made here to Y. Porter and R. Castinel, “*Rendez à Khusrau ...*,” *Transferts, projections et distorsions dans l’étude de l’art iranien*,” forthcoming. The quote refers to the *Gospels* (Mark, XII, 13–17; Matthew, XXII, 21; Luke, XX, 25).

4 On the inevitable influence of education and milieu on scholars working in the Middle East, see the excellent essay by Nadia Ali, “The Road from Decadence: Agendas and Personal Histories in the Study of Early Islamic Art,” in Jas Elsner (ed), *Empires of Faith: Histories of Image and Religion in Late Antiquity from India to Ireland*, Cambridge, University Press, 2019, pp. 189–222.

5 Between fascination and fear, in this novel, both of Bowles’ characters embody varying facets of the biased Western vision of a “local,” or “oriental” culture; see Rachel Bouvet, “L’altérité du désert dans ‘The Sheltering Sky’ de Paul Bowles,” in *Images de l’autre: lectures divergentes de l’altérité/Imagens do outro: lecturas divergentes da alteridade*. 2001. Bahia, Presses universitaires de l’Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, 2001, pp. 141–153. <http://oic.uqam.ca/fr/publications/lalterite-du-desert-dans-the-sheltering-sky-de-paul-bowles> (accessed 16/11/2022). On metaphors evoking the sky in Persian poetry, see A.S. Melikian Chirvani, “The Nine domes of the Universe,” in *The Nine Domes of the Universe. The Ancient Noh Gonbad Mosque*, Bergame, Bolis, 2016, pp. 61–73.

6 Some historians – J. Le Goff among others – are now questioning issues such as the periodization of history. See J. Le Goff, *Faut-il découper l’histoire en tranches?* Paris, Seuil, 2014.

7 See Y. Porter, “*Noh sepehr*: The Concept of ‘Persianate’ as Applied to Delhi Sultanate Architecture and Décor.” Harvard, AKPIA, March 14th, 2019, <https://www.youtube>

Opposing a current *iranocentrism*, the contribution devoted to Indian tiles in this volume should demonstrate that these productions are only remotely connected with the Iranian and Central Asian ones.

The examples illustrated by the following four papers resemble moments rather than a continuous story. However, they share several common characteristics in their contents as much as their methodology. Some essential questions recur through these contributions, such as “how is it done,” “by whom,” and “why.” These imply viewpoints about techniques, artists and craftspeople (see below), and patrons, in a manner related to cultural anthropology, ethnoarchaeology, or sociological history. This trilogy contains the same actors as in *Le prince, l’artiste et l’alchimiste*.<sup>8</sup> These categories of actors also respond to the different steps in the description of the “operational sequence,” coined by André Leroi-Gourhan.<sup>9</sup> However, the audience of the works studied here must also be considered; visual arts, represented by manuscript illustrations together with monumental decoration and ceramics (vessels and tiles), have an evident performative dimension. Moreover, if manuscripts represent a type of intimate relationship in an elitist milieu, “illustrated” ceramics do not necessarily imply a similar audience. Due to their multilayered semiotics, monumental decoration potentially addresses an even larger public, especially through inscribed tiles.

More widely, due to the lack of sources that could explain not only technicalities but also other abstract notions such as *Kunstwollen*, the aim here

is to replace the objects into the central position. Based on these objects, the intention is to proceed via a bottom-up method, starting from the materials, operational sequences, and craftspeople involved before considering, when appropriate, questions related to patronage and the milieu in which these artifacts were created, or their symbolic value.

The four topics studied here also share concepts of influence and impact, although inflected on different modes. The productions they embody represent many poles of influence, even if working on different scales, from the extensive diffusion of products, techniques, and systems to almost isolated productions. How these topics – and the diffusion scheme they represent – might be approached deserves full attention:

- Concerning illustrated manuscripts, the system of the princely workshops or *kitābkhāna*, in which many of them were produced, can be compared to a crucible where abilities and artistic genius combine (see hereafter, *Habitus versus creation*); although not systematic, and witnessing notable variations in time and space, the *kitābkhāna* production scheme acknowledged a remarkable spread.
- The ceramics manufactured in Kashan during the late 12th to early 13th century exemplify products allegedly made at a single center but admitting extraordinary diffusion. Likewise, the imagery and poems carried by these vessels illustrate other types of dissemination.
- Luster tiles, also made in Kashan, propose yet another type of propagation, inherent to the walls they once covered but also subject to the vagaries of reuse and later plundering.
- Glazed tiles from the Indian sultanates show the vibrancy of locally made productions, created using still unclear paths of influence and with more independent or isolated ramifications.

Before entering the specificities of each topic, some general remarks are necessary regarding timespan, continuities, ruptures, and other methodological aspects of these cultural areas.

.com/watch?v=cDDCtGAzUn4 (accessed 05/12/2022). See also Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation. Material Culture and Medieval ‘Hindu-Muslim’ Encounter*. Princeton, PUP, 2009.

8 Y. Porter & R. Castinel, *Le prince, l’artiste et l’alchimiste*, Paris, Hermann, 2011.

9 A. Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la Parole. Technique et Langage*. Vol. 1. Paris, Albin Michel, 1964, p. 164.

## 1 Geohistorical Dimension

The timespan illustrated by these four papers covers a period from the late 12th to the 16th centuries. Although this time lapse might appear stretched, I do not intend to establish geo-temporal continuity throughout these papers. Every chapter is encased in its own spatial-temporal box.

Persian illustrated manuscripts dated before the late 13th century (Ilkhanid period, 1256–1353) are extremely rare. The latest examples provided here extend to the late 16th century, during the first Safavid century (1500–1600). All the manuscripts considered were produced in Iran unless otherwise specified.

The chapter on “illustrated ceramics” is more restricted in area and era since the objects are datable to between the late 12th and early 13th century, and all the studied material was probably produced in the town of Kashan.<sup>10</sup> Regarding politics, this period is often linked with the Great Seljuqs (1038–1194), and although their power was considerably weakened since the mid-12th century, this does not necessarily mean that the credit for the art created during the period of study must go to another dynasty, such as the Khwarazm-Shahs (c.1077–1231). All (or most of) the studied objects were probably made for average customers, unrelated to the ruling elites.<sup>11</sup>

The third chapter, devoted to the use of Persian luster tiles, also considers the production of Kashan but at a slightly later date, in the late 13th to mid-14th centuries, under the Ilkhanids. Again, this does not necessarily imply a connection between artistic activity and royal patronage.

<sup>10</sup> The existence of other luster ware production centers is still discussed; further research on examples found at Qalhat (Oman) might lead to new directions.

<sup>11</sup> The question of clientele is discussed, among others, in A. Contadini, “Patronage and the Idea of an Urban Bourgeoisie,” in F.B. Flood and G. Necipoglu (eds.), *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, Hoboken, John Wiley, 2017, vol. 1, pp. 431–452.; I return to this question in my second chapter.

Regarding Indian tiles, the study is limited here to three different sultanates: Delhi, Bengal, and Malwa, over a period spanning the early 14th to mid-16th centuries. These allow observation of a series of original productions, emerging in various milieu and each resulting in distinct types of exchanges and inspirations.

## 2 *Weltanschauung versus Continuities and Ruptures*

The *imago mundi*, *Weltanschauung*, the world’s order, varies with time. Constants and variables probably exist, but ruptures are also numerous. Therefore, it is essential to define spatial-temporal units that are likely to be *seriously* examined. Hence, detailed microhistories are important.<sup>12</sup> Only through defining the characteristics of a place and time can the convergence of ideas and artistic expressions be considered, as E. Panofsky showed with scholastics.<sup>13</sup>

The history of Iranian art is often considered remarkably continuous, spreading throughout an extended territory. The concept of an eternal Iran has opportunely been used as a political and ideological tool to illustrate a “never changing land,” particularly during the Pahlavi period.<sup>14</sup> Concerning the artistic domains, the same bias often appears to apply, as in the study of Persian painting, particularly when this subject includes what has been termed “*Persianate* painting,” thus breaking the boundaries of space and time. The danger of such global approaches is that it can obliterate the gaps and local specificities or disregarding the ruptures and twists inevitable in *longue durée* studies. Moreover, the present *globalizing*

<sup>12</sup> On microhistory, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Mythes, emblèmes, traces: Morphologie et histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> E. Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. Latrobe, The Archabbey Press, 1951.

<sup>14</sup> See Kamyar Abdi, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 105, 1 (2001), pp. 51–76.

bias is a defect of a Western *imago mundi*, often resulting in external acculturation, inviting scholars to remain cautious in their approach.

The perception of nature in the Persian-speaking world represents a methodological frame through which a specific *imago mundi* can be understood. However, it is subject to changes throughout history but also in its vast geography. C.-H. de Fouchécour, in his study of 11th-century Persian poetry, writes that the poets' vision of nature can be compared with miniature painting since both expressions are void of shadows, volume, and depth.<sup>15</sup> However, if it is true that Persian paintings do not use these three concepts, the vision of nature changes considerably through the ages, and, significantly, no miniature painting is known to be contemporary with the poetry described by Fouchécour. Moreover, landscape defines a type of prerequisite in lyrical poetry, as in the structure of the *qasida*.<sup>16</sup> Instead, it is absent from paintings before the late 13th century, when it appears, although rarely as an isolated subject.<sup>17</sup>

An interesting example of alleged continuity could be illustrated through the theme of the *gul-u bulbul* (rose and nightingale). A favorite *topos* of Persian lyrical poetry, since at least the 11th century if not before, this theme was invisible in the visual arts until the 17th century. During this period, Iranian artists progressively adopted new trends influenced by European engravings, *herbaria* in this case. However, when Iranian painters started reproducing and adapting images of flowers, insects, and birds from these engravings, it was not evident that they intended to "illustrate" the *gul-u bulbul* theme. It is noteworthy that when this type

of subject is described, in a more "matter of fact" way, as *gul-u murgh* (flower and bird), it naturally loses its poetic implications. Furthermore, this (pseudo)-"illustration" of a literary theme can be paralleled with literary metaphors virtually never, except for rare exceptions, being illustrated.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, another parallel on unnecessary *explanation* concerns the beloved's genre, most often prudishly translated in Western languages as feminine, hence ignoring essential rules of Persian grammar.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if the *gul-u bulbul* theme proves remarkably long-lived in poetry, its visual translation does not run parallelly.<sup>20</sup> However, the image has left such a deep mark in the Iranian collective imagination that it now embodies the essence of the country: "hence the jocular expression *kešvar-i gol o bolbol* (the rose-and-nightingale country) used (sometimes disparagingly) to refer to modern Persia."<sup>21</sup> The iconographic theme of the *gul-u bulbul*, often perceived as *essentially* Iranian, clearly exemplifies not only a divorce between literary and visual perceptions but also an example of acculturation.

The representation of nature, for instance, through landscape painting, evolved dramatically from the Mongol period onward. A similar

15 Charles-Henri de Fouchécour, *La description de la nature dans la poésie lyrique persane du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1969, p. 251.

16 On the structure of the *qasida*, and particularly the exordia (*tashbib*), in which the description of nature plays an important role, see Fouchécour, *La description*, p. 5.

17 Among exceptions is the so-called "Funerary landscape"; see Lisa Golombek, "The *Paysage* as Funerary Imagery in the Timurid Period," *Muqarnas* 10, (1993), pp. 241–252.

18 Among rare exceptions: "a lapis-lazuli sky"; conversely, unrepresented metaphors include "teeth like pearls," or "ruby-red cheeks."

19 The Persian language does not mark the gender (*ū* translates as *he* or *she*); it is thus often impossible to ascertain the sex of the beloved. "Translation" usually implies changing language (such as "English translation"); however, gender differentiation in visual arts has now fully impregnated the Iranian collective imagery, thus "sexually" translating the beloved as female. On "modern" illustrations of Khayyam, see also Y. Porter and R. Castinel, "*Rendez à Khusrau ...*"

20 Layla S. Diba, "Gol o Bolbol," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1, (2001), pp. 52–57. "The use of this theme as a metaphor for spiritual and earthly love by Persian poets in epic and romance, lyrical and mystical works for nearly one thousand years attests to its deep significance in Persian culture." <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gol-o-bolbol> (accessed 19/11/2022).

21 Hušang A'lam, "Gol (gul)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1, (2001), pp. 46–52. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gol> (accessed 19/11/2022).



FIGURE 0.1  
Darius' trilingual inscription at Bisutun,  
circa 515 BC  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2006

change is observed concerning the depiction of people. Before the period of Turkish domination, the physical criteria of beauty included large wide open black eyes, whereas, during the Seljuq rule, the eyes became slanted, and the face was usually rounder, resembling a full moon. Together with these facial changes, the costumes also evolved, especially concerning hats, garments, or shoes, often indicating ethnographic appurtenances originating from lands far from Iran.<sup>22</sup>

If the perceptions of nature and beauty evolved, it appears natural that tastes and artistic *habitus* followed similar paths, although at different speeds. Thus, the method of producing illuminated manuscripts evolved, as did the place and importance of illustrations, among others. The place of illustrations is closely linked to the relationship between text and image, which is shared – although through different modes – by manuscripts and “illustrated” ceramics.

22 Priscilla Soucek, “Ethnicity in the Islamic Figural Tradition: the Case of the “Turk,”” *Tārīḥ*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 73–103. See also Y. Porter and R. Castinel, “Simple exotisme ou contestation subliminale: Les costumes mongols dans le *Kalila & Dimna* de Rabat (BRR 3655),” in E. Brac de la Perrière et al. (eds.), *Les périple de Kalila et Dimna*, Leiden, Brill, 2022, pp. 301–324.

### 3 Word and Image

The relationship between discourse and image is an ancient *topos*, evoked in the West by Simonides of Keos, followed by Horace’s famous *Ut pictura poesis*.<sup>23</sup>

The Persian world appears to maintain a peculiar relationship between text and image.<sup>24</sup> The example of Darius’ relief in Bisutun, in which an image *illustrates* the trilingual inscription (see Fig. 0.1), might be an ancient example of this phenomenon. However, far from being a continuous history, the place of writing is conflictive and ambivalent in the Iranian world. Achaemenid inscriptions are not numerous, and it appears that a distrust of the written word existed in ancient Iran.<sup>25</sup> Among other factors, this is indicated by

23 Rensselaer, W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The humanistic theory of painting*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1967. A similar discussion, but between music and words, occurs in the libretto for Richard Strauss *Capriccio* (1942), co-written by the composer and Clemens Krauss.

24 On this general topic, see the introduction of Sheila Blair, *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art*, Edinburgh, EUP, 2013, (pp. 1–9), with a special tribute to E. Yarshater.

25 Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l’empire perse*, Paris, Fayard, 1996, p. 201, incidentally mentions the rarity of books in the Achaemenid period.

the sacred texts of the *Avesta* not being written down until long after the Islamic invasion. Distrust and superstition are not the only explanations, and the level of literacy must also be considered. Moreover, there are other sociological issues to consider in the frame of Sasanian society that are linked to the status and privileges of the scribes' caste.

The relationship with the written word probably changed dramatically with the appearance of Islam and its immediate correlate, the Arabic language. This is illustrated not only by the language of the Quran but also by decrees making the use of Arabic compulsory in administrative documents or on coins (as with the monetary reform of 'Abd al-Malik).<sup>26</sup>

In the Iranian world, Arabic remained prevalent not only in documents but also on objects and architectural epigraphy until the 11th century.<sup>27</sup> This might be partly due to the numerous Arab settlements in Khurasan, although the status of the administrative and literate language of Arabic transcends this point.<sup>28</sup> A strange coincidence is represented by the spectacular Nishapur plates (c.10th century) displaying, in a superb Kufic script, some Arabic proverbs and aphorisms written in black over a whitish slip (or vice versa). The flourishing period of such vessels ironically corresponds to what is often termed the "Persian renaissance," a locution usually restricted to the *Belles-lettres*. However, the existence of these calligraphic ceramics does not represent the only production of the time. During the same period, another type of ceramic appeared to emerge in



FIGURE 0.2 Luster bowl with flag-bearer, Iraq, 10th century.  
Musée du Louvre, MAO 23  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

this region: the so-called buff ware, polychrome and decorated with figures, in which text is almost absent.<sup>29</sup> These two types of objects were possibly not intended for the same sociocultural clientele. Moreover, since several of these buff ware objects display cross motifs, their clientele may have comprised, exclusively or not, Nestorian Christians.<sup>30</sup>

The approach to *readable* data is another thorny question, sometimes obscured by the over-textualist temptation. The question of the inscriptions' legibility, when these accompany images, might be problematic, especially regarding

26 André Miquel, *L'Islam et sa civilisation*. Paris, Armand Colin, 1968, p. 75.

27 Sheila Blair, *The Monumental inscriptions from early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana*, Leiden, Brill, 1992, p. 10. See also Bernard O'Kane, *The Appearance of Persian on Islamic Art*, New York, Persian Heritage Foundation, 2009.

28 E.L. Daniel, "Arab iii. Arab settlements in Iran," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 11/2, pp. 210–214, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arab-iii> (accessed 16/11/2022).

29 I deliberately elude here the question of aniconism in Islamic art as irrelevant; on this question see O. Pancaroglu, "Figural ornament in Medieval Islamic Art," in F.B. Flood and G. Necipoglu (eds.), *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, Hoboken, John Wiley, 2017, vol. 1, pp. 501–520.

30 "References to Demmi communities in Nishapur are sparse, though the Sufi Shaikh Abu Sa'id ibn Abi'l-Kayr is said to have converted forty of the local Christians in the middle years of the 11th century." C. Edmund Bosworth, "Nishapur i. Historical Geography and History to the Beginning of the 20th Century," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2010 (online edition). <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nishapur-i> (accessed 16/11/2022).



FIGURE 0.3 Detail of Nishapur buff ware bowl, 10th century (?). Ex-Plotnick collection  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

the early periods, and two examples illustrate the problem here. V.A. Kratchowskaya deciphered the inscription on an ‘Abbasid luster bowl in the Louvre, showing a man holding a banner, as *al-mulku li-llah* (Fig. 0.2).<sup>31</sup> The question is whether this “epigraphic” motif can be considered a *readable text*. Moreover, this object has been used as an example documenting the earliest inscribed banner represented in figural art from the Islamic world.<sup>32</sup> However, one could object that its documentary aspect as “epigraphic banner” might be misleading unless one considers epigraphy as a global sign or icon, although unreadable.<sup>33</sup>

Another example of the difficulty in trusting inscriptions has been published by Oya Pancaroğlu. A Nishapur buff ware bowl formerly in the Plotnick collection and showing a seated couple has an inscription that has been read as *nush kon* (Drink!) (Fig. 0.3).<sup>34</sup> However, since inscrip-

tions in Persian were almost nonexistent at that time, one could wonder whether this inscription was really in Persian or if its reading was correct. Another possibility is that this piece is a fake.<sup>35</sup>

The appearance and ubiquity of Arabic inscriptions in Iranian areas probably blurred the strictly scriptural value of the texts, turning them into a transcendent image of the script. The later use of the Arabic alphabet for transcribing Persian further increased this blurring. This effect was exacerbated when the viewers of these inscriptions did not read or speak Arabic.

Later, when Persian inscriptions appeared, they did not always show a clear correlation between text and images, as is evident with figurative ceramics of the *mina’i* or lusterware types. Moreover, many of these objects only have repetitive and abridged blessings. Again, and ironically significantly, these Persian texts appear in what is often and misleadingly qualified as “Seljuq” ceramics. As such, they frequently serve as illustrations for books and exhibitions concerning the “Turks.”

The importance of monumental epigraphy varies considerably according to times and places across the Islamic world.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in the Maghreb and the Ottoman Empire, large visible and monumental inscriptions are infrequent, whereas these are much more explicit in Safavid architecture. In Greater Iran, the presence of written words is extremely variable based on the chronology. The inscriptions are almost invisible on the Samanid tomb in Bukhara and even more in the so-called Hajji Piyada mosque in Balkh. Only in the late

31 See V.A. Kratchowskaya, “A propos de l’épigraphie d’un plat à lustre métallique,” in *Ars Islamica* IV, (1937), pp. 468–471. See Musée du Louvre, MAO 23, (accessed 18/11/2022). [http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=32980&langue=fr](http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=32980&langue=fr).

32 J. David-Weill, “Alam,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1960), I, pp. 359–360.

33 This subject is again addressed in the second Chapter, *Inscriptions*, p. 93.

34 O. Pancaroğlu, *Perpetual Glory. Medieval Islamic Ceramics from the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection*, Chicago, The Art Institute, 2007, pp. 82–83. The expected

formulation of the imperative of *nushidan* (to drink) should be *benush*. <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/arts-of-the-islamic-world/lot.517.html> (accessed 18/11/2022).

35 The shape of this bowl is unusual, as noted by Sheila Samavaki in her thesis, *L’iconographie des céramiques polychromes (rangārang) de Nishapur, IX<sup>e</sup>-X<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Aix-in-Provence, 2016, p. 132 and Fig. 2.36, in which she discarded this object as unreliable.

36 A.S. Mélikian-Chirvani, “L’écriture et l’art dans les pays de l’Islam,” *Discours, écriture et société dans le monde islamique contemporain*, Paris, AAEI, 1982, pp. 177–200.



FIGURE 0.4 Main entrance pavilion at the Mausoleum of Akbar, Sikandra. The calligraphy on white marble framing the red sandstone composition under the iwan is signed by ‘Abd al-Haqq Shirazi and dated 1022/1613.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

10th or early 11th century did a real monumental epigraphy emerge.<sup>37</sup>

On luster tiles, starting from the early 13th century, one often finds a combination of texts and images, particularly on star-shaped revetments. Later, during the Ilkhanid period, revetments made specifically for palatial decoration made extensive use of non-figural, epigraphic tiles. This deliberate choice, which does not necessarily exclude figurative tiles, signifies the value given to the written word even in contexts in which it is less expected (than in religious buildings).

37 Blair, *The Monumental Inscriptions*, p. 10; A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, “Remarques préliminaires sur un mausolée ghaznévide,” *Arts Asiatiques* 17, (1968), pp. 59–92.

In India, before the Mughal period, the place and visibility of the epigraphic décor also varied considerably. Monumental and clearly visible inscriptions are rare in the Delhi sultanate, whereas in Malwa and the Deccan, one can find large inscriptions made from colored tiles and thus easily seen from afar. However, even in more restricted areas, the place and role of monumental epigraphy varied enormously. A comparison between the Mughal mausoleums of Sikandra and the Taj Mahal demonstrates this point (Figs. 0.4–5), and although both mausolea are only approximately 10 kilometers apart and display inscriptions made by the same calligrapher (‘Abd al-Haqq Shirazi “Amanat Khan”), Akbar’s tomb is almost devoid of clearly visible epigraphy, whereas in the Taj, the epigraphic program appears as almost structural.<sup>38</sup>

Although classification of the diverse arts in the Islamic world appears a complex issue (as developed hereafter), calligraphy doubtlessly occupies the first rank. Not all writing is considered calligraphic, and in bookmaking, average copyists did not claim to be calligraphers. Thus, even in the divine field of the art of writing, a distinction between artists and craftspeople emerges.

#### 4 Habitus versus Creation and the “Material Turn”

The opposition between “know-how” and “artistic creativity,” embodied in Persian by the couple *ṣanʿat/hunar*, is a multifaceted issue, especially in the arts of Islam. Following a complex evolution from antiquity to the Renaissance, the Western arts have differentiated the noble arts (sculpture, painting, and architecture) from the handicrafts. However, this distinction proves much more diffuse in the arts of the Islamic world. Assuredly, the epistemology of this field requires reassessment,

38 See W.E. Begley & Z.A. Desai, *Taj Mahal. The Illumined Tomb*, Cambridge (Mass.), The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1989.



FIGURE 0.5 Taj Mahal. The calligraphy on black over white marble is signed by ‘Abd al-Haqq Shirazi Amanat Khan and dated 1048/1638–39.

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

part of which could find a basis in the “material turn” through renewed attention to the artwork’s materiality.

Arts and crafts might be used simultaneously: in producing illustrated manuscripts, one finds creative processes (painting) and repetitive operations (preparation of paper, ruling, and *jadval-kashi*). A similar scheme would probably be observed in some ceramic productions. This is especially true with the “invention” of images or complex geometric and floral patterns found on certain vessels such as the so-called *mina’i*, although their later multiplication blurs their initial inventive facet. Hence, the question of the “unique” work of art, as opposed to the multiple, is added to the discussion.

Issues related to materials, techniques, operational sequences, and habitus are many; they are often easier to study and outnumber than questions related to creativity, which are less easily objectivated. The difficulty of achieving physical and chemical analysis on materials regrettably prevented approaches based on archaeometry in the present studies.<sup>39</sup> However, materials have been considered through the

39 Fortunately, the work of some scholars belonging to other scientific domains proves extremely helpful in these matters, as with Maninder Singh Gill’s thesis on Indian tiles (Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India: a technological appraisal*, unpublished PhD dissertation, UCL University College, London, 2015; see also our Chapter 4).

(mainly Persian) written sources, providing a large span of responses, although these sources should be used with caution. A large gap exists between texts produced by learned scholars and the works of non-academic craftspeople. Moreover, the study of the materials used by craftspeople is biased by modern chemistry as while industry uses pure materials, these were infrequent in pre-modern crafts.

For economic reasons, craftspeople customarily prefer using available materials or those produced locally. This also strongly influences techniques since these must be adapted to available materials. Moreover, the cost and expenses related to materials vary according to the workshop patron's wealth, prestige, and capacity to establish a professional network.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> For luster ware, see Y. Porter, "Les potiers de Kashan (fin XII<sup>e</sup> début XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles), splendeurs et mystères d'une production persane," in S. Burri and M. Ouerfelli (dir.), *Artisanat et métiers en Méditerranée médiévale et moderne*, Aix-in-Provence, PUP, 2018, pp. 425–467.

Process-based approaches can be completed by decision-based ones, as the first follows established and traditional planning, whereas the second might be renewed on each occasion. This duality of processes could also be paralleled with "tradition versus innovation." Interestingly, the establishment of the Beaux-Arts school in Pahlavi Iran corresponded with the moment when "miniature painting" *paradoxically* became a "traditional art," illustrating a remarkable acculturation twist.<sup>41</sup>

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Most of the issues addressed in this introduction must be explored in more depth. However, it is hoped that scholars will find, in the following pages, materials to continue their exploration. The four contributions are followed by a series of Annexes (1 to 6), representing part of the "raw material" used for some of these papers.

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<sup>41</sup> On this question, see Bahram Ahmadi, *L'enseignement universitaire de la peinture en Iran: problèmes et influences*, PhD thesis, Aix Marseille Université, 2011.

## The “Making of” of Persian Illustrated Manuscripts

The Persian outlook is essentially and incurably romantic [sic]

LAURENCE BINYON<sup>1</sup>



The study of Persian painting – what is vulgarly termed “Persian miniature”<sup>2</sup> – has long been undertaken, since the late 19th century, with the utmost scorn for the text framing it: this ethnocentric viewpoint was based on ignorance of Oriental languages and writings but also misunderstanding of the value of calligraphy in the Islamic lands.

Thus, most of the books on *Persian painting* display “mostly miniatures,” the accompanying text often being cut off.<sup>3</sup> The first goal of this paper could consequently be to reconnect these two expressions of the Iranian artistic genius: calligraphy and painting. They represent what the Safavid poet ‘Abdi Beyk Shirazi calls “the two *qalams*.”<sup>4</sup> In

doing so, one could replace manuscript paintings into its “context,” not only as text illustrations but also as a part of the *total work* embodied by the painted codex. Fortunately, several recent studies on this topic have provided new information on different aspects of this peculiar visual language.<sup>5</sup>

Why, where, when, and how were illustrated manuscripts made? After more than 30 years’ work on the “making of” of *Persian paintings*, many questions remain for which I have not yet found an answer. Persian miniatures are mainly included in manuscripts as illustrations. This artistic medium appears intricately bound to the Iranian world and is an incarnation of one of its specific forms.<sup>6</sup> While other regions, such as 13th century Iraq, or later-Ottoman Turkey or Mughal India, also offer examples of illustrated books, some chrono-geographical areas in the Islamic world, such as the Maghreb, are almost devoid of such artistic achievements.<sup>7</sup>

1 Quoted by Oleg Grabar, “Toward an Aesthetic of Persian Painting,” in S. Scott (ed.), *The Art of Interpreting. Papers in Art History from The Pennsylvania State University*, vol. IX, 1995, p. 132.

2 Both these terms are problematic: the word “miniature” is ambiguous and often understood as “something tiny” (a miniature car), whereas the etymology originates from *minium*, lead oxide (Pb<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>); therefore, I prefer not to use it. For an amusing survey of the question, see Simon Garfield, *In Miniature. How small things illuminate the world*. New York, Atria Books, 2018. “Persian” might also be an ambiguous word, as developed in Y. Porter & R. Castinel, “*Rendez à Khusrau ...*”

3 Oleg Grabar *Mostly Miniatures*, Princeton, PUP, 2000; Basil Gray, *Persian Painting*, Geneva, Skira, 1961.

4 See Y. Porter, “From the ‘Theory of the two *qalams*’ to the ‘Seven Principles of Painting’: Theory, Terminology, and Practice in Persian Painting,” *Muqarnas*, 17 (2000), pp. 109–118.

5 See, among many others, M. Amin Mahdavi, “Evidence for Grid Layout in Persian Manuscripts,” in R. Hillenbrand, ed., *Shahnama. The Visual language of the Persian Book of Kings*, Edinburgh, 2004, pp. 155–174. On another aspect, see David J. Roxburgh, “Micrographia. Toward a visual logic of Persianate painting,” *Res* n°43, *Islamic Arts*, 2003, pp. 12–30. More recently, see the excellent and groundbreaking essay by Rachel Milstein, “Persian Painting: The Page and the Text as Determinants in the Construction of Pictorial Space,” *JSAI* 50 (2021), pp. 313–356.

6 Before all, the geo-cultural area where this artistic form flourished should be defined. The terms of “Persian miniature” have sometimes included works made in the Deccan or in other Indian sultanates, or in the Ottoman Empire. This is what D. Roxburgh terms “Persianate painting” (Roxburgh, “Micrographia”).

7 A close observation of Ottoman or Indian paintings shows that behind evident stylistic disparities, the concepts behind these works are also different from those of the Iranian world. See Y. Porter, “La « miniature »: mythe occidental et réalités orientales,” in Rémi Labrusse (ed.), *Purs décors?* Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 2007, pp. 216–220.

Consequently, the first questions could be: Why insert illustrations in a book at all? Does this practice correspond to a *habitus*?<sup>8</sup> If the answer is yes, when did this practice start?

Beyond these questions, defining paintings in manuscripts as mere illustrations can prove reductive. The images could also be considered as iconographic glosses, respirations or pauses in the reading of the work, and evocations or openings (or transposition, sublimation, or transcendence) toward other directions, unveiling further domains for investigation.<sup>9</sup>

Persian illustrated manuscripts are the fruit of collaboration between two main categories of artists/craftspeople. The first term indicates a singular and original creative gest, while the second represents repetitive or mechanical expertise, but it is the conjunction of both that results in the final work.

However, neither category is impermeable, especially because some of the “craftspeople” became so virtuous that they were recognized for their extraordinary ability. This applied to Muhammad Amin Jadval-kash (“frame-maker”) and Yahya Qazvini, an expert in restoring books and making *abri* (or “marbled”) paper.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in the social categorization and its subsequent hierarchy, it must be remembered that the highest

rank is given without contest to the calligrapher. Their names often appear in the colophons, and many biographies cite their names, whereas painters seldom sign their works, and few *tadhkira* (or biographies) are dedicated to them.

Regarding the hierarchy, the calligraphers excepted, such manuscripts represent the fruit of a collective work in which the rank of each contributor is probably irrelevant.

Briefly, the professional categories involved in making illustrated manuscripts potentially include simple and talented craftspeople, artists simply reproducing pre-existing patterns, and truly creative designers.

The strategy used here is placed in the general framework of the study of the “operational sequences”<sup>11</sup> involved in creating an illustrated manuscript, with the concern more closely related to techniques than “schools” of painting or attributions to a specific artist. This field is thus closer to codicology than to traditional art history. The goal is to define all the different steps involved in the production of a painted codex. However, in parallel with identifying the processes, it is also necessary to insert them into a historical framework to observe possible evolutions.

Some technical aspects, such as the making and typology of plain papers, decorated papers, dyes and pigments, and similar materials, have been addressed in previous studies.<sup>12</sup> Moreover,

8 As defined by E. Panofsky: “Cet *habitus* [force formatrice d’habitudes] pourrait être défini par analogie avec la « grammaire génératrice » de Chomsky, comme système des schèmes intériorisés qui permettent d’engendrer toutes les pensées, les perceptions et les actions caractéristiques d’une culture, et celles-là seulement.” Quoted from Jean-Louis Déotte, “Bourdieu et Panofsky: l’appareil de l’habitus scolastique,” *Appareil* [Online], Articles, Online 04 November 2010. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/appareil/1136> (accessed 13/11/2022). For a broader definition of the *habitus*, see also Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford, Polity, 1990, pp. 52–66.

9 Some of these questions (adding *Jeopardy*) have been addressed by O. Grabar “Toward an Aesthetic of Persian Painting,” pp. 137–139.

10 Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, transl. by V. Minorsky, Washington, Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, 1959, pp. 189 and 194.

11 The goal of the *chaîne opératoire*, as described by Leroi-Gourhan, is a better understanding not only of the society in which a technique originated but also of the social context, actions, and cognition accompanying the production of an object; see our Introduction, note 9.

12 See Y. Porter, “Kāqaz-e abri, notes sur les techniques de la marbrure,” *Studia Iranica*, 17,1 (1988). pp. 47–55; *Peinture et arts du livre. Essai de littérature technique indo-persane*. Paris: Editions Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1992; “Shangarf et lājvard dans le monde iranien,” *Res orientales*, v, *Circulation des monnaies, des marchandises et de monnaies*, (1993), pp. 147–157; “Notes sur la fabrication du papier dans le monde iranien médiéval (VIII<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle),” in M. Zerdoun Bat-Yehouda (ed.), *Le papier au Moyen Age: histoire et techniques, Actes du colloque tenu*

the materials (such as pigments and dyes) making the manifold hues of a palette possible at a determined time and place underwent no significant evolution during the pre-modern period from the late 13th to late 16th centuries.

The present study mainly concentrates on the decisional and intellectual processes involved in creating an illustrated manuscript. One could, incidentally, question this limit. Why only *illustrated* manuscripts? Recent research, such as Simon Rettig’s PhD dissertation on 15th century Turkmen manuscripts from Shiraz, focuses on many typological trends besides paintings, such as layout, style of writing, and illumination.<sup>13</sup> Considering unillustrated manuscripts widely enlarges the critical mass for codicological studies.

Therefore, as mentioned above, although taxonomies concerning schools of painting, styles, painters, or attributions are not addressed here, analyses of the processes are inscribed in a history of arts, with the variations in forms and concepts that this duration necessarily implies.

It must be emphasized that few answers exist to the different questions studied here. If the practical and material aspects of the arts of the book are likely to be outnumbered and analyzed, other matters appear much more reluctantly addressed. These issues relate to creative dimensions, such as the “invention” of images, the manner figures are placed into the general outlines of a composition, and elements concerned with the expression of emotions, which are much more difficult to understand.

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à Paris 23–25 avril 1998, (*Bibliologia* 19), Turnhout, Brepols, 1999, pp. 19–30; “Les papiers décorés dans l’Orient musulman,” in *Les objets de l’écriture. Les Essentiels de Maqalid*, Septembre 2013 n°2, pp. 203–215; “Papiers de l’Iran et de l’Inde: archéologies impalpables de témoins discrets,” in: Laroque C. (ed.), *La peinture et l’écrit au Moyen-Orient, supports et tracés: [Actes de la journée d’étude du 22 septembre 2017, organisée par L’HiCSA, Paris Sorbonne]*. Paris: HiCSA Editions, 2018, pp. 4–21.

13 Simon Rettig, *La production manuscrite à Chiraz sous les Aq Qoyunlu entre 1467 et 1503*. PhD Thesis, Aix-in-Provence, 2011.

Persian painting uses a codified language.<sup>14</sup> Although one can differentiate several characters by their sex, skin color, age, social attributes, and attire, the human body is seldom shown, and its anatomical details (such as shoulders, waist, and breast) are even more rarely drawn. Accordingly, one sees “tubular” bodies, with a uniform skin color, meaning that frequently used poetical metaphors such as “rose-cheeks” or “ruby lips” are never observed, not to mention “teeth as white as pearls,” since those are *never* shown except in monstrous beings or animals.

Landscapes, appearing only by the end of the 13th century, are devoid of perspective or depth, the space being rendered almost bidimensional; the light is even, without shadows. The weather is bright, as in an eternal spring, with cherry or almond-tree blossoms, sometimes sharing their space with an autumnal chinar or a seasonless cypress.

To summarize, the highly codified, non-mimetic mode of expression characteristic of Persian painting implies using the intellect to fill the gaps between what is seen in a painting and what is told, either by the text or by its codified iconographic rendition.

Many other aspects could be linked to the study of the techniques and processes involved in the arts of the book, which are generally far from the *invention* of images. However, the “making of,” together with its technological apparatus and various forms of *habitus*, is often not alien to more formal approaches in the practice of painting; these relate, since the works by L. Réau and O. Pächt, to the “life of forms.”<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the method implied by the “formal opportunity” has rarely been applied to Islamic art, with one notable exception being the recent research by Nadia Ali

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14 See Oleg Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, “Constraints” and “Values,” pp. 127–146.

15 Louis Réau, “L’influence de la forme sur l’iconographie de l’art médiéval,” in *Formes de l’art, formes de l’esprit*, Paris, PUF, 1951, pp. 85–105; Otto PÄCHT, *Methodisches zur kunsthistorischen Praxis*. Munich, Prestel, 1977.

on Umayyad figurative art.<sup>16</sup> This issue is discussed again in the second chapter (see II, 3).

Before discussing the subject, some prolegomena are provided to set Persian illustrated manuscripts in context. Questions regarding history, historiography, chronology, geography, texts, and contexts are addressed first. These are followed by questions on the decisions and steps to creation.

## 1 Prolegomena: Persian Illustrated Manuscripts in Context

### 1.1 Early Illustrated Manuscripts and Timespan

The oldest illustrated *Persian* manuscript that has survived is probably the *Varqa and Gulshāh* kept in Istanbul (Fig. 1.1). This is the first object of study, but what is known about illustrated manuscripts before this date?

Images were present in the Persian world long before Islam. They served mainly as representations of royal power, such as Sasanian rock reliefs and the so-called *Khudāy-nāma*, which is addressed later. Using images may have been considered a privilege.

Moreover, the illustration of epics appears to precede their writing, as with the *Shāh-nāma* and other texts, as shown on the mural paintings of Pendzhikent.<sup>17</sup> The oral tradition, through bards and minstrels (*gosān*), appears to have been prevalent for a long period. The long process of creating images related to an epic (although unwritten) and their probable, yet temporary, loss of significance and reference are also addressed in the next chapter.

16 See Nadia Ali, *Processus de fabrication de l'iconographie palatiale omeyyade*, PhD thesis, Aix Marseille Université, 2008; more recently, Nadia Ali, "Qusayr 'Amra and the Continuity of Post-Classical Art in Early Islam," in A. Lichtenberger et R. Raja, *The Diversity of Classical Archaeology*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, pp. 161–197.

17 Boris Marshak "Panjikant," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2002, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/panjikant> (accessed 13/11/2022).

If illustrated books existed before Islam, their number and importance are unknown. The few scattered fragments of Manichean illustrated manuscripts on paper in Uyghur script, found in Chinese Turkestan and dating back to the 9th century, represent the phantom remains of a long-lost pre-Islamic tradition of illustrated manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> However, evidence of *Sasanian* illustrated books is lacking. A few scattered mentions could indicate the existence of such codices, but other facts (such as the "unwritten" character of sacred Zoroastrian texts) make this probability uncertain.

The *Khudāy-nāma*, mentioned by Mas'udi (10th c.) among other authors, is symptomatic of the existence (however legendary) of illustrated books and the values that representation can convey.<sup>19</sup> This work was supposedly a compendium of portraits of the Sasanian kings and queens that were, amazingly and according to the sources, not painted in their lifetime but after their death. Mas'udi claims he saw these portraits himself at the house of a patrician from Istakhr and describes the garments and attributes, together with poses and attitudes of the deceased kings. Other authors emphasize that the book was brandished during battles in the manner of a banner.<sup>20</sup> It can be added that since it is stated that *all* the Sasanian kings and queens were featured in this book, it could hardly belong to the "Sasanian"

18 For an excellent overall survey of the subject, see Zsuzsana Gulacsi, *Mani's Pictures. The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uyghur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China*, Leiden, Brill, 2015.

19 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mas'udi, *Kitāb al-tanbih wa'l ashraf*, Leyden, Brill, 1893, pp. 106,5–107,5; transl. B. Carra de Vaux, *El-Maḥoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement*, Paris, Société Asiatique, 1896, pp. 150–151.

20 Since Thomas Arnold (*Painting in Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1928, reprint New York, Dover, 1965, pp. 63 and 82), many authors have addressed this story based on Mas'udi; among them, see Muhammad Taqi Danish-Pazhuh, "Muraqqa' sāzi va jung navisi," in *Farkhunda payyām, in memory of Q.H. Yusefi*, Mashhad, Dānishgāh, 1360/1981, pp. 152–153. This author also gives a series of references to similar stories based on the works of Tha'alibi and Tabari.

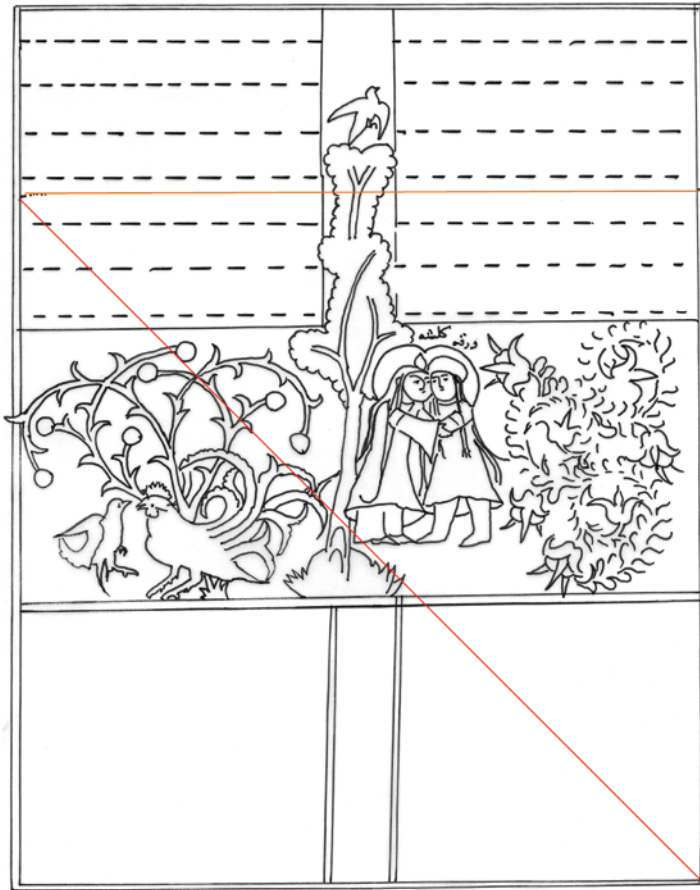


FIGURE 1.1

*Varqa and Gulshāh*, folio 33b (Istanbul, TSMK H. 841). There are 19 lines per page, and seven text-lines are figured here (top); the diagonal of the square (in red) evidences a ratio of 1/1.28, which contrasts with later, more vertical formats.

DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

period, strictly speaking (without addressing a type of “evolutive” work).

While references to illustrated books were rare before Islam, the number of occurrences appears to plummet on reaching the first centuries of Islamic domination. Almost no information on the topic exists. One exception could be a mention by Ibn Muqaffa’ (circa 720–756) concerning paintings added to his translation of the *Kalila and Dimna*, “in order to make the book more suitable.”<sup>21</sup>

21 This and following references are – somewhat loosely – given by Danish-Pazhuh (“Muraqqa’ sāzi,” pp. 151–152); I have mentioned them in *Peinture et arts du livre* (p. 19 note 11). I must thank my former student, Lamia Balafrej for providing me with the originals of these quotations. The text of the preface to *Kalila and Dimna* is from the edition by Shaykhu al-Yasu’i, Beyrouth, 1923, p. 52, note 1. The text of the preface of Abu Mansur’s *Shāh-nāma* is given by Muhammad

However, this detail apparently does not appear in all the versions of his text and could be a later addition. It is noteworthy that some tales from the *Panchatantra* are portrayed on the murals from Pendzhikent. Moreover, the iconography of these episodes is known from Indian Buddhist sculptures (Fig. 1.2).<sup>22</sup> Curiously, it is again concerning these Fables that yet another mention of illustrations is found. In the preface to the *Shāh-nāma*

Qazvini, “Muqaddama-i Shāh-nāma-i Abu Mansuri,” *Bist maqale*, Tehran, 1934, (reprint Tehran, Dunyā-i Kitāb, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 30–47; on Rudaki’s versified and illustrated version, idem, p. 33.

22 See Simona Cohen and Housni Alkhateeb Shehada, “From the Panchatantra to La Fontaine: Migrations of Didactic Animal Illustrations from India to the West,” *Artibus Asiae*, 77, 1 (2017), pp. 5–68. [https://www.academia.edu/36974680/Panchatantra\\_pdf\\_AA\\_76-2.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/36974680/Panchatantra_pdf_AA_76-2.pdf) (accessed 13/11/2022). On *Panchatantra*, see also B. Flood, *Objects of Translation*, pp. 6–8.



FIGURE 1.2 Terracotta tile with scene from *Panchatantra*, circa 781–821. Paharpur Vihara (Bangladesh)  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014

of Abu Mansur (957 CE), it is stated that Rudaki wrote a versified version of *Kalila and Dimna*, and subsequently some Chinese painters were ordered to add paintings to the text to make it more agreeable and understandable.<sup>23</sup>

No such illustrated manuscripts are known, the oldest surviving ones being probably the copies found at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, probably originating from Syria and dating from c.1200–1220. It is possible that other texts, also of Indian origin and translated as early as the Sasanian period, were also illustrated. This could apply to the *Kitāb Bilawar wa Budāsf* (known in the West as *Barlaam and Josaphat*) although the

oldest known illustrated copy in Arabic probably dates from the second half of the 13th century.<sup>24</sup>

When examining some early illustrated Persian manuscripts, such as the *Varqa and Gulshāh* (Istanbul, TSMK, Hazine 841), the following question arises; why is this the only known illustrated manuscript of this text? The same question could be asked about the *Kitāb-i Samak-i Ayyār* from the Bodleian Library.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, one might wonder why other texts, such as *Vis-o Rāmin*, which were extremely popular in their times, were never illustrated. It is also possible that these illustrated manuscripts existed but were later destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

The sudden appearance of illustrated Persian manuscripts by the late 13th–early 14th century remains unexplained, and opinions diverge on this topic.<sup>27</sup> The hiatus between the hypothetical art of the pre-Islamic illustrated book and the production of the Ilkhanid period could be filled with other media, such as painted ceramics or metalwork. However, these objects are mainly devoid of a relationship between image and text to compare with the one observed in manuscripts. Hence, images exist without text and text without images.<sup>28</sup> This fact could indicate that images *signify* differently from the text. The picture thus resembles a perspective or viewpoint, allowing the text to be ignored.

<sup>24</sup> Balamand Monastery (Lebanon), Ms. 147.

<sup>25</sup> MSS. Ouseley 379–81; B.W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958, pp. 2–7.

<sup>26</sup> On these early manuscripts, see also Chapter 2.

<sup>27</sup> Concerning this topic, see M.S. Simpson, “*Shahnama* as Text and *Shahnama* as Image: A Brief Overview of Recent Studies, 1975–2000,” in R. Hillenbrand (ed.), *Shahnama. The Visual Language of the Persian Book of Kings*, Edinburgh, Ashgate, 2004, (pp. 9–23), p. 12. See also R. Hillenbrand, “The relationship between book painting and luxury ceramics,” in R. Hillenbrand (ed.), *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, Costa Mesa, Mazda, 1994, pp. 134–145.

<sup>28</sup> On the question of early unillustrated *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts, see Charles Melville, “The *Shāh-nāma* in Historical Context,” in B. Brend & C. Melville (eds.), *Epic of the Persian Kings*, Cambridge, Tauris, 2010, pp. 11–14.

<sup>23</sup> See note 21.

From the early 14th century onward, when the production of illustrated manuscripts reaches a critical mass, it becomes possible to investigate the methods used to make these codices and identify any evolution in their creation.

What are termed here as "illustrated manuscripts" should be considered "manuscripts with paintings." The conception of an image inserted in an illuminated codex differs significantly from a mere *illustrative* dimension, as is known in Western art. The didactic purpose (resembling Manichean manuscripts mentioned above) and philosophical transcendence appearing through the choices of the subjects and layout are essential for their understanding.

The definition of a classical period in Persian painting is somewhat conflictive.<sup>29</sup> Since few illustrated manuscripts are known before the Ilkhanid times, a limited number of items represent what could be termed the "archaic" period.<sup>30</sup> From the mid-point of Ilkhanid rule, in around 1300, to the Jalayirids in circa 1370, painting and the arts of the book underwent important evolutions. Accordingly, Dust Muhammad writes that Ahmad Musa started painting in the manner that remained common in the Safavid epoch, but a few years after the 1370s, Mir 'Ali of Tabriz invented the *nasta'liq* script. This is labeled the "formative period" by B.W. Robinson.<sup>31</sup>

The classical epoch is considered to have begun at this point, and included the production of the whole of the 15th century (Timurid and Turkmen) through to the first century of Safavid rule in the 16th century.<sup>32</sup> From the early 17th century onward, visual arts experimented with new visions, techniques, and functionalities. By the 1660s, the role of European inspiration had grown significantly. Therefore, the time span considered here is tentatively limited to the early 14th through to the late 16th centuries.

From afar, Persian painting might be considered entirely endogenous, but a closer examination shows that besides the major influence represented by the great invasions of the Arabs, Turks, and Mongols, other cultural areas penetrated it. This applied to the Caucasian lands, India, and China, while Europe probably entered the scene later as mentioned above.<sup>33</sup>

According to current terminology, major currents existed in the arts of the book, often metropolitan and "official," although many "provincial" centers also existed. However, little is known about the migrations of artists, either by force or by choice, from one workshop to another. These different centers of manuscript production might imply inventive phases and, conversely, repetitive ones, during which mere "formulae" were applied. Painting probably shows these variations in "style" (taste, conception, and references) with more evidence than other fields such as layout or calligraphy. The function and destination of manuscripts are also important issues to consider. What is often termed "commercial" was probably conceived differently from "princely" productions.<sup>34</sup> However,

29 Oleg Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, p. 32, does not refer to a "classical" period in his historiographical survey. On this question, see also Christiane Gruber, "Questioning the 'classical' in Persian painting: models and problems of definition," *Journal of Art Historiography*, 6 (2012), pp. 1–25.

30 A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Trois manuscrits de l'Iran seldjoudide," *Arts asiatiques*, 16, (1967), pp. 3–51, inflated the list of illustrated *Persian* manuscripts by mixing Arabic codices with Persian ones; furthermore, the *Varqa and Gulshāh* was probably made in the Konya sultanate. See also A.S. Melikian-Chirvani. *Le roman de Varqe et Golshāh: Essai sur les rapports de l'esthétique littéraire et de l'esthétique plastique dans l'Iran pré-mongol, suivi de la traduction du poème*, *Arts asiatiques*, 22, (1970), pp. 1–264.

31 B.W. Robinson, "A Survey of Persian Painting (1350–1896)," in C. Adle (ed.), *Art et Société dans le Monde Iranien*, Paris, ERSC, 1982, p. 16.

32 Curiously, the French résumé (Robinson, idem) is called "Peinture classique iranienne (1350–1896)," p. 83. On the historiography of Persian painting, see also O. Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures*, p. 32.

33 Some previous contacts exist; see Gülrü Necipoglu, "Persianate Images between Europe and China: The 'Frankish Manner' in the Diez and Topkapı Albums, c. 1350–1450," in J. Gonnella, F. Weis and C. Rauch, eds., *The Diez Albums. Contexts and Contents*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 531–591.

34 See for instance Ilse Sturkenboom, "Copying 'Atṭār's Conference of the Birds in Aq Qoyunlu Shiraz Evidence

it must be emphasized that the minimal information that is available originates primarily from princely workshops.

### 1.2 *Decisions and Steps to Creation*

Many questions arise concerning the whole process of producing an illustrated manuscript. Some address the iconographic programme or the meaning of images as illustrations of a text. Other issues relate to the abilities and artistic achievements of the painters involved. Another series of questions relates to technical matters such as the size, layout, and materials chosen for a codex.

Where should one start? At which point can the birth of a manuscript be situated?

- Do all manuscripts respond to an order?
- Who decides which text is copied and on what format and type of paper? Are special orders made for special occasions?
- How many illustrations will be included?
- What are the subjects? Do these images always deliver a message other than the *mere illustration*? If a message exists, what is its subject or substance? Who can see, understand, and decide it?
- What is the frequency of illustrated cycles?
- Are the compositions new, or are they copied from, or inspired by older ones?
- Where will the copied text be interrupted to accommodate an illustration? Who decides about this interruption?
- Does a general framework, template, or grid exist for the layout and composition of the illustrations and text, such as that based on the *mas̄tar* (ruling)?
- Are these decisions collegial, or are they imposed by the patron or head of the workshop?
- Does a unique *cas de figure* exist, or does each creation respond to appropriate demands?
- What is the extent of the *carte blanche* allowed to the different artists in the workshop?

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for Book Production in Sufi Convents,” in Antonella Brita, Giovanni Ciotti, Florinda De Simini, Amneris Roselli, eds. *Copying Manuscripts: Textual and Material Craftmanship*, Naples, Università degli Studi, 2020, pp. 271–310.

- When all the decisions are made, what is the starting task?

This list of questions could be extended, and only some directions on a few issues are suggested in the following pages.

The first series concerns the format, size, and proportions of illustrated manuscripts. Did common format standards exist for copying a specific type of text? A tentative answer is based on the example of Firdawsi’s *Shāh-nāma*.

One might then wonder whether the number of illustrations depended on the book’s format or if these data are irrelevant. The number and place of illustrations are surveyed, and this process is followed by the question of the frequency of images showing specific episodes, notably with the example of *Shirin bathing* in Nizami’s *Khamsa*.

The second series of issues concerns the structure of the painted page. This is approached through the layout, ruling (*mas̄tar*), and composition of paintings based on the geometry of the page, and in this phase the image is only considered through its basic structural construction.

The mechanisms for conceiving and inventing the illustrations are considered in the following section. Creations and repetitions are then analyzed. Finally, other operations such as inseting (*vaṣṣāli*) or frame ruling (*jadval-kashi*) are surveyed, particularly based on the ‘arza-dāshṭ (or “Presentation”) of Baysanghor’s library, c.1430.

## 2 **Formats, Ratios, and Space for Illustrations**

### 2.1 *Format (qaṭ‘) and Ratios of the Folios*

The Persian written sources are generally lacking in practical questions; the explanations concerning remarkable proportions, such as the golden section or the Pythagoras rectangle, are almost nonexistent.<sup>35</sup> However, the concern for the paper format is known through authors such as Rashid

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35 Conversely, literature on ratios and proportions, mainly based on Euclid’s *Elements*, is abundant in Western sources.

al-Din or, in the Mamluk world, Qalqashandi.<sup>36</sup> Overall, little is known about the practices concerning specific formats. Were these used *ad libitum*, or were they subject to tacit rules? It is evident that, as paper was expensive, using large pages was a means of demonstrating a patron’s wealth. However, did standards exist depending on which text was copied? It also appears natural that the format corresponded to a specific function such as public reading (large format), teaching (standard), or intimacy (pocketbook). Qazi Ahmad mentions a puzzling anecdote concerning the calligrapher ‘Umar Aqta’. He copied a minute Quran in *ghubār* (“dust”) script and presented it to Timur. The latter, unimpressed, did not approve of the gift and sent it back. The calligrapher then copied an extremely large copy of the Holy Book, “each of its lines being a cubit (*dhar’*) in length.” ‘Umar Aqta’ was then duly rewarded.<sup>37</sup>

More recently, Marie Efthymiou demonstrated the noticeable format variations in copies of Qurans in Central Asia, depending on their use as amulets, reading books for learning, or prestige copies for public display.<sup>38</sup>

Few mentions are specific concerning the use of a determined format for a special order. It is possible, as Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah recommends in his *Vaqf-nāma*, that certain formats are suited to certain types of texts. Thus, he explains that Qurans must be copied based on Baghdad’s in-folio (*qat’-i buzurg-i baghdādi*), whereas the Hadith must be written based on a consensual “suitable format” (*bi qat’-i ki munāsib dānand*).<sup>39</sup> Concerning his own works, he writes,

“Every year, two copies of the whole works of the founder have to be copied, one in Persian, the other in Arabic, on beautiful paper, with a nice writing, bound in Morocco-leather, and copied after the original manuscripts kept in the library of the Rashidi foundation.”<sup>40</sup>

However, the Vizier does not specify the format of these volumes.

In rare mentions, such as by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi or Dust Muhammad, the question of size (*qat’*) appears coupled with the *mas̄tar*. In his treatise on learning calligraphy, Sultan ‘Ali writes:

“Find some small manuscript  
Of good style and hold it before your eyes.  
Prepare yourself to copy it  
*In the same format, ruling, and kind of writing.*”<sup>41</sup>

In Dust Muhammad’s Preface, another mention of the couple *qat’/mas̄tar* is found:

“Baysanghur Mirza [...] ordered that after the pleasing manner of Sultan Ahmad of Baghdad’s miscellany, they should produce a book in exactly the same format and layout (*qat’-u-mas̄tar*) and with the same scenes depicted.”<sup>42</sup>

This relationship between size and ruling (or “layout,” as translated by Thackston) is not fortuitous. It appears logical that the copyist, especially with prestige manuscripts, wanted to endow his pages with an image of harmony. The ancient authors called this “symmetry,” commensurability between a whole and its parts.<sup>43</sup> To achieve this goal, the

36 Qalqashandi, *Ṣubḥ ul-a’sha*, Cairo, Government Press, 1963, vol. VI, pp. 189–191.

37 Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers*, p. 64.

38 Marie Efthymiou, *L’art du livre en Asie centrale de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 55–63.

39 The manuscript BnF Ar. 2324, *Majmū’a-i Rashidiya*, a collection of Rashid al-Din works in various subjects, is probably an example of the Baghdad in-folio. On the codicological characteristics of Ilkhanid manuscripts, see N. Ben Azouna, *Aux origines du classicisme. Calligraphes et bibliophiles au temps des dynasties mongoles (Les Ilkhanides et les Djalayirides 656–814 / 1258–1411)*, Leiden, Brill, 2018, chapter 6, pp. 473–524.

40 Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah, *Vaqf-nāma*, Persian text edited by I. Afshar and M. Minovi, Tehran, Anjuman-i āthār-i milli, 1977, pp. 237–238; translation Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, p. 163.

41 Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi, Transl. V. Minorsky in Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 118 (underlining is my own).

42 Translated by W. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters*, Leiden, Brill, 2001, p. 13.

43 See Ghika C. Matila, *Essai sur le rythme*. Paris, Gallimard, 1938.

artist could use relatively simple geometric formulae. These would allow him to divide the page in a chosen format, subdivided between the margins and main ground, the latter being divided into lines and columns forming the textbox. However, quantitative studies on the layouts and their relation to the *mas̄tar* are still required to provide satisfactory results. The question of the layout is further discussed in more detail below.

Several problems complicate the study of formats. Firstly, most of the manuscripts have been trimmed, in some cases on various occasions, meaning our knowledge of the original formats is approximate. Secondly, old restoration of ancient or damaged codices often involved in-setting the pages on fresh margins, sometimes made of tinted or gold-flecked papers, making their original size impossible to determine.

I have checked whether Rashid al-Din's recommendation concerning copies of the Quran could be applied to other texts such as the *Shāh-nāma*. A somewhat random corpus resembling an archaeological survey has been established by collecting all the information on the sizes of the 69 manuscripts listed by B. Brend and C. Melville (see Annex 1, Table 1).<sup>44</sup> These data have been organized in charts, allowing consideration of whether standards or common trends existed when using certain formats.

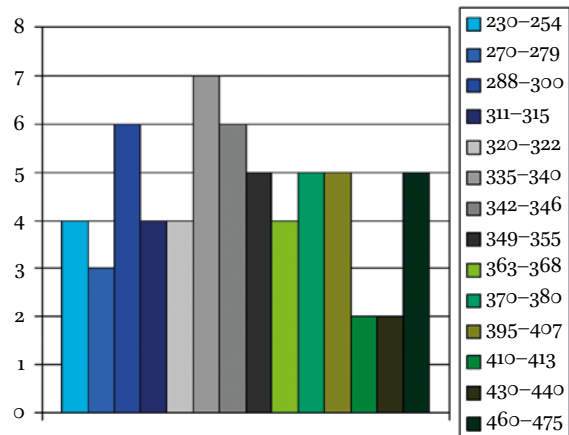
Format of *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts in the UK (see Graph 1 and Annex 1, Table 3):

- The smallest format in the corpus is Manchester, Ryl. Pers. 9 (mid-15th c., Shiraz/India): the size of the leaves is 23 × 15.8 cm, representing a ratio format of 1 × 1.45. The manuscript has 702 folios and 55 illustrations (ratio of folio/illustration: 12.76).
- Ten manuscripts are less than 30 cm high (6.4%).
- Twenty-five are under 35 cm high (16%).
- Fourteen are between 35 and 40 cm high (8.9%).
- Nine are under 45 cm high (5.7%).

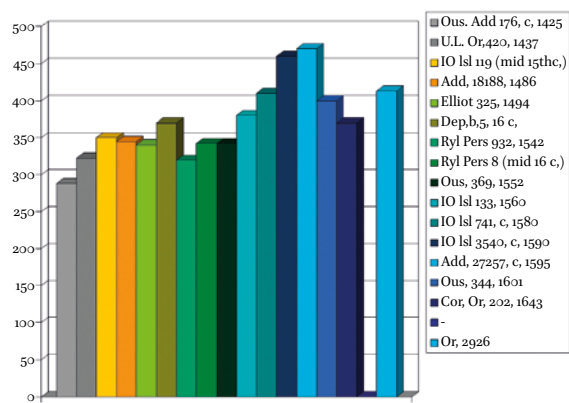
- Five are between 45 and 47.5 cm high (3.2%).
- The largest format is British Library, Add. 27302 (994/1586, Qazvin): 621 fol.; 52 ill. Ratio fol./ill.: 8, 37; size leaves: 47.5 × 31.5 cm; ratio format: 1.50.

If the larger proportion (16%) concerns manuscripts measuring approximately 35 cm in height, it is difficult to acknowledge a clear trend.

On a table of sixteen manuscripts copied between 1425 and 1830 in a single place (that is, Shiraz, see Graph 2) and arranged in chronological order, the results show a majority of volumes with a height around 35 cm, but no constant trend of format applied to the copy of the *Shāh-nāma* on the *longue durée*.



GRAPH 1 Number of *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts per size (to the right, height in mm)



GRAPH 2 Size (height in mm, to the left) of sixteen *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts copied at Shiraz, 1425-1830

44 Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings*, pp. 248-251. Five of the 69 manuscripts listed do not include the measurements.

### 2.1.1 Format of Royal Copies of the *Shāh-nāma*

The comparison between the format, ratio, actual size, number of folios, and ratio of illustrations versus folios has been applied to a selection of royal or princely copies of the *Shāh-nāma*.<sup>45</sup> These are as follows:

1. Ibrahim Sultan ibn Shah Rukh (c.1425–30): 28.8 × 19.8 cm (468 fol.; 51 ill.; ratio fol./ill. = 9.17)
2. Baysanghor ibn Shah Rukh (833/1429–30): 38 × 26 cm (350 fol./700 p.; 22 ill.; ratio fol./ill. = 15.9)
3. Muhammad Juki ibn Shah Rukh (c.1444): 32 × 17.8 cm (536 fol.; 31 ill.; ratio fol./ill. = 17.2)
4. Sultan 'Ali Mirza of Gilan "Big-Head" *Shāh-nāma* (1494): 34.5 × 24 cm (2 vol.; fol.? about 350 ill.)
5. Shah Tahmasp (1520–25): 47 × 31.8 cm (380 fol.; 258 ill.; ratio fol./ill. = 1.47)<sup>46</sup>
6. Shah Isma'il II (1576–77): 45.9 × 30.3 cm (fol.? about 49 ill.)
7. Shah 'Abbas I (1590–1600): 40.64 × 26.03 cm. (fol.? 16 ill.?)

It is noteworthy that even between the copies made in the years c.1425 to 1444 for the three sons of Shah Rukh (see nos. 1, 2, 3), no two figures (size, ratio, number of illustrations) are comparable.

Among the royal manuscripts for which the numbers of folios and illustrations are known, Shah Tahmasp's copy (Fig. 1.3) is undoubtedly by far the richest (thus the ratio folio/illustration is the lowest) and Muhammad Juki's the poorest.

45 *Shāh-nāma* of Ibrahim Sultan ibn Shah Rukh, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ouseley Add. 176; of Baysanghor ibn Shah Rukh, Tehran, Gulistan Library no. 716; of Muhammad Juki ibn Shah Rukh, London, Royal Asiatic Society, Ms. 239; of Sultan 'Ali Mirza of Gilan, "Big-Head" *Shāh-nāma*, partially dispersed, two volumes: Istanbul, TIEM, Ms. 1978 and University Library, Yıldız, (7954/310); of Shah Tahmasp, dispersed; of Shah Isma'il II, unfinished, dispersed, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 256; of Shah 'Abbas, unfinished (?), dispersed, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 277.

46 For comparison, the *Khamsa* of Shah Tahmasp (British Library) measures 36.51 × 25.08 cm (396 fol.; 14 + 3 ill.).

Finally, no standard formats appear to exist for the copies of the *Shāh-nāma*. In fact, the opposite may even be possible, meaning that each copy of this text, and especially the princely copies, needed to be unique in all aspects, including format and ratio.

### 2.1.2 Ratio of Format

As François Déroche stated, many manuscripts offer, despite variable dimensions, similar ratios of proportion. This is especially true if one considers specific regions and times and if the nature of the medium (i.e., parchment or paper) is considered. The ratios in manuscripts written on parchment diverge considerably from those on paper.<sup>47</sup>

Roughly, formats are closer to the square in the early manuscripts (see *Varqa and Gulshāh*, for instance, with a ratio of 1/1.28, Fig. 1.1; *Manāfi' al-ḥayawān*: 1/1.267, Fig. 1.5), but tend to be vertical in later times.

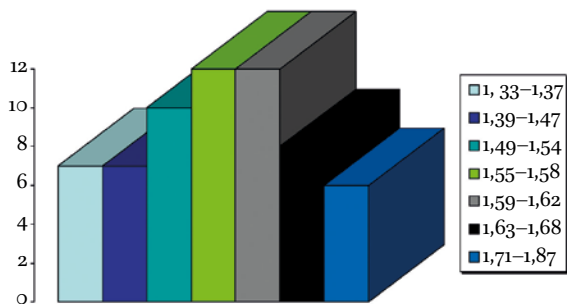
Although the proportions of *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts vary independently of their size, some ratios are evidently preferred; this particularly applies to ratios between 1.5 and 1.6 (see Graph 3 and Annex 1, Table 2):

- Eight manuscripts have ratios under 1.4, the smallest ratio being Windsor Castle, RCIN (A/5; c.1585, Qazvin): 283 fol.; 88 ill.; 44 × 33 cm: ratio 1.333.
- Seven manuscripts have ratios between 1.4 and 1.5.
- Twenty-five have ratios between 1.5 and 1.59.
- Sixteen have ratios between 1.6 and 1.69.
- Six have ratios between 1.71 and 1.87. The highest ratio is B.L. Or. 11842 (early 17th c., India): 573 fol.; 14 ill.; 30 × 16 cm: ratio 1.875.

47 On this topic, see F. Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe*, Paris, BnF, 2000, pp. 180–181. The concern for format is apparent in recent studies such as Eloïse Brac de la Perrière, *L'art du livre dans l'Inde des sultanats*, Paris, PUPS, 2008, pp. 113–121; Adeline Laclau, *Les manuscrits enlumines dans le sultanat mamluk au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Thesis, Aix-in-Provence, 2019, pp. 147–164. See also Marie Efthymiou, *L'art du livre en Asie centrale*, pp. 53–66.



FIGURE 1.3 *The Feast of Sada*, Folio 22v from the *Shāh-nāma* (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp, Tabriz, ca. 1525. Dim. page: 47 × 31.8 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1970.301.2. GIFT OF ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON JR., 1970. OA PUBLIC DOMAIN



GRAPH 3 Ratio of format (length/width) of 63 *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts in the UK

The highest number of *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts fall between 1.5 and 1.59 (25 manuscripts), followed by a ratio between 1.6 and 1.69 (16 manuscripts). The ratio 1.5 corresponds to the double Pythagoras rectangle, whereas 1.618 is the golden section.

The statistical study of the data concerning the format and ratio of the folios confirms no explicit relation with the available tools and equipment of the workshops that could indicate production standards.

## 2.2 *Number and Place of Illustrations*

Does a correspondence exist between the size of a manuscript and its number of illustrations? It appears likely that a lavishly illustrated and illuminated manuscript would cost more than a simpler copy. Therefore, it is logical to think that a codex with many illustrations is more "royal" than an unillustrated one.<sup>48</sup> However, when comparing the royal or princely copies of the *Shāh-nāma*, the number of illustrations varies from 22 in Baysanghor's copy to over 350 in Gilan's "Big-Head" *Shāh-nāma*.

Moreover, Shah Tahmasp's copy of the *Shāh-nāma* has at least 258 paintings, but his *Khamsa* of Nizami contains only 14 original painted folios (three others are later additions). Thus, is the

number of illustrations significant? What process leads to a decision regarding the number of illustrations?

As previously observed, no correlation exists between the format and number of illustrations in royal copies. On comparing these princely copies with more average ones, it is evident that the number of illustrations is not necessarily related to the patron's fortune or the intrinsic value of the codex. Moreover, another parameter, calligraphy, is considered concerning this value.

Illustrated manuscripts in the studied corpus range between a single image (Res. C.4, 852/1448, Tabriz?) and approximately 350 painted pages that used to adorn the "Big-Head" *Shāh-nāma*.

The choice of an illustrative programme might respond to a specific demand. The number of pictures might indicate the patron's (or designer's) desire to offer specific perspectives and comments, although data for objectivating such aspects remain elusive.

The parallel with the quotations found in the so-called "Takht-i Sulaiman tiles with trilobed arch" (see Chapter 3, section 3) provides a thought-provoking alternative involving comparing the illustrations with excerpts from an anthology.<sup>49</sup> As seen below, it could be interesting to analyze the illustrations in terms of "expectation."

### 2.2.1 Frequency and Place of Illustrations

After surveying the global number of illustrations, one could also search for their frequency subject-wise; are some episodes particularly expected in the paintings?

Using logarithms, Farhad Mehran has attempted to answer this question, especially concerning the iconographic programme in terms of expectation.<sup>50</sup> The Database of the *Shāh-nāma* Project provides helpful information on this

48 This is a European viewpoint: in the pre-modern Islamic world, calligraphy was better rewarded than painting.

49 This question could be extended to other types of tiles, such as star-shaped luster stars.

50 Farhad Mehran, "Frequency Distribution of Illustrated Scenes in Persian Manuscripts," *Student*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Neuchatel, 1998), pp. 351-79.

matter. Thus, “Rustam killing the White Div” is represented by 284 illustrations recorded on this website, while “The Court of Kayumars” is present in 137 manuscripts. Another frequent illustration in the *Shāh-nāma* is the “Fire ordeal of Siyavush,” with 214 illustrations listed.<sup>51</sup>

Illustrations from texts other than the *Shāh-nāma* undoubtedly also show some frequency. Among the most popular, *Shirin bathing* is widely represented in manuscripts and also present in mural paintings.<sup>52</sup> On the 69 manuscripts of the *Khamsa* surveyed by Ivan Stchoukine at Topkapı Saray Library, 64 are complete; 46 illustrate *Shirin bathing*, which is 71.8%, and a similar proportion is found in the illustrated *Khamsa* from Bibliothèque Nationale de France. They form a total of 14 manuscripts, 13 are complete and 9 are illustrated with *Shirin bathing* being 69%. Furthermore, the presence of this illustration is not related to the date and place of the copies.

### 2.2.2 Break-line Verse

Each image is fixed in the text by the coordinates of the lines appearing before and after it. The verses immediately before and after the painting are called the “break-lines.” The concept of the break-line belongs to Farhad Mehran, who developed it in two publications.<sup>53</sup> As commented by Simpson,

“The break-line is a powerful tool in statistically analyzing the text of the *Shāh-nāma* and discussing such questions as the placement of images on the page and the frequency of illustrations in each manuscript. The break-line also provides a useful

method for correctly identifying the title of the painting.”<sup>54</sup>

Does the break-line verse influence the composition of illustrations? How is this line chosen? Does a specific number of text lines determine it?

If the example of *Shirin bathing* is taken, it is observed that in 29 random examples (dated between 1386 and 1834),

- 5 have (upper) *shāna mikard/*  
break-line verse: *dāna mikard* (17.24%)
- 4 : *nishasta/basta* (13.7%)
- 3 : *dilkash/ādash* (10.3%)
- 2 : *andām/bādām* (6.89%)
- 2 : *mishkin/shirin* (6.89%)
- 12 others appear only once (41.37%).

These “break-line” verses appear within a large text span, with at least 58 verses separating the earliest from the latest.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, one can observe that the order of verses varies according to the edited text. Conversely, paintings almost always display the same basic iconography: Shirin is bathing in a pond, half-naked, while Khusrau, riding Gulgun almost systematically, bites his finger in admiration, while Shabdiz is indifferently browsing or whinnying. However, the place of the characters and the space between the field (in the justification space or textbox) and margin vary. Khusrau enters the scene in some illustrations (Fig. 1.4) but exits in others, and the break-line verse does not appear to modify the iconographic content here.

One might wonder whether the question could be reverted. Does the place of the image influence the chosen break-line verse? However, the answer would probably be as uncertain as for vice versa.

51 According to the *Shāh-nāma* Project Database: <http://shahnama.lib.cam.ac.uk/> (accessed 17/11/2022).

52 In Isfahan’s Chihil Sutun palace, and in Fath ‘Ali Shah’s pavilion in Bagh-i Fin (Kashan), among others.

53 Mehran, “Frequency distribution of illustrated scenes in Persian manuscripts,” pp. 351–79, and “Missing paintings in dismantled Persian manuscripts,” *Student* vol. 4, no. 1 (2001), pp. 61–78.

54 See M.S Simpson, “*Shahnama* as Text and *Shahnama* as Image,” pp. 15–16.

55 The earliest verse is found on p. 175, line 6, while the latest is p. 178, line 2 according to Nizami Ganjavi, *Kulliyat-i Khamsa*, ed. Vahid-i Dastgerdi, Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1998.



FIGURE 1.4 *Khusrau discovers Shirin bathing.* Folio from a *Khusrau u Shirin* by Nizami (d. 1209), Tabriz? c.1400  
 FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1931.32

### 3 Layout, *mas̄tar*, and Page Composition

#### 3.1 Page Layout

Almost no textual indication exists concerning the page layout in Islamic literature. However, F. Déroche notes, “The copyist’s decision to draw the ruling reveals his concern with the page’s layout.”<sup>56</sup> Concerning this issue, this author laments that only a unique reference – although probably incomplete – is still known. This reference, in Arabic, was highlighted in 1986 by the late Yvette Sauvan and originates from a treatise for a copyist written by al-Qalalusi in Nasrid Granada.<sup>57</sup>

The *mas̄tar*, slightly more documented, constitutes the main tool for studying the actual layout.

Amin Mahdavi showed a possible formula for the layout, unfortunately without textual references; this is thus a type of *a posteriori* method.<sup>58</sup>

It appears natural that the uses concerning layout have evolved over centuries. The example of *Varqa and Gulshāh* (c.1250) might serve to describe an “archaic” layout.<sup>59</sup> The manuscript, kept at TSMK, has 70 folios, with 19 text lines per page written in *naskhi* on two columns.<sup>60</sup> The folios are framed with a red double line forming a *jadval* with a ratio of 1/1.28, and a total of 71 images illustrate the text (see Fig. 1.1). These illustrations are

generally approximately five text lines high, their width occupying the whole two-column space. They are found either at the top, middle, or even bottom of the page, and in a few cases, some elements overlap the frame of the painting, penetrating the text area.

Dated to several decades later, in c.1290, the so-called Second “small” *Shāh-nāma* offers a similar *jadval* ratio (1/1.3). The illustrations occupy a width of two or four columns, while their height is generally nine to 10 text lines.<sup>61</sup> This type of ratio is also found in the *Manāfi’ al-ḥayawān* of 1290–95 kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library (Fig. 1.5).<sup>62</sup> The layout distributing text and illustrations shows considerable variation in this manuscript. Moreover, it can be noted that the pages were trimmed and rebound, and that several paintings have been pasted and heavily restored or repainted. As noted below, later Ilkhanid manuscripts tend to have more vertical ratios, close to 1/1.4 (i.e.,  $\sqrt{2}$ ).

#### 3.2 *Mas̄tar/Ruling*

When examining Persian illustrated manuscripts, it is evident that ruling is not only a guide for the calligrapher while copying a text but can also be used by the painters to create their illustrations. Some preserved examples of unfinished illustrated pages show that the *mas̄tar* precedes the painting (Fig. 1.6).

Considering the *mas̄tar*, as well as the calligraphic frame of the page (*jadval* or textbox), thus offers another approach to understanding images and appears to facilitate their reading.

François Déroche, in his *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe*, highlights the importance of ruling in elaborating a manuscript.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, he provides no textual sources that

56 F. Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie*, p. 170.

57 Yvette Sauvan, “Un traité à l’usage des scribes à l’époque nasride,” in F. Déroche (ed.), *Les Manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, Istanbul/Paris, *Varia Turcica*, 1989, pp. 49–50.

58 Amin Mahdavi, “Evidence for Grid Layout in Persian Manuscripts.”

59 The place and date of this manuscript are unknown; according to Özergin, the painter ‘Abd al-Mo’min al-Khuyi participated as a witness in the foundation of the Karatay madrasa in Konya (651H./1252–53); thus, it could be situated at Konya around 1250. Kemal Özergin, “Selçuklu Sanatçisi Nakkaş Abdülmü’min el-Hoyi Hakkında,” *Bellesten* xxxiv, sayı: 134 (1970), pp. 219–229.

60 TSMK H. 841; 27.8 × 21.3 cm (Istanbul, *Anadolu Medeniyetleri*, III, exhibition catalogue, Istanbul, TSMK, 1983, n° D.100, p. 62); see also Melikian-Chirvani, *Varqa et Golshāh*, pp. 14–15. This author highlights some lacunae in the text.

61 Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings*, pp. 84–85.

62 The ratio of the paper is now 1/1.267; however, the original size was probably 1/1.209; the *jadval* (textbox) is 1/1.210; see Barbara Schmitz, *Islamic and Indian Manuscripts and Paintings in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 1997, cat. 1.

63 François Déroche, *Manuel de codicologie*, pp. 171–178.



FIGURE 1.5 Ibn Bakhtishu, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jibra'il, *Manāfi-i ḥayavān*, fol. 55r: The Simorgh. Maraghah, Iran, 1297–1298 or 1299–1300

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM. MS M.500, FOL. 55R



FIGURE 1.6

*The combat of Suhrāb and Gurdāfarid*, in the Diez Album (Diez A fol. 73.S.70, no. 1 and back page). The *jadval* (or text-box frame) is outlined in red.

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would illuminate the processes to achieve this step.

Using another method, in 1975 Chahryar Adle unveiled, probably for the first time, what appeared then as a fortuitous discovery. The manuscript of *Futuhāt-i Humāyun* – an historical work on the campaigns of Shah ‘Abbas I (BnF, Suppl. persan 226, c.1600) – showed traces of a highly learned construction, not only regarding the illustrations but also the organization of the illuminations’ layout and their relation to the written sections.<sup>64</sup> At that time, Adle based his reasoning on a mention originating from Qazi Ahmad’s *Gulistān-i hunar*, the latter quoting, in reality, the Safavid poet ‘Abdi Beyk Shirazi.<sup>65</sup>

However, this quote lacks precision; fortunately, other written sources provide more accurate descriptions of this matter.

### 3.2.1 *Mas̄tar* in Written Sources

As mentioned earlier, Arabic sources on the arts of the book are not prolix on the question of *mas̄tar*. Conversely, Persian texts deliver several examples,

the oldest probably being in Amir Khusrau Dihlavi’s *Qirān al-sa‘dayn* (1284). This mention occurs in the *khātima* (conclusion), dedicated to the physical composition of a book.<sup>66</sup>

Curiously, in the treatise written by the mid-14th century by the celebrated calligrapher ‘Abdullah Seyrafi (d. 742/1341), no mention of the *mas̄tar* is found. Only one passing, elliptic remark addresses the relationship between written matter and page layout: “On the page, proportioning the letters adds beauty and is convenient for the line.”<sup>67</sup>

One must wait for the mid-15th century to find, in a Persian text written in India by a Shirazi calligrapher, clearer explanations on the *mas̄tar*. Siraj-i Shirazi’s *Tuḥfat al-muḥibbin* (858/1454) mentions this matter several times.<sup>68</sup>

64 Chahryar Adle, “Recherche sur le module et le tracé correcteur dans la miniature orientale. 1,” *Le Monde Iranien et l’Islam*, vol. III (1975), pp. 81–105.

65 Porter, “From the ‘Theory of the two Qalams’ to the Seven Principles of Painting,” p. 109.

66 *Gah khula-i suzan-i mas̄tar kishad/Gah kishish-i rishta-i daftar kishad*. See Yves Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 26–27; see also Siraj-i Shirazi, *Tuḥfat al-muḥibbin*, ed. M. Taqi Danish-Pazhuh Tehran, Noghte, 1376/1997, p. 108.

67 *Dar saḥḥa, tanāsub-i ḥuruf kardan mustaḥsan ast va dar saḥri vājib ast*. Persian text in N. Mayil-i Hiravi, *Kitāb ārā’i dar tamaddun-i islāmi*, Mashhad, Āstān-i Quds-i Ražavi, 1372/1993, p. 32.

68 “In the *naskh-i ta’liq* writing from Tabriz, it is compulsory to observe these proportions unless the *mas̄tar* does not have the capacity for the verses or prose which have been written. In this case, it is allowed that

Concerning the calligrapher’s materials and implements, Siraj-i Shirazi lists,

“The tracing pen (*qalam-i-jadval*), the ruler (*sitāra*) and two compasses, one with a reed-pen, the other with a metallic head. Some needles bigger than the ones used for sewing, in case you should have to trace a frame (*jadval*) or build up a *maṣṭar* [*maṣṭar bastan*] or writing a volume; the surface of the page is divided into lines (...) Usually the white line at the top of the page should be equivalent to the height of an *alif*, according to every type of writing. The inferior white line must be shorter than the top one.”<sup>69</sup>

As previously noted, the mentions of *maṣṭar* by Sultan ‘Ali Mashhadi and Dust Muhammad are connected with the format (*qaṭ‘*).<sup>70</sup>

In the Indo-Persian *Risāla-i jild-sāzi* (on Book-binding, early 19th century?), a description of the ruling board is provided:

“It is a piece of cardboard on which some silk strings are sewn; this matrix is placed under a folded sheet; this is gently rubbed in such a way that the stretched threads get printed on the sheet.”<sup>71</sup>

3.2.2 Uses of the *Maṣṭar* through Examples  
The careful observation of Ilkhanid manuscripts from the early 14th century, especially originating from Rashid al-Din’s *scriptorium* in the Rab’-i Rashidi, clarifies some processes involved in

their making.<sup>72</sup> Using a *maṣṭar* or *mīṣṭara* was an ancient practice of the copyists at that time.<sup>73</sup> However, it is interesting to see that ruling is also used now for illumination motifs and illustrations. Nevertheless, the manuscripts from this period are not numerous, making quantitative analysis complex.

The *Majmu‘a al-Rashidiyya* dated 710/1310–11 (BnF arabe 2324; 375 folios) has a colophon signed by the calligrapher Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn Muhammad al-Amin, nicknamed *zud-nevis-i baghdādi*.<sup>74</sup> The double frontispiece (fol. 3v–4r) displays two marginal medallions. On the right page (f<sup>o</sup>3 v), the signature of the humble servant Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Baghdadi suggests that this could be the same person as the calligrapher. This observation could indicate that the calligrapher participated in an important part of the preparative processes that occurred before the copying of the text. Moreover, he participated in the illumination process. Interestingly, the left page illumination is signed by another artist (f<sup>o</sup>4 r): Muhammad ibn al-‘Afif al-Kashi.<sup>75</sup>

The manuscript has 35 lines per page, making 36 intervals. If this horizontal grid is transferred to the vertical format, 24 spaces are observed, which are marked on the frontispiece by finials. The ratio of the illuminated field is 1/1.5, and if the number of line spaces (24 × 36) is considered, the same ratio is obtained. This would confirm that a relationship exists between the ratio of the field and its division in lines and columns.

for two letters of a same sort following each other, the second one can be smaller; thus, the line will not go out of the *maṣṭar*. Otherwise, it is considered faulty” Siraj-i Shirazi, *Tuḥfat al-muḥibbīn*, p. 93.

69 Siraj-i Shirazi, *Tuḥfat al-muḥibbīn*, p. 111.

70 Qazi Ahmad, *Gulistān-i hunar*, ed. A. Suhayli Khwānsāri, Tehran, Manuchehri, 1973, p. 73; trad. Minorsky, *Calligraphers and Painters*, p. 118. W.M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and other Documents*, p. 13.

71 I. Afshar, in *Saḥḥāfi-i sumati*, Tehran, Kitābkhāna-i Markazi va Markaz-i Asnād, 1357/1978, p. 130; transl. Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, p. 62.

72 See Sheila Blair, “Patterns of Patronage and Production in Ilkhanid Iran. The Case of Rashid al-Din,” in J. Raby and T. Fitzherbert (eds.), *The Court of the Il-Khans, 1290–1340*, *Oxford Studies in Islamic Art*, XII, 1996, pp. 39–62.

73 Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, London, Saqi, 2010, pp. 44–46.

74 Francis Richard, *Splendeurs persanes*, Paris, BnF, 1997, p. 44 n<sup>o</sup>12.

75 This artist is mentioned by Ibn al-Fuwati, as stated by Richard, *Splendeurs*, p. 44; see also Anatoli Ivanov, “The Name of a Painter who Illustrated the *World History* of Rashid al-Din,” in R. Hillendrand (ed.), *Persian Painting*, London, Tauris, 2000, pp. 147–149.

### 3.2.2.1 Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh (*World History*)<sup>76</sup>

Ruling is easily observed in this manuscript. The folios measure 43.6 × 29.1 cm, which is a ratio of almost 1/1.5 (1.498). The written surface is included in a frame (*jadval*) of a ratio closer to 1/1.414 ( $\sqrt{2}$ ) and has 35 text lines, interrupted by illuminated titles (*‘unvān*) and illustrations.

Folio 19r is embellished with a *shamsa* (Fig. 1.7). Curiously, on the back of this folio (19v<sup>o</sup>, see Fig. 1.8), in addition to the horizontal ruling, two diagonals crossing in the middle of the page (17th line) mark the center of the *shamsa*, which has a radius of 10 lines, and 24 circles with a diameter of three lines each form the radiant inner belt of the *shamsa*. On folio 19v, an *‘unvān* (title-box) with the *bismillah* is inscribed in a five-line-high cartouche.

Text pages, illustrated or not, have 35 text lines; it is noteworthy that the page ratio (1.5) and ruling resemble the *Majmu‘a al-Rashidiyya*, although the size is different. The illustrations vary in format; most of them cover the whole page width, although their height differs from 9 to 14 text lines (Fig. 1.9); illustrations on 12 lines are most common. This 12 lines measure represents a third of the ruled page.

It appears natural that architectural elements or pieces of furniture figuring in the illustrations fall into the horizontal ruled lines. The varying scale of people is not provided systematically by the ruling, as in later times.

The serial manuscript production of the Rashidiyya workshops (the foundation made by the vizier Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah in the early 14th c.) used the *mas‘tar* and *jadval* to normalize the production of illustrated copies but also facilitated the reproduction in several exemplars of the founder’s works produced annually.<sup>77</sup> Manuscripts

such as the *Majmu‘a al-Rashidiyya* (710/1310–11) or the *Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh* (dated 714/1314) are examples of this early stage.

The instructions of Rashid al-Din concerning the manuscript production of his foundation at Rab‘-i Rashidi have been mentioned.<sup>78</sup> Such a serial production required a planned organization in which the talents of every artist were used to their best advantage. Initially, one considers rationalizing production, facilitating the reproduction of the texts as well as the paintings and illuminations. Unfortunately, considering his *World History*, no contemporary copies for comparison are known. In this serial and rationalized production of manuscripts, it is evident that formatting and ruling played an important part, and a system resembling a grid used for reproducing images could thus be imagined.

### 3.2.2.2 *The Great Mongol Shāh-nāma*

In 1961, Basil Gray wrote that the *Great Mongol Shāh-nāma* probably represented the first “modern” book from Iran.<sup>79</sup> This clear chronological distinction between an obscure “archaic” period and the renewal of Persian painting was described by Dust Muhammad in his Preface:

Then, the custom of portraiture flourished so in the lands of Cathay and the Franks until sharp-penned Mercury scrievined the rescript of rule in the name of Sultan Abusa‘id Khudaybanda. Master Ahmad Musa, who was his father’s pupil, lifted the veil from the face of depiction, and the [style of] depiction that is now current was invented by him.<sup>80</sup>

Visually, paintings from the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma*, although of heterogenous “styles,” are remarkable for their space conception – a revolution in visual arts from the Middle East – and their often-vivid compositions, are not devoid of

76 Dated 714/1314, coll. Khalili and University of Edinburgh. On this manuscript, now divided, see Sheila S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles, Rashid al-Din’s illustrated history of the world*, London, Nour Foundation, 1995; see also Richard, *Splendeurs persanes*, pp. 44–46.

77 See Yves Porter, “La réglure (*mas‘tar*): de la ‘formule d’atelier’ aux jeux de l’esprit,” *Studia Islamica* n°96, 2004, pp. 55–74.

78 Rashid al-Din, *Vaqf-nāma*, p. 133 and pp. 237–238; transl. Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 162–163.

79 Gray, *Persian painting*, p. 34.

80 Thackston, *Album Prefaces and other Documents*, p. 12.



FIGURE 1.7 Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, Frontispiece with *shamsa*, fol. 19r  
KHALILI COLLECTION, MS.0727



FIGURE 1.8 Geometrical composition of the preceding folio, based on its back (fol. 19v), showing proportions, ruling and possible module, here represented by a small circle  
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التي تسمى منكر لانها تسمى بالبحر والجزر الذي قطع من بلاد الهند وورد في السيف في الماء وترك الدنيا كلها واعطى بعض شعره لملك الساسين وعنه الى ابيه  
 وابنه وابساق من شعره واخذها الملاكه وحملوه الى ابيه الملكة التي اقامت الامراء وكانوا يرونه في كل صباح الميز كانوا على صورة اهل  
 عليه وظلوا البرزانت وان هذا العمل عن جبهه الليل والهار وعبد الله ونزاض وباصه صعبة ما كل لطيف بل العناء واثت ضد دوك في  
 فقهه وفروه كيف يطبق مشقة الجنوع والوعاء رواه به بالملك من واشتغل بالمراد والجل والاصد فلما سمع من بلاد الهند كلامه ظهر له عذبة  
 فاحسنا والفتاحة وقد است سنين على بلاد صحرة وكان يخلو في كل يوم حبة من الساسين واثت قدمه على ذلك فزحكان ان اقرت الى الطين كما كان في هذه  
 هن لا ويحقا بل يشاهد على حاله الاول وبلونه وقوته فاعاد على سرير مرتجع معالج في الهواء والذبي كان منهم ضعيف المنين وبعد من الجن وحبوه  
 خفقا او بعد غدا منه وعمره وقه واعصابه في جلد من في فوق حجر وكان في خدمه حمة نغم من تلك الجماعة بلاذونه كيت انونها اذ فلما تبت الملك في  
 ست سنين جاز اليه ملك اسمه اندر وهو الذي له الف عين فقال له قل ان الزمان الذي خرج فيه من هذا المقام وبه ملك الحاله جاز صوت السلك  
 من السماء وتسمى كيون وهو الذي يسميه اهل المذاهب والاديان اوبه والآن ابره قد تم موجود في حجر على جبل سهند عند معدن ايا فرت  
 الاخر وكذا سته باق في عم الغنمين في مقام مقال له ساد بل وكانت الملاكه الذي حضره من رجل قاف للاجل افضارها كوني اربع فضع معي بعضها  
 فوني بعض في عند محاورى سهند ب باقية الى الآن والسلام

الفصل السادس في شرح بعض ما كوني من الجنوة والجماعة

فما اخترع من الجنوة ووصل خبره الى الساسين والاسام والارصاد والعتاد علوماً باه فخرج من الجنوة والارصاد وهو نطلب الماكل والاشراب  
 وكان له بنت خطيبا لها ان تعمل له طعاما وتقدمه من يده ليكون اقل اكل عندها وكان لها شرح من البقر فامرته حتى ارضت بما به بقرة وحلبها ونظف بالز  
 والسلك اما وكذا باقي اصحابه واصدقا له طيفا مثلها طيفت اجته فلما وعوا من الطبخ اخبروا الطعام من يده قد بدت الى الاطعمة واعطاهما لسطح اكلها



فكل لكل واحد منهم ان يسا كوني الكسل من طعامه ففرجوا عا به الصرح واخر وايدك وكان يقول كل واحد منهم ان يسا كوني اكل من طعاني فلما غيب  
 بعض المشايخ والارصاد وبعض مريد به تلك الاغتال منه اكلوا عليه وقالوا انه لما اكل الطعام وسرك للقلوه تكدر صفا اظه وترى من عنده المكاسات  
 ومعرفة الاستراد الاله والعلوم الغيبية ومضمنا يكون كذا فكيف يستار وصلت الى من هذه عالم النور والشدس والمكاشفة انت خاتمة ارواها  
 على تحته وتكون فلما راى سا كوني انها لم يوسعوا لهم اخذ الفصعة التي كان فيها الطبخ ورماها في البحر وقال ان كنت حتى اخلاتون ومقدمه لتق  
 تسمى هذه الفصعة الى على الماء فلما رماها امتدحت وسادت الى على الماء في مقدار ساعة وحلت الى العين التي كانت تخرج من الماء ورواها  
 بها وصديت على الاضاع التي كانت للانباء السنة للفت من عجله وكان داخل العين ملك اعنى على صورة فيمان سموه كالك طراد  
 في بنت امست اكلته صفا وفورا من كوة اشعة انوارها وصحت عين الملك من كبتها فخر كالك وقال السبع كيت خرج في بعد  
 ثم روى الحد وكان مقدر يوم كالك فسال سا كوني وباقي الانبياء ان مقدر مرة كلب هو انا لو كنت ارضا مساحتها اربعة ارجح طر  
 اربعة ارجح عرقله اربعة ارجح عرقله من السم ونظف في كل سنة واكون حاصل في هذه المرة من طوفان الى طوفان ان كلب

FIGURE 1.9 Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, A scene from the life of Buddha, fol. 34r. The illustration is placed in a ten-line high box. KHALILI COLLECTION, MS.0727

expression (Fig. 1.10). However, another revolution was related not only to images but to the codex as a complete artistic unit. This was the formal relationship between paintings and the invisible grid of the ruling. As noted, the *mas̄tar* was used by the copyist as a guideline, and since this grid existed before painting, it appears natural that painters might also have used it to create their compositions.

The concept of formally linking text and image is probably a real intellectual revolution. Starting with a standard practice in the workshop, the spatial relation between text and image served more intellectual goals during later periods. Moreover, the taste for “geometric normalization,” organically binding text and image, was born during a period when architecture reached unprecedented peaks, with buildings such as Ghazan Khan’s funerary complex (now vanished) and, above all, Uljaytu’s mausoleum at Sultaniye. In these outstanding monuments, with unmatched proportions, lay the question of the knowledge of practical geometry and doubtlessly also of static mechanics and other engineering domains. Unfortunately, Persian texts on architecture and its geometry are almost nonexistent. It is possible, as Golombek and Wilber write about Timurid architecture, that the theoretical knowledge of Ilkhanid architects was based on Euclid’s treatise and its transmission through authors such as Farabi (died 950).<sup>81</sup> The work of Abu al-Wafa Buzjani (940–998), the *Kitāb al-Nijārat*, could be added; this “renovator of practical geometry” wrote his book especially for craftspeople.<sup>82</sup> During the late 13th century, already under Ilkhanid rule, Nasir al-Din Tusi was among the first Persian commentators of Euclid. The first Persian translation of the *Elements* was

made by Qutb al-Din Shirazi (1236–1311), a disciple of Tusi.<sup>83</sup>

It is only due to the collaboration of all the staff of the *kitābkhāna* that a project as monumental as the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma* could be created. Unfortunately, the circumstances of its production are far from clear. Several hypotheses have been proposed, particularly concerning its patron or recipient. In an interesting paper, Abolala Soudavar proposes that the chief calligrapher overseeing the whole project could have been the great ‘Abdullah Seyrafi.<sup>84</sup> This hypothesis is tempting because this calligrapher worked on several media<sup>85</sup> and is the author of a well-known treatise on calligraphy. This fact could also link artistic practice to theoretical and normative knowledge.

During the subsequent decades of the 14th century, these tools produced a more abstract language and allowed the creation in images of elements that clarified their narrative aspect. However, this language is already visible in some paintings from the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma*, dated c.1330.<sup>86</sup> The concept of a “normalization” of the manuscript, observed at that time, appears naturally concomitant with research in geometry, particularly applied to architecture; the goal of this normalization was to offer the whole manuscript a harmonious appearance and coherence. At this point, it might be useful to remember that authors of treatises on calligraphy, such as Siraj-i Shirazi, insisted on using the compass as an indispensable instrument for preparing the page for calligraphy. This device proved useful in constructing a

81 L. Golombek and D. Wilber (eds.), *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, Princeton, PUP, 1988, vol. 1, p. 137.

82 On this subject, see Jafar Aghayani-Chavoshi, “Abū al-Wafa, innovateur de la géométrie pratique dans le monde islamique,” in Z. Vesel et al. (eds.), *La science dans le monde iranien*, Tehran, IFRI, 1998, pp. 95–116.

83 See Sonja Brentjes, “On the Persian Transmission of Euclid’s ‘Elements,’” in Z. Vesel et al. (eds.), *La science dans le monde iranien*, pp. 73–94.

84 A. Soudavar, “The Saga of Abu-Sa’id Bahador Khan, The *Abu-Sa’idnamé*,” in J. Raby et T. Fitzhebert, eds., *The Court of the Il-khans, 1290–1340*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 159–170.

85 Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, pp. 62–63.

86 The Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma* is now a dispersed manuscript; Grabar & Blair have listed 58 illustrations in their *Epic Images and Contemporary History. The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shāh-nāma*. Chicago, UCP, 1980.



FIGURE 1.10 *The Funeral of Isfandiyyār*, Folio from the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma* (Book of Kings), Tabriz, c.1330. Dim. page: 58 × 40 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 33.70. PURCHASE, JOSEPH PULITZER BEQUEST, 1933. OA PUBLIC DOMAIN





FIGURE 1.11 Bi-leaflet from a *Khusrau u Shirin* by Nizami (d. 1209), Tabriz? c.1400; left: illustration: *Farhad before Shirin*; facing page: text copied by Ali ibn Hasan al-Sultani  
 FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1931.34

“remarkable ratio,” determining the proportions of the page; the compass was also used to calculate the intervals of the ruling (*maṣṭar*).

For historical completeness and pertinence, a general study of the ruling and layout of Persian manuscript paintings should be continued with the illustrations produced between the end of the Ilkhanid dynasty (c.1335) and the early Jalayirid period; these would include the fragmentary paintings from the *Kalila and Dimna* or a dispersed copy of a *Shāh-nāma*, the latter now preserved in the Istanbul album of Bahram Mirza (H. 2153). In the page illustrating *Kalila and Dimna's The Thief is Beaten in the Bedroom*, probably the only almost entire surviving page of the original manuscript, the *maṣṭar* is used to create the architectural details of the composition.<sup>87</sup> The ratio of the calligraphic rectangle (21 lines) is probably  $1/1 \times \sqrt{3}$ . The right margin is seven lines wide, and the superior one is five lines high. The *Shāh-nāma* page showing *Manuchehr fighting with Tur* displays a ratio of  $1/1,414 (\sqrt{2})$ ; the text probably has 33 lines, and the left margin is seven lines wide.<sup>88</sup>

By the end of the century, ruling and its importance in the page layout appeared to reach its maturity. This is evident from a study of Khwaju Kirmani's *Three poems*, dated 798/1396.<sup>89</sup> This manuscript constitutes a landmark in the evolution of the painted Persian codex. Copied at Baghdad by Mir 'Ali Tabrizi – the inventor of *nasta'liq* – the illustrations were probably painted

by Junayd.<sup>90</sup> Most of the painted folios now occupy the entire page, often overstepping the *jadval*. This reframing of the image indicates the intelligence in the narrative contents.

Made approximately ten years later, the *Khusrau and Shirin* kept at the Freer Gallery confirms a more complex relationship between text and image.<sup>91</sup> The illustration showing *Farhad before Shirin* (Fig. 1.11) offers the viewer an assembly of both sexes in an interior. In the foreground, several individuals are represented, apparently without barriers. Shirin is at the center of the room, sitting on a carpet and next to her stands Shapur. In apparent contradiction of the text, Farhad is near the princess' group, when in Nizami's text, Farhad speaks to Shirin through a curtain. However, on replacing the full textbox *jadval* as visible in the facing folio on the painting, it is shown that Farhad is actually in the margin, so here, the *jadval* plays the role of a curtain.

This use of the *maṣṭar* for calligraphy and the composition of illustrations continued at least to the end of the Safavid times. This system is considered one of the original features of Persian painting, and as such, it is seldom found in works produced in the Ottoman or Mughal courts.

### 3.3 Tarkib-o maṣṭar (*Layout and Ruling*)

Using the *maṣṭar* as a grid or template would facilitate copying illustrations. This would have been particularly useful when producing several illustrated copies of the same text, as with the works of Rashid al-Din. For Shah Tahmasp's *Shāh-nāma*, with at least 258 illustrations, it is evident that a type of *cahier des charges* (general instructions), must have existed after the copy of the text had been made (since this task was the only one generally devoted to a single person: the calligrapher)

87 Istanbul, University Library, Yıldız F. 1422, fol.24a; reproduced in Gray, *Persian Painting*, p. 39.

88 Istanbul Topkapı Palace Library, Hazine 2153, fol. 102a; reproduced in Gray, *Persian Painting*, p. 43.

89 British Library, Persian Manuscripts, Add. 18113; repro. Gray, *Persian Painting*, pp. 46–47; T.W. Lentz & G.D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision. Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, Los Angeles, LACMA, 1989, pp. 54–55. See also Y. Porter, “The illustrations of the *Three Poems* of Khwaju Kirmani: A Turning point in the composition of Persian painting,” in F. Richard et M. Szuppe (eds.), *Écrit et culture en Asie Centrale et dans le monde turco-iranien, X<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, AAEI, 2009, pp. 359–374, pls. V–VII.

90 Only one is signed, and the one in the TKSM is ascribed to 'Abd al-Hay. See Porter, “The illustrations of the *Three Poems*,” p. 369.

91 Gray, *Persian Painting*, p. 54; Freer Gallery of Art, F193L29–37. Simon Rettig has given several lectures on this manuscript and is currently preparing a monograph (personal communication, 18/11/2022).

to allow each painter to do their job. Besides (or beyond) the question of attribution to specific painters, the main observation is the extreme difference in quality between the large number of painted pages. Outstanding pages, such as Sultan Muhammad's *Court of Kayumarth*, and less remarkable works, such as *Gushtasp playing polo*, can be compared.<sup>92</sup> The first painting is noteworthy not only in its details, accuracy, and meticulousness but also in its composition. This shows a pyramidal structure with Kayumarth at the top, Siyamak at the bottom right, and Hushang to the left, with the crowd forming a circle under the triangle. The painting of Gushtasp initially appears less "composed," as if the characters were disposed at random. The ground is plain golden with only small clumps of grass, with the faces and beards appearing to be quickly painted. Are then the excellent and mediocre painters guided by common composition rules?

The minimum common factor is undoubtedly the frame and ruling (*jadval* and *mas̄tar*). The *mas̄tar* included in the frame of the *jadval* is supposedly the same throughout the manuscript. This would thus constitute a basic framework, which can also be used as a template. It is noteworthy that this does not explain why numerous illustrations overlap in the margins, that is, unless the margins are also submitted to the ruling. Different methods exist for illustrating the use of a grid pattern. A. Mahdavi proposes one solution based on the dynamic rectangles.<sup>93</sup> Another solution is based on a square whose side is equivalent to a text line. I used a tentative "module" formed by  $3 \times 3$  squares, based on the concept that the whole page is cross ruled (or "checkered"). This *a posteriori* method works satisfactorily to create the general layout of

the painted pages, including marginal overlaps. However, unsurprisingly, this method does not help *create* the painted compositions.

Ibrahim Sultan's *Haft Awrang* makes the use of a pattern-grid or template even more evident. The manuscript was copied in various places over several years and assembled later before its presentation to the prince (Figs. 1.12–13).<sup>94</sup> How can the calligraphers, illuminators, and painters work together if no general outline is available?

A similar system is observed in 'Ismat al-Dunya's copy of Nizami's *Khamse* (Herat, 1444, TKSM), at least for the original illustrations, since others were added later, probably in Istanbul.<sup>95</sup>

Geometric outlines for general compositions are not attested (to my knowledge) on illustrated manuscripts. However, some examples on a Mamluk illumination, made with a dry point, are known.<sup>96</sup> These concern complex geometric figures, for which the outline appears compulsory. In rare instances, such as on the eight unfinished illustrations of a *Jāmi' al-tawārikh* manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Supplément persan 1561), the outline of the images, painted in red ink, is noticeable. Compass holes and lines in dry point are also observed.<sup>97</sup>

Another solution for a grid pattern is based on the geometry of the page, taking the actual oblique lines of Shah Tahmasp's *Shāh-nāma* frontispiece as a guide (see Fig. 1.14.a–c). This solution allows observation of the image compartments and the emphasis given to their different parts. Still, this grid does not help invent the image.

92 *The Court of Kayumarth*, The Aga Khan Museum (AKM165), folio 20v<sup>o</sup>. *Gushtasp playing polo*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, fol. 403v, reproduced in Sheila Canby, *The Shāh-nāma of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of the Kings*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 69 and p. 245.

93 Mahdavi, "Evidence for Grid Layout in Persian Manuscripts."

94 M.S. Simpson, "The Production and Patronage of the Haft Awrang by Jami in the Freer Gallery of Art," *Ars Orientalis* 13, (1982), pp. 93–119; M.S. Simpson, *Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's "Haft Awrang" – A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth Century Iran*, Washington, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1997.

95 Ivan Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits de la «Khamseh» de Nizami au Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi d'Istanbul*, Paris, Geuthner, 1977, pp. 44–49; Lentz & Lowry, *Timur and the princely vision*, cat. no. 32, p. 335.

96 Laclau, *Les manuscrits enluminés*, pp. 288–289.

97 Richard, *Splendeurs persanes*, no. 32, p. 70.



FIGURE 1.12 *A father advises his son about love*, from Ibrahim Sultan's *Haft Awrang*. Iran, 1556–1565.

Dim. 34.2 × 23.2 cm

FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1946.12.52



FIGURE 1.13 Folio from a *Haft Awrang* (Seven thrones) by Jami (d. 1492)  
 FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1946.12.131

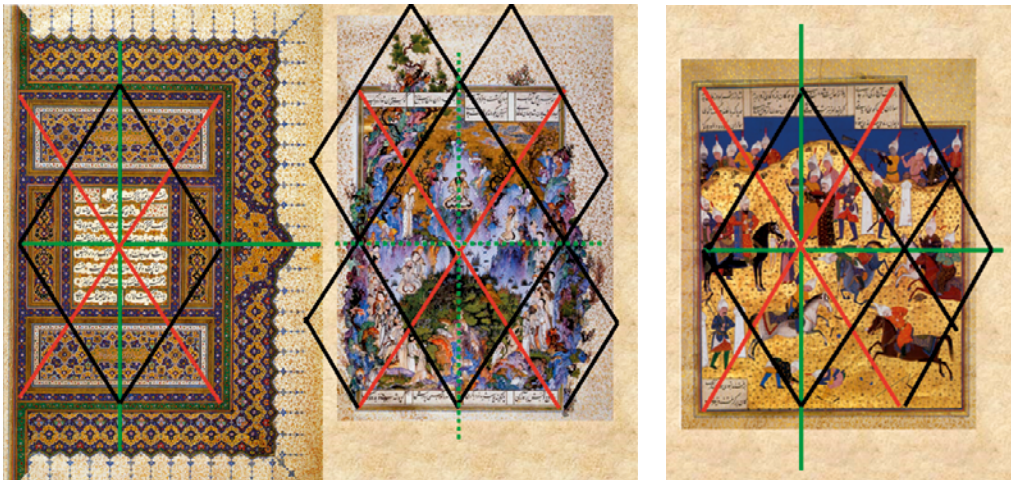


FIGURE 1.14.A–C Geometric grid based on the diagonals of the frontispiece from Shah Tahmasp's *Shāh-nāma* (fol. 3v), applied to two other illustrated folios (20v and 403v)  
REWORKED BY THE AUTHOR

It is difficult to establish that a system of rules constituting a unique norm existed during the period and places envisioned here. However, each manuscript uses a layout and a ruling creating a norm at the scale of each work. Consequently, every representation embodying a deviation from the norm is even more significant. Thus, the norm and a deviation from it become a narrative device or a figure of speech.

#### 4 Invention of Images, Coloring, Framing, and Insetting

##### 4.1 *Drawing and Creating the Composition*

Little is known about how images are invented. Although the episodes represented in illustrations are somewhat repetitive, slight variations often exist between copies of a text. In some cases, the illustrated episode might be fully revisited. It can thus be acknowledged that while some painters appear uninspired or bound to tradition and mere repetition, others invent and renew the repertoire. Preparatory drawings such as those preserved in the Berlin and Topkapı albums illuminate the

different processes or steps from scraps to final sketches.

Persian texts explain little about composing a painting.<sup>98</sup> Nothing is said on the place of the depicted subjects according to space or meaning. Important figures may be central, relegated to a corner, or even placed in the margins. Elements such as trees, horses, or even people might be cut off by the *jadval* frame. Elements such as the people forming a crowd or tree leaves might overlap but without necessarily being placed in perspective, or with a size in accordance with distance. Finally, although some paintings clearly show circle- or pyramid-based compositions, nothing is said on geometry applied to pictorial construction.

Anand Ram Mukhlis, in his *Mirāt al-iṣṭilāḥ*, describes “composition” in such terms:

*Ustukhwān-bandī*, meaning making the sketch right and building up the composition, for instance if you want to write a piece of calligraphy or to make a drawing, first you draw its composition (or

98 Sadiqi is particularly elusive on this subject; see Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 69–70.

general outline) with a black line; after this, it is required to set one’s heart upon the work with it.<sup>99</sup>

Another locution, *aṣl-i tarḥ*, probably also means “composition.” This is found in Mirza Haydar Dughlat’s account of the painters in the Herat *kitābkhāna*, and he writes about Behzad: “His pen is more forceful and his drawings [draftsmanship] and compositions [articulation] are better than those of Shah Muzaffar.”<sup>100</sup>

On Khwaja Mirak Naqqash: “His drawings/compositions (*aṣl-i tarḥ*) are more mature than those of Behzad, although his production is lesser than Behzad’s.”

On Qasim ‘Ali: “His works are very different from those of Behzad; any expert can recognize that his style (*uslub*) is rougher (*durushtar*) than Behzad’s, and his compositions less harmonious (*aṣl-i tarḥ-i u bi-andāmtar ast*).<sup>101</sup>

It is noteworthy that Mirza Haydar – almost the only author who criticizes old masters – is unclear when he refers to *aṣl-i tarḥ*: does he mean an actual drawing, or is he referring to the more theoretical and abstract notion of composition?

Some drawings or unfinished paintings enable observation of the different steps in the “making of” of a painting.<sup>102</sup> In some cases, it is evident that the composition is entirely new, from the first

sketch to the finished outline. Conversely, other paintings are strongly inspired by previous works. Some preserved pounced drawings probably attest to later uses (rather than previous, as might be expected) of part of a painting.<sup>103</sup>

Many questions arise from the study of these drawings: Who realized the general compositions? Were these named *tarḥ*, or even *aṣl-i tarḥ*, and then, were they the specialty of the *tarrāḥ* (draughtsman-designer)? The tasks executed by the painters of a royal *kitābkhāna* may have undergone a division among the artists according to their own skills. This case is well-known due to the marginal mentions on the illustrated manuscripts made for the Mughal Akbar.<sup>104</sup> However, this division (*tarḥ*/drawing, *rang-āmizi*/coloring, and *chihri*/faces – plus details?) is less clear in the works produced for the Timurids or the Safavids. The *‘arza-dāsht* from Baysanghor’s library, being the only known report of the “work in progress” in a Timurid workshop, does not allow positive conclusions regarding a similar system of production.<sup>105</sup> That is, it remains difficult to determine whether each artist only participated in some stages in making an illustration or if they took charge of the whole creative process, from the sketch to the application of color and faces.

#### 4.2 On the Repetition of Compositions

The repetition of compositions in Timurid illustrated manuscripts has already been addressed, among others by A. Adamova, and Lentz and Lowry.<sup>106</sup> These repetitions could be understood

99 Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Mir’at al-iṣtilāḥ*, Ms. Khudabakhsh Library, Patna no. 796, fol. 11b. Transl. Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, p. 70.

100 Mirza Haydar Dughlat, quoted by T.W. Arnold in Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray (BWG), *Persian Miniature Painting*. (London, 1933) reprint, New York, 1971, p. 190. Between square brackets: translation by W.M. Thackston, *A Century of Princes. Sources on Timurid History and Art*. Cambridge, AKPIA, 1989, p. 361.

101 BWG, pp. 190–191. These translations are my own and differ slightly from Arnold’s in BWG and Thackston, *A Century*, pp. 361–362. Arménag Sakisian (“Esthétique et terminologie persanes,” *Journal Asiatique*, 1935, pp. 144–150) proposes still other translations.

102 On this subject, see Y. Porter, “Models, Sketches, and Pounced Drawings in the Diez Albums: First Steps in the Making of Illustrated Manuscripts,” in J. Gonnella,

F. Weis, C. Rauch (eds), *The Diez Albums, Contexts and Contents*, Berlin, 2017, pp. 353–379.

103 Porter, “Models, Sketches, and Pounced Drawings,” pp. 374–376.

104 John Seyller, “Scribal Notes on Mughal Manuscript Illustration,” *Artibus Asiae* 48 (1987), pp. 247–277.

105 See Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, pp. 43–44.

106 A.T. Adamova, “Repetition of Composition in Manuscripts: the *Khamsa* of Nizami in Leningrad,” in L. Golombek and M. Subtelny, *Timurid Art and Culture, Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*. Leiden, 1992, pp. 67–75; see also eight examples of repetition

as an identifying signature in creating a visual identity.

The phenomenon probably began with the copy of Jalayerid models, and it continued later with a type of internal self-quotation throughout the Timurid period. A striking extract of Dust Muhammad's *Preface* stresses this phenomenon when he writes that Baysanghor Mirza asked that the Album (*Jung*) of Ahmad Jalayer should be copied "in the same format and ruling, and with *the same subjects of paintings*."<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, the *Anthology* of Iskandar Sultan holds at least six illustrations copied throughout the Timurid century, some over several occasions.<sup>108</sup> Thus folio 131v, showing *Leyla and Majnun fainting in a camp*, has been copied at least five times,<sup>109</sup> and the scene of *Shirin holding Khusrau's portrait* in the same *Anthology* has been copied at least twice.<sup>110</sup>

Baysanghor's *Shāh-nāma* displays at least one painting that was evidently copied from an older

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in Lentz & Lowry, *Timur*, pp. 376–379. On the *Khamsa* illustrations, see also P. Soucek, *Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's Khamsah*, 1386–1482. New York, 1971 (PhD dissertation).

107 "bi hamān dastur-i qaṭ' va maṣṭar va mawzu'i taṣvīr bi 'aynihā," Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 13.

108 British Library Add. 27261. See particularly fol. 38r, *Shirin holding Khusrau's portrait*; fol. 61r Farhad and Shirin at Bisutun; fol. 109r, Battle of clans; fol. 131v Leyla and Majnun faint; fol. 160v Bahram Gur in the Black pavilion; fol. 225v, Iskandar before Nushabe. See also Soucek, *Illustrated Manuscripts of Nizami's Khamsah*, pp. 262–63, and Adamova, "Repetition of Composition," 1992.

109 1) Page from Keir collection, Herat, 1425–30; repro Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, p. 378, 5b. 2) *Khamsa* of Shah Rukh, Herat, 1431, repro A.T. Adamova, *Persidskaja zhivopis i risunok XV–XIX vekov*, Saint-Petersburg, Slavija, 1996, p. 134; 3) *Khamsa* of 'Esmat al-Donya, Herat, 1445–6, TSMK H. 781, fol. 138r; 4) *Khamsa* of Pir Budaq, Bagdad, 1461, TSMK H. 761, fol. 140r; 5) *Khamsa* of 'Ali Farsi Barlas, Herat, 1494–5, British Library Or. 6810, fol. 137b; see also Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, p. 378, 5a–d.

110 British Library, Add. 27261, fol. 38a; *Khamsa* of Shah Rukh, Herat, 1431, fol. 55a, Adamova *Persidskaja zhivopis*, pp. 98–99; *Khamsa*, Herat, copied 1442, British Library Add. 25900, fol. 41; Shirin's face was repainted in Mughal India.

page.<sup>111</sup> Some of the drawings in the Diez albums have also been used as inspiration or are drawn after paintings from this manuscript.<sup>112</sup> However, besides some repetitions, most of the other compositions from this *Shāh-nāma* were not only completely new but extremely audacious. Besides these borrowings, *Jamshid teaching the Crafts*, in the same manuscript, inspired later illustrations.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, it should be emphasized that this legendary theme is differently composed in Baysanghor's *Shāh-nāma* and his own *Anthology*.<sup>114</sup>

The practice of repetition may sometimes have led to iconographical errors and even surprising aberrations. Puzzling examples are sometimes observed, such as the scene of *Iskandar before Nushaba*, from the *Anthology* of Iskandar Sultan, which was reused for a copy of *Humay seeing the portrait of Humayun*. In the first painting, Iskandar is seated to the left of the room with his hands crossed in his lap, while Nushaba, on her throne, is looking at the king's portrait. In the painting from *Humay and Humayun*, it is the young prince seated on the throne, looking up at the portrait of the princess hanging from the wall, while a winged fairy with hands crossed in her lap, thus in the same position as the Macedonian, occupies the seat where Iskandar was in the first painting.<sup>115</sup>

However, the quota of innovation appears much more elevated than that of repetition.

Furthermore, this process of self-quotation stopped at the end of the dynasty.<sup>116</sup>

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111 *Isfandyar fighting with the rhino-wolves*, TSMK, H. 2153, fol. 73b. See B. Brend, *Muhammad Juki's Shāh-nāma of Firdausi*, London, Royal Asiatic Society, 2010, p. 13, pl. 6.

112 Diez A fol. 73, p. 76, no. 1: Two studies of Rustam on Rakhsh; Diez fol. 73, p. 77, no. 1: The blacksmiths of king Jamshid; Diez A fol. 73, p. 57, no. 6: Rustam lassoing the Khaqan of Chin.

113 Chester Beatty (cat vol. 1, pl. 36), made for Uzun Hasan, Tabriz, 1470; see Lentz & Lowry, *Timur*, p. 377.

114 Sheila Blair, "Jamshid invents crafts," in J. Gonnella & C. Rauch, *Heroic Times. A Thousand Years of the Persian Book of Kings*, Berlin, 2012, pp. 54–57.

115 See Lentz & Lowry, *Timur*, p. 378, Fig. 4a–b.

116 Repetitions of Timurid paintings during Safavid times are rare; one example is provided by N. Titley, *Persian*

### 4.3 *Phases of Painting according to the ‘arza-dāsht*

The ‘*arza-dāsht* text of Baysanghor’s workshop might illuminate the different operations involved in making an illustrated or illuminated manuscript.

“§1 “Amir Khalil<sup>117</sup> has finished the waves in two sea scenes of the *Gulistan* and will begin to apply color”<sup>118</sup>

The manuscript of *Gulistān* is probably the one kept at Dublin’s Chester Beatty Library (Fig. 1.15.). The “scene” is *mawza’*, “a subject.”<sup>119</sup> The waves (*mawj-i āb*) are painted with silver solution, which is evidently not considered a “color,” as colors are applied (*rang nihādan*) at a later phase. Metallic pigments such as gold and silver need burnishing and this operation might damage the other colors.

“§2 “Mawlana Shihab<sup>120</sup> has applied gold to the frontispiece illumination, to four cartouches, and to the [*sharaf-i dibācha-i suratgari*];<sup>121</sup> he has

outlined 8 *na’l-i shamsa* from the center of the frontispiece. He is now working on another scene from the ‘*mārat* of *Gulistan*.””

Mawlana Shihab is apparently a *muzahhib* (illuminator working with gold),<sup>122</sup> and he appears here as an artist specializing in illumination motifs. He oversees gilding a frontispiece (*dibācha*) and heading cartouches (*lawḥ*). The meaning of *sharaf-i dibācha-i surat-gari* is unclear, but it probably designates a part of the *dibācha*. The *na’l-i shamsa* is probably another part of the main *dibācha* composition. The outline (*tahrir*) is made after gilding,<sup>123</sup> but an unspecified step occurs between gilding and outlining, which is burnishing.

It is unclear whether *suratgari* designates here some figures painted in the frontispiece,<sup>124</sup> but his working on another scene from the *Gulistan* could imply that he also worked on illustrations. The meaning of ‘*mārat* has been rendered by Thackston as “repair.” However, it could also mean “building,” so the artist would have been engaged in gilding the details of a building figuring in an illustration, similarly to how Amir Khalil painted “waves.”<sup>125</sup>

“§3 “Mahmud<sup>126</sup> has completed the groundwork for seven out of ten cartouches (*lawḥ*)

*Miniature Painting*, London, British Library, 1983, p. 74 and Fig. 35.

117 “Mir Khalil was the supervisor of painting in Baysanghur’s establishment”; see Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44, note 2.

118 Unless specified, W. Thackston’s translation is followed; Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, pp. 43–45.

119 On *mawza’*, see Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, p. 109.

120 This artist is not mentioned (at least by this name) in contemporary sources.

121 Thackston (Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 43) translates *sharaf* as “the finials of the frontispiece [in preparation] for painting”; in his note 4 he adds, “This word may refer to the finials, usually in blue, that radiate from a rosette and rise from an illuminated frontispiece.” Here, the *sharaf* are painted with gold. A similar definition is given by Mayil-i Heravi for the word *sharafa* (Mayil Hiravi, *Lughāt va ištīlāḥāt-i fann-i kitāb sāzi*, Tehran, 1353/1974, p. 132, and subsequently by his son, N. Mayil-i Hiravi, *Kitāb ārā’i*, p. 684). However, the same word occurs on Tents (Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 46): *shamsahā-i miyān-i qa’ihā-i khatt ki suratgari-st az jumla bist-u yak ‘adad shish ‘adad tamām shuda va sharaf va mahbas va ḥāshiya-hā rā qarib-i yak dang-u nim kār dukhta shuda*. “Six of the 21 figural rosettes in the middle of calligraphic samples

have been completed; nearly 3/8 (one quarter plus half of it) of the *sharaf*; field (? *mahbas*) and margins/borders have been sewn.”

122 This Shihab does not seem to appear on other documents. One Shihabuddin Abdallah is mentioned by Dust Muhammad (Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 14).

123 On *tahrir*, see Porter *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 57, 59, 64.

124 The same association *shamsa/suratgari* also appears on Tents (see Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 46).

125 The same expression (‘*mārat-i Gulistān*) is found on the notice about Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din; see §15.

126 Thackston (Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44, note 7) questions whether this Mahmud is a scribe or an illuminator; I do not believe that room exists for hesitation: he is an illuminator. Furthermore, the names of some artists are preceded by a title (Mawlana, Khwaja, Hajji), whereas others have only a single name



FIGURE 1.15 Amir Khalil, *Marooned at sea*, a folio from Prince Baysunghur's *Rose Garden (Gulistān)* by Sa'di. Herat, 1427. Dim. 24.9 × 15.2 cm  
 CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, CBL PER 119.29

for the Divan of Khwaju and is busy with the rest.”

The “groundwork” (*bum*) probably means the flat colors painted before the details.<sup>127</sup> Some unfinished paintings display juxtaposed colors as in a mosaic.<sup>128</sup>

“§4 “Khwaja ‘Ata-ye Jadvalkash has finished Mawlana Sa‘duddin’s *History* and the *Divan* of Khwaju and is working on the *Shāh-nāma*.”

*Jadval kishidan* means tracing the lines framing the justification space or text box, a repetitive task that demanded the utmost attention from the artist. It is unclear at which stage this ruling is made. In some cases, empty pages displaying a finished *jadval* indicate that this was done before copying the text or painting the illustration. Furthermore, a careful examination of pages from Shah Tahmasp’s *Shāh-nāma* indicates that some *jadval* were painted before the illustration. This operation often implies the inseting of margins made from a different type of paper. In Shah Tahmasp’s *Shāh-nāma*, the paper for the margins is gold-flecked, and close examination shows that the painting overlaps the gold flecking.

“§5 “Mawlana Muhammad Mutahhar has finished writing 25,000 verses of the *Shāh-nāma*.”<sup>129</sup>

§6 “Mawlana Shams has finished one *kashti* and has done the groundwork (*bum*) on one cartouche (*lawḥ*) for the Divan of Khwaju.”

The word *kashti* is puzzling,<sup>130</sup> and according to Thackston (quoting Moti Chandra), it could mean an oval compartment variously decorated.<sup>131</sup> The oval or almond-shaped form, when applied to a vessel, might be termed *kashti* (in the form of a boat or nave).<sup>132</sup> However, the oval form is rarely encountered in manuscript illumination, and the almond shape is usually termed *turunj* (citron).<sup>133</sup>

“§7 “All the painters are working on painting and varnishing (*shustimān*) seventy-five tent poles.”

*Shustimān* is used by Sadiqi while describing “oil-painting,” and refers to a kind of varnish.<sup>134</sup> It is noteworthy that “all the painters” are engaged in the task involving these tent poles, probably meaning that it was important and time-consuming.

“§8 “On the day this report is being written Mawlana ‘Ali is designing a frontispiece illumination for the *Shāh-nāma*. His eyes were sore for a few days.”

The word *tarḥ* is used for “designing.” Thackston suggests that this ‘Ali could be Khwaja ‘Ali Musavvir;<sup>135</sup> but such a sobriquet would indicate a painter specializing in figures, whereas here, the artist is working on illumination.

(Mahmud, Khata’i, Abdul-Salam). Could this practice be an indication of the age or rank of these artists?

127 On *bum*, see Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 39, 101, 122.

128 See *Tahmina enters Rustam’s room*. Page from a *Shāh-nāma* of Firdausi, Safavid Iran, circa 1520–30. Istanbul, Album F. 1422, fol. 35a. 26.7 × 20.5 cm.

129 As indicated by Thackston, this *Shāh-nāma* is probably the copy housed at Malek Library, Tehran; see Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44, note 9.

130 On this term see Shiva Mihan, “On the Meaning of a Fifteenth Century Technical Term in a Timurid Document Associated with Prince Baysanghor’s Library in Herat,” *Iran*, LIVII, 2016, pp. 15–29.

131 Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44 note 10, referring to Moti Chandra, *The Technique of Mughal Painting*, Lucknow, 1949, p. 70.

132 For nave-shaped vessels, see A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, “From the Royal Boat to the Beggars bowl,” *Islamic Art*, 4 (1990–91), pp. 3–111.

133 See Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 116–122.

134 See Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 101–102; Porter, “From the Theory,” p. 112 and note 35. I disagree with Thackston’s translation (“tinting”); Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 43.

135 Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44, note 11.

“§9 “Mawlana Qavvam al-Din<sup>136</sup> has finished the arabesque margins for the binding of the *Shāh-nāma* and has taken up the brush for the pleasure scene of the body of the binding. The groundwork is nearly two thirds done; the back; head, and neck have been attached, and the groove has been drawn.”

This paragraph is interesting because it describes the making of a binding. The materials are not described, but is probably referring to leather, since lacquer work was developed later. The border or margin (*hāshiya*) is decorated with arabesque (*islīmi*). The bookbinder has completed the ground (*bum*) of the main field (*matn-i-jild*) that displays a “pleasure scene” (*‘aysh-i tamāshā*).<sup>137</sup> This passage is of particular importance as the names for different parts of the binding (*pusht*, *sar*, *gardan*, *ṭariq*) are not often mentioned in sources.<sup>138</sup>

“§10 “Hajji Mahmud has done the ground and outlining (*bum va taḥrīr*) for the front field (*matn-i ru*) of the binding for the facsimile (*naql*) of the *Rasā’il* and is busy drawing outlines (*guzar*).”

§11 “Mawlana Qutb has copied ten sections of the *Tārikh-i Ṭabari*.”

§12 “Khwaja ‘Abd al-Rahim is busy making designs (*turuḥ*) for the binders, illuminators, tent-makers, and tile-makers.”

§13 “Hajji and Khata’i have gotten two other *kashti* to the point of gilding (*hall kāri*).”

§14 “Ustad Seyf al-Din is well again after his illness.”

§15 “Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din has progressed in two scenes (*mawza*) of the *Rasā’il* to the point of the faces (*chihri*), and another scene is nearly there. At present, he is busy with an *‘emarat* scene which has been rejected from *Gulistan*.”

An interesting point here is that the painting from *Gulistan* has been *rejected*. This could mean that the painting was not judged to fit with the whole project, and what became of this page is unknown.

“§16 “Mawlana Shams lacks one section of making a facsimile (*naql*) of the treatises in the late *Khwaja’s* hand.”

§17 “Khwaja Mahmud has finished the front and back (*pusht-u ru*) of the binding for the Khwaja’s calligraphic treatises and is busy with the head and neck (*sar-u gardan*).”

§18 “Khwaja ‘Ata has finished the sections (*ajzā*) of the *Gulistān*, and he has finished the ground of two cartouches (*lawḥ*) [of/and?] the main cartouche (*sar-lawḥ*) for the *History* that Mawlana Sa’d al-Din has copied.”

§19 “Mawlana Sa’d al-Din has finished the lid of the begum’s little chest (*sar-i sanduqcha*); one side is ready for final touches (*pardākht*). The door panel (*tabaqa-i dar*) that remains will be completed in fifteen days.”

Again, this is interesting since it alludes to a box or “little chest,” whose material is not specified. Almost nothing is known concerning the production of portable objects in the *kitābkhāna* (another hint is given below, §21).

“§20 “Another *kashti* has almost been finished by ‘Abd al-Salam.”

§21 “There was a design (*tarḥ*) by Mir Dawlatyar for a saddle. Khwaja Mir Hasan copied (*naql*) it, and Khwaja Mir Hasan’s son Mir Shams al-Din and Ustad Dawlat-Khwaja are busy executing it in mother-of-pearl.”

§22 “Your most humble servant, the most miserable speck of dust, has finished writing three and a half sections of the *Shāh-nāma* and has begun to write the *Nuzhat al-arwah*.”

The text of the *‘arza-dāsht*, unfortunately almost unique in its type, provides a rich harvest concerning the vocabulary related to the arts of the book and other activities of the *kitābkhāna*. In addition

136 This bookbinder was brought from Tabriz, as mentioned by Dust Muhammad; see Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, p. 44, note 12.

137 This expression appears uncommon.

138 Only *pusht* (back) and *sar* (head) are mentioned in the *Risāla-i jild-sāzi* edited by I. Afshar.

to the illuminated and illustrated books, insights into other activities are also provided in the two last parts of this document, dedicated to Royal Buildings and Grounds and to Tents.<sup>139</sup> Some words or locutions, absent from dictionaries or lexicons, remain obscure, implying that further research is still required in this domain, and a few other terms are addressed hereafter.

#### 4.4 *In-setting (vaṣṣāli) and Frame-drawing (jadvalkashi)*

The operations involving inseting manuscript pages in margins of a different type of paper, known as *vaṣṣāli*, are almost unrecorded in written sources. Some artists, such as Mawlana Yahya from Qazvin, are sometimes described in the *tadhkira* as excelling in the *vaṣṣāli* work.<sup>140</sup> This artist is also known for making marbled paper, which is occasionally used for making margins.<sup>141</sup> The *vaṣṣāli/faṣṣāli* operations are only briefly described in the *Risāla-i jild-sāzi*.<sup>142</sup>

The illustrations of some royal manuscripts display richly ornamented margins in which the paintings are inset. This applies to the *Khamsa* of Shah Tahmasp, where the glued parts are amazingly invisible at first glance. The *jadval* framing the image is also used to dissimulate the collage. As mentioned previously (while discussing paragraph 4 of the *ʿarza-dāsh*t, on Khwaja ʿAta-i Jadvalkash), it is not always possible to establish the order of these operations, but in most cases the *jadval* is probably made before painting or copying the text. However, the illustrations of Shah Tahmasp's *Khamsa* have been enlarged before in-setting. Moreover, they are rare examples

in which the text columns are not aligned with the regular page layout of the justification space.<sup>143</sup>

Remarkably, Muhammad Amin Jadvalkash, mentioned by Qazi Ahmad as an expert in *vaṣṣāli*, is instead known by his sobriquet as "frame-drawer" (*jadval-kash*).<sup>144</sup>

These techniques, although hardly noticeable, display amazing levels of craftsmanship and require more systematic studies. Recent conservation work has evidenced the complexity involved not only in the pigments used for the *jadval* (among which is the fatal paper-destroying verdigris) but also concerning the different types of glues and other binding agents.<sup>145</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand and identify the operational sequence involved in creating an illustrated manuscript. On initially considering that these operations are all computable, measurable, and reducible to mere *habitus*, it appears with hindsight that many issues remain irreducible. This is because, in artistic activity, the emotional and creative dimensions cannot be computed.

Briefly, the materials are all (more or less) known, and most of the practical aspects involved in the different operations are also relatively clear. However, the decisional facets remain much more obscure.

139 See Thackston translation, Thackston, *Album Prefaces*, pp. 45–46.

140 Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers*, p. 194. Other artists quoted by Qazi Ahmad for *vaṣṣāli/faṣṣāli* are the calligrapher ʿAbd-allah Tabbakh and the painters Muhammad Amin Jadvalkash and Abu al-Maʿsum Mirza (idem, pp. 66, 189–190).

141 See BnF Supplément persan no. 1956; F. Richard, *Splendeurs persanes*, n°131.

142 See Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre*, pp. 118–119.

143 Another oddity remains in these illustrations: the scene of *Khusrau's portrait discovered by Shirin* depicts the "portrait episode" of Iskandar and Nushaba.

144 Qazi Ahmad, *Calligraphers*, p. 189. On the mounting of margins, see also Y. Porter, "Remarques sur la peinture de Boukhara au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale*, no. 5–6 (1998), pp. 158–161.

145 On some of these aspects, see Y. Porter, "Papiers de l'Iran et de l'Inde," pp. 4–21. In the same volume, see also Morgane Royo, "De vers persans en vert perçant. Etude matérielle d'un manuscrit persan," C. Laroque (ed.), *La peinture et l'écrit au Moyen-Orient, supports et tracés* [Actes de la journée d'étude du 22 septembre 2017, HiCSA], Paris, HiCSA Editions, 2018, pp. 84–102.

The *kitābkhāna* has often been described from the patron's perspective, in a top-down approach. Instead, it should be considered an operational device. The workshop, especially for the princely *kitābkhāna*, should not be solely perceived as the expression of the patron's choice concerning the order of specific items in a specific place. It is constitutive of a network integrated into a decision and coordination process to manage projects. Thus, each work constitutes a unit resulting from a specific design driven by a team whose hierarchy is contingent.

On the question of size and proportions, as observed earlier, no specific standards appear in the choice of a format, for example, for the princely *Shāh-nāma* manuscripts. The only clear indication of the size of a volume found in the sources concerns the Qurans copied at the Rashidiya Foundation, written on *qaṭʿ-i buzurg-i baghdādi* folios.

A patron might ask for a large volume or, conversely, a pocketbook. However, it is doubtful that this patron is aware of or even interested in the specifications of the ratios used in bookmaking. The already noted quotation of Dust Muhammad, writing that Baysanghor asked for an album "*in the same kind of format and ruling, and with the same painting subjects*" is almost unique in its type and cannot thus be considered a rule.

Little is known about the geometry of the layout, or the use of remarkable figures. In parallel, one can note that although ancient Egyptians were unaware of  $\pi$  or  $\varphi$ , these remarkable numbers are found in the Great Pyramid's geometric construction.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, it is well-known that  $\varphi$  is present in many natural manifestations, vegetal or animal. Are such remarkable ratios applied to art by instinct?

<sup>146</sup> See Marianne Michel, *Les mathématiques de l'Égypte ancienne. Numération, métrologie, arithmétique, géométrie et autres problèmes*, Bruxelles, Safran, 2014. As an example, the circumference of the circle ( $2\pi R$ ), whose radius is the height of the pyramid (280 cubits), is equal to the perimeter of the base of the pyramid (each side: 440 cubits).

As observed earlier, the Ilkhanid period saw remarkable architectural achievements, particularly in building Uljaytu's mausoleum. However, what was the theoretical knowledge of its architects? One must admit that a craftsman can use mathematical solutions without knowing the theory behind them.

The page layout experienced, throughout the period covered, a dramatic evolution. In approximately a century, that is, from the Small *Shāh-nāma* -s (c.1300) to the *Three Poems* of Khwaju Kirmani (1396), the place covered by illustrations was drastically augmented. Moreover, the narrative roles of the field (textbox or justification space) and margin became increasingly significant. Pragmatically, elements in the margins are measured with ruling lines. However, if the page surface is entirely computed (and constructed) using the *masṭar*, this does not explain the "invention" of images.

The "reading" of the painted pages, when considering the division between the main field and margin, has rarely been explored before. However, it offers various new perspectives in interpreting images.

Concerning the choice of the illustrated episodes, several solutions might be suggested. A. Soudavar argues that some manuscripts' illustrative sequences have a programmatic aspect.<sup>147</sup> His conclusions might be questioned, but nevertheless, comparing two different cycles, such as the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma* and Shah Tahmasp's copy, indicates different choices in their illustrations. However, was this always intentional? What is the role of *Kunstwollen* here?

Regarding the bibliophilic tastes of some princes, it is assumed that most of them wanted a collection of personal copies of Persian classics for their library. Moreover, literary tastes depend on fashions and trends, influencing their copies. However, it is difficult to understand why Baysanghor had two copies of the *Shāh-nāma* made at the same time (both dated 833), two copies

<sup>147</sup> Soudavar. "The Saga of Abu-Sa'īd."

of *Kalila and Dimna* (dated 833 and 834), or two copies of Juvayni's *Tārīkh-i jahān-gushāy* (dated 834 and 835).<sup>148</sup> Is it possible that one of these copies was intended as a gift? Alternatively, were both copies for his personal use? Furthermore, the details of the decisions are unclear. Was it Baysanghor himself who asked for Sa'di's works?

Did Ibrahim Mirza choose to have Jami's *Haft Awrang* copied by various celebrated calligraphers and lavishly illustrated? Was he specific about the number of illustrations and their subjects?

Regarding many other issues, almost the only document containing meager information on these topics is "the" *'arza-dāsh*t.<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately, besides copious amounts of vocabulary, little is known except that an artist painted scenes for a copy of Sa'di's *Gulistān*, while another applied gold to a frontispiece.

The "making of" of Persian illustrated manuscripts appears as a kaleidoscope of tasks. These imply using structural and normed units, although not necessarily in a static dynamic. The whole process of the calligraphy and painting connection evolves according to regulated principles authorizing formal evolutions originating from structured transmission practices.

Among the pending contextualizing issues, it is important to clarify whether artistic expression was intrinsically valued for each contributor in creating an illustrated manuscript and hence how much the creative liberty would be appreciated in the dense network of constraints and logic of social subordination. These issues probably varied according to time and place.

Finally, the conception of the paintings studied here relies on a cultural identity that had filtered the representation of trivial realism for the benefit of a transcended manifestation long before the covered period. This was later reflected through geometric frames and constructions. Even if the technique of areal perspective or the rendering of emotions were identified, these features were not adopted. The main discourse was carried by the "shot/reverse-shot" or "field versus margin" game based on the geometric structures from a *planar* perspective. Thus, the painted page of a manuscript encompassed all the keys to its understanding, incorporating all the required beliefs and cultural references in the codex. The page thus largely exceeds the status of a mere support for a representation and becomes a bidimensional space where it projects its meaning. The manuscript embodies the place where text and painting develop discourses that are evidently correlated, each in a divided field framed by precisely defined geometric surfaces and individually conveying their own density, without being subordinated to each other, in a dialogue enriched by their own specific universe of meaning.

148 See list in Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, pp. 368–369.

149 Less known documents exist, such as a decree by the Timurid Ibrahim Sultan appointing Khwaja Nasir Muhammad as the head of his library; see Francis Richard, "Nasr al-Soltani, Nasir al-Din Mozahheb et la bibliothèque d'Ibrahim Soltan à Shiraz," *Studia Iranica*, 30, 1 (2001), pp. 96–99.

## Epic Iconography or Folktale Illustrations?

### *Narrative Devices on Kashan Ceramics (Late 12th–Early 13th Century)*

Painting is silent poetry and poetry is  
talking painting.

SIMONIDES OF KEOS (c.556–468 BC)

...

Les mots et les couleurs ne sont choses  
pareilles  
Ni les yeux ne sont les oreilles.

JEAN DE LA FONTAINE

∴

#### 1 Introduction

In the arts of premodern Europe, a massive part of iconography was nourished by religious or mythological content, inspired by the Bible, the Apocryphal Gospels, the *Legenda Aurea*, Homer's epics, or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This literary background identifies Leda because of the Swan, or Mary Magdalene and her Pyxis. In some cases, a precise moment in a story can be recognized; a crying man coupled with a rooster is immediately associated with the *Denial of Peter*. Hence, a type of “iconographic click” allows the viewer to recognize the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in the Iranian world, many images, not necessarily accompanied by an instantly relevant text, can be identified as narrative or literary

because the story is familiar (“identification of visual context”), as is the case with *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl*, for instance. This theme has been known since the late Sasanian period, although the exact version to which it is related is more difficult to identify.<sup>2</sup>

This specific case finds a parallel with some of the mural paintings from Pendzhikent, where the walls of a Sogdian palace display frescoes in which some stories are easily recognized,<sup>3</sup> such as Rustam's “Seven Feats” (*Haft-Khwān*). However, it was obviously not Firdawsi's version of these stories, written three centuries later, that was used as a basis for these depictions.<sup>4</sup>

1 E. Panofsky in his *Studies in Iconology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 3, defined iconography as the branch of the history of art that concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to form; he drew a distinction between definitions of “iconography” (the identification of visual content) and “iconology” (the analysis of the meaning of that content).

2 W.L. Hanaway Jr., “Bahrām V Gōr in Persian Legend and Literature,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 111/5, pp. 514–522, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bahram-05-lit> (accessed 18/11/2022) says little on the topic besides stating that the accounts by the early historians (Tabari, Dinavari, Bal'ami, Ibn Balkhi) on Bahram Gur are relatively colorless and straightforward, whereas the legend develops significantly with Firdawsi and Tha'alibi. On the iconography of Bahram Gur, see also Richard Ettinghausen, “Bahram Gur's Hunting Feats or the Problem of Identification,” *Iran* 17 (1979), pp. 25–31; and Maria Vittoria Fontana, *La leggenda di Bahram Gur e Azada: Materiali per la storia di una tipologia figurative delle origini al XIV secolo*, Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1986.

3 Besides stories related to the Iranian epic, these murals also show episodes inspired by the *Mahabharata* or the *Panchatantra*. On Pendzhikent, see Boris I. Marshak, “Panjikant.”

4 On *Haft-Khwān*, see Olga M. Davidson, “Haftkhwān,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 5, (2002) pp. 516–519; <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-kan> (accessed 18/11/2022); see also Ehsan Yarshater, “Iran iii. Traditional History,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI11/3, (2004) pp. 299–307 (accessed 18/11/2022). <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iran-iii-traditional-history>; in this paper, Yarshater addresses a mixed corpus including *Shāh-nāma* among other sources (Biruni, Tha'alibi, etc.).

Narrative iconography naturally derives from a story. One of the main aims in this chapter is to try and establish the bases of iconographic themes on Kashan ceramics. Two different approaches may be taken for this goal; identifying a specific narrative, and studying how it is represented or appears for the narrative substrata of diverse origins. It would thus be ideal not to start from a specific text, although prestigious, to deduct its iconographic result on ceramics, but to rewind from the iconography toward the abundance of references that have inspired it. This assumes a bottom-up approach, especially to identify the most “popular” components of these images, contrary to the too frequent top-down method, which would start from Firdawsī’s *Shāh-nāma*, for instance.

In the frame of a founding narrative, some episodes might be nourished by the persistence or resurgence of anterior or parallel stories converging to procure a special density for some episodes rather than others. From these episodes emerge privileged iconographic sources, although they are less systematically significant than other episodes from the same founding narrative could be.

With some frequency, bowls and plates show poetic quotations or, more rarely, circumstantial inscriptions, such as dates, signatures, or dedications. Still, on most occasions, these texts do not correspond clearly with the depicted scene.<sup>5</sup> A similar question rises with luster star tiles. Repeatedly, these display images surrounded by Persian poems, but the poems do not appear to match the images. This association could be considered as a *coq à l’âne* (apparently absurd juxtaposition or elliptical interpolation),<sup>6</sup> to be compared, to a

certain extent, with the mixed contents of poetic anthologies. Alternatively, it could be understood that the images and poems were voluntarily and “simply” mixed randomly. A third direction can be proposed concerning the “textual” presence, albeit sometimes unreadable, which considers inscriptions based on their formal aspect (rather than their written meaning), as explained below.

One wonders thus what meaning should be given to this text/image relationship. Some contextualizing preliminary observations are required to answer this crucial question. These first address the choice of ceramics as a basis for this iconographic study. Questions on time span are also essential; these are followed by some considerations on the use, cost, and customers of the concerned commodities before proposing a brief survey of pre- and early Islamic iconography.

### 1.1 Why Ceramics?

The period addressed by this study is remarkably devoid of illustrated manuscripts, especially concerning Firdawsī’s *Shāh-nāma*. At least two explanations could enlighten this absence, namely destruction or defiance. Supporters exist for both hypotheses.<sup>7</sup> During a period for which no illustrated Persian manuscripts are known, ceramics furnish numerous examples of “literary” iconography. It has been noted, by Barbara Brend, for instance, that the iconography on ceramics is different from that found in the early illustrated

5 On the text/image relation, see also Anna Contadini, “Text and Image on Middle Eastern Objects: The Palmer Cup in Context,” in Pippa Shirley and Dora Thornton (eds.), *A Rothschild Renaissance: A New Look at the Waddesdon Bequest in the British Museum*, London, British Museum, 2017, chap. 11, 124–145.

6 Some 16th century French authors, such as Rabelais or Clément Marot, are known for their “coq à l’âne”; this apparent incoherent juxtaposition of sentences allows freedom to express unconventional notions. The reading of these compositions thus implies a series of keys for

their understanding; see Robert Griffin, *Clément Marot and the Inflections of Poetic Voice*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974, pp. 80–84.

7 For Basil Gray (*Shāh-nāma* illustration from Firdawsī to the Mongol invasions, in R. Hillenbrand (ed.), *The Art of the Saljuqs*, 1994, p. 96), for instance, “there were in fact no pre-1300 illustrated *Shahnama* manuscripts.” See also Robert Hillenbrand, “The Relationship between Book Painting and Luxury Ceramics in 13th-century Iran,” p. 134. On “the question of why illustrated *Shāh-nāma* suddenly became popular around 1300,” see also Hillenbrand, “New Perspectives in *Shahnama* Iconography,” in R. Hillenbrand, *Shahnama, The Visual Language*, 2004, p. 1.

manuscripts.<sup>8</sup> However, a preliminary question must be asked; can illustrations on manuscripts be compared with those on ceramics? One can wonder whether both these media belong to the same sociological sphere and, even if they do, whether they belong to the same context of use. That is, the audiences of painted manuscripts and the so-called deluxe ceramics might not be the same. An evident time gap separates these audiences since the ceramics studied here date mainly from the late 12th to early 13th centuries, while surviving illustrated manuscripts are extremely rare before the early 14th century. Naturally, the purpose or function of these categories (vessels and books) cannot be the same. Concerning erudition, a fundamental difference exists between manuscripts and ceramics. Images in manuscripts enhance the taste of a learned category, whereas, on ceramics, they appear as flashes of a socio-culturally more popular audience. They are also markers of a folk culture suggesting a looser referential, disconnected from any requirement for erudition and therefore freer in their relation to a literary corpus. Thus, images on ceramics appear simpler in their graphic signification than those in manuscripts.

In some rare cases, the images on ceramics are apparently inspired by historical events. Thus, the exceptional *Battle Scene* plate from the Freer Gallery, in which several characters are identified by inscribed names, probably depicts a real battle (Fig. 2.1). However, nothing is known concerning the means of transmission for such a picture. Additionally, this large plate has also been interpreted as a possible copy from a preexisting image.<sup>9</sup> One wonders where these images originated from and what was the “creative” dimension in their making or their artistic status. Almost nothing is known regarding how potters worked, neither concerning figures nor the poetic quotations that can be read on the objects. Potters may

have disposed of notebooks or models or only referred to their memory and inventive talent.<sup>10</sup> As explained below, how images were transferred (or transmitted) could explain certain iconographic aberrations, which, conversely, are extremely rare in illustrated manuscripts.

Most examples studied here concern the so-called *mina'i* bowls. A limited series of finely illustrated luster vessels are also noticeable.<sup>11</sup> Other media, such as metal or textiles, occasionally also display these types of themes.<sup>12</sup>

The examples of ceramics were particularly numerous at the turn of the 12th–13th centuries, and they decreased considerably after the Mongol invasions (starting in the 1220s). By the late 13th century, the first known illustrated copies of the *Shāh-nāma* appeared, beginning with the Small Mongol *Shāh-nāma*-s, and then, by the 1330s, with the so-called Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma*, together with its contemporary Injuid versions. Is this why few ceramics are then illustrated with literary themes?

Besides, by the end of the 13th century, tiles with verses from the *Shāh-nāma*, but devoid of illustrations, became popular in the decoration of royal palaces (see the third section of Chapter 3).

8 See Barbara Brend, “The Tradition of Illustration,” in Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian Kings*, 2010, p. 32.

9 See Renata Holod, “Event and Memory: The Freer Gallery’s Siege Scene Plate,” *Ars Orientalis*, 42 (2012), p. 209.

10 The late antique mosaic specialists also raise the question of notebooks; see Janine Balty, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1993, pp. 36 and 252–253.

11 *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl*, Christies, London, October 6th, 2011, no. 80; fragment of bowl with Faridun and Zahhak, Louvre, MA0936/342; bowl with Prince back from hunting, found at Ghazni, Kabul Museum (repro. O. Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, Fig. 49, p. 78.); large bowl with *Faridun Farrukh*, Jerusalem (Rachel Hasson, *The Museum for Islamic Art. Selected Works from the Collection*, Jerusalem, L.A. Mayer Museum for Islamic Art, 2014, pp. 62–63, no. 41).

12 Marianna Shreve Simpson, “Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects,” in H.L. Kessler and M.S. Simpson (eds.), *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Studies in the History of Art Vol. 16, Symposium Papers 1v*, Washington, National Gallery of Art, 1985, pp. 131–149.



FIGURE 2.1  
Large *mina'i* plate with *Battle Scene*, Kashan, late 12th century.  
Diam. 47.8 cm  
FREER GALLERY OF ART,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,  
WASHINGTON, D.C., F1943.3

### 1.2 *Time Span*

As mentioned above, most of the examples studied in this chapter date back to the late 12th to early 13th century, a period that is often referred to as Seljuq, but this dynasty ended brutally in 1194 when Tughril III (the last sultan) was killed in a battle against the Khwarazm-shah Tikish. Before this brutal end, the Seljuq supremacy, among others, had tilted because of the pressure of the Eldiguzid Atabegs of Azerbaijan.<sup>13</sup> Concerning the iconography, the dynastic shift is far from obvious. This is probably why many artifacts dating from the early 13th century are nevertheless still labelled as “Seljuq.”

If this first “transition period” is hardly noticed in visual arts, the Mongol invasions starting in the 1220s marked a rupture, particularly with the disappearance of the *mina'i* objects. Evolutions

are evident from the 1180s to the early 14th century, and gaps must be explained. If some trends exhibit continuity, particularly concerning the making of lusterware, breaks and innovations are also palpable.

### 1.3 *Use, Cost, and Customers*

Another aspect concerns the *use* of the vessels on which these iconographies appear. It is difficult to precisely determine what social category these so-called deluxe artifacts were made for.<sup>14</sup> The issue is complex since *mina'i*, and luster bowls are fragile and easily scratched with iron tools. This implies that these vessels cannot be used

13 C.E. Bosworth, *The Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh, EUP, 1967, pp. 123–124.

14 See Anna Contadini, “Patronage and the Idea of an Urban Bourgeoisie,” pp. 431–452. Regarding other aspects and methods, see for instance, I. Taxel, “Luxury and Common Wares: Socio-economic Aspects of the Distribution of Glazed Pottery in Early Islamic Palestine,” *Levant* 46.1 (2014) pp. 118–139.

as common tableware.<sup>15</sup> Their use is therefore exceptional for eating or drinking purposes, and these objects might be judged as superfluous or decorative.<sup>16</sup>

In later periods, some examples show decorative uses of underglaze painted ceramics. This fashion might have been originally inspired by the elite's *chini-khāna-s* (porcelain galleries), such as that in Samarqand, built in the early 15th century for Ulugh Beg and mentioned by Babur in his Memoirs.<sup>17</sup> Visual examples of exhibited vessels on illustrated manuscripts are numerous (see Fig. 2.2).<sup>18</sup> Many of the Safavid so-called Kubachi wares of the 16th–17th centuries possess drilled hanging holes in their bases,<sup>19</sup> and reports from the 19th century say that such vessels were included in the dowries of Kubachi brides.<sup>20</sup> However, the

coming of these vessels to the Daghestan region is probably not contemporaneous with their making. Another even later (late 19th–early 20th century) but possibly restricted example of exhibited vessels, also forming part of a dowry, is provided by Micheline Centlivres-Demont about the wares from Na'in/Meybod.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the *exhibitive* dimension of luster vessels, a parallel could also be drawn with the Hispano-Moresque luster salvers. However, their frequently emblematic (or heraldic) aspect, together with the fact that the hanging holes were often made *before* firing, confirm that these objects were explicitly made for show (Figs. 2.3.a–b).<sup>22</sup>

The superfluous aspect of Kashan's wares reveals a social class able to spend money on unessential goods and therefore indicates a type of urban upper-middle-class. However, these so-called deluxe vessels probably remained much cheaper than any Chinese porcelain,<sup>23</sup> or silver inlaid bronze item.

Accordingly, another question could be whether these vessels were intended as a cheaper substitute for other materials, such as porcelain or metalwork. The profiles of some *mina'i*, especially lobed bowls, appear inspired by the porcelain shapes. Likewise, some forms in lusterware (such as scalloped salvers and pitchers) are probably borrowed from metal models. From a "pictorial" or aesthetic viewpoint, the visual difference between these locally produced vessels and porcelain/metal objects is naturally striking. *Mina'i* and – to a lesser

15 The notion of "tableware" is odd in Islamic contexts; however, it appeared on the title of L. Golombek, R.B. Mason, G.A. Bailey, *Tamerlane's Table Ware*, Costa Mesa, 1996. The exact function of the different types of vessels, perhaps for special dishes (soups, stews, palaw, etc.), has retained little attention. On "tables," see J. Sadan, *Le mobilier au Proche Orient medieval*, Leiden, Brill, 1976, pp. 67–85; on "tableware," see pp. 86–95. M.S. Simpson ("Narrative," p. 143) considers these objects as usual, a view that is not shared here.

16 The concept of decorative objects or bibelots appears odd at first glance; consequently, during my 2013 lecture, I mentioned "Seljuq housewives dusting *mina'i* bibelots" as an amusing image questioning this aspect.

17 Babur, *Bābur-Nāma or Memoirs of Bābur*, transl. A.S. Beveridge, (reprint, Delhi, Atlantic Publishers, 1989) vol. 1, p. 80. See also Mehreen Chida-Razvi, "From Function to Form: Chini-khana in Safavid and Mughal Architecture," *South Asian Studies*, 35:1 (2019), pp. 82–106.

18 See, for instance, the Frontispiece for Sa'di's *Bustān*, Herat, 1488, fol. 1v–2r°. Cairo, Dār al-Kutub. See also *A Ruffian Spares the Life of a Poor Man*, Folio 4v° from a copy of 'Attar's *Mantiq al-ṭair* (Language of the Birds), Isfahan, c.1600, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 63.210.4. <https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/is/original/DP247745.jpg> (accessed 18/11/2022).

19 See Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.61.9: Dish with Floral Designs on an Olive Background, diam. 34.9 cm. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451437> (accessed 18/11/2022).

20 See Lisa Golombek et al., *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 171.

21 See Micheline Centlivres-Demont, "Cent vingt ans de bleu et blanc à Meybod (Iran)," in Anne-Claire Schumacher (dir.), *Terres d'Islam*, Geneva, Musée Ariana, 2014, p. 180.

22 See Dish with Unidentified Coat of Arms, Manises, c.1470–90, diam. 45.1 cm, The Cloisters Collection, 1956, no. 56.171.107. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471768> (accessed 18/11/2022).

23 Few indications exist concerning the cost of porcelain wares; Biruni writes that some pieces can amount to 10 dinars; see Biruni, Abu Rayhan, *The Book Most Comprehensive in the Knowledge on Precious Stones*, transl. H.M. Said, Islamabad, Pakistan Hijra Council, 1989, p. 195.

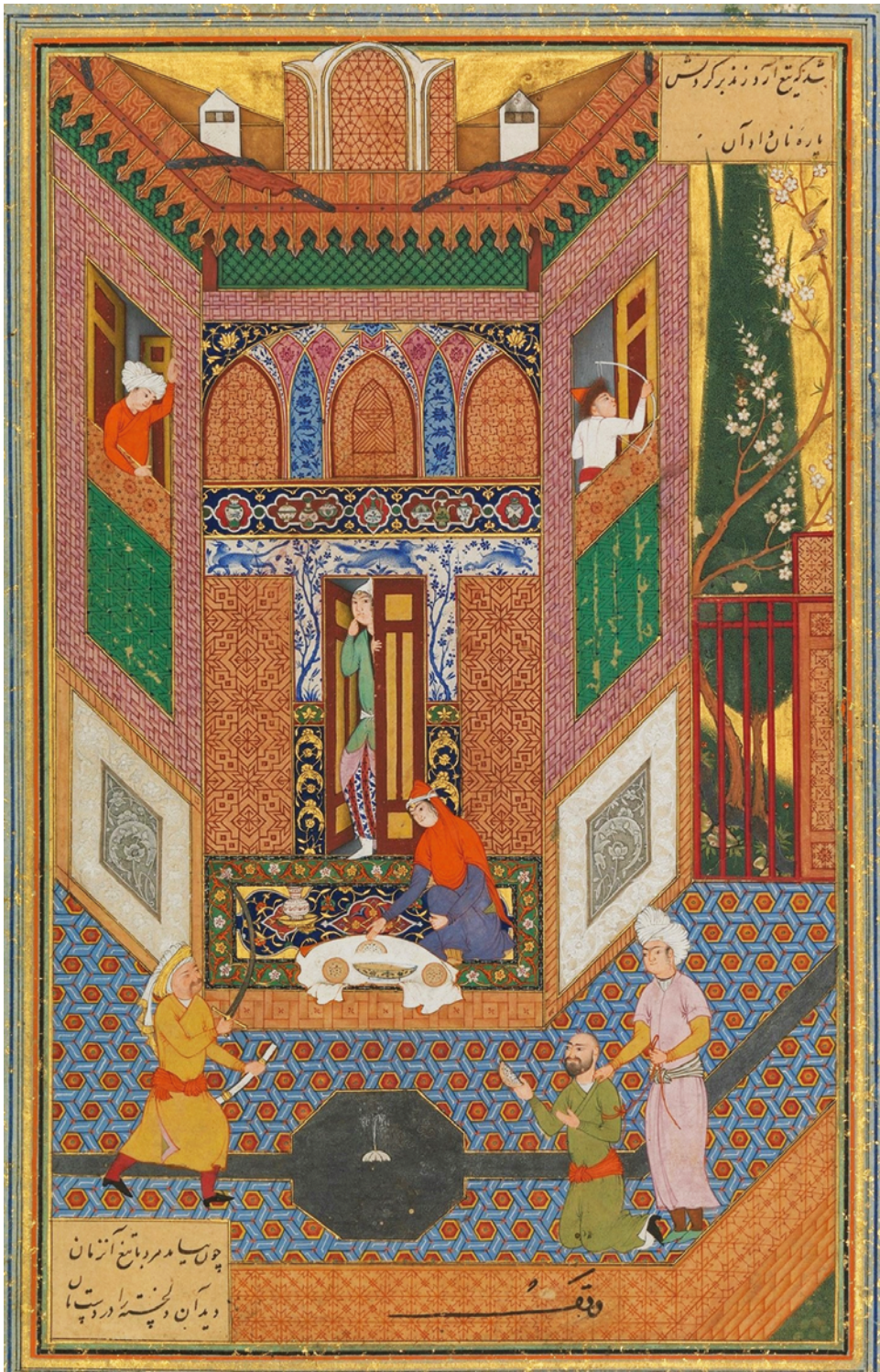


FIGURE 2.2 *A Ruffian Spares the Life of a Poor Man*, Folio 4v from a copy of 'Attar's *Mantiq al-tair* (Language of the Birds), Isfahan, c.1600  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NO. 63.210.4



FIGURE 2.3.A–B a.: Dish with Unidentified Coat of Arms, Manises, c.1470–90, diam. 45.1 cm, The Cloisters Collection, 1956, no. 56.171.107. b.: Detail showing hanging holes made before firing  
PHOTO Y. PORTER

extent – lusterware allow infinite possibilities of expression and detail, whereas porcelain from this period was mainly plain, and inlaid metal offered more limited possibilities in terms of polychromy, drawing, or figuration. Compared with plain porcelain, *mina'i* wares might also appear flashy or ostentatious. Considerations on the “good taste” of the time would be highly valued.

Few dedicatees are identified on inscriptions that could help identify the target of these goods. One of the most spectacular dedicative inscriptions is a turquoise-glazed and gilded *mina'i* bottle with the name of Tughan Shah ibn al-Mu'ayyad, the governor of Nishapur between 1173 and 1186, under the Khwarazm-shahs.<sup>24</sup> This object is even more fascinating since it was apparently ordered from Kashan, and this type of ceramic was probably never produced in Khurasan.

A *mina'i* bowl kept at Washington's Freer Gallery displays for its part, on its outer wall, an inscription celebrating the qualities of a certain Abu Nasr Kermanshah (Fig. 2.4). Was he the patron or addressee of this object?<sup>25</sup> Another *mina'i* bowl, now in the Khalili Collection, addresses good wishes to a certain Najib al-Din, qualified as “Success of Islam” (*sa'd al-islām*) and “the most capable of capable men” (*akfā al-kufāt*), which, according to Sheila Blair, could connect this individual with the Khwarazm-shah administration.<sup>26</sup>

Dedication inscriptions are not more numerous on lusterwares. First published in 1963, an octagonal tray mentions a certain 'Umar ibn Ahmad al-Tusi, qualified as “Sun of the Arabs, provost of the Kingdom.” Mentioning an official here is curious since Oliver Watson qualifies this object as “average.”<sup>27</sup> A pitcher, originally in the Bahrami

24 Miho Collection, Japan; see Stefano Carboni, “Islamic Art,” in *Ancient Art from the Shumei Family Collection*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996, pp. 160–161.

25 Freer Gallery, Washington, F1927.3; <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1927.3/> (accessed 18/11/2022); H. 9 cm; diam. 18.9 cm. See Gaston Wiet. “Un Bol en Faïence du XI<sup>e</sup> Siecle.” *Ars Islamica*, vol. 1, no. 1, (1934), pp. 118–120. This individual has not yet been identified.

26 Sheila S. Blair, “A Brief Biography of Abu Zayd,” *Muqarnas* 28, (2008), p. 165.

27 Oliver Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, London, Faber, p. 52.



FIGURE 2.4 *Mina'i* bowl with prince on elephant back. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 18.9 cm  
FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1927.3

Collection, was addressed to Hasan ibn Salman, “the Grand vizier, support of people and religion, crown of Islam and the Muslims, dear to kings and sultans.”<sup>28</sup> According to Sheila Blair, the title formulation resembles that on a bronze pen case, dated 607/1210–11, made for another vizier, Majd al-Mulk al-Muzzafar.<sup>29</sup> She believes that this otherwise unknown Hasan ibn Salman must be a contemporary of Majd al-Mulk, probably also serving the Khwarazm-shahs.

Two bowls, one signed by Abu Zayd, display the name of a vizier called Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah (Figs. 2.5.a–b).<sup>30</sup> I have mentioned in a previous

28 *al-ṣadr al-kabir, ‘imād al-milla wa ‘l-din, tāj al-islām wa ‘l-muslimin, ‘aziz al-muluk wa ‘l-salāṭin*; see Mehdi Bahrami, *Gurgan faiences*, Cairo, Le Scribe Egyptien, 1949, p. 134, pl. 11.

29 Blair, “A Brief Biography,” p. 165. Freer Gallery F.1936.7; <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1936.7/> (accessed 18/11/2022); width: 31.4 cm.

30 One, signed *katabahu Abu Zayd*, was sold at Sotheby London (23 June 1989, n°214); the other, fragmentary, is LACMA (M.2002.1.187; <https://collections.lacma.org/node/204636> (accessed 18/11/2022)); on the exterior frieze, in reserve on cobalt background: *mu‘ayyad*

publication a great plate with a royal dedication, unfortunately anonymous.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the famous Freer luster scalloped plate with a sleeping groom has a dedication to an anonymous emir, qualified as *isfahsālār* (chief of army), “sword of kings and religion, blade of the commander of the believers” (Fig. 2.6).<sup>32</sup>

However, the reliability of these documentary inscriptions must be questioned. Some objects might contain errors in the dates<sup>33</sup> or might have been copied several times, as Renata Holod believes was the case with the great *Battle Scene* plate from the Freer Gallery (Fig. 2.1).<sup>34</sup> The dedication inscriptions on the above-mentioned

*al-wuzarā’ Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah a‘azza Allah anṣārahu* (assistant of viziers (...) may God increase his victories). See Blair, “A Brief Biography,” p. 165 and note 74.

31 Yves Porter, “Potters, painters, and patrons: documentary inscriptions and iconography in pre-Mongol Iranian ceramics,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 69 (2006), p. 34.

32 *sayf al-muluk wa l-din, husam amir al-mu‘minin*, Blair, “A Brief Biography,” pp. 165–167.

33 A luster bowl sold at Christie’s London in April 2000 (no. 236) has two dates, both in the month of *Shawwal*, one dated 574/March 1178 and the other 575/March 1180. This double dating is extremely confusing. The hypothesis of a copy error has not been credited by the authors of the sales catalogue.

Concerning dates appearing on ceramics, another puzzling example is illustrated with a tile, dated 529/1134–35, published by A. Ghouchani, *Persian Poetry on the Tiles of Takht-i Sulayman*, Tehran, Iran University Press, 1992, p. 2, which evidently dates from a much later period; it is now preserved in Berlin and dated to the 19th century. A Quranic frieze in Mashhad, dated 1118, probably follows a similar pattern; see Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 28. Finally, the Sèvres Foundation Disk, dated 711/1311–12 (Sèvres, MNC 22688, published by C. Adle, “Un dyptique de fondation en céramique lustrée, Kashan 711/1312,” in C. Adle, *Art et société*, pp. 199–218) has a “twin” kept in the Tashkent Museum, with the same date (repro: S. Saidkassymov (dir.) *La renaissance témouride*, Paris, Unesco, 1996, p. 164). However, the Sèvres disk is molded, while the Tashkent one is flat; this difference could indicate a later date for the latter, whose text has been integrally copied from the Sèvres disk.

34 See Holod, “Event and Memory,” p. 209.



FIGURE 2.5.A–B Fragment of a luster bowl with the mention of ... *mu'ayyad al-wuzarā Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallah*. 17.14 × 17.14 cm. LACMA, M.2002.1.87. a.: exterior. b.: interior

ceramics may have been copied from other objects. Fewer than 10 ceramic portable objects containing a dedication are known, making this practice exceptional.

Locally made ceramics are never mentioned in lists of gifts, as the important persons who were to receive a gift were more often gratified with a robe of honor (*khil'at*) or a richly harnessed horse, as well as precious metal items.<sup>35</sup> Precious ceramics were probably limited to Chinese imports and thus did not include locally made wares, however splendid. Consequently, it is unclear whether these meager mentions hint at the social categories that might have patronized these productions.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, only one of the items with a dedication (Freer Gallery, F1927.3; Fig. 2.4) is part of the corpus studied here.

Other aspects that could illuminate the consumers of these vessels are the various meanings they convey, not only with their iconography but also with their literary contents. 'A. Ghouchani, followed by Sheila Blair, noted that some of the quoted verses, either in Persian or Arabic, are sometimes introduced by locutions reading *aydhan li-hi* (also by the same [poet]) or simply *aydhan* (the same). These Arabic expressions are typical of poetical anthologies and *divans*. Sheila Blair then replaces these literary contents in the context of assemblies (*majlis*), during which the observation of such objects could have served as a starting block for poetical jousts or a game of riddles (*mu'ammā*), and Blair compares this type of social pastime to today's Scrabble or Trivial Pursuit. Consequently, one could imagine that these objects were intended for learned customers, who could potentially have tasted the puns of the poems together with their possible but indirect allusion to the images (see Annex 2, Anthology of poems on luster, *mina'i* & underglaze painted vessels).<sup>37</sup> Undoubtedly, the example described below of the bowl with *Faridun on a donkey* would clearly illustrate this fact (Fig. 2.20).

However, if some of these vessels display elegant images and selected poems, other objects decorated with the same techniques (*mina'i* and luster), far more numerous, are much less accurately

35 See for instance Contadini, "Patronage and the Idea of an Urban Bourgeoisie," p. 433: "The range of artifacts mentioned – jewelry, pearls, gold, silver, metalwork, various fabrics, and the specific reference to gilded glass from Aleppo – is striking, and the absence of ivory or ceramics may be no more than chance, as al-Urmawi's account was a dramatic narrative rather than a comprehensive catalogue."

36 A parallel might be drawn with Fatimid lusterware; see a pair of fragments (Islamic Art Museum, Cairo, and Benaki Museum, Athens) with the names of officials of caliph al-Hakim (996–1021); Lane, 1947, pl. 25, and A.V. Meinecke-Berg in *Trésors Fatimides*, Paris, SDZ, 1998, p. 171.

37 Blair, "A Brief Biography," p. 167.



FIGURE 2.6  
Scalloped luster plate with  
sleeping groom, signed and  
dated (twice) Shamsuddin  
al-Hasani Abu Zayd, 607/1210.  
Diam. 35.2 cm  
FREER GALLERY OF ART,  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,  
WASHINGTON, D.C., F1941.11

drawn, quickly painted, with no poems, no signatures, and no dates (Fig. 2.7). In some cases, these objects display unreadable pseudo-epigraphic bands, either reminiscent of Kufic script or in a type of *naskhi* cursive. This indicates a second rank production, probably less expensive than the “boutique” category.<sup>38</sup> Nothing is known about market prices for these commodities, but it could be tentatively hypothesized that the cost of a “boutique” bowl was approximately ten times more expensive than a monochrome glazed one. In between these two top and bottom categories probably stood the underglaze painted wares.

Did these objects respond to specific functions and special occasions? Were they offered, for instance, as special gifts for *Nowruz* (New Year),



FIGURE 2.7 Base of *mina'i* bowl, Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 20.120.123

38 I borrow this anachronism from L. Golombek et al., *Persian Pottery in the First Global Age*, p. 21.



FIGURE 2.8  
Fragment of *mina'i* house model. Kashan,  
late 12th–early 13th century. L. 11 cm  
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER

marriage or circumcision, or for any other social event? Curiously, other series of objects, such as the ceramic “house models,” decorated in a wide range of techniques (luster, *mina'i*, monochrome glazed) are also often considered as New Year presents (Fig. 2.8). Like the *mina'i* bowls, they disappeared after the Mongol invasions.<sup>39</sup>

One can wonder whether these vessels, after they had been offered, were effectively “used”; one could imagine ritualized practices, perhaps on rare occasions, for drinking wine, for instance.<sup>40</sup> A parallel with Sasanian metal *iconophoric* vessels could serve as a hypothesis; Abu Nuwas (762–815) described this practice for wine drinking during the ‘Abbasid period:

“She marries wine with water in golden cups full of representations which neither speak nor hear; they are the images of the sons of Papak (i.e. Sasanian kings), with a ditch in front of them and when there is wine over them, they are like armies drowning in a whirlpool.”<sup>41</sup>

Other uses for these vessels cannot be discarded, such as presentation containers for sweets, spices, or sugar lumps. It could also be imagined that this type of vessel was kept safely, perhaps displayed on certain occasions and treasured as forming a type of iconographic library.

The present state of these objects is also an important issue regarding their iconography. Many *mina'i* objects have been abusively “restored” and are in certain cases completely over-painted.<sup>42</sup>

39 Series of “sweetmeat dishes,” made using various techniques, but all offering seven cavities, are also often associated with New Year’s *haft-sin* (seven items whose name starts with letter *sin*); M. Ruggiadi, in Canby et al. *Court and Cosmos. The Great Age of the Seljuqs*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016, no. 43, p. 115. A singular example of a “house-model” shows some people in a courtyard with a large dish in its center; this evokes precisely the type of seven cavities “sweetmeat dish” and could reveal a link between these two types of objects. On this topic, see also Margaret Graves, “Ceramic House Models from Medieval Persia: Domestic Architecture and Concealed Activities,” *Iran* 46, 1 (2008), pp. 227–251.

40 This practice would then evoke the “wine-bulls” mentioned by Mélikian-Chirvani, “The Wine-bull and the Magian Master,” in Ph. Gignoux (dir.), *Recurrent patterns in Iranian religions: from Mazdaism to Sufism: proceedings of the round table held in Bamberg (30th September–4th October 1991)*, Paris, *Studia Iranica, Cahier*, vol. 11, 1992, pp. 101–134.

41 Quoted by Rachel Ward, *Islamic Metalwork*, London, British Museum Press, 1993, p. 43.

42 For an example of complete over-painting, see V&A C.81-1918, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O85594/bowl-unknown/> (accessed 18/11/2022). Arthur Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, Faber, 1947, no. 72A. Stefano Carboni has examined a pilgrim flask with zodiacal motifs kept at the Metropolitan Museum; further examination has proved that the *lājvardina* decoration was a modern addition. S. Carboni, “A Guastada with Images of the Zodiac,” in M.V. Fontana & B. Genito, eds, *Studi in Onore di Umberto Scerrato*, Naples, IsMEO, 2003, pp.167–180. Kirsty Norman, “Restoration and Faking of Islamic Ceramics: Case Histories,” in Oliver Watson, *Ceramic from Islamic Lands, Kuwait National Museum, The Al-Sabah Collection*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 2004, pp. 69–89, provides several examples of abusive restorations. See also Richard McClary, <https://www.bips.ac.uk/recording/the-rediscovery-of-minai-wares-and-the-fiction-of-completion-13th-century-polychrome-iranian-ceramics-and-their-reception-in-the-20th-century/> (accessed 18/11/2022).

This constitutes yet another difficulty in studying their iconography since direct access to the works is generally impossible. This issue is briefly addressed in the conclusion of this chapter.

#### 1.4 *A Brief Survey of Pre-Islamic Iconography*

Since pre-Islamic times, the idiom of Persian figuration is not mimetic but tends, conversely, to establish a distance between the subject and its representation. This trend was visible before the Islamic conquest and later constituted one of the fundamentals of visual arts in the Iranian world, as well as in most Islamized lands. Therefore, the painted or sculpted figures tend to be simplified and can appear as archetypes. This point sometimes hinders identifying a specific person or character.

Thus, the royal representation of the Achaemenids reveals the elaboration of an iconography at the service of what Pierre Briant terms “a dominating ethno-class.”<sup>43</sup> However, the figure of the king, although clearly differentiated from other subjects, is too archetypal to be identified as an individual such as Darius or Xerxes.

Seleucid and Parthian times represent a long parenthesis regarding royal iconography; this is mainly due to the fragmentation of their realms and current ignorance of their period. The epoch of the Seleucids introduces foreign (Hellenistic) elements, with references showing a certain degree of acculturation. The Begram glass beaker in the Musée Guimet in Paris, illustrating Ganymede and Europa, uses popular themes in the Greco-Roman area;<sup>44</sup> Ganymede can be recognized because he is shown as a young naked boy with a Phrygian cap and because an eagle is present. However, how was this understood by the local population? Other examples inspired by Greek mythology undergo strange evolutions, such as the series

of salvers illustrating the *Triumph of Dionysus* (Figs. 2.9–10).<sup>45</sup>

It is evident that the rise of the Sasanian Empire in 226 CE significantly contributed to the formation of a new “Iranian” royal iconography, as their numerous rock reliefs demonstrate. This visible figuration is accompanied by the production of portable objects, especially in silver but also in numismatics and sigillography.<sup>46</sup>

Sasanian silver plates often show images of hunting kings. These are usually without inscriptions so that they are identified through comparison with coins and other artifacts. Moreover, the meaning of the royal hunt involves a religious component since when the king kills an animal, he benefits from its virtues; big game is often contemplated as the hypostasis of a god.<sup>47</sup> Overall, Sasanian figuration gives a first rank role to royal representation; reliefs and portable objects are mainly related to identifiable kings, appearing to inscribe their feats, *hic et nunc*, in a type of “presentification” far from a linear historical narrative. Moreover, Sasanian iconography appears little concerned with the illustration of mythology and fiction narratives generally. However, some intriguing examples exist, such as the gilded silver plate with a giant bird holding a naked woman, identified as Anahita (Fig. 2.11), and the episode

43 Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse*, pp. 88–89.

44 Musée Guimet, no. 21228, 16 cm high; from J. Hackin expedition, Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan, 1936–1940.

45 Three salvers are known; the older is undoubtedly that at the British Museum (124086; Badakhshan, 2nd–3rd c., diam. 22.5 cm), with its embossed figuration; the two others are extremely alike, show an almost flat rendition and a loss of meaning, Dionysus becoming a female deity and the chariot being transformed in a type of carpet: see Moscow, Historical Museum, Inv. 84845, diam. 21 cm, dated 7th–8th c.; and Washington, Freer Gallery F 1964.10, diam. 22.1 cm, 5th–7th c.

46 The great Sasanian reliefs are not systematically labelled with the names of the figured people; conversely, the presence of names evidently characterizes numismatics and seals. See, for instance, R. Gyselen, “L’art sigillaire” and “La monnaie,” in F. Demange (dir.), *Les Perses sassanides, Fastes d’un empire oublié* (224–642), Paris, Findakly, 2006, pp. 199–224.

47 The Sasanian king hunting remains present in Islamic art (in a fresco from Qasr al-Khayr al-Gharbi, for instance), although devoid of religious implications.



FIGURE 2.9 Silver gilded plate with Dionysus' Triumph. Badakhshan, 2nd–3rd century AD, diam. 22.5 cm  
BRITISH MUSEUM NO 124086

illustrates a story narrated in Aban Yasht of the Avesta.<sup>48</sup> It is noteworthy that this plate was found in the village of Anikovskoe, near Perm, very far from the central Sasanian dominions.

The defiance toward illustrating myths is probably paralleled with other domains, such as music, distractions, and games, which do not appear to have been systematically favored by the Zoroastrian hierarchy.<sup>49</sup>

In this context, and contrary to the central Sasanian world, it is even more remarkable that in the Sogdian area, some examples display



FIGURE 2.10 Silver gilded plate with a scene inspired by Dionysus' Triumph. Iran, 5th–7th century. Diam. 22.1 cm  
FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1964.10

familiar characters. Zahhak can be recognized in a terracotta statue preserved at St. Petersburg's Hermitage because snakes emerge from his shoulders (Fig. 2.12). The same occurs with the previously mentioned Pendzhikent paintings showing different episodes of Rustam's career. Here, the "context" illustrating these episodes furnishes the keys to their reading.

The transition between the fall of the Sasanian empire and the emergence of Islamicate Iranian local power, from the mid-7th to late 12th centuries, remains relatively poorly represented in terms of visual arts. The aesthetic canons for representing human figures are only known through some rare fragments of mural paintings, a few metal objects, textiles, and ceramics – such as the so-called buff ware from Nishapur. However, the latter is probably attributable to a lower social category than the corpus analyzed in this contribution. Moreover, and in contrast with the anterior, the period studied here offers many more examples of "illustrated" ceramics, sometimes of fair artistic standards.

48 Hermitage Inv. S-217, diam. 22.2 cm; see V. Loukonine & A. Ivanov, *L'art persan*, St-Petersburg, Parkstone/Aurora, 1995, no. 74. For other Sasanian silver vessels with mythological themes, see F. Demange (dir.), *Les Perses sassanides*, pp. 98–110.

49 For music in ancient Iran, see Bo Lawergren, "Music History. i. pre-Islamic Iran," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2016, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/music-history-i-pre-islamic-iran> (accessed 07/12/2022).



FIGURE 2.11 Detail of Silver plate from Anikovskoe, with giant bird holding a naked woman. Diam. 22.2 cm SAINT-PETERSBURG, HERMITAGE, S-217. DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

...

The above contextualizing remarks were a necessary step to introduce the main subject of this chapter. As explained hereafter, a major issue concerns establishing the difference between the epic/historic iconography – as developed in Sasanian art, for instance – confronted with what sometimes appears as more entertaining folktale illustrations. From a methodological viewpoint, considering the images on ceramics as a *substitute* for manuscript illustrations could result in an unjustified transfer.

What do these objects convey about the persons who once held them? The different approaches presented below offer some hints concerning the

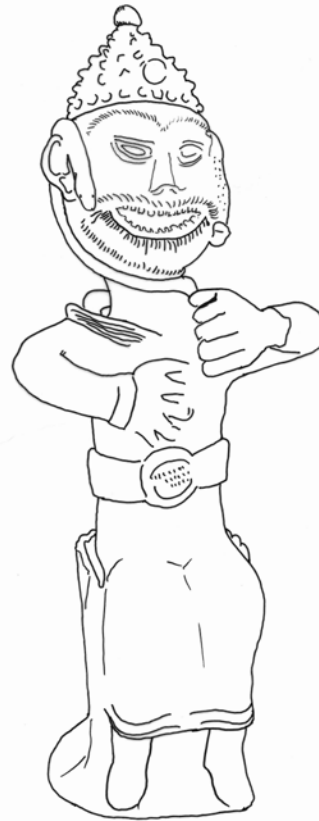


FIGURE 2.12 *Zahhak the Dragon King*, terracotta, Khotan or Eastern Sogdiana, 7th–8th c. (?), H. 61.5 cm SAINT-PETERSBURG, HERMITAGE, GA 3053. DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

tastes and trends of the social group using this type of object.

Consequently, the first section is devoted to deconstructing the narrative elements offered by the studied vessels, attempting to analyze the vectors of the story, that is, the episodes that can be identified on the “illustrated” ceramics. In a second step, the opportunities and formal constraints, together with the structural aspects of the narratives, are examined. Finally, the question of de-personifying iconographic themes and using archetypes/stereotypes also helps measure the types of representations offered to the users of these vessels.

## 2 Deconstructing the Elements of Narration (Narrative Contents)

A *mina'i* sherd in the Sèvres Museum (MNC 23415-M23; Fig. 2.13) shows a young beardless man riding a galloping horse, his left arm behind his back; behind him, the front part of another horse is observed.<sup>50</sup> This fragmented image could illustrate a narrative, similarly to many other relatively complete examples, such as sherds showing a couple playing music. However, these images could also be non-narrative, not illustrating a precise moment or specific characters. Elements of contextualization, such as specific attributes and situations, are necessary to recognize a precise episode in a narration.

When the episodes can be recognized, the first question concerns the “textual” origin of the images. Many stories – *Bahram Gur and the Harpist*, for instance – can be traced to various “texts” or versions, which in some cases can rely only on oral narrations.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, when people observe a representation of *Saint George and the Dragon*, they recognize the subject but do not necessarily link it with a specific version of the story.<sup>52</sup>

When searching for the narratives illustrated in ceramics, a brief survey reveals that most recognizable themes appear inspired by the episodes found in the *Shāh-nāma*. Some of these themes are specific stories, such as *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl* or *Faridun and Zahhak*.<sup>53</sup> This is also

the case with *Faridun and his Sons* or the romance of *Bizhan and Manizhah*, all of which are studied below. Other narratives are less specific, such as a Hero fighting a dragon or a Hero on elephant-back.

More depictions could probably be added, such as a prince on a throne, couples of lovers, horsemen, polo players, or rows of Bactrian camels, although the exact origin of these iconographic motives is much less easy to determine. Some of these themes appear as “merely” stereotyped, and a section below is devoted to some of them.

There are also some uncommon themes alien to the *Shāh-nāma*'s context, including references to the *Kalila and Dimna*, or *Leyla and Majnun*. As examined, other themes could tentatively be related to other romances, such as *Khusrau and Shirin* or *Vis u Ramin*. However, as explained below, the reference to a specific text should probably not be systematically favored.

### 2.1 Stories Related to the Shāh-nāma

Firdawsi's *Shāh-nāma* is based on various sources (including *Avesta*, *Khudāy-nāma*, Daqiqi), but the result is a fixed text.<sup>54</sup> The images studied below do not strictly follow Firdawsi's version, probably because they are based on a larger scope of sources, to which the distortion of time and repetition/dislocation must be added.<sup>55</sup> This is particularly the case with the theme of *Faridun and Zahhak*, whose rendition radically differs from illustrated manuscripts. For its part, the episode of *Faridun and his Three Sons* is seldom illustrated in later manuscripts. The iconography on ceramics appears different from that appearing in later

50 The external face of the larger fragment of bowl in the Khalili Collection (POTO875) shows a rider in a similar position and scene (Fig. 2.14).

51 See Simpson, “Narrative Allusion,” pp. 131–132.

52 Amazingly, in one of the early versions of Saint George's story, it is said that he confronted an evil person named Nahfir, signifying “dragon”; a parallel could be established with the story of Faridun and the dragon/Zahhak. Furthermore, a reddish jasper seal in the Hermitage shows a horseman killing a seven-headed dragon, also reminiscent of the Lernaean Hydra. According to Loukonin and Ivanov, this iconography could have influenced that of Saint George (Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, Cat. no. 57; Hermitage, Gl 833).

53 Both these themes (*Bahram Gur and Faridun with Zahhak*) form the core of Simpson, “Narrative Allusion.”

54 See Yarshater, “Traditional History”; see also Mahmoud Omidshalar and Touraj Daryaei, “Šāh-Nāma. nn. The Šāh-nāma as a historical source,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2017, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sah-nama-nn-historical-source> (accessed 18/11/2022).

55 This distortion is not clearly established by M.S. Simpson: Simpson, “Šāh-Nāma. iv. Illustrations,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sah-nama-iv-illustrations>, (accessed 18/11/2022), who considers the images on vessels as illustrations of Firdawsi's text.



FIGURE 2.13  
Fragment of *mina'i* bowl with horseman. Kashan,  
late 12th–early 13th century  
SÈVRES MUSEUM (MNC 23415-M23).  
PHOTO Y. PORTER



FIGURE 2.14  
Exterior of fragmentary *mina'i* bowl  
KHALILI COLLECTION (POT0875)

manuscripts. No *simorghs* are observed, and dragons are extremely rare, while these two creatures are common in manuscript illustrations. These differences, both in the choice of themes and their pictorial rendering, could explain an autonomous evolution for both media. Iconographic themes, such as the *Cycle of Faridun* or *Bahram Gur and the Harpist*, date to much earlier versions than that of Firdawsi. Not being directly related to a specific text, as observed earlier, variations are observed in their rendition, making some scenes difficult to identify. Moreover, surprisingly, major heroes of Firdawsi's poem, such as Rustam, Iskandar, and Khusrau, are remarkably absent (or hardly recognizable) from the current corpus of images. One could assume that some of the horsemen depicted on ceramics could represent such heroes. However, the absence of contextualization forbids formal identification. Thus, when "*Shāh-nāma*" is used here, it does not necessarily imply a specific

reference to Firdawsi's masterwork but to what Yarshater calls "Traditional History."<sup>56</sup>

#### 2.1.1 The Cycle of Faridun

The character of Faridun plays an important role in the decoration of late Seljuq ceramics. Much before the *Shāh-nāma*, Faridun (Θraētaona – or Traītaon in Avestic) appears in several parts of the Avesta. His major feat is his victory over Dahāka (Zahhak), which in the *Yashts* is described as a three-headed, six-eyed dragon.<sup>57</sup>

Several late Sasanian objects show images that could be related to Faridun's cycle. Thus, a fourth century Sasanian calcedony engraved seal, preserved at the British Museum, shows a hero hitting

<sup>56</sup> See Yarshater, "Traditional History."

<sup>57</sup> Ahmad Tafazzoli, "Feredun," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. IX, Fasc. 5, (1999), pp. 531–533 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/feredu-> (accessed 18/11/2022).

a demon; this evil being has disheveled hair and a baby in his mouth. The hero holds a bull-headed mace, which could identify him as Faridun (Fig. 2.15).<sup>58</sup>

The gilded silver plate with a bird of prey and the above-mentioned naked woman illustrates the story told in Aban Yasht, in which Traitaon/Faridun plays a key role (Fig. 2.11).<sup>59</sup>

Faridun is also known as:

“The first to tame the elephant and use it in battle and to cross horses and donkeys to produce mules, as well as many other marvelous deeds beneficial to the world.

(...) Ferēdūn’s close connection with cattle is noteworthy. His totemic ancestors are mentioned with the suffix *gāw* ‘cow.’ This connection may have influenced later reports, for example, his famous mace with a bull’s head (*gorz-i gāvsar*), his nourishment by a cow named Barmāyūn, his being the first to ride a bull on the feast of *dar-i mazīnān*, his riding a bull while hunting, and his fastening the Māzandars to the hooves of the ox Barmāyūn.”<sup>60</sup>

The figure of Zahhak also appears in contexts other than the ceramics in this corpus. Besides the pre-Islamic terracotta statue (Fig. 2.12), a basin in the Victoria & Albert Museum shows the episode of Faridun’s triumph in a similar scheme, except for the direction (going to the right) (Fig. 2.16).<sup>61</sup>



FIGURE 2.15 Calcedony engraved seal with hero hitting a demon. Iran, 4th century CE. Diam. 2.5 cm  
BRITISH MUSEUM 1905,0530.1

A medallion in the Bobrinsky bucket figures a ruler on a throne sided by two dragons, which could be considered as the dislocation of Zahhak’s snakes. A so-called “Garrus” pottery bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art might also figure this evil character, although its authenticity is now questioned.<sup>62</sup>

The most frequent episode related to the story of Faridun on this ceramic corpus is his victory over Zahhak, which is labelled *Faridun farrukh* (Glorious Faridun) on the luster plate in Jerusalem (see below, Fig. 2.17). A second theme is probably also illustrated on ceramics, that is, *Faridun and his Three Sons*. Finally, a unique example of the whole story is depicted on an incomplete bowl now in the Khalili Collection.

2.1.1.1 *Faridun and Zahhak or Faridun Farrukh*  
The story from the *Shāh-nāma* recounting Faridun’s victory over the tyrant Zahhak is well-known, and its iconographic trends are easily recognized since young Faridun is riding a bull and often has a bull-headed mace resting on his shoulder. This bull is repeatedly identified as Birmaye,

58 British Museum, 1905,0530.1. diam. 2.5 cm; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_1905-0530-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1905-0530-1) (accessed 18/11/2022).

59 Loukonine & Ivanov, *L’art persan*, Cat. no. 74.

60 Sources cited by Tafazzoli, “Feredun,” include: Šāh-nāma, ed. Khaleghi, 1, pp. 71 v. 257, 82, v. 444; Ebn al-Balkī, pp. 12, 36; Ṭabarī, 1, p. 228; Ṭa’ālebī, Gorar, p. 34; Ebn Esfandiār, p.58; Bīrūnī, Āṭār, p. 226; Gardīzī, ed. Ḥabībī, p. 246, and Dēnkard, ed. Madan, 814.11 ff.

61 V&A 760–1889; on the interpretation of this basin, see A.-S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th–18th Centuries*, London, HMSO, 1982, p. 228 and n. 19. See also Sylvia Auld, “Characters out of Context,” in R. Hillenbrand, *Shahnama*, p. 105 and note 24.

62 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.274.3; see: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451774> (accessed 18/11/2022).



FIGURE 2.16

*Faridun and Zahhak*. Detail of brass with silver inlay bowl, with scenes based on the *Shāh-nāma*, made by Turanshah for Muhammad al-Jurjani. Iran, dated 752/1351–52. Diam. 22.7 cm  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 760–1889



FIGURE 2.17

Luster bowl with *Faridun and Zahhak*, inscribed with verses from *Shāh-nāma*: *Faridun farrukh firishta nabud ...* (Glorious Faridun was not an angel). Kashan, late 12th century. Diam. 28.3 cm  
JERUSALEM, MUSEUM FOR ISLAMIC ART (C 16-69).  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

the cow who nourished Faridun as a baby; this identification is not necessarily accurate since, as mentioned above, it is said that Faridun rode a bull on several occasions.

Usually, the enchained old tyrant Zahhak is shown behind the new king. His arms are knotted on his back; he is half-naked, with bare feet and head. Being more than 1,000 years old, he should be represented as a bald and bearded man, whereas several examples show him as a youngster. Snakes should be visible on his shoulders. Some versions show a flagbearer, sometimes identified as Kaveh. However, as in the case of Zahhak, the blacksmith and revolt leader should be a

mature man, whereas he is often figured as beardless. As previously noted, these three persons plus the bull never appear simultaneously in Firdawsī's version.<sup>63</sup> Several examples, mostly in *mina'i*, are known; as with the Bahram Gur series (see hereafter), the different versions confirm various quality standards and preservation conditions.

Marianna S. Simpson mentions four examples in *mina'i*:<sup>64</sup>

63 See Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," p. 133; Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*, p. 110.

64 Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," pp. 143–144.

1. Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (30.421).
2. Keir Collection, cat. no. 142.
3. Geneva [ex-Croisier; ex-Plotnick, see Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory* no. 70].
4. an unpublished fragment of a bowl in the Hermitage.

To this list, two other *mina'i* bowls can be included:

1. Metropolitan Museum, 64.178.2.
2. Yale University Art Gallery, 1953.24.8.

At least three examples decorated in luster can be added to the *mina'i* examples: the first is an important bowl, composed in a “monumental” style, now in the Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem (C 16–69).<sup>65</sup> Although some parts of this bowl might have been restored, refilled, and repainted (I do not know to what extent), the object generally appears reliable; a large cobalt drop fell during firing. It is noteworthy that Faridun is wearing a turban and that Zahhak, although figured as a prisoner, has curly black hair and no beard; so is the flagbearer. The image of this large bowl has an exceptional feature: the scene is identified by an inscription within the main field, figuring the only known quotation from the *Shāh-nāma* on such “illustrated” vessels:

*“Faridun farrukh firishta nabud / ba ‘ud u ba ‘anbar  
sirishta nabud*

Glorious Faridun was not an angel

He was not made of aloe wood mixed with  
amber.”<sup>66</sup>

65 Hasson, *The Museum for Islamic Art*, pp. 62–63, no. 41. See also Simpson, “Narrative Allusion,” p. 144.

66 Firdawsi, ed. J. Mohl, *Jibi* 1, p. 57, l. 532a–b. Part of this verse figures on a tile in the Fitzwilliam Museum (C.43-1924) published by Firuza Melville, “Zahhak from Cambridge”, p. 322; translation is hers. For this tile, see also Annex 3, Cat. 4.1. The inner rim of the bowl has a long *naskhi* inscription in which this distich is repeated, with addition of the following one in the text edition. The inscription continues with *Nigahdār bādā jahān āfarīn ...* and *Hamvāra turā ...* (see Anthology, Annex 2), which also figures on the ex-Plotnick *Faridun and Zahhak* bowl (Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*, no. 70).

It is noteworthy that this quote does not *describe* the depicted action but inflects a moral message, and Faridun acts here as its “icon.” A similar distance is observed on the *Faridun on a Donkey mina'i* bowl from the Metropolitan Museum (no. 64.178.2) discussed below.

The second is a fragment of a large bowl (Louvre MAO 936-342; Fig. 2.18), painted in a “less monumental” style.<sup>67</sup> Although the luster painting is slightly faded, Faridun is easily recognized because of the bull he is riding, together with the bull-headed mace. A winged crown is on his head. Behind him, the figure of Zahhak is observed, wearing patterned breeches, and his bald head and pointed beard are noticeable. There are some landscape elements, such as checkered trees and a radial “sun”; the left part of the bowl is missing. The back of the bowl is hastily painted with compartmented scrolls and the inside of the annular base is coated with cobalt blue.

A third luster example, in Leipzig Kunstgewerbe Museum, is discussed by M.S. Simpson.<sup>68</sup> This displays Faridun on his bull but with no supporting characters.

From an iconographic viewpoint, one of the more literal interpretations of this theme is the *mina'i* bowl in the Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (Fig. 2.19).<sup>69</sup> To my knowledge, it is neither signed nor dated, and the drawing quality is average. Beardless Faridun occupies the center of the composition, riding a bull and holding a bull-headed mace in his right hand. In front of him, a youngster is holding a banner (he is too young to be identified as Kavah, the blacksmith, with the *parcham-i kāviāni*). Behind the bull, Zahhak is depicted as a beardless man in breeches, with bare feet and head. A pair of bowel-like “snakes” frames his

67 Not mentioned by Simpson, “Narrative Allusion”; Louvre, MAO 936-342; max. width: 22 cm. <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010323500> (accessed 18/11/2022).

68 Simpson “Narrative Allusion,” p. 144 and Fig. 4.

69 Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (30.421); diam. 21 cm. <https://www.dia.org/art/collection/object/bowl-inscribed-wealth-49366> (accessed 18/11/2022).



FIGURE 2.18 Fragment of luster bowl with *Faridun and Zahhak*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century  
PARIS, MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, MAO 936-342.  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

face. In the foreground is a pond with fishes and a swimming humanoid.

A less accurate, although visually attractive example is another *mina'i* bowl, dated Muharram 583/March 1187, often attributed to Abu Zayd, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 2.20).<sup>70</sup> Faridun, wearing a turban and no mace, is shockingly riding a donkey.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Zahhak is fully dressed, even wearing boots and a turban. He has his arms behind his back, but the fore-guard is in the same position and has the same outfit as the tyrant. Instead of snakes, two ribbon-like scarves

<sup>70</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.178.2; D. 21, 6 cm. Inscribed: *Qā'iluhu kātibuhu ba'da mā 'amilahu kutiba fi yaum al-sabt awā'il muḥarram li-sana thalath thamānin khamsamī'a hijrīyya 'arabīyya baqā li-šāhibihi wa li-kātibihī wa li-qā'ilihī*. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451753> (accessed 18/11/2022).

<sup>71</sup> A well-preserved shard in *mina'i*, showing the head of a donkey (Louvre, MAO 290e, legs Y. Godard 1977), is extremely close in style to that on the Met's bowl.



FIGURE 2.19 *Mina'i* bowl with *Faridun and Zahhak*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century.  
Diam. 21 cm  
DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS MUSEUM  
(30.421)

link his head to an angel-like flying person. What is puzzling about this bowl is that Abu Zayd himself wrote a verse, appearing immediately below the painted scene, stating,

“For a human who outsteps courtesy, what does it matter  
if it is a cow or a donkey, a demon or a human being?”<sup>72</sup>

This assumed distortion of a well-known theme remains unique within this corpus; however, this could indicate that other iconographic “errors” observed in other themes, such as *Faridun with his three sons* studied below, might reveal other levels of reading. As for Bahram Gur (see below),

<sup>72</sup> Unpublished translation of a verse on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's bowl, no. 64.178.2; the reading was made in 2011 by 'A. Ghouhani, available online: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451753> (accessed 18/11/2022). See also Y. Porter, “Faridun on a donkey,” forthcoming.



FIGURE 2.20 *Mina'i* bowl with Faridun on a donkey, probably by Abu Zayd. Kashan, dated 583/1187. Diam. 21.6 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 64.178.2

the theme of Faridun's triumph also appears in a series of Ilkhanid tiles.<sup>73</sup>

#### 2.1.1.2 *Faridun with His Three Sons*

A *mina'i* bowl in the LACMA (Fig. 2. 21), partially dated ...83 and attributed to Abu Zayd, shows a beardless man seated on the left,<sup>74</sup> wearing a winged crown. He appears to be talking to three young men, all seated on a single (symbolic?) throne in front of him, one also wearing a winged crown and a similar garment. Behind the throne are three standing youths with a fourth attendant standing on the far right. A checkered cypress

vertically divides the scene. The foreground displays a pond, and the upper part has a dais figuring the sky. The scene could be interpreted as Faridun dividing the world with his three sons.<sup>75</sup> This conversation occurs after the king has tested them, taking the aspect of a dragon. From this test, he decides to give the West/Rum to Salm, the East/Turan to Tur, and the Center – Iran – to Iraj; Iraj's robe and winged-crown would thus echo that of Faridun. Both elder brothers subsequently kill Iraj.

As suggested in a previous publication, this theme finds a strong resonance in Iranian identity and would thus fit well with the political context of the late Seljuq period.<sup>76</sup>

However, other examples – some also attributed to Abu Zayd – offer a series of variations that could blur the interpretation of this episode if the identification with the story of Faridun is considered. If this type of image depicted a poetic assembly (*majlis*), the interpretation would have no importance. The main argument in defense of a story related to Faridun is the existence of the previously studied case of Faridun and Zahhak but also of at least one bowl with the complete story (see below).

Another bowl, in the Metropolitan Museum, is signed by Abu Zayd and dated Muharram 582/ March 1186 (Fig. 2.22).<sup>77</sup> Painted against a turquoise

73 Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," p. 144 mentions a luster star tile, previously in the G.J. de Osma Collection, and two luster square tiles (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, 48.1296; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 16–170). Several other Ilkhanid tiles, using diverse techniques, could be added, among them a fragment of a luster tile preserved at Sèvres, probably illustrating the same episode (MNC.18606).

74 "Afrasiyab" in the Freer Gallery Beaker, F1928.2 is also beardless; <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1928.2/> (accessed 18/11/2022).

75 LACMA (M.45.3.116), Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Allan C. Balch; diam. 21.27 cm. According to the online description of this bowl, the interpretation of its iconography differs: "it can be imagined that the performer here, seated at the left before a courtly audience, is delivering the verses inscribed along the exterior rim of the bowl, which begin: If the beloved leaves me, what am I to do? If s/he does not see the wisdom of our union, what am I to do?" see <https://collections.lacma.org/node/228685> (accessed 18/11/2022).

76 Porter, "Potters, Painters and Patrons," p. 31. In this 2006 paper, I used the term "national," which is anachronistic.

77 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.178.1; diam. 21.6 cm. The text reads, "Oh beloved, did you see what the snow (white hair) did to me? / Oh snow (white hair), you told me, but tell my beloved // To the passion (fire) of lovers ... and cold(?) / And you are still flirting with me! //

background, the disposition of the characters, at first glance, resembles the previous version. There is no cypress here, but both water and sky are present. Some differences in the characters' positions are evident. The man on the left is wearing a bonnet, only two people are sitting on the throne, and four standing people complete the scene. If the previous example follows the plot literally, this second one appears distracted.

The bowl in the British Museum (1945,1017.261; Fig. 2.23) is even more puzzling. The cypress, pond, and dais are there, but in front of the left character, a young man of a slightly larger size is seated alone on the throne, with three attendants at his back and two others at his sides.<sup>78</sup> This bowl shows obvious fillings, which might represent repainting in certain zones, but the exact modifications are not documented.

A luster bowl signed Ab(i) ... and dated twice (1179 & 1180 CE) was sold in London in 2000.<sup>79</sup> Three young men are seated together on a throne, talking to a fourth youngster to their left. Other examples (such as an incomplete bowl in San Francisco) might be inspired by the same theme.<sup>80</sup>

This conversation between Faridun and his sons is seldom represented in illustrated manuscripts.<sup>81</sup>

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Oh body, the sorrow of love will not make you any better (than this) / Will not (help) ... your soul and faith // At the end, the sweetness of lust will entrap you / So that love will not make a fool of you." <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451752> (accessed 18/11/2022). See also Anthology in Annex 2: *Ay tan gham-i 'ishq*/Oh body, the sorrow of love ...

78 British Museum, 1945,1017.261; diam. 21 cm. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1945-1017-261](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1945-1017-261) (accessed 18/11/2022).

79 Christie's, London, 11th April 2000 no. 236.

80 San Francisco, Asian Art Museum no. B60P1874. Inscription, according to Asian Art Museum online database: [In Arabic; in *naskh* script, on outer rim]: "Written at the start of Muharram in 583 of the hijri year. Long life to the owner. The reciter (*qayilahu*) is the writer (*kutbahu*). [A]bu [Zayd]" (Translated by Oliver Watson, 10/20/2014). <http://searchcollection.asianart.org/view/objects/asitem/23146/134?t:state:flow=46171608-64c6-4839-b518-d83897fa1a9d> (accessed 20/11/2022).

81 Several illustrations show Faridun and his three sons at the palace of the king of Yemen; see AKM Ir.M. i/C



FIGURE 2.21  
*Mina'i* bowl with *Faridun and his three sons*, partially dated ... 83 and attributed to Abu Zayd. Diam. 21.27 cm  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART (LACMA, M.45.3.116)



FIGURE 2.22  
*Mina'i* bowl with *Faridun and his three sons* (?), dated 582/1186, by Abu Zayd. Diam. 21, 6 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 64.178.1



FIGURE 2.23  
*Mina'i* bowl with *Faridun and his three sons* (?), attributed to Abu Zayd and dated 583/1187. Diam. 21 cm  
BRITISH MUSEUM, 1945,1017.261

This argument could reinforce the identification of this episode as illustrating a poetic *majlis*, but as noted, the theme of Faridun on his bull (or *Faridun farrukh*) is rarely found in manuscript illustrations.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, as studied below, this conversation scene is fully visible on the fragmentary bowl in the Khalili Collection (Fig. 2.24).<sup>83</sup>

Surprisingly, the story of Faridun testing his sons and taking the aspect of a dragon never appears on ceramics, whereas it is a popular theme in manuscripts. Moreover, as explained below, dragons seldom appear in narrative contexts on the ceramics under study here.

Still, a fragmentary *mina'i* bowl in the Khalili Collection probably narrates the whole story of the sons of Faridun, although not in the standard order.<sup>84</sup> According to B. Schmitz, the registers read from right to left, from top to bottom. On the upper right is an incomplete scene with three people walking to the right. Then, to its left, a bearded man on a throne is faced by three young men but separated from them by a chest and a sword, and these could be Faridun with his three sons (1). To the left of this scene, separated by a bracket, a scene shows a young man preparing to mount a horse, together with a groom (2), and according to B. Schmitz, this could be Iraj. After another bracket, a young man on horseback confronts a cut-off object (3), interpreted by Schmitz as the confrontation of Iraj with Faridun as a dragon. On the second register, below the former, to the right,

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(from the "First Small" *Shāh-nāma*) and Tashkent (Institute of Oriental Studies, no. 1811, C.O.M. II, no. 751, fol. 24b, by Muhammad Murad Samarqandi) but this episode is related to other circumstances (i.e., choosing a wife, and not dividing the world).

82 At least one exception is in the Great Mongol *Shāh-nāma*, although with significant differences; see Grabar and Blair, *Epic Images*, pp. 64–5, no. 4: *Faridun Leading Zahhak to Mount Damavand*, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Pers. MS 111.

83 Barbara Schmitz, "A Fragmentary Mina'i Bowl with scenes from the *Shahnama*," in R. Hillenbrand, *Shahnama*, Fig. 154.

84 According to Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian*, p. 82. See also Schmitz, "A Fragmentary Mina'i bowl," pp. 156–164.

a young man in breeches is partially hidden by a shield (?) and confronting a fully dressed opponent, armed with a sword and a round shield (4). This could be the murder of Iraj (?). However, in later manuscript illustrations, the victim is never figured as a prisoner (that is, half-naked) but as a fully dressed young man. The depiction of the young man in breeches recalls that of Varqa as a prisoner but is surprising for Iraj.<sup>85</sup> Separated by a bracket, the bearded, enthroned king again faces a young man with a rounded shield (5); this could once more be Faridun, learning of the death of Iraj.

### 2.1.2 Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl

Among the iconographic themes in vogue in late Sasanian times, the story of *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl* is a curious example; it is based on an anecdote of an historical character – the Sasanian king Bahram V (r. 420–438), whose reign, without being disastrous, was not particularly outstanding. However, contrary to the great feats depicted on the rock reliefs of Naqsh-e Rostam or Bishapur, this anecdote is trivial, and its ethical or moral contents are unclear.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, it also differs from the highly ritualized Sasanian royal hunting scenes, in which the individuality of the represented kings is often recognized mainly through their crowns. Conversely, the story appears as an illustration of a folktale.

The iconography of *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl* probably appears during the "late" Sasanian period,<sup>87</sup> and several silver plates and fragments of stucco from Chal Tarkhan illustrate this early

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85 Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian*, p. 82.

86 M.S. Simpson statement (Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," p. 141) that this episode is exemplary of what is expected from a sovereign seems overrated. The "exemplarity" of images on ceramics, generally, must probably be tempered.

87 I voluntarily avoid calling the girl Azadah since this is the name given by Firdawsi whereas, as noted by previous authors (Simpson, Shalem), the images on ceramics (or textiles) do not literally transcribe Firdawsi's text.



FIGURE 2.24 Fragmentary *mina'i* bowl with scenes from the history of *Faridun and his three sons*  
KHALILI COLLECTION (POT0875)

phase.<sup>88</sup> Notably, these works precede Firdawsi's version.

In the late 12th to early 13th century, the story of *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl* is depicted on *mina'i* and luster bowls but also on other media, such as metalwork or textiles, and has been the subject of many studies.<sup>89</sup>

88 Embossed gilded silver plate, 5th c., Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994-402, diam. 20.1 cm. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/327497> (accessed 18/11/2022). Gilded silver plate, 6th c., Hermitage Inv. S-252, diam. 21.7cm; Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, Cat. no. 71. Stucco panel (incomplete), National Museum, Tehran, no. 2605; see Tehran, Muze-ye Melli *Decorative Architectural Stucco from the Parthian and Sassanid eras*, Tehran, Muze-ye Melli, [2006], p. 11. The detail from an ivory casket reproduced by A. Shalem (Bahram Gur Woven, Figure 9.10, formerly in the Stoclet Collection), labelled "Sasanian (?)," shows Bahram Gur riding from right to left, which would indicate, in my opinion, that it is a post-Sasanian work.

89 A. Shalem, "Bahram Gur Woven with Gold: A Silk Fragment in the Diocesan Museum of St. Afra in

In late Sasanian metal objects (Met 1994-402, Fig. 2.25; Hermitage S-252), or in the stucco from Chal Tarkhan, the king rides a camel from left to right, whereas in *mina'i* ceramics, Bahram Gur rides from right to left. It can be assumed that this change of direction follows the change in the sense of writing.

Nine *mina'i* bowls and one luster bowl are selected here:<sup>90</sup>

Augsburg and the Modes of Rendition of a Popular Theme," in R. Hillenbrand, *Shahnama*, 2004, pp. 117–127, for instance.

90 Compare with list in Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," pp. 144–145:

- 1) New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.2.
- 2) New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.13.
- 3) New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.14.
- 4) Collection Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, P. 64.
- 5) Philadelphia Museum of Art, 43-41-6.
- 6) Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Islamisches Museum.
- 7) Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, no. 992.
- 8) Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum, 1976.338.



FIGURE 2.25 Embossed and gilded silver plate with *Bahram Gur and the Harpist girl*. Iran, 5th century. Diam. 20.1 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1994.402



FIGURE 2.26 *Mina'i* bowl with *Bahram Gur and The Harpist girl*, Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 22.1 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.36.2

#### *Mina'i*:

1. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.2 (Fig. 2.26).
2. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.13 (Fig. 2.27).
3. New York, Metropolitan Museum no. 57.36.14 (Fig. 2.28).
4. AKM/Collection Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, P. 64.
5. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 43-41-6.
6. Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Nr. 1. 5667 (fragment).
7. Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, no. 992 (fragment).
8. Brooklyn Museum, no. 86.227.11.
9. Private collection;<sup>91</sup>

#### Luster:

- Christie's London, October 6th, 2011, lot no. 80.

Nos. 1–5 are *mina'i* bowls. Nos. 6–7 are *mina'i* fragments; no. 8 is a molded whiteware bowl. Additionally, Simpson lists six tiles with the same theme.

91 Repro. in Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian*, p. 83.

These objects display variations on formal aspects that could be studied through different features, such as their artistic level, state of preservation (repainting), as well as general composition and details. The bowls Met 57.36.14 and AKM are extremely similar in composition, but in Met 57.36.14, Bahram is beardless, whereas in AKM, he has a profuse black beard.<sup>92</sup>

In several cases (4/9, i.e., nos. 1, 2, 8, 9), the harpist girl is figured twice, first playing the harp on the back of the camel and then lying on the floor after she has been flung and trampled. It must be emphasized that this double figuration, implying two different moments in the narrative, is different from the late Sasanian models for this episode and extremely rare (if not unique) in Persian visual arts.<sup>93</sup>

92 Likewise for the bowls in Berlin, Philadelphia, Met. 57.36.13, and Christie's luster one.

93 In the silk fabric from Augsburg (Shalem, "Bahram Gur," Fig. 9.3), an archer is figured on the back of a camel, while "Azadeh" is being trampled. This "correction" of an unusual iconography is significant. Another curious occurrence of this episode figures



FIGURE 2.27 *Mina'i* bowl with *Bahram Gur and The Harpist girl*, Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 21.6 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.36.13



FIGURE 2.28 *Mina'i* bowl with *Bahram Gur and The Harpist girl*; the name of Bahram Gur is inscribed over the camel's neck. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 21.3 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.36.14

In one case (Met 57.36.14), the figure of Bahram Gur is labelled by an inscription with his name placed beside him. This seldom occurs, although at least two other examples can be added (*Faridun farrukh*, previously mentioned and *Majnun*, see below).

A luster bowl which appeared in a London sale shows a drawing of pristine qualities. It features a bearded Bahram Gur with a turban, together with the harpist girl. Another girl with checkered trousers is standing at the back of the camel, while three small, seated figures complete the composition.<sup>94</sup>

Other variants concerning the iconography of Bahram Gur are found in secondary elements of the compositions, such as the layout, landscape, or the presence of supporting roles – a guard or groom, an “angel-like” figure, a monkey-faced

character, or even an aquatic creature. These last two beings (monkey-faced and aquatic) are also present in some scenes of “Two riders” (see below).

The episode of Bahram Gur and the harpist girl was also used on tiles. An early example, in a technique closely resembling *mina'i*, is preserved in the Louvre Museum.<sup>95</sup> Large tiles from the later Ilkhanid period in monochrome turquoise glaze or luster are often attributed to Takht-i Suleiman (see below, third section of Chapter 3).

### 2.1.3 Other Episodes from the *Shāh-nāma*

One of the most often published *mina'i* objects is the Freer Gallery beaker, narrating the story of Bizhan and Manizhah (Fig. 2.29).<sup>96</sup> Curiously, a square plain luster tile, now in the Keir Collection, also describes an episode from this story, with a label on the upper right stating, *The coming of*

in the Hermitage bronze bucket (Hermitage IR 1668, Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, 144–45, no. 126.), in which the harpist girl is shown without Bahram Gur.

94 Christies, London, October 6th, 2011, no. 80.

95 Louvre MAO 1221; Louvre, *Nouvelles acquisitions, Arts de l'Islam*, Paris, RMN, 2002, pp. 66–67, no. 33.

96 Freer Gallery, F1928.2; see also M.S. Simpson, “Narrative Structure of a Medieval Iranian Beaker,” *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 12, (1981), pp. 15–24.



FIGURE 2.29

*Mina'i* beaker with scenes from the *Story of Bizhan and Manizha*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. H. 12 cm

FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1928.2

*Rustam to the head of the pit*. The hero is lifting the stone of Bizhan's well, which resembles a tower, with young Bizhan inside it.<sup>97</sup> This is probably the only represented episode on ceramics of Rustam's many feats.

Another exceptional polychrome tile, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, shows an army.<sup>98</sup> It is labelled *The Iranians leaving Furud's Fortress*, a complex story occurring during the reign of Key Khusrau, about "the conflict resulting in repeated clashes of heroic honor."<sup>99</sup> The drawing is accu-

rate; the horse's harness is detailed and resembles that of a mule or donkey shown in a sherd in the Louvre Museum (MAO 290e). It could be added that, besides the polychrome technique (both *mina'i* and luster), this type of star tile with specific episodes from the *Shāh-nāma* is rare. The reason for choosing to illustrate this episode is obscure.

#### 2.1.3.1 *Prince on Elephant*

Several examples of ceramics display a young person on an elephant. At least three *mina'i* bowls display this theme (Freer, Keir, and Minneapolis).<sup>100</sup> The one in the Freer Gallery was dedicated to

97 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, 1985, Fig. 102, p. 125. According to Watson, two other tiles from the same frieze are in the Cairo and Iran Bastan [Muze-ye Melli] Museums (idem, note 2, p. 123).

98 Boston Fine Arts Museum, 31.495. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/17690/star-tile-with-shahnāma-imagery> (accessed 18/11/2022).

99 Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Forud," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. x, Fasc. 1, (1999), p. 107, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/forud-2> (accessed 18/11/2022).

100 Freer Gallery, F1927.3. Keir collection, K1.2014.313: <https://collections.dma.org/artwork/5341536> (accessed 18/11/2022). Minneapolis no. 50.46.434: <https://collections.artsmia.org/art/1096/bowl-depicting-a-lady-riding-an-ilephant-iran> (accessed 18/11/2022). A fourth example is illustrated in Pope, *Survey*, vol. VI/1, pl. 671, formerly in the Allan Balch Collection.



FIGURE 2.30 *Mina'i* bowl with prince on an elephant. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 22.23 cm  
MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART,  
50.46.434

one Abu Nasr Kermanshah, as mentioned above (Fig. 2.4). It shows a young beardless prince on a luxurious seat, on the back of a parade elephant, with a bearded mahout in front of him, and a young black servant is at his back. The example in the Keir Collection is dated 1219 and attributed to Abu Zayd. It is the most complex of the three: in addition to the three people on the elephant, there is a fore-guard and a rear-guard with a shield. The one from Minneapolis is simpler, and features only one attendant in the position of a mahout. It is noteworthy that the label of Minneapolis Museum (50.46.434; Fig. 2.30) indicates “Lady Riding an Elephant.” This sexual differentiation raises many questions. A terracotta stamp, probably originating from Eastern Iran and dated to the 12th century (?), was published in a Louvre catalogue;<sup>101</sup> it shows a person in a palanquin on elephant-back, with a mahout and a rear-back attendant, both with a beard. This stamp strongly resembles several glass medallions, such as in Berlin Museum

<sup>101</sup> Louvre, *Nouvelles acquisitions*, pp. 59–60, n°26, (MAO 1230. diam. 5.7 cm).

or in the al-Sabah Collection.<sup>102</sup> According to the Louvre catalogue, the person in the howdah could be a lady, perhaps Sapinud, the Indian princess who marries Bahram Gur, according to the *Shāh-nāma*.

A piece of silhouette-ware in the Louvre Museum, painted in black under turquoise glaze, also shows a young person on an elephant. Although it has been suggested that it could be the Indian princess again, the catalog indicates that Firdawsi’s text mentions a horse and not an elephant in this episode.<sup>103</sup>

Moreover, one can observe on other ceramics the depiction of veiled women (see below). The question would then be, “Why are these people on elephant-back not veiled if they are women?” More probably, these beardless persons on elephant-back are young princes.

A man on an elephant can undoubtedly be observed on the already mentioned Victoria and Albert brass basin (*tās*).<sup>104</sup> Mélikian identified him as Zal presented to Manuchehr, thus quoting, “He [Sam] had golden Zal mount a male elephant and took him fast to court.”<sup>105</sup> This scene is seldom illustrated in later manuscripts.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Berlin Museum, Kröger, 1984, no. 115–119; al-Sabah Collection, LNS 323G.

<sup>103</sup> Louvre, Inv. 6473, diam. 22 cm; see Marthe Bernus-Taylor (dir), *Arabesques et jardins de Paradis*, Paris, Louvre, RMN, 1989, p. 125, n°98. The catalogue’s entry is signed by M.C. [Maguy Charitat].

<sup>104</sup> V&A 760–1889. Among other examples, see also a large high-tin bronze hemispherical basin in the Khalili C with three persons in a howdah: J.M. Rogers, *The Arts of Islam. Masterpieces from the Khalili Collection*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2010, Cat. no. 21, 44–45.

<sup>105</sup> Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 228 and n. 19. See also Sylvia Auld, “Characters out of Context,” in R. Hillenbrand, *Shahnama*, p. 105 and note 24.

<sup>106</sup> The only image appearing in the *Shāh-nāma* Project is Ouseley 344, fol. 58r. (Shiraz, 1601). Sylvia Auld indicates another painting: *Celebrations in Kabulistan*, on the occasion of Zal and Rudabeh’s marriage, from the Freer *Shāh-nāma* (F1929.34, see M.S. Simpson, *Illustration of an Epic. The Earliest Shāh-nāma Manuscripts*, New York, Garland, 1979, Figure 54). However, this elephant carries only two musicians on its howdah.

In the later story of Khusrau Parviz, narrated by Nizami, the young prince undoubtedly mounts an elephant during the battle against Bahram Chubine. Could the “Young Prince on Elephant-back” theme be based on oral tradition? If credit is given to the “political” relevance of iconographic motives, the story of *Young Khusrau Fighting to get his Empire Back* would fit in the “legitimacy” theme. Finally, as mentioned above, Faridun was the first to tame elephants and use them in battle; this feat could qualify him as another candidate for this iconographic theme.

### 2.1.3.2 Women

Contrary to the problematic Nishapur buffware bowl formerly in the Plotnick Collection (see Fig. 0.3), in which a man and woman couple can be easily identified, it is often difficult to ascertain whether the young people depicted on later ceramics are boys or girls. In the Freer Beaker (Fig. 2.29), for instance, Manizhah can be recognized only by her outfit (a loose vest over a shirt and a type of breeches) and headdress with four tresses, but not by her features, which strongly resemble Bizhan’s. A similar observation could be made about the illustrations of the copy of *Varqa and Gulshāh’s* in Istanbul.<sup>107</sup>

Many objects depict couples, under a tree and playing music, for instance. In some cases, as with Manizhah, a few details in the attire could signal sexual differences.

Following this direction, some authors interpret the sexual differentiation of the characters appearing on ceramics according to their attire. Thus, the “drop-shaped diadem” could, according to Martina Ruggiadi, identify a character as female. Conversely, the tripartite headgear, visible on a bowl with a lute player on a turquoise background, for instance, would be “almost exclusively a male attribute” (Fig. 2.31).<sup>108</sup> Accordingly, a luster



FIGURE 2.31 Turquoise *mina'i* bowl with *Lute Player*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 19.7 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.61.16

bowl in the Ashmolean Museum (EA1956.33) is described as a *majlis* with “six figures, five of whom wear head ornaments with a teardrop diadem and are thus recognizable as women.”<sup>109</sup>

However, these sexual differentiations are highly problematic. Besides the thorny problem concerning the numerous restorations (faces are often repainted), these depictions raise the question of the “documental” or “narrative” value of the images. Did *majlis* audiences integrate women? Consequently, should these representations be considered as inspired by reality, illustrating the entertainments of the elite, or must they

107 See Melikian-Chirvani, *Le roman de Varqa et Golshāh*; on the *but-i māhru*, see pp. 42–43.

108 Met. 57.61.16, see Martina Ruggiadi, in Canby et al., *Court & Cosmos*, nos. 87, 88 and note 4.

109 Ruggiadi, in Canby et al., *Court & Cosmos*, no. 41, p. 113; <http://collections.ashmolean.org/object/352701> (accessed 18/11/2022). The author adds, “as the verses also use the notion of a ‘majlis of life’ to express the importance of the beloved’s presence, the bowl’s scene may even be read as a transcendental gathering.” It could be added that in Persian poetry, the “beloved” is never sexually identifiable and is entirely interchangeable.



FIGURE 2.32 Large, fluted luster dish depicting a Wedding Procession. Kashan, early 13th century. Diam. 41 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1983.247

be considered a diffracted stereotyped reflection made for an “inferior” social class? This issue is again discussed below.

When women wear a veil or a niqab, the question of sexual identity is solved.<sup>110</sup> A luster-footed dish dated to 1214 and signed by Muhammad ibn Abi Nasr ibn al-Husaini (?) shows a veiled lady on elephant-back.<sup>111</sup> A large fluted luster dish in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1983.247; Fig. 2.32)

features forty-four people clustered around a veiled woman seated in a palanquin, probably a bride.<sup>112</sup> A *mina'i* bowl in the Louvre Museum, although largely repainted, shows on its center a veiled lady on camel-back.<sup>113</sup>

110 The same, exceptional, explicit sexual differentiation can be read in the poem *Guftam ki niqāb az qamarat bar giram* (“I said that I will take the niqab off your moon”); Anonymous (?); see Annex 2, appearing on ex-Plotnick no. 76 (luster) and no. 80 (luster); Canby et al., *Court and Cosmos*, no. 122 (luster).

111 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, pl. 74, p. 99. On the signature, see also *idem*, p. 181. Ruggiadi, in Canby et al., *Court and Cosmos*, no. 138, p. 224. Doha MIA PO.285.2004.

112 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983–247, diam. 41 cm. Translation of text around the rim by Annemarie Schimmel: “If the reflection of your cheek had fallen into the darkness/Immediately (a hundred suns) would have been checkmated. / If Alexander had put a kiss on our lip, / He would have been free from the search for the Water of Life.” Data provided by <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/453209> (accessed 18/11/2022).

113 Louvre MAO 833, diam. 20.5 cm. The central part appears original; see Bernus-Taylor, *Arabesques*, p. 132, no. 102. A luster bowl, formerly in the Ades Family Collection, displays a young person – probably a half-veiled lady, on mule-back: Watson, *Persian Luster*



FIGURE 2.33  
Luster bowl with narrative scene, found at Ghazni  
KABUL MUSEUM. DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

Other veiled ladies appear in different contexts, such as on the luster bowl from Ghazni previously on display at the Kabul Museum (Fig. 2.33).<sup>114</sup>

A final, puzzling example – so exceptional that its authenticity is questioned – is given by a bowl in the ex-Plotnick Collection. This represents a woman lying in bed, with three attendants, one fanning the woman. The iconography could be related to the Birth of Rustam, but further investigation would be required to ascertain its genuineness.<sup>115</sup>

Other “aberrant” subjects exist, such as the often published “bleeding scene” in the Berlin Museum, for which close observation is also required.<sup>116</sup>

### 2.1.3.3 *Hero Fighting with Dragon*

Dragons are used as decorative devices in a series of luster vessels, but the depiction of dragons in an epic context is exceedingly rare on objects dating to before the end of the 13th century and the emergence of the Small *Shāh-nāma*-s. One rare example is a 12-pointed star decorated in *mina'i* in the Freer Gallery (F1911-319; Fig. 2.34); a young horseman wearing a blue tunic is fighting with a coiled dragon.<sup>117</sup> Another example is at the back of the above-mentioned great *Battle Scene* plate, also at the Freer Gallery (Fig. 2.35). The bronze bucket in the Hermitage, undated (late 12th–early 13th c.) but “signed” by Muhammad ibn Nasir ibn Muhammad al-Harawi, also displays a hero fighting a dragon figured in a compartment immediately under the figure of the harpist girl riding a camel (see above).<sup>118</sup>

As noted, if the presence of epic-dragons is rare, the figure of a *simorgh* in a narrative context is completely absent during this pre-Mongol period.

Ware, p. 78, Fig. 48. For another mule with howdah, Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands. Kuwait National Museum; The Al-Sabah Collection*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 2004, Cat. O.11 (LNS 282 C), p. 353. For Bactrian camels on luster, see also Watson (idem), p. 371, Cat.P.6 (I 108 C); Watson *Persian Luster Ware*, Fig.40 (sherd, Sèvres Museum). In *mina'i*, Minneapolis 624-2787, and Sèvres 22701.

114 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 78, Fig. 49.

115 Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*, pp. 110–114, cat. no. 71.

116 Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, no. I. 4360.

117 In the Freer Gallery database, the star is labelled as *Rustam and the dragon*, diam. 18.3 cm. <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1911.319/> (accessed 18/11/2022).

118 Hermitage IR 1668, Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, pp. 144–45, no. 126.



FIGURE 2.34  
*Mina'i* star with hero attacking a dragon. Kashan,  
 late 12th–early 13th century. H. 18.3 cm  
 FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN  
 INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1911.319



FIGURE 2.35 Back of large *mina'i* plate with battle scene. Kashan, late 12th century. Diam. 47.8 cm  
 FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.,  
 F1943.3

The iconography of this important literary character from the *Shāh-nāma* and other texts is limited, in pre-Mongol arts, to the so-called late Sasanian *sinmurv*. Other fantastic animals, such as harpies, griffons, or sphinxes, could have played the role of this mythical bird. However, these animals only appear as secondary supporting characters in the iconography in question, never in a narrative context.

#### 2.1.3.4 Scene of Investiture

The scene representing an investiture through a divine intervention is found in Sasanian rock reliefs, particularly at Naqsh-e Rostam, where two horsemen face each other. One is Ardashir, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, shown receiving a ring from the second, god Ahuramazda (Fig. 2.36). The reuse of this model in the Islamic period – even in a few instances – is extremely rare and worth noting. In ceramics, the only obvious examples of this theme are represented on a series of octagonal molded frit ware bowls with monochrome cobalt or turquoise glaze (Fig. 2.37).<sup>119</sup> This iconography, to be seen again in the V&A basin from 1351–52 (Fig. 2.38), is not found in manuscript illustrations.

On glazed bowls these investiture scenes alternate with pairs of facing sphinxes. Such supernatural creatures, including harpies, sphinxes, and griffons, disappeared almost completely after the Mongol conquest.<sup>120</sup> The iconographic theme showing two horsemen facing each other, ubiquitous on *mina'i* bowls, but without the ring of investiture, is addressed below.

## 2.2 Stories Other Than the Shāh-nāma

As mentioned for the *Shāh-nāma*, references here do not necessarily indicate a specific written narrative. Moreover, if the stories of *Leyla and Majnun*, or *Kalila and Dimna*, do not originally belong to the Iranian heritage and are thus probably alien to the *Traditional History* mentioned above, this is not the case with *Khusrau and Shirin*, which is also included in the *Shāh-nāma* cycle.

### 2.2.1 Majnun

The story of Leyla and Majnun was known in Iran long before Nizami's poem, as he mentions in his version.<sup>121</sup> However, iconographic examples are infrequent. A well-known case, often interpreted as *Leyla and Majnun at school*, is represented by the David Collection plate (Inv. no. 50/1966; Fig. 2.39).<sup>122</sup> Twenty-four children are shown with their tablets (*lawḥ*), together with a bearded master. All the child characters except one (second on the top second row) look to the left.

If this example could be considered controversial (especially since no names or specific quotations appear on this plate), a *mina'i* bowl in the Doris Duke Collection (Shangri La, Hawaii; Fig. 2.40) is more explicit.<sup>123</sup> It shows a half-naked man, labelled *Majnun* in a script close to the label of Bahram Gur on Met. 57.36.14. The cross-legged Majnun is observed by three camel-riders, one having a second inscription close to the head of his spear. This bowl has undergone some heavy restorations, with repaints and fillings, and even the inclusion of refired sherds, and unfortunately, the upper part of the inscription falls into a filled, repainted part.<sup>124</sup> It is thus difficult to judge the authenticity of this bowl. A copy of this bowl, most

119 See, for example, Oxford, Ashmolean no. x 1206; H. 13.7 cm, diam. 18.2 cm. reproduced in James Allan, *Islamic ceramics*, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1991, n°7 pp. 16–17. Paris, Louvre MAO 308; H. 14 cm, diam. 18 cm. *L'Etrange et le merveilleux*, n°101, p. 139. British Museum, 1945,1017.265, H. 13.02 cm.; Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, 42A.

120 A type of sphinx or griffon appears on the fabric from Augsburg, see Shalem, "Bahram Gur," p. 119.

121 A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Leyli o Majnun," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/leyli-o-majnun-narrative-poem> (accessed 18/11/2022).

122 <https://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/ceramics/art/50-1966> (accessed 18/11/2022).

123 Doris Duke Foundation, Shangri La, DDF 48.338.

124 The inscription could be read, '*arā'i Majnūn*, "the open-space of Majnun" (?).



FIGURE 2.36  
Rock-relief with the Investiture of  
Ardashir, Naqsh-i Rostam, 3rd century  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013



FIGURE 2.37  
Octagonal molded bowl with investiture scene. Iran,  
12th century. H. 13.02 cm  
BRITISH MUSEUM, 1945,1017.265



FIGURE 2.38  
Scene of investiture on the inlaid brass bowl made by  
Turanshah, dated 752H, 1351-52  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 760-1889



FIGURE 2.39 Luster plate with Leyla and Majnun at school. Kashan, end of 12th century.  
Diam. 47.5 cm  
COPENHAGEN, THE DAVID COLLECTION, 50/1966



FIGURE 2.40 *Mina'i* bowl with Majnun in the desert. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century.  
Diam. 20.8 cm  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII, DDF.48.338

certainly modern and devoid of inscriptions, has recently cropped up in the London art market.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.2.2 Khusrau and Shirin?

A finely drawn luster bowl excavated from Ghazni, once on display at the Kabul Museum, shows a bearded horseman, together with a hound – as if returning from hunting – arriving in front of a castle (Fig. 2.33). On the terrace of this building, four veiled ladies observe the scene. This is reminiscent of the episode narrating Khusrau's visit to Shirin castle, found in the eponymous poem by Nizami. However, it could be an older story, taken from *Vis o Ramin's* romance, for instance. This ancient Parthian love story, narrated by Gorgani, was popular in its time. One can thus wonder why not a single illustrated manuscript represents it.<sup>126</sup>

The Freer Gallery scalloped plate with a sleeping groom and a bathing person has sometimes been interpreted as the *Bath of Shirin*.<sup>127</sup> This interpretation is not shared here since other bathing humanoids appear on several bowls (such as Bahram Gur's bowl in the Aga Khan Museum), so this item has been deliberately omitted from the study of this theme.

### 2.2.3 Kalila and Dimna

Another peculiar example of iconography is on a fragmentary *mina'i* bowl now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and recently restored (Fig. 2.41).<sup>128</sup> It shows two riders and a tree, but here, the trunk emerges from the mouth of a dragon. Moreover, a black rat appears on the rim, and a white rat probably once appeared opposite it. This iconography

125 Sotheby's London, *Arts of the Islamic World*, Oct. 9th 2013, lot 118.

126 Besides, as noted earlier, only a single illustrated manuscript exists for *Samak-i 'Ayyār* or *Varqa & Gulshāh*.

127 Ettinghausen, Richard, "The Iconography of a Kashan Lustre Plate," *Ars Orientalis* IV, (1961), pp. 25–64; Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 92.

128 Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.36.6; thanks are due to J.-F. de la Pérouse for showing me this bowl after de-restoration and for guiding me through the Met's storerooms. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collectio/search/451381> (accessed 18/11/2022).



FIGURE 2.41 *Mina'i* bowl with scene inspired by an episode from *Kalila and Dimna*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 20.3 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 57.36.6



FIGURE 2.42 Fresco from Pendzhikent with a scene inspired by an episode of the *Mahabharata*  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

is related to a story, found in the *Panchatantra* but also told in *Bilawar and Budasf*, of a man pursued by a unicorn/monster.<sup>129</sup> I know of no other Iranian ceramic vessels with iconographic motives explicitly originating from these narratives. However, at least one tile, made in monochrome turquoise glaze, apparently illustrates an episode of a fable with animal interaction.<sup>130</sup>

In the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, a curious *mina'i* fragment shows two people playing

*pachisi*,<sup>131</sup> a board game of Indian origin that plays a major role in the *Mahabharata* and is also represented on the murals of Pendzhikent (Fig. 2.42).<sup>132</sup> The story relates to a dice game, which ends with the disgrace of the Pandava brothers and the subsequent loss of their wife, Draupadi. It would be difficult to interpret the iconography of this shard as definitely linked to the Indian epic.

To conclude this section, it appears that most recognizable scenes painted on ceramics illustrate episodes of the *Shāh-nāma*, even if the reference is not necessarily Firdawsi's version. This observation on the supra-textual reference is also valid for non-*Shāh-nāma* illustrations, such as those from *Leyla and Majnun*, and other such stories.

Some other narratives might also have been popular, such as the stories of *Samak-i Ayyār* or the *Vis u Rāmin* romance, and some episodes illustrated on ceramics may be no longer understandable because their original reference is now lost.

129 For an early Arabic illustrated manuscript, see *Bilawar wa Budasf*, Balamand Monastery, Ms. no. 147, fol. 129r. The theme was later used in Christian iconography; see, for instance, the sculpted tympanum above the south portal of the Parma baptistery (late 12th–early 13th century).

130 Musée du Louvre, AD 10330 (don J. Maciet 1902). On the iconography of *Kalila and Dimna* and related texts, see also F. Barry Flood, "A Ghaznavid Narrative Relief and the Problem of pre-Mongol Persian Book-Painting," in David Knipp, ed., *Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic Painting 1100–1300*, *Proceedings of the International Conference, Berlin, 6–8 July 2007*, München, Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana, 2011, 257–272.

131 And not "backgammon," as stated by M. Ruggiadi, in Canby et al., *Court and Cosmos*, no. 80. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, no. 39.380.

132 Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, no. CA 14863.

The iconographic *errors*, particularly in the bowls signed or ascribed to Abu Zayd, are difficult to understand, especially when one considers that “Abu Zayd” had the reputation of being extremely learned.<sup>133</sup> As discussed in a previous publication, the errors could be interpreted in various ways:<sup>134</sup>

- It is the work of an apprentice.
- The object has been repainted.
- Literal exactitude was irrelevant, and the distortions were intentional (as with the *Faridun on a donkey* bowl).

Contrary to the paintings in dialogue with a narrative, such as the images in manuscripts, the scenes figuring on ceramics take liberties regarding the narrative constraints, although they remain loosely bound to them. They can implicitly refer to versions differing from the existing narratives or take some distance from them. These images function then as iconographic flashes, highlighting a cultural snapshot involving a mental palimpsest from the painter, who thus incorporates several narrative strata in a mechanism of interpretation of successive or simultaneous oral transmissions. Moreover, the images on ceramics potentially reveal the sociological densities applying to the considered period but are themselves loosely constitutive of a narrative.

After studying *what* these vessels convey, it is necessary to turn to *how* these stories are structured.

### 3 Opportunities and Formal Constraints

In the decorative process of a vessel, the operational sequence should probably start (besides the choice of the subject) with a basic layout. However, it is evident that not all objects follow the same layout scheme. Some compositions develop a single scene over all the available surface, whereas others display bands resembling comic-book strips. The first has been qualified as “monumental,” while

the second has been – misleadingly – termed as “miniature.”<sup>135</sup> Both these compositional schemes are developed below.

As mentioned previously, almost nothing is known about how potters worked, neither concerning images nor the poetic quotations on the objects. The question of notebooks or models against solely using the potters’ memory has also been raised by the specialists of late antique mosaics concerning the work’s distribution among the different craftsmen and artists.<sup>136</sup> This discussion is partly based on interpreting visual sources such as a Roman marble relief, kept in the Sens Museum, depicting *fresco* artists. While some on the right side are preparing the wall surface, another, on the left side, is drawing or consulting a type of notebook or tablet (Fig. 2.43). The question of using paper models or pounced drawings has also been considered by Jonathan Bloom concerning certain limited categories of ceramics, such as the Samanid calligraphic wares of Eastern Iran and Central Asia.<sup>137</sup>

#### 3.1 Narrative Structures

As noted by M.S. Simpson, two types of images can be distinguished on metalwork and ceramics: the “single heroic exploit” and “sequential representations.”<sup>138</sup> In most cases, bowls and plates display a single episode or narrative moment.

In lusterware, single or “monumental” scenes are the most common. The Jerusalem bowl with *Faridun farrukh* gives most of the available space to the hero and his bull. The supporting roles (the flagbearer and Zahhak) are squeezed at both his

133 Blair, “A Brief Biography,” p. 9.

134 See Porter, “Potters, painters and patrons,” pp. 31–32.

135 On the definition of “miniature,” see Chap. 1, Introduction; this is why I prefer here to speak of a “less monumental” style.

136 See Janine Balty, *Mosaiques antiques du Proche-Orient*, pp. 36 and 252–253.

137 Jonathan Bloom, “The Introduction of Paper to the Islamic Lands and the Development of the Illustrated Manuscript,” *Muqarnas* xvii (2000), pp. 20–21.

138 Simpson, *Illustration of an Epic*, pp. 222 and 236; see also Simpson, “Narrative structure”; and Sylvia Auld, “Characters,” pp. 99–100.

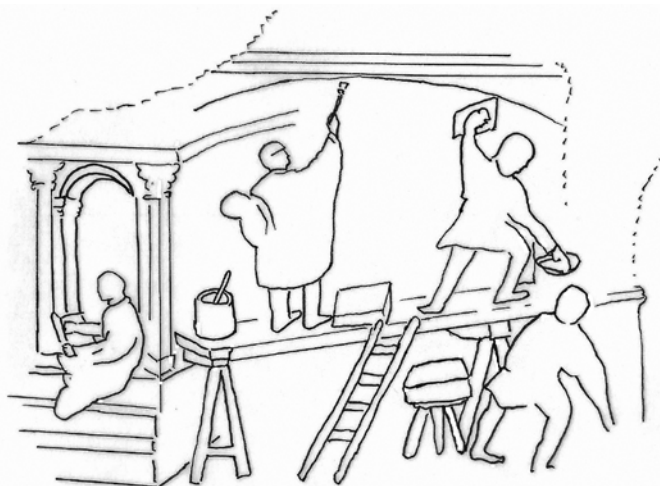


FIGURE 2.43  
Roman fresco artists at work, after a 2nd century  
marble relief in the Museum of Sens (France)  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

sides and are much smaller.<sup>139</sup> It might also be observed that, in the absence of perspective, the concave shape of bowls could give a certain depth to the figures in the composition. The drawn surface is framed by a double epigraphic band, in Kufic and *naskhi* scripts, and a few other elements fill the voids, such as a small sun (Fig. 2.17).

The composition of the same scene in the Louvre fragment shows all the characters on a less monumental scale (Fig. 2.18). This allows more characters to fit into the composition, integrating a certain narrative dynamism, as is the case with most of the so-called Abu Zayd *mina'i* bowls, but also for several pieces with *Bahram Gur and the Harpist Girl*. However, it should be mentioned that in this final example, some bowls show the harpist girl twice: once on the camel-back and once being trampled.<sup>140</sup> This implies depicting two consecutive moments on a single image. This case is particularly rare in medieval Iranian visual arts. Yet, this process might be identified in some Sasanian silver salvers with hunting scenes. For instance, the hunted beast is first observed while alive and

fighting and then after being killed.<sup>141</sup> Other examples of the depiction of chronologically distant events in a single image are found in Sasanian high reliefs, as is the case for the different depictions of Shapur I's Triumph over Gordian, Philippe, and Valerian, these different feats extending over more than twenty years (Fig. 2.44).<sup>142</sup>

In the case of the mentioned images of Faridun and Zahhak, in which the characters never appear together in Firdawsi's version (the cow Birmaya has been killed when Zahhak is taken as prisoner, and Kavah is absent from the cortege escorting Zahhak to the Damavand), the painter may have chosen to offer a synthetic translation of the whole story, as suggested by Simpson.<sup>143</sup>

The above-mentioned *Battle Scene* plate from the Freer Gallery displays a single battle covering the whole available surface up to the rim, but different actions involving different groups of characters occur simultaneously.<sup>144</sup>

139 Concerning the size of characters on a semicircular surface, see also Nadia Ali, "Qusayr Amra, la peinture du personnage trônant sur l'eau," *Annales Islamologiques*, 40 (2006), pp. 1–31.

140 See Brend & Melville, *Epic of the Persian*, p. 83.

141 Demange, *Les Perses Sassanides*, nos. 29 and 73, pp. 89 and 130–131.

142 There are several depictions of *Shapur's Triumph*. However, while at Naqsh-e Rostam, there are only two Roman emperors, at Bishapur, three are figured together: Gordian III (killed in 244 CE, figured being trampled), Philippe the Arab (paying ransom and retiring to Antioch the same year, figured kneeling), and Valerian (captured in 259, hands tied).

143 Simpson, "Narrative Allusion," p. 134.

144 See Holod, "Event and Memory," p. 209.



FIGURE 2.44  
Bishapur (Fars). Rock-relief with Shapur's triumph  
over three Roman emperors: Gordian III (244),  
Philip the Arab (249) and Valerian (260)  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013

Far less frequent than single scene-compositions, several objects display a series of episodes, depicted on horizontal bands or strips. This is the case with the above-mentioned *Bizhan and Manizhah* story on the Freer Beaker but also on the Khalili fragment with the story of Faridun and his sons.<sup>145</sup> A large *mina'i* plate with numerous *restorations*, now at The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA, Doha), displays seven horizontal bands, the central one being probably the only explicitly narrative one.<sup>146</sup> Because of repaints and refills, the story has not yet been identified, although some features are found on other objects. To the far-right, a young prince is enthroned, and a bearded man is speaking to him. A vertical bracket separates this scene from the following one, to the left, in which a horse with crossed spears looks to the right. Behind the horse stands a young man, followed by another, both walking in the same direction (to the right). There is no separation with the next scene, showing a young horseman hunting a type of ram (although this zone, up to the left end of the band, is over-painted and heavily restored).

<sup>145</sup> As observed previously, the order of events is confused.

<sup>146</sup> Leslee Katrina Michelsen and Johanna Olafsdotter, "Telling Tales: Investigating a Minā'i Bowl," in D. Roxburgh (ed), *Envisioning Islamic Art and Architecture. Essays in Honor of Renata Holod*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 66–87.

A similar sequence on the Freer beaker shows a seated prince with an entertainer, followed by a horse looking to the right with crossed spears, a pedestrian waving his left hand, and a horseman running to the left. The entertainer is bearded on the Doha plate but beardless on the Freer beaker.

In lusterware, scenes in various bands are seldom found, but a curious example, illustrated by Watson, has three figural rows alternating with two written lines, although the strictly narrative contents of the illustrations are relatively meager.<sup>147</sup> The top band shows a couple of young musicians, a smaller bearded man standing in the right corner, with the middle section is occupied by five horsemen running to the left. The lower band displays three people looking to the right toward a bare-headed bearded man.

The horizontal band also often depicts what appears as more stereotyped themes, such as hunting horsemen, running hounds, or polo players, as in a sherd from the Sèvres Museum.<sup>148</sup>

As in Pendzhikent frescoes, a certain narrative continuity gives the meaning of the story.

Several examples of *mina'i* show "sprays" of people, apparently seated at random. In rare cases,

<sup>147</sup> Watson, *Persian Luster Wares*, p. 73 Fig. 41. Allegedly in the Brooklyn Museum but not recorded in their online database.

<sup>148</sup> Watson, *Persian Luster Wares*, Fig. 40.



FIGURE 2.45  
Bowl, brass with silver inlay, with  
scenes based on the *Shāh-nāma*, Iran,  
dated 752/1351–52  
VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM,  
LONDON, 760–1889

the figures are geometrically distributed, such as on a bowl in the Louvre displaying nine on its interior.<sup>149</sup> The disposition according to the nine squares is interesting, as it borrows the scheme used for some architectural structures, such as the Hajji Piyada Mosque in Balkh, but also suggests a cosmological depiction of the nine spheres of the universe.<sup>150</sup> However, possible repaints might have altered this object. Moreover, without contextualizing elements, it is difficult (if not impossible) to ascertain an interaction or semantic relationship between the different figures, and these compositions thus appear to belong to the “archetypal/stereotyped” themes.

However, some objects, mainly in metalwork, display episodes that do not appear continuous. The V&A Basin 760–1889, for instance, has yielded to different interpretations (see Fig. 2.45).<sup>151</sup>

This basin depicts both “stereotyped” subjects and specific characters/episodes:

1. Royal investiture (Fig. 2.38).
2. Faridun and Zahhak (Fig. 2.16).
3. Horseman and lion.
4. Prince on elephant.
5. Polo playing.
6. Bahram Gur.

This narrative discontinuity could be based on using multiple scenes, for instance, as depicted in a page of drawings kept in Topkapı’s H. 2152 album.<sup>152</sup> As mentioned previously, whether the craftsmen used model books, or the images were only “mental” is ignored. However, this apparent disorder could also be due to a parallel with poetic anthologies. When reading some descriptions of wall paintings in the *Shāh-nāma*, these sound more like a mere evocation of juxtaposed images than an ekphrastic rendering:

“He had the iwan painted with some images, of kings, banquets and battles. There was king Kavus, with his mace and gauntlet, seated on his throne with Rostam the elephant-like next to him. There were also Zal and Gudarz and their people. On another side, there was Afrasiyab with his army, together with Piran and Garshivaz the Avenger.”<sup>153</sup>

There is no true ekphrasis in the *Shāh-nāma*, and the subjects of the paintings cited above appear independently the ones from the others, not composing a narrative sequence. This juxtaposition

149 Musée du Louvre, OA6452.

150 See Melikian-Chirvani, “The Nine Domes of the Universe,” pp. 64–70.

151 See Sylvia Auld, “Characters out of Context”; and Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, p. 228.

152 Ink drawing, ca. 1350–1430, Topkapı Palace Museum H. 2152, fol. 98a. Reproduced in David Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, Yale, Yale University Press, 2005, p. 4, Fig. 3.

153 Firdawsi, *Shah-nāma*, (ed. J. Mohl, jibi, II, p. 176), “The building of Siyavushgerd.”

could be compared with other aspects of Persian poetry; thus, using colored objects as metaphors is not intended to express precise hues but different values of the same referent.<sup>154</sup>

Another type of media, the luster tiles series allegedly from Takht-i Suleiman (thus dating from a slightly later period), decorated with verses from the *Shāh-nāma* (one hemistich on each tile), could illuminate this “anthological” practice, as only an extremely small percentage of the epic poem was chosen for these tiles. Moreover, most of the selected hemistiches do not quote narrative sequences but concern mainly bucolic or ana-creontic quotes. These tiles are more thoroughly addressed in the following contribution (see third section of Chapter 3).

### 3.2 Formal Opportunity

If iconography provides an “explanation” for some figures, other methods can be employed to understand the images on ceramics, namely the formal opportunity. This method implies changing the viewpoint, placing oneself somehow in the role of the artist. Henceforth, the questions are not what does it represent? but how can I fill this surface at its best?

The general shape of an object commands, at least partially, the general shape of the decorative scheme. Bowls and plates naturally offer a circular space to be filled. In some instances, the space is occupied with a single, monumental character or scene, such as is seen in “monumental” style luster pieces.<sup>155</sup> Conversely, some objects display several scenes distributed in strips. This implies much smaller characters, thus sometimes qualified in lusterware as “miniature style.” The proximity of these illustrated ceramics to the few illustrated



FIGURE 2.46 Luster bottle, Kashan, dated 1179, with rows of hounds, epigraphy and figures. H. 15 cm BRITISH MUSEUM, 1920,0326.1

manuscripts known from the same period, primarily the manuscript of *Varqa & Gulshāh*, is indeed compelling.

Closed shapes, such as bottles and beakers, are more fitted to the strip’s scheme. The division of lusterware between “monumental” and “miniature” compositions allegedly corresponds to two different, successive periods, the former being completely undocumented by dated items. Furthermore, the comparison with the layout of so-called *mina’i* wares shows a clear preference for the “miniature” or “less monumental” scheme.

Most of the objects studied here are bowls, which offer circular spaces as a field, and the layout often uses strips adorned with epigraphic bands for the rim and upper part of the vessels (interior and exterior). Closed forms, such as beakers, ewers, or bottles, necessarily imply using a succession of horizontal bands of varying widths. This indicates that the object’s viewers must hold it in their hands and turn it round to discover the

154 Red cheeks and red lips are compared to tulips, pomegranates, rubies, and coral, among others; this variety of comparisons only results in the enriched evocation of the red color; see Fouchécour, *La description de la nature*, p. 171.

155 In Western art, the epitomes of “monumental composition” are the fifth century BC metopes from the Parthenon.

whole text and images. It is noteworthy that these horizontal bands, alternating with written lines, are often animated by elements, such as hounds or horsemen running to the left (i.e., in the same direction as reading), thus allowing dynamic compositions (Fig. 2.46). This “in-motion” superposition also finds a parallel with mural painting.<sup>156</sup>

### 3.2.1 Inscriptions

The general layout for the décor of a piece of vessel can be compared, from a formal viewpoint, with the page of an illustrated manuscript. This implies that both images (or decorative motifs) and inscriptions must be considered.

As mentioned previously, most of the objects studied here display epigraphic bands, which naturally adopt the form of horizontal strips. They occupy diverse locations, such as the rims of bowls (both interior and exterior), the frame around a central subject, and some horizontal bands on closed shaped vessels, alternating with running hounds, horsemen, and others.

The contents and style of these inscriptions vary from one piece to another.<sup>157</sup> A series of inscriptions displays rhythmic, hieratic Arabic scripts (so-called Kufic), with full or abridged, sometimes unreadable, formulae (*al-mulk*, *al-āfiya*). Persian poetical inscriptions are far from systematic. None of the Bahram Gur *mina'i* bowls have Persian inscriptions on the interior, but a line in *naskhi* on exterior walls is recurrent, and when they occur, the poems are usually written in a flowing, steady *naskhi* script. They are sometimes accompanied by circumstantial data such as date, signature, or dedicatee.

If one considers these inscriptions from a purely formal viewpoint, the writings offer an alternative

to the bands of decorative motifs and can thus be used as mere filling elements. This *formal* use could contribute to explaining the presence of unrelated texts and images. Moreover, most of the poems on the bowls signed by (or attributed to) Abu Zayd were his own compositions.

### 3.2.2 Two Horsemen Facing Each Other

An important number of ceramic bowls, decorated in *mina'i* or luster, show two horsemen facing each other. In most of these, a tree separates both figures, forming a vertical axis for symmetry (Figs. 2.47–48). It is particularly difficult to relate these characters to an exact episode. The motif could have *started* from a duel between two characters described in an epic, for instance. However, some cases display widely differing backgrounds. Furthermore, secondary characters accompany several examples of pairs of riders. Among these, some appear as monkeys or as men disguised as such. As previously stated, some details from these bowls may have undergone repainting, but the huge number of sherds with this type of iconography proves that the basic design is reliable.

In terms of the processual approach, this repetitive composition scheme allows filling the space symmetrically (a horse-rider at both sides of a symmetric axis), offering an attractive variation on the single rider scheme.

Another “mechanical” explanation for these pairs of riders could be found by referring to textiles. Pairs of riders are often found on Sasanian or Byzantine silks (Figs. 2.49–50). Some display a pair of shooting amazons, or the emperor hunting, only with the ruler represented twice, as in a mirror-like composition. The roundel layout, characteristic of Sasanian textile and copied or adapted by Byzantine craftsmen, often offers an axial symmetric composition based on pairs of animals, birds, or other characters. The grid device used for textiles, facilitating the reverse of a model, probably explains this use. The transfer of these symmetrical, appealing compositions to other media, such as metal or ceramics, concerns only the image since the technical constraints of each craft involved are completely different.

<sup>156</sup> Thus, the rows of running hounds can be compared with the lower band of the mural painting at Samarqand, published by Yuri Karev, “Un cycle de peintures murales d'époque qarakhanide (XI<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) à la citadelle de Samarkand: le souverain et le peintre,” *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 147–4 (2003), pp. 1685–1730.

<sup>157</sup> See the Anthology in Annexe 2.



FIGURE 2.47  
*Mina'i* bowl with two riders. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century.  
 Diam. 19.3 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1975.1.1642



FIGURE 2.48  
*Mina'i* bowl with two riders. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century.  
 Diam. 17.6 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 17.120.40



FIGURE 2.49  
 Silk textile fragment with Shooting Amazons. Egypt?  
 7th–9th centuries (?). Dim. 20.8 × 20.9 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1987.442.5



FIGURE 2.50 Silk textile fragment with hunters. Egypt? 8th century. Dim. 21 × 28 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 1987.440.1



FIGURE 2.51 Sasanian silver plate with youths and winged horses. Iran, ca. 5th–6th century AD  
Diam. 21 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 63.152

Figures in mirrored pairs are a ubiquitous iconographic theme. A silver Sasanian plate dated fifth–sixth century offers an interesting parallel: it shows two young men accompanied by a pair of winged horses facing each other (Fig. 2.51).<sup>158</sup> The iconography has been interpreted as Pegasus with Bellerophon at the Pyrene spring (thus represented twice) or as the Dioscuri (or Gemini). However, these heroes are known for riding ordinary horses, so the presence of winged horses would be an unexplainable detail.<sup>159</sup>

### 3.2.3 Landscape or Contextualization as a Tool for Layout

If “monumental” compositions seldom give occasion to add contextualizing elements, other objects decorated in “less monumental” style often add landscape elements; these play a role in articulating the composition.

<sup>158</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 63.152; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/325650> (accessed 07/12/2022).

<sup>159</sup> Demange, *Les Perses Sassanides*, no. 37, p. 99; another plate, in the Arthur Sackler gallery, shows a pair of winged horses but without the couple of young men; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plate\\_with\\_winged\\_horses\\_Iran\\_Sasanian\\_period\\_7th\\_century\\_AD\\_silver\\_and\\_gilt\\_-\\_Arthur\\_M.\\_Sackler\\_Gallery\\_-\\_DSC05849.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plate_with_winged_horses_Iran_Sasanian_period_7th_century_AD_silver_and_gilt_-_Arthur_M._Sackler_Gallery_-_DSC05849.JPG) (accessed 07/12/2022).

*Mina'i* and luster bowls frequently depict a pond in the foreground. This pond might be limited by a vegetal bordure, and fish are shown in its water. Other beings are observed in certain cases, recalling the *insān al-mā'* (man from water) mentioned in the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*. This occupation of the lower field can be paralleled with Sasanian metalwork: a plate found in the governorate of Viatka (Russia, middle Volga course), but with the name of a *sipāhbud* of Tabaristan (6th–7th c.), shows a female flute player on the back of a winged griffin.<sup>160</sup> A strip of land is shown, together with some shrubs, below which is a pond with a couple of fishes.<sup>161</sup>

If the earth is seldom represented but for a single line, cypress trees are frequently used in the composition, and on many occasions, the vertical

<sup>160</sup> Demange, *Les Perses Sassanides*, n° 49, p. 110.

<sup>161</sup> From a formal viewpoint, this plate could be compared with the composition of Theodose's *missorium*, for instance; on this subject, see Nadia Ali, “Qusayr ‘Amra, la peinture” p. 118 and Fig. 4.

shape of the tree marks a significant division of space, as between Faridun and his three sons.

The sky is figured as a textile dais, borrowing a common poetical metaphor, and other elements, such as flying birds or winged persons, also contribute to the rendering of the ethereal, otherwise invisible sky.

...

Studying the compositional schemes would require more analytical examination of the whole series to determine some recurrent trends. As with iconography, these examinations must be conducted with a corpus of reliable objects, including unaltered sherds and de-restored vessels with any modern overpaint removed.

Other aspects should probably be considered, such as the formal alternation of text and image. Beyond the identification of a specific character or episode, other fields must be explored concerning the semantic level of the illustrated figures (see below).

As mentioned in the general introduction, the Iranian world entertains a peculiar relation between text and image. Among the specific characteristics of the objects described here, it is noteworthy that these vessels with narrative images, accompanied by texts not always readable or relevant, involuntarily offer the effect of a double hypallage ("talking" images and silent, iconic "words").

#### 4 De-personification and Archetypes/ Stereotypes

In the study of iconography, a thorny issue is recognizing the different characters represented on an object. Men can be beardless, thus supposing a young man, or display a beard, thus implying a mature man. However, as mentioned above, several examples of characters who should be drawn as mature or old (Zahhak, Afrasiyab) are represented as beardless young men. It appears that the visual codes identifying the characters in later manuscript illustrations do not systematically

apply to the images on ceramics. This blurring of attributes indicates several questions, such as the "levels of signification" of some recurrent themes (the horse-rider), but also concerns the visual characterization of stereotyped figures, such as the *ghulāms* and the sultan.

##### 4.1 *The Horse-rider: A Folktale Hero?*

The figure of the horse-rider is among the most popular in the decoration of medieval Iranian art, as it appears in multiple media (from mural painting to metalwork) and is also abundant in the ceramics studied here. However, contrary to other mounts, such as a camel, a bull, or an elephant, the figure of the horse-rider does not imply a reference to a specific episode. Moreover, one can easily wonder whether every figurative motif appearing on medieval Iranian ceramics is significant. Sasanian silver plates, especially in the royal hunt examples, display figures of kings that are often identifiable. The Sasanian iconography thus proves *ideologically* distant from the figure of an archetype. Conversely, in medieval iconography, the tendency is to de-personification of the subject/motif in favor of an archetype/stereotype. Thus, a hierarchy in the meaning of figures should probably be introduced.

In the Hermitage, an interesting silver plate of the late Sasanian period eloquently exemplifies this transition.<sup>162</sup> First, and contrary to earlier Sasanian pieces, the horseman rides from right to left. The man is delineated in profile with minimal relief. His right hand is lifted and holding a sword. Two lions are figured, one rampant on the left, the other dead and being trampled at the bottom. The landscape is rendered by vegetal stems and scrolls holding fleurons or pomegranates.

The motif of the horseman, particularly ubiquitous in early Islamic art, leads to the question of his status. Is this horseman represented on a ceramic or metal dish a 'lambda' horseman or a specific character, historical (king) or heroic such

<sup>162</sup> Hermitage, St. Petersburg, no. 5-503; found in the Perm region. See Demange, *Les Perses Sassanides*, no. 73, pp. 130-131.

as Rustam, Iskandar, or Khusrau, or even a popular hero such as Samak-i 'Ayyar?<sup>163</sup> In any case, riding a horse is, independently, significant of a certain social standing. Different archetypal levels could thus be proposed, from less (or not) significantly specific to more significant:

- A lambda horseman
- A noble horseman (introducing a social variable)
- A generic king or a prince (historical or literary character in general)
- A king/hero in particular
- A king/hero at a specific moment/place.

Some contextualizing elements are required to identify a horseman as pertaining to the final category: specific garments or attributes, facial or other physical specific features, specific situations, and accompanying figures (as in Panofsky's iconology).

However, an over-textualist temptation should be considered. At Qusayr 'Amra, a large depiction of a hunt might serve as an example. The painting, situated in the uppermost register of the western wall of the reception hall, shows the hunting riders pursuing wild asses. On the left side, a horseman is falling from his mount. This character has been interpreted as historical by O. Grabar and G. Fowden. Conversely, Nadia Ali showed that the model for the painting originates from chariot races depicted on late antique mosaics, often showing a rider falling in the loop of the hippodrome, a clear case of formal transfer.<sup>164</sup>

A series of horsemen represented on so-called Nishapur buff ware can be a starting point for an iconographic inquest. Although evidently anterior to this corpus, they might help fix some trends in the stereotype of the horseman and attempt to determine whether they depict specific characters.

Over about eight random examples, one may observe that the drawing could be relatively

accurate, depending on the objects.<sup>165</sup> All examples display a monumental composition with a single horseman. The ornaments of both horse and rider also vary, some being richly ornate, although all horses have a saddlecloth. Most have a sword in their left hand and the reins in the right. Some are shown in profile; fewer are in three-quarter face, and only two are in full face (Berlin, ROM). Most of the riders are accompanied by a bird (falcon?), sometimes sitting on the horse's back; other animals, such as leopards, cheetahs, or dogs, can also figure in the picture. These small differences in details or rendering could imply various reasons: different characters/actions (hunting, warfare), different craftsmen and workshops, different quality/price (implying different customers), or even different periods. However, methods for precisely identifying these horsemen are lacking.

A comparison can be made between the plates at the Iran Bastan (Fig. 2.52) and the Aga Khan Museum (Fig. 2.53). The two objects are slightly different in shape, size, and conditions,<sup>166</sup> but both horsemen ride from right to left. They are drawn on a monumental scale, in black over a yellow background, with some touches in green, and

165 List of eight examples:

1: Tehran Iran Bastan (Muze-ye Melli); repro. Charles K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur, Pottery of the Early Islamic Period*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973, pp. 20–22, no. 62.

2: The Aga Khan Museum, no. AKM 573; <https://agakhanmuseum.org/collection/artifact/bowl-akm-753> (accessed 07/12/2022).

3: Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Nr. I. 11/62;

4: Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, no. 993.95.1; <https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/450544/bowl-with-horse-rider-and-birds> (accessed 07/12/2022).

5: Copenhagen, David Collection, Inv. no. 25/1968; <https://www.davidmus.dk/islamisk-samling/keramik/item/101> (accessed 07/12/2022);

6: Denver Art Museum, Object ID: 1967.93; <https://denverartmuseum.org/object/1967.93> (accessed 07/12/2022).

7: Ex-Plotnick Collection; repro Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*, no. 40, p. 81;

8: Christies London, 26 October 2007, no. 281.

166 Tehran, Iran Bastan/Muza-i Milli: diam. 38 cm; The Aga Khan Museum: diam. 22.2 cm.

163 On *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, see Marina Gaillard, "Samak-i 'Ayyār," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition (2009), <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/samak-i-ayyar> (accessed 20/11/2022).

164 See Nadia Ali, "Qusayr Amra and the Continuity of Post-Classical Art," pp. 186–188.



FIGURE 2.52 Buff ware plate with horse rider, Nishapur, 10th century (?). Diam. 38 cm  
TEHRAN, MUZE-YE MELLI



FIGURE 2.53 Buff ware plate with horse rider, Nishapur, 10th century (?). Diam. 22.2 cm  
TORONTO, AGA KHAN MUSEUM,  
AKM 753

the quality and nature of pigments vary between both objects.<sup>167</sup> The riders both hold the reins in their right hand and a sword in the left. However, the one in Tehran has his elbow bent while the one in the Aga Khan Museum has his straight backward. Both wear a belted tunic opening toward the left and high-topped, soft, and pointy-toed riding boots, slipped into the stirrups. The former is undoubtedly more accurate in drawing, both in the thickness of the line, proportions of the bodies, and details. Having a beard, he also appears more mature. The composition in the Aga Khan bowl fills the available space much more completely than the other. The first example is refined, the second efficient and more synthetic. Still, despite these differences in rendering, the subject, or iconographic contents, of both vessels appear extremely similar. Based on the “formal opportunity” approach, it could be considered that in the first example, the available space defines the

motif, while in the second, the motif defines the space.

Other horsemen can be found in mural paintings, such as the rider from a Nishapur mansion at Vineyard Tepe (dated before 1145).<sup>168</sup> Although the state of conservation is not pristine, several features are evident. The face is completely erased, but the headdress is preserved; the rider is richly dressed, with:

“A belt with three long lappets tipped with metal, from which two swords are suspended (...) The rider is clad in a stiff, decorated caftan with tight sleeves, ornamented trousers (or leggings that cover the heels), and high boots with pointed toes.<sup>169</sup> On the upper sleeves of the caftan are *ṭerāz* (embroidered) bands of pseudo-Kufic

167 Pigments of some of these wares have been analyzed by Anne-Marie Keblow Bernsted, *Early Islamic Pottery*, London, Archetype, 2003, pp. 17–19; yellow particularly is a peculiar lead *stannate*.

168 Charles K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur. Some Early Islamic Buildings and Their Decoration*, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986, p. 188.

169 These resemble those in the above-mentioned buff ware horsemen; they are also close to the boots of the Guards painted at Lashkari Bazar; see Daniel Schlumberger, *Lashkari Bazar*, Paris, De Boccard, 1978, Pl. 123.



FIGURE 2.54 Glass disk with horse rider. Iran, 12th century. Diam. 9.1 cm  
KHALILI COLLECTION, GLS 608

writing, a common element of clothing in the early Islamic period.”<sup>170</sup>

The horse also displays some ornaments. The rider could be interpreted as a hunting nobleman since he holds a bird in his left hand. A similar figure appears on a glass disk (Fig. 2.54).<sup>171</sup>

However, the rider is followed by a strange character on foot, wearing a weird headgear (?) with crosses and heart motifs.<sup>172</sup> Does this second character have a role in the story?

170 Elsie H. Peck, “Clothing viii. In Persia from the Arab conquest to the Mongol invasion,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. v, Fasc. 7, (1992), pp. 760–778. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/clothing-viii> (accessed 07/12/2022).

171 Khalili Collection no. GLS 608; <https://www.khalili.org/collections/islamic-art/khalili-collection-islamic-art-medallion-gls608/> (accessed 07/12/2022).

172 Wilkinson, *Nishapur. Some Early Islamic Buildings*, pp. 206–207. See also Peck, “Clothing”: “Next to the rider is a second, damaged figure wearing a stiff embroidered coat; what appears to be a stole; ample, decorated trousers; and small slippers reminiscent of Omayyad examples (Wilkinson, *Nishapur. Some Early*

One of the attributes for identifying characters is the outfit. The ethnolinguistic appurtenance, as defined by the costume, especially the headdress, can determine a dominating group and hence a historical period.<sup>173</sup>

Some textual descriptions are known, such as that concerning Hasanak-i Vazir as described by Bayhaqi (995–1077) on the eve of his trial and subsequent death sentence:

“He was wearing an ink-color cloak (*jubba*), almost black; a tunic (*durrā’a*) and jacket (*radā’i*) extremely fine/pure, a smoothed Nishapuri turban, and new *mikā’ili* boots; his anointed hair was hidden under his turban, only a few [curls] were visible.”<sup>174</sup>

However, such accurate descriptions of garments are rare; moreover, some elements, such as the *mikā’ili* boots, appear difficult (if not impossible) to visualize.

Figures of horsemen are numerous in the studied corpus, both in luster and *mina’i*. Some are represented alone, on a monumental scale, while others are grouped in pairs or rows. Mainly, as with the Nishapur examples, these horsemen do not refer to specific characters but a stereotyped figure. Obvious differences exist in the visual rendition between the Nishapur’s horsemen and those studied here. Figures from the former are stiffer, their eyes are wide open and black, and their features are craggy. Conversely, the horsemen in this corpus are more curved and leaner, their faces have the beardless *but-i māhru* type (moon-faced), much rounder, with slanted eyes and a heavy chin. In certain cases, some implements, such as the polo cross (*chawghān*), a hound, or a falcon, allow

*Islamic Buildings*, p. 207 Fig. 2.40). The headdress, an onion-shaped turban, perhaps of ornamented silk, with a pseudo-Kufic inscription and a knobbed finial at the top, is a new style that prefigures Islamic headdresses known from later representations.”

173 See Soucek, “Ethnicity in the Islamic Figural Tradition.”  
174 Abu al-Fazl Bayhaqi, *Tārikh-i Bayhaqi*, ed. ‘A.A. Fayyaz, Tehran, Irānmihir, 1358/1979, p. 204.



FIGURE 2.55 Luster dish with polo player, Kashan, dated 1208. Diam. 35.2 cm  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, C.51-1952

understanding of the scene, differentiating it from other “sports.” In rare instances, an animal (lion, panther) is shown in combat with the rider.

Systematically, the rider faces from right to left. Usually, the horseman is a beardless young man, but the rider on San Francisco’s B60P28+ bowl has a beard.<sup>175</sup> The horse is usually rearing, his tail is knotted, and the rider looks forward. However, the fine luster example from the V&A (C.51-1952; Fig. 2.55) dated 1208, whose rider holds a *chawghān*, looks backward as if observing some chaser during his sport. In the example from Yale (1958.63.7), a type of leopard appears between the horse’s legs.<sup>176</sup> The vessel appears unfinished, although it is possible that some gilding or luster painting once enhanced the composition, and the same remark

175 San Francisco, Asian Art Museum, B60P28+, diam. 24.8 cm; this item shows clear overpaints. Moreover, it is noteworthy that this figure resembles Bahram Gur and the Harpist.

176 Bowl with Man on Horseback, Yale University Art Gallery, 1958.63.7; <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/7478> (accessed 07/12/2022).

concerns the two bowls signed by Muqri.<sup>177</sup> These, and a plate in the Louvre (MAO 610/MAO 440) use both luster and *mina’i*, as does the example in the Musée des Beaux Arts de Lyon, although drawn on a smaller scale (Fig. 2.56).<sup>178</sup>

To summarize, the figure of the horseman generally shows a young, idle man in a stereotyped position/occupation denoting his noble or socially high rank. This type of figure is probably not a self-representation of the customer but could instead betray his social aspiration through the image of a popular folktale hero.

#### 4.2 *Ghulām/Sultan Stereotypes*

Among what could be termed as “standard” subjects, many objects display court scenes figuring a bearded ruler surrounded by beardless young men or *ghulāms* (Figs.2.57–58), a theme observed on manuscript frontispieces as well as on ceramics. A puzzling example of a frontispiece is illustrated by the series of volumes of *Kitāb al-Āghāni*, probably copied in Mosul in the early 13th century and thus almost contemporary with the ceramics addressed.<sup>179</sup>

A question arising from this comparison would be: do these scenes on ceramics depict an actual court, or are they *purely* stereotypes?

The visual idiom presented on ceramics often clearly opposes the masculine ruler in full frontality, with a headdress that may be a fur bonnet or turban (in some cases a winged crown or tripartite headgear), to the court of beauties figured by the beardless *ghulāms*, in three-quarter profile, wearing different types of headdress, but seldom

177 Another “unfinished” example of a bowl with a horseman is in the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, no. 931. This exceptionally shows the rider fighting with a snake-like dragon, although parts of this bowl are modern additions. See Richard McClary, “Calouste Gulbenkian, His Mina’i Ware, and the Changing Islamic Art Market in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Muqarnas* 37 (2020), Fig. 3.

178 See Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, E 698 (diam. 22.4 cm).

179 Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Geneva, Skira, 1961, p. 65; see also p. 91: frontispiece of *Kitāb al-Dīryāq*, Mosul (?), mid-13th century.



FIGURE 2.56  
 Bowl with a horse rider painted both in *mina'i* and luster. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century.  
 Diam. 22.4 cm  
 LYON, MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS, E 698



FIGURE 2.57  
 Dated luster star-tile with prince and attending *ghulāms*, Kashan, 608/1211–12.  
 Diam. 32.1 cm  
 NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 40.181.1



FIGURE 2.58 Luster bowl with prince and attending *ghulāms*. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 37.8 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 41.199.1



FIGURE 2.59 Lobed *mina'i* bowl with prince and attendants. Kashan, late 12th–early 13th century. Diam. 21.6 cm  
NEW YORK, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, 17.120.41

turbans, contrary to the above-mentioned illustrated manuscripts. Another difference is that manuscript frontispieces are more accurate in the details of headdresses and attributes (cupbearer, sword-bearer, *chawghān*-bearer, each corresponding to different categories of *ghulāms*). Conversely, this type of scene in ceramics rarely shows such details. This difference probably emphasizes that ceramics and manuscripts are not intended for the same type of audience. Moreover, contrary to Sasanian silver plates, for instance, in which individual kings can be recognized by the shape of their crowns, these court scenes on ceramics do not show easily recognizable characters and have no written indications concerning their identity.<sup>180</sup>

180 An interesting counterexample is a large figure with a frit body painted in black and turquoise, inscribed on the brim of the hat: "Our Lord Tughril the Sultan, the Learned, the Just, year thirty-eight five hundred." However, the date 538, corresponding to 1143–44, does not refer to the time of manufacture. See Mikhail Piotrovsky and John Vrieze, *Earthy Beauty, Heavenly Art: Art of Islam*, Amsterdam, Lund Humphries, 1999, no. 148.

This lack of clear identification transforms these depictions into stereotypes.

Another troubling fact is that contrary to the consistently beardless *ghulāms*, the physiognomy of the ruler figure is subject to change. Examples of beardless princes are not rare, mainly on *mina'i* but also on some luster objects, thus blurring the stereotypes (Fig. 2.59). However, the strict frontality of the prince is safeguarded. Besides, a bearded man accompanying the ruler, depicting an older, more experienced man, such as a vizier, is often visible on manuscript frontispieces or metal objects, whereas no example on ceramics shows this type of character.

A stereotype is usually defined as the vision of a social group by another, while the archetype is recognized as universal. The social milieu in which these vessels were made was probably unrelated to the princely courts. The use of stereotyped motifs could thus confirm the mainly commercial production level of these items.

Stereotyped images might also result from an *evaporation* of meaning. Thus, the image of a rider could remotely trace back to a Sasanian knight or a specific hero, likewise concerning a prince and his

*ghulāms*. As noted for the “literary” episodes, the study of this type of non-narrative, stereotyped scene would require further investigation to establish quantitative statistics and reasonably durable trends. The comparison with metal objects should also be extended; as suggested earlier, ceramic objects were made for a social category slightly inferior to the metalwork patrons.

## 5 Conclusion

It is almost impossible to know how a potter picked a subject for decorating his works. Some themes were probably in favor, responding to the market trends. Many of these fine ceramics show figurative decoration, although not narratively, as is the case with friezes of horsemen, hunting or playing polo, and musicians or couples seated by a tree. Some scenes are immediately understood, while others are less obvious, such as a young prince on the back of an elephant. Moreover, when a readable text accompanies the image, it is usually unrelated to it. This leads to the concept proposed by O. Grabar (and later by others such as O. Watson, and S. Blair) that these objects function as greeting cards. Only three examples display a written identification of the episode (the AKM’s *Bahram Gur*, DDF’s *Majnun*, and Jerusalem’s *Faridun Farrukh*).

Do the recognizable scenes represented on ceramics, such as Faridun, Zahhak, or Bizhan, have another signification besides illustrating an epic? If the answer were yes, could this be a political message linked to cultural identity?

Images without a text indicate that these could speak for themselves, meaning the contemporary audience, aware of the stories, identified and understood them. One could imagine that mural paintings functioned similarly, although, unfortunately, most have now disappeared.

The painter decorating ceramics used a repertoire of images and poetic quotations that were mostly based on oral transmission. Thus, the stories did not need to be written down to be illustrated, as demonstrated by the Pendzhikent

frescoes. Moreover, the oral transmission also indicates that the painter required no memorandum in the form of a model book.

Several *mina’i* objects display themes yet to be identified and, in some cases, these are so odd (as was the case with the already mentioned, ex-Plotnick *Reclining woman*) that their authenticity might be questioned. Furthermore, with some exceptions, the owners of these objects are often reluctant to remove the modern overpainting and other interventions.

A fragment in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, of high-quality drawing, shows a couple of persons beside a tent or a palace,<sup>181</sup> but, as is often the case with such fragments, the context is too vague to allow identification of a precise episode. A bowl now in the Doha Museum displays, despite some restorations, two beardless figures bowing in front of a bearded prince seated on a throne, one of which presents a decapitated head to the sovereign.<sup>182</sup> The subject would thus suggest the illustration of a *Shāh-nāma* episode, perhaps the *Presentation of Iraj’s head to Faridun*. The quality of the drawing is clearly second-rate, but the scene appears unique for this type of illustrated vessel.

The oddity of some subjects, such as the above-mentioned famous *Bleeding scene* in a bowl from Berlin, could be sufficient to discard some objects.<sup>183</sup> The representation of a non-fictional medical subject would probably be a unicum. Moreover, recent de-restorations show that many *mina’i* objects were made from dozens of fragments, not all originally belonging to the same object. This issue is highly problematic since some

181 Fragments of a Dish, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 66.95.9a, b; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451862> (accessed 07/12/2022).

182 MIA PO.228.2002; see “Mina’i painted bowl” in Explore Islamic Art Collections. Museum With No Frontiers, 2019. [http://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database\\_item.php?id=object;EPM;qt;Mus21;28](http://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=object;EPM;qt;Mus21;28) (accessed 07/12/2022).

183 Berlin, no. I. 4350.

reputed objects would, if de-restored, lose a high percentage of their body.<sup>184</sup>

Vessels with “secondary” characters not quoted in the stories, such as winged persons, monkey- and black-faced humans (sometimes with a tail), or swimming individuals (*Insan al-ma’* or *peri?*) also require further investigation. To the human figures, other creatures could be added, such as sphinxes, harpies, and other fabulous beasts.

The parallels with metalwork, regarding the shapes (scalloped salvers or pitchers) or their iconographic contents, probably show an “imitative” process of a socially slightly inferior but urban and educated class toward their superiors. Chinese porcelains – another socially “superior” good – should be added to metalwork as a source of inspiration for the shapes of fine Kashan wares.

The stories narrated by the pictures on the vessels do not necessarily address a highly learned audience (this is not the case with the poems and other inscriptions, often difficult to decipher). The “illustrative” aspect of images is thus limited, especially when the accompanying texts prove unrelated. Furthermore, a comprehensive anthology of the poems appearing on these vessels (see Annex 2) would prove a useful tool for further taxonomies and defining the commercial target market of these products.

It should be added that “illustrated” ceramics are short-lived, considering the Iranian premodern period. These vessels represent only a few decades. Tiles with figures survive longer, although some, such as the series of stars and crosses, do not often show specific (or recognizable) episodes. An exception concerns the series of large Ilkhanid square tiles from Takht-i Suleiman (or alike), with *Bahram Gur hunting*, *Faridun and Zahhak*, and similar scenes.

184 See for instance J.F. de Lapérouse, Karen Stamm and Vicki Parry, “Re-examination and Treatment of Mina’i Ceramics at The Metropolitan Museum of Art,” in *Glass and Ceramics Conservation: Preprints of the Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Working Group*, Nova Gorica, Goriski Musej Kromberk, 2007, pp. 112–119.

The relatively short time span, especially concerning the so-called *mina’i* vessels (between 1186 and 1219, according to dated pieces), could raise the question of the existence of a short-lived practice by a community of customers. How is such a sudden break explained? Is it merely a turn in trends, or can other factors, such as economy, explain the end of this practice? Ethnoarchaeological theory usually applies a recurrent scheme implying three steps:

- a special product,
- made by a highly specialized craftsman,
- for a special customer.

Thus, the social or ritualized practice involving these objects could have suddenly ceased immediately before or because of the Mongol invasions. The relative homogeneity of the customers’ initial milieu probably provoked an emulation of the production that, by secondary effect, diluted or weakened some themes. The codes and stability of the cultural material embodied here by the studied depictions appear to express themselves loosely. The collapse of the socioeconomic fabric in the early 1220s probably resulted in a replacement of references.

The Mongol invasions are often pushed forward to explain this sudden break. However, one could wonder why these invasions did not also affect the luster production. The major Mongol attack on Kashan occurred in 1224, whereas the great mihrab from the Maidan Masjid, now in Berlin, is dated 1226. This indicates that the Kashan workshops could restart their production relatively soon after the city was allegedly destroyed. Moreover, the technological aspects of *mina’i*, by far less aleatory than luster, were used again some decades later in what has been termed as *lājvardina* ceramics. Other explanations are thus required.

It could be added that after the disturbed period of invasions, the economy resumed progressively. One of the results, in terms of trade, was the renewed circulation of goods, raw materials as well as deluxe commodities, including imported Chinese wares. These were eventually imitated by

the Persian potters. However, the narrative images were definitively absent from these wares.

A specific relation to the narrative, although experiencing several subtleties, can be retrieved from the ensemble of productions studied above. If some objects are relatively explicit in their visual transcription of a narrative, the story simultaneously appears as a snapshot. The painted scene *presentifies* one or several episodes in a largely elliptic and multi-referenced narrative dimension. One faces an identifiable cultural substrate, although emptied from explicit narrative processes. In some

cases, all narration disappears in favor of stereotypes, appearing as simple markers of a specific socioeconomic milieu. In this, the objects gain meaning through their evocative power toward the members of this milieu, not even requiring the support of a story. The objects and their decoration thus embody manifestations of high standing in a given context, with the synthesis of cultural references whose function is to proclaim the wealth and relative success of the customer, with no intervention of erudition as sediment of this social fact.

## Use and Reuse of Persian Luster Tiles (13th–14th Centuries)

And this is the writing that was written,  
MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.  
Book of DANIEL, 5, 25

•••

What has been accordingly fired will  
shine like red gold  
and will glow with the brilliance of the  
sun.

ABU AL-QASIM KASHANI

••

At least since the times of the Seljuqs, the taste for color in Iranian architecture was notably illustrated using glazed tiles.<sup>1</sup> If the first attempts were mainly based on turquoise monochrome elements, during the rule of the Ilkhans (1258–1350), tile-making acknowledged a fantastic boom, together with a diversification of processes. This was especially the case with luster tiles, although other techniques such as low-fired so-called *lājvardīna* and underglaze-painted tiles, were also produced in addition to monochrome ones (both flat and molded). A quick initial survey of existing glazed architectural revetments would probably show that luster tiles were often preferred to other sophisticated techniques such as *lājvardīna*. However, monochrome-glazed tiles, regularly



FIGURE 3.1 Plain monochrome turquoise cross-shaped tile  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION  
FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA  
MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII,  
DDF48.213A–B

judged much less aesthetically (and commercially) valuable, covered much larger surfaces (Fig. 3.1).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since monochrome-glazed tiles were mainly used on exterior surfaces such as domes and *pishtāq*-s, they were also much more visible (Fig. 3.2).

Some preliminary questions should be addressed concerning the hierarchy in the use of materials for architectural decoration.<sup>3</sup> However, the criteria dictating the choice of colored stones, stucco, wood, or glazed tiles remain elusive, as does the possible hierarchy for the different types of tiles.<sup>4</sup> These questions might involve matters

1 See Douglas Pickett, *Early Persian Tilework*, Cranbury, Associated University Presses, 1997. One could imagine that glazed tiles are becoming for brick architecture because of the coherence in material but also the means of production. However, turquoise-glazed tiles from the Seljuq period were instead progressively based on a siliceous body, indicating a specialized production sector, apart from brickmaking.

2 This is especially true for plain, flat monochrome tiles and, to a lesser extent, for molded ones.

3 This question is also examined in the Chapter 4, “Glazed Tiles from Indian Sultanates.”

4 A stunning example of the use of different types of tiles is available at Kubadabad Palace, in Beyşehir. See Ian C. Freestone, Zehra Yegingil, and Rüçhan Anık, “Scientific Analysis of Glazed Tiles from the Seljuq Palace of Kubad-Abad, Lake Beyşehir, Turkey,” in B. McCarthy, E. Salzman



FIGURE 3.2 The shrine of 'Abd al-Samad at Natanz, early 14th century  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013



FIGURE 3.3 Panel showing a patchwork of reused tiles.  
Mosque of Rustam Pasha, Istanbul  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2011

related to expertise, availability, or taste but perhaps also convenience. The lack of primary sources, partly due to the dispersion of the material, makes these necessary questions difficult to answer.

As a commodity, tiles have experienced an important international trade throughout the Islamic world, a phenomenon especially known in the Ottoman realm. Pieces made in Valencia, Barcelona, Genoa, and Naples were used in Algiers, Tunis, and Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> Reuse of tiles also appears to have been a popular practice, as observed on the walls of Rustam Pasha's Mosque in Istanbul (Fig. 3.3). Similarly, panels made of Catalan tiles

are observed in the Topkapı Saray's dados.<sup>6</sup> Iznik tiles (or their Syrian derivatives) were extensively used in Egyptian mosques. In more recent periods, Pierre Loti's "mosque," in his eclectic house in Rochefort, reuses mainly Iznik and Damascus tiles, bought by him when the old monuments were destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

The mechanisms of trade and reuse of Persian tiles are far less well-known than their Ottoman counterparts. Apart from the examples studied below, an unexpected late 19th-century example of Persian Qajar underglaze-painted tiles is found in Calcutta, in the decoration of the pediments for the statues in the garden of Sheetalnathji Temple, circa 1867 (Fig. 3.4).<sup>8</sup> Besides, art collectors such

Chase, L.A. Cort, J.G. Douglas, and P. Jett, eds. *Scientific Research On Historic Asian Ceramics: Proceedings of the Fourth Forbes Symposium at the Freer Gallery of Art*, Washington, Freer Gallery of Art, 2009, pp. 3–8.

5 See Arles, *Vanités de Faïence*, exhibition catalogue, Arles, Museon Arlaten, 2000.

6 Arles, *Vanités de Faïence*, p. 104.

7 Thierry Liot, *La maison de Pierre Loti à Rochefort – 1850–1923*, Prahecq, Patrimoine et médias, 1999.

8 Sheetalnath ji Mandir is a Jain complex of temples in Badridas Temple Street, Calcutta. The complex was started in 1867 in a relatively eclectic style.



FIGURE 3.4 Qajar underglaze painted tile, Sheetalnathji Temple, Calcutta, circa 1867  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

as Henry d'Allemagne and, later, Doris Duke had large collections of Persian tiles integrated in their interiors (Fig. 3.5).<sup>9</sup>

A large proportion of Ilkhanid tiles (from the second half of the 13th to the first half of the 14th century) are no longer on the monuments they belonged to, and are now scattered among dozens of collections, public and private, worldwide. Few items remain thus in their original abodes, and their global dispersion significantly complicates their study. Tiles are part of what Mélikian-Chirvani terms the “immense shipwreck in which the Iranian archaeological heritage has

sunk since more than a century.”<sup>10</sup> Although still disputable, all these tiles were probably made in Kashan, in the family workshops of renowned potters. The technique of luster ware was known long before the Mongol invasion and continued after their fall. The sequence of dated tiles during the Ilkhanid rule shows periods of intense activity with some gaps in the production.<sup>11</sup> However, it is noteworthy that it was during Ilkhanid rule that the most impressive architectural decorations were made in luster tiles. The patronage for masterpieces such as the monumental luster mihrabs was probably, in most cases, independent of the central Mongol power. Conversely, this type of patronage often arose from either the Shiite Iranian urban elites or the entourage of Sufi saints.

Luster tiles once adorned religious buildings, such as mosques and shrines. However, the partition between Shiite and Sunnite monuments is probably more permeable than previously thought, especially regarding Sufi shrines. Moreover, Mélikian-Chirvani has confirmed that palatial architecture was also a place where this type of décor was extensively in use, not only at Takht-i Suleiman.<sup>12</sup>

In some instances, the identity of the building these tiles originally adorned is known, although at times in a hypothetical form. At the turn of the 19th–20th century, some significant sites such as Varamin were used as prestige labels, even if the tiles originated from a different place. An example is a star tile in San Francisco’s Asian Art Museum, dated Ramadhan 663/June–July 1265.<sup>13</sup> The star has an old label inscribed “Varamin,” but despite its date being the same as that of the Varamin mihrab at Shangri-La, its diameter (21 cm) is much smaller than those of the stars from Varamin (see below).

9 Tomoko Masuya, “Persian Tiles on European Walls: Collecting Ilkhanid Tiles in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 30, 2000, pp. 39–54. Thomas Mellins and Donald Albrecht (eds.), *Doris Duke’s Shangri-La, a House in Paradise*. New York, Skira Rizzoli, 2012.

10 A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāme dans l’architecture iranienne sous les Ilkhān*, Paris, *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 18, 1996, p. 7.

11 See Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, pp. 191–196, for an inventory of dated pieces.

12 Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāme*, pp. 7–8.

13 San Francisco, Asian Art Museum, B60P2034.



FIGURE 3.5  
The inner courtyard at Doris Duke Foundation for  
Islamic Art, Shangri La Museum, Honolulu, Hawai'i  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2020

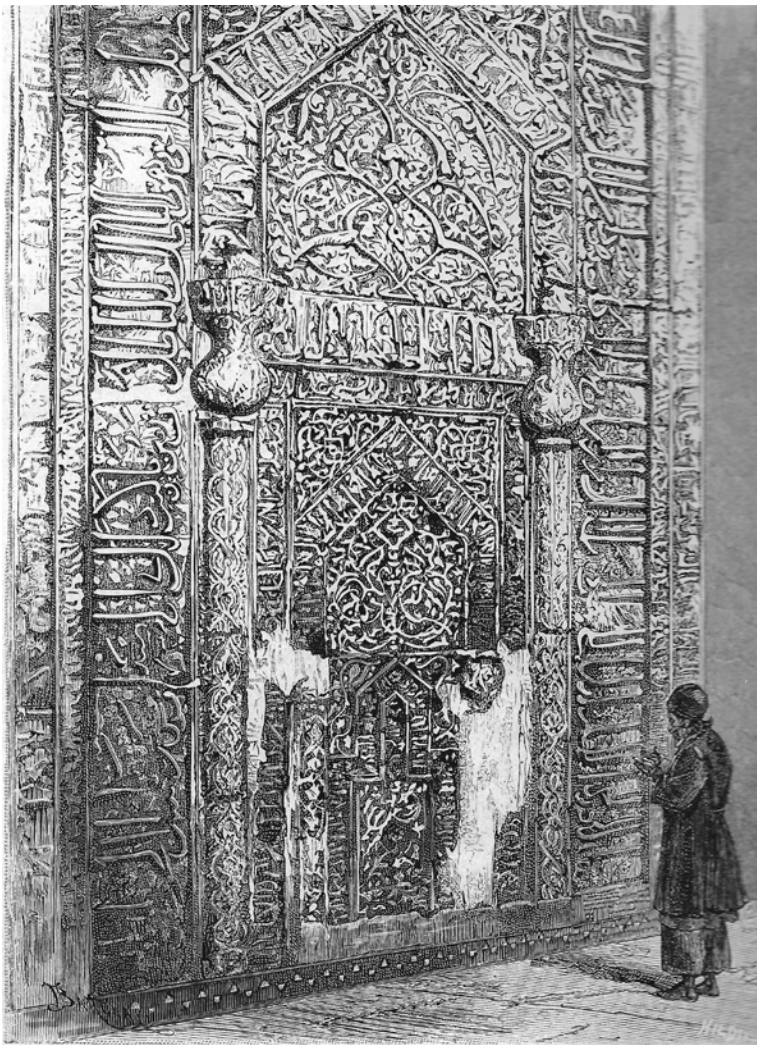


FIGURE 3.6 Luster mihrab signed by Hasan ibn 'Arabshah and dated 1226, in  
Kashan's Maidan-i Sang Mosque, before its removal  
AFTER J. DIEULAFOY, *LA PERSE, LA CHALDÉE, LA SUSIANE*, 1887



FIGURE 3.7 The dome of Eghvard Church (Armenia), early 14th century, with its row of luster tiles  
PHOTO PATRICK DONABÉDIAN

In other cases, neither the dates nor their original buildings are identified. Moreover, it is certain that tiles were occasionally reused. Thus, the magnificent *mihrab* dated 1226 signed by Hasan ibn ‘Arabshah, now in Berlin, was removed from the Maidan-i Sang Mosque, a building dating mainly from the Timurid/Aq Qoyunlu period, confirming the reuse of an ancient masterpiece (Fig. 3.6).<sup>14</sup> Other examples of reuse, such as the probable relocation of the tiles from Imamzadah Ja‘far in Damghan, are found in Iran. Moreover, the reuse of luster tiles is also observed across the Iranian world. This could be the case with the stars in Pir-i Ravanan shrine near Baku.<sup>15</sup> However, this has

been confirmed in Eghvard Church in Armenia (Fig. 3.7),<sup>16</sup> as well as in other structures such as the Friday Mosque at Qalhat (Oman).

Eight-pointed stars and cross-patterned tiles are by far the most common luster pieces preserved now; they probably number in the thousands. However, besides some peculiar formats, such as those in the Varamin shrine (about 30 cm in diameter), standard stars around 20 cm wide were so broadly produced that it is almost impossible to relocate them. Moreover, the distinction between religious and secular uses for these star tiles is often difficult to ascertain. A first step for their analysis would require a typological study mainly based on sizes or templates, composition, décors, and dates. In addition, special attention would need to focus on the Persian poetical quotations.<sup>17</sup> Moreover,

14 Donald Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran. The Il Khanid Period*, Princeton, PUP, 1955, cat. no. 3, p. 105.

15 See Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 193, no. 67; M.B. Piotrovsky & J. Vrieze, eds., *Earthly beauty, Heavenly art*, cat no. 190, p. 217. Whether the star tiles were originally intended for this building (Tomb of Pir-i Husain) is not clear; obviously made in Kashan, in a rather extended timespan (between 1284 and 1286 according to the dates inscribed on the tiles), their mixed Persian and Arabic inscriptions might also be an argument for their reuse. Conversely, the main linear frieze mentioning Pir Husayn Rawanan and the patron of the décor (‘Umar son of Muhammad al-Shirazi from Qazvin) was undoubtedly made deliberately. See V. Kratchovskaya, “Texte de Construction: Khanakah Pir Husain,” in

*Répertoire chronologique d’épigraphie arabe*, XIII, (1944), pp. 45–46, n°4865. See also Anaïs Leone, *Revêtements au lustre métallique dans l’architecture religieuse et funéraire de l’Iran ilkhanide (1256–1335)*, PhD thesis, Aix-en-Provence, 2021, pp. 169–196.

16 Patrick Donabédian and Yves Porter, “Eghvard, (Arménie, début XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle), La chapelle de l’alliance,” *Hortus artium medievalium: Journal of the International Research Center for Late Antiquity and Middle Ages*, 23–2, (2017), pp. 837–855.

17 On this topic, see Ghouchani, *Persian Poetry on the Tiles of Takht-i Sulayman*, and Masuya, *The Ilkhanid*

physical and chemical analyses of the tiles' materials could determine subgroups and periods of production. However, these tasks exceed the limits of the present contribution, which only proposes some directions for further research.

Some preliminary remarks on the circumstances of Ilkhanid luster tile production are initially essential. Ideally, examples taken from religious buildings should be examined first, followed by secular ones. However, this distinction, mainly based on the inscribed textual contents, is not entirely relevant because tiles might have been reused, as noted, moving from one type of building to another.

## 1 Artists, Workshops, and Means of Production

The artists, workshops, and means of production constitute a large issue to be considered, including the identification of artists and potters and questions such as whether the artists who signed the artifacts indifferently worked on both tiles and vessels. Knowledge about their workshops and location, social organization, and economic networks are other fields for research.

Most of the artists working on luster tiles are only known through their signatures. Starting from these names, several authors have tried to construct the genealogies of the great Kashan luster potters. Oliver Watson traced back several families, among which the best known is undoubtedly Abu Tahir's. A *mina'i* bowl in the Cairo Museum bears the name of Bu Tahir Husain, which could be an abbreviated form of Abu Tahir ibn Abi al-Husain, probably the eponymous ancestor of that family.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, 'Abbas Eqbal proposes the name of Abu al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Hebat-Allah al-Husaini as the

ancestor.<sup>19</sup> The following generation is doubtlessly represented by Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir ibn Abi Husain, who signed a series of works preserved at Qum and Mashhad, among which is a tomb cover for the shrine of Fatima Ma'suma in Qum, datable to circa 1206.<sup>20</sup> His son's name is known in turn due to the *mihrab* in the shrine of Mashhad, signed 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and dated 640/1242.<sup>21</sup> Another monumental *mihrab*, originating from the Imamzadah Yahya in Varamin and dated *Sha'ban* 663/May 1265, is also signed by him. It is now at Shangri-La, owned by the Doris Duke Foundation in Honolulu (Fig. 3.14).<sup>22</sup>

The next generation includes 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Ali, better known as Abu al-Qasim of Kashan, the author of the famous *Treatise on Ceramics*, and his brother Yusuf ibn 'Ali, of whom several signed works are known, dated between 1305 and 1334. Sheila Blair adds two other family members to this brotherhood. The first is Rukn al-Din Muhammad, and an inscription on a tile states that he was "the son of the late Sayyid Zayn al-Din 'Ali al-Qaza'iri," proprietor of a workshop, as shown below. The fourth brother is 'Izz al-Din Mahmud, a Sufi of the Suhrawardi order, living in Natanz.<sup>23</sup> Later members of this family are apparently unknown.

Watson's investigations on other potters' families allowed the identification of the Husaini, Abu Zayd, or Muqri lineages, each having at least two members identified by their signatures.<sup>24</sup> The

*phase of Takht-i Sulaiman*, thesis, New York, NYU, 1997, pp. 677–705.

18 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 178.

19 'A. Eqbal, in Abu al-Qasim, (AQK ed. I. Afshar, 1966), p. 374. His argument is based on an alleged "signed" tile in the Mashhad shrine; however, O. Watson does not mention this or other sources.

20 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 179 and Fig. 103; 290 × 120 cm.

21 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 132, Fig. 109; 190 × 125 cm.

22 Arthur U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, pl. 400; Blair, "Art as Text: The Luster Mihrab in the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art," in A. Korangy and D.J. Sheffield (eds.), *No Tapping around Philology. A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2014, pp. 407–435.

23 Blair, "A Brief Biography," p. 160.

24 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, pp. 178–182.

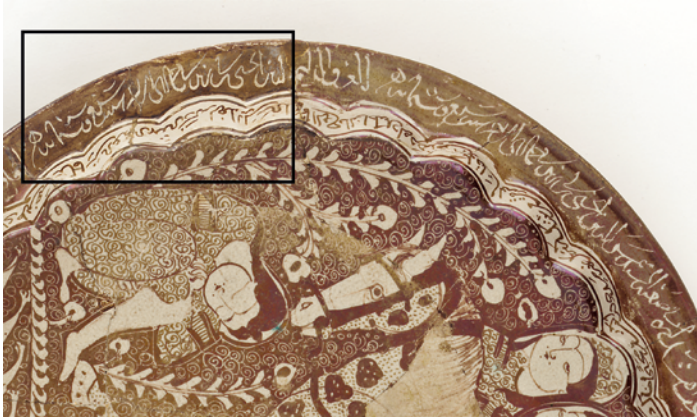


FIGURE 3.8

Detail from the scalloped luster plate with sleeping groom, signed and dated Shamsuddin al-Hasani Abu Zayd, 607/1210; note the fragment inserted (framed in black), repeating date and signature

FREER GALLERY OF ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C., F1941.11

study of these names reveals that an important part of these dynasties claims descent from the Shiite imams (particularly Hasan and Husain), thus also pretending to the title of Sayyid. Moreover, the slight difference in writing between the two names of Imam 'Ali's sons, Hasan and Husain (only the letter *ya* differentiates them) complicates the reading and the attribution to both these family branches.

Furthermore, the difficulties in reading are numerous. The large Freer Gallery scalloped luster plate with a sleeping groom, dated *Jumada* 11 607/November 1210, is emblematic of these problems (Fig. 2.6). It has been read by 'Abdullah Ghouchani and Sheila Blair as "Shams al-Din al-Hasani *Abu Zayd*," while O. Watson reads *fi shahr* (in the month of) rather than *Abu Zayd*.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, *Abu Zayd*'s name had previously been read as *Abu Rufaza*.<sup>26</sup> Beyond these questions of decipherment, other issues remain. Although the famous Freer scalloped plate has been published on numerous occasions, no one appears to have noted that the whole signature and date appear twice, evidencing that a part of the rim did not

originally belong to this plate (see Fig. 3.8). The name of *Abu Zayd* is ubiquitous on late 12th and early 13th-century ceramics, both on *mina'i* and luster vessels and tiles. Sheila Blair has made an inventory of his works, amounting to 31 items, dated between 1186 and 1219–20, but some of these items only display incomplete signatures or are simply attributed to him.<sup>27</sup> Few documentary inscriptions other than signatures and dates appear on tiles, although occasionally, the name of Kashan is mentioned (Fig. 3.9).

Little is known about the functioning of the potters' workshops. A star tile, from a series preserved at Qum, furnishes the longest documental inscription known to this date:

"Written on 10th of Rabi' 11, the year 738/November 6th 1337, at Kashan, in the workshop of Sayyid al-Sadat Sayyid Rukn al-Din Muhammad son of the late Sayyid Zayn al-Din 'Ali al-Qaza'eri, the work of Ustad (...) Jamal Naqqash."<sup>28</sup>

One can observe that the artist Master Jamal "the Painter" (*Naqqash*), who painted this piece, was working for another individual who appears to

25 Blair, "A Brief Biography," p. 158; Ghouchani, *Persian Poetry*, p. 5. Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 90, differentiates *Abu Zaid* from Shams al-Din al-Hasani.

26 See Pope, *Survey*, pl. 722 A and E, for instance. This reading might be explained because of the word *بخطه* (*bikhatih*, "in his own writing") following *Abu Zayd*'s name; the ligatures used to write this locution are somewhat audacious.

27 Blair, "A Brief Biography," pp. 169–172.

28 The series originating from the Imamzadah Ja'far at Qum contains at least 38 stars, 13 being dated between Rabi' 1 and *Jumada* 1 738/October–December 1337. Three stars have the name of the workshop's owner, and two have the name of the painter. See Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 196 n°126.

be a descendant of Imam ‘Ali (with the double mention of Sayyid’s title). It is also stated that this Sayyid was the son of a potter (*qazā’iri*) and the workshop owner. Moreover, as mentioned above and according to Sheila Blair, this person was one of the four sons of ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and therefore Yusuf ibn ‘Ali’s and Abu al-Qasim’s brother.<sup>29</sup> It can also be deduced from this inscription that the Abu Tahir family possessed its own workshop.

Some signed inscriptions appear to confirm the collaboration between several craftsmen. One of the mihrabs in the Mashhad shrine is signed by two artists, Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir ibn Abu al-Husain and Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd al-Naqqash.<sup>30</sup>

The tomb slab in the *Imamzadah* Yahya at Varamin, dated 10th *Muharram* 705/August 2nd, 1305, depicts, in the lower central part, ‘Ali ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Ali al-Husaini al-Kashi while the name of Yusuf ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad appears at the bottom left of the calligraphic bandeau.<sup>31</sup> These examples of collaborations are not exceptional, although they raise a series of questions. One can thus wonder whether these pairs of artists belonged to the same familial workshop or whether one of them was at the service of the other. Likewise, whether their tasks were undifferentiated or, conversely, the craftsmen were highly specialized remains uncertain.

In both these examples the Abu Tahir family is represented, once together with Abu Zayd, the other accompanied by ‘Ali ibn Ahmad al-Husaini. It is known that both claim ‘Alid descentance. Therefore, one could imagine that they were united by family ties of some type, however distant, in the context of an endogamous society.

In the framework of prestigious or specific orders, linked to a precise delivery date but also due to bulk orders, one can suppose that the need



FIGURE 3.9 Composite star-tile panel; the upper left fragment of luster star has the date 738/1337–38 (written in words), followed by the mention *bi-maqām Kāshān* (at Kashan).  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART,  
SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII,  
DDF48.291

was felt to share the work burden according to sub- or co-contracting processes (reminiscent of modern temporary grouping of companies). Production and labor regulations, traditionally overseen by the town’s *muhtasib* (controller), are unknown for this period and location,<sup>32</sup> likewise for labor organizations such as guilds.<sup>33</sup>

If most of these artists appear to be of Kashan old stock, others, such as Hasan ibn ‘Ali Ahmad

29 Blair, “A Brief Biography,” p. 160.

30 See Ghouhani, *Persian Poetry*, pp. 18–21.

31 Hermitage NP 1594. 221 × 87 cm. See Loukonine and Ivanov, *L’art persan*. p. 132, no. 143.

32 In the 14th c. Mamluk area, Ibn Ikhwah’s treatise on *hisba* (*Ma‘ālim al-qurbat fi ahkām al-hisbat*) has a chapter on regulations concerning vessel sellers and potters; see Porter, *Le prince*, pp. 36–37.

33 Guilds are only known for later periods in Iran, see W.M. Floor, “Asnaf,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 7 (1987), pp. 772–778; <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/asnaf-guilds> (accessed 07/12/2022).

Babuyeh al-Banna Vidguli, might have a different family history. This craftsman also claims to descend from Imam Husain; one illustrious ancestor, Ibn Babuyeh (d. 991 AD), was a well-known Shiite theologian. By the end of the 12th century, another family member was a mason (*bannā*) at Qazvin.<sup>34</sup> ‘Ali bin Ahmad, Hasan ibn ‘Ali’s father, might have traveled from Qazvin, attracted by the activity of Kashan’s potters.<sup>35</sup>

The workshop’s organization probably aimed to preserve expertise within a closed circle to protect the potters’ economic power in a context where “industrial property” was not safeguarded by rules or regulations.

Watson provides an extensive list of monuments related to a luster tile decoration.<sup>36</sup> Only one palace is noted, at Takht-i Suleiman. However, it is highly probable that other palaces were decorated with such tiles, perhaps – as Mélikian-Chirvani believes – due to the influence of Iranian Shiite viziers.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, the question of whether these tiles were made on site or imported there remains unsolved.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, most ceramics made by the Masters of Kashan concerns Shiite shrines. A type of communitarian solidarity may have been expressed between the craftsmen and the patrons of such shrines.

Among these, and probably since the first years of the 13th century, Qum and Mashhad are the most relevant. Besides these two important pilgrimage cities, Iran contains numerous mausoleums dedicated to the descendants of ‘Ali, the

*imamzadah*-s.<sup>39</sup> Many of them are devoted to the masculine members of the family.<sup>40</sup> Among dozens of these monuments, approximately 15 display (or displayed) a luster tile decoration, and at least four mosques belong to this list.<sup>41</sup>

Among the mosques decorated with luster tiles is the Maidan Mosque in Kashan, although its mihrab is now in Berlin. Qohrud has two mosques, the first decorated with luster tiles and the second having an underglaze-painted small mihrab signed by Yusuf [ibn] ‘Ali ibn Muhammad [...] al-Qaza’eri al-Qashani.<sup>42</sup> Among very recent discoveries, a mihrab comprising turquoise-glazed and luster elements has been recovered from the Masjed-i Jāmi‘ of Sarab (Azerbaijan).<sup>43</sup>

Besides mosques, a small number of pious foundations, sometimes in the form of complexes, also displayed luster decorations. Such was the case for the tomb of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Samad at Natanz. The *khaneqah* of Pir Rawanan near Baku, dated (according to the tiles) 683–684/1284–6,<sup>44</sup> and the tomb of Abu Sa’id Abu al-Khair (967–1049), the famous Sufi poet at Mianah (Turkmenistan), with a tiled dado made of luster star tiles resembling

34 Blair, “A Brief Biography,” p. 160. See also Sheila Blair, *The Ilkhanid Shrine Complex at Natanz, Iran*, Cambridge, Harvard University, 1986, pp. 14–15.

35 Blair, “A Medieval Persian Builder,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 45, 4, (1986), p. 391.

36 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 183–188 (Table IV).

37 See Mélikian-Chirvani, “Le livre des rois, miroir du destin. II. Takht-i Soleyman et la symbolique du *Shāh-nāme*,” *Studia Iranica* 20,1 (1991), pp. 54–82.

38 That some types of tiles, such as the glazed press-molded ones, were made in situ appears a confirmed fact; see John Hix, Marco Leona and Pieter Meyers, “The Glazed Press-Molded Tiles of Takht-i Sulaiman,” in Komaroff, *The Legacy*, 2002, pp. 233–242.

39 Hamid Algar, “Emamzadeh, i. Function and devotional practice,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* Vol. VIII, Fasc. 4 (1998), pp. 395–397, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/emamzada-i> (accessed 08/12/2022) and Parviz Varjavand, “Emamzadeh, ii. Forms, decorations, and other characteristics,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* Vol. VIII, Fasc. 4 (1998), pp. 397–400, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/emamzada-ii> (accessed 08/12/2022).

40 Besides Fatima Ma’suma’s shrine, several feminine burials exist; see, for instance, the luster tomb slab in the name of Khadija, daughter of Imam Ja’far, dated Rabi‘ II 713/July–August 1313, kept at Shangri-La (Honolulu) DDF 48.348. 194.3 × 82.6 cm; see hereafter.

41 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 183–188.

42 Watson, “The Masjed-i Ali, Quhrud: an architectural and Epigraphic Survey,” *Iran* XIII, 1975, p. 63.

43 Isna News, “Ihyā-i mihrāb 500 sāla dar muza-i Azarbāyjan,” ISNA News, 29 ordibihisht 1394 / <https://www.isna.ir/news/94022917412/> (accessed 08/12/2022).

44 Hermitage IR 233–287. Piotrovsky and Vrieze, *Earthly Beauty, Heavenly Art*, p. 217. See also Leone, *Revêtements au lustre métallique*, pp. 169–196.

those of Varamin, belong to the list.<sup>45</sup> The tomb, probably started after the poet's death, was refurbished on several occasions. Additionally, the shrine of Pir-i Bakran at Linjan, near Isfahan, had luster tile decorations too.<sup>46</sup>

### 1.1 Workshop Location

Minimal information is available concerning the location of Kashan's workshops. It appears that these were concentrated in the heart of the city rather than at its periphery. In his 1938 paper, Mehdi Bahrami mentions the Kalahar area in the city center, where several findings were revealed, including parts of a kiln (*shakhurah*).<sup>47</sup> Bahrami also mentions the neighborhoods of Malekabad and Darb-i Zanjir, both in the city center, adding that the present owners have conducted some excavations there.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, these old excavations did not involve modern scientific registration methods, and at almost the same period, circa 1934, A.U. Pope collected wasters originating from these private excavations.<sup>49</sup> More recently, Abbas Akbari studied and restored another kiln in Kashan.<sup>50</sup>

This central urban settlement might have represented the social importance of Kashan's potters. Moreover, little is known about the educational level of these craftsmen, although it appears that most of them wrote in both Persian and Arabic

languages. This learning could confer a type of intellectual aura on the artists.

Beyond their personal and familial social networks, it is probable that their reputations also spread far beyond their hometown, particularly toward the main Shiite or Sufi shrines. Patrons of such religious centers could thus provide them with economic stability. It would also be tempting to believe that a communitarian solidarity exerted itself not only with orders for the revetment of monuments but also for providing the potters with long-distance goods such as cobalt or tin, establishing a type of "prestige Shiite economic sector."<sup>51</sup>

### 1.2 Costs and Patrons

The making of monumental décors, such as the great mihrabs of Mashhad or Natanz, implies important costs. These expenses do not concern basic materials such as clay, quartzite, soda, or perhaps even cobalt,<sup>52</sup> which were mainly provided locally. However, other materials such as tin, necessary in large quantities for the opaque white glaze, were probably imported.<sup>53</sup> Another crucial

45 Sarah Kuehn, "Tilework on 12th to 14th century funerary monuments in Urgench (Gurganj)," *Arts of Asia*, Vol. 37, n°2, (2007), p. 124 and Fig. 41.

46 Leone, *Revêtements au lustre métallique*, pp. 233–248.

47 Mehdi Bahrami, "Contribution à l'étude de la céramique musulmane de l'Iran," *Athar-i Iran*, III, 2, (1938), pp. 218 and 228–229. This area owes its name to the *Qal'a-i Kalāharān*, an old fort destroyed and reoccupied by habitations; see 'Abd al-Rahim Kalantar Zarrabi, *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1999, p. 116.

48 Bahrami, "Contribution," pp. 225–229, Figs. 141–143.

49 Arthur U. Pope, "New findings in Persian ceramics of the Islamic period," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, v, no. 2, 1937, Figs. 10–17.

50 Abbas Akbari, *Shakooreh*, Kashan, Khāna-i sufāl, 2019.

51 This topic will be expanded in a book in progress, Yves Porter, *Potters of Kashan: Ways of Identity and Prosperity (late 12th–early 14th c.)*.

52 On cobalt, see Yves Porter, "Le cobalt dans le monde iranien (IX<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)," *Taoci* 1, 2000, pp. 5–14.

53 In the mineralogical part of his work, Abu al-Qasim writes (AQK, ed. p. 232) that tin arrives by boat from the East (*dar taraf-i sharq az jānib-i Chin*), from the lands of Bulghar (on the Volga), or from Europe. Tin deposits exist in Iran, such as in Deh Hosein, "a copper-tin deposit, already mined in ancient times, with high contents of gold, hosted in Mesozoic schists and phyllites at the southern contact of the Astaneh intrusive complex" (Mindat.org, Deh Hosein prospect (Deh Hosein mine), Astaneh, Markazi Province, Iran, <https://www.mindat.org/loc-223294.html>; accessed 08/12/2022). However, it is not mentioned as such in the sources of the Ilkhanid period; on ancient tin-deposits, see also D. Berger, J.S. Soles, A.R. Giumlia-Mair, G. Brüggemann, E. Galili, et al. "Isotope systematics and chemical composition of tin ingots from Mochlos (Crete) and other Late Bronze Age sites in the eastern Mediterranean Sea: An ultimate key to tin provenance?," *PLOS ONE* 14,6, (2019): e0218326. <https://>

issue concerns fuel. Wood is particularly rare in the Kashan area, but more abundant up in the hills, in the Karkas Range. In addition, not all types of vegetal combustible are suited for fueling the potter's kiln.<sup>54</sup> Since three firings are necessary for luster, this implies an important quantity of firewood. Additionally, each firing is risky, as cracks might appear, bubbles inside the clay might explode and damage the whole batch, pieces might be blackened, or the final luster low-heat reduction firing can fail.

It is assumed that labor was not highly paid in the concerned period, but making the different components of a large mihrab required time, patience, and craftsmanship. One can observe that some pieces have undergone deformations during firing or have been stained by dripping.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, these pieces have still been placed in their allotted location because remaking them would have been difficult, tedious, or costly. However, these failings are often difficult to observe since most of the exhibited luster masterpieces have undergone repainting and restorations.

Although more luxurious materials existed, the shiny aspect of luster tiles was appealing, and the ordering of such decorations was probably considered a demonstration of wealth, if not piety.

The troubled period between the fall of the Seljuqs, the subsequent rise of the Khwarazmshahs, and then the Mongol invasions was undoubtedly marked by the relative absence of a durable centralized power. This probably means that the patronage of architectural embellishments involved local elites acting as private patrons and not the representatives of a ruling dynasty.

Unfortunately, inscriptions that could illuminate the subject are not numerous. Some names appear occasionally, such as in the shrine of Imam Riza at Mashhad, where 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Adam is named on several tiles and the main mihrab. As observed earlier, he relied on Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir ibn Abu al-Husain and Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd al-Naqqash to achieve the task.<sup>56</sup>

Also in the Astan-i Quds shrine in Mashhad, the name of a donor, 'Ali ibn Muhammad Muqri, together with the name of the potter, Muhammad ibn Abi Ṭahir, and the date 1st Jumādā 612 (28 September 1215) appear in an inscription on glazed bricks. The same Muqri also donated the inscribed tiles over the plinth inside the chamber and the three fine niches in the southern wall, all of which remain *in situ*.<sup>57</sup>

It is curious to observe that when offering a mihrab for the winter prayer room of Isfahan's Masjid-i Jāmi', a stucco masterpiece was provided rather than a luster tile one (Fig. 3.10). This superb work has the names of vizier Sa'd al-Din, his second, 'Adud ibn 'Ali al-Masṭari (family name found again at Natanz), and Haydar ibn Asil, probably the most reputed calligrapher of his time.<sup>58</sup> The reasons for the choice of decorative materials are relatively obscure, but it is known that some artists such as Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad Babuyeh have inscribed their names in both stucco and luster tiles.

The building and décor of the shrine of 'Abd al-Samad in Natanz were ordered by Zayn al-Din Khalifa ibn Husain ibn 'Ali al-Masṭari, as emblazoned in the three foundation inscriptions at this site (Fig. 3.11). This important figure oversaw the administration in the Ilkhanid chancery, and the

doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218326 (accessed 08/12/2022).

54 Abu al-Qasim writes that "at Kashan, they burn soft-wood (*haizum-i narm*), whereas at Dar al-salam (Bagdad) and Tabriz, they use willow-wood (*chub-i bid*) which has been peeled of its bark," AQR, ed., p. 346.

55 A single-piece luster mihrab (or tomb cover) in the Lisbon Gulbenkian collection (Inv. No. 1567) shows a bending of several centimeters. [https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/works\\_museu/nicho-de-oracao/](https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/works_museu/nicho-de-oracao/) (accessed 08/12/2022).

56 See Ghouchani, *Persian Poetry*, 1992, pp. 18–21.

57 'A.-Ḥ. Mawlawī, M.T. Moṣṭafawī, and E. Šakūr-zāda, "Āstān-i Qods-i Rażawī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 8, (1987), pp. 826–837 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/astan-i-qods-i-razawi> (accessed 08/12/2022).

58 Blair, *The Ilkhanid Shrine*, pp. 8 and 14.

luster tiles that once adorned the tomb chamber were probably also part of Maṣṭari's order.<sup>59</sup>

Another less illustrious example is a mihrab-shaped panel in the Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon.<sup>60</sup> This comprises three plaques; the outer border features the Quran 76: 1–5; the inner border shows the name of the person who ordered it on the right side, Shams al-Din Husain. On the left is the date: in the months of the year 710/1310–11. This panel could be a tomb cover, although the question remains open since there is no name of a deceased.

A similar tomb cover, in the name of Khadija daughter of Imam Ja'far ibn Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, dated Rabi' II 713/July–August 1313, is kept at the Doris Duke Foundation (Fig. 3.12).<sup>61</sup> This panel, slightly smaller than the Hermitage's one (see below), is formed of three great plaques with molded decoration enhanced with luster together with cobalt and turquoise blue. It is bordered by two epigraphic bands framing a trilobed arch, with the field of the latter also inscribed.

The exterior band displays a circumstantial inscription: "This is the tomb of the infallible Khadija our lady, daughter of Imam Ja'far, the son of the great Imam Muhammad al-Baqir." The outer inscription ends with the name of the patron, Mahmud ibn *Suhir* (?) Mir Khalaj, about whom nothing is known.<sup>62</sup>

The middle band is inscribed with a quotation from the Quran (77: 1–4), continuing in the central zone, and the last line in the middle tile says, *fi Rabi' al-akhir li sana thalath 'ashar*



FIGURE 3.10 Stucco mihrab in the winter prayer room of Isfahan's Masjid-i Jāmi', dated 1310  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013

*wa saba'miya* ... (in the month of Rabi' II of the year 713/July–August 1313) but does not include a signature, contrary to the statement given by Watson.<sup>63</sup> However, it is noteworthy that an important part of the lower tile has been repainted and further inquiry is thus necessary.

Although this tomb cover has been mentioned in several publications, its original abode appears undocumented. This could be an imamzadah known as Khadija Khatun, located 35 km southwest of Qum. The monument is briefly described by Golombek and Wilber, who date it, according to a stucco inscription, as 770/1368–69.<sup>64</sup> The building

59 Blair, *The Ilkhanid Shrine*, pp. 6–9. Most of the luster tiles have now disappeared. See also Anaïs Leone, "New Data on Luster Tiles of 'Abd al-Samad's Shrine in Natanz," *Muqarnas* 38 (2021), pp. 331–356.

60 Fundação Gulbenkian, Inv. 1562; [E. Kühnel], *Arte do Oriente Islâmico. Coleção da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*, Lisbon, 1963, n°27.

61 Doris Duke Foundation, DDF48.348; dimensions: 194.3 × 82.6 cm.

62 *Khalaj* is a Turkish name occurring in the Qum region; to the north of the Khadija Khatun village (see hereafter) is a hamlet known as Khalajabad. This toponym could indicate that the patron of the tomb cover was a person living in this area.

63 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 195, n°114.

64 Golombek & Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture*, 1, no. 196, p. 400. See also, Hussain Tabataba'i, *Turbat-i pākān, āsār va banāhā-i qadīm-i maḥdūdah-i kunūn-i Dār al-Mu'minīn-i Qum*, Qum, Chāpkhānah-i Mihr, 1976, vol. 2, pp. 202–6, figs. 252–263. For a recent survey, see Mehdi Pirhayati, 'Abdulla Nasrelahi and Abuzar Hadi, "Maruri bar khususiyāt-i mi'māri va ta'zināt-i banāhā-i

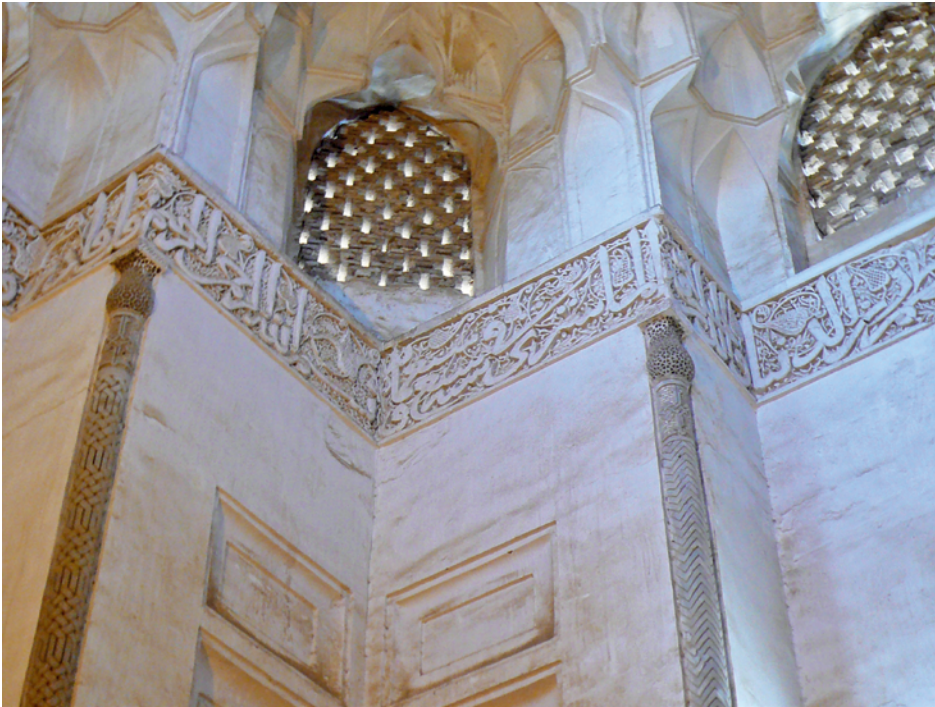


FIGURE 3.11 Calligraphic frieze in stucco, signed by Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmad Babuyeh and dated 1307-8. Natanz, shrine of 'Abd al-Samad  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013



FIGURE 3.12  
Tomb cover of Khadija Khatun, dated 713/1313.  
Dim. 194.3 × 82.6 cm  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART,  
SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII,  
DDF48.348

has the shape of a tomb tower with an octagonal plan on the outside covered by a 16-sided pyramidal dome, while the interior has a cruciform plan, with doors on the north and south sides and alcoves on the east and west. Besides the luster tomb cover, the chamber may have also had a tiled dado (*izāra*), although no trace of it survive.<sup>65</sup>

There are several stucco inscriptions, either in Kufic or in *thuluth* in the upper sections of the room. One clearly mentions the place as the tomb of Khadija bint Ja'far, giving the date as Rabi' II 770/November 1368, and adding the name of Ghiyath al-Din ibn Amir Muhammad, son of 'Ali Safi as the patron. Another epigraphic frieze mentions the names of the craftsmen 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Shuja', Darvish 'Ali Tahir, and Darvish Ibrahim ibn Hasan Halaj (or Khalaj).<sup>66</sup>

These dated stucco decorations could be part of a refurbishment of the building, that already existed in the early 14th century, but its early phase is now only documented by the luster tomb cover at Shangri-La.

In contrast with the magnificent décors of Mashad, Varamin, and Natanz, other buildings used luster decoration with much more paucity, as in the mosque of 'Ali at Qohrud. The dados are decorated with six-pointed stars (now amounting to 250 pieces, diameter 19 cm) alternating with turquoise hexagonal tiles. The inscriptions on the stars, containing both Quranic and Persian poetic quotations, show two dates: Rabi' I 700/November 1300 and Rabi' II 707/October 1307.<sup>67</sup> The 7-year gap is puzzling, considering the relatively small order. Furthermore, the bulk represented by this type of somewhat small tile was probably insufficient to justify a batch, indicating that this order was not

considered a priority. Another explanation would assume that the tiles, produced on a standard, mass scale, were bought on the market rather than especially commissioned order.

The Masjed-i Qal'a of Qohrud was built by order of Muhammad ibn Fazl-Allah ibn 'Ali al-Qohrudi, 1316–27.<sup>68</sup> The small, underglaze-painted mihrab in its prayer room could provide other hints concerning the patronage. It is signed by Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad of the Abu Tahir dynasty. It is the only signed work attributable to this renowned family that is not made with luster. The patron of this plaque (perhaps the same Muhammad Qohrudi) may have considered a luster one too expensive. Moreover, the signature inscription ends with *al-qaza'iri al-qashani* (the potter from Kashan),<sup>69</sup> this locution is interesting, as it is found in a series of stars from Qum. This could designate Yusuf's brother, Zayn al-Din, already mentioned as the workshop's owner.

Intriguingly, the back of a luster half-star previously in my collection has, painted with the opaque brownish slip which is usually found on the backs, the name of Yusuf inscribed (Fig. 3.13. a–b), and the script strangely recalls that of the Qohrud mihrab. This half-star could thus be the training work of young Yusuf.<sup>70</sup>

•••

While difficult to reconstruct in its totality, the who's who in the chain of production of luster tile décors, from collecting materials to distributing the final products, has yielded some results. The names of the potters are undoubtedly the best represented.

ārāmgāhi-i qum dar dawra-i ilkhāni," 1392/2013, <https://rasekhoon.net/article/show/757489/> (accessed 13/12/2022).

65 Pirhayati, Nasrelahi and Hadi, "Maruri," p. 12.

66 Golombek & Wilber, *The Timurid Architecture*, 1, no. 196, p. 400. See also, Pirhayati, Nasrelahi and Hadi, "Maruri," pp. 14–16.

67 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, pp. 136, 187 and pl. 115; Watson, "The Masjid-i 'Ali"; and Anaïs Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 152–165.

68 Watson, "The Masjid-i 'Ali," pp. 62–63.

69 Oliver Watson, *Persian Lustre Tiles of the 13th and 14th Century*, thesis, London, SOAS, 1977, p. 217. Watson, "The Masjid-i 'Ali," p. 63.

70 Pierre Bergé & Associés, *Vente Archéologie, Arts d'Orient, Extrême-Orient*, Paris, Drouot, 27 avril 2007, no. 209.



FIGURE 3.13.A–B Luster half-star with the name of Yusuf written on its back. Ex-author's collection  
PHOTO Y. PORTER

Although some patrons appear on inscriptions, almost nothing is known concerning how the tiled décors were ordered. In the case of Natanz, Anaïs Leone recently noticed that Yusuf of the Abu Tahir family signed the mihrab of 'Abd al-Samad's funerary room.<sup>71</sup> His brother 'Izz al-Din resided at the shrine during the same period, and one might wonder whether his presence at this place influenced the choice of luster decoration.

The choice of materials was probably subordinated to various factors, such as the costs of craftsmanship or tastes of the patrons. The availability of raw materials was also erratic due to international political instability throughout the period. The decisions leading to these choices thus remain to be fully deciphered.

The names of the ruling dynasties remain remarkably absent from the patronage of luster tiles. However, the palatial decoration represents an exception, as developed below.

At this stage, one can find a sociological coherence at the core of an economic sector, marked by its adherence to a mainly Shiite cultural trend and accompanied by communitarian solidarity. The professional appeal of prestigious expertise embodied by the luster ware industry provides a sign of wealth but also various degrees of social visibility.

The production ranges from a piece unique of its type to standard mass items, implying different levels of craft expertise but also varied

interventions in the frame of the market. The diffusion of tiles follows export mechanisms on diverse geographical scales, which might in some cases prove opportunistic, especially at long distances. Moreover, interpreting the tiles' mobility is complex because of their reuses, also inducing the possibility of a secondary market, especially concerning standard tiles such as stars and crosses. The price for fresh tiles was probably higher than that of reused ones, making the latter attractive, although less prestigious. Other cases of reuse of prestigious items, such as the mihrab of Maidan-i Sang Mosque, seem alien to this type of mechanism.

Another completely unexplored trail concerns the people involved in a series of operations, such as the setting of the tiles on the walls, their placing according to specific designs, and the plasterwork and recutting of tiles.

From the viewpoints of its actors, the luster tile sector appears an elite community of craftspeople, although tributary to time-consuming, complex, and sometimes hazardous processes.

## 2 Shrines, Tombs, and Mosques

Among the 22 monuments listed by Watson, 21 are religious monuments, 15 of which are *imamzadahs*, four are mosques, and two are Sufi shrines.<sup>72</sup> Some of these displayed an abundance of luster

71 Leone, "New Data on the Luster Tiles," p. 342.

72 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 183–188.

decoration, such as the tomb of ‘Abd al-Samad in Natanz or the Imamzadah Yahya at Varamin. Instead, other buildings had only some isolated pieces, of which the monumental mihrabs are the most impressive.

At least six monumental mihrabs decorated in luster survive. Three remain in Mashhad (although moved to the Museum); one was in Qum (now at Muze-ye Melli, Tehran), another in Kashan (now in Berlin), and the sixth in Varamin (now Shangri-La, Honolulu).<sup>73</sup> However, other monumental mihrabs existed, which are presently divided between several collections; this was definitively the case with the one from the tomb of ‘Abd al-Samad in Natanz.<sup>74</sup> Other cases existed, known only by separated pieces such as spandrels, columns, or calligraphic borders. A complete inventory of these pieces remains to be achieved.<sup>75</sup>

The processes in the conception and elaboration of luster architectural décors in a religious context are enhanced through some selected examples.<sup>76</sup> The episodes of deconstruction and reuse are first examined during the Ilkhanid period, then in the frame of the acquisition process led by the Europeans. This phase was accompanied by distortions in the valuation and understanding of these objects. These examples also furnish some hints and limits regarding the possible restitution of these décors to their original contexts.

### 2.1 *The Shrine of Imam Reza, Mashhad*

The decoration of the funerary room in the Astan-i Quds Shrine has acknowledged several phases of refurbishing. The luster tile dados are partly preserved, although their dating, after 557/1162, is disputable. The mausoleum was repaired by

Sharaf-al-din Abu Tahir ibn Sa‘d ibn Ali Qumi, perhaps for the account of the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar (r. 1118–1157).<sup>77</sup> By the end of the Seljuq period, Zumurrud Malik, a daughter of Sanjar’s nephew (sister’s son), caused the dados of the Ḥaram to be adorned with octagonal and hexagonal star-shaped luster tiles. Inscriptions on remains of the tiles show that this work was conducted after 557/1162.<sup>78</sup> One tile bears the name of *Turkân Zumurrud Malika* (sic) *bint-i sultân-i shahid Maḥmud*. These tiles were removed at later times. In subsequent restorations, they were refixed to the plinth of the Ḥaram in random order, the sequence of the inscriptions being ignored. The inscriptions contain useful information and have been transcribed by Sanī‘-al-dawla.<sup>79</sup>

Several calligraphic friezes in luster date from the early 13th century, with some of the inscriptions stating the donor (Ali ibn Muhammad Muqri), the potter (Muhammadibn Abi Tahir), and the date (1 Jumadā 612/28 September 1215) having already been mentioned.

Mawlawi, Moṣṭafawi, and Shakurzada further add:

“In another part of the surround of the same doorway of the Ḥaram, there is an inscription comprising two verses by the Arabic poet Abū Nuwās in praise of the imam and the name of ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz ibn Ādam ibn Abī Naṣr Qumī, who apparently was responsible for the building of the doorway. His name reappears on the *mehṛāb* on the southwest side of the Ḥaram in an inscription which also includes the name of the luster potter, Abū Zayd ibn Abī Muhammad Kāšānī, and bears the date Rabī‘ 11, 612/August, 1215. The same date reappears in yet another inscription on the Ṣoffa-ye Šāh

73 Blair, “Art as Text,” pp. 409–412.

74 On the reconstructed mihrab in Natanz, see Leone, “New Data on the Luster Tiles,” pp. 336–348.

75 Watson, *Persian Lustre Tiles*, p. 188 gives some directions on the subject, but recent discoveries can now be added to his list (see note 178).

76 On this subject, see also Leone, *Revêtements au lustre métallique*.

77 Mawlawī, Moṣṭafawī, and Šakürzāda, “Āstān-i Qods-i Rażavī.”

78 Taqī Binešh, “Sangāb-i Khwārazmshāhī,” *Nāma-i Āstān-i Qods-i Rażavī* 38, n.s. 1 (1347/1968), pp. 81 and 99.

79 Mawlawī, Moṣṭafawī, and Šakürzāda, “Āstān-i Qods-i Rażavī.”

Ṭahmāsbī, which also consists of a Hadith of the Prophet as well as two Persian verses.”<sup>80</sup>

Three luster mihrabs embellished the room and are now in the Shrine’s Central Museum.<sup>81</sup>

One is signed by Abu Zaid and Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and dated 612/1215 (240 × 184 cm). It is probably the finest example in the whole series of monumental mihrabs, both for the quality of molding and the accuracy of the painted background. It is composed as follows:

- Large border in *Kufic* script over scroll ground
- Large calligraphic band in blue *thuluth* over scrolls with upper band of intertwining palmettes. The signature of Muhammad appears in a cartouche, written in reserve over a luster ground, near the end of the inscription.
- Triangular arch with narrow *Kufic* band; tympanum and spandrels with large, molded palm scrolls; the columns are of greenish marble.
- Central part bordered by three sides medium *Kufic* band, narrow upper band in plaited *Kufic*, three sides framed in *naskhi*, stepped muqarnas niche resting on tiny baluster columns, flat tympanum over two horizontal bands (one with Abu Zaid signature on white ground), three-sided frame scribed in reserve, carinated arch with miniature columns and hanging lamp. The date appears in the lower central plaque, written in blue over luster ground.

The second is smaller but probably contemporary with the first, although it shows many restorations and losses.<sup>82</sup>

The third, signed by Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir, is dated 640/1242 and shows the following:

- Large calligraphic band in *thuluth* with palmette upper border (about 15 tiles)
- Triangular arch with tympanum and spandrels, baluster columns

- Central part in three tiles: narrow calligraphic band, trilobed arch, hanging lamp; the lower plaque has the signature of Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and is dated 640/1242.

As noted earlier, Kashan potters worked at the embellishment of the Mashhad Shrine for several generations. Moreover, making three mihrabs for a single place is probably unique.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.2 *The mihrab from Maidan-i Sang Mosque, Kashan, 1226*

The ‘Imadi Mosque (*Masjid-i ‘imadi* or *Mir ‘Imad* or *Masjed-i Maidan-i Sang*) was built on the south side of the present Fayz Square, otherwise known as *Maidan-i Sang* (Stone-paved square), next to the entry to the coppersmiths’ bazaar (*Bāzār-i misgarhā*). The original mosque was built in 613/1218 during the Seljuq/Khwarazm-shah interregnum and was destroyed by the Mongols in 1224. The present monument is due to Khwaja ‘Imad-al-Din Mahmud, vizier of Jahanshah Qara Qoyunlu (r. 1438–67). It used to display an extraordinary luster tiled mihrab, still in situ by the early 20th century.<sup>84</sup> This masterpiece, now housed at Berlin’s Museum für Islamische Kunst, was made only 2 years after Kashan was “ruined” by the Mongols.<sup>85</sup> This mihrab displays the date of 623/1226 and the signature of Hasan ibn ‘Arabshah al-Naqqash.<sup>86</sup> It is probably the only element preserved from an ancient building, sufficiently remarkable to be reused in the newly built mosque. A minbar decorated with a cut-out tile-mosaic is part of the new refurbishing of the building. It has an inscription in *thuluth* script dating from the

83 See also Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 185.

84 Jane Dieulafoy (1887) saw the mihrab in situ, while when Sarre visited the mosque (before 1910), it was missing. It first entered the J.R. Preece Collection and was later acquired by the Staatliche Museen in Berlin. See Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran. The Il Khanid Period*, p. 105 and Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 185.

85 Between 617/1220–21 and 621/1224; only four dated pieces are currently registered; see Porter and Castinel, *Le prince*, p. 273, nos. 104–107.

86 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 131 and 181.

80 Mawlawī, Moṣṭafawī, and Šakūrzāda, “Āstān-i Qods-i Rażavī.”

81 Blair, “Art as Text,” pp. 409–411.

82 Blair, “Art as Text,” pp. 409–410. Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 336–337.

reign of Timurid Abu Sa'īd (r. 1459–69), mentioning Haydar 'Alī Kashitarash (the tile-cutter).<sup>87</sup> Jane Dieulafoy illustrated (out of scale) this mihrab in her travelogue (Fig. 3.6).<sup>88</sup>

The tiles forming the mihrab were stolen during a considerable time span:

“A large number of tiles comprising this mihrab were carried off surreptitiously and were secured later on, tile by tile, by Mr Preece until at length the guardian of the Masjed was induced to dispose of the remaining, and most important, portion of the panel. The negotiation to this end extended over nearly twenty years.”<sup>89</sup>

The photographs taken before restoration indicate that several tiles are missing.<sup>90</sup> A neat restoration occurred before the mihrab was displayed at Burlington House in 1931. It was subsequently bought by the Berlin Museum für Islamische Kunst.<sup>91</sup>

The mihrab has two calligraphic frames. The first is narrow, in Kufic writing, whereas the second is large, in *thuluth*, with an upper border of intertwining palmettes, made of 21 tiles. The inscription starts with Quran 17: 78–81, and ends with the date and signature. A pair of columns with

baluster capitals sustains a triangular arch with a Kufic inscription, over which are scroll-patterned spandrels. A similar pattern is used for the tympanum. A horizontal calligraphic band in Kufic is placed under the tympanum. The central part of the mihrab is framed by a narrow calligraphic band in *naskhi* script; this contains two niches (one inside the other), again with a triangular arch with Kufic writing and spandrels cum tympanum with foliated scrolls.

### 2.3 *The Imamzadah Yahya at Varamin, (1262–1305)*

This imamzadah is somewhat emblematic of the questions raised by the construction and decoration of this type of building, together with its further transformations or additions. Its (re)construction probably started around 1262, but its decoration lasted at least until 1307. The dedicatee, Yahya ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Qasim ibn Hasan ibn Zayd ibn Imam Hasan, is a great-grandson of Imam Hasan. The dating of the monument is based on the inscriptions found on tiles (mihrab, dado, and slab) and a stucco inscription dated 707/1307.<sup>92</sup>

Jane Dieulafoy visited the structure in 1881 and “wrote of the luster faïence decoration of the mihrab, dado area, and tomb and stated that parts of it had already been removed and sold.”<sup>93</sup>

The luster tile decoration of this building was probably astonishing. The mihrab, signed by 'Alī ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and dated 1264, is now preserved in Honolulu (Fig. 3.14). The tomb slab is signed twice, by Yusuf ibn 'Alī (of the Abu Tahir) and by 'Alī ibn Ahmad ibn 'Alī al-Husaini al-Kashi, and dated 1305. It is now housed at Saint Petersburg Hermitage. The stars and crosses that once formed the dado, among which some 60 are dated between Dhu'l-hijja 660 and

87 Zarrabi, *Tārīkh-i Kāshān*, pp. 95–96 and 424–25.

88 Jane Dieulafoy, *La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane*, Paris, Hachette, 1887, p. 206.

89 Quoted by Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 183.

90 See Lane, *Early Islamic Pottery*, pl. 66. For an accurate reconstruction of the mihrab, see A. Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 131–151.

91 See Markus Ritter, “Image of Architecture with God's Word: The Luster Tile Panel of a Prayer Niche from Kashan, Bild einer Architektur mit Gottes Wort,” in Miriam Kühn & Martina Müller-Wiener (eds.), *Lüsterkeramik: Schillerndes Geheimnis. Lustre Ceramic: Shimmering Mystery*, Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Petersberg/Michael Imhof Verlag, 2022, pp. 80–99. See also J. Kröger and Désirée Heiden, (eds.), *Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen*, Berlin, Parthas, 2004, p. 45 for a photograph of Kurt Erdmann and Richard Ettinghausen, dated “summer 1932,” in front of the mihrab.

92 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, pp. 109–111. For the luster decoration see A. Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 197–222.

93 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, Cat. N. 11, p. 109.

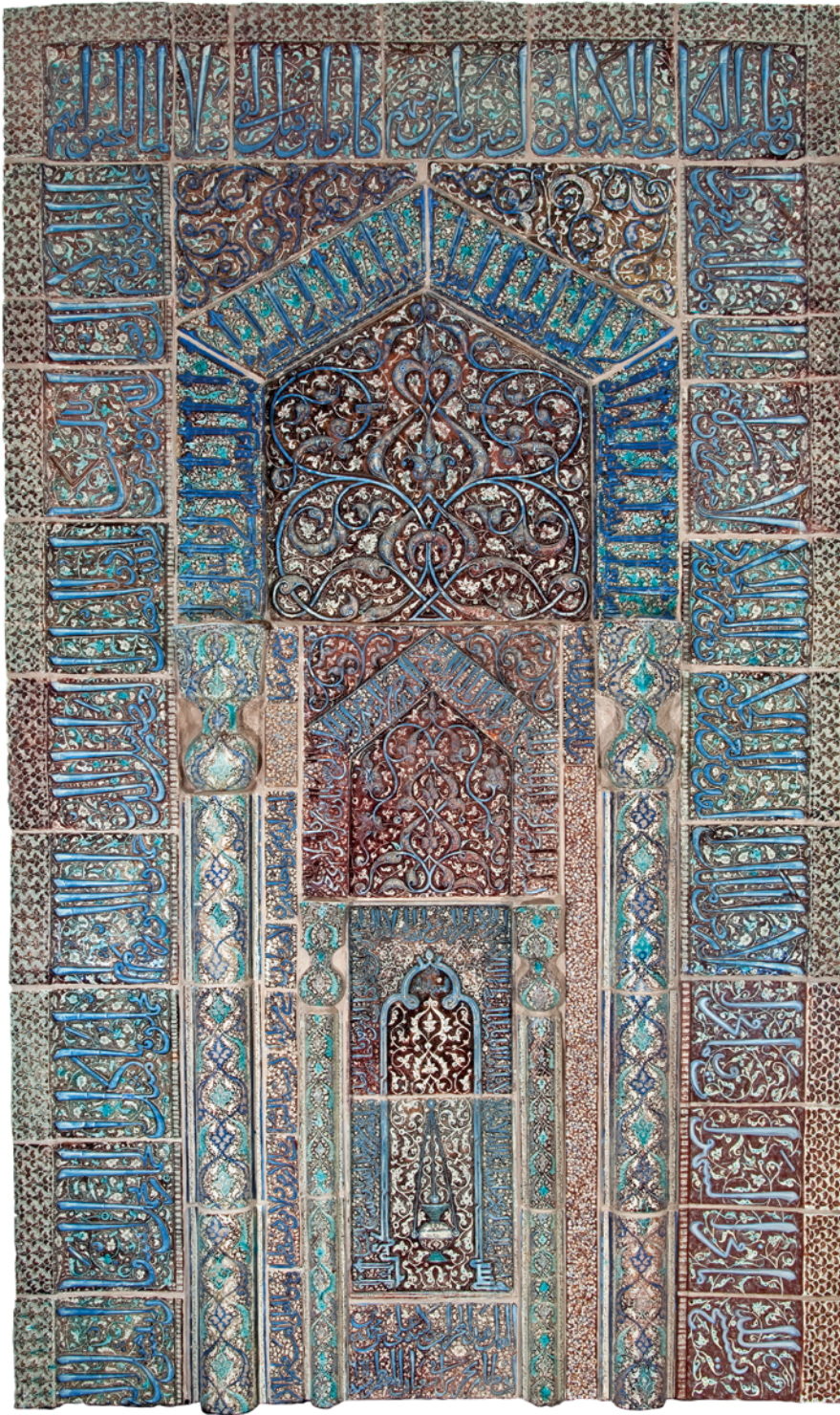


FIGURE 3.14 Mihrab of Imamzadah Yahya (Varamin), signed by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and dated 1264. Dim. 384.5 × 228.6 cm  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA MUSEUM,  
HONOLULU, HAWAII, DDF 48.327

Rabīʿ II 661/October 1262–March 1263, are scattered between numerous different collections.

While no signatures appear on the dado tiles, three signatures feature elsewhere, representing a 43-year time span, together with the collaboration of two generations of the Abu Tahir dynasty. The chronology of these dates is puzzling, as based on their order, the dado would have been placed first, followed by the mihrab, and ending with the tomb slab. Besides, the stucco frieze surmounting the tiled dado is curiously dated 707/1307, more than forty years later than the dated stars.<sup>94</sup>

Although no patron name appears on the inscriptions, it seems odd that the craftsmen worked on their own initiative, even if the possibility of contributing to the embellishment of a distant relative's resting place remains credible.<sup>95</sup>

### 2.3.1 Dado: Stars and Crosses

According to Wilber's description and plan, the mausoleum is a square brick structure with sides of approximately 12 m. The interior has an octagonal plan, with deep corner niches on four sides, covered with *muqarnas* squinches. The dado around the room, about 1.23 m in height (stucco frieze), has been stripped bare of its original decoration. The room's perimeter, with its recesses, is approximately 38 m long. The space allowed for the mihrab measures between 2.59 and 2.63 m wide (whereas the mihrab at the DDF is 2.28 m, as stated by Wilber). Since the dado was approximately 35 m long and the stars approximately 0.31 m in diameter, there could be a row of approximately 114 stars around the room. The surface covered by the dado could have been about 43 m<sup>2</sup> (35 × 1.23 m); the surface of a star being approximately 0.10 m<sup>2</sup>, there should be approximately 430 stars scattered around the world's collection. However, the common figure based on diverse publications is approximately 150 stars (which

would merely cover around 15 m<sup>2</sup>).<sup>96</sup> Conversely, a publication on the Hermitage collections states that this museum possesses more than 1,000 stars and fragments originating from the same building;<sup>97</sup> this figure might be overrated (unless the count is made not only on complete pieces but also on halves and fragments).

To explain the discrepancy between these figures, one can also establish that some of the tiles originated from other monuments. Sarah Kuehn has published a photo showing some tiles from the Mausoleum of Abu Sa'īd at Miana (Turkmenistan), which appear similar both in module and decoration. Similar items can also be noticed in the art market or public collections.<sup>98</sup>

Comparing several Varamin tiles with similar texts (such as the *bismillah*) shows some graphological differences (although occasionally altered by restorations). It is thus probable that several copyists were employed in writing the Quranic texts on these series of stars and crosses.

Another interesting feature about the stars from Varamin is that some display drawings on their backs. Thus, Sèvres MNC 7826-1 is a cross with a line drawing of a bear cub painted on its back (Fig. 3.15). This plantigrade is reminiscent of the pair of bear cubs in a star from Damghan, now in the Louvre. Thus, if no figurative motifs are recorded in the Varamin stars, the workshop where these stars were crafted could evidently provide figurative tiles.

As stated before, many of these stars are found in the Hermitage, although other items are also

94 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, p. 110.

95 Indeed, both the dedicatee of the imamzadah and these Kashan potters have a common ancestor.

96 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, no. 27, p. 191: "Over 150 examples are recorded in some twenty-four collections." See also Mehdi Bahrami, *Recherches sur les carreaux de revêtement lustré dans la céramique persane du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, Les Presses Modernes, 1937, pp. 87–91; London, *The Arts of Islam*, Hayward Gallery, London, Arts Council, 1976, no. 379.

97 Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, p. 128; see also M.B. Piotrovsky & J. Vrieze, eds., *Earthly beauty, heavenly art*, cat nos. 186 & 187.

98 Star, dated 667H./1269, Christie's, London 11 April 2000, no. 215. A star, dated 670H./1271, is in Kuala Lumpur's Museum (thanks to B. O'Kane for pointing it out to me).



FIGURE 3.15 Back of luster cross-shaped tile with drawing  
SÈVRES, MUSÉE NATIONAL DE  
LA CÉRAMIQUE, MNC 7826-1.  
PHOTO YP

kept, among others, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum, Sèvres Museum, and the Doris Duke Foundation's Shangri-La.<sup>99</sup> The diameters are between 30.5 and 31 cm. All are decorated in plain luster, with non-figurative patterns (some have a tiny pond with a leaf replacing the expected fish), with an epigraphic band on a white ground, and all the fragments have quotations from the Quran.

Three half-stars and two crosses are in the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF 48.361), one of which is dated 661/1262. They are now part of the décor of the Mihrab Room, where the masterpiece signed by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir is also on display.

### 2.3.2 Mihrab and Tomb Cover

The large *mihrab* from Varamin is dated *Sha'ban* 663/May 1265 (Fig. 3.14). In a better state than the Berlin one, it has a large calligraphic band written in thuluth with an upper border made of dense intertwining palmettes (the four first tiles

are missing). The central part contains a triangular arch with Kufic inscription, together with spandrels and tympanum with scroll motifs. It is supported by a pair of baluster capitals resting on columns. A narrow calligraphic band (some elements missing) frames the inner part, comprising a second triangular arch (with *naskhi* inscription) with tympanum and spandrels, under which is a two-tile composition showing a niche with a hanging lamp. This is bordered on three sides by a narrow calligraphic band in both Kufic and thuluth; under this is a plaque written in thuluth, reading, "This mihrab was made and calligraphed by 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir in the month of *sha'ban* of the year 663 (May 1265)."

As noted, this mihrab is narrower than the space allowed for it in the monument: the mihrab is 2.28 m wide when the space measures 2.60 m. One could wonder whether the 30 cm were left deliberately or if it is an error in the transmission of measures. It is also possible that this piece may have been originally intended for another place; at any rate, the empty space was filled with half-stars.<sup>100</sup>

The tomb cover of Imamzadah Yahya is now at the Hermitage (Inv. N.P.1594), and measures 221 × 87 cm.<sup>101</sup> It comprises four molded tiles forming a mihrab motif with a triangular arch. The outer calligraphic band, in *naskhi*, contains the Quran 2: 255 and finishes with the date 10th Muharram 705 (2nd August 1305) and the signature of Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad. The central inscription states, "This is the tomb of the learned Imam Yahya, the blessings of God upon him." The inscription continues with the Quran 41: 30–32 and ends with the signature of 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Husayni al-Kashi.<sup>102</sup>

99 Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 416–425, has listed to this day 268 items in collections all around the world.

100 As observed by Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 218–19, the space above the mihrab was completed by half-stars and crosses, the imprint of which remains visible.

101 Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, no. 143, p. 132.

102 See also Leone, *Revêtements au lustre*, pp. 220–221.

#### 2.4 *Imamzadah Ja'far, Damghan, circa 665–6/1266–7*

Ja'far was a distant descendant of the 4th Imam, 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin. According to D Wilber, "The tomb shrine complex includes a structure of the earlier Seljuq period and an annex of the 15th century."<sup>103</sup> Sani' al-Dawla wrote that in 1883, these tiles were still in situ, unexpectedly covering the walls of an outer iwan. He added (followed by Sarre and Wilber) that the tiles originated from a ruined palace next to Damghan.<sup>104</sup> This would be an example of reuse since the monument was built much later. Only a few years after 1883, these tiles had been removed, to reappear later in the Paris art market.

A large panel of at least 21 stars and crosses is displayed at the Louvre Museum;<sup>105</sup> their diameter is 20.1 cm, and some are dated 665–6/1266–7. All crosses are anepigraphic and mostly in plain luster. The stars display figures surrounded by a white calligraphic band in *naskhi* script, most of which comprise Persian verses. Six stars use luster together with touches of cobalt and turquoise, and two stars are in plain luster. Both plain luster stars are dated 665/1266–67. One features the previously mentioned pair of bear cubs. Its iconography could be related to the Gemini, and the verses on its rim start with a distich from the *Shāh-nāma*.<sup>106</sup> The second star features the *Shir-u khurshid* (Lion and Sun) and is dated from the month of Shawwal.

<sup>103</sup> Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, p. 111.

<sup>104</sup> Sani' al-Dawla (I'timad us-Saltana), *Maṭla' al-shams*, Tehran 1884, (reprint Tehran, 1983), vol. II, pp. 272–274. The palace of Cheshme 'Ali, about 30 km north of Damghan, dates to Fath Ali Shah; however, the place might have been used by earlier buildings. This location could thus be a plausible candidate, although archaeological surveys would be required for confirmation.

<sup>105</sup> There are thirteen stars and eight crosses, with several inventory numbers and diverse origins; see Paris, *Reflets d'or*, p. 62. Musée du Louvre, OA 6310. OA 3879–3881. OA 6319 (five stars and one cross). To these, some items belonging to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (MAO 550. AD 5151, AD 5153, dépôts, musée de Arts Décoratifs, Paris) can be added.

<sup>106</sup> *Kunun khwurd bāyad may-i khush gavār*. This verse also appears on the larger square tiles; see below, section 3.

Mélikian-Chirvani relates both these tiles with "astrological" motifs to the Ilkhanid palatial decoration of Takht-i Sulaiman.<sup>107</sup> Some other items, several of which are dated from the same year, or the next, probably belonged to the same ensemble and are found in other collections such as the British Museum, Berlin's Museum, and Doris Duke Foundation.<sup>108</sup>

This case of reuse at Damghan might be paralleled with other tile panels. The one from the shrine of Shaikh Pir Husayn Rawanan, near Baku, Azerbaidjan, has stars dated between 683/1284 and 684/1286. These tiles alternate luster stars and plain turquoise crosses, and all the texts but two are Quranic.<sup>109</sup> It is unknown whether these tiles were intended for this monument or must be considered as reused; another option could be to relate them to the secondhand market mentioned earlier. Conversely, the already mentioned dated frieze from this shrine clearly indicates a special order.

#### 2.5 *A Quranic Frieze Signed by Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir (DDF 48.347)*

A Quranic frieze currently comprising 10 tiles with quotations from the Quran is now preserved at Doris Duke's Shangri-La (Fig. 3.16). It is signed by Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir, the fourth generation of potters born into this prestigious family of Kashan. Watson lists six major works signed by this artist, among which is the

<sup>107</sup> Mélikian-Chirvani, "Le livre des rois, miroir du destin," pp. 80–81. However, as discussed below, other palatial locations could be proposed.

<sup>108</sup> See for instance British Museum G.232.1–2; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_G-232-1-2](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_G-232-1-2) (accessed 08/12/2022). The Berlin panel, Islamische Kunst, Nr. 1. 3865 is made of stars and crosses of different dates and patterns (one is dated 665 H./1265–1266); some of them could originate from Damghan. For DDF 48.227. 48.229. 48.243, see Annex 4, "Undated stars, 2nd half of 13th c., with Persian epigraphic band on white ground."

<sup>109</sup> Hermitage IR 233–287. Piotrovsky & J. Vrieze, eds., *Earthly Beauty*, no. 190, p. 217.



FIGURE 3.16 Quranic frieze (Quran 2: 255), signed by Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir, dated 1310. Each tile: 39.7 × 41.3 cm  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAI'I, DDF 48.347

previously mentioned tomb cover of Imamzadah Yahya.<sup>110</sup>

No information is available on the building this frieze was originally intended to adorn. The quotation is part of the Quran 2: 255, *Ayat al-Kursi* (Verse of the Throne), although at least 20 words are missing, mainly in the middle of the verse. Moreover, the tiles are currently disordered. The same Quranic quotation appears on the Dar-i Bihisht Mihrab, also signed by Yusuf, where it occupies 19 tiles. Although no corner pieces are currently known, the DDF Quranic frieze may have been intended as a mihrab frame. This frieze is thus emblematic of “orphan” luster décors.

The epigraphic frieze is inscribed on almost square tiles (their length is irregular) measuring 39 cm in height, and above the epigraphy runs a floral band composed, at the center of each tile, a lotus flower (with eight petals) placed between pairs of indented leaves, followed by a flower stem (with six petals) and half a lotus (this motif being completed by the neighboring tiles).

At least 10 known monumental Quranic friezes are made of luster tiles, and are differentiated by their size, the décor of their calligraphic field, and their decorative crowning border. An almost twin frieze, also signed by Yusuf and recently identified by Anaïs Leone, differs only by slight touches of

cobalt on the upper frieze, and framed the mihrab of the funerary chamber at Natanz.<sup>111</sup>

To my knowledge, the frieze in the DDF has no other published element, with a notable exception. A.U. Pope illustrated, on the plates of his gigantic *Survey of Persian Art*, (pl. 725 E), a tile preserved in the Cairo Museum, with the same floral band and 39 cm in height. He attributed the work to Yusuf ibn 'Ali, although this artist's name does not appear on the present tile.<sup>112</sup> However, it is the date inscribed on this tile that requires attention, 710 (1310). It is reasonable to assume that this tile belongs to the same frieze as the one in the DDF. Therefore, this frieze can be dated to 1310. The full reading of the Cairo tile is “... r-k sana 'ashar wa saba'miya.” The first, incomplete, word of this tile may be part of *mubāarak* (or “blessed,” probably referring to the month of Ramadan), indicating that, besides the mentioned gaps in the quotations from the Quran, other tiles existed, which remain to be found. At least two fragments of the

110 Loukonine & Ivanov, *L'art persan*, no. 143, p. 132; Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, p. 179.

111 Anaïs Leone, “New Data on Luster Tiles.”

112 Watson, *Persian Luster Ware*, n°109 p. 195, mentions the tile in the Cairo Museum; he also gives notice of a single tile, in the Kevorkian collection (New York), with the signature of Yusuf ibn 'Ali, with reference to Pope, *Survey*, pl. 725e (the tile in the Cairo Museum), adding that “no further pieces are known” (sic).



FIGURE 3.17  
Upper frieze from luster tile with  
lotus flowers. Former Alexis Renard  
collection, Paris  
WITH KIND PERMISSION OF ALEXIS  
RENARD

border were part of the Alexis Renard collection (Fig. 3.17).<sup>113</sup>

Hundreds of scattered tiles (and fragments) remain to be identified and restituted to their original building. The reconstruction of lost décors is often difficult or impossible. However, some sites, such as the shrine of ‘Abd al-Samad at Natanz, can now be almost completely (albeit virtually) restored.

The case of luster tiles in palace decoration is a much more complicated issue, as developed below. One of the questions concerns whether tiles with Persian verses and figural themes once belonged to secular buildings only, as is often assumed for the stars of the Damghan shrine, for instance. However, this question is now much discussed, and Watson considers the religious/secular partition based on figures and inscriptions as unfounded.<sup>114</sup>

To summarize, if the restitution of some luster décors is possible, the fact that most tiles are now completely out of context complicates the task. However, a series of statements can be made. The prestige of some masterworks included in these shrines reinforces the Shiite attachment of the products and sector, especially through the links

between patrons and craftspeople. Moreover, the reuse of palatial tiles in pious monuments enhances the porosity of motifs between secular and religious contexts and hints at decorative mobility in the frame of constrained programs. The dynastic instabilities might have influenced the building opportunities through the reality of successive demolitions and (re)building.

### 3 Luster Tiles in Ilkhanid Palace Decoration<sup>115</sup>

The palatial architecture of the Ilkhans is remarkably undocumented by archaeological remains. Watson’s list of buildings decorated with luster tiles only includes one palace, Takht-i Suleiman, the summer complex of Abaqa Khan, rebuilt in circa 1275.<sup>116</sup> Hence, most of the tiles, either epigraphic or decorated with figural patterns (dragons, simorgh, narrative scenes), now out of context, are repeatedly attributed to this palace only. The archaeological surveys in this area

113 Former Alexis Renard Gallery, Paris (unpublished). A similar fragment of tile is at Oxford’s Ashmolean Museum, EAX.3160.

114 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 154–155.

115 This section has been the object of a separate, expanded paper; the vicissitudes of life have caused this paper to appear before these collected essays. See Y. Porter, “Talking tiles from Vanished Ilkhanid Palaces (late 13th–early 14th century): Frieze Luster Tiles with Verses from the *Shāh-nāma*,” *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World*, 2/1–2, (2021), pp. 97–149.

116 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 188.

have yielded numerous examples of tiles in various shapes and motifs and decorated with a wide range of techniques (monochrome flat or molded, so-called *lājvardina*, luster). However, only a few incomplete tiles belonging to the series studied here were found in situ.<sup>117</sup>

It is evident that apart from Takht-i Suleiman, the Ilkhans had many other dwelling places, starting with their urban residences at Tabriz or Sultaniya. The study of several series of tiles of similar patterns with verses from the *Shāh-nāma* probably indicates, as noted by Mélikian-Chirvani, that other palaces were also decorated with tiles.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, a section below proposes a survey of the Ilkhanid palaces as a frame for further analyses. This is followed by the study of the alleged Frieze of Takht-i Suleiman (or “First Frieze”). However, it appears that at least two very similar series exist (indicating two different locations/palaces). Finally, the inventory of other series of tiles with similar contents but undocumented provenance is analyzed.

### 3.1 *A Survey of the Ilkhanid Palaces*

Basing her arguments on the seasonal mobility and customs of the Mongols, Tomoko Masuya proposes a classification system for their residences. She names Tabriz, Maragha, Ghazaniya, and Sultaniya as “capitals of the *ulus*” (country), distinguishing them from “regional government centers” such as Baghdad, Isfahan, and Hamadan, and from seasonal camps (Chinese *xingong*).<sup>119</sup> These are divided between summer (*yaylaq*)

and winter (*qishlaq*) camps.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, some urban settlements can comprise large temporary encampments or a combination of permanent and temporary elements.<sup>121</sup>

About Tabriz, Mustaufi Qazvini writes,

“In Mongol times, when this city had become the capital of the kingdom, the population here greatly increased, and they began to build many houses outside the city limits, until at length at each gate there was a suburb as great as the city itself had originally been. These suburbs therefore Ghazan Khan proceeded to surround by a wall, which should encircle also all the gardens and their buildings.”<sup>122</sup>

Several palaces were built in and around Tabriz. Arghun (r. 1284–91) founded Arghuniya, his palatial city, later called Shenb, on a western suburb of Tabriz, and “lofty houses” are mentioned in this location.<sup>123</sup> His son Ghazan (1295–1303) had his own complex (Ghazaniya, where his mausoleum lay) built next to it, and he is also credited for building a “palace or administration building (...) and a garden palace.”<sup>124</sup> Wilber notes, without further details, that fragments of tiles have been found in the ruins of the Ghazaniya.<sup>125</sup>

Apparently, Uljaytu (1303–1316) also used the Shenb palace but was also busy building palaces and residential quarters at Sultaniya (see below). The vizier and historian Rashid al-Din Fazl-Allah (d. 1317) also had his foundation (Rab'-i Rashidi) built in this area. However, as noted by Masuya,

117 Among these are Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst Nos. I. 4/67.35.2 and I. 4/67.35.1. The collections of Berlin's Museum contain dozens of fragments originating from the excavations of the site, illustrating a wide variety of techniques (plain-glazed, molded, luster-painted, *lājvardina* low-fired, etc.).

118 Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāma*. Other series of tiles, such as luster stars, or tiles with animal patterns in luster or *lājvardina* are more difficult to attribute to a single location. All the studied tiles are listed in Annex 3.

119 Masuya, *The Ilkhanid phase*, pp. 177–78.

120 Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p. 76, Fig. 80.

121 Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p. 77.

122 Hamdallah Mustawfi, *The Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulub*, transl. G. Le Strange, Leiden/London, Brill/Luzac, 1919, p. 79.

123 According to Rashid al-Din, quoted by Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” pp. 80–81.

124 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, p. 190.

125 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 188, quoting Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, no. 27.

“its endowment deed does not indicate that the vizier had a residence there.”<sup>126</sup>

### 3.1.1 Sultaniya

The city of Sultaniya, previously known as the Ilkhanid summer camp of Khonkur Öleng,<sup>127</sup> developed inside a walled stronghold quadrangle measuring circa 325 m N–S and 290 m E–W. Uljaytu’s monumental mausoleum occupies part of the southwestern quadrant of the city.<sup>128</sup> Hafiz-i Abru, a historian of the 15th century, reports that Uljaytu built an enormous palace with a huge iwan, although the current state hardly shows such remains.<sup>129</sup> Recent archeological surveys in the area have yielded hundreds of luster tile fragments, although their original exact location and typology are not accurately described.<sup>130</sup>

Sultaniya retained some cultural importance during the following decades; Mustawfi wrote in circa 1340 that “There are at the present time so many great buildings in Sultaniya, that, except for Tabriz, the like thereof is seen in no other city.”<sup>131</sup>

The seasonal mobility of the Ilkhans is well-attested by written sources, the residences thus varying from summer to winter. This mobility implies that some of the temporary residences were built with light materials such as wood and

textiles, while more permanent ones were made of bricks and stones and, in this case, might have been decorated with tiles.

Besides Takht-i Suleiman, Ilkhanid chronicles mention several other royal residences. Wilber lists some summer dwellings in his “Supplementary Catalogue of Architectural Monuments known only through literary references,” which gives several indications on this subject.<sup>132</sup>

### 3.1.2 Takht-i Sulaiman/Saturiqli/Shiz

As the only located, still standing Ilkhanid palace, this *yaylaq* site has been abundantly studied and commented on. It forms the core of Tomoko Masuya’s thesis,<sup>133</sup> and an updated synthesis of archaeological surveys on this site has been proposed by D. Huff.<sup>134</sup> As previously noted, although many tiles have been found on this site, only a few fragments belong to the series studied here. Moreover, their precise location on the walls of the palace is unknown.

In a different context, recent studies on ancient gold mining in the area have also been published.<sup>135</sup> These concern the region situated north of Takab, particularly in the valleys of Agh-Darreh and Zarshuran, both adjacent to Takht-i Sulaiman. Interestingly, the ruins of a small fort have also been traced in the vicinity of Zarshuran deposits, probably implying the presence of guards/soldiers. Both these deposits, showing evidence of mining during antique and medieval periods, are (or will soon be) exploited. Further archaeological research in this region is therefore urgent. Thus, beyond the symbolic reprise of an ancient site,

126 Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p. 79. However, Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 79, writes that Rashid al-Din “constructed many high and magnificent palaces” in this location.

127 Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p. 81.

128 Blair, *Text & Image*, pp. 128–29.

129 Masuya, “Ilkhanid Courtly Life,” p. 81. According to Blair, “Hafiz-i Abru gives the best description of the enormous palace which Oljeytu built at Sultaniyya. It had a square court paved with marble measuring 100 by 100 [*gaz*]. Around the court [was] a huge iwan like the one in Khusraw’s palace at Ctesiphon and twelve smaller units (*saraycha*), each with a window overlooking the main court,” Sheila Blair, “The Mongol Capital of Sultaniyya, ‘the Imperial,’” *Iran*, 24 (1986), p. 146.

130 IribNewsAgency/Khabarguzāri-īsidāvāsīmā, “Barrasi-i yakšad namuna-i kāshi-i zarrin fām-i sultaniya,” 12 Dey 1398/January 2nd 2020. <https://zanjan.mcth.ir/news/ID/488/> (accessed 08/12/2022).

131 Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 61.

132 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, pp. 190–191. Unfortunately, this author gives no textual reference backing his affirmations.

133 Masuya, “The Ilkhanid phase.”

134 Dietrich Huff, “The Ilkhanid Palace at Takht-i Sulayman: Excavation Results,” in Linda Komaroff (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, pp. 94–110.

135 Morteza Momenzadeh, Nima Nezafati, Muhammad Rahim Sarraf and Kourosh Shabani, “Ancient Gold-Mercury Mining in the Takht-i Soleyman Area, North-west Iran,” *Metalla*, 22.2 (2016), pp. 147–168.



FIGURE 3.18 The Lar Valley, Iran  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1982

Takht-i Sulaiman appears likewise as an important economic relay in exploiting precious metals.

3.1.3 Other Ilkhanid Seasonal Residences  
Although several other sites are mentioned in the sources as locations of seasonal “palaces,” these now show no architectural traces. Among these, Wilber mentions a castle at Khoy built for Hulagu (1256–1265) before 1265, together with a Buddhist temple.<sup>136</sup>

Hamdallah Mustawfi writes that Alataq (Ala Dagh) is “a district with excellent pasture-lands and many hunting-grounds. Arghun built a palace here, and was wont to sojourn here most of the summer.”<sup>137</sup> According to Wilber, a previous castle

there was probably made of wood, so in this case, tiling would have been highly improbable.

Sujas is 5 leagues from Sultaniya,<sup>138</sup> Wilber, quoting Mustawfi, mistakenly mentions a palace built by Arghun in this location. Mustawfi describes in this place the “city” of Saturiq, Takht-i Sulaiman: “In this town there is a great palace, in the court of which a spring gushes forth into a large tank, that is like a small lake for size, and no boatman has been able to plumb its depth.”<sup>139</sup> Besides this apparently mistaken reference made by Wilber, I have found no evidence of a palace at Sujas.

Wilber also mentions a “Summer palace, called ‘Arghun’s Kiosk’ at Lar, near Mount Damavand,”

136 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, p. 190.

137 Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 100.

138 Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 61 (or 56 km according to D. Wilber; see p. 118 for description of a stucco mihrab in Sujas Masjid-i Jāmi’).

139 Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 69.

without other references.<sup>140</sup> The Lar valley had been the site of *yaylaq* up to the Qajar period (Fig. 3.18), and recent exploration has yielded some remains of this palace, including some tiles.<sup>141</sup>

Finally, a castle in the town of Arjish [Ercis, Lake Van] was built by ‘Ali Shah: “The Vazir Khwajah Taj-ad-Din ‘Ali Shah of Tabriz fortified it, and now it has a strong castle.”<sup>142</sup>

Further surveys, both of the written sources and archaeological fields, are required to complete the picture of Ilkhanid residences. However, it appears certain that Ilkhanid palaces other than Takht-i Sulaiman were decorated with tiles. The aforementioned luster stars and crosses from Imamzadah Ja’far in Damghan, now dispersed among various collections, could be an example of the reuse of tiles originating from a palatial residence.<sup>143</sup> As noted, Mélikian-Chirvani has evidenced that the frieze tiles with verses from the *Shāh-nāma* in a trilobed arch originated from at least seven (or more) different palaces.

The domain of Ilkhanid tiles in palace decoration, both urban and seasonal, thus appears much wider than previously pictured.

### 3.2 Tiles with Verses from the *Shāh-nāma*

The *Shāh-nāma*, composed by Firdawsi by the end of the 10th century, contains about 50,000 distichs and is thus among the longest poems known in the world literature. Besides different series of linear tiles, approximately 90 tiles inscribed with verses from the *Shāh-nāma* are identified.<sup>144</sup> Even if one considers that the inventoried tiles constitute only

a small portion of what existed in the late 13th century, it is evident that the friezes did not quote the totality of the epic, but only some *morceaux choisis*.

These friezes are formed by large, almost square tiles (29–30 × 29 cm) with a hemistich from the *Shāh-nāma* inscribed in a trilobed arch. A careful examination shows that the upper and lower borders, together with the spandrel motifs of these tiles, display different patterns, meaning different series.

Comparing epigraphic tile borders, either with Quranic or *Shāh-nāma* quotations, shows that both types of series might use similar spandrel patterns, including figurative ones. Moreover, even in the series made according to the same model, two or more tiles display the same *Shāh-nāma* hemistich (Figs. 3.19–20), meaning that at least two similar, twin series existed.

Masuya sorts the tiles studied in her thesis between excavated and non-excavated ones. However, this distinction might be confusing regarding some series. Besides the few fragments found at Takht-i Sulaiman, to which at least another fragment found at Zulfabad can be added, the other notable set of tiles alien to the art market is the ensemble reused at Eghvard’s church (Figs. 3.7 and 3.20).<sup>145</sup> A Mongol palace was probably decorated with luster tiles in Armenia since some fragments of luster tiles have been found in various localities.<sup>146</sup> The tiles reused at Eghvard could thus have been originally sited in one of these palaces. This type of reuse is not unique in Armenian architecture: the Spitakavor Church (1321) also shows traces of tiles.<sup>147</sup> The church in

140 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, p. 190.

141 M.S. Siri and S. Amirhajloo, “Review of Seven Pieces of Luster Tiles in the National Museum of Iran: New Archaeological Finds from Lar Plain in Tehran,” *Majalla-i Muza-i Milli-i Irān*, 1,1 (2020), pp. 147–60.

142 Mustawfi, *Nuzhat*, p. 100. Itinerary from Tabriz to Erzerum, p. 175.

143 See above, p. 127.

144 Melikian-Chirvani, “Le *Shāh-nāme*, la gnose soufie et le pouvoir mongol,” *Journal Asiatique* t. CCLXXII, 3–4 (1984) pp. 249–337; Melikian-Chirvani, “Le Livre des Rois, miroir du Destin,” Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāme*, 1996.

145 For Zulfabad, see Fig. 3.26 and Hossein Sedighian, “Barrasi-i kāshihā-i zarrin-fām maḥṭa-i zulfābād farahān ustān-i markazi, *Majmu’-e-ye maqālāt-i Bāstān shīnāsi-i Irān dar dawrān-i islāmī*,” 2011, pp. 1169–1200.

146 A. Zhamkochyan, (in Armenian), *The Faïence of Medieval Armenia in the 9th–14th centuries*, Yerevan, EUP, 1981.

147 Ten cavities have been prepared just under the dome’s cornice (six on the east and west faces, four on the north and south ones). These cavities have the form of eight-pointed stars, but only one of them, on the



FIGURE 3.19 Luster tile with verse from *Shāh-nāma* (*Shavad āsmān hamchu pusht-i palang*/The sky will become like the back of the panther; see Annex 3, Cat. 1.39)  
BRITISH MUSEUM, 1876,1230.573.2



FIGURE 3.20 Luster tile with verse from *Shāh-nāma* (*Shavad āsmān hamchu pusht-i palang*/The sky will become like the back of the panther; see Annex 3, Cat. 1.40)  
EGHVARD CHURCH, ARMENIA.  
PHOTO P. DONABÉDIAN

Kirants Monastery (early 13th c.) displays in its drum green-glazed tiles, which appear contemporaneous with the building, but apparently no luster tiles. Moreover, L. Gyuzalyan highlights some secular buildings (at Dvin, Ani, and Garni), which were at some point adorned with tiles as well.<sup>148</sup>

In addition to these, the storage rooms of several museums, such as the Cité de la Céramique de Sèvres, possess dozens of luster tile fragments. At Sèvres, some of these fragments have old labels mentioning, *Fouilles des ruines de Rheï, F. Méchin, 1866–67*.<sup>149</sup> It appears that what these labels mean by “Rheï” is a much-extended area, spreading well off the present city of Rayy, comprising Tappe Mil/Chal-Tarkhan, Bibi Shahrbānu, and probably even the vicinity of Varamin. However, no Ilkhanid building susceptible to being decorated with luster tiles has been identified in this area yet.

In summary, the proportion of excavated tiles with archeological provenance is extremely low

western face, retains traces of a tile, perhaps belonging to the so-called *lājvardina* type.

148 L.T. Gyuzalyan, “Iranskie Izratsi na Barabane Khrama v Egvarde,” *Istoriko filologicheski Jurnal*, Erevan, n°1, (1984), p. 155. Several recent finds are illustrated in Astghik Babajanyan, “The Glazed Pottery of Armenia in the XII–XIV Centuries in the Cultural Context of East and West,” in *Proceedings of XIth Congress AIECM3 on Medieval and Modern Mediterranean Ceramics*, Ankara, 2017. Some scholars believe that the palace at Tiknuni (next to Dvin), might have been ordered by Hulagu; see A.A. Kalantaryan, *Armenia in the Cultural Context of East and West: Ceramics and Glass*, Erevan, Gitutyun, 2009, p. 169.

149 Ferdinand Méchin traveled to Iran in the 1860s; on his return, he published *Lettres d’un voyageur en Perse*, Bourges, 1867. A sale of his collections occurred in 1868, in Paris (*Catalogue des objets de la Perse (...) composant la collection de M. Méchin*, M<sup>es</sup> C. Pillet et C. Mannheim, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 23–25 janvier 1868). Lot no. 207 of this sale comprises “Quantité de fragments de plaques de revêtement, de plats, de bols, etc., en faïence blanche et bleue à décors à reflets métalliques et autres, provenant des fouilles faites à Rheï et à Ferabad.” None of the Sèvres fragments can clearly be identified as belonging to the “trilobed arch” series.

compared with that of those originating from the art market.

### 3.3 Tiles with Trilobed Arch: *Takht-i Suleiman's Frieze*

Only a few incomplete tiles are reported to have been found at Takht-i Suleiman.<sup>150</sup> The larger fragment represents less than half a complete tile, and its lower narrow frieze is missing.

The extreme paucity of these finds may be due to previous depredations or because these tiles were reused during the early 14th century, not only on other secular buildings but also in some relatively far-off locations. As previously mentioned, a curious example of this type of long distant reuse is the church of Eghvard, displaying several tiles inscribed with verses from the *Shāh-nāma*, inserted at the base of the central cupola.<sup>151</sup>

Crossing Melikian-Chirvani's inventories with unnoticed tiles, a preliminary list of the so-called Takht-i Suleiman (or First) Frieze outnumbers about 63 tiles or fragments (see Figs. 3.21–22 and Annex 3, Cat. 1.1–63). Since each tile measures approximately 0.30 m long, 63 tiles represent approximately 18.9 linear meters. The room of Takht-i Suleiman palace where these tiles lay is not precisely known, but if these adorned the great western iwan (the rectangular hall described by Wilber, approx. 70 m in perimeter), this would indicate that less than 7% of the total frieze is currently known. It also means that many tiles remain to be discovered.<sup>152</sup> The tiles were probably originally arranged in pairs to form a distich (most of the recorded tiles only display one hemistich of



FIGURE 3.21 Luster tile with verse from *Shāh-nāma* (*Khīrad-i tīre-u mard-i rawshan ravān*/The dark spirit and the man of enlightened soul; see Annex 3, Cat. 1.4)  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII, DDF 48.346.1



FIGURE 3.22 Luster tile with verse from *Shāh-nāma* (*Zi har dānishi chun sukhan bishnuy*/When you will listen to the words of each wisdom; see Annex 3, Cat. 1.6)  
DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART, SHANGRI LA MUSEUM, HONOLULU, HAWAII, DDF 48.346.2

<sup>150</sup> Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Livre des Rois, miroir du Destin II," pp. 112–113, Fig. 24; he refers to Naumann (1976) pl. 6b n<sup>o</sup>122; see also Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Shāh-nāme, la gnose soufie et le pouvoir mongol," p. 276, and Fig. 3, p. 267.

<sup>151</sup> Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāme*, p. 10; he quotes L.T. Gyuzalian, "Iranskie Izratsi na Barabane Khrama v Eghvarde," pp. 153–174.

<sup>152</sup> Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, Cat. N. 15, plan Fig. 8; however, other tiles are reported to originate from the two adjacent octagonal rooms to the north and south of the rectangular hall.

Firdawsi's epic), forming a continuous frieze at some distance from the floor; these square tiles were disposed above a dado decorated with stars and crosses.<sup>153</sup>

Since most tiles display only a single hemistich, finding a pair of tiles with matching hemistich is exceptional, but this is the case among the tiles preserved at Eghvard Church. Moreover, the number of known tiles does not allow understanding of their original arrangement, as once the known hemistiches are placed in text order, they represent scattered quotations taken from diverse sequences in the *Shāh-nāma*. However, a hint is given again by Eghvard's tiles because some of them show numbers written on their backs; these numbers suggest that the distiches, which were side by side, could belong to different parts of Firdawsi's epic.

The tiles are molded and painted in luster on a white ground, with touches of cobalt and turquoise, and are almost square, measuring approx. 30 cm per side. The upper band displays a series of double split leaves and palmettes forming a two-level network.

The main field is occupied by a trilobed arch formed from a double line painted in turquoise, and between these lines is the Persian text, written in slight relief and painted with cobalt, in *naskhi* script. The spandrels are decorated with scrolls ending with animal heads (often termed as *waq-waq* motifs but inspired by the "Talking tree" story in the Book of Alexander, according to Mélikian-Chirvani).<sup>154</sup> Under the trilobe is a symmetric composition of split leaves. The lower border is a narrow strip decorated with a double

vertical stroke motif (so-called *lam-alif*) alternating with three dots and an irregular shape formed from several incurved thin strokes.

At Eghvard, the tiles are incrustated in the stone facing, forming a continuous frieze (Fig. 3.7). Cavities present alternatively a quadrangular module of about 30 × 30 cm, followed by either a hexagon or an eight-pointed star (approx. 21 cm; see Annex 5).

Eghvard's series of tiles with the trilobed arch resembles the Takht-i Suleiman Frieze, and two of its tiles have the same text and décor as two other tiles now in the British Museum (Figs. 3.19–20). However, some details in the epigraphy show that these inscriptions were not molded. Thus, two almost identical friezes exist, probably signifying the décor of two distinct palaces.

The quotes appearing on the nine remaining tiles with a trilobed arch are listed below, in the order of the *Shāh-nāma*'s text.<sup>155</sup>

1. *Girāzanda āhu ba-rāgh andarun* (I, p. 245, l. 32b) [29?]<sup>156</sup>
2. *Za changal-i yuzān hama dasht gharm* (III, p. 151, l. 113) [50?]<sup>157</sup>
3. *Chu bidār gardi jahān-ra bibin* (IV, p. 245, l. 1545a), [14]<sup>158</sup>
4. *Kunun khwurd bāyad may-i khush gavār* (IV, p. 281)<sup>159</sup>
5. *Khunuk ānka dīlshād dārad binush* (IV, p. 281) not reproduced by Gyuzalyan.<sup>160</sup>
6. *Bakhshad har āngah ki khurram shavad* [variant?] [43 + ۲]<sup>161</sup>

155 The text order is based on J. Mohl's *jibi* edition, 1966. Numbers between brackets refer to inscriptions on the back.

156 Gyuzalyan, "Iranskie Izratsi," ill. 11–11a. The first incomplete word could be *bīst*: 20 or *shast*: 60. See Cat.1.15.

157 Gyuzalyan, "Iranskie Izratsi," ill. 12–12a. This inscription is complex and overwritten. See Cat.1.22.

158 Gyuzalyan, "Iranskie Izratsi," ill. 10–10a. See Cat.1.27.

159 Gyuzalyan, "Iranskie Izratsi," ill. 8. See Cat.1.29.

160 See Cat.1.31.

161 Gyuzalyan, "Iranskie Izratsi," ill. 3–3a. This verse does not appear in Mohl's edition; the meaning of this *lam-alif*- [۲] is unclear; it also appears on n°9 (see infra). See Cat.1.50.

153 Ghouchani has published the Persian texts of dozens of stars (or fragments), allegedly originating from Takht-i Sulaiman, in his book, *Persian Poetry on the Tiles of Takht-i Sulayman* (in Persian). Unfortunately, the present locations of most of these stars and their registration numbers are not provided in this publication.

154 Regarding the so-called *waq-waq* motif, see Porter and Castinel, "Rendez à Khusrāu;" see also Melikian-Chirvani, "Le *Shāh-nāme*, la gnose soufie et le pouvoir mongol," pp. 305–307; and Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Livre des Rois, miroir du Destin 11," pp. 100–101.

7. *Kunun bar gul-u nār-u sib-u bihi* (v, 330, l. 1288a) [44]<sup>162</sup>
8. *Chu bini rukh-i sib-i bijāda rang* (v, 300, l. 1289a). [46]<sup>163</sup>
9. *Shavad āsmān hamchu pusht-i palang* (v, 330, l. 1289b) [47 + لا]<sup>164</sup>

Only a pair of tiles has matching hemistiches (8–9), featuring a complete distich. Number 7 is the first hemistich of the immediately preceding distich in the *Shāh-nāma*. When the tiles were removed for cleaning, their backs were also studied, and several had rapidly written inscriptions featuring spelled out numbers.<sup>165</sup> Unfortunately, some inscriptions are difficult to read.

The verse on tile no. 6 does not appear in Firdawsī's poem and is probably a variation. Similar examples have been listed by Masuya.<sup>166</sup> The sequence formed by tiles nos. 7–8–9 is numbered in Persian: 44–46–47; the absence of no. 45 is thus logical since a hemistich is missing.

Tile no. 50 (if the reading is accurate) was thus placed after the preceding ones; however, its quoted verse belongs to a much earlier portion of the text.

The remaining tiles from Eghvard are insufficient to provide a critical mass for studying the textual contents of the tiles. However, if one considers the totality of the known tiles, encompassing all series, the “anthological” aspect of the quotes appears clearly. Moreover, since there is no narrative unity, the quoted verses can be placed as relatively random pairs.

162 Gyuzalyan, “Iranskie Izratsi,” ill 4–4a. See Cat.1.37.

163 Gyuzalyan, “Iranskie Izratsi,” ill. 5–5a. See Cat.1.38.

164 Gyuzalyan, “Iranskie Izratsi,” ill. 6–6a. The inscription on the back of this tile is complex and overwritten: the first line has a word (*chihil?* 40), followed by *panjāh* [the figure of units not readable] (50?); the second line has *chihil haft* (47), then the third has *lā* [لا] (“no?”). See Cat.1.40.

165 See Gyuzalyan, “Iranskie Izratsi,” p. 158 (and ill. 2a–12a). Gyuzalyan (idem, p. 157 and ill. 2a.) remarks that the number 29 (بیست نه) is written on the back of the tile with a linear inscription.

166 Masuya, “The Ilkhanid Phase,” pp. 404–405 and 492–494.

### 3.4 *The Other Tiles with Trilobed Arches*

As Mélikian-Chirvani confirmed previously, several other series of tiles with trilobed arches and verses from the *Shāh-nāma* are known.<sup>167</sup> However, contrary to the First Frieze, for which some pieces of information allow a possible relocation to Takht-i Suleiman (at least for one of the twin-series), the following series are completely undocumented regarding their original location.

At least three series possess sizes (approximately 29/30 × 30 cm) similar to the First Frieze, the variations mainly concerning the decorative motifs of the upper frieze, spandrels, and lower frieze.

If one follows Mélikian-Chirvani, Frieze II is only differentiated from Frieze I by its lower border, here comprising a row of pearls rather than the *lam-alif* motif of the so-called Takht-i Suleiman Frieze I. To my knowledge, only three tiles from this frieze are identified (Sèvres, Leipzig, and San Francisco; see Annex 3, Cat.2.1–3.).

What could be tentatively named Frieze III (Mélikian-Chirvani's IV) offers a different décor. The upper border shows a large epigraphic band in Kufic script (perhaps an abbreviation of *al-mulk?*), and the spandrels display a pair of flying birds (Fig. 3.23). The precise ornithological species might be irrelevant here since these birds probably resemble a combination of the recently arrived phoenix and other types of birds such as peacocks, cranes, and geese. However, and according to the “formal opportunity” method, flying birds prove a remarkable motif for filling the space of a spandrel. Three complete (from London sales) and three other fragmentary items (V&A and Sèvres) are recorded for this frieze.<sup>168</sup>

Frieze IV (Mélikian-Chirvani's VI) distinguishes itself by spandrel motifs comprising split palmettes and a lower band showing a tress pattern

167 Melikian's Frieze III (Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāma*, Fig. 5) and VII (his Fig. 13) are, in my opinion, very similar to Frieze I.

168 See Annex 3, Cat. 3.1. to 6.



FIGURE 3.23 Fragment of tile from frieze III (Annex 3, Cat. 3.4.). Dim. 19.6 × 30.3 cm  
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,  
542-1900



FIGURE 3.24 Tile from Frieze IV. *Du nargis-i duzham/du rukhsār-i tābān bi kirdā[r]*/Two cruel narcissus/Two faces as bright as [...]. (Annex 3, Cat. 4.2.). 29.8 × 30.5 cm  
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,  
544-1900

(Fig. 3.24). Only two tiles are listed (V&A and Fitzwilliam).<sup>169</sup>

At least two slightly smaller series are observed:

Frieze V (26 × 26.5 cm) has an upper band with flowering bushes. On the spandrels, parrots look outward with one wing spread; the motif under

the trilobe is also a flowered stem. Five complete tiles and a fragment are identified.<sup>170</sup>

Frieze VI (24 × 25.8 cm approx.) has an upper band with split palmettes, flying birds resembling those on Frieze III on the spandrels, and no lower frieze; four tiles are listed.<sup>171</sup> However, the Brooklyn one apart, the other three comprise split fragments, which complicates identifying the quotes.

Curiously, this tile model has also been used for Quranic friezes.<sup>172</sup> Another series with Arabic quotations (Quran 2: 255; Twelve Imams) exists but in monochrome turquoise glaze.<sup>173</sup>

### 3.4.1 Frieze with Trilobed Arch and High-relief Figures

Another frieze with an epigraphic trilobed arch is known from several items. While working on the one kept at the Chicago Art Institute (Fig. 3.25), I determined that the quoted verse contained too many Arabic words to be from Firdawsī. Further research demonstrated that the quote belonged to a qasida by Anvari.<sup>174</sup> This quote is particularly interesting as it describes, in the expected bombastic style, the beauties of a Seljuq palace, about which almost nothing is known otherwise.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>170</sup> See Annex 3, Cat. 5.1 to 7.

<sup>171</sup> See Annex 3, Cat. 6.1 to 4.

<sup>172</sup> Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Nr. 1. 13/67 a–b. A fragment of the same model was found at Qalhat (Oman); see Rougeulle A., Creissen Th., Bernard V.: “The great mosque of Qalhat rediscovered. Main results of the 2008–2010 excavations at Qalhat, Oman,” *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 42, (2012), pp. 341–356.

<sup>173</sup> Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāme*, Figs. 20–23.

<sup>174</sup> Anvari, Qasida No. 83, *Dar taʿrif-i ʿimārat va madḥ-i Šāhib Naṣir al-Dīn Ṭāhir* (b. Fakhr al-Mulk ibn Nizam al-Mulk Tusi, i.e., Sultan Sanjar’s vizier; see E. Bosworth, *The History of the Seljuq Turks: The Seljuq-name of Zakir al-Dīn Nishapuri*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. 96). Thanks are due to Will Kwiatkowski for pointing this poem to me.

<sup>175</sup> Moreover, the subject of panegyrics composed purposely for the architectural décor has a prestigious precedent with the example of the Ghazni palace; see Viola Allegranzi, *Aux sources de la poésie ghaznavide. Les inscriptions persanes de Ghazni*. Paris, P.S.N., 2019.

<sup>169</sup> See Annex 3, Cat. 4.1 and 2.



FIGURE 3.25  
Tile with figures and a quote from a qasida by  
Anvari (Annex 3, Cat.8.3). Dim. 28.9 × 41.5 cm  
CHICAGO ART INSTITUTE, 1939-368

Each tile has a superior border decorated with split palmettes, interrupted in the center and both ends with seated figures in high relief. Another seated figure is placed under the trilobe; the lower frieze displays a row of hounds running to the left. Unfortunately, most known examples comprise several fragments, rendering the reconstruction of both their décor and textual quotes relatively difficult. This is the case for the tiles in Khalili, Gayer-Anderson, and Sotheby's. A fragment featuring half a tile, also showing some additions and fillings, was published in *A Survey of Persian Art*. It is now preserved at the Reza Abbasi Museum, Tehran. The same collection also has a second half-tile with high-relief figures but of slightly inferior size. Moreover, several collections keep separated figures of seated persons that probably once belonged to this tile model (Providence, Brooklyn).<sup>176</sup>

•••

The domain of tiles in palace or secular architecture is much wider and requires further exploration. Future archaeological surveys may yield evidence to that effect.

Related issues concern the placement of these tiles. Mélikian-Chirvani showed the example of a

painting from a dispersed *Shāh-nāma*, in which one can see an epigraphic band quoting the first verses of the *Shāh-nāma* above a tiled dado, evocative of this type of secular decoration.<sup>177</sup>

The similarity of some upper bands, such as in Frieze III, with tiles having a figurative decoration is puzzling. This could suggest that the figurative tiles alternated with pairs of inscribed tiles.

These tiles offer a prestigious secular program affirming the royal grandeur in an explicitly Iranian context, with increased liberty of motifs. Their outreach in the surrounding areas (such as in Armenia) is marked by their reuse in prominent monuments, signifying that the axes of their dispersion might prove different from those of tiles originating from religious buildings.

The almost complete destruction of the palaces is the mark of an explicitly political power allied to a multiple territorial hold (illustrated by the nomadic mobility, implying temporary structures). This enhances the role of monumental décors in implantations designed to be perennial.

#### 4 Conclusion

In the absence of archival documents, many aspects concerning the creation, production,

<sup>176</sup> See Annex 3, Frieze VIII.

<sup>177</sup> Mélikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāma*, Fig. 64.



FIGURE 3.26 Fragment of tile found at Zulfabad, repositioned in a complete tile (Annex 3, Cat. 1.63)  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

and uses of these tiles remain obscure, and it is impossible to know anything concerning the selling price of these revetments, for instance. One can at least conclude that because of their reuse, luster tiled décors were held in high esteem. This was the case for standard tiles such as star-shaped ones and even more so for unique pieces such as the monumental mihrabs. However, contrary to other prestige export goods such as Chinese wares, luster tiles appear to have nourished no important trade flows, which could indicate a strong “international” exchange value. Their worth is recognized within a tight sociological and cultural milieu but not outside the frame of a somewhat loose “Iranian” world. The undeniable value of these products probably reflects the sociocultural charge they vehiculate more than an accession to the status of a luxury commodity at a scale larger than the specific Iranian world.

Recent archaeological surveys in various Iranian locations, not recorded in O. Watson’s list of monuments, have yielded hundreds of luster tile fragments. Each of these locations (Aveh, Sultaniya, Zulfabad (Fig. 3.26), Alamut, Lar) provides specific

examples of the use or reuse of this type of revetment.<sup>178</sup> These finds will naturally refresh the knowledge of the field.

Although not on the same scale as in central Iran, the diffusion of Kashan luster tiles also extended to regions situated out of its boundaries; the examples in Pir-i Ravanan, Eghvard, and Miana have been noted. Other cases remain to be studied in depth, such as Qalhat’s mosque (Oman).<sup>179</sup> In this now ruined building, luster tiles were used not only in their whole original aspect but also in the form of a sherd mosaic. This would probably be a clear yet peculiar case of reuse, and the material from Qalhat requires further studies.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, some of the tiles are relatively crude, showing both a body and a glaze, appearing different than those originating from Kashan kilns. The question of other production sites for luster tiles thus remains open.<sup>181</sup>

Another more anecdotal example of a sherd mosaic is now preserved at the Armenian Museum in Jolfa, Isfahan. It comprises dozens of fragments of broken luster tiles (stars or square molded), one of them having the date 837 (1433–4) written in numerals (Fig. 3.27).<sup>182</sup> Some cut-out cobalt blue plain tiles frame and structure the composition. This peculiar use of broken tiles is reminiscent of

178 For Aveh, see Arash Lashkari, Hamid Khatib Shahidi, Somaye Mohajer Vatan, “A Preliminary Report of Excavations at Aveh Plain, Islamic period,” *IJAS*, 3,1 (2013), pp. 21–37. For Sultaniya, see Irib News Agency, “Barrasi-i yakšad namuna-i kâshi;” for Zulfabad, see Sedighian, “Barrasi-i kâshihâ-i zarrin-fâm maḥṭa-i zulfabâd,” pp. 1169–1200. Findings from Alamut are even more surprising: see Chamedanmag, “Kârgâh-i sufâl-i Alamut râh-andâzi shud,” 5 Aban 1397/27th October 2018, <https://www.chamedanmag.com/news/187839/> (accessed 08/12/2022).

179 Rougeulle A., Creissen Th., Bernard V. 2012: “The great mosque of Qalhat rediscovered.”

180 The use of broken tiles could find a parallel with that of later “broken mirrors” mosaic (*â’inah-kâri*).

181 Margaret S. Graves, “Kashan vii. Kashan Ware,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2014, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kashan-vii-kashan-ware> (accessed 08/12/2022).

182 No known tile corresponds to this date.



FIGURE 3.27  
Detail of a luster tile mosaic, with a fragment  
(bottom, center) dated 837/1433–34 in numerals  
ARMENIAN MUSEUM, JOLFA (ISFAHAN).  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2013

Antoni Gaudí's *trencadís*. The date of its making is unknown, but it could be a relatively modern way of reusing this type of material.

A last and puzzling far-off example is a single tile with a fragment of a Persian text, found in Eastern Africa by the mid-19th century. This has been published by Mélikian-Chirvani.<sup>183</sup> The tile is now at the British Museum (1895.0603.124). It has a label on its back reading, “Found by Captain Burton in Eastern Central Africa between Zingibar and Lake Tangouka [Tanganyika].”

This refers to the Burton/Speke 1856–1860 expedition. However, Zanzibar and the Lake are at least 1,000 km apart, and the tile was actually taken by Burton from a mausoleum in Tongo-Ni, 17 km south of Tanga (Tanzania).<sup>184</sup> He recounts his finding in these words:

“Each of the principal mausolea had its tall stele of cut coralline, denoting, like the Egyptian and Syrian Shahadah, the position of the corpse’s head. In one of these, the gem of the place, was fixed a chipped fragment of Persian glazed tile, with large azure letters in the beautiful character called ‘Ruka’a,’ enameled on a dirty yellow ground. The legend (*Shidi raushan*, the ‘bright sun’) may be part of a panegyric or devotional verse removed from the frieze of some tomb or mosque. The country people hold it an impregnable proof that the men of Ajem once ruled in Tongo-ni: but the tile, (For the Persian ruins on this coast the reader will consult Herr Richard Branner’s *Forschungen in Ost Afrika*, *Mitteilungen*, 1868), like two China platters, also mortared into the Shahadah, is evidently an importation from the far north. It was regarded with superstitious reverence by the Wasawahili, who informed me that some years before Kimwere, Sultan of Usumbara, had sent a party of bold men to bear it away: of these, nineteen died mysterious deaths, and the relic was thereupon returned to its place. A few muslins, here representing dollars, had a wonderful effect upon their fancies: I was at once allowed by the principal Diwan to remove it; although no one would bear a hand to aid the Beni Nar, or Sons of Fire, as the Arabs honourably style our countrymen. The tile, a common encaustic affair, found its way to the Royal Geographical Society; nor did the East African expedition feel

183 See Melikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāma*, pp. 73–76.

184 Richard Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast*. London, Tinsley Brothers, 1872, 2 vols., II, pp. 134–135. See also Vera-Simone Schulz, “Artistic Dynamics Across the Seas Architecture, Objects, and Ornamentation in the Medieval Port Cities Kilwa, Songo Mnara and Pisa,” in A. Sarathi (ed.), *Early Maritime Cultures in East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean*, Cambridge, Archaeopress, 2018, pp. 185–214. This author mistakenly writes that this tile is lost, whereas Melikian-Chirvani does not quote the circumstances of Burton’s find.

itself the worse for having sent it. We did not visit the Tamba-ni settlement, where, according to the people, there is a coralline mosque, and tombs are to be seen under the seawater. Our purchase concluded, we returned to the Riami, followed by the headmen, who after refreshment of dates, Maskat Halwa (sweetmeats), and coffee, naturally became discontented with the promised amount of 'hishmat,' or honorarium."<sup>185</sup>

As mentioned by Burton, the tile is inscribed in Persian: [*khur*]shid-i rawshan (bright sun); the reverse has a number, probably *chihil* (forty), unfortunately covered by the label. The tile has an upper band of split palmettes; the inscription in relief, painted with cobalt blue, rises against a luster backing with floral stems and nimbus-headed birds looking to the right. Contrary to other series with linear quotes from the *Shāh-nāma*, this tile has no lower band but only a thick molded blue line.

It is curious to find an isolated tile with only one and a half Persian words (identified by Mélikian-Chirvani as from the *Shāh-nāma*) which could indicate that other tiles existed. Moreover, the word *chihil* written on its back suggests a frieze of at least 40 tiles.

Mélikian-Chirvani parallels this tile with another, kept in Mogadishu, although this site is far removed from Burton's itinerary. In Mogadishu, a luster small mihrab dated 667/1269 features above the Cambay marble mihrab in the mosque of Fakhr al-Din.<sup>186</sup>

Further south, at Kilwa, fragments of wall decoration have been uncovered from Husuni Kubwa Palace, and the star-and-cross-patterned coral-stone panels could have had luster stars inserted in them, as the shape of the pattern is

evocative of tiled dados.<sup>187</sup> Much remains to be investigated concerning the possible diffusion of luster tiles in Eastern Africa's coastal sites.

The study of Ilkhanid luster tiles raises many questions, and only a few directions have been considered here. One of the first issues would probably be establishing a worldwide database to inventory the tiles scattered among the world's collections.<sup>188</sup> This first step would establish the numbers of catalogued tiles of the same type, date, size, or provenance and indicate the proportion of the surface they would cover, provided that their original building is known. When imprints have been left on the walls, the reconstruction is naturally easier, but unfortunately, many of the buildings have undergone considerable renovation and refurbishing, obliterating any past imprints. A worldwide survey of the existing tiles would also enable a more accurate chronology of the history of luster tile-making.

A close study of their epigraphy, through statistics, for instance, would explain why some verses occur more frequently than others and the general relevance of the poetical epigraphic program. Deciphering the texts is often tedious and one might wonder who, at the times these tiles were made, could not only decipher them but also appreciate the full flavor of their contents, as mentioned in the previous contribution.

The questions on iconography are no less interesting, as the relationships between texts and images found on the tiles often appear almost void of logic. Oleg Grabar suggested that their correspondence is not found on a "narrative and illustrative level but on some other level, just as the text and the image of a Christmas card do not necessarily relate to each other, although both reflect ... sentiments accepted as appropriate to the occasion."<sup>189</sup>

185 Burton, *Zanzibar: City, Island and Coast*, II, pp. 134–135.

186 Regio Governo della Somalia, *Museo della Garesa*, Mogadiscio, 1934, 69–70, n°14 and pl. 74. See also Enrico Cerulli, "Scrizioni e documenti arabi per la storia della Somalia," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, XI (1926–1929), p. 9; C.H. Becker, "Materialien zur Kenntnis des Islam in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Der Islam*, II (1911), pp. 1–48.

187 Schulz, "Artistic Dynamics," p. 198, Fig. 15.

188 This task has been considerably advanced by Anaïs Leone in her PhD research, *Revêtements au lustre*.

189 Oleg Grabar, "The Visual Arts," quoted by O. Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 153.

The influence and outreach of Kashan luster tiles is another direction for further research. The period of flourishing of Kashan luster tiles is relatively short (ca. 1200–1350),<sup>190</sup> especially compared with longer productions such as the Iznik tiles, later relayed by “provincial imitations” such as those of Damascus and Kütahya. The controversial concept of “imitation” must be understood within a larger meaning, especially because the tiles from Damascus or Kütahya adapted processes, materials, and motifs to their needs. A similar case could be demonstrated with Spanish azulejos, later produced in Portugal and the Americas.<sup>191</sup>

Conversely, Kashan tiles were rarely imitated. The question of the existence of other luster tile production centers is not clearly established, although, as mentioned, some of the tiles used at Qalhat, showing a relatively crude body and glaze, could have been made in a different, currently unknown, location.

To the best of present knowledge, the sphere of influence of luster tiles, although well-represented in Ilkhanid palaces, does not appear to include other “non-Iranian” Mongol courts. For instance, no traces have been found in Saray Berke (whereas one – single? – underglaze-painted square tile has been found).<sup>192</sup>

The reuse mechanism particularly shows that the examples located far from proper Iran acknowledge a loss of references, the tiles being used as mere “out of context” glittering ornaments. The tiles from Eghvard, for instance, are not only placed randomly, as by being placed high on the building makes them impossible to read from street level. The most curious case is Burton’s tile, shrouded with an aura of evil superstition at the time of its removal, thus completely disembodied of its original “meaning.” In this context, reused luster tiles could thus be compared with African masks displayed in European house decorations in the early 20th century.

Although the paths of the tiles’ far diffusion remain insufficiently documented to draw conclusions, one could imagine that some might have been included in occasional boatloads as items for trade and barter. However, the diffusion and influence of Kashan tiles have proven relatively short-lived.

Future studies on this subject must also consider a wider reading of the sociological interpretation and meaning of this production, especially in its moving historical context. The decorative programs and reuse processes lead to the concept of an economic and artistic milieu acting as a medium for a cultural or identity permanence together with prestige guaranteeing the stability of the socioeconomic powers of intermediate social bodies. The later fate of luster tiles, especially in the 15th century, is mainly represented by a few funerary stelae: a macabre aftermath.<sup>193</sup>

190 Watson’s (Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 196–97) list of dated tiles is almost continuous up to 740/1339; however, only nine dated tiles exist between 860/1455 and 967/1560, and most of these are tombstones.

191 Céline Ventura Teixeira, *Lazulejo, la genèse d’un art*, Paris, Mare & Martin, 2019, pp. 304–316.

192 Komaroff, *The Legacy*, cat. No. 127, Fig. 28 p. 31. At Sarai’s Selitrennoe settlement, excavations conducted in the 1980s yielded fragments of polychrome underglaze-painted and *lajvardina* tiles: see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghengisid%027s\\_palace\\_tile\\_decor\\_detail.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ghengisid%027s_palace_tile_decor_detail.jpg) (accessed 08/12/2022).

193 Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, pp. 157–175, provides some information on “Later Lustre Ware.” Besides, Sandra Aube, *La céramique dans l’architecture en Iran au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, PUPS, 2017, pp. 48–51, has pointed out the use of luster tiles in 15th c. Iran, including previously unnoticed examples in Tabriz’s Blue Mosque.

## Glazed Tiles from Indian Sultanates: Delhi, Gaur, and Mandu

Glazed ceramics from the Indian subcontinent, both vessels and tiles, are an almost unexplored subject. This is not only true for the tiles made during the Sultanate period – the main subject of this paper – but also for Mughal times and even up to the present day.<sup>1</sup> Since the late 19th century, Mughal tiles have benefited from little more attention.<sup>2</sup> However, glazed vessels are almost uncharted, especially in art-historical publications. Only a few ethnographical studies have been achieved in this field, although they are mainly dedicated to unglazed pottery.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the

Annual Reports from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) provide evidence for many finds of glazed ceramics, even back to pre-Islamic times (see Annex 6). Based on these data, it would be interesting to question whether their common technology implies that the glazed vessels and tiles were made by the same craftspeople. Moreover, physicochemical analyses are necessary to understand issues concerning not only materials but also technological transfers and local adaptations. Recent studies on archaeology and archaeometry offer some perspectives on these fields but should be more widely expanded.<sup>4</sup>

Before entering the details of glazed tiles from three Indian sultanates, Delhi, Bengal, and Malwa, mainly represented here through the monuments of their capitals, some hints on a series of preliminary questions are required. The first concerns the existence of pre-Islamic glazed ceramics in India. Secondly, the alleged communitarian partition between Hindu *kumhar* and Muslim *kāshigar*

1 See Tanvir Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India,” *South Asian Studies*, 11 (1995), pp. 83–106. A first study on Sultanate tiles was published in 1997, Yves Porter, “Décors émaillés dans l’architecture de pierre de l’Inde centrale: les monuments islamiques de Mandu,” *Archéologie Islamique*, 7 (1997), pp. 121–146. More recently, see Arthur Millner, *Indian Tiles. Architectural Ceramics from Sultanate and Mughal India and Pakistan*, Munich, Prestel, 2021. On transition towards Mughal tiles, see Y. Porter, “Revêtements émaillés des premiers Moghols à Delhi,” in Alireza Anisi (ed.), *Adle Nameh, Studies in Memory of Chahryar Adle*, Tehran, Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism, 2018, pp. 263–299, and Bernard O’Kane, “Mughal Tilework: Derivative or Original?,” *South Asian Studies*, 35, 1, (2019) pp. 25–42.

2 J. Lockwood Kipling was among the first to explore the subject; see J.L. Kipling, “Mooltan Pottery,” *Journal of Indian Art*, Vol. 1 (1886) and “Mosque of Wazir Khan at Lahore,” *Journal of Indian Art*, 11 (no. 19, 1887), pp. 17–18. See also Julius Bryant and Susan Weber, *Lockwood Kipling: Arts and Crafts in the Punjab and London* – Exhibition at V&A Museum, 14 Jan.–2 April 2017. Yale, Yale U.P., 2017. On Mughal tiles, for a first report on the Chini ka Rauza, see J.D. Beglar and A.C.L. Carlleyle, ASI Report 1871–72, Calcutta 1874: “The Chini ka Roza,” pp. 162–169. This was followed by E.W. Smith, *Moghul Decoration of Agra. Description of the Chini ka Rauza*, Calcutta, ASI, 1901. On Sind, see H. Cousens, *Portfolio of Illustrations of Sind Tiles*, Calcutta, ASI, 1906. On Lahore’s fort, see J.Ph. Vogel, *The Tile Mosaics of the Lahore fort*, London, Griggs & Sons, 1920.

3 See, for instance, Owen S. Rye & Clifford Evans, *Traditional Pottery Techniques of Pakistan*, Washington, Smithsonian,

1976; and Jane Perryman, *Traditional pottery of India*. London: A. & C. Black, 2000.

4 The recent completion of Maninder Singh Gill’s thesis (Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India: a technological appraisal*. Doctoral thesis, UCL [University College London, 2015]) has considerably changed the potential vision of the technologies involved in the craft of Indian tile-making, especially for the Delhi and Punjab areas. Many of my previous hesitations or suppositions must now be reconsidered based on his extraordinary results. Figures 8.1 (Process outline for Punjab Type of glazed tile production, p. 303) and 8.2 (Process outline for Delhi Type of glazed tile production, p. 304) in his thesis, for instance, brilliantly illustrate that the production of tiles in the Punjab and Delhi areas followed two different operational sequences. See also A.S. Gaur, Vijay Khedekar and B. Ramalingeswara Rao, “Elemental oxides analysis of the medieval period glazed ware from Gogha, Gulf of Khambhat, Gujarat, India,” *Current Science*, 95, 5, (2008), pp. 670–674.

should be examined. Finally, some observations on the questions of workshops and technologies are briefly addressed.

## 1 Preliminary Remarks

### 1.1 *Pre-Islamic Glazing in India*

The existence of glazed pottery in Indian pre-Islamic times is attested by some findings, mostly in Buddhist contexts. These objects are not to be confused with the numerous items imported during these periods.<sup>5</sup> The excavations at Shahji-ki-Dheri, near Peshawar, of a monastery and a stupa probably raised by Kanishka (1st century AD) have yielded some glazed tiles with inscriptions in Kharosthi script.<sup>6</sup> Green-glazed pieces were also found at other sites, such as Sonkh and Sambhur.<sup>7</sup> More findings in the Mathura district, dating back to the Kushan period (circa 1st–3rd century AD), include “remarkable green-glazed pottery tubes and fragments of early Kushan date (Kanishka period)” and “terracotta figurines ... including a glazed example.”<sup>8</sup> J. Irwin (quoted by T. Hasan) mentions several “Kushan glazed tiles excavated at Bajna site near Mathura, and kept in the Mathura

Museum.”<sup>9</sup> The transmission of glazed ceramic to the Indian Buddhist contexts may have occurred through the Greco-Bactrian Afghan area, but other origins cannot be discarded. Indeed, at the other end of the subcontinent, in the Guwahati area (Assam), local attempts to imitate imported ceramics were also made.<sup>10</sup> The Buddhist paths undeniably constituted an important mode of transmission and diffusion of techniques and products, as was notably the case with paper.<sup>11</sup> The subsequent political and religious changes in the ruling dynasties of Northern India probably marked a progressive rupture in making and using glazed ceramics.

The use of glazed pipes, found in the Mathura area, for instance, is noteworthy, as it indicates a major advantage of glazing over plain terracotta in terms of permeability.<sup>12</sup> Its use on architectural revetments is less obviously acknowledged. However, the hydrographic conditions imposed by the monsoon regime do not appear to have favored the coating of buildings with this type of material. Regarding vessels, the Hindu dislike for

5 This is the case in Pattanam (Kerala), at least since Roman times. See P.J. Cherian, G.V. Ravi Prasad, Koushik Dutta, Dinesh Kr. Ray, V. Selvakumar, K.P. Shajan, “Chronology of Pattanam: a multi-cultural port site on the Malabar coast,” *Current Science* 97, 2, (2009) 236–40. Regarding Chinese celadons, see also Yves Porter, “Martabani: Import and Reception of Chinese Celadon Ware in the Islamic Courts, 14th–17th c.,” in *Longquan of the World: Longquan Celadon and Globalization International Seminar. Paper Collection*, Beijing, Wenwu, 2021, pp. 365–384.

6 D.B. Spooner, “Excavations at Shah-ji-ki-Dheri,” A.S.I. Annual Report, 1908–9, pp. 55–56 and fig. 4.

7 Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India,” p. 103, note 4. For Sonkh, see H Härtel, “The Apsidal Temple No. 2 at Sonkh,” *South Asian Archaeology, 1973*, Leiden, Brill, 1974, p. 106; for Sambhur, see Thomas H. Hendley, “Buddhist Remains near Sambhur, in Western Rajputana, India,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 17, no. 1, (1885), p. 33.

8 See Annex 6, ASI, 1972–73, p. 34. ASI, 1974–75, p. 50.

9 Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India,” p. 86, quoting J. Irwin, “The stupa and the cosmic axis,” *South Asian Archaeology*, Istituto Universario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor VI, vol. 2, (1977), pp. 799–845, fig. 2 p. 832.

10 Preetee Sharma, “A Micro Study of Pottery Traditions from the Early Medieval Brahmaputra Valley (c. 7th–13th Centuries CE),” *Heritage: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Archaeology*, 6 (2018), pp. 310–332.

11 On paper used in Indian sultanate manuscripts, see Brac de la Perrière, *L'art du livre dans l'Inde des sultanats*, pp. 91–101.

12 Glazed pipes have also been observed at other, later locations such as at Sikandar Lodi's tomb (Delhi), at Gaur's palace (see below, p. 191), and at Jahangiri Mahal in Agra's Red Fort, see Fig. 4.41. However, glazed pipes are not systematic, as observed on several Deccani sites (such as in Bijapur, at Kumatgi complex, or at Afzal Khan's tomb) where plain terracotta pipes were used. See Y. Porter, “Miroirs et ruissellements: usages de l'eau dans les jardins entre l'Iran et l'Inde,” in *Colloque L'eau dans le monde iranien: usages, partages, représentations de la Préhistoire à nos jours, Aix-en-Provence, MMSH, 2020*, forthcoming.

pottery, which was usually discarded after a single use because it was considered impure, functioned as a brake.<sup>13</sup> However, this dislike did not apply in Buddhist contexts, as represented among others by the use of imported Chinese and South Asian ceramics.<sup>14</sup> Even in recent times, glazing has been practiced in Ladakh.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as developed below, the partition between Muslim glazed/Hindu unglazed pottery is probably less obvious than is often acknowledged.

Glass technology, especially applied to beads and bangle-making, has been known in the sub-continent since ancient times; in terms of technology, glass and glazed wares are closely related since both rely on silica melt with alkali or lead-based flux materials.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Marshall mentions several pavements in Kalawan (Taxila) made of “tiles of blue glass.”<sup>17</sup>

Besides these mainly Kushan-Buddhist examples, other cultures entirely unrelated to Iran and Central Asia also made glazed tiles, with some in Burma/Myanmar, especially at Pagan, dating from at least the 11th century if not before.<sup>18</sup>

Glassmaking for beads and bangles appeared to continue uninterrupted up to the time of the Delhi sultanate. Conversely, one must admit that the production of glazed ceramics was probably less continuous, with important gaps remaining to be explored. The introduction of a silica-based body in the manufacture of glazed wares during the early Delhi sultanate might have occurred due to foreign craftsmen and eventually been adapted by local potters. Describing the findings at Delhi's Purana Qila, the ASI Report says, “A significant feature of the [sultanate] Period was the use of glazed ware, both of sandy friable as also of normal texture.”<sup>19</sup>

13 On the non-borrowing of materials and techniques between contemporary Indian Hindu/Muslim potters, see Valentine Roux, “Spreading of Innovative Technical Traits and Cumulative Technical Evolution: Continuity or Discontinuity,” *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 20, n°2, (2013), pp. 312–330.

14 For the recovery of celadons at Ambari and Guwahati (Assam), now preserved at Ambari Archaeological Museum, see Annex 6: ASI 1968–69, p. 3: “Ambari, Guwahati, District Kamrup: celadon (12th–14th c.);” see also: “a few sherds of celadon (Phase III, 7th–13th c.),” ASI 1970–71, p. 4; “celadon,” ASI 1987–88, p. 9; “celadon,” ASI 1988–89, p. 6.

15 Baidyanath Saraswati, *Pottery-making Cultures and Indian Civilization*, New Delhi, Abhinav, 1978, p. 13. In this work (idem, p. 13, note 3), the story of glazing at Chunar (Mirzapur, U.P.) is explained as follows: “Some 500 years ago, one Bacha, Khatri by caste, learned glazing from a woman. After her death, the technique passed to a Kannaujia potter and since then, the technique was passed from generation to generation.”

16 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 117–135 devotes a whole section of his work to traditional glassmaking techniques, especially concerning Indian glass.

17 John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1960, p. 133; see also p. 104 and 117 (Dharmarajika).

### 1.2 “Persian” Tiles: kumhar vs. kāshigar?

While, as is evident, glazed ceramics were once produced in the subcontinent in pre-Islamic periods, glazed tiles are often presented in scholarly literature as almost exclusively linked to a Persian, or at least a “Muhammadan,” influence when they are not simply considered as originating from Persia. In George Watt's 1903 publication, one can hence read,

“There are thus many powerful arguments in favour of the opinion that the glazed pottery of India, as generally accepted by art collectors in Europe, originated with the Muhammadan traffic in coloured tiles, used in mosques and tombs. When the demand for these goods declined, the

18 A green-glazed tile in the Victoria and Albert Museum, originating from Burma and dated 12th century, depicts an episode from Buddha's life. V&A IS.127-1999, Bequeathed by Alex Biancardi. Other later Burmese tiles, dating from the 15th century and originating from the Shweguyi Pagoda (Pegu), are also known.

19 ASI, 1969–70, p. 5 (see Annex 6).

art of *kuzagar* was diverted to the production of jars (*martabans*), *surahis* and such like wares.”<sup>20</sup>

It could be emphasized that the opinion favoring a “Muhammadan” origin is supported, in Watt’s commentaries, by the “art collectors in Europe” but not by local arguments (either textual, ethno-archaeological, or museal).

Even in the second part of the 20th century, one can still read, in ASIAR,

“District Sahebganj Rajmahal, Jhimjhimia-Khalistan, (Bihar): Earlier explorations of the area had yielded ... grey and Muslim glazed wares, Chinese porcelain, *Persian tiles*, etc.

Period III was marked by the appearance of green, yellow and bluish glazed ware as well as Chinese porcelain of the medieval period. ... A few pieces of *Persian tiles* were also met with.”<sup>21</sup>

Amazingly, one could draw a parallel between the trend signified by “Muhammadan” glazed ware and the so-called northern black polished ware (NBPW), which has been related to Greek black pottery. Disturbingly, these alleged Western “influences” appear to show that civilization could not come otherwise than from the West.<sup>22</sup>

Almost nothing is known from the historical written sources on the production of glazed tiles, with the exception – as detailed further on – of Malwa, for which the author of the *Ma’āthir-i Maḥmudshāhi* writes that colored tiles were made by “Persian craftsmen.” However, “Persian” does

not necessarily mean here that these craftsmen directly originated from Persia.<sup>23</sup>

The partition between Hindu *kumhar* and Muslim *kāshigar* is also a recurrent pattern.<sup>24</sup> In a catalogue published in 1979, R. Skelton notes, “Even in recent times, the makers of glazed tiles (*kashigars*) have been Muslims whereas Hindu builders (*sutradhars*) have restricted themselves to working with unglazed terra-cotta.”<sup>25</sup>

However, an exception to this scheme, already noted by Birdwood,<sup>26</sup> and followed by Watt, is the glazed pottery from Vellore (Fig. 4.1), “among the Dravidians of South India, ... [which] seems to have been spontaneous, not acquired.”<sup>27</sup> Jaipur’s “blue pottery,” existing well before but which was reinvented in the early 1960s by Kripal Singh Shekawat (1922–2008), could also be added to this (Fig. 4.2).<sup>28</sup> The case of Bhuj’s Aina-Mahal so-called “Delftian” tiles (ca. 1750?) is also noteworthy (Fig. 4.3).<sup>29</sup> Unsurprisingly, none of these ceramics were formed on a foot wheel.

20 George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi 1903. Being the Official Catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition 1902–1903* (1903), reprint Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 1987, p. 82.

21 ASI, 1987–88, pp. 12–13 (See Annex 6). Underlining is my own.

22 On NBPW (northern black polished ware), see Siddharth Shankar Rai, G.K. Rai, Avinash C. Pandey and U.C. Chattopadhyaya, “Geochemical studies of the ancient Indian glazed ware,” *Current Science*, 106, 3, (2014), pp. 428–434.

23 As shown below (see pp. 201–203), ‘Ali ibn Mahmud Kirmani mentions several times artists or scholars originating “from Khurasan and Hindustan.” Beyond a geographical origin, one must see here an expression of their skills.

24 Non-Muslim potters fall into several classes, such as Hindu *kumhar* (or *kumbhar*), also called *prajapati*, usually belonging to the *suthra* or “craftsmen” castes; however, there are also tribal potters, considered out-cast by the Hindus. See J. Perryman, *Traditional Pottery*, pp. 16–19.

25 Robert Skelton, *Arts of Bengal. The Heritage of Bangladesh and Eastern India*, London, Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1979, p. 30.

26 George Birdwood, *The industrial arts of India*, London, Chapman & Hall, 1884 (2 vol.), p. 390 and pl. 76.

27 Watt, *Indian Art*, p. 81. Glazed wares are still made in the Vellore district (Tamil Nadu) in the village of Karigiri.

28 Jaipur “blue pottery” was probably introduced from Delhi, perhaps under maharajah Sawai Ram Singh (1835–1880). Watt, *Indian Art*, p. 91, writes that “Jaipur formerly differed from Delhi and attained its reputation and traffic through the use of two shades of blue.” See also Aman Nath & Francis Wacziarg, *Arts and Crafts from Rajasthan*, New York, Mapin, 1987, pp. 199–205.

29 The Aina Mahal of Bhuj palace was built around 1750 by Maharao Lakho, known as Lakhpatji (r. 1741–1760).



FIGURE 4.1  
Composite fountain  
with figure of Krishna  
made of green-glazed  
clay. Vellore, late  
19th century  
VELLORE  
FORT MUSEUM  
(TAMIL NADU).  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015



FIGURE 4.2  
Underglaze painted  
vase. Jaipur, second half  
of 19th century  
JAIPUR, ALBERT  
HALL MUSEUM.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015



FIGURE 4.3  
Aina-Mahal, with  
so-called "Delftian" tiled  
floor. Bhuj (Gujerat),  
circa 1750  
PHOTO Y. PORTER,  
2008

Amin Jaffer writes that the best source for this subject is L.F. Rushbrook Williams' *The Black Hills. Kutch in History and Legend*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1958, pp. 137–138. According to this author, an apprentice named Ramsingh Malam from Saurashtra, aged 12, sailed to the Netherlands, where he stayed for 18 years

Another notable exception, quoted by Watt, concerns the "Hindu *kuzagars* of Delhi." According to this author:

"The potters, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, are referred to two septs – the *kumhar* or village potter who as a rule produces non-glazed pottery and confines himself to the ordinary articles of household and agricultural use; the artistic potter or *kuzagar* (*kashigar*) who makes artistic wares (*kagazi*), often glazed. In the latter case he is usually a Muhammadan, though there are notable exceptions, such as the Hindi *kuzagars* of Delhi."<sup>30</sup>

Some confusion also occurs today in how Muslim potters from Khurja term themselves. They usually style themselves as *multani kumhar*, which is probably a "late" self-denomination.<sup>31</sup> *Kumhar* designates a village potter (most often Hindu) practicing unglazed pottery. As mentioned by Watt, the "artistic potter" should be called *kuzagar*.<sup>32</sup> *Kumhar* would have consequently been considered a less prestigious craft than *kuzagar*. The addition of *Multani* refers to their alleged origin, that is, Multan in what is now Pakistan, but tracing the exact origin of these potters is a complex issue. Moreover, two communities of *multani kumhar* potters practice two different products: the urban potters make fine glazed and painted wares, while the "village" potters' production is mainly utilitarian. Their settlement in the Khurja area was late

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learning glassmaking, together with mirror-making and ceramics. Returning home, Ramsingh was employed by Lakhpatji for the decoration of the Aina Mahal. See Amin Jaffer, "The Aina Mahal: An Early Example of 'Europeanerie,'" in Christopher W. London, dir., *The Arts of Kutch*, Mumbai, Marg, 2000, pp. 62–75. It is noteworthy that the tiles from Bhuj are much closer to those of Multan than to the Delft ones.

30 Watt, *Indian Art*, p. 82.

31 This locution does not appear to have been used before the 1940s, when the pottery in Khurja took an industrial loop.

32 The term *chinigar* is also found; see Geeta Jayaram Sodhi, "Traditional Potters and Technological Change in a North Indian Town," *Sociological Bulletin*, 55, 3 (2006), pp. 367–382.



FIGURE 4.4 Potter working with clay on a foot-wheel at Rashid Ahmed workshop, Khurja (Uttar Pradesh)  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007



FIGURE 4.5 Rashid Ahmed's pottery factory, founded in 1949, Khurja (Uttar Pradesh)  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

(i.e., not before the late 19th–early 20th century). Their styling as *multani kumhar* is thus a re-vindicated qualificative, but it is not historically supported.<sup>33</sup> However, their technology (foot wheel and kiln; Figs. 4.4 and 4.5) is undoubtedly originally related to the Indus Valley.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, many authors writing about glazed tiles in Indian architecture consider it obvious that these were made by Muslim craftsmen. However, the links between “Muslim,” Iranian, and Central

Asian traditions and those of the subcontinent must be reassessed, not only regarding glazed ceramics but also concerning “an alleged correspondence between archaeological artifacts and religious identities.”<sup>35</sup> Examples of glazed ceramics existed in pre-Islamic times, as previously mentioned. Moreover, recent research showed that the technology and materials of the Mughal tiles from the Delhi area differ from those of Iran, Central Asia, and even Punjab.<sup>36</sup> Another related issue concerns the authorship of the tile decorations on Hindu-related monuments, such as at Gwalior’s Man Mandir, ordered by the Rajput Rajah Man

33 While interviewing some Khurja potters (July 6th, 2007) together with Valentine Roux, one of the most influential craftsmen among the “urban” potters (Shamim Ahmad Afghani) claimed an Afghan origin; he told us that his great-grandfather, Jiwanullah Afghani, awarded in 1895, had settled in Khurja. Mr. Shamim Afghani considered the term *Multani kumhar* ridiculous and expressed the utmost disgust for their representatives.

34 Roux, “Spreading of Innovative Technical Traits,” p. 315.

35 Supriya Varma and Jaya Menon, “Archaeology and the Construction of Identities in Medieval North India,” *Studies in History*, 24, 2, n.s. (2008), pp. 173–193.

36 M.S. Gill, Th. Rehren and I. Freestone, “Tradition and indigeneity in Mughal architectural glazed tiles,” *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 49 (2014) pp. 546–555.

Singh Tomar (reigned 1486–1516) for the ornament of his palace; this subject is detailed below.

### 1.3 *Workshops and Technology*

The architecture of India's central areas relies mainly on stone, as is traditionally the case for temple buildings, for instance. Tile decoration appears better adapted to edifices made of bricks, as is the case for the alluvial zones of Sind and Bengal. However, as observed for Bengal, for instance, the use of stone facing is also observed. This fact raises the question of the hierarchy of decoration materials but also their availability, together with the economic and prestige repercussions induced by these material choices.

Bricks and glazed tiles share not only common materials but also potentially similar industrial structures, although kilns might notably differ; similarly, as mentioned above, glazed ceramics share materials and techniques with glassmaking. However, no potter or tile-maker's workshop has yet been archaeologically surveyed in the area studied in this chapter.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, in the present state of the art, distinguishing specific workshops through studying surviving décors or artifacts proves extremely difficult. Thus, it remains impossible to know whether these workshops produced both categories of goods (i.e., vessels and tiles) or whether they were more specialized. Glazed bricks of the *bannā'i* type offer a mixed technique, between a plain brick and a tile, but are more likely to be fired in a potter's kiln. However, the socio-economic frame of these industries, implying the whole operational sequence (from the material collection and its specific network to the potters, as well as to the customers, patrons, and distribution circuits) is almost completely undocumented. It can at least be assumed that tiles decorating

prestigious buildings were ordered and paid for by patrons belonging to the social elite, but whether the workshops were permanent or bound to a specific construction site is unknown. Moreover, most of the cases studied below show that the use of specific types of tiles had a relatively short duration, which suggests that the craftspeople involved in their making "disappeared" when no longer requested.

From a technological viewpoint, one can first suppose that the potters of the areas covered by this study preferred to use locally available materials.<sup>38</sup> This implies that technological knowledge must adapt to the available materials. Body composition thus varies according to the regions concerned, so while Delhi and Mandu often have a type of greyish or whitish stone body (of different compositions),<sup>39</sup> those in Bengal mainly feature a reddish clay body. However, most of my remarks on the tile bodies are based on naked eye observations and only petrographic analysis can show their mineralogical composition and, hence, the provenance of the paste and the technology involved in its making.

The palette of Indian sultanate tiles is relatively restricted and relied on available oxides but probably also on trends or tastes. Regarding other technological and aesthetic questions, materials and their corresponding hues vary according to region.

The most ubiquitous examples are monochrome tiles, and turquoise blue was undoubtedly the favorite hue. It was generally achieved with a copper oxide in an alkaline glaze, sometimes opacified with tin (whereas a lead-based glaze would yield a green color).

37 Among the rare examples of a potter's workshop archaeologically surveyed, see Kuldip Kumar Bhan, "Towards the understanding of medieval glazed pottery manufacture from Lashkarshah, Khambhat, Gujarat," *Man and Environment*, 31, 2, (2006), pp. 90–95.

38 See Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 293–94.

39 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 275, on Delhi and Punjab tiles: "All the examined Lodhi and Mughal tiles are determined to be of the stone paste variety, comprising quartz-rich bodies and glazes that are divided over two broad typologies (Type I and Type II)."

Cobalt blue has second position. It is often thought that cobalt oxide originated from Iran, whereas the ore used in Delhi originated from Khetri in Rajasthan.<sup>40</sup> At present, no Indian production of cobalt from indigenous ores has been found, although deposits are also known in Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Nagaland.<sup>41</sup>

Concerning the use of cobalt, Birdwood writes, “The *rita* or zaffre is the black oxide of cobalt found all over Central and Southern India, which has been roasted and powdered, mixed with a little powdered flint.”<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, Birdwood does not say whether this zaffre is local or imported.

Yellow is usually made from a lead stannate,<sup>43</sup> and when mixed with copper oxide, it gives a green color. Iron oxide can also be used for yellow, although it tends to give an ochre or brownish color; this hue is mainly found on Bengali tiles.

White might be produced without coloring, with a mere transparent glaze over the white stone paste, or with tin. Cassiterite occurs in India in several places but is presently only mined on an industrial scale in Chhattisgarh.<sup>44</sup> Whether these

deposits were known in premodern times still needs to be confirmed, especially because smaller deposits existed in other localities. Moreover, tin from Malaysia has been circulating in Southeast Asia since ancient times. Curiously, manganese oxides do not seem to appear frequently in sultanate tiles (whereas they are frequent in Mughal tiles).

Monochrome tiles might be used as plain squares or be cut out, forming a mosaic, sometimes incrusting in a stucco or stone inlay work. The chemical composition of monochrome tiles appears to involve basic recipes. Conversely, painted ones, being over- or underglaze, often rely on more elaborate processes. Glazed bricks – called *bannā'i* in Persian – are mainly used in Bengal (as in Punjab), directly inserted into brick-made buildings. In Delhi and Malwa, a plaster coating is necessary on rubble-built monuments to provide a smooth surface and adherence for the tiles.

Underglaze-painted tiles are few in Delhi and Mandu, whereas overglaze ones are best represented in Bengal. Underglaze-painted tiles could be paralleled with vessels, some examples of which are known (see below). Several examples of so-called *cuerda seca* (or black-line) tiles are found in Mandu.<sup>45</sup>

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To resume, if Mughal tile decoration has received some attention, both in its architectural and museal dimensions, tiles from the Indian sultanates remain poorly documented, the examples on display in museums being exceedingly rare. Some items, mainly originating from Gaur, constitute an exception and are discussed below.<sup>46</sup>

40 See C. Palache, H. Berman, and C. Frondel, *The System of Mineralogy*, 7th ed., I, New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1944, pp. 296–298, quoted by Elisabeth West FitzHugh and Willem M. Floor, “Cobalt,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. v, Fasc. 8, pp. 873–875. See also Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 288. Khetri is now mainly known for its copper mine, owned by Hindustan Copper Limited.

41 *Indian Minerals Yearbook 2013 (Part – II: Metals & Alloys). Cobalt*. Nagpur, Government of India, Ministry of Mines, Indian Bureau of Mines, 2015, pp. 2–3. [https://ibm.gov.in/writereaddata/files/05282015122953cobalt\\_2013.pdf](https://ibm.gov.in/writereaddata/files/05282015122953cobalt_2013.pdf) (accessed 08/12/2022).

42 Birdwood, *The industrial arts of India*, pp. 402–403. See also B.B. Lal, “Composition and Technique of Some Glazed Tiles from Historic Monuments,” *Science and Culture* 19, (1953), pp. 244–46.

43 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 287.

44 *Indian Minerals Yearbook 2015 (Part – II: Metals & Alloys). Tin*. Nagpur, Government of India, Ministry of Mines, Indian Bureau of Mines, 2016, pp. 17-2 to 17-4. [http://ibm.nic.in/writereaddata/files/10202016095114IMYB2015\\_Tin\\_19102016\\_Adv.pdf](http://ibm.nic.in/writereaddata/files/10202016095114IMYB2015_Tin_19102016_Adv.pdf) (accessed 08/12/2022).

45 For this terminology, see Jean Soustiel & Yves Porter, *Tombeaux de Paradis*, St-Rémy-in-L'au, Monelle Hayot, 2003, pp. 215–218.

46 See Venetia Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, London, British Museum, 1995, pp. 86–91. In 1956–57, the ASI (ASI, 1956–57 p. 73) announced the opening of a room dedicated to “enameled tiles” in the then Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Tile decorations in the architecture of Deccan, and of Bidar in particular, have been the subject of some research.<sup>47</sup> However, given the vastness of the subject, only allusions to Deccani productions are proposed below.

Historically, this survey should probably start with the Sind-Punjab area, as some monuments in Multan and elsewhere are probably the oldest examples of Muslim tile decoration in the subcontinent.<sup>48</sup> However, as shown by Gill and already noted, the technology of Punjab tiles differs from that of Delhi, for instance.<sup>49</sup> This suggests that no immediate technological link exists between these regions, and they should therefore be treated separately. Consequently, and due to the scope of the subject, only a few examples originating from Delhi, Bengal, and Malwa sultanates have been selected here. These illustrate three almost contemporaneous productions (early 14th–mid 16th c.) designed to adorn buildings whose shapes, styles, and materials differ considerably. Each of these ancient kingdoms developed its own language, not only in the profile of buildings but also in their decoration. The possibility that some craftspeople originated from a region with a rich tradition of tile-making cannot be completely ruled out; these craftsmen could then have adapted their technology to the available resources. Beyond the questions related to transmitting techniques, patterns, or materials, which are naturally different according to the times and places concerned by the three examples studied here, it appears noteworthy that each of these

sultanates developed according to different, not necessarily connected, patterns.

India – especially during the period studied here – cannot be considered a coherent ethno-cultural ensemble. Its global perception was (and remains) principally due to a Western vision, from a largely imperialist perspective, with the current addition of modern nationalisms.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the religious partitions are a strategic prism whose objective involves creating and cultivating antagonisms implying the devaluation of the parties rather than their contribution to the ensemble. Historically, the subcontinent was consistently divided, favoring the perception of each of its parts as a minor sub-ensemble in an unachieved whole. Thus, starting from the approach of the specific cultural context of each entity should lead to considering it as an original expression rather than a byproduct of a remote reference eventually rarely available.

Beyond religious antagonisms, the subcontinental context is struck by impervious partitions of social strata. These lead to a structurally devalued frame for certain populations, implying that the constitution of extended networks is chaotic and uncertain. Accordingly, the economic chain is frequently limited to the local dimension and more, depending on specific worksites and occasional trends for decorative production. A logic of stricter spatiotemporal division is thus apparent, particularly generating a more erratic diffusion chain over long distances. Conversely, this situation produced brilliance in adapting imperfectly accessible expertise and stimulated technical specificity and original decorative creativity, as seen below.

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Vastu Sangrahalaya); to my knowledge, this project was never concretized.

47 G. Yazdani, *Bidar, Its History and Monuments*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1947; see also Y. Crowe, “Colored Tiles,” in G. Michell ed., *Islamic Heritage of the Deccan*, Bombay, Marg, 1986, pp. 86–91. G. Curatola, “Un percorso di lettura sulle arti decorative nel Deccan,” in *Rivista degli studi Orientali* vol. 64, 1/2 (1990), pp. 195–234.

48 This is the main focus of Tanvir Hasan’s paper, already noted (Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India”).

49 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 303–304.

## 2 Tiles from the Delhi Sultanate, 13th–16th Centuries

Tile decoration in the architecture of Delhi during the sultanate period is a rarely explored subject.

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50 On this topic, see Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan. The Invention of India*. Cambridge, Harvard U.P., 2020.

However, even before the flourishing acknowledged during the Lodi dynasty (1451–1526), several still-standing monuments decorated with glazed tiles remain. Moreover, although excavations have yielded numerous examples, almost nothing is known about the production of glazed ceramics (tiles or vessels) in the sultans' capital city up to modern times.

Without returning here to the possible existence of pre-Islamic examples, the emergence of glazed ceramics is usually linked, in the Delhi area, to the Ghurid invasion during the late 12th century. The methods enabling this industry to develop at that time and place, together with the transfer of the necessary technological expertise, remain difficult to apprehend. So far, direct transmission from the Iranian or Central Asian areas, often proposed as a possible answer to this issue, is probably too schematic.

Although many of the Delhi monuments studied here are found in the heart of the present city, most of them have not benefited from a proper and accurate architectural monograph. However, beyond their descriptive accounts, one issue would also be to examine these monuments together with their meaning and place in the capital city of the sultans.<sup>51</sup> The scattered urban network resulting from the numerous consecutive settlements in the Delhi area blurs the legibility of the hierarchy between the different buildings. What was their monumental visibility or political symbolism? Why were glazed tiles chosen for their decoration rather than other materials often better adapted to the wet subtropical climate?

A few tiles from the Delhi sultanates are displayed in museum collections to achieve the picture. Yet, a curious example is preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum (not in view), and was published by Tanvir Hasan.<sup>52</sup> It is a carved



FIGURE 4.6 Samuel Bourne (England, 1834–1912), *The Kutab Minar and adjacent buildings*. Albumen print, late 1860s  
LACMA, M.90.24.20

tile with monochrome turquoise glaze, figuring an inscription in square Kufic. Although, as seen later, some rare examples of this style of writing were seen in Mandu, the tile in the V&A remains an isolated item, unconnected with any existing work from the Delhi area.

The examples studied here propose a chronological analysis of some landmarks in the use of architectural revetments in the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate. If the instances are rare before the Lodi sultanate, the works of this dynasty prove much richer. Moreover, the transition between the end of the Lodis (1526) and the early Mughal/Suri periods is much smoother than usually thought. In conclusion, some remarks are made concerning the later periods, the great Mughals and the British Raj.

## 2.1 *Early Sultanate (13th–14th Centuries)*

Few monuments before the Lodi period still show the remains of glazed tiles. However, in addition

51 The urban settlement in Delhi, especially between the Seyed period and the times of Akbar, is a little-known topic. During this time lapse, the city suffered periods of abandon – particularly to the benefit of Agra.

52 See Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India,” pp. 83–106. A pair of monochrome tiles (V&A, 18.73-1963: cobalt;

18.74-1963: turquoise), originating from Delhi and dated 15th century, together with another tile, described “Architecture, terracotta, glazed, Delhi, C13” (18.2178-1883, in storage), are also part of this museum’s collection.

to the rare still-standing monuments, some statements in archaeological reports attest to the findings of tiles during excavations. Thus, in the ASI report of 1871–72, notice is given of the discovery of greenish-glazed tiles next to the western wall of the Qubbat al-Islam Masjid:

“The excavations outside and at the foot of the centre of west wall disclosed the remains of a structure of rubble-dressed stone plaster and green enamelled tiles: the enamelled tiles were found lying in heaps, and several basket-loads have been found in this portion of the trenches.

The structure above-mentioned has been identified by General Cunningham with the Kushak Sabz, or green palace, mentioned in early Muhammadan History.”<sup>53</sup>

It is unfortunate that the whereabouts of these “basket-loads” of tiles are unknown; these would have helped in analyzing their composition and general aspect, furnishing some clues concerning their technology and hence the possible methods of their transmission. Moreover, this important trove is almost ignored in subsequent literature. It could be further added that information on the palaces of the first sultans of Delhi is almost non-existent. Other fragments of blue and greenish glazed tiles, excavated from the Qutb Minar area, are likewise reported by later excavations:

“It is worthy of mention that in the course of these excavations, there came to light a number of fragments of early blue-glazed tiles of geometric design approximately contemporary with the adjoining buildings. Tiles of the same kind were also recovered during General Cunningham’s excavations at the Qutb in 1871, and again during Mr. Sanderson’s excavations in 1913. Similar fragments are occasionally found within the area of Qila Rai Pithora, and there can be little doubt that

this particular kind of tile-work was extensively used for the decoration of early Muhammadan structures.”<sup>54</sup>

Also regarding the Lal Kot area, more recent surveys mention, “Among other finds ... fragments of Persian glazed tile with Arabic legends ... terracotta glazed tiles.”<sup>55</sup>

M.S. Gill further notes “fragmentary remains of blue tiles on the now ruined tomb of the later Mamluk sultan Ghiyath al-Din Balban in Delhi, dating to the last quarter of the thirteenth century.” He also mentions “a row of glazed bricks on the Mamluk period Shamsi Idgah, erected in 1209 CE at Badaun.”<sup>56</sup>

However, from these scattered findings, one might deduce that glazed tiles were used in the early decades of the Delhi sultanate. Moreover, these tiles provide information about the existence of monuments – and probably among them no less than a royal palace – about which nothing is known otherwise.

Furthermore, another striking feature is that the use of glazed tiles is accompanied by the local production of glazed wares. Their production was known at least from the Ghurid period onward (if not before).<sup>57</sup> Thus, one can read, among several other mentions (see annex 6) in the ASI report of Lal Kot, South Delhi District,

“The Phase II of Rajput period is characterized by the occasional appearance of plain glazed ware of

53 Concerning A. Cunningham’s excavation (1871–72) see J.D. Beglar and A.C.L. Carlisle, *Report for the Year 1871–72*, p. 28.

54 J. Marshall, *ASI Annual Report, 1916–17*, Calcutta, 1918, p. 3. See also G. Sanderson, “Archaeological Work at the Qutb, Delhi, 1912–13,” in J. Marshall (ed.) *ASI, Annual Report, 1912–13*, Calcutta, 1916, pp. 120–131.

55 ASI, 1991–92, pp. 14–15.

56 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 59. Concerning Badaun, he refers to Rahman 1988, 268.

57 At Hastinapura, fragments of glazed wares made with a whitish, sandy friable body are dated by a coin of Balban (1266–1287). See B.B. Lal, “Excavation at Hastinapura and other Explorations,” *Ancient India, Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India*, nos. 10–11, (1954–55), p. 71.



FIGURE 4.7  
The Shahi 'Idgah at Rapri  
(Uttar Pradesh), dated 1312  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2017

ordinary terracotta core ... The presence of glazed ware of ordinary core indicated that this phase was much closer to the Turkish invasion of Delhi as during the Muslim period its use was plentiful.”<sup>58</sup>

The “pre-Mughal period” proposed in most of the ASI reports for the periodization of these strata is stretched (late 12th–early 16th c.) and must be refined. Each of the collected items – especially the *fragments of Persian glazed tile with Arabic legends* quoted above – should be carefully studied. However, the whereabouts and preservation conditions of most of these findings are unknown and remain unpublished.

Another early landmark in the use of glazed tiles, which, contrary to the above-mentioned examples, concerns a still-standing monument, is found at Rapri, in Uttar-Pradesh (Fig. 4.7). The Shahi-'Idgah at Rapri was built in 1312 by Malik Kafur, under the reign of 'Ala' al-Din Khalji, as stated on an inscribed stone slab.<sup>59</sup> This well-

preserved wall mosque displays a full series of plain turquoise glazed tiles, still in situ.<sup>60</sup>

The monument comprises a 46 m long wall flanked by two hollow tower-like buttresses. Brick-built, its surface is divided into seven sections with 11 mihrab niches. These sections alternately display two small arched niches and one larger pointed one. However, the central section shows a different pattern since two superimposed slender pointed arches occupy its right side. The whole wall is crowned with *kanguras* (crenulation); the sections with a larger niche are higher than those with smaller double niches.

Turquoise-glazed tiles ran on the wall in horizontal and vertical lines, dividing the surface into 11 rectangular, vertical sections, each encasing on three sides a mihrab (small or large; Fig. 4.8).

The rectangular and flat tiles are made of pale pinkish clay covered with a turquoise glaze, apparently with no slip coating, meaning that the glaze

58 ASI, 1991–92, p. 12.

59 Beglar and Carlleyle, ASI Report 1871, pp. 219–20. The inscription was again published, transcribed, and translated in extenso by Ghulam Yazdani, “Inscriptions of the Khalji Sultans of Delhi,” *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* (1917–8), p. 30 and Pl. X. A partial

translation was published in ASI *Indian Archaeology, a Review 2007–08*, 150 and Pl. 67B.

60 ASI, vol. III (Calcutta, 1873), pp. 219–20. See also Muhammad Mokhlesur Rahman, “A Khalji 'Idgah at Rapri (1312): Reflections on its Glazed Tile Decoration,” *Islamic Studies*, 27, 3, (1988), pp. 267–268; Y. Porter, “The Shahi Idgah of 1312 at Rapri (Uttar Pradesh),” *Muqarnas* 35 (2018), pp. 281–91.



FIGURE 4.8 The Shahi 'Idgah at Rapri. Turquoise glazed tiles and traces of stucco  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2017



FIGURE 4.9 The Shahi 'Idgah at Rapri. Detail of turquoise glazed tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2017

was slightly opacified (Fig. 4.9). Although no analyses have been conducted yet, one can assume that the turquoise color was obtained with a copper oxide in an alkaline glaze, perhaps with added tin. These are probably the oldest known Delhi Sultanate tiles still in situ and thus constitute an important landmark in the history of glazing in the subcontinent.

Slightly later, the Begumpuri Masjid (c.1345) still retains traces of glazed tiles.<sup>61</sup> Two different types of tiles appear on the exterior southern façade arcades. The first type is situated in the spandrels of the arcades. They display an uncommon, molded form in the shape of a blooming lotus, and they are entirely coated with a turquoise glaze (Fig. 4.10). This type of molded tile in a high relief floral shape is unknown in the Iranian and Central Asian repertoires.

On the same side of the exterior façade but corresponding to the three naves of the prayer hall, a single square molded turquoise tile is inset on each of the three tympanums (Fig. 4.11). These tiles,

61 Y. Porter and R. Castinel, "Jahanpanah's Jami' Masjid (circa 1343): A Reassessment," *Muqarnas* 35 (2018), pp. 104–109.



FIGURE 4.10  
Begumpuri Masjid, Delhi, c.1343.  
Detail of the exterior façade of the  
southern *riwāq* showing molded  
turquoise glazed lotus tiles in the  
spandrels

PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2017



FIGURE 4.11  
Begumpuri Masjid, Delhi, c.1343.  
Tympanum on the exterior  
façade of the southern *riwāq* with  
turquoise-glazed molded tile

PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2017

decorated with hexagons and six-pointed stars in light relief, resemble a far echo of Ilkhanid prototypes, but in the latter, the tiles are arranged in an all-covering fashion, whereas in the Begumpuri, the tiles are isolated.

One could add that in its present state, this magnificent mosque is almost devoid of decoration. No foundation inscriptions are found in situ, and the decorative plaster and stonework are reduced to rare stucco blooming lotuses in some spandrels and cupolas. Despite the lack of epigraphy in the monument, which has previously led

to hesitations in its dating, the Begumpuri Masjid can now be safely attributed to Muhammad Tughluq.<sup>62</sup>

The monuments dating from the reign of Firuz Shah (1351–1388) do not show, in their present state, traces of large, tiled surfaces. Later buildings, particularly during the Sayyid period (1414–1451), are now likewise devoid of tiled décors. However, their current absence does not necessarily mean

62 Porter & Castinel, “Jahanpanah’s Jami‘ Masjid,” pp. 83–86.

that these monuments were originally tile-less. Thus, while describing the tomb of Mubarak Shah Sayyid in 1885, Cunningham mentioned some tiles that now appear to have disappeared: “There are small medallions of coloured glazed tiles in the spandrels of the arches, and a band of blue glazed tiles on the entrance gateway of the courtyard.”<sup>63</sup>

The use of glazed tiles during the early phases of the Delhi sultanate appears in summary as a partial and fragmented picture. However, some hints yielded by excavations or still in-situ examples show that glazed tiles were occasionally



FIGURE 4.12 Man Mandir palace, Gwalior Fort, late 15th–early 16th century, with its tiled decoration  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1986

63 Alexander Cunningham, *Report of a Tour in Eastern Rajputana in 1882–83*, Calcutta, Archaeological Survey of India, 1885, p. 154.

implemented in the architectural decoration. Particularly, the apparent austerity of Tughluq monuments is partly due to the disappearance of surface décors, either made of stucco, painted plaster, or tiles. Some elementary caution is thus necessary while evaluating early Sultanate architectural décors to avoid negative evidence.

## 2.2 Lodi Period

Contrary to the former period, the architecture of the Lodi makes frequent use of tiles. This taste for architectural polychromy, in which colored stones (white marble, red sandstone, black shale, grey quartzite) intermix with painted stucco and colorful tiles, continued up to the early Mughal period and later to the times of Jahangir.<sup>64</sup>

Most of the Delhi monuments decorated with colored tiles belong to the Sikandar Lodi period (1489–1517). However, these buildings do not have the monumental aspect of those from preceding periods.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, this tile flourishing is contemporary with the building of the Man Mandir palace at Gwalior, made for rajah Man Singh (1486–1516; Fig. 4.12). Its exterior façades, together with some of the inner courts, are richly decorated with colorful designs of passing ducks, parrots, fleurons, and banana trees, all made of cut-out monochrome tiles in turquoise, yellow, and green set into the stone walls. The origins and identities of the craftsmen responsible for this work are unknown. One could imagine that it was achieved by Muslim craftsmen originating from Delhi or Malwa, although, as indicated previously, this religious boundary may be less relevant than previously thought. Moreover, later Rajput palaces also display glazed tile decorations, such as in Orchhah or Chittorgarh, as will be noted below. This

64 Lahore displays spectacular examples of tile decoration, such as in the Fort, published by J. Ph. Vogel *Tile-mosaics of the Lahore Fort*. Other examples are present at Wazir Khan’s Masjid (1634), for instance.

65 Neither the Sayyids nor the Lodis are known for building great mosques or palaces in Delhi. Their major architectural contribution comprises tombs and small mosques.

explosion of color at the apex of the Lodi dynasty could be an expression of the period's prosperity and stability.

In Delhi, the first group of buildings distinguishes itself by the exclusive use of blue (often in hues of both turquoise and cobalt) monochrome tiles.<sup>66</sup>

The Bagh-i 'Alam ka Gumbad is a square-plan structure built in grey quartzite, that has the semblance of three levels and displays a composition on three vertical sections. According to the inscription on its western wall, it was built in 906/1501, during Sikandar Lodi's reign, by a certain Sultan Abu Sa'id over the grave of Miyan Shaikh Shihab al-Din Taj Khan, whose position at court must have been prominent.<sup>67</sup> A window above the southern door has a double frame in red sandstone intersected with blue tiles. Above this window, three small niches, also framed in red sandstone and white marble, are covered with blue tiles (Fig. 4.13). Other high windows and doors, which are well-preserved on the western wall, also have blue tiled spandrels.

This is also the case for the Nili Masjid, near Hauz-Khas, which owes its name to the blue tiles adorning the façade of the prayer hall. This opens with three pointed arches, dividing the façade into three sections. Above the central arch, an inscription on a stone slab declares that the mosque was built in 911/1505–1506 by Kasumbhil, wet nurse of Fath Khan, son of Khan-i 'Azam Masnad 'Ali Khawas Khan, governor of Delhi under the reign of



FIGURE 4.13 Bagh-i 'Alam ka Gumbad, Delhi, built in 1501. Detail of upper section of the southern façade with turquoise glazed tiles framed by red sandstone  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015

Sikandar Lodi.<sup>68</sup> Below the cornice of the central section stands a series of square, turquoise-glazed tiles; both lateral sections had a similar row of tiles placed above the *chajja* (Fig. 4.14). The crenelated band at the top of the central section also displayed blue tiles inserted into a checkered-cross pattern.

The Moth ki Masjid was built circa 1505 by Miyan Bhuwa, vizier under Sikandar and Ibrahim Lodi (1517–1526; the latter put him to death).<sup>69</sup> The mosque is on a raised platform enclosed by walls, with a monumental gate in red sandstone standing on its east side. The eastern side was flanked by two *chhatris*, although only the northeastern

66 While examining the glazes of Lodi monuments, Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 195, notes: "All samples from three of the Delhi buildings (BAG, SG and MM), and those from both the Punjab buildings (BT and HM) are of one typology (Type I). These are alkali glazes that exhibit characteristics of being fluxed using a plant ash source. The samples from the remainder two Delhi buildings (SL and JM) are of the second typology (Type II). These are also alkali glazes but exhibit characteristics instead of being fluxed using a mineral soda source."

67 Y.D. Sharma, *Delhi and its Neighbourhood*, New Delhi, ASI, 1974, pp. 81–82. Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 154–156 for description.

68 Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 84.

69 Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 78–79.



FIGURE 4.14

Nili Masjid, Delhi, built in 1505–6. Upper section of the façade with continuous band of turquoise glazed tiles

PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.15 Moth ki Masjid, Delhi, built circa 1505. Northeastern *chhatri* with remains of turquoise-glazed tiles

PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015

one remains. Some traces of tiles remain on this *chhatri*, on the octagonal band above the *chajja*, forming a continuous row of square turquoise tiles. The outer dome has lotus-petal designs that were probably filled with tiles; the blossoming lotus finial was also colored with this hue (Fig. 4.15).

The funerary *chhatri* overlooking the *baoli* (stepped well) known as Rajon-ki-bain, now included in the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, has an inscription dated 912/1506, under Sikandar Lodi's reign.<sup>70</sup> This small building, resting on grey quartzite columns, displays some turquoise tiles inlaid in the masonry: the first band is on the top of the square section, below the dome, in which tiles appear in cross-shaped compartments inside a crenulated frieze (Fig. 4.16). A second series of incrustated tiles highlights the crenulated motifs at the base of the dome. The topmost part of the dome is decorated with a lotus flower finial in high relief, and some traces of blue tiles remain between its petals. The dome might have been entirely covered with such tiles.

The so-called Jahaz Mahal monument – probably a mosque – has no date, but its style corresponds to the same period, and it also displays turquoise-blue glazed tiles on the *chhatris* resting on the terraced roof (Fig. 4.17).<sup>71</sup> These tiles are

<sup>70</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 64–65. Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 162–164 for description.



FIGURE 4.16  
 Rajon-ki-bain, Mehrauli  
 Archaeological Park (Delhi). Detail  
 of funerary *chhatri* dated 1506, with  
 turquoise-glazed tiles inserted in  
 stucco crenelated *kangura*  
 PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.17 Jahaz Mahal, next to Hauz-i Shamsi, Mehrauli, early 16th century  
 PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007



FIGURE 4.18 Chhote Khan-ka-Gumbad, early 16th century (?), Delhi, South-Extension  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2008

used either in a continuous band or incrusting in the crenulated motifs encircling the domes.<sup>72</sup> A band of tiles used to run at the top of the outer wall, under the molded cornice, although only some pieces remain.

These occasional uses of monochrome turquoise tiles in the times of the Lodi probably perpetuate an older tradition (as shown by the findings at Qutb Minar and on Khalji/Tughluq buildings). However, their superficial importance and combination with the stone and masonry polychromies are undoubtedly stronger than in earlier times.

The Chhote Khan-ka-Gumbad is an undated mausoleum, but its style and location (the so-called Tin-Burj area in Delhi's South Extension)

suggest the late Lodi period.<sup>73</sup> This mausoleum displays the habitual features and architectural scheme, namely a square plan with each façade divided into three vertical sections (Fig. 4.18). The southern central section opens with a door, and under the cornice are the remains of an uninterrupted frieze alternating turquoise-blue and emerald-green flat square tiles.<sup>74</sup>

In these first examples, tiles occupy restricted areas, and their hues are limited. Moreover, the shapes and layout of these tiles, together with how these are inserted into the masonry, differ considerably from the uses in Iranian or Central Asian décors. Moreover, at least two other buildings display more astonishing glazed decorations.

2.2.1 The Shishe-Gumbad (Late 15th Century)  
The mausoleum known as Shishe-Gumbad is undated (Fig. 4.19).<sup>75</sup> Located in the Lodi Garden, it faces the Bara Gumbad ensemble at about 50 m to the north. The latter forms a U-shaped ensemble comprising a central domed square building and two aisles, a mosque to the right, and to the left another building, which may be a madrasa or a *mihmān-khāna*, (guesthouse). The mosque, dated 900/1494, is probably anterior to the domed "entrance" building, while the *mihmān-khāna* is a later addition. Curiously, the qibla orientation of the Shishe-Gumbad shows a difference of a few degrees with the mosque's qibla, the latter being perfectly adjusted in a north-south orientation, as is the case with nearby Sikandar Lodi's tomb (see

72 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 158–160, adds the Madhi Masjid to the monuments decorated with blue tiles. Although undated, it is either Lodi or early Mughal. Two other Lodi period tombs, located in the Sirhind area (Punjab), are also included in his study (see description pp. 164–168). As explained by this author, the technology involved in making the Punjabi tiles differs from the examples from Delhi: "The two broad typologies that emerge utilizing this criteria follow the regional groupings associated with the tile-work, all the Delhi samples being one type or group while all the Punjab samples are encompassed in the other." (idem, p. 183).

73 The three tombs known as Tin-Burj are undated; they are in the vicinity of the so-called Kale Khan-ka-Gumbad, dated 889/1481 and not far from the ensemble of Mubarak Shah Seyyed (died 1434); see Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 86–87.

74 Following Gill's analyses, green is probably obtained with a mixture of yellow lead stannate and cobalt blue; see, Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 265–69.

75 Sharma, *Delhi*, 93–94; Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 156–158 for description.



FIGURE 4.19 Shishe-Gumbad, late 15th century, Lodi Garden, Delhi  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015

below). This slightly different orientation could suggest an earlier date for the Shishe-Gumbad.<sup>76</sup>

The mausoleum has a square plan with sides of about 16 m. It opens on three sides and is closed on the west, or qibla, side, and the four façades follow the same scheme. The central section has a large, pointed arch where the door opens, above which is an arched window, suggesting two different levels. The recessed side sections also display two arched levels, some of them opening with windows. The walls are mainly built with grey quartzite, with some highlights in red sandstone. However, the type of decoration that has given its name to the monument (glass dome) is formed by

a series of glazed tiles in various hues and arrangements. The lateral sections display two cornices, the first marking the “first” level and the second on the top of the wall. The first cornice has a row of cobalt-blue square tiles with narrow turquoise framing, whereas the top one alternates cobalt and turquoise tiles, with the same turquoise framing. The central section displays a more complex scheme, with a large horizontal band of nine red sandstone squares framed with a row of alternating cobalt and turquoise tiles (Fig. 4.20). Inside the red sandstone frames are large painted rectangular tiles in white, turquoise, and cobalt.

Although many tiles are now missing or badly damaged, it can be observed that each of them displayed different patterns: an exterior inscribed frame runs around an arched form. Inside this frame, the field shows either epigraphic bands or scroll motifs around a central arched inscribed cartouche (Fig. 4.21). The inscriptions are repetitive and often incomplete; they comprise Perso-Arabic

76 Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 296–97, adds an interesting remark concerning the dating of this tomb: “That Sheesh Gumbad predates Sikandar Lodhi’s tomb is determined through the compositions of its tile glazes, these being of a [plant ash] variety that ceased to be employed after the establishment of the Delhi tile industry.”



FIGURE 4.20 Shishe-Gumbad, detail of upper section of southern façade  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015

formulae (*baqāʾ-i ʿumr-i tu ʿāfiyat bād ...* “May the rest of your life be safe”?). One of the tiles (south façade, third from left) shows a field pattern in blue and white, figuring lotus flowers and scrolls in a chinoiserie style (Fig. 4.22). The number of sultanate objects with such motifs is extremely rare, making this tile particularly interesting. Most of the other tiles display vegetal-inspired motifs, including a rolled leaf with leaflets; this pattern reappears on some of the blue and white tiles of the Jamali-Kamali tomb (see below).

Painted tiles, either under or overglaze, are extremely rare in Sultanate architecture. However, the excavations at Purana Qila, Champaner, and other Sultanate sites have yielded quantities of glazed painted vessels.<sup>77</sup> This indicates that the

technology for producing painted tiles was available. In Delhi, some other rare examples of painted tiles are observed in Sikandar Lodi’s tomb and, as mentioned above, in the Jamali-Kamali tomb.

2.2.2 Mausoleum of Sikandar Lodi (1489–1517)  
Sikandar Lodi’s funerary enclosure is a square with sides of about 80 m, and turrets at the corners.<sup>78</sup> The main entrance, on the south side, is reached by a staircase leading to a terrace with two *chhatris* on the southeast and southwest corners (Fig. 4.23). These were abundantly decorated with colored tiles: square in plan, four grey quartzite pillars support them. The first square transition zone, divided into two sections by a cornice, starts above the red sandstone *chajja*.

77 At Purana Qila, a porcelain ware of the Cheng Hua era (1465–87) and a coin of ʿAdil Shah Suri (1552–53) have also been found; see Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 126.

78 Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 94–95; and Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 160–162 for description.



FIGURE 4.21 Shishe-Gumbad, detail of underglaze painted tile with Persian inscriptions  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.22 Shishe-Gumbad, detail of underglaze painted tile with Persian inscriptions and blue and white chinoiserie motifs  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.23 Mausoleum of Sikandar Lodi, c.1517. Lodi Garden, Delhi. Southern entrance with terrace and *chhatris*  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

A first pyramidal dome with sloping sides surmounts it, followed by a second square section and a second pyramidal dome. These complex structures show the remains of several rows of tiles. Curiously, slight pattern variations occur between the two *chhatris*' upper domes (Fig. 4.24).

From the bottom upward,

- The first square transition zone:
  - Green and yellow square tiles (on edge) framed by two narrow cobalt bands
  - Narrow cobalt blue band on the cornice
  - Crenulated red sandstone frieze with incrustated checkered cross in cobalt
- Lower dome covered with turquoise/cobalt tiles (in continuity with previous?)



FIGURE 4.24 Detail of southwest *chhatra* at the entrance of Sikandar Lodi's Mausoleum  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015

- Second transition zone:
    - Edgewise green and yellow square (southwest *chhatra*)/eight-pointed star tiles (southeast) framed with narrow cobalt bands
    - Above the upper cornice are traces of a fleuron band (on southeast *chhatra*); the dome was probably covered with turquoise and/or cobalt tiles.
- The entrance gate was also decorated with tiles, although only tiny remains are visible in its present dilapidated state.

The mausoleum is an octagon of 23 m in diameter. The funerary chamber is encircled by a portico formed by three pointed arches on each side of the octagon, the central one being slightly larger, and the angles are supported with sloping buttresses.

Now, no tiles remain on the exterior surfaces of the tomb, but a comparison with the typologically similar tomb of Issa Khan (see below) might indicate its former color scheme. The facing is mainly made of grey quartzite, with some notes in red sandstone together with lime mortar/stucco in the upper portions. This stucco coating, present on

the outer façade and veranda, might have had sections decorated with tile mosaic, although none of it remains. The central dome rises over a 16-sided drum, each of its corners being marked by a *gul-dasta* (pinnacle). These were anciently covered with small square edgewise tiles whose imprints on the plaster coating remain visible. The *chhatris* on the roof, probably also once decorated with tiles, have disappeared.

Contrary to the tomb's exterior, the funerary chamber retains a large part of its tile decoration (Fig. 4.25). Each wall of the octagonal room has a slightly recessed pointed arch, divided into two sections: the lower part opens with a door (except on the west, qibla wall), while the upper section opens with a small arched window. The remains of tiled décor concern only this upper section.

- The topmost part of the arches is bordered on three sides (all but the bottom) by a rectangular frame festooned with a band of peacock-eye motifs in turquoise and white. The spandrels, originally painted with reddish stucco, are



FIGURE 4.25  
Interior of Sikandar  
Lodi's Mausoleum.  
Upper section of the  
walls  
PHOTO Y. PORTER,  
2015

decorated with stucco roundels, alternating epigraphic and geometric designs inside turquoise or cobalt circles.

- The arches extrados follow two alternating patterns: a lam-alif floral motif in green and cobalt and a frieze alternating green flowers and cobalt almond-shaped motifs (Fig. 4.26).
- The inner recessed niche has a stucco tympanum bordered with tiles painted blue and white, with a fleuron garland (Fig. 4.27).
- A second rectangular frame borders the small arched window; this also alternates two models: the first pattern has a central band made of cross-and-star tiles painted yellow and turquoise, bordered on both sides with painted narrow bands in white and turquoise (Fig. 4.28.). The second pattern shows rows of medallions alternating with floral motifs in green and cobalt mosaic.<sup>79</sup>
- The spandrels in the inner niche also had some tile decoration, but most of it is now gone.

The 16-sided drum is decorated with pointed arches, only four of them being open. All the arches are framed with a continua of squares, while the extrados and spandrel roundels in cobalt, green,



FIGURE 4.26 Interior of Sikandar Lodi's Mausoleum. Detail of extrados with tiles forming a *lam-alif* floral motif in green and cobalt  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015

79 O'Kane, "Mughal Tilework," p. 28 and Fig. 6, suggests sgraffito instead.



FIGURE 4.27 Interior of Sikandar Lodi's Mausoleum. The tympanum inside the recessed arch is bordered by a frieze of blue and white painted tiles.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015



FIGURE 4.28 Interior of Sikandar Lodi's Mausoleum. A band of turquoise and yellow painted tiles frames the rectangular recess  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2015

turquoise, and white tile mosaic alternate two different patterns.

Undoubtedly, the richness – both in hues and techniques – of Sikandar Lodi's tomb tile decoration was astonishing, although large parts are now missing. A similar example of tiled décor, limited to the drum area but dating from the period following the end of the Lodi dynasty, is visible at the Purana Qila Mosque (see below), offering

some continuity. The arrival of the Mughals, after Babur's victory at Panipat in 1526, did not represent a real rupture with the immediately previous architecture. Moreover, and as mentioned, Gwalior's Man Mandir is another almost contemporary example of tiling on a large scale. The late 15th–early 16th century appears to have been a flourishing period for original-colored tiled décors in Delhi.

### 2.3 *First Mughal Period and Suri Intermezzo (1526–1560)*

Only a few monuments can be attributed with certainty to the first Mughal period (1526–1540), that is, before Sher Shah Suri's coup. Among these, only a single example, the tomb of Jamali-Kamali, shows important remains of a tiled décor. Later monuments built between the flight of Humayun and the beginning of Akbar's reign (between 1540–1556) are often difficult to date precisely since the identity of their builders is problematic. An exception is Issa Khan's funerary complex.

The difficulty in identifying the patrons of some buildings, such as the gates and mosque of Purana Qila, might be explained because their style, together with the tiling techniques, does not show an abrupt rupture compared with the previous period. However, by the end of this period, after Akbar's accession, several new patterns appeared in the tile mosaic.

#### 2.3.1 The Jamali-Kamali Ensemble

Shaikh Fazlullah, known as Jalal Khan, or under his *nom de plume*, Jamali, was a saint and poet who lived between the times of Sikandar Lodi and Humayun.<sup>80</sup> The mosque next to his tomb was built under Babur, about 1528–29. From the style viewpoint, it is situated between the Moth ki Masjid and the Purana Qila Masjid, and it has no trace of tiles. Conversely, the tomb, situated in a walled enclosure next to the mosque, is probably slightly later, since Jamali died about 10 years after the mosque's completion in 1535–36, and its tile decoration has some outstanding features (Fig. 4.29).

The tomb has a square plan of 6 m per side; it has a flat roof bordered by a *chajja* and red sandstone brackets. Between each bracket, a pair of blue and white-painted tiles makes a continuous band under the *chajja* (Fig. 4.30). These square

tiles have a reserved white ground over which are cobalt blue designs in the shapes of scrolls, flowers, and geometric star motifs, each tile being different (Fig. 4.31). The designs are not particularly accurate. However, as indicated, some motifs resemble those on the tiles of the Shishe-Gumbad, as is the case with a recurrent foliated scroll. As previously mentioned, painted tiles are extremely rare in Northern Indian sultanate architecture. Blue and white tiles are reminiscent of examples from Sind or Multan, but a closer observation shows that the two productions are unconnected, especially because the Multan tiles often show more accurate designs, together with the mixed use of turquoise and cobalt blues.

Above the *chajja*, a continuous band of painted tiles figures a fleuron garland in blue on a white ground, and the same hues were probably present around the door frame, forming a narrow band of S-like motifs, although only tiny sections remain. The cornice is highlighted with a narrow cobalt blue line, with the crenelated upper section resting on a turquoise tiled band, and several tiles are still visible.

The interior décor mixes painted plaster with stucco reliefs and colored tiles, mainly used in mosaic. The chamber has a square plan, each side having an arch closed by *jalis*. Above the openings, it divides into an octagon with squinches, followed by a 16-sided polygon.

The dado, which is only preserved in some sections, is made of a mosaic of geometric elements (polygons and stars), mainly in cobalt blue. The top dado border is decorated with yellow and cobalt cartouches (Fig. 4.32).

The squinches have a succession of stucco and tile mosaic bands, the spandrels being framed with a narrow band in cobalt and white, figuring the peacock-eye motif (noticed in Sikandar Lodi's tomb). Alternating with the squinches, flat recessed niches are decorated with stucco and tile tympanums in geometric patterns. The extremely narrow 16-sided upper polygon is decorated with eight distiches from Jamali. Moreover, all this

<sup>80</sup> Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 66–67; see also Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, p. 199.



FIGURE 4.29  
Tomb of Jamali-Kamali, Mehrauli,  
circa 1546  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.30  
Tomb of Jamali-Kamali. Detail of upper  
section of the façade. Under the red  
sandstone *chajja*, frieze of square blue  
and white underglaze painted tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2015



FIGURE 4.31  
Tomb of Jamali-Kamali. Detail of the  
square blue and white underglaze painted  
tiles under the *chajja*  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

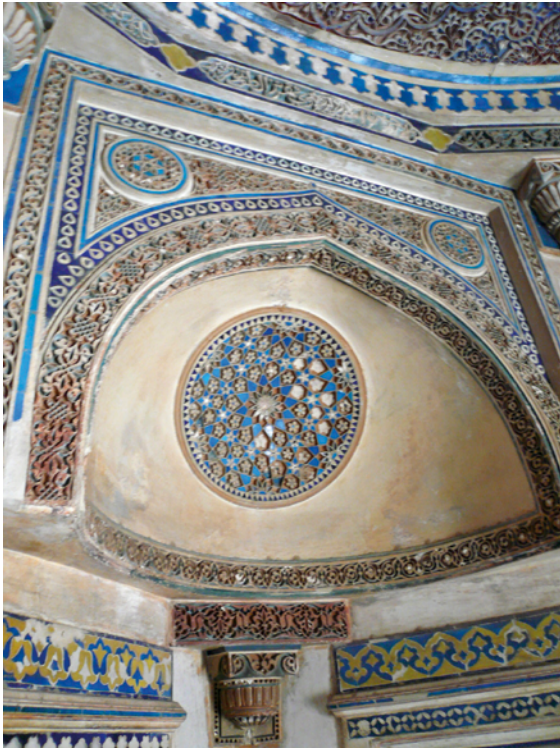


FIGURE 4.32 Interior of the Tomb of Jamali-Kamali. Squinch with stucco and tile decoration  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

transition zone is punctuated by tiles in cobalt and turquoise, the tiled lines emphasizing the architectural lines.

The vivid polychromy of this chamber is still enhanced by the painted flat roof, whose huge and intricate medallion, in blue and red, takes inspiration from the opening frontispiece *shamsas* from contemporary manuscripts.

### 2.3.2 'Issa Khan's Funerary Complex

The funerary complex of 'Issa Khan, situated close to Humayun's tomb, is the only undoubtedly Suri monument in Delhi displaying a colorful tiled decoration.<sup>81</sup> This person held an important position at the court of Sher Shah Suri and his son Islam Shah (1545–54). An inscription over the mihrab in the western wall of the tomb chamber reads,

81 Sharma, *Delhi*, 111–112; Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 207–209.

“This tomb, which is an asylum of paradise, was built during the reign of Islam Shah, son of Sher Shah, may God perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, by Masnad 'Ali 'Issa Khan, son of Niyaz Aghwan, the chief chamberlain, in the Hijra year 954 (AD 1547–48).”<sup>82</sup>

The ensemble is walled by an irregular octagonal enclosure (so-called Baghdadi octagon, with four long sides and four shorter ones), 125 m in diameter, the angles provided with circular bastions. Its orientation is slightly different from the nearby monuments (Bu Halima Garden and Tomb, Afsarwala mosque and tomb, Humayun's tomb, 'Arab-Saray), all of them probably being later buildings. The entrance, on the north side, is made through a monumental gateway; the tomb is further enclosed by a low octagonal wall (60 m diam.). The octagonal mausoleum (23 m diam.) stands on a plinth about a meter high. A funerary mosque is present on the western enclosure wall.

The general scheme follows the pattern of Sayyid and Lodi royal tombs. A veranda encircles the octagonal chamber, each of its sides opening with three pointed arches, supported by strong grey quartzite pillars, and the upper sections are coated with stucco. Some tiled decorations are visible on their spandrels (Fig. 4.33). A narrow border with the ubiquitous peacock-eye motif forms a continuous band framing the arches, with the extrados and the inner border of the spandrels are highlighted by a narrow cobalt line. The roundels in the spandrels are alternatively circled in turquoise and green.

Above the *chajja*, the crenulated band has merlons ornamented with almond-shaped motifs in turquoise tiles alternating *Allah* and flower motifs. The eight *chhatris* on the roof were abundantly decorated with tiles, and on top of the *chajja*, a first band shows edgewise cobalt tiles with a narrow cobalt frame followed by a cornice (Fig. 4.34).

82 Inscription cited by S.A.A. Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb and Adjacent Buildings*, (new edition.) New Delhi, ASI, 2002, p. 73.



FIGURE 4.33  
Mausoleum of 'Issa Khan, 1547–8,  
Delhi. Detail of arched gallery with tiled  
spandrels  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2008



FIGURE 4.34  
Mausoleum of 'Issa Khan. Detail of tiled  
*chhatri* on the roof  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2008

Over it is a frieze of head-to-tail fleurons in turquoise tiles. The domes were initially covered entirely with green and yellow tiles, their original arrangement now being unreadable. Assuredly, this mausoleum was in its time dazzling with its polychromy. The central inner dome has traces of a tiled décor in the transition zone, reminiscent of the one described at Sikandar Lodi's tomb.

The adjoining wall mosque displays an elegant façade with three pointed arches of the same

height, the central one being enhanced by a large red sandstone facing. The side arches open on a grey quartzite facing, the upper section being cut by the *chajja*, giving these sections a lowered aspect. The spandrels of the three arches are decorated with tiles forming a type of *alfiz* frames on the whole upper section, with a turquoise band. The extrados has a frieze of edgewise tiles in yellow and green (sides) or turquoise and cobalt (central). The central roundels have sunflower-like

motifs in turquoise with a heart inscribed with Allah, while the side ones are in stucco encircled with a narrow green band.

The following monuments, being the gates and mosque of Purana Qila, together with the so-called Lal Darwaza, might have been started during the first reign of Humayun but were continued and completed in the following reigns.

### 2.3.3 Purana Qila's Gates

The Purana Qila (or *Qal'a* "Old Fort") was built on the supposed ancient site of Indraprastha, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*.<sup>83</sup> Humayun is credited with the building of Dinpanah city, but Sher Shah Suri would have demolished it and replaced it with the present fort. No actual date is visible on it, except for two graffiti (see below). Its building may have included three stages: Humayun's foundation, Sher Shah's restoration and embellishments, and finally, Akbar's restorations. It is known that in *Jumada* II 967 /March 1560, Shihab al-Din Ahmad Khan, Akbar's governor of Delhi, was engaged in the consolidation and restoration of the Fort's walls.<sup>84</sup>

With a perimeter of about 2 km, the wall opens with three gates, each being of a different pattern. The northwest gate, called Talaqi Darwaza (Forbidden Gate), was probably never in use, this perhaps explaining its name. With an attractive grey facing, the gate opens with an arch over which are two *jharokas*. Above them, square frames in blue tiles are adorned with white marble high reliefs with mutilated animal motifs (lion and griffin?), the ensemble being on a red sandstone facing. Some traces of tiles are also visible on the domes of the *jharokas*. At the top of the wall, under the cornice, is a fleuron frieze in cobalt and turquoise against a white marble ground.

Some scribbling in ink existed in a recess at the Talaqi Darwaza, among which was a mention of Humayun, and it is possible that the gate was either constructed by him or at least repaired by him.<sup>85</sup> Another graffiti, dated from 950 (1543–44), that mentioned Sher Shah Suri was found at the Humayun (or Southern) Darwaza.<sup>86</sup>

The third gate, or Bara Darwaza, opens to the west of the citadel and is now the only operating one. Two massive towers frame it; on the top of the right one is a tiled *chhatra*. A large arch opens in the façade, framing the doorway; the facing of this wall portion is mainly in red sandstone. The spandrels over the arch have white marble facing and are adorned with a pair of six-pointed stars (Solomon's seal) in black shale. This ornament is probably characteristic of Akbar's reign. It is present at Humayun's tomb as well as on Akbar monuments at Fatehpur Sikri and Agra and remains visible at Khan-i Khanan's tomb, for instance.<sup>87</sup> It thus appears reasonable to attribute this gate to the first years of Akbar's reign.

The upper red sandstone section has three openings: a central arched window and *jharokas* on both sides. The domes of the *jharokas* are adorned with several rows of colored tiles, and immediately above the *chajja*, yellow square tiles are framed with cobalt blue. A turquoise cornice is followed upward by a band of head-to-tail fleurons and the pyramidal dome is tiled in turquoise. This type of decoration pattern is still extremely close to the examples observed at Sikandar Lodi's tomb, for instance.

Conversely, the top of the wall displays a parapet that was entirely covered with a once magnificent and innovative composition decorated in tile mosaic, unfortunately now much dilapidated. Large head-to-tail fleurons were filled with

83 Sharma, *Delhi*, pp. 122–129. The excavations have yielded Painted Grey Ware pottery, also found at other sites associated with the Mahabharata and dated around 1000 BC. See Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb*, p. 18.

84 Abu al-Fazl, *Akbar-nāma*, transl. H. Beveridge, reprint Delhi, Atlantic, 1989, II, p. 143.

85 Naqvi, *Humayun's Tomb*, p. 18; Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 123.

86 On tiles on Humayun Darwaza, see, Gill, *Glazed tiles from Lodhi and Mughal northern India*, pp. 206–207.

87 See John Burton-Page, "The Sitara-i Sulayman in Indian Muslim Art," in C.E. Bosworth, ed. *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times. Essays in Honour of Bernard Lewis*, Princeton, Darwin Press, 1989, pp. 75–87.



FIGURE 4.35  
Bara Darwaza, Purana Qila, 1560s (?), Delhi.  
Detail of the upper section, with polychrome  
tile mosaic

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007



FIGURE 4.36  
Purana Qila's Mosque, mid-16th century. Inner  
drum of the central dome with polychrome  
tiled arches

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

nine-petal lotuses, in white, yellow, turquoise, green, and cobalt (Fig. 4.35).

#### 2.3.4 Purana Qila's Mosque

Few monuments are preserved inside the Fort, besides the Mosque (Qal'a-i-Kuhna-Masjid), allegedly dated 1541 and built during Sher Shah Suri's reign.<sup>88</sup> In terms of style, it represents the last stage in the evolution of the "Lodi" mosque, following the Moth ki Masjid, the Bara Gumbad, and the Jamali-Kamali Mosque. All these examples have a

prayer hall opening through five arches, balconied windows, and angle turrets with several galleries.

The façade of Qal'a-i-Kuhna-Masjid is remarkable for the richness of its polychromy. Most of the facing is made with grey quartzite, but red sandstone is also used, especially for the three central arches. In these, the sandstone is combined with white marble and touches of black shale.

Tiled decoration exists in the inner drum of the central (*maqsurā*) cupola (Fig. 4.36). Above the squinches is a 16-sided transition zone, each side adorned with tiles. The panels are framed with a band of blue quatrefoils over a white ground, each panel separated by a vertical strip with chevron motifs in blue, white, green, and yellow. Inside each

88 To my knowledge, this mosque has no dated inscription; Burton-Page, "The Sitara-i Sulayman," pp. 79–80, discusses its patron, without securing a date.

panel is an arch framed with a band alternating cobalt almond-shaped motifs and green roundels. Four pointed arches open with a window, while the other arches are furnished with a recessed arch framed with a band of turquoise roundels, the interior of the flat niche being dressed alternately with cobalt over yellow ground patterns of eight-pointed stars or roundels. This drum is reminiscent of the one in Sikandar Lodi's Tomb and from a stylistic viewpoint, it predates the Bara Darwaza decoration.

### 2.3.5 Lal Darwaza

The monumental gate known as Lal Darwaza is situated in front of the Purana Qila, on the other side of Mathura Road, and follows the same north-east southwest orientation as the Fort's northern wall, at about 200 m.<sup>89</sup> The gate opens amid the remains of a wall about 100 m long. It is supposed to be one of the main gates in Sher Shah Suri's capital city, although no inscription gives its date of construction.

The southeastern façade of the gate has a grand facing of grey quartzite with large red sandstone panels and notes of white marble (Fig. 4.37). The northern façade, in its turn, is much more ruined, exposing the inner part of the wall, made of rubble masonry.<sup>90</sup> In the gate axis, on the southern side,

is an avenue bordered by what appear to be shops, forming a type of bazaar alley about 130 m long.

A close examination of the southern wall shows the remains of a once fine tiled décor. A large arch, in a central position, occupies three-quarters of the façade's height. The facing inside the arch is divided into three horizontal sections, the middle one being in red sandstone. The doorway opens in the two lower sections, its pointed arch being in the red sandstone section. A white marble incrustated line forms the spandrel design with a pair of sun-like roundels also incrustated with white marble. Above the doorway arch is a pointed arched window; a frieze of head-to-tail fleurons in turquoise and yellow mosaic tiles crowns this.

On both sides of the central arch, the walls have a quartzite facing and on the continuity of the red sandstone central facing these walls each display three red sandstone squares, above which are intersected arches forming flat compartments (Fig. 4.38). The red sandstone squares were framed with a tile mosaic. The two lateral squares had an outer frame in yellow and turquoise and a second inner frame with yellow quatrefoils over a cobalt ground; the color scheme was probably inverted in the central square.

The interior of the intersecting arches was once adorned with intricate patterns also made of tile mosaic. The central panel displayed a large trilobed fleuron garnished with a nine-petal lotus pattern, while the side panels displayed intersecting hexagons.

This tiled décor, now in an extremely poor condition, is of a high standard. It is reminiscent of the works visible on the top of Purana Qila's Bara Darwaza but also on later buildings such as Atagah Khan's tomb in nearby Nizamuddin. However, its dating is puzzling, as the style of the tile decoration indicates a dating in the first years of Akbar's

89 This orientation is all the more visible because the nearby mosque, Khayr al-Manazil (1561), is perfectly oriented according to a north-south axis, parallel to Mathura Road; the mosque thus forms a 45° angle with the exit of the Lal Darwaza.

90 It is unclear whether the gates open toward the city on its north or its southern side; Y.D. Sharma writes that the city was on its northern side (Sharma, *Delhi*, p. 128); a second gate, situated about 3 km to the north of Lal Darwaza, and currently known as Khunin Darwaza (or "Bloody Gate," because it was the place where two of Bahadur Shah Zafar's sons were killed after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857), is supposed to be the northern gate of the city. This configuration appears odd because of the minute number of preserved monuments in this area (see below 'Abd'un-Nabi Mosque, for instance). Moreover, a causeway bordered with shops opens on the southern side of the gate. It appears strange that this "bazaar" opened outside the city. Following the

same direction eastward, at about 920 m (0.5 miles), is a milestone (*kos-minar*, now in the precinct of Delhi's Zoo) dating from Jahangir and indicating the ancient layout of the road to Mathura; on the *kos-minar*, see H.C. Fanshawe, *Shah Jahan's Delhi, Past and Present*, (1902, reprint Delhi, Sumit, 1979), p. 229.



FIGURE 4.37  
Lal Darwaza, mid. 16th century (?), Delhi  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2008



FIGURE 4.38  
Lal Darwaza, detail of  
intersecting arches and  
polychrome tile mosaic  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2008

and not during Sher Shah's reign, although he is credited with its building.

Tiled décors, and especially the cut-out mosaic technique, were well-developed in the Lodi era and the arrival of Babur did not signify a break in this type of craftsmanship. Evidently, the patterns of Akbar's Delhi period differ from the previous one, especially due to the intricacy of their designs (both nine-petal lotus and intersecting hexagons, for instance).

The examples of painted tiles remained relatively rare until the picture changed dramatically with the appearance of the so-called "black-line" (or *cuerda seca*) tiles during the 17th century.<sup>91</sup>

•••

91 Often termed as "encaustic tiles" in early 20th-century literature.

Until now, the art of tiling in the Delhi sultanate was a somewhat discarded topic, only included as a minor aspect of architectural decoration. The present section demonstrates that its use was almost continuous since the late 13th century and probably linked to the local industry of glazed wares. Some periods are illustrated by more dazzling examples than others, and in this sense, the reign of Sikandar Lodi constitutes an important landmark. The origins and means of transmission of this craft's techniques and aesthetics remain obscure. Undoubtedly, most of the examples shown here do not aim to imitate how tiles were used in other regions; conversely, they adapted to the specific materials, building techniques, and architectural features of the Delhi region. Basing observations on actual remains, it appears that, contrary to Iranian or Central Asian (or Deccani) examples, colored tiles were not used for monumental inscriptions in Delhi during the pre-Mughal era.

The use of glazed tiles naturally continued during the subsequent periods of Mughal rule, especially during Akbar's reign. Among later *Akbari* monuments, the Khayr al-Manazil mosque (dated 969/1561–2), Atagah Khan's tomb in Nizamuddin (974/1566–7), as well as the so-called Nila Gumbad and the Sabz-Burj (both undated), were once spectacularly decorated with tiles on an unprecedented scale.<sup>92</sup> In terms of all-over tiled decoration, these examples were outpaced by the Chini ka Rauza (1635) in Agra, unpaired in this North Central Indian area (Fig. 4.39). In terms of covered surface, all these examples cannot compete with the large-scale décors present in the Punjab, such as the Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore (1045/1634–5).

Few examples remain in Delhi from the time of Jahangir, except for the south gate of the so-called 'Arab-sarai next to Humayun's tomb, built by one



FIGURE 4.39 Polychrome mosaic tile decoration on the Chini ka Rauza, 1635, Agra  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

Mehr Banu Qadimi Jahangir-shahi.<sup>93</sup> Few other examples are known dating from the reign of Shah Jahan, besides the entrance pavilion to Roshanara Garden.

Usually dated to the time of Aurangzeb are the polychrome, black-line tiles from the Dargah of Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli (Fig. 4.40). Contrary to the plain glazed tiles or the cut-out mosaic, this type of black-line polychrome tile, decorated with floral patterns (lilies, poppies), belongs to a specific Mughal repertoire starting during the time of Shah Jahan.

The evolution of tile-making techniques was thus extremely slow, except for some isolated cases, with underglaze-painted tiles produced under the Lodis and the later introduction of the

92 For all these early Mughal examples, see Porter, "Revêtements émaillés des premiers Moghols à Delhi," pp. 263–299.

93 Porter, "Revêtements émaillés des premiers Moghols à Delhi," p. 282.



FIGURE 4.40  
Dargah of Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki,  
Mehrauli. Polychrome “black-line” (so-called  
*cuerda seca*) tiles with floral motifs, probably  
second part of 17th century  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

black-line décors. However, this survey might be incomplete, and it could be assumed that many other, now vanished, tile revetments existed in the Delhi area.

In parallel, the study of glazed vessels conducted in Delhi offers a much less clear and uninterrupted picture. Surprisingly, the Mughal period is less documented and characterized, while archaeological surveys give a nearly continuous picture of the glazed vessels used during the Sultanate period. Utilitarian Mughal glazed wares is a completely uncharted domain. In this field, some glazed pipes such as those inserted in the walls of Jahangiri Mahal in Agra Fort are noteworthy, although still never addressed in scholarly publications (see Fig. 4.41).

In addition, almost nothing is known, neither, about the “luxury” vessels used by the elites besides imported Chinese wares either (Fig. 4.42).<sup>94</sup>

Curiously, museum collections display practically no locally produced fine wares for the whole Mughal period (Fig. 4.43).<sup>95</sup> Thus, the emergence of the so-called “Delhi Blue Pottery,” maybe

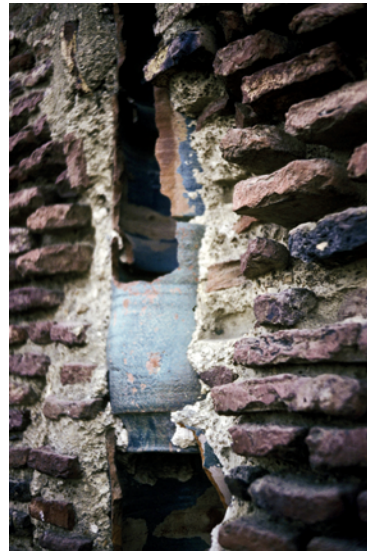


FIGURE 4.41  
Turquoise glazed pipes inserted in the  
walls of the Jahangiri Mahal in Agra  
Fort, early 17th century  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

during the late 18th or early 19th century, currently appears unconnected with any tradition of fine glazed vessels or with tile-making.

While describing “minor arts” from Delhi in the early years of the 20th century, Fanshawe wrote,

date of 150–250 years old. See Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*, Cat. v.1, pp. 482–83.

94 Asok K. Das, “Chinese porcelain at the Mughal court,” in *Silk Road art and archaeology*, 2 (1991/92), pp. 383–409; Porter, “Martabani,” pp. 455–57.

95 In this regard, the frit-ware plate, painted in cobalt and turquoise, now in the al-Sabah collection, appears as an exception. Its thermoluminescence test gave a



FIGURE 4.42 Celadon dish with an inscription (on the back) in the name of prince Shuja' son of Shah Jahan, dated 1646  
RED FORT MUSEUM, DELHI.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007



FIGURE 4.43 Fragment of underglaze painted plate, found at Purana Qila, first half of 16th century (?)  
PURANA QILA MUSEUM, DELHI.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2007

“Minor art products are ivory miniatures and ivory carvings, but these are no longer of high quality, while the manufacture of the finer blue Delhi pottery has entirely ceased.”<sup>96</sup>

This affirmation suggests that this “Delhi blue pottery” was once a common commodity, but little is known about the topic besides the productions of the last quarter of the 19th century.<sup>97</sup>

96 Fanshawe, *Shah Jahan's Delhi*, p. 13.

97 In his work published in 1884 (*The industrial arts of India*, London, 1884), George C.M. Birdwood mentions Delhi pottery (“The glazed pottery of Sindh is made principally at Hala, Hyderabad, Tatta, and Jerruck, and that of the Panjab at Lahore, Multan, Jang, Delhi, and elsewhere.” p. 390), adding a plate with a vase made in Delhi (pl. 76). Regarding Burmese pottery, Watt writes (Watt, *Indian Art*, p. 94), “Mr. Lockwood Kipling while discussing the question of the jars made in Delhi and which bear the vernacular name of *martabán* observes: ‘In 1869 the writer, while passing through Delhi, purchased a number of jars and took them to the London Exhibition of 1870 where their fine texture of glaze, a rough duck-egg like coating, was admired by connoisseurs, notably the late Mr. Fortuny, a celebrated Spanish painter, then visiting England. Incidentally, one of these articles was marked *martabán*, the native name for a jar, and was afterwards described on a

Following a suggestion by R. Skelton, Tanvir Hasan notes that the *Mirzā-nāmah* mentions glazed ceramics being produced in 17th-century Delhi.<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, it is interesting to observe that in 1952, Gurcharan Singh, a Punjabi potter, started making what was termed “Delhi Blue Pottery.” He achieved this with the help of a Muslim potter from Khurja named Abdallah: this production

museum label as originating from Martaban, a port on the Burmese coast.”

It is unclear, according to Kipling's statement, whether these jars were made in Delhi or in Burma. I have unsuccessfully tried to find one of these jars; I do not know whether Fortuny bought any of these; no trace of them is visible in the Paris sale catalog (1875) or in the inventory after Fortuny's death in Rome. See *Atelier Fortuny. Œuvre posthume, objets d'art et de curiosité*. 26 avril 1875, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 1875; and Carlos G. Navarro, “Testamentaria e inventario de bienes de Mariano Fortuny en Roma,” *Locus Amœnus* 9, (2007–2008), pp. 319–349.

98 Hasan, “Ceramics of Sultanate India,” p. 83. He refers to the anonymous manuscript, BL, Ms Add. 16819, *Mirzā-nāma*, and to Aziz Ahmad, “The British Museum *Mirzā-nāma* and the Seventeenth Century Mirza in India,” *Iran*, 8 (1975), pp. 99–110.

lasted until 1986.<sup>99</sup> However, it is noteworthy that the beginning of the pottery industry at Khurja, still prolific and now much industrialized, is relatively obscure and, unfortunately, poorly documented.<sup>100</sup>

### 3 Gaur and the Bengal Sultanate

Tiles from Bengal, mainly represented on the monuments of Gaur, form a peculiar chapter amidst Sultanate architecture.<sup>101</sup> As shown below, their techniques, motifs, and setting in the architecture are radically different from the works present in the other regions of the subcontinent. Moreover, as mentioned previously, tiles from Gaur are almost the only Sultanate period examples present in museum showcases, such as in London's Victoria and Albert Museum (see below).

Most Bengali lands are situated on alluvial plains, and as stone is seldom found, monuments are generally built of brick (Fig. 4.44). The custom of using bricks probably generated terracotta architectural decoration, as is evident in early Bengali architecture (see Figs. 1.2 and 4.45).<sup>102</sup> From a technological viewpoint, both bricks and

terracotta tiles are made from the same materials and similarly fired.

It is unclear during what period glazed tiles were first used in Bengal. The archaeological surveys of Bengal, Bihar, and the surrounding areas have yielded some glazed sherds from pre-Islamic periods, such as: "Antichak, District Bhagalpur (Bihar; proto-Bengali script?): A few green-glazed sherds were also found in the overlying debris."<sup>103</sup>

Since the Bengali region was long familiar with terracotta molded tiles, adding colored glazes does not signify a considerable change in building habits. Glaze-making involves materials such as quartz, alien to the brick or terracotta techniques. As suggested above, glazes could have been used before the Muslim conquest and were not necessarily connected with other Muslim traditions since, as mentioned earlier, glazed tiles existed in Burma/Myanmar in the 12th century, if not earlier.<sup>104</sup>

The time span during which glazed tiles were widespread in Sultanate architecture is relatively short. According to Blochmann, enameled tiles were in the interior wall of the Chhota Pandua Minar (Hooghly District), although a more recent description does not appear to note any tiles.<sup>105</sup>

According to several authors, the Eklakhi mausoleum at Pandua (c.1425) was the first Bengali monument to display some glazed tiles.<sup>106</sup> However,

99 See collective work published by the Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, *Pottery and the Legacy of Sardar Gurcharan Singh*, New Delhi, 1998. On the Khurja potters, see K.J. Geetha, *A sociological study of potters in a town in Uttar Pradesh*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Delhi University, Department of Sociology, 1994.

100 It is surprising that neither Khurja nor the Bulandshahr area are mentioned by Birdwood in his 1884 work. As mentioned before, a series of studies on the potters of the Khurja area has been undertaken by Valentine Roux, following a first field study with the present author in 2007. See Roux, "Spreading of Innovative Technical Traits."

101 For a brief note on Gaur tiles, see Ratnabali Chatterjee, "Use of Glazed Tiles in Sultanate Bengal: A study in Technology," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 55 (1994), pp. 921–925.

102 For a general survey on the subject, see A. Goswami (ed.), *Indian Terracotta Art*, Calcutta, Mayflower, 1959; see also Muhammad Hafizullah Khan, *Terracotta Ormentation in Muslim Architecture of Bengal*, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1988.

103 ASI, 1960–61, p. 4. See Annex 6.

104 When discussing the origin of Bengali glazed tiles with Yolande Crowe, she indicated to me her feeling that the mainstream influence was from Burma and not from the Muslim Iranian area.

105 Henry Blochmann, "Notes on Places of Historical Interest in the District of Hugli," *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1870, p. 122: "The inside walls are well enamelled."

106 Venetia Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, p. 87, for instance, writes, "One of the earliest buildings with tiles in Bengal is the Ekhlati mosque [sic] at nearby Pandua." Likewise, the sales catalog of Sven Gahlin's collection (see note 121) affirms, "a related tile attributed to the Eklakhi tomb (possibly the mausoleum of Sultan Jalal al-Din who died in 1431) is in the British Museum (inv. no.1951,1008.3)." However, V. Porter states that the "building [the tiles] came from is unknown" (idem, p. 87). The British Museum tiles were donated by Ian Clark in 1951, and



FIGURE 4.44  
Brick factory, Sylhet district, Bangladesh  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014



FIGURE 4.45 Terracotta plaque, 9th century. Paharpur Vihara, Bangladesh  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014

I was unable to discover any of them. Conversely, a little-noticed band made of turquoise and yellow monochrome *bannā'i* bricks is visible over the foundational inscription of the much older Adina Masjid of Pandua, dated 1374–75 (Fig. 4.46). However, it cannot be denied that glazed tiles flourished in a much more spectacular fashion on the monuments of Gaur from the second half of the 15th to the middle of the 16th century.

Moreover, few glazed tiles can be observed outside Gaur. All the items preserved in British collections appear to originate, directly or not, from this site. However, some rare examples are found in Bagerhat (Bangladesh, Khulna district). Unfortunately, some décors have now irremediably disappeared.<sup>107</sup>

Stone is also occasionally found in the architecture of Bengal. During the early period of Islamic rule, spolia from temples were used, both

the museum website does not attribute them to any specific building; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/col/lection/object/A\\_1951-1008-3](https://www.britishmuseum.org/col/lection/object/A_1951-1008-3) (accessed 08/12/2022).

107 Muhammad Hafizullah Khan, *Terracotta Ornamentation*, p. 35 (quoting Laila Arjuman Ara Habib, “The Art of Glazed Tile Decoration in Medieval Bengal,” *Shilpakala*, 1 (1978), p. 65), adds, “The Tantipara Masjid (c. 1475) and the Chand and Nim Gates (15th century) are also reported to have been decorated with encaustic tiles.”



FIGURE 4.46

Foundational inscription of the Adina Masjid of Pandua, dated 1374–75 (West-Bengal). Above and to the left of the stone slab is a border of glazed bricks in yellow and turquoise.

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

as building material – especially pillars and lintels – but also for architectural decoration, as is the case for the inscription of Abul Fath Yuzbak from Sitalmath (Rajshahi), dated 652/1254.<sup>108</sup> Two main varieties of stone were used, quartzite and black basalt or shale, with the quarries for such stones possibly having been in eastern Bihar, which would have led to a significant cost for transporting these materials.

A puzzling question concerns the hierarchy of materials used for architectural decoration. Plain bricks, terracotta, stone, or glazed tiles as exterior decoration are found, but the use of glazed tiles does not appear represented on interior mihrab niches, for instance. Moreover, most surviving monumental inscriptions are made of stone, black basalt, mostly imported from Rajmahal (Bihar), being the favorite material.<sup>109</sup> Conversely, examples of tiles are found in interior cupolas and

squinches, a location seldom chosen for stone for obvious weight reasons.

The body of Bengali tiles is consistently made of orange-red clay, indicating a high iron oxide content in the clay and a firing in an oxidizing atmosphere. Tiles might be flat or molded, monochrome, or painted. Usually, the glaze is relatively thick and vitreous, occasionally showing bubbles, especially on white areas.

The exploration of the Gaur palace has yielded important quartzite blocks believed to be used for glaze-making:

“Significant finds from the first compartment is unusual occurrence of quartz chunks, shapely cut in association with glazed tiles and bricks. Since quartz powder is an essential ingredient in glazing, their occurrence here indicates the existence of the *Karkhana* for production of glazed tiles and bricks for repair and renovation of the buildings.”<sup>110</sup>

108 Enamul Haque, *Islamic Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, Dhaka, Bangladesh National Museum, 1983, ill. 88a–b, p. 145.

109 See Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq, *Historical and Cultural Aspects of the Islamic Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dhaka, International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, 2009, p. 36.

110 Sutapa Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur: a Medieval Capital of Bengal,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.)*, 58, 1, (2013), p. 38.

Tin was probably used for white and as an opacifier, and the turquoise glazes are often closer to green, probably indicating the use of lead-based glazes. Lead-based glaze is also recognized in pavement tiles from Bagerhat (see below). Cobalt hues are usually extremely dark, suggesting a high percentage of cobalt oxide. Ochre is easily provided by iron oxides. Additionally, an orange hue also appears specific to Bengali tiles, although I do not know its composition. The advantage of a clay body covered with lead-based glazes is mainly the relatively low temperature for firing (around 600°C). In terms of technology, glazed tiles from Bengal show a considerably different aspect compared with the productions from other Indian Sultanates. Interestingly, some of the tiles and wares found in Myanmar have similar characteristics.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> The study of glazed wares and tiles in Myanmar still appears hesitant. Recent discoveries along the Thai-Myanmar border have renewed common knowledge on the subject; see Don Hein “Summary Report on Archaeological Fieldwork at Myaung Mya, Bagan, and Other Sites in Myanmar, August-September 1999,” Melbourne: Deakin University, unpublished e-manuscript. See also, Louise Allison Cort (with George Ashley Williams IV and David P. Rehfuss), *Ceramics in Mainland Southeast Asia. Collections in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*, <https://archive.asia.si.edu/publications/seaceramics/default.php> (accessed 08/12/2022): “Glazed earthenware is a distinctive and long-standing product of kilns within Burma. The characteristic coating is a lead-silicate mixture opacified with tin and tinted with copper or iron oxide. Uncommon elsewhere in Southeast Asia, this glaze suggests a relationship to the tin-opacified lead glaze developed in West Asia in the ninth century (Di Crocco and Schulz 1985). Early surviving products give important evidence for both terminology and technology.” It is curious to note the West Asian origin proposed for tin-opacified lead glaze; the relations between Myanmar and the “Islamic” areas appear difficult to ascertain. Moreover, the territories in between seldom use this technology. Furthermore, the products from these distant areas are strikingly different in aspect. This could mean that either the technology originated from the West via the sea, or it originated from another source. The Thai connection

The existing Bengali glazed tiles fall into three categories:

- Buildings currently ornate with glazed tiles, including several mosques, some tombs, and at least one gate.
- Tiles originating from ruined or vanished buildings. More recently, excavations have also led to the discovery of glazed tiles in palatial contexts, not only at Gaur but also at Bagerhat (Bangladesh).
- The last category includes reused and out-of-context tiles, either in later monuments or scattered collections.

This section aims not to make a comprehensive inventory of all these tiles but to highlight some of their major aspects.

### 3.1 *Tiles from Existing Monuments in Gaur*

The city of Gaur, now south of Malda, was built next to ancient Lakhnawati. It was the main capital of the Bengal Sultanate between the Ilyasid restoration (1437–1487) and the line of Sayyid Husain Shah (1494–1539). This sultan (1494–1519) ended the chaotic Habashi period (1487–1494). During his reign, Bihar was annexed, and the Sharqi ruler of Jaunpur (deposed by the Lodis of Delhi) took refuge at his court. Nusrat Shah succeeded him (1519–1532); the only known Bengali illustrated manuscript from the Sultanate period is dedicated to him.<sup>112</sup> The monuments described hereafter are all dated between the mid-15th and the early 16th century.

has been studied, among others, by Ray Hearn; according to him, “The curious appearance of wares with in-glaze copper green designs in a tin/lead base glaze, especially those from Tak, are now generally accepted as Burmese.” See Ray Hearn, “Thai Ceramics, Lao Na and Sawankalok: An Interview with John Shaw,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 88.1 & 2 (2000), p. 214.

<sup>112</sup> British Library, Or. 13836; see Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, London, British Library, 1982, pp. 68–69.



FIGURE 4.47  
Gaur (West-Bengal). Chika or Chamkan Building,  
circa 1450

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010



FIGURE 4.48  
Chika or Chamkan Building, detail of the medium  
cornice

PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

### 3.1.1 Chika or Chamkan Building, Circa 1450<sup>113</sup>

This single-domed square building is a massive structure (with sides of about 20 m) buttressed by octagonal corner towers on the eastern side. On the western side, where the mihrab on the qibla

wall should stand, a door leads to a columned portico, now collapsed. The stone pillars are probably reused from pre-Islamic buildings. Information given by the ASI in-situ panel reads thus:

“Chika or Chamkan Mosque (c.1450 AD). Containing some carved stones from a Hindu temple and enamelled bricks in cornices, this single domed structure is called a mosque, but is probably a mausoleum. Tradition says it was used as a prison by Sultan Husain Shah (1493–1519 AD). It is also called Chika Mosque, as it was infested by bats before its clearance.”

The exterior tile decoration consists of a medium cornice comprising a series of rows (Fig. 4.47.). The

<sup>113</sup> Syed Mahmudul Hasan, *Mosque Architecture of Pre-Mughal Bengal*, Dhaka, University Press, 1979, p. 112, dates it 818–36/1415–32: “The Chika building is the earliest known example of a neat little building roofed over by a hemispherical dome in Gaud, which unmistakably recalls the Eklakhi Tomb at Hazrat Pandua, dated 818/1415. Built during the period 818–36/1415–32, the Chika building, measuring 42 feet square internally and 71 feet 6 inches’ square externally anticipates the Mosque of Binat Bibi ...”

lower row is molded with a chevron pattern and painted in green and white glaze. Four thin brick layers in inverted stairs alternate the same two colors; over them is a frieze of diamonds, above which are painted tiles (Fig. 4.48). These display quatrefoils and scale motifs painted white and green or over a cobalt-blue ground.

Above this medium cornice frieze stand ruined framed compositions figuring arched niches with motifs of a lamp hanging from a chain (Fig. 4.49). These are mainly made of molded monochrome tiles.

The upper cornice stands over a two-row frieze of intersecting roundels in white and yellow. Above this, two rows of miniature niches are filled, in the lower row by flat tiles carelessly painted with floral motifs and in the superior one, by various molded motifs from vegetal or geometric repertoires.



FIGURE 4.49 Chika or Chamkan Building, panel in form of a niche with lamp motif  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

### 3.1.2 Chamkati Masjid, 883/1478

This mosque, built during the reign of Yusuf Shah, has a single-domed square prayer room preceded by a veranda opening by three arches.<sup>114</sup> The monument is somewhat ruined, especially on the front side, although some glazed tile decorations can still be observed, chiefly on the exterior qibla wall.

The facing is made of bricks, although a horizontal quartzite band runs across the whole back wall. The upper section is divided into three vertical segments, the central one (corresponding to the interior mihrab) protruding slightly. Molded tiles, painted yellow and turquoise, figure frames for arched, mihrab-like compositions with a hanging lamp (Fig. 4.50). The upper section under the cornice is much dilapidated; it comprises a first row of rectangular compartments, each framed by narrow flat tiles with painted vegetal motifs. Encased are merlons or arched tiles, molded either with tree-like motifs in various shapes or with geometrical compositions. Above is a narrow band of intersecting circles forming an x-like pattern, followed by the slightly projecting cornice, of which only some sections remain.

The interior of the square prayer room displays a dome supported by arched squinches. Eight shamsa-like roundels adorn these squinches; they are made of glazed, molded, and painted elements on a white ground; roundels with dominant white, green, and yellow hues alternate with roundels also displaying turquoise.

### 3.1.3 Lottan (or Lattan) Masjid, Husain Shah Period, 1493–1519 (?)

This mosque, entirely made of small bricks,<sup>115</sup> also has a square prayer-room plan preceded by

114 Description in Hasan, *Mosque Architecture*, pp.115–117 and pl. XLIII (a). The date 883/1478 is given by an inscription now in the British Museum (OA+6485/1 and OA+6485/1), also published by Syed Mahmudul Hasan, "Two Bengal Inscriptions in the British Museum," *JRAS*, October 1966, pp. 141–147.

115 The use of small bricks (4 inches in length, 3 in breadth, and 1.5 in thickness) is noted by Chambers, quoted by Hasan, *Mosque Architecture*, p. 122.



FIGURE 4.50 Gaur (West-Bengal). Chamkati Masjid, 883/1478. Panel on exterior qibla wall  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

a veranda, resembling the preceding Chamkati Masjid.<sup>116</sup> Four turrets mark the corners of the square, while two others stand on the veranda corners (Fig. 4.51). The lower sections of the wall, adorned with a series of moldings, are now almost bare of glazing. On the wall section above the moldings, glazed bricks, arranged in colored strips, run horizontally on the whole length of the building and probably once covered the whole surface. Five mihrab-like arched panels with carved and glazed elements adorn the side walls.

The medium and upper molded cornices of the turrets also show carved and glazed tiles. The medium cornice displays a row of rectangular cases, each case separated by a tiny carved column, and each compartment is filled with a rectangular molded tile painted in cobalt and white

(Figs. 4.52–53). A projecting cornice displays several bands: a row of petal-like motifs, painted in cobalt and white, is followed by a row of horizontal diamonds in green and yellow; colored lines separate these rows.

Above the cornice is a row of arched merlon-like molded tiles, mostly painted in cobalt and white and decorated with vegetal motifs. A tile in the V&A could belong to this series (Fig. 4.54).<sup>117</sup> Francklin drew several other tiles probably also belonging to this series, inscribed as originating from the *Nuttin masjid*.<sup>118</sup> However, similar designs painted on flat tiles are present inside the mosque.

Cunningham severely judges the effect of the monument: “Surely this is the very poorest, the most primitive, and the most tasteless style of ornamentation that could be imagined; nothing but plain horizontal stripes repeated till the eye is fatigued with their niggling monotony ...”<sup>119</sup>

Surprisingly, Francklin (quoted by S.M. Hasan) holds the opposite opinion, especially when he describes the interior decoration in these words:

“Its whole interior is adorned in the most beautiful tile work of variegated colours; consisting of very dark blue, yellow, green and white tiles ... I have not myself met with anything superior to it either for elegance of style, lightness in construction, or tasteful decoration of ornament in any part that I have visited in Upper Hindustan.”

117 V&A 9363:32/(15); <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O83868/glazed-tile-tile-unknown/> (accessed 08/12/2022).

118 Francklin's Journal is bound up with four other manuscripts and preserved in the European Manuscripts Section of the British Library under Shelf Mark Add. 26602. The handwritten Journal covers folios 170 to 235 of the bound volume. Watercolors of the *Nuttin masjid* tiles are on fol. 192a–b, 193a, 194a and 197a. See Pratip Kumar Mitra, “Rediscovering Gaur: Source Material in the Public Collections of the United Kingdom,” *Journal of Bengal Art*, Vol. 15, (2010), pp. 20–23.

119 Alexander Cunningham, *Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879–80*, Archaeological Survey Reports, vol. xv, Calcutta, ASI, 1882, pp. 62–64, quoted by Hasan, *Mosque Architecture*, p. 123.

116 For a detailed description, see Hasan, *Mosque Architecture*, pp. 119–123.



FIGURE 4.51  
Gaur (West-Bengal). Lottan (or Lattan)  
Masjid, circa 1493–1519 (?)  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010



FIGURE 4.52 Lottan (or Lattan) Masjid, mihrab-like  
arched panel  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

The interior decoration of the Lattan is dazzling. The dome is supported by arched squinches, structurally resembling that at the Chamkati. However, here, the squinches are covered with muqarnas-like patterns. Immediately above them is a circular cornice belt made of several rows, in much the same arrangement as on the exterior cornice (Figs. 4.55–56); the main difference is that here the encased tiles are flat and uncarved. The lower row has rectangular compartments encasing flat painted tiles, whereas the upper row displays arched compartments garnished with arched painted tiles. Some of these were drawn by Francklin,<sup>120</sup> a few of which are preserved in the V&A, while others are in private possession.<sup>121</sup>

120 Mitra, “Rediscovering Gaur,” Plates 1.14, 1.15, and 1.16.

121 V&A 9364:3/(15); this tile is not linked to a specific monument in the museum’s website, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O39697/tile/> (accessed 08/12/2022); see also a similar tile, formerly in the Sven Gahlin collection (Sotheby’s, London, Oct. 6th, 2015, no. 127): “A *cuerda seca* earthenware tile, Gaur, Bengal, 15th century. The bold central lotus-palmette and the distinctive polychrome palette together with the inadvertently textured ‘orange-peel’ surface caused by the misfiring of the glaze relate this piece to the group of fifteenth-century tiles from Gaur, one of the capitals of the Bengal sultanate (1204–1576), known for its pre-Mughal Muslim monuments incorporating partial



FIGURE 4.53  
Lottan (or Lattan) Masjid, detail of overglaze  
painted tile  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010



FIGURE 4.54  
Glazed tile with raised floral arabesque  
in blue on a white enameled background.  
Dim. 17.8 × 12.6 cm  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, 9363:32/(1S)

black stone facing enlivened with polychrome tilework (see V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, The British Museum, 1995, pp. 87–88, no. 80). Tiles from the same Bengali group are in the Victoria and Albert Museum (see, for example, inv. no.IM 565:7-1924), whilst a related tile attributed to the Eklakhi tomb (possibly the mausoleum of Sultan Jalal al-Din who died in 1431) is in the British Museum (1951,1008.3).” See below and Fig. 4.68.

The whole surface of the inner dome was covered with colored tiles; eight ribs divide the surface and are decorated with a motif of a hanging lamp and chain. The main covering pattern resembles fish scales, mainly in cobalt and white. A similar covering pattern was discovered on a pavement in the Gaur palace area (see below). A central medallion is framed by a band of petal-like motifs in blue and white.

#### 3.1.4 Gumti Gate, Circa 1512

The Gumti Gate was probably built by Husain Shah (1493–1519) as the eastern gate to the citadel of Gaur. It is a single-domed, almost square structure, mainly built with bricks, although some lower wall sections show a stone facing (Fig. 4.57). The doors opening on the eastern and western sides are framed with fluted turrets, as were the four corners of the buildings.

Many parts of the building were probably lavishly decorated with glazed tiles, and while some parts remain visible and easy to read, others are unfortunately much dilapidated.

The bases of the corner turrets show a series of bountifully decorated rounded moldings. The detailed arrangement of the dazzling decoration of these moldings appears to vary according to the turrets. The southwestern turret base shows thus (from the bottom upward; Fig. 4.58), first a lower rounded molding made of grey quartzite stone.



FIGURE 4.55  
Lottan (or Lattan) Masjid, interior with upper cornice  
displaying arched compartments with painted tiles  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010



FIGURE 4.56  
Lottan (or Lattan) Masjid, squinch with blue and white  
and polychrome-painted tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

This is followed by a flat section with a narrow band of tiny vertical rectangles in white, yellow, green, turquoise, and a row of carved diamonds. A second molding is made of three rows of bricks painted with petal motifs in white, yellow, turquoise, and green. Above are two narrow rows of carved diamonds (yellow and turquoise; yellow on turquoise ground) separated by a turquoise line, followed by two rows of bricks painted with petal motifs in similar colors.

A narrow band of carved triangles, oriented right-wise (white, yellow, turquoise) is below a dilapidated rounded section topped by a carved diamond frieze in the same hues. A scotia molding made of four brick rows painted turquoise, yellow, and white with petal and quatrefoil motifs tops the composition.

Both gates are also flanked by fluted turrets. Some of the bases preserve their flat tiles, painted in yellow over a turquoise ground, inserted in niches separated by small baluster columns (Fig. 4.59).

The upper sections of the fluted turrets are best preserved on the western side door (Fig. 4.60). They display almost circular monochrome bricks painted white, yellow, turquoise, and green. The upper wall section has a band of x-like patterns in yellow, framed by a pair of turquoise and white lines. Above are two rows of tiny flat niches, each coated with monochrome tiles of the same hue scheme.

The north and south side walls probably each had four mihrab-like panels decorated with painted tiles, mainly in yellow and turquoise,



FIGURE 4.57 Gaur (West-Bengal). Gumti Gate, circa 1512  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

some of which still retain their shape. These were arranged following at least two schemes. The first is mainly made of carved tiles: a rectangular frame is decorated with a lotus scroll; inside are leafed spandrels with a central hanging lamp. On the top of the small cornice are flat painted tiles.

The second panel shows a flat ground with only some detail in relief, and it is noteworthy that the yellow and turquoise flat painted tiles appear disordered (Fig. 4.61).

### 3.2 *Ruined or Vanished Monuments and Scattered Tiles*

To these still-standing monuments, several other ruined or vanished structures could be added. The excavations of Gaur's palatial zone have yielded,

among other artifacts, the remains of spectacular pavements still in situ, made of fish-scale monochrome elements glazed in cobalt or white.<sup>122</sup> Regarding these, Ratnabali Chatterjee mentions that,

“Chinese travellers who came to the Sultan's court at Pandua were struck not only by the architectural splendour but also by its decoration. According to their statements, the coloured embellishments were done mainly on bricks, which were bound

<sup>122</sup> The floor was discovered in May 1992 by Prof. Aniruddha Ray and recorded by the Team; Aniruddha Ray, “Archaeological Reconnaissance at the City of Gaur: A preliminary report” in *Pratna Samiksha*, Vol. 2 & 3, (1993–94), Calcutta, p. 252. Quoted by Sutapa Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 39.



FIGURE 4.58 Gumti Gate, base of southwestern corner turret  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

together with lime. They specially mentioned the palace of the Sultan.”<sup>123</sup>

A contemporary description of the Gaur palace is also available in the account of an anonymous Portuguese interpreter.<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately, little remains of Gaur’s palace, which was located inside a walled area, a still-standing portion of which is known as Baisgazi wall. As discussed by Pratip Kumar Mitra, a drawing by William Baillie (1752–99), labeled as “Ruined Gateway in the Baisgazi wall with the remains of a hexagonal

tower,” was probably one of the internal gates of the palace area, now completely vanished, and was “likely to have been decorated with brightly coloured terracotta tiles.”<sup>125</sup>

Archaeological explorations of this area, based on previous British surveys, have been conducted by the ASI during successive campaigns between 1992 and 2005, as summarized by Sutapa Sinha.<sup>126</sup>

Three “compartments” have been acknowledged, each yielding characteristic materials.

- In the first compartment (so-called *Durbar Hall*), “plenty of architectural fragments of stone as well as decorated bricks (18.06%), glazed bricks (16.12%), floor tiles (9.68%) and glazed pipes (12.90%) have been found along with remains of a white tiled floor.”<sup>127</sup> The chunks of quartz mentioned previously were also found in this compartment.
- The second compartment (so-called *Khas Mahal*) yielded “the finest quality of porcelain sherds (47.26%), celadon ware (6.08%), sherds of buff-colored ceramics (1.42%), coarse pottery (19.68%), decorated bricks (5.88%), glazed tiles (5.88%), glazed roof tiles (2.23%), cowrie-shells (0.81%), glass bangles and miniature glass bowls (2.63%).”<sup>128</sup>
- The third compartment, identified as the “*Zenana Mahal* or *Haremsara*,” has also yielded “the usual assemblage of porcelain (48.42%), celadon (5.03%), coarse pottery (18.87%) and decorated bricks (9.43%) of deluxe quality whereas glass ware, glass objects occurred in higher number, 12.32%.”<sup>129</sup>

In addition to the numerous tiles and glazed bricks, the presence of glazed pipes is noteworthy. One

123 Chatterjee, “Use of Glazed Tiles,” p. 922; she refers to P.C. Bagchi, “Political Relations between Bengal and China in the Pathan Period,” *Viswa-Bharati Annal*, 1945, Pt 1 (pp. 96–134), p. 141 (to be corrected: pp. 130–131).

124 Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 36, quoting the anonymous text from 1521, edited by G. Bouchon and L.P. Thomaz, *Voyage Dans Les Deltas Du Gange et de L’irraouaddy*, 1521, Paris, EHESS, 1988, p. 321.

125 Prints, Drawings and Photographs Section of the Asia Pacific & Africa (formerly referred to as the Oriental & India Office), British Library, London, no. WD 3953; see Mitra, “Rediscovering Gaur,” Pl. 1.1. Among other views of the so-called Baisgazi Wall also published by this author, see a page by Sitaram (Add. or 4890), pl. 1.9 and p. 10.

126 Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” pp. 35–40.

127 Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 37.

128 Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 39.

129 Sinha, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 40.



FIGURE 4.59 Gumti Gate, base of fluted turret with painted tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

can also find, accompanying imported Chinese wares, some locally made fine glazed wares and many glass objects.<sup>130</sup> The findings of the palace area illustrate a wide range of products, many of them made locally, but unfortunately, these surveys do not provide specific information on workshops, either concerning glassmaking furnaces or pottery, tiles or brickmaking kilns.

<sup>130</sup> In 2005, the British Museum acquired a series of sherds from Gaur, comprising “A collection of earthenware tile-fragments overglaze-painted in blue, yellow and green; and high-fire stoneware pots-sherds underglaze-painted in blue and white or celadon or pseudo-celadon. Acquired on site at Gaur, West Bengal, from Dr. P.K. Mitra, Director of the State Museum, Kolkata.” See [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A\\_2005-0813-1-1-64](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_2005-0813-1-1-64) (accessed 09/12/2022).

Many of Gaur’s buildings have now vanished, partly due to natural phenomena. However, an aggravating factor has been the large-scale reuse of bricks and stonework from old monuments. In the Qadam Rasul enclosure, for instance, some glazed bricks decorated with painted motifs can still be observed among other plain, reused bricks (Fig. 4.62).

The tomb of Husain Shah (d. 1520) was destroyed in 1848 by an earthquake, but a few hints on its aspect and decoration are provided by travelers and artists,<sup>131</sup> including Francklin, who drew some

<sup>131</sup> Mitra, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 23: “Fortunately, one can form an idea of its superb glazed ornamentation from an account found among Robert Orme’s papers (Gawre: Description of its ruins with four inscriptions taken in the Arabic copy, The British Library. Orme Ms ov. 65:25, folio 172.) and a painting of its gateway left by Henry Creighton (Henry Creighton, *The Ruins of*



FIGURE 4.60 Gumti Gate, upper section of fluted turret  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010



FIGURE 4.61 Gumti Gate, mihrab-like panel with painted tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2010

of the tiles that adorned the building and provided information on their subject.<sup>132</sup> A tile preserved in the V&A (IM.565:11-1924; see Fig. 4.63) provides the same pattern as Francklin's plate and can thus be safely attributed to the tomb of Husain Shah.<sup>133</sup> A carved block of black shale figuring a floral motif shows a related pattern.<sup>134</sup>

Other monuments could probably be added to the examples studied here. Gaur's Firuz Minar, for instance, would have been – according to some scholars – decorated with tiles, although these are no longer visible. Likewise, both the Chhota Sona and the Bara Sona Masjid are sometimes credited

Gaur Described and Represented in Eight Views with a Topographical Map. Compiled From The Manuscripts and Drawings of the Late H. Creighton, Esq., London, 1817, No. viii11." <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/creighton1817/0007/scroll> (accessed 09/12/2022).

132 Francklin mss. 179v – Specimens of Enamelled Bricks at the Kings tomb in Gaur. Numbered '2' above; and 181r – Enamelled Bricks at the Kings tomb. Numbered '2' in pencil.

133 Strangely, the V&A's website does not acknowledge the provenance of this tile. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1141381/lotus-roundel-unknown/> (accessed 09/12/2022).

134 V&A, 1S.3395:3-1883, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O83508/part-of-a/> (accessed 09/12/2022): "Given

by Reginald Porch, Magistrate at Malda. J.D. Beglar, assistant to Alexander Cunningham, Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1888 Report on Bengal, reported that he had 'seen in the compound of the then Magistrate of Malda, the late Mr. Porch, a set of lintels obtained from Pandua, [the Sultan's capital for a century from the mid-14th century, after which it returned to Gaur] which he, when going on his last furlong packed up and carried off to England'. (quoted in Syed Mahmudul Hasan, 1979, p. 135). Hasan assumes these architectural pieces to be those now in the V&A Museum and that they came from the ruined mosque of Firuz Shah II which stands close to the abandoned indigo factory at Goamalti in the south-west part of English Bazar in the District of Malda, which was the British settlement established between the cities of Gaur and Pandua."



FIGURE 4.62  
Gaur (West-Bengal). Qadam Rasul, glazed brick reused in  
the enclosure wall  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010



FIGURE 4.63  
Square tile painted in white over a deep blue glaze.  
19.36 cm by side  
LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,  
IM.565:11-1924

with tile decorations, even if none have recently been observed in situ.

Surprisingly, while other locations in Bengal show no surviving large-scale instances of glazed tiles, some examples can be observed in distant Bagerhat, in the Khulna district of Bangladesh. During the excavations of a residential area situated north of the Shaith Gumbad Mosque and associated with Ulug Khan Jahan,<sup>135</sup> glazed ele-

ments in fish-scale form in white, yellow, green, and cobalt were discovered among many glazed vessels (Figs. 4.64–65).<sup>136</sup> I observed them during a visit to the site in 2014, but these findings remain (to my knowledge) unpublished. As previously

<sup>135</sup> The exact identity of Ulug Khan Jahan, alleged founder of Khalifatabad/Bagerhat, is not ascertained; he died in 1459, as mentioned on his tombstone; see Nazimuddin

Ahmed, *The Buildings of Khan Jahan in and around Bagerhat*, Dhaka, University Press, 1989, p. 26.

<sup>136</sup> Among these vessels, some objects with a fine deep cobalt glaze are particularly noteworthy. Excavations of the mound where this residential area was built started in the 1970's and yielded many artifacts now preserved in the Bagerhat Museum; see Ahmed, *The Buildings of Khan Jahan*, pp. 50–51.



FIGURE 4.64  
Bagerhat (Khulna district, Bangladesh). Excavations of a residential area associated with Ulug Khan Jahan  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2014

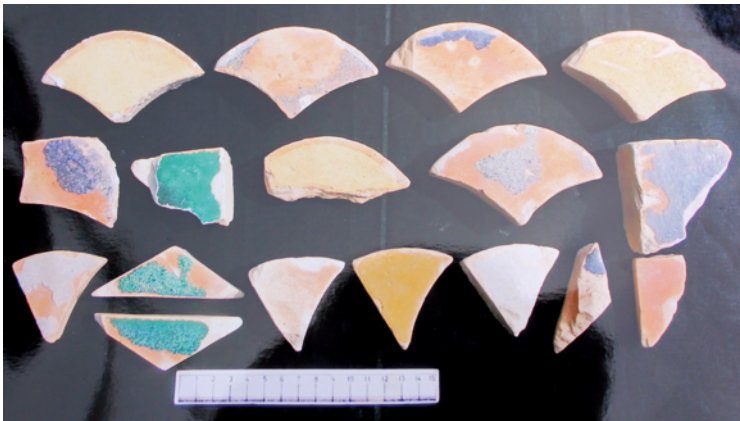


FIGURE 4.65  
Bagerhat. Excavations of a residential area. Glazed fish-scale tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014

mentioned, fish-scale glazed tiles were used not only in Gaur's palace pavement but also in the inner dome of the Lattan Masjid.

Another surprising case of glazed tiles occurs at Bagerhat, in the tomb of Khan-Jahan. According to Reginald Craufuird Sterndale, "The floor was covered with hexagonal encaustic tiles, of many patterns and colors, the cheif [sic] being blue, white and yellow."<sup>137</sup> Today, the "encaustic tiles" on the floor have disappeared, but a few of them are

now inserted into the three steps around the tomb (Fig. 4.66). This was probably entirely covered with hexagonal tiles: some are painted white over a cobalt ground or orange on yellow, while others have white slip underglaze-painted motifs with a light greenish-turquoise glaze. Unfortunately, the state of preservation of this damaged tiling is precarious, the tomb still being much visited.

Because of the considerable distance from the ones in Gaur, the tiles from Bagerhat appear puzzling and naturally raise the question of their place of production.

Finally, a comprehensive inventory of dispersed Bengali tiles remains to be achieved. Apart from major collections such as the Victoria & Albert

<sup>137</sup> Ahmed, *The Buildings of Khan Jahan*, pp.36–37; Johana E. van Lohuizen de Leeuw, "The early Muslim monuments at Bagerhat," in G. Michell (ed.), *The Islamic Heritage of Bengal*, Paris, UNESCO, 1984, pp. 173–174, mentions her discovery of Sterndale's unpublished manuscript, R.C. Sterndale, *Flotsam and Jetsam or Waifs and Strays from Sunderbuntwaters and Central Indian Forests*, c.1866. Full text available:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000060439>  
(accessed 09/12/2022).



FIGURE 4.66  
Bagerhat. Tomb of Khan-Jahan. Floor with  
hexagonal glazed tiles  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014



FIGURE 4.67  
A sample of glazed tiles collected by a *chaiwallah*  
at Gaur  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2010

Museum or the British Museum, samples are visible in various Indian and Bangladeshi museums (in Calcutta, Dhaka, Khulna, and Malda), although most of them are uncatalogued. In Gaur proper, the *chai-wallah* sitting next to the Lukochuri Darwaza has collected an impressive assortment of tiles (Fig. 4.67).

The exact origin of many tiles remains uncertain, and a tile in the British Museum (1951,1008.3; see Fig. 4.68) has sometimes been associated with the Eklakhi Tomb, although this assertion is not backed by any evidence.<sup>138</sup>

Pratip Kumar Mitra writes about the V&A collection of tiles from Gaur:

<sup>138</sup> V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, p. 87 specifies that the “building [this tile] came from is unknown.”

“A sizeable collection of glazed ceramics in the form of bricks, tiles and other architectural pieces, salvaged from the ruins of Gaur, is preserved at the Battersea store of the Museum, and seven of these exhibited at the Indian section. The material is listed under four serial numbers respectively, IM 565, 9363 (1S), 9364 (1S) and 9592 (1S) and must have therefore entered the Museum in four lots. IM 565 series, comprising of eleven individual pieces and one tile panel was donated to the Museum by the Royal Asiatic Society of London in 1924. The series with the numbers 9363 (1S), 9364 (1S) and 9592 (1S) were transferred to the V&A (then known as the South Kensington Museum) in 1879 and accessioned in 1880. They came from the India Museum, which was founded in 1801. On the demise of the East India Company in 1858, the collections of the India Museum were transferred to the India Office, and thence, in 1879, most of them



FIGURE 4.68  
Over glaze painted tile from Gaur. Dim. 7 × 13.5 cm  
LONDON, BRITISH MUSEUM, 1951,1008.3

came to V&A. There are some additional pieces also which do not bear any accession number. The IM 565 series donated to V&A is obviously the collection of William Francklin, of which reference had been made previously.”<sup>139</sup>

• • •

The tiles from the Bengal sultanate are clearly technically and visually recognizable at first sight. They thus display a strong identity that can hardly be compared with other productions in the sub-continent. This is due to the compartmented or isolated evolution of Bengal’s architecture and décor, a feature that proves highly representative of many pre-Mughal sultanates. The considerable difference between Bengali tiles and those from other sultanates raises the question of their specific modes of transmission, which, as suggested, could be linked with other (non-Muslim) South Asian traditions, although definitive conclusions still appear premature.

The concentration of glazed tiles at Gaur, together with the finding of glazing materials inside the capital’s palace, could suggest that the

production was directly linked with or controlled by the sultan’s court. However, since no workshops have been discovered yet, this question must likewise remain open.

As observed previously, glazed tiles are not used for inscriptions, and neither are the mihrabs, both of which are normally made of black shale. This could indicate that stone was finally considered a higher standard material than glazed tiles.

Glazed tiles or bricks easily adapt to brick-built monuments. However, their period of blooming was relatively short. Surprisingly, after the Mughal conquest of Bengal, glazed tiles almost disappeared from the late 16th-century architecture. The spread of the imperial aesthetics might have erased some regional characteristics, perhaps judged as “crude” or “provincial,” although this type of value-based judgment is extremely difficult to apprehend.

In Bengal, Mughal buildings using tiles include the Tomb of Bibi Pari (d. 1678; Fig. 4.69) and the hammam inside the Lal Bagh in Dhaka. These examples belong to the 17th-century Mughal repertoire and represent a disruption to the preceding productions.

Moreover, there was, during the following centuries, a curious balance between the “imperial” Mughal taste, which henceforth dominated the scenery and was followed by later courts such as Murshidabad, and the continuity of the use of terracotta decoration, which continued up to modern times, with an apex in the later “terracotta temples” such as in Bishnupur (17th–18th centuries).

139 Mitra, “Rediscovering Gaur,” p. 39. Additionally, a curious and isolated tile in the V&A (IND.LOST.392; see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O429213/tile-unknown/>, accessed 09/12/2022), painted in cobalt and turquoise on a white ground, is catalogued as “Bengal, 15th c.,” whereas its style appears evocative of later Mughal examples, such as inside Dhaka’s Lal Bagh Fort (see below).



FIGURE 4.69  
Dado of glazed tiles inside the Tomb of Bibi Pari,  
Dhaka (Bangladesh), after 1678  
PHOTO Y. PORTER



FIGURE 4.70  
European industrial tiles in the Sitara Masjid,  
Dhaka (Bangladesh), early 20th century  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2014

The annexation of Bengal by the British East India Company represented yet another disruption. By the late 19th century, some curious uses of tiles can be observed, inserted into eclectic buildings, such as in the Shitalnajee temple in Calcutta (Fig. 3.4). These proved to be either imported industrial tiles originating from Europe or, more curiously, underglaze polychrome-painted Qajar tiles.

In the early 20th century, the dazzling Sitara Masjid in Dhaka was decorated with industrial molded and printed tiles originating from Europe (probably from Stoke-on-Trent), some portraying Mount Fuji (Fig. 4.70).

#### 4 Tiles from Mandu (Sultanate of Malwa, 1401–1531)<sup>140</sup>

The sultanate of Malwa emerged after the disintegration of the Delhi sultanate, partly provoked by its devastation by Timur in 1398. A first dynasty, the Ghuris, reigned from 1401 to 1436, when a second line, that of the Khaljis, seized power and retained it up to 1531. The Khalji lineage was extinct after

<sup>140</sup> This is a revised version of my previous paper, Porter, “Décors émaillés dans l’architecture de pierre de l’Inde centrale,” published in 1997, and based on field surveys made in the late 80s–early 90s. Unfortunately, some of the then endangered buildings have disappeared since.

this date, the kingdom passing first to the domains of the Gujarat sultanate, then to the Mughals.<sup>141</sup>

Although the architecture of the Malwa sultanate is reputed for its original style, the tiled decoration of its buildings is less known. Concerning this subject, Percy Brown wrote,

“While marble was freely used as an overlay, black, yellow, slate, and other colours being also introduced, ... but the most vivid colouristic effect was that obtained by the application of glaze. ... So much of this is even now traceable that it is evident there was a very flourishing industry in glazed earthenware at Mandu during the fifteenth century, and the fine colours the potters were able to produce show that they were adepts at their trade.”<sup>142</sup>

The monuments of Mandu, the capital of the sultanate, are mainly built of stone, but unfortunately, contrary to what P. Brown wrote in his time, most of the tiles have now vanished, and generally, only their imprints remain. Moreover, nothing is known concerning the workshops and kilns where the “flourishing industry in glazed earthenware” occurred.

Three successive periods can be distinguished in the history of Malwa; accordingly, this chronological division is reflected in the architecture, and its tiled decoration appears to follow the evolution of other building trends:

- Early (or Ghuri, 1401–1436) period,
- Mahmud and Ghiyath al-Din Khalji (1436–1469/1469–1500),
- Late period (1500–1531 and later).

However, this formal classification, strictly following the historical events, might be misleading, especially because the monuments involved have often undergone later rebuilding or refurbishing.

Moreover, the concept of evolution is too often perceived as an ascending and continuous line, whereas the reality might be less linear.

The oldest monuments of the sultanate, such as the austere and somewhat “archaic”<sup>143</sup> mosque of Dilawar Khan (c.1405), are, in their present state, devoid of tiles. However, some other buildings, belonging to the late Ghuri period, such as Malik Mughith Masjid (835/1432), are architecturally more daring and display some turquoise tiles; these are also visible in the Jāmi‘ Masjid. The first period is mainly illustrated by the constrained use of monochrome tiles. These could find parallels with some of the Delhi monuments from the late Tughluq to early Lodi periods.

The second period runs from the mid-15th to the early 16th century, corresponding to the rise and peak of the Khalji lineage. It is marked by an enlarged color scheme, mainly achieved through cut-out tiles, although other decorative techniques, such as polychrome so-called “black line” (or *cuerda-seca*) tiles, might also belong to this era. The central position of this large time span makes it a favorite for the designation of a “classical” period, although this type of classification might also appear questionable. Regardless, this marks the imprint of a prosperous sultanate, illustrated by the vigor and variety of its architecture. Works from this innovative era find parallels with examples found in Bidar, a parallel reinforced by Mahmud Khalji’s occupation of this city between 1461 and 1463. It is noteworthy that if the long reign of Mahmud (1436–69) is documented both with ‘Ali ibn Mahmud Kirmani’s chronicle and by some dated buildings, that of Ghiyath al-Din is much more obscure.

The later period, defined by Yazdani as “a mingling of building traditions,” is the fruit of stylistic

141 For a detailed account of the history of Malwa, see U.N. Day, *Medieval Malwa. A Political and Cultural History, 1401–1562*, Delhi, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1965.

142 Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture. Islamic Period*, Bombay, Taraporevala, 1956, p. 63.

143 The notion of “archaic” is also controversial: it applies here to a widespread system of building reusing (or imitating) temple pillars supporting a flat roof. The low naves visually give the prayer hall a strong horizontal aspect.

analyses and thus subjective.<sup>144</sup> Few buildings associated with this period are clearly dated, although the tomb and funerary complex of Darya Khan (c.1526) could be considered a landmark for this period.<sup>145</sup>

#### 4.1 *Masjid of Malik Mughith, 1432*

The early period is represented here by a single monument: the Masjid of Malik Mughith, dated 835/1432. This mosque is situated to the east of the Sagar Talao. According to the inscription above the door, it was built by Malik Mughith, the father of Mahmud Khalji, in 835/1432. The entrance, on the east side, is approached by 20 steps leading to a partially collapsed domed structure. The mosque's basement displays a series of six arcades on both sides of the stairs, leading to small chambers. The facing is made of stone, the higher section of the wall being covered with a colored limestone mortar.<sup>146</sup> Monochrome turquoise tiles make a modest appearance in this building.

Above the door and over the inscription slab, a pointed arch rests on the entrance wall.

It has spandrels, carved in a pinkish coralline limestone,<sup>147</sup> which show a covering cross-pattern of intersecting octagons (reminiscent of Gaur's intersecting circles) interrupted by two roundels with a 12-petal flower comparable with almost contemporary similar motifs in Delhi's Begumpuri Masjid. All the carved motifs were incrustated with cut-out turquoise tiles, some of which remain visible (Fig. 4.71). Although the visual effect is reminiscent of the turquoise inclusions in red-brick architecture, as in Seljuq Iranian architecture, for instance, the materials and designs differ considerably.

On the qibla wall, the lateral mihrabs are surmounted by a series of tiny niches lined with turquoise tiles. A similar pattern is seen at the Jami' Masjid.

Stylistically, this mosque shows a much more daring conception than the older mosque of Dilawar Khan, and almost 30 years and more than 3 km separate these buildings. However, other significant differences, especially political, could probably explain these discrepancies:



FIGURE 4.71  
Mandu, Masjid of Malik Mughith, 1432. Entrance pavilion  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989

144 G[hulam Husain] Yazdani, *Mandu, The City of Joy*, Oxford, University Press, 1929, p. 110, note 2.

145 Yazdani, *Mandu*, p. 28, based on John Briggs' translation of Firishtha, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, 1829, vol. iv, 267.

146 Limestone mortar was unknown in Malwa before the sultanate period; see Klaus Rötzer, "Architecture de pierre dans le Dekkan et le Mälwa avant l'époque moghole," *Techniques et cultures*, 14, (1989), p. 75.

147 Rötzer, "Architecture de pierre," p. 75.

Dilawar Khan Ghuri's mosque was created at the beginning of the Malwa sultanate by its founder. Malik Mughith, the vizier of Hushang Ghuri, incarnates the new emerging lineage, the Khaljis. However, tiled decorations were far from systematic; Hushang Shah Ghuri's magnificent tomb is entirely lined with white marble and devoid of tiles. The monument, probably started while Hushang was still living, was eventually finished during Mahmud Khalji's reign, after 1435.<sup>148</sup> The same fate befell Mandu's Jāmi' Masjid, with which the tomb shares some architectural forms.

#### 4.2 *Jāmi' Masjid of Mandu, Achieved 858/1454*

The Jāmi' Masjid of Mandu is among the most majestic buildings in the town. A new congregational mosque was undoubtedly started by Hushang Shah. Mahmud Khalji resumed the work in 1438, but the building was not finished before 1454, as mentioned in an inscription. Therefore, the ascription of this monument to the first or the second period is arguable. As in Malik Mughith's mosque, colored decoration is restricted here to monochrome blue tiles.

The mosque is inscribed in a square with sides of almost 98 m. Its basement is over 5 m high and includes a gallery with chambers. A stately flight of 30 steps leads to a domed entrance room.

This entrance pavilion, clad with a pinkish limestone facing, has a central dome and four small cupolas, much in the same scheme as in Hushang's tomb, with which it is perfectly aligned. The upper section of the wall, above the *chajja*, was originally set with colored tiles, according to Yazdani.<sup>149</sup> The dome's drum has a crenulated pattern in slight relief. The interstices between the merlons were originally lined with turquoise tiles, but only traces remain. Inside the square entrance

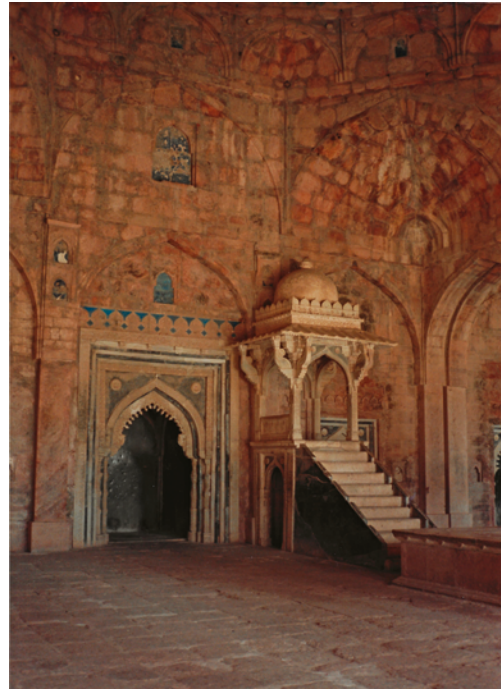


FIGURE 4.72 Mandu, Jāmi' Masjid, circa 1454, main mihrab  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989

room, immediately above the windows, runs a narrow band of stars and lozenges cut out in blue tiles.

The qibla wall of the prayer hall features 17 mihrabs, with the central one being larger, and mainly carved in white marble and blackish basalt. On the top of its frame is an almost flat crenulated band alternating stone merlons and turquoise lining. The inclusion of turquoise tiles in a mainly pinkish stone facing, but with highlights in white and black, furnishes a vivid sense of polychromy (Fig. 4.72).

#### 4.3 *Ashrafi Mahal*

The building now known as Ashrafi Mahal, situated immediately in front of the Jāmi' Masjid and forming, with Hushang's Tomb and the Jāmi' Masjid, a perfect alignment of 360 m, was originally called Madrasa Bām-i Bihisht. It was probably initiated by Hushang, although 'Ali ibn Mahmud Kirmani writes that it was started in 1442 by Mahmud Khalji. The building eventually became the mausoleum of the Khalji dynasty. 'Ali

148 Yves Porter, "Khalji architecture of Malwa in the light of the Ma'āser-i Mahmudshāhi," in F. Delvoye (ed.), *Confluence of Cultures*, Delhi, Manohar, 1994, p. 27.

149 Yazdani, *Mandu*, p. 52.

ibn Mahmud Kirmani, the author of the contemporary chronicle *Ma'āthir-i Mahmudshāhi*, wrote his text in 872/1467–68 and stated that at this time, and after more than 20 years of work, the building remained unfinished. Mahmud Khalji died the following year and was buried here.

The chronicler says,

“Craftsmen and artists from Khurasan and Hindustan assembled ... and did not spare any ornamentation ... Persian artists made inscriptions of great beauty on the doors, the walls and the ceiling, written in *thuluth* and *muhaqqaq* style, with glazed tiles (*kāshi-kāri*). They also made designs of polychrome glazed tiles on the upper level of the dome.”<sup>150</sup>

The madrasah designed by Hushang may have initially had a courtyard at its center, which was later filled with rubble to transform the previous building into a monumental plinth for the subsequent mausoleum. This might have appeared extremely impressive, with a huge cupola raising at the center of the terrace; however, the instability of the base, together with the excessive weight of the domed structure, caused the latter to collapse.

Both Mughals Akbar and Jahangir had made some repairs on the building, as recorded in inscriptions and mentions in sources.<sup>151</sup> Unfortunately, these did not prevent the ruin of the dome, which vanished at an unknown date. Sir John Marshall gave instructions for clearing the large number of debris, which formed a huge mound and hid the tombs. Unfortunately, this cleaning might have erased the remains of any tiled décor. Today, although some remains of colored stonework decoration still exist, no traces of tiles are visible (Fig. 4.73).

The noteworthy presence of *Persian* artists is puzzling, and one might wonder whether this meant “real” Persian craftsmen or signified that the best artists were summoned to Mandu, whatever



FIGURE 4.73 Mandu, Ashrafi Mahal. Interior of the funerary room with remains of inlaid marble facing  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989

their origin. A similar mention is found in the account of the building of the Kushk-i Zarrin (see below). Although some prudence is necessary in using these mentions, they are worth noting since they appear particularly rare in documenting the participation of foreign craftsmen.

#### 4.4 *Kushk-i Zarrin* or “*Jahaz Mahal*,” 1441 and Later

According to the *Ma'āthir-i Mahmudshāhi*, the building of this Kushk-i Zarrin (Golden Palace) was started in 1441 with the help of artists from *Khurasan*.<sup>152</sup> This palace is none other than the now so-called *Jahaz Mahal*, a 130 m long building stretching between two water tanks: the Munj Talao and Kafur Talao. The building has undergone some transformations, especially with the monumental staircase on the southeastern corner,

150 Porter, “Khalji architecture,” p. 29.

151 Yazdani, *Mandu*, pp. 57–61.

152 Ali ibn Mahmud al-Kirmani, *Ma'āthir-i Mahmudshāhi*, ed. N.H. Ansari, Delhi, Anjuman Farsi, 1968, p. 58. Porter, “Khalji architecture,” pp. 27–29.



FIGURE 4.74 Mandu, Jahaz Mahal, second half of 15th century. The central tower, overlooking the Munj Talao  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1990

a later addition probably made during Jahangir's stay at Mandu. One could imagine that the name Golden Palace was due to the once exuberant color decoration. At its time, the aspect of this palace must have been dazzling. Unfortunately, only tiny traces still allow the reconstruction of parts of this glazed décor.

The ground floor of the palace comprises a long double nave gallery divided into three main sections with its facing showing pinkish limestone up to the dripstones. In the middle of the façade opens a door framed with colored stones (white, yellow, black). Above the *chajja*, the remnants of a large horizontal tiled panel are visible, although only the imprints of the tiles remain. This tiled panel may have been made of overglaze-painted tiles, although since no trace remains, this is only a hypothesis.

The upper sections of the wall, above the *chajja*, are built with small basalt blocks sealed with mortar; a coating covered this masonry. This upper

zone is divided into three horizontal registers. The lower one is now bare of all décors. The middle register comprises a series of flat arched niches, above which is the third, higher register, with upside-down fleurons. These fleurons were once incrustated with colored tiles, some minute traces of which remain visible. A similar fleuron band can be observed on the dome of the central tower.

This central tower has a square plan and was developed on three levels: the basement, ground floor, and terrace floor (Figs. 4.74–75). The whole gallery is covered with a flat terrace; two pavilions stand on each side, while the tower is situated in the center of the terrace, facing the main entrance. The rubble-built walls are covered with colored mortar up to the *chajja*. On the parapet, at least two decorative registers can be observed: the lower (E) is a narrow band with alternating almond-shaped and round floral motifs made of cut-out tiles. This almond-shaped design resembles the one used for the curious windows of the room; it is reminiscent of the *turunj* ornament used in manuscript illumination. Above (D) is a larger band with a type of cloud-collar motif similarly formed. This type of motif is visible, among others, on the mural decoration of Ahmad Shah's (d. 1436) tomb in Ashtur, next to Bidar (Deccan).

The dome's drum has a narrow chevron band (C) alternating white, yellow, turquoise, and cobalt pieces. Above it is a large frieze of upside-down fleurons (B). A small cornice separates it from the dome, which was probably also covered with tiles (Fig. 4.76). The repertoire of these fleuron and cloud-collar motifs is reminiscent of the décor on some buildings in Bidar, such as Mahmud Gawan's madrasa or the Gate of the Citadel.

Both the ground floor and terrace rooms inside the tower have a cut-out tile band immediately under the domed ceiling (Fig. 4.77). The lower room displays a motif of repeating S-patterns in yellow, green, and turquoise, whereas the terrace room has a tress motif in the same color scheme.

The imprints of tile panels can also be observed on the north side wall of the tower, and as seen concerning the tiled panel over the main entrance,

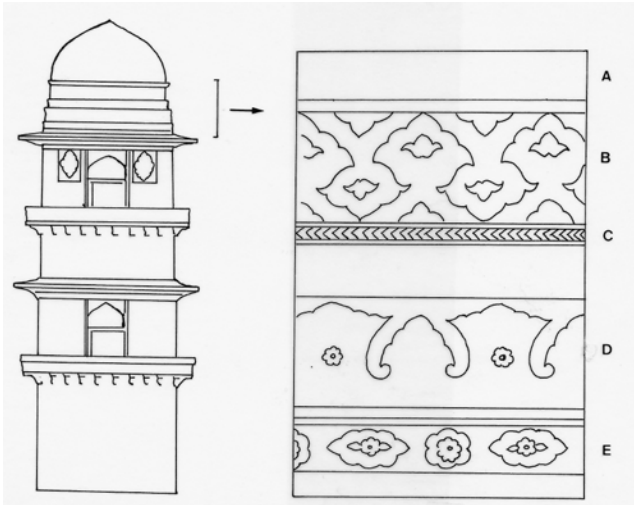


FIGURE 4.75  
The central tower of the Jahaz Mahal and detail of  
the upper section  
DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR



FIGURE 4.76  
Base of the dome of Jahaz Mahal's central tower  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1990

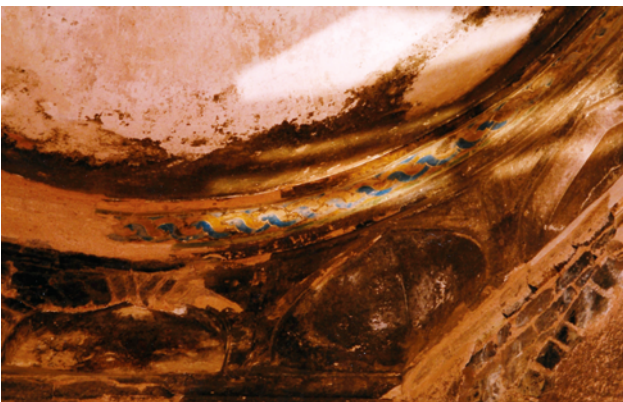


FIGURE 4.77  
Room inside Jahaz Mahal's central tower; at the base  
of the dome is a band of yellow, green, and turquoise  
cut-out tiles  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989

these could be painted tiles. The three-domed pavilions on both sides of the terrace probably also had colored decorations in glazed tiles. Moreover, a visual parallel can be drawn with the pavilions depicted in the *Chandayana* sultanate manuscript, often attributed to Mandu.<sup>153</sup>

#### 4.5 *Hamam*

In the palatial ensemble known as Dawlat-khana, a small hamam has an octagonal domed room. The spandrels supporting the ribs of the dome are coated with plaster, but traces of overglaze-painted tiles can also be observed. These figured floral motifs in yellow, turquoise, and cobalt over a white ground have now almost entirely vanished (Fig. 4.78.a–b). This type of tile technique, often termed  *cuerda seca* , appears reminiscent of what Jean Soustiel and I christened as “black line.” This technique was probably first experimented with at Samarkand toward the last quarter of the

14th century.<sup>154</sup> However, none of the examples found at Samarkand are painted on a white ground and instead favor cobalt or turquoise grounds. Therefore, it can be affirmed that these décors are original. From a technological viewpoint, these tiles represent enormous progress. The date of these works is unknown but could be from the mid to late 15th century.

#### 4.6 *Jal-Mahal*

The Jal-Mahal is situated on the western side of the Munj Talao. The northern façade was originally made of two side galleries intersected by an advancing balcony, but much of this gallery has now vanished. The top of the wall, under the dripstones, had a series of puzzling stone panels with square Kufic inscriptions (Figs. 4.79–80). When surveyed, several panels remained in place: two were visible at the left of the balcony, while another series of five panels was placed over the

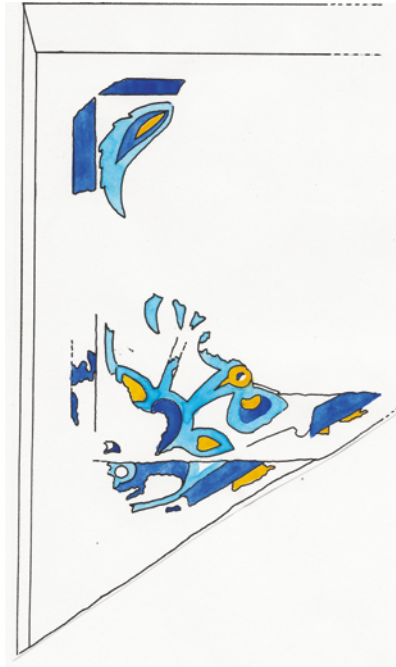


FIGURE 4.78.A–B Mandu, Hammam of the Dawlat-khana. Detail of a spandrel with polychrome tiles  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989, AND DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

153 Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, Acc. No. 57.1/1.68.

154 Soustiel and Porter, *Tombeaux de paradis*, pp. 215–218.



FIGURE 4.79

Mandu, Jal Mahal. Panels under the *chajja* decorated with square Kufic inscriptions. The panel on the right shows the words *al-sultān al-ʿazam* (“the mighty sultan”).

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1988



FIGURE 4.80

Jal Mahal. Panels under the *chajja* with square Kufic inscriptions

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1988

balcony’s upper arch. Other panel fragments lay on the floor (Fig. 4.81). The building has undergone reconstruction, since the *chajja* above the upper arch has been replaced.

Each panel was separated by a stone bracket; the stone slabs were carved with a diamond-shaped square Kufic inscription and corner motifs (stars, cloud bands, double-tailed trefoil). All the carvings were originally filled with cut-out tiles, probably in turquoise, cobalt, and yellow, although only faded traces remain.<sup>155</sup> The inscription on the left side, reasonably readable, was probably praise for the sultan since the first words are *al-sultān al-ʿazam ... al-malik ...* (The mighty sultan ... the king ...). This formulation is reminiscent of the one

found on Mahmud and Ghiyath al-Din coins.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, as Sheila Blair writes about this square or *maʿqilli* style of writing, “these phrases in square Kufic could be recognized visually faster than they could be read literally.”<sup>157</sup>

Unfortunately, the glazing of these décors has almost completely disappeared. The use of square Kufic script is particularly rare in Sultanate India (as noted for Delhi’s square Kufic tile). Besides coins, little is known about the *title formulation* of the Malwa sultans. Square Kufic is used in religious inscriptions more often than in secular ones. A parallel could be drawn with an illustration of Nizami’s *Khamsa* in a copy made for Ulugh Beg,

<sup>155</sup> Yazdani, *Mandu* (p. 70) mentions yellow, which I have not seen.

<sup>156</sup> *Al-sultān al-ʿazam al-ʿudduniyā wa-ddin abu-muẓaffar sikandar al-thāni yamin al-khilāfat naṣir amir al-muminin*. See P.L. Gupta, *Coins*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1979, p. 104.

<sup>157</sup> Sheila Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, Edinburgh, University Press, 2008, p. 380.



FIGURE 4.81  
Jal Mahal. Fallen fragment of panel with square Kufic  
inscriptions

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1988



FIGURE 4.82 Gallery on the upper floor of Jal  
Mahal. The pilaster shows the  
remains of a tiled dado.

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1988

dated 850/1446, showing Iskandar in front of the Ka'bah.<sup>158</sup> The inscription, often incomplete, of *al-sultān al-'aẓam* also occurs frequently in so-called "Turkmen" Shirazi manuscript paintings, but the usual script is *thuluth*, not Kufic.

158 Ivan Stchoukine, *Les peintures des manuscrits de la Khamseh de Nizami*, Ms. no. VII, pl. XXIxb.

In the upper story of this building, some pilasters sustaining the arches were once partially coated with colored tiles, forming geometric compositions (triangle, lozenge, square), but only tiny pieces of cobalt remained in place when last surveyed (Fig. 4.82). This décor was subsequently covered with mortar during a refurbishment, maybe in Jahangir's time.

#### 4.7 *Undated and "Late" Monuments*

##### 4.7.1 Da'i ki Chhoti Bahein ka Mahal, Late 15th–Early 16th Century (?)

This small mausoleum was probably designed for a woman, perhaps in the early 16th century.<sup>159</sup>

The building has an octagonal plan and opens through four arched bays. On the upper section of the wall, which has a stone facing, is a now much-ruined *chajja* followed by a rubble-built section. The octagon then divides into a 16-sided drum made of two horizontal registers separated by a rope molding. The upper section has a frieze made of square tiles featuring a large fleuron painted in cobalt and white over a turquoise ground (Figs. 4.83–84). If the color scheme recalls Timurid "blue and white" tiles (such as on Samarkand's Ishrat-khana), these are of an entirely different design. The whole cupola was coated with turquoise tiles, although only tiny traces remain.

159 Yazdani, *Mandu*, pp. 86–88.



FIGURE 4.83  
Mandu, tomb known as Da'i ki Chhoti Bahein ka Mahal,  
late 15th century (?)  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1990



FIGURE 4.84  
Detail of a tile from the drum of the dome of the Da'i ki  
Chhoti Bahein ka Mahal  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

#### 4.7.2 Funerary Complex of Darya Khan (1510–1526)

According to Yazdani, Darya Khan was a high-ranking officer at the court of Mahmud II (1510–1526).<sup>160</sup> His tomb has a square plan, and the facing is mainly made of stone. However, some tile panels are observed, especially on the western façade, although only the imprints with tiny bits of color remain here (Fig. 4.85). Yazdani described them as follows: “decorated tastefully with moldings and enamel tiles, the arrangement of the latter being intricate, containing patterns in green, blue, light blue, yellow and white.”<sup>161</sup>

Immediately below the *chajja*, a once outstanding calligraphic frieze was admired, although only

a tiny portion remains visible on the southern side. The frieze was made of overglazed, almost square, painted tiles written in *thuluth* script, in white against a cobalt ground adorned with delicate turquoise scrolls (Fig. 4.86). The frieze was framed on both the upper and bottom sides with a contrasting yellow ribbon. Traces of cobalt tiles can also be observed immediately below the calligraphic frieze, incrustated between the flat stone merlons.

Although little remains of this epigraphic frieze, the high quality of the writing is remarkable. It shares some common traits with the much larger epigraphic frieze on Mahmud Gawan's madrasa in Bidar, although the latter is made of cut-out tiles. It is probable that large calligraphies were likewise placed on other monuments in Mandu but are now completely lost.

160 Yazdani, *Mandu*, p. 102.

161 Yazdani, *Mandu*, p. 102.



FIGURE 4.85  
Mandu, Tomb of Darya Khan, western façade, with  
remains of a tiled panel  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1990



FIGURE 4.86  
Tomb of Darya Khan, southern façade, with remains of  
a tiled epigraphic frieze  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1990

#### 4.7.3 Chishti Khan-ka-Mahal, 2nd Half of the 16th Century?

The dating of this curious ensemble, known as Chishti Khan ka Mahal, is uncertain. Yazdani places it by the end of the 16th century, but the building could be earlier.<sup>162</sup> The name could be related to a Shaikh Maudud Chishti who resided at Mandu during Jahangir's stay, although no convincing argument exists to affirm that he was responsible for its building.

On the easternmost corner of the ensemble, a square room displays a once delicate decoration.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Yazdani, *Mandu*, 108–109.

<sup>163</sup> Yazdani, *Mandu*, 109: "In the room ... the walls are decorated with tiles and painting. There is also a Persian inscription in verse, composed in an epicurean vein." This poetical inscription was not found.

The lower parts of the wall were painted on plaster in blue and white with cloud-like patterns (Fig. 4.87). Above a narrow stone cornice, a belt supporting the dome has a series of black line painted square tiles with radiating and connecting motifs in white and yellow over a cobalt ground. Although most of the tiles have lost their glazing, the design remains visible on the bare ground (Fig. 4.88).

The delicacy of the designs has no pairing at Mandu, and parallels appear difficult to find, not only in India but also in Iran or Central Asia. The closest parallel that suggests itself is the almost contemporaneous black-line tiles from the Arz-odası at Topkapı. A similar pattern, but inserted in a more complex composition, is visible on the façade of the tomb of 'Ala' al-Din Ahmad Shah in Bidar, circa 1458 (Fig. 4.89).

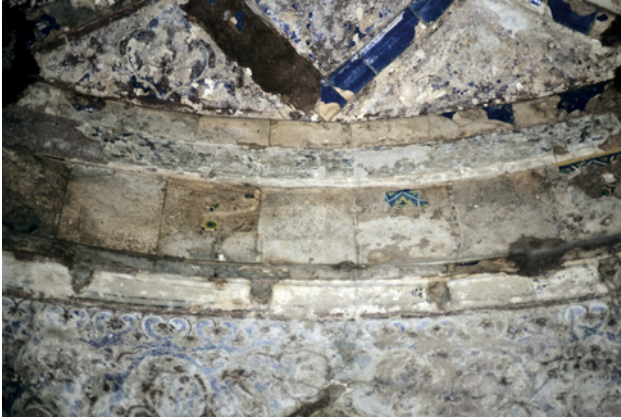


FIGURE 4.87  
Mandu, Chishti Khan-ka-Mahal, 2nd half of  
the 16th century (?). Interior decoration of the  
easternmost room

PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1988



FIGURE 4.88  
Polychrome painted tile from the frieze at the base of  
Chishti Khan-ka-Mahal's easternmost room  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

The dome surface was divided into compartments using intersecting ribs made of molded cobalt tiles.

#### 4.7.4 Nalcha's Malcolm ki kothi, Late 15th Century?

Nalcha is situated about 10 km north of Mandu.<sup>164</sup> It is known that Mahmud Khalji renovated the Paramara tank and had several buildings erected

around the place, some of which still stand.<sup>165</sup> The ensemble now known as Malcolm ki kothi is about 500 m west of the tank. In the early 19th century, the place was occupied by Sir John Malcolm as a summer residence. A main rectangular building has, on its north side, two small pools and two octagonal domed pavilions once overlooking a seasonal lake (Fig. 4.90). The now collapsed, eastern pavilion retained some parts of a once glorious tile decoration (Fig. 4.91).<sup>166</sup>

<sup>164</sup> About 1,800 m from Nalcha Tank is another, irregularly shaped water tank in a village named Kagadipura. Any information on papermaking in this area would be welcome.

<sup>165</sup> Porter, "Khalji Architecture," pp. 31–33.

<sup>166</sup> Last surveyed 21/07/1989.



FIGURE 4.89  
Ashtur, next to Bidar (Karnataka), Tomb of Alauddin  
Ahmad Shah, circa 1458. Detail of tiled decoration  
PHOTO R. CASTINEL, 2019



FIGURE 4.90  
Nalcha (Dhar district), Malcolm ki Kothi, view from  
North  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989



FIGURE 4.91  
Malcolm ki Kothi, now-collapsed eastern pavilion  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989



FIGURE 4.92  
Malcolm ki Kothi, now-collapsed eastern pavilion,  
upper section of the wall, under the *chajja*  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989



FIGURE 4.93  
Malcolm ki Kothi, drum and dome of the  
now-collapsed eastern pavilion  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 1989

Pointed arches opened on eight sides; above each was a horizontal panel with upper and lower bands of turquoise tiles. Following upward, a band of painted tiles in cobalt with white fleurons was delimited by a pair of narrow green bands. Above were two more turquoise bands framing a lost frieze; the already much dilapidated *chajja* was next (Fig. 4.92).

Above it, on the octagonal drum section (made of bricks), was a large register of black-line painted tiles, only tiny fragments of which remained (Figs. 4.93–95). These figured scrolls and cloud bands in white, yellow, and turquoise over a cobalt ground. Most unfortunately, this pavilion has collapsed in recent years due to a lack of care from the ASI.

•••

Several other monuments in Mandu retain traces of glazed decoration, mainly made of monochrome tiles, such as in the mosque next to the Da'i ka mahal tomb, “decorated with beautiful tiles,” according to Yazdani.<sup>167</sup> Other tombs are also noticed by this author, such as the Hathi Mahal (“tiles seem once to have decorated these bands, for the lime bed to which they were fixed may still be seen”) or the Chhapan Mahal (early 16th c.? “a band of ornamental arches set with deep-blue tiles”).<sup>168</sup> Several domes, such as in the so-called Baz Bahadur palace, may also have had tiled revetment. The extremely poor condition of the remaining tiles in Mandu is a matter of concern, especially when considering the recent collapse of such extraordinary décors as in the

167 Yazdani, *Mandu*, p. 89.

168 Yazdani, *Mandu*, pp. 101 and 111.

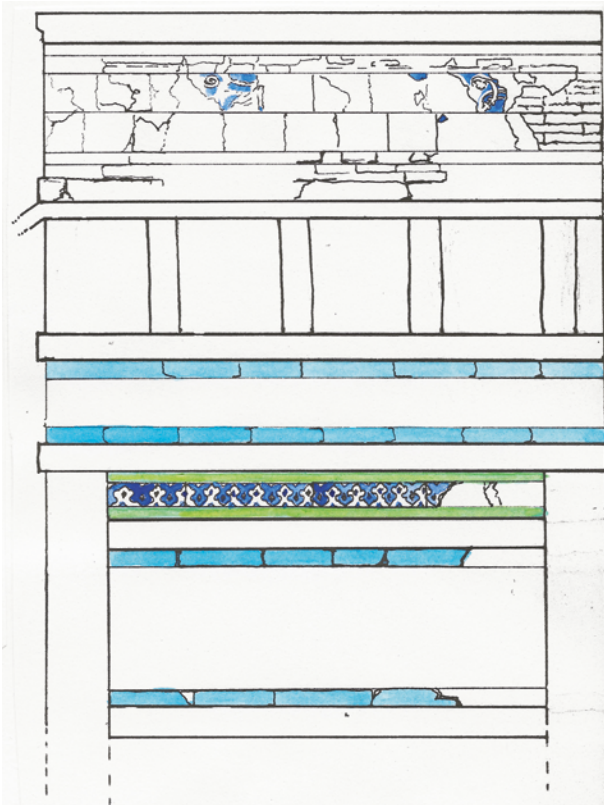


FIGURE 4.94  
Malcolm ki Kothi. Reconstructed sequence of tiled  
elements of the now collapsed eastern pavilion  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

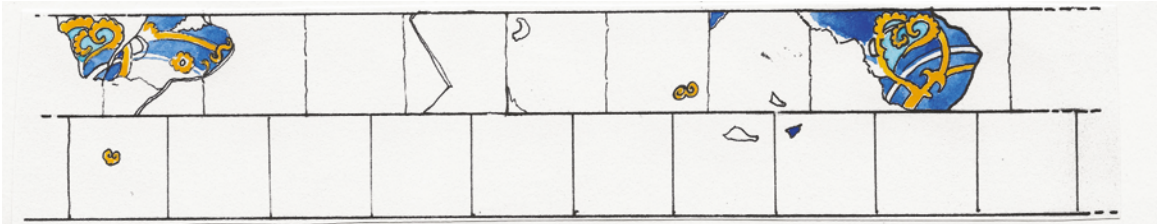


FIGURE 4.95 Malcolm ki Kothi. Band of polychrome painted tiles on the drum of the now collapsed eastern pavilion  
DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR

Malcolm ki Kothi octagonal pavilion. The need for conservation is thus an urgent issue.

As mentioned earlier, almost nothing is known about the origin and training of the craftspeople responsible for such works, and the mention by ‘Ali ibn Mahmud Kirmani of artists from Persia or Khurasan must be treated with caution. To the naked eye, the tiles from Mandu differ from those of Iran and Central Asia, for instance. However, no physical analysis of these has yet been conducted,

although analyses have confirmed the adaptation or transformation of formulae to the available materials for other areas and periods. These adaptations could be the fruit of a collaboration between local and “foreign” craftspeople. Thus, the filiation of both techniques and motifs is probably much more complex than a mere remake of borrowed items.

Several parallels have also been proposed with tiled decorations from Bidar; Mahmud Khalji

occupied the Bahmanid capital from 1461 to 1463, and 'Ali ibn Mahmud Kirmani mentions several craftsmen that the sultan took with him to Mandu, although none of them qualified as "tile-maker."<sup>169</sup>

The permanent settlement of a community or workshop specializing in producing glazed ceramics should have left some traces, although no survey on this field has yet been conducted.

One might wonder whether these craftspeople were also employed outside the Malwa sultanate. Thus, craftsmen from Mandu may have participated in the decoration of the already mentioned Man Mandir in Gwalior, although this is only a hypothesis. Other Rajput palaces, such as Chittorgarh and Orchhah, show some examples of mainly turquoise cut-out decoration, but their exact date is unclear.

Malwa progressively disappeared as an artistic center and was subsequently swallowed by the Mughal empire. It remains that although the Malwa sultanate was relatively short-lived, it attained significant power at its apex. The multiple conflicts with the neighboring states of Delhi, Bidar, and Gujarat reduced the compartment effect acknowledged in other regions. However, the result appears as an original culture beautifully illustrated in diverse artistic domains, from architecture to the arts of the book.

## 5 Conclusion

The three examples examined above offer a contrasting yet incomplete picture of the use of tiles in the Sultanate architecture of the subcontinent. Tile decoration is undoubtedly not the most frequently used material for architectural decoration, especially when considering Sultanate India as a whole. In this respect, the monuments of Sind and Punjab are the most visible exceptions and continued, even during the Mughal period, using tiled revetments. However, some sultanates, such

as Gujarat, Kashmir, and even Jaunpur, do not appear to have used tiles on their buildings. The so-called Firuz Shah's tomb in Jaunpur is probably an exception, although dating from the Mughal period.

Using tiles was a deliberate choice, probably made according to the taste of a specific elite.

Much has been said about the alleged Persian or Central Asiatic provenance of models, techniques, and craftsmen, but when considering these tiles in detail, these origins appear at least controversial. Conversely, what appears clearly is the will to elaborate an original creation, in which local abilities are used to their best, together with locally mined materials.

Much remains to be studied concerning the introduction of the different techniques, which varied according to the regions and epochs, and concerning the craftspeople responsible for such works. However, these studies probably imply a much more diffracted and wide-ranging vision than previously thought. In this broad picture, the tiles from Bengal emerge as the most original but also the least related to the Iranian-Central Asian connection. The links with the monuments in Burma/Myanmar should probably be further examined, although other sources might also be considered. However, exceptional décors are also visible in Delhi, such as the underglaze-painted tiles from the Shishe-Gumbad, and in Malwa, with the unfortunate example of Malcolm ki Kothi's octagonal pavilion.

A survey of Indian sultanate tiles would be incomplete without an in-depth study of the Deccani productions. As observed with some of the examples from Malwa, contacts between these areas, even if violent, are an established fact. However, as mentioned, tiles from the Deccan have voluntarily been left aside here, as they would represent a whole volume alone. Among the many potential examples of further research, a special case could be established. This concerns the use of *'adilshahi* tiles in Portuguese Goa, particularly in the church of Santa Monica, and their

<sup>169</sup> Kirmani, *Ma'athir*, p. 97.



FIGURE 4.96  
Underglaze painted tile coming from the Church  
of Santa Monica, Goa, early 17th century  
LISBON, MUSEU NACIONAL DO AZULEJO.  
PHOTO Y. PORTER, 2019

possible impact on later Lusitanian productions (Fig. 4.96).<sup>170</sup>

Besides Lahore Fort and the Chini ka Rauza, few monographs exist on Mughal tiles;<sup>171</sup> even rarer are studies on late-Mughal tiles, such as in Bibi ka Maqbara, Qutb al-Din Kaki's dargah, and others.

Other interesting issues to be studied in early modern times could also concern the progressive introduction of "foreign" tiles in the architecture of the subcontinent; this is the case with the use of blue and white Chinese porcelain tiles, as observed in Udaipur's City Palace, where they are in some places mixed with Delft items. The latter are also reminiscent of the already mentioned so-called "Delftian" tiles in Bhuj's palace.

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, glazed Indian vessels would require an in-depth study, from Buddhist Kushan times to the modern

period. It would be necessary to link the numerous findings of glazed pottery with the architectural revetments and thus attempt to reconstruct the activities of an important category of the subcontinent's craftspeople.

When, in the future, both tiles and vessels are considered to write a comprehensive "History of glazed ceramics in India," it will be possible to fulfill Jean Soustiel's vow of completing "a forgotten chapter of Islamic *Arts du feu*."<sup>172</sup>

In terms of methodology and historiography, the study of glazed ceramics appears an interesting prism for reconsidering the mindset through which the productions of Muslim India are approached. Traditionally, the evaluation grids for their interpretation favor either the exterior influence (from Iran, for instance) as the impassable mint *beyond* which the Indian productions could not surpass the status of "provincial" sub-products or as the impure excrescence of an alien civilization (Hinduism).

170 Céline Ventura Teixeira, *L'azulejo, la genèse d'un art*, pp. 290–291. See also Alexandra Curvelo, "O uso do azulejo e a presença portuguesa na Ásia do século XVII," *Um gosto português, O uso do azulejo no século XVII*, Lisbon, Athena, 2012, pp. 335–348.

171 See note 2.

172 See Jean Soustiel, *La céramique islamique*, Fribourg, Office du Livre, 1985, pp. 238–39.

The precise analysis, based on still accessible and tangible productions, together with the acceptance of their originality, allows a change in this viewpoint to emphasize two aspects. The first is the multiplication in the subcontinent of décors and techniques whose compartment effect mentioned above structured their differences. This

involved loose or sporadic contacts or combined and alternating partitioning. Second, the intrinsic originality resulting from underlying dynamics in the different regions acted as a melting pot in which exterior references – when they occurred – were transcended as parts of local inspirations, and not slavishly or imperfectly copied.

## Post-scriptum

Transcribing the written version of these Yarshater Lectures has resulted in a long-stretched task. While finishing this written version, I realized that it represents a kind of personal balance, although necessarily incomplete, of an important part of my academic investigations.

Indeed, these four papers correspond to consecutive moments in my research. I started working on the *“Making of” of Persian Manuscripts* while doing my MA dissertation, back in 1982. At that time, as a student, I still had some spare time to practice painting as well. Later, while residing in India, from 1986 to 1989 as a PhD student, working on my thesis dissertation, I continued my research on (and my practice of) painting but was also attracted, among others, by the almost undocumented domain of Indian sultanate tiles. However, my interest in ceramics grew mainly while working with Jean Soustiel and Marie-Christine David at the Soustiel Gallery, from 1989 to 1993. I am forever grateful for all they taught me while working with them. Later, and especially during our 1998 field work in Central Asia, my understanding of Islamic ceramics improved notably. But it was still a few years later, when I was already living in Aix-in-Provence, that I started practicing on how to *make* ceramics. Although I would have liked that “practice made me perfect,” at least I learned some bases of the crafts I have been studying, which undoubtedly allow their better understanding.

The present volume would not have been possible without the help of many people. I would first like to express all my gratefulness to the late Dr. Ehsan Yarshater, who always showed a keen interest in my research. Since his tight schedule did not allow him to attend to the London lectures, he previously made me the honor to assist to my talk at New York’s Bard Graduate Center.<sup>1</sup> All my thanks

are also due to Doris Behrens-Abuseif for inviting me to give these lectures, and to Scott Redford and the Yarshater Foundation for helping me in publishing them. My gratitude also goes to Teddi Dols for her enduring patience. A hearty thank you to Richard McClary for going through all my text, editing and improving it, and to Finbarr Barry Flood for his beautiful Foreword and his long-lasting friendship.

I first met Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom in 1986 at Istanbul, during the first ever codicological symposium on Islamic manuscripts. Since then they have always encouraged my research and moreover made the kindest recommendations for me, both for Shangri-La’s resident scholarship (2010) and for these Yarshater Lectures. They thus deserve all my gratitude and sympathy. This is also the occasion to address a warm aloha to the Shangri-La team active at that time, and especially to Deborah Pope.

In London, Yolande Crowe, but also Steve Waring and Richard Lancaster always provide not only a warm welcoming and the kindest hospitality, but also demonstrate a long-lasting friendship. Thank you also to Moya Carey (now in Dublin), Anna Contadini, Fuchsia Hart, Arthur Millner, Venetia Porter, and Rosalind Wade Haddon, for their help and sympathy.

My collaboration with Valentine Roux started many years ago, i.e. 1986, while we both were residing in Delhi, at the Mission Archéologique Française en Inde (MAFI). Since then, she has become a true and wonderful friend. My warmest thanks to her for re-reading the chapter 4 and making most welcome suggestions.

Since the 2013’s lectures, I have been honored, in 2018, with my admission at the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF). This grant has given me the occasion to travel extensively, and

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<sup>1</sup> “Potters of Kashan (Late 12th–early 14th c.),” Bard Graduate Center (New York), Ravi and Seran Trehan Lectures in Islamic Art and Material Culture, 23 October

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<sup>2012</sup>. Acknowledgements are extended here to Abigail Krasner-Balbale for her kind invitation.

to meet numerous persons who have helped me in several ways, and particularly Qamar Adamjee (San Francisco), Persis Berlekamp (Chicago), Alain George (Oxford), Francesca Leoni (Oxford), Leslee Michelsen (Honolulu), Gulru Necipoglu (Cambridge, Mass.), Jean-François de la Pérouse (New York), Laura Weinstein (Boston), Mary McWilliams (Harvard Museum).

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Special thanks are addressed to Massumeh Farhad (Freer Gallery, Washington DC), but also to the Chester Beatty Library, the David Collection, the Doris Duke Foundation Shangri La, the Khalili Foundation, and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, for allowing free reproduction of works in their collections.

In these last years, there has been an increasing place devoted to new demons such as *globalization*,

one of the latest being the near-blasphemous *appropriation*. In some ways, I wondered if my exterior or distanced glance at alien cultures such as those I endeavor on the Iranian and Indian worlds was legitimate. Richard Castinel has, once again, played an important role in finding the right-angle approach. Far from only playing the role of the naïve while traveling together, and thanks to his knowledge on multiple fields and to his synthetic spirit, our numerous discussions and his many additions have enormously helped improving these contributions, not to mention his wonderful photos. Dedicating this work to him is thus a well-deserved and obvious due.

Finally, my former students (among whom are Nadia Ali, Eloïse Brac de la Perrière, Jean-Do Brignoli, Negar Habibi, Adeline Laclau, Anaïs Leone, Simon Rettig and Yi Zhai) deserve a special praise not only for their enriching exchanges, but above all because they give to my research a *raison d'être*.

Marseille, December 15th, 2022

## *Shāh-nāma* Illustrated Manuscripts in the UK (after Brend and Melville, *Epic of the Persian*, pp. 248–251)

69 complete manuscripts.

TABLE 1 Alphabetical location-wise

Location	Ms Acc. N <sup>o</sup> (date, place): folios; illustrations	% fol/ill	format	ratio
1	<b>Birmingham</b> , Mingana Persian 9 (Mid 17th c., Astarabad): 441 folios; 72 ill.	16, 32	363 × 233 mm	1, 55
2	<b>Cambridge</b> AI&IT, PERS 2.01 BD (1012H/1604, Samarqand): 485 fol.; 27 ill.	5, 56	335 × 205 mm	1, 63
3	Fitwilliam MS 311 (1030H/1621, Astarabad?): 440 fol. 68 ill.	15, 45	370 × 245 mm	1, 51
4	University Library Or. 420 (841H/1437, Shiraz): 281 fol. 11 ill.	3, 91	322 × 200 mm	1, 61
5	Or. 1356 (10) (972H/1562, India): 281 fol.; 12 ill. (19th c.)	4, 27	254 × 162 mm	1, 56
6	Add. 269 (c.1580, Qazvin/Mashhad): 559 fol.; 13 ill.	2, 32	368 × 232 mm	1, 58
7	Corpus Or. 202 (1053H/1643, Shiraz): 338 fol.; 12 ill.	3, 55	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
8	<b>London</b> , British Library Or. 4384 (c.1430, Herat?): 307 fol.; 9 ill.	2, 93	340 × 225 mm	1, 51
9	Or. 1403 (841H/1438, Gulbarga?): 513 fol.; 92 ill.	17, 93	270 × 160 mm	1, 68
10	Or. 12688 (850H/1446, Māzandarān): 734 fol.; 89 ill.	12, 12	340 × 250 mm	1, 36
11	10 Islamic 119 (Mid 15th c., Shiraz): 554 fol.; 4 ill.	0, 72	350 × 215 mm	1, 62
12	Add. 18188 (891H/1486, Shiraz): 500 folios; 72 ill.	14, 4	345 × 225 mm	1, 53
13	Or. 13859 (1490s, Transoxiana): 429 folios; 28 ill. + 1 blank space	6, 52	313 × 210 mm	1, 49
14	Or. 14403 (910H/1504, Bokhara?): 547 fol.; 36 ill.	6, 58	?	–
15	Add. 15531 (942H/1536, Tabriz): 543 fol.; 48 ill.	8, 83	338 × 213 mm	1, 58
16	10 Islamic 133 (967H/1560, Shiraz): 538 fol.; 23 ill.	4, 27	380 × 225 mm	1, 68
17	Or. 12084–12086 (972H/1564, Astarabad): 3 vol. 542 fol.; 36 ill.	6, 64	230 × 160 mm	1, 43
18	10 Islamic 741–742 (c.1580, Shiraz): 2 vol. 1336 fol.; 15 ill.	1, 12	410 × 255 mm	1, 60
19	Add. 27302 (994H/1586, Qazvin): 621 fol.; 52 ill.	8, 37	475 × 315 mm	1, 50
20	10 Islamic 3254 (c.1590, Qazvin/Esfahan): 371 fol.; 52 ill.	14, 01	335 × 215 mm	1, 55
21	10 Islamic 3540 (c.1590, Shiraz): 569 fol.; 59 ill.	10, 36	460 × 295 mm	1, 55
22	Or. 4906 (c.1590 and later, Iran): 642 fol.; 38 ill.	5, 91	315 × 195 mm	1, 61
23	Add. 27257 (1590–95, Shiraz): 540 fol.; 55 ill.	10, 18	470 × 300 mm	1, 56
24	10 Islamic 301 (1008H/1600, Samarqand): 375 fol.; 24 ill.	6, 4	365 × 230 mm	1, 58
25	10 Islamic 966 (1012H/1604, Esfahan): 523 fol.; 63 ill.	12, 04	370 × 235 mm	1, 57
26	Add. 7724 (1021H/1612, Esfahan): 471 fol.; 10 ill.	2, 12	344 × 219 mm	1, 57
27	10 Islamic 3265 (1022/1614, Astarabad): 610 fol.; 41 ill.	6, 72	405 × 275 mm	1, 47
28	Add. 16761 (1023/1614, Esfahan): 525 fol.; 40 ill.	7, 63	294 × 181 mm	1, 62
29	Add. 5600 (15th c., Iran and 1616, India): 586 fol.; 90 ill.	15, 35	313 × 200 mm	1, 56
30	Add. 27258 (1037H/1628, Esfahan): 660 fol.; 64 ill.	9, 69	300 × 240 mm	1, 25
31	10 Islamic 1256 (1630–40, Esfahan): 622 fol.; 28 ill.	4, 5	430 × 270 mm	1, 59
32	Or. 11842 (early 17th c., India): 573 fol.; 14 ill.	2, 44	300 × 160 mm	1, 87

TABLE I Alphabetical location-wise (*cont.*)

Location	Ms Acc. N <sup>o</sup> (date, place): folios; illustrations	% fol/ill	format	ratio
33	Add. 6609 (17th c., India): 611 fol.; 5 ill.	0, 81	279 × 205 mm	1, 36
34	10 Islamic 3263 (late 17th c. Esfahan): 456 fol.; 23 ill.	5, 04	?	–
35	Add. 6610 (late 17th c. India): 311 fol.; 47 ill.	15, 11	395 × 260 mm	1, 51
36	Add. 18804 (1131H/1719, Kashmir): 358 fol.; 97 ill.	27, 09	352 × 245 mm	1, 43
37	Or. 12483 (c.1820, India): 597 fol.; 30 ill.	5, 02	320 × 210 mm	1, 52
38–39	Or. 2926–2976 (1246/1830–1252/1836, Shiraz): 624 fol.; 18 ill.	2, 88	413 × 282 mm	1, 46
40	Royal Asiatic Society, *MS 239 (c.1444, Herat): 536 fol.; 31 ill.	5, 78	340 × 220 mm	1, 54
41	Codrington 241 (early 17th c., India): 746 fol. 13 ill.	1, 74	368 × 267 mm	1, 37
42	SOAS, MS 25294 (912/1506, Central Asia? 17th c. ill.): 542 fol.; 20 ill.	3, 69	320 × 178 mm	1, 79
43	MS 24949 (18th c., Kashmir): 646 fol.; 79 ill.	12, 22	300 × 175 mm	1, 71
44	MS 24948 (19th c., Kashmir): 310 fol.; 22 ill.	7, 09	346 × 190 mm	1, 82
45	MS 21381 (19th c., Central Asia?): 352 fol.; 17 ill.	4, 82	244 × 175 mm	1, 39
46	<b>Manchester</b> J. Rylands Lib., Ryl Pers 9 (mid 15th c., Shiraz/India): 702 fol.; 55 ill.	7, 83	230 × 158 mm	1, 45
47	Ryl Pers 910 (924/1518, Tabriz): 564 fol.; 101 ill.	17, 90	311 × 228 mm	1, 36
48	Ryl Pers 932 (949/1542, Shiraz): 604 fol.; 41 ill.	6, 78	320 × 192 mm	1, 66
49	Ryl Pers 8 (mid 16th c., Shiraz): 581 fol.; 19 ill.	3, 27	342 × 206 mm	1, 66
50	Ryl Pers 933 (16th c., Qazvin/Mashhad): 266 fol.; 79 ill.	29, 69	400 × 292 mm	1, 36
51	OR F40 Q (1006/1597, Iran/India): 2 vol. 557 fol.; 15 ill.	2, 69	272 × 170 mm	1, 6
52	Ryl Pers 909 (1060/1650, Esfahan): 493 fol.; 99 ill.	20, 08	407 × 255 mm	1, 59
53	Ryl Pers 869 (1247/1832, India): 522 fol.; 86 ill.	16, 47	410 × 250 mm	1, 64
54	Ryl Pers 525 (19th c., India): 717 fol.; 76 ill.	10, 60	355 × 215 mm	1, 65
55	<b>Oxford</b> , All Souls, MS 288 (988/1580, Baghdad/Istanbul): 487 fol.; 21 ill.	4, 31	349 × 230 mm	1, 51
56	MS 289 (18th c. India): 209 fol.; 49 ill.	23, 44	?	–
57	Bodleian, *Ouseley Add.176 (c.1425–30, Shiraz): 468 fol.; 51 ill.	10, 89	288 × 198 mm	1, 45
58	Pers C.4 (852/1448, S. Iran/Tabriz?): 539 fol.; 1 ill.	0, 18	350 × 260 mm	1, 34
59	Elliott 325 (899/1494, Shiraz): 627 fol.; 56 ill.	8, 93	340 × 220 mm	1, 54
60	Ouseley 369 (959/1552, Shiraz): 602 fol.; 24 ill.	3, 98	342 × 195 mm	1, 75
61	Dep.b.5 (16th c., Shiraz): 507 fol.; 24 ill.	4, 73	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
62	Ouseley 344 (1010/1601, Shiraz): 580 fol.; 41 ill.	7, 06	400 × 255 mm	1, 56
63	Whinfield 1 (18th c., India): 545 fol.; 40 ill.	7, 33	475 × 272 mm	1, 74
64	Indian Institute Pers 32 (early 19th c., India): 604 fol.; 75 ill.	12, 41	299 × 187 mm	1, 59
65	Fraser 60 (19th c.? India): 628 fol.; 1 ill. + 43 blank spaces	0, 15/7	?	–
66	Bodl. Or. 716 (18th–19th c. Kashmir): 653 fol.; 113 ill.	17, 30	?	–
67	<b>St Andrews</b> , Univ Lib, MS 28(0) (1014/1605, Iran; ill. India): 551 fol.; 30 ill.	5, 44	346 × 217 mm	1, 59
68	<b>Windsor</b> , Windsor Castle, RCIN (A/5) (c.1585, Qazvin): 283 fol.; 88 ill.	31, 09	440 × 330 mm	1, 33
69	RCIN (A/6) (1058/1648, Esfahan): 756 fol.; 148 ill.	19, 57	460 × 280 mm	1, 64

TABLE 2 Shāh-nāma in the UK: increasing ratio-wise

Location	Ms Acc. N <sup>o</sup> (date, place): folios; illustrations	% fol/ill	format	ratio
30	Add. 27258 (1037H/1628, Esfahan): 660 fol.; 64 ill.	9, 69	300 × 240 mm?	1, 25?
68	<b>Windsor</b> , Windsor Castle, RCIN (A/5) (c.1585, Qazvin): 283 fol.; 88 ill.	31, 09	440 × 330 mm	1, 33
58	Pers C.4 (852/1448, S. Iran/Tabriz?): 539 fol.; 1 ill.	0, 18	350 × 260 mm	1, 34
10	Or. 12688 (850H/1446, Māzandarān): 734 fol.; 89 ill.	12, 12	340 × 250 mm	1, 36
47	Ryl Pers 910 (924/1518, Tabriz): 564 fol.; 101 ill.	17, 90	311 × 228 mm	1, 36
50	Ryl Pers 933 (16th c., Qazvin/Mashhad): 266 fol.; 79 ill.	29, 69	400 × 292 mm	1, 36
33	Add. 6609 (17th c., India): 611 fol.; 5 ill.	0, 81	279 × 205 mm	1, 36
41	Codrington 241 (early 17th c., India): 746 fol. 13 ill.	1, 74	368 × 267 mm	1, 37
45	MS 21381 (19th c., Central Asia?): 352 fol.; 17 ill.	4, 82	244 × 175 mm	1, 39
17	Or. 12084–12086 (972H/1564, Astarabad): 3 vol. 542 fol.; 36 ill.	6, 64	230 × 160 mm	1, 43
36	Add. 18804 (1131H/1719, Kashmir): 358 fol.; 97 ill.	27, 09	352 × 245 mm	1, 43
57	Bodleian, *Ouseley Add.176 (c.1425–30, Shiraz): 468 fol.; 51 ill.	10, 89	288 × 198 mm	1, 45
46	<b>Manchester</b> J. Rylands Lib., Ryl Pers 9 (mid 15th c., Shiraz/India): 702 fol.; 55 ill.	7, 83	230 × 158 mm	1, 45
38–39	Or. 2926–2976 (1246/1830–1252/1836, Shiraz): 624 fol.; 18 ill.	2, 88	413 × 282 mm	1, 46
27	10 Islamic 3265 (1022/1614, Astarabad): 610 fol.; 41 ill.	6, 72	405 × 275 mm	1, 47
13	Or. 13859 (1490s, Transoxiana): 429 folios; 28 ill. + 1 blank space	6, 52	313 × 210 mm	1, 49
19	Add. 27302 (994H/1586, Qazvin): 621 fol.; 52 ill.	8, 37	475 × 315 mm	1, 50
8	<b>London</b> , British Library Or. 4384 (c.1430, Herat?): 307 fol.; 9 ill.	2, 93	340 × 225 mm	1, 51
55	<b>Oxford</b> , All Souls, MS 288 (988/1580, Baghdad/Istanbul): 487 fol.; 21 ill.	4, 31	349 × 230 mm	1, 51
3	Fitwilliam MS 311 (1030H/1621, Astarabad?): 440 fol. 68 ill.	15, 45	370 × 245 mm	1, 51
35	Add. 6610 (late 17th c. India): 311 fol.; 47 ill.	15, 11	395 × 260 mm	1, 51
37	Or. 12483 (c.1820, India): 597 fol.; 30 ill.	5, 02	320 × 210 mm	1, 52
12	Add. 18188 (891H/1486, Shiraz): 500 folios; 72 ill.	14, 4	345 × 225 mm	1, 53
40	Royal Asiatic Society, *MS 239 (c.1444, Herat): 536 fol.; 31 ill.	5, 78	340 × 220 mm	1, 54
59	Elliott 325 (899/1494, Shiraz): 627 fol.; 56 ill.	8, 93	340 × 220 mm	1, 54
20	10 Islamic 3254 (c.1590, Qazvin/Esfahan): 371 fol.; 52 ill.	14, 01	335 × 215 mm	1, 55
21	10 Islamic 3540 (c.1590, Shiraz): 569 fol.; 59 ill.	10, 36	460 × 295 mm	1, 55
1	<b>Birmingham</b> , Mingana Persian 9 (Mid 17th c., Astarabad): 441 folios; 72 ill.	16, 32	363 × 233 mm	1, 55
29	Add. 5600 (15th c., Iran and 1616, India): 586 fol.; 90 ill.	15, 35	313 × 200 mm	1, 56
5	Or. 1356 (10) (972H/1562, India): 281 fol.; 12 ill. (19th c.)	4, 27	254 × 162 mm	1, 56
23	Add. 27257 (1590–95, Shiraz): 540 fol.; 55 ill.	10, 18	470 × 300 mm	1, 56
62	Ouseley 344 (1010/1601, Shiraz): 580 fol.; 41 ill.	7, 06	400 × 255 mm	1, 56
25	10 Islamic 966 (1012H/1604, Esfahan): 523 fol.; 63 ill.	12, 04	370 × 235 mm	1, 57
26	Add. 7724 (1021H/1612, Esfahan): 471 fol.; 10 ill.	2, 12	344 × 219 mm	1, 57
15	Add. 15531 (942H/1536, Tabriz): 543 fol.; 48 ill.	8, 83	338 × 213 mm	1, 58
6	Add. 269 (c.1580, Qazvin/Mashhad): 559 fol.; 13 ill.	2, 32	368 × 232 mm	1, 58
24	10 Islamic 301 (1008H/1600, Samarqand): 375 fol.; 24 ill.	6, 4	365 × 230 mm	1, 58
67	<b>St Andrews</b> , Univ Lib, MS 28(0) (1014/1605, Iran; ill. India): 551 fol.; 30 ill.	5, 44	346 × 217 mm	1, 59
52	Ryl Pers 909 (1060/1650, Esfahan): 493 fol.; 99 ill.	20, 08	407 × 255 mm	1, 59
31	10 Islamic 1256 (1630–40, Esfahan): 622 fol.; 28 ill.	4, 5	430 × 270 mm	1, 59

TABLE 2 Shāh-nāma in the UK: increasing ratio-wise (*cont.*)

Location	Ms Acc. N <sup>o</sup> (date, place): folios; illustrations	% fol/ill	format	ratio
64	Indian Institute Pers 32 (early 19th c., India): 604 fol.; 75 ill.	12, 41	299 × 187 mm	1, 59
51	OR F40 Q (1006/1597, Iran/India): 2 vol. 557 fol.; 15 ill.	2, 69	272 × 170 mm	1, 6
18	IO Islamic 741–742 (c.1580, Shiraz): 2 vol. 1336 fol.; 15 ill.	1, 12	410 × 255 mm	1, 60
61	Dep.b.5 (16th c., Shiraz): 507 fol.; 24 ill.	4, 73	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
7	Corpus Or. 202 (1053H/1643, Shiraz): 338 fol.; 12 ill.	3, 55	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
4	University Library Or. 420 (841H/1437, Shiraz): 281 fol. 11 ill.	3, 91	322 × 200 mm	1, 61
22	Or. 4906 (c.1590 and later, Iran): 642 fol.; 38 ill.	5, 91	315 × 195 mm	1, 61
11	IO Islamic 119 (Mid 15th c., Shiraz): 554 fol.; 4 ill.	0, 72	350 × 215 mm	1, 62
28	Add. 16761 (1023/1614, Esfahan): 525 fol.; 40 ill.	7, 63	294 × 181 mm	1, 62
2	<b>Cambridge</b> AI&IT, PERS 2.01 BD (1012H/1604, Samarqand): 485 fol.; 27 ill.	5, 56	335 × 205 mm	1, 63
69	RCIN (A/6) (1058/1648, Esfahan): 756 fol.; 148 ill.	19, 57	460 × 280 mm	1, 64
53	Ryl Pers 869 (1247/1832, India): 522 fol.; 86 ill.	16, 47	410 × 250 mm	1, 64
54	Ryl Pers 525 (19th c., India): 717 fol.; 76 ill.	10, 60	355 × 215 mm	1, 65
48	Ryl Pers 932 (949/1542, Shiraz): 604 fol.; 41 ill.	6, 78	320 × 192 mm	1, 66
49	Ryl Pers 8 (mid-16th c., Shiraz): 581 fol.; 19 ill.	3, 27	342 × 206 mm	1, 66
9	Or. 1403 (841H/1438, Gulbarga?): 513 fol.; 92 ill.	17, 93	270 × 160 mm	1, 68
16	IO Islamic 133 (967H/1560, Shiraz): 538 fol.; 23 ill.	4, 27	380 × 225 mm	1, 68
43	MS 24949 (18th c., Kashmir): 646 fol.; 79 ill.	12, 22	300 × 175 mm	1, 71
63	Whinfield 1 (18th c., India): 545 fol.; 40 ill.	7, 33	475 × 272 mm	1, 74
60	Ouseley 369 (959/1552, Shiraz): 602 fol.; 24 ill.	3, 98	342 × 195 mm	1, 75
42	SOAS, MS 25294 (912/1506, Central Asia? 17th c. ill.): 542 fol.; 20 ill.	3, 69	320 × 178 mm	1, 79
44	MS 24948 (19th c., Kashmir): 310 fol.; 22 ill.	7, 09	346 × 190 mm	1, 82
32	Or. 11842 (early 17th c., India): 573 fol.; 14 ill.	2, 44	300 × 160 mm	1, 87

TABLE 3 Size-wise

46	<b>Manchester</b> J. Rylands Lib., Ryl Pers 9 (mid-15th c., Shiraz/India): 702 fol.; 55 ill.	7, 83	230 × 158 mm	1, 45
17	Or. 12084–12086 (972H/1564, Astarabad): 3 vol. 542 fol.; 36 ill.	6, 64	230 × 160 mm	1, 43
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57	<b>Bodleian</b> , *Ouseley Add.176 (c.1425–30, Shiraz): 468 fol.; 51 ill.	10, 89	288 × 198 mm	1, 45
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TABLE 3 Size-wise (*cont.*)

47	Ryl Pers 910 (924/1518, Tabriz): 564 fol.; 101 ill.	17, 90	311 × 228 mm	1, 36
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8	<b>London</b> , British Library Or. 4384 (c.1430, Herat?): 307 fol.; 9 ill.	2, 93	340 × 225 mm	1, 51
10	Or. 12688 (850H/1446, Māzandarān): 734 fol.; 89 ill.	12, 12	340 × 250 mm	1, 36
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55	<b>Oxford</b> , All Souls, MS 288 (988/1580, Baghdad/Istanbul): 487 fol.; 21 ill	4, 31	349 × 230 mm	1, 51
11	10 Islamic 119 (Mid 15th c., Shiraz): 554 fol.; 4 ill.	0, 72	350 × 215 mm	1, 62
58	Pers C.4 (852/1448, S. Iran/Tabriz?): 539 fol.; 1 ill.	0, 18	350 × 260 mm	1, 34
36	Add. 18804 (1131H/1719, Kashmir): 358 fol.; 97 ill.	27, 09	352 × 245 mm	1, 43
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1	<b>Birmingham</b> , Mingana Persian 9 (Mid 17th c., Astarabad): 441 folios; 72 ill.	16, 32	363 × 233 mm	1, 55
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41	Codrington 241 (early 17th c., India): 746 fol. 13 ill.	1, 74	368 × 267 mm	1, 37
61	Dep.b.5 (16th c., Shiraz): 507 fol.; 24 ill.	4, 73	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
7	Corpus Or. 202 (1053H/1643, Shiraz): 338 fol.; 12 ill.	3, 55	370 × 230 mm	1, 60
25	10 Islamic 966 (1012H/1604, Esfahan): 523 fol.; 63 ill.	12, 04	370 × 235 mm	1, 57
3	Fitwilliam MS 311 (1030H/1621, Astarabad?): 440 fol. 68 ill.	15, 45	370 × 245 mm	1, 51
16	10 Islamic 133 (967H/1560, Shiraz): 538 fol.; 23 ill.	4, 27	380 × 225 mm	1, 68
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62	Ouseley 344 (1010/1601, Shiraz): 580 fol.; 41 ill.	7, 06	400 × 255 mm	1, 56
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52	Ryl Pers 909 (1060/1650, Esfahan): 493 fol.; 99 ill.	20, 08	407 × 255 mm	1, 59
53	Ryl Pers 869 (1247/1832, India): 522 fol.; 86 ill.	16, 47	410 × 250 mm	1, 64
18	10 Islamic 741–742 (c.1580, Shiraz): 2 vol. 1336 fol.; 15 ill.	1, 12	410 × 255 mm	1, 60

TABLE 3 Size-wise (*cont.*)

38–39	Or. 2926–2976 (1246/1830–1252/1836, Shiraz): 624 fol.; 18 ill.	2, 88	413 × 282 mm	1, 46
31	IO Islamic 1256 (1630–40, Esfahan): 622 fol.; 28 ill.	4, 5	430 × 270 mm	1, 59
68	<b>Windsor</b> , Windsor Castle, RCIN (A/5) (c.1585, Qazvin): 283 fol.; 88 ill.	31, 09	440 × 330 mm	1, 33
69	RCIN (A/6) (1058/1648, Esfahan): 756 fol.; 148 ill.	19, 57	460 × 280 mm	1, 64
21	IO Islamic 3540 (c.1590, Shiraz): 569 fol.; 59 ill.	10, 36	460 × 295 mm	1, 55
23	Add. 27257 (1590–95, Shiraz): 540 fol.; 55 ill.	10, 18	470 × 300 mm	1, 56
63	Whinfield 1 (18th c., India): 545 fol.; 40 ill.	7, 33	475 × 272 mm	1, 74
19	Add. 27302 (994H/1586, Qazvin): 621 fol.; 52 ill.	8, 37	475 × 315 mm	1, 50

## Anthology of Poems on Luster, *mina'i* & Underglaze Painted Vessels

This poetical anthology is a work in progress, based on texts published in the sources cited below; there is no pretention of exhaustiveness.

Abbreviations Chart:

**Ābgine:** Farzana Qa'ini, *Muza-i ābgina va sufālinahā-i Irān*. Tehran, 2004.

**Cosmos:** Sheila Canby, Deniz Beyazit, Martina Ruggiadi and A.C.S. Peacock, *Court and Cosmos. The Great Age of the Seljuqs*, New York, 2016.

**Ghouchani 1987:** 'Abdullah Ghouchani, Sufālinahā-i zarrin fām va naqqāshi shuda zir-i lu'āb, *Majalla-i bāstān shīnāsi va tārikh*, 1, 2 (1366/1987), pp. 30–41.

\***Ghouchani 1992:** 'Abdullah Ghouchani, *Persian Poetry on the Tiles of Takht-i Sulayman*.

**Plotnick:** Oya Pancaroglu, *Perpetual Glory*.

**al-Sabah:** Oliver Watson, *Ceramics from Islamic Lands. Kuwait National Museum. The Al-Sabbah Collection*, 2004.

### Alphabetical Order, First Hemistich; Rime or Radif in Bold

*Ādat nabuvad marā ki az ruyi havas*

Anonymous (?)

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster)

*Ān sururān ki nāma niku kasb kardand*

Rashid al-Din Vatvāt (Nafisi, 1960, p. 140, II., 1778, 1780)

– Cosmos no. 52 (luster fragment of bowl, LACMA)

*Ay bulbul dil fitna gul zār rakht*

Anonymous (?)

– al-Sabah P.1 (*mina'i*)

*Ay burda dilam zi dast dildāri kun*

Anonymous (?)

– Cosmos no. 122 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.58);

– al-Sabah O.17 (luster)

*Ay dil zi ṭarab hich nishān mi-bini*

Afzal al-Din Kashani<sup>1</sup>

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster);

– Plotnick no. 61 (underglaze);

– Plotnick no. 76 (luster).

*Ay dil zi ṭarab chirāt bigānagist*

Jamāl al-Din Ashhari (Ghouchani 1987, p. 36)

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster).

*Ay dil ... sanam dil dāri*

Anonymous (?)

– Plotnick no. 86 (luster)

*Ay dust majuy gar khiradmandi (bayt?)*

Anonymous

– Cosmos no. 87 (luster, Met. 56.185.13)

*Ay gurusna-i mihr-i tu sirān-i jahān*

Attr. Jalal al-Din Rumi (?)

– \*Ghouchani 1992, 67.

– Plotnick no. 76 (luster).

– Plotnick no. 91 (luster).

– Berlin I 528 (1529; yp no. 77?).

*Ay rā-i tu sāl u māh azardan-i man*

Anonymous (?)

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 9, David coll., luster).

– \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 92, no. 91.

– Plotnick no. 59 (underglaze).

– Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze).

– Plotnick no. 75 (luster).

– Plotnick no. 76 (luster).

<sup>1</sup> William Chittick, "BĀBĀ AFZĀL-AL-DĪN," Encyclopaedia Iranica, III, Fasc. 3, pp. 285–291, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baba-afzal-al-din> (accessed 14/12/2022).

– al-Sabah O.15 (luster).

– al-Sabah O.16 (luster, x 2)

– Ābgine 123-S

– Ābgine 122-S (luster, x2)

*Ay ruy-i tu bar majlis-i jān zuhra shuda*

Anonymous (?)

– Cosmos no. 41 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.33)

*Ay sim bar la'l-i lab ākhir ruzi*

Anonymous (?)

– Ābgine 122-S (luster, dated 614; YP 92)

*Ay tan gham-i 'ishq ba kazinat na kunad*

Anonymous (Abu Zayd?)

– Cosmos no. 40 (Met. 64.178.1, mina'i Abu Zayd)

*Ay yād-i lab-i marham dāgh-i dil-i man*

Anonymous (?)

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 33 (no. 7, Walters, luster)

*Ay yād-i labat marham dāgh-i dil-i man*

Anonymous (?)

– Cosmos no. 138 (luster, Doha P.O.285.2004; signed Muhammad ibn Abi [Tahir?] ibn Abu-l-Husayn [al-Hasani?]\*)

*Āyā mihr-i minnat hami bugzārad*

Anonymous (?)

– al-Sabah O.15 (luster)

*Ayām-i viṣāl-i ān delafruz che sud*

Anonymous (?)

– al-Sabah O.15 (luster)

*Az 'ālam 'āqibat birun bād dilam*

Anonymous (?)

– Plotnick no. 93 (luster)

*Az kabr-i sarat bar āsmān mi-sāyad*

Rashid al-Din Vatvāt/Atsiz Shāh

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90)

*Bā gardish-i charkh kār-i yaksān maṭlab*

Abu Sa'īd Abu al-Khair

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 15 (priv. coll., luster)

– al-Sabah P.4 (mina'i)

*Bar 'āriz-i zibā'i but-i yaqhmāni*

Attr. Sadr Khujandi (Shirvani, p. 384, no. 1838)

– Plotnick no. 95 (luster)

*Bar jān-i manat nist dami dilsuzi*

Anvāri

– al-Sabah O.17 (luster)

*Bāz dādam dil ba-dast-i dilbari khunkhāra'i (masnavi)*

'Abd al-Vāsa' Jabali

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 7, Walters?, luster)

*Bukhur har chi dāri fuzuni bidih*

*Tu ranjida'i bahar dushman manih (beyt)*

Ferdowsi

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 11, V&A?, underglaze);

– \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 62, no. 35;

– al-Sabah N.7 (underglaze).

*Chākar-i gham-i to dā'im dar jān dārad*

Sharaf al-Din Shofruh or Shams al-Din Mobārakshāh Sanjari Sistāni

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 10, Gulbenkian, underglaze)

*Chākar za tu bisyār ba jān gardida-st*

Anonymous (?):

– \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 97, no. 102;

– Plotnick no. 77 (luster);

– Cosmos no. 41 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.33)

*Dāni ki chīrāst ay pasandida-i man*

Attr. Majd al-Din Baghdadi (see Shirvani, p. 628, no. 3698), or Razi al-Din Nishapuri (Ghouchani):

– Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90);

– \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 75, no. 61;

– Ābgine 2-S, luster, dated 616 (YP 102)

- Ābgine 147-S (luster)
- Plotnick no. 62 (underglaze);
- Plotnick no. 76 (luster)

*Dar ʿālam-i ʿishq gham zi shādi kam nist*

Anonymous (?)

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90);
- \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 87, no. 82;
- Cosmos no. 144 (luster, Met. 61.40)

*Dar bāgh-i iram sarv-i sahi bāri-i tu*

Anonymous (?), quoted Shirvani 1375/1996, p. 299, no. 1147:

- Plotnick no. 56 (underglaze)

*Dil banda ʿāshiqi tan-i āzād chi sud*

Anonymous (?)

- Plotnick no. 96 (mixte)

*Dildār az ānch kard gar bāz āyad*

Anonymous (?), *Nuzhat*, p. 216

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 15 (priv. coll., luster)

*Dil dar bar-i man zi dilbari mi-larзад*

// *Nuzhat al-majālīs*, Shirvani, p. 517, no. 2860:

- Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze)

*Dil dar sar-i zulfat hama gumrāhi did*

Anonymous (?)

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 36 (no. 13, V&A, luster)

*Dil gar chi be gham sukhta-tar migardad*

Anonymous (?); Ghouchani: Jamāl al-Din Ashhari, *Nozhat* p. 235, no. 976.

- \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 50, no. 14;
- Plotnick no. 59 (underglaze)
- Ābgine 206-S (underglaze)

*Didi ki chi kard barf bā mā yārā*

Anonymous (Abu Zayd?):

- Cosmos no. 40 (minaʿi Abu Zayd)

*Dush ahvāli zi dil hami pursidam*

Anonymous (?)

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 9, David coll., luster);
- al-Sabah, O.17 (luster)

*Dush az sar-i zolfi butānesh dida*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 85 (luster)

*Dush didam khīyāl-i u dar khwāb*

Jamal al-Din Muhammad Isfahani<sup>2</sup> (see Nasrin Askari):

- Freer Gallery of Art, F1941.11

*Fardā tu-i bi-kār chun khāma-i man*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 86 (luster)

*Giram ki sabā zulf-i tu dar tāb kishad*

Anonymous (?)

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster);
- \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 38.

*Guftam ay betā kujāst ... nigāhat*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 56 (underglaze)

*Guftam chu risad bi-zulf dāni dastam*

Anonymous (?)

- Cosmos no. 143 (underglaze, Macy: Met, 32.52.1, dated 612/1215–16)

*Guftam ki magar ghamat buvad darmānam*

Attributed to Malik Tughanshah (Shirvani, p. 284, no. 1031):

- \*Ghouchani 1992, no. 60;
- Plotnick, no. 86 (luster),
- Plotnick, no. 91 (luster);
- see also Christie's, 26 April 2012, no. 97 (underglaze).

2 D. Durand-Guédy, "Jamal al-Din Mohammad Esfahani," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XIV, Fasc. 4, pp. 436–438 <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jamal-al-din-mohammad-esfahani> (accessed 14/12/2022).

*Guftam ki niqāb az qamarat bar giram*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 76 (luster);
- Plotnick no. 80 (luster);
- Cosmos no. 122 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.58)

*Ham chun gul-i burāq va zi bahr-i tu shab firishtigān*  
(bayt)

Anonymous (?):

- Al-Sabah no. N.5 (underglaze)

*Hamvāra turā dawlat u 'izz afzun bād*

Anonymous (?):

- Ghouchani 1987, p.36 (no. 12, Abgine, luster);
- Ghouchani 1987, p.36 no. 13, V&A luster);
- \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 25
- (Freer Gallery F1949.19 <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1949.19/>, underglaze);
- Plotnick no. 70 (mina'i);
- Plotnick no. 74 (luster);
- Plotnick no. 77 (luster, ×2);
- Plotnick no. 79 (luster);
- Plotnick no. 94 (luster);
- Cosmos no. 144 (luster);
- al-Sabah O.16 (luster)

*Hamvāra zi man kishide dāman dil-i tust*

Abu Sa'īd Abu al-Khair

- Cosmos no. 138

*Har giriya/nāla ki bar sar-i shutur mikardam*

Mahasti

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster);
- \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 66, no. 47.

*Har jahān tang āyad bāyad ki zinājins u khush nang āyad*

Anonymous (?):

- Cosmos no. 87 (luster)

*Janā zi ghamat ba-kharābāt (?) shudim*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 91 (luster)

*Khāl-i ki vatan chihri khub-i tu guzid*

Fakhr al-Din Mubarakshah (d. 602/1207). (Shirvani, p. 384, no. 1834)

- Plotnick no. 95 (luster).

*Mah-i khatā, but-i chin, daranda jangi**Ze man majuy kināra chu dar miyān dili*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 87 (luster)

*Man bi-tu hamān sar zada-am fārigh bāsh*

Anonymous (?):

- Cosmos no. 143 (underglaze, Macy, Met. 32.52.1)

*Man 'ishq-i tu sakht sust midānistam*

Mahasti, Khwārazmshāh, or Abu al-Faraj Runi

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 16 (Keir coll.?, luster jug)

*Man mihr-i tu dar miyān-i jān āvardam*

Abu Zayd Shams al-Din Hasani

- al-Sabah O.17 (luster, ×2);
- (cf. Ghouchani 1992, pp. 89–90, no. 86;
- see unsigned *mina'i* dated 583!!!)
- Ābgine 123-S (×2)
- Ābgine 122-S

*May āmad va karda nargis ra'nā rā*

Razi al-Din Neyshāpuri

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 36, no. 14 (luster, Ades, Gurgan no. 88)

*May āmad va khush khush nazari miafkanad*

Jamāl al-Din Saqā

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 14 (luster, Ades, Gurgan no. 88)

*Mi-guyad amir-i māvarān-nahr bi-hāl*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 89 (luster)

*Niqah kardan andar hama kārhā**Bih az durr-u gawhar bi kharvārhā (beyt)*

Abu Shokur Balkhi

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90);

- Ghouchani 1992, p. 44, no. 3;
- Cosmos no. 138 (luster, Doha PO.285.2004).

*Rang az rukh-i tu lāla nu'mān girad*

Jamāl al-Din Ashhari

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 36 (no. 13, V&A, luster)

*Şanam bāz chu zad bi-tu balāy ākhir*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 85 (luster)

*Shādi nakunad sar-i gul azinat narasad*

Anonymous (?)

- Cosmos no. 144 (luster)

*Tā bā gham-i 'ishqat in dil parvardam (masnavi)*

Anonymous (?)

- Plotnick no.95 (luster, dated 603/1206)

*Tā gasht zi 'ishq-i yār chu zar-i rukh-i man*

Anonymous (?), *Nuzhat*, p. 194

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 36 (no. 12, Ābgine, luster)

*Yādam chu az-in 'izzam safar mi-āyad*

Attr. Sayyid Ashraf (Shirvani, p. 534, no. 2988);  
(Ghouchani: Seyyed Hasan Ghaznavi, Sharaf al-Din Shofruh, Shams al-Din Tabasi, Tāleb Jājarmi):

- \*Ghouchani 1992, pp. 16 & 75, no. 62;
- Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze)
- Ābgine 206-S (underglaze)

*Yā rabb agar 'ishq-i tu afzun gardad*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 85 (luster)

*Yāram cho kalāla bar gul-o lāla nihād*

Ashraf Tabari/Sayyid Ashraf Ghaznavi (Shirvani, p. 290,  
no. 1084)

- Plotnick no. 89.

*Yāram dari ki nagushud babast*

Anonymous (?)

- Cosmos no. 52 (luster)

*Yak lahza chu nist bā manat bastigi*

Zahir al-Din Tāj al-Kuttāb Sarakhsi

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 11, V&A ?, underglaze);
- al-Sabah, N.7 (underglaze)

*Zi-ān hin ki bā tu 'āram āyad guftan*

Anonymous (?)

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster)

*... har dam hama sāla midavad dar tak-o tāz*

Anonymous (?)

- Cosmos no. 88 (mina'i)

*... zulf-i ān şanam darmāni*

Anonymous (?):

- Plotnick no. 85 (luster)

## Object-location Wise

### Luster

- Ābgine 2-S (luster, dated 616/1219; YP no. 102);  
diam. 19.2 cm

Interior:

- *Dāni ki chirāst ...* (Majd al-Din Khwārazmi)
- *Nigahdār bādā*

- Ābgine 122-S (luster, dated 614/1217–18; YP no. 92);  
diam. 23.3 cm

Interior 1:

- *Ay sim bar la'i lab ākhir ruzi*
- *Ay rā'i-i to*

Interior 2:

- *Ay rā'i-i to*
- *Man mihr-i tu*

- Ābgine 123-S (luster); diam. 22.3 cm

Interior:

- *Nigahdār bādā*
- *Man mihr-i tu*
- *Ay rā'i-i to*

Exterior:

- *Man mihr-i tu*
- *Nigahdār bādā*

- Ābgine 147-S (luster), H.?

- *Dāni ki chirāst*
- *Nigahdār bādā*

- Ābgine 314-S (luster, dated 608/1212; YP no. 52), diam.?
  - *Nigahdār bādā*
- Berlin I (528 ?), dated 613 (unread)
  - *Ay gurusna-i mihr-i tu sirān-i jahān (?)*
- Cosmos no. 41 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.33)
  - *Chākīr zi tu bisyār ba jān gardīda-st*
  - *Ay ruy-i tu bar majlis-i jān zuhra shoda*
- Cosmos no. 52 (luster fragment of bowl, LACMA)
  - *Ān sururān ki nāma niku kasb kardand*
  - *Yāram dari ki nagushud bibast*
- Cosmos no. 87 (luster, Met. 56.185.13)
  - *Ay dust majuy gar khīradmandi (bayt ?)*
  - *Har jahān tang āyad bāyad ki zinājins u khush nang āyad*
- Cosmos no. 122 (luster, Ashmolean EA1956.58)
  - *Ay burda dilam zi dast dildāri kun*
  - *Guftam ki niqāb az qamarat bar giram*
- Cosmos no. 138 (luster, Doha PO.285.2004; signed)
  - *Ay yād-i LABAT marham dāgh-i dil-i man*
  - *Hamvāra zi man kishide dāman dil-i tost*
  - *Nigah kardan andar hama kārhā*
- Cosmos no. 144 (luster, Met. 61.40)
  - *Dar ‘ālam-i ‘ishq gham zi shādi kam nist*
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
  - *Shādi nakunad sar-i gul azinat narisad*
- Freer Gallery of Art, F1941.11
  - *Dush didam khiyāl-i u dar khwāb*
- Ghouhani 1987, pp. 33–4 (no. 7, Walters?, luster)
  - *Ay yād-i LAB-I marham dāgh-i dil-i man*
  - *Bāz dādām dil bi-dast-i dilbari khunkhāra’i (masnavi)*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90)
  - *Az kabr-i sarat bar āsmān mi-sāyad*
  - *Dar ‘ālam-i ‘ishq gham zi shādi kam nist*
  - *Dāni ki chirāst ay pasandīda-i man*
  - *Ay yād-i lab-i marham dāgh-i dil-i man*
  - *Nigah kardan andar hama kārhā*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 35 (no. 9, David coll., luster)
  - *Dush ahvāli zi dil hami pursidam*
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māh azardan-i man*
- Ghouhani 1987, p.36 (no. 12, Abgine, luster)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
  - *Tā gasht zi ‘ishq-i yār chu zar-i rukh-i man*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 36 (no. 13, V&A, luster)
  - *Dil dar sar-i zulfat hama gumrāhi did*
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
  - *Rang az rukh-i tu lāla nu’mān girad*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 36, no. 14 (luster, Ades, Gurgan no. 88)
  - *May āmad va karda nargis ra’nā rā*
  - *May āmad va khush nazar mi-afkanad*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 37, no. 15 (priv. coll., luster)
  - *Bā gardish-i charkh kār-i yaksān maṭlab*
  - *Dildār az ānch kard gar bāz āyad*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 37, no. 16 (Keir coll.?, luster jug)
  - *Man ‘ishq-i tu sakht sust midānistam*
- Ghouhani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster)
  - *Ādat nabuvad marā ki az ruyi havas*
  - *Ay dil zi ṭarab hich nishān mi-bīni*
  - *Ay dil zi ṭarab chirāt bigānigist*
  - *Giram ki sabā zulf-i tu dar tāb kishad*
  - *Har girīya/nāla ki bar sar-i shutur mikardam*
  - *Zi-ān hīn ki bā tu ‘āram āyad guftan*
- Plotnick no. 74 (luster)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Plotnick no. 75 (luster)
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māh azardan-i man*
- Plotnick no. 76 (luster)
  - *Dāni ki chirāst ay pasandīda-i man*
  - *Ay dil zi ṭarab hich nishān mi-bīni*
  - *Ay gurusna-i mihr-i tu sirān-i jahān*
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māh azardan-i man*
  - *Guftam ki niqāb az qamarat bar giram*
- Plotnick no. 77 (luster)
  - *Chākīr zi tu bisyār jān gardīdast*
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Plotnick no. 79 (luster)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Plotnick no. 80 (luster)
  - *Guftam ki niqāb az qamarat bar giram*
- Plotnick no. 85 (luster)
  - *Dush az sar-i zulfī butānish dida*
  - *Ṣanam bāz chu zad bi-tu balāy ākhir*
  - *Yā rabb agar ‘ishq-i tu afzun gardad*
  - *... zulf-i ān ṣanam darmāni*
- Plotnick no. 86 (luster)
  - *Ay dil ... ṣanam dil dāri*
  - *Fardā tu-i bi-kār chun khāma-i man*
  - *Guftam ki maḡar ghamat buvad darmānam*

- Plotnick no. 87 (luster)
  - *Mah-i khatā, but-i chin, daranda jangi*
- Plotnick no. 89 (luster)
  - *Mi-guyad amir-i māvarān-nahr ba hāl*
  - *Yāram chu kalāla bar gul-u lāla nihād*
- Plotnick no. 91 (luster)
  - *Ay gurusna-i mihr-i tu sirān-i jahān*
  - *Guftam ki magar ghamat buvad darmānam*
  - *Janā zi ghamat ba-kharābāt (?) shodim*
- Plotnick no. 93 (luster)
  - *Az ‘ālam ‘āqibat birun bād dilam*
- Plotnick no. 94 (luster)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Plotnick no. 95 (luster)
  - *Bar ‘ariz-i zibā’i but-i yaghmāni*
  - *Khāl-i ki vatan-i chihri khub-i tu guzid*
  - *Tā bā gham-i ‘ishqat in dil parvardam*
- al-Sabah O.15 (luster)
  - *Āyā mihr-i minnat hami bugzārad*
  - *Ayām-i visāl-i ān dilafroz chi sud*
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māk azardan-i man*
- al-Sabah O.16 (luster, ×2)
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māk azardan-i man*
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- al-Sabah O.17 (luster)
  - *Bar jān-i manat nist dami dilsuzi*
  - *Dush ahvāli zi dil hami pursidam*
  - *Ay burda dilam zi dast dildāri kun*
  - *Man mihr-i tu dar miyān-i jān āvardam*

### Underglaze

- Ābgine 206-S (underglaze)
  - *Dil gar chi bi gham sukhta-tar migardad*
  - *Yādam chu az in ‘izzam safar mi-āyad*
- Cosmos no. 143 (underglaze, Macy: Met, 32.52.1, dated 612/1215–16)
  - *Guftam chu risad bi zulf dāni dastam*
  - *Man bi-to hamān sar zada-am fārigh bāsh*
- Christie’s, 26 April 2012, no. 97 (underglaze)
  - *Guftam ki magar ghamat buvad darmānam*
- Freer Gallery (F1949.19 <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1949.19/>, underglaze)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 10, Gulbenkian, underglaze)
  - *Chākīr-i gham-i tu dā’im dar jān dārad*

- Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 11, V&A?, underglaze)
  - *Bukhur har chi dāri fuzuni bidih*
  - *Yak lahza chu nist bā manat bastigi*
- Plotnick no. 56 (underglaze)
  - *Dar bāgh-i iram sarv-i sahi bāri-i to*
  - *Guftam ay bitā kujāst ... nigahat*
- Plotnick no. 59 (underglaze)
  - *Dil gar chi bi gham sukhta-tar migardad*
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māk azardan-i man*
- Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze)
  - *Dil dar bar-i man zi dilbari mi-lar zad*
  - *Ay rāy-i tu sāl u māk azardan-i man*
  - *Yādam chu az in ‘izzam safar mi-āyad*
- Plotnick no. 61 (underglaze)
  - *Ay dil zi ṭarab hich nishān mi-bini*
- Plotnick no. 62 (underglaze)
  - *Dāni ki chirāst ay pasandida-i man*
- al-Sabah no. N.5 (underglaze)
  - *Ham chun gul-i burāq va zi bahr-i tu shab firishtigān*
- al-Sabah N.7 (underglaze)
  - *Bukhur har chi dāri fuzuni bidih*
  - *Yak lahza chu nist bā manat bastigi*

### Mina’i

- Cosmos no. 40 (mina’i Abu Zayd)
  - *Didi ki chi kard barf bā mā yārā*
  - *Ay tan gham-i ‘ishq bi kazinat na kunad*
- Cosmos no. 88 (mina’i)
  - *... har dam hama sāla midavad dar tak-u tāz*
- Plotnick no. 70 (mina’i)
  - *Hamvāra turā dawlat-u ‘izz afzun bād*
- Plotnick no. 96 (mixte)
  - *Dil banda ‘āshiqi tan-i āzād chi sud*
- al-Sabah P.1 (mina’i)
  - *Ay bulbul dil fitna gul zār rakht*
- al-Sabah P.4 (mina’i)
  - *Bā gardish-i charkh kār-i yaksān maṭlab*

### Poets Wise

1. ‘Abd al-Vāsa’ Jabali
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 7, Walters?, luster)

2. **Abu Sa'īd Abu al-Khair (967/1049)**<sup>3</sup>
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 15 (priv. coll., luster);
  - al-Sabah P.4 (mina'i)
  - Abu Sa'īd Abu al-Khair
  - Cosmos no. 138
3. **Abu Shakur Balkhi (born 915/?)**
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90);
  - \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 44, no. 3;
  - Cosmos no. 138 (luster, Doha PO.285,2004).
4. **Afzal al-Din Kashani (d. 1213–14?)**<sup>4</sup>
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51-1952, luster);
  - Ghouchani 1992, pp. 2–3; 34; pp. 45–7, nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; pp. 69–71, nos. 51, 52, 53, 54, 55; p. 79, no. 68.
  - Plotnick no. 61 (underglaze).
  - Plotnick no. 76 (luster).
5. **Anvari (1126–1186?)**<sup>5</sup>
  - al-Sabah O.17 (luster)
6. **Ashraf Tabari/see also Sayyid Ashraf Ghaznavi (d. 1160–61?)**<sup>6</sup>
  - (Shirvani, p. 290, no. 1084)
  - Plotnick no. 89.
7. **Fakhr al-Din Mubarakshah (d. 602/1207). Quoted on the bowl.**
  - (Shirvani, p. 384, no. 1834)
  - Plotnick no. 95 (luster).
8. **Firdawsi (d. 1020)**
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 11, V&A?, underglaze);
  - \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 62, no. 35.
  - al-Sabah N.7 (underglaze).
9. **Jamāl al-Din Ashhari,**<sup>7</sup>
  - Nozhat* p. 235, no. 976. (Anonymous?); Ghouchani:
  - \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 50, no. 14;
  - see also Christies 1/05/2001, no. 271
  - Plotnick no. 59 (underglaze)
  - Jamāl al-Din Ashhari (Ghouchani 1987, p. 36)
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 38, no. 17 (V&A C.51–1952, luster).
  - Jamāl al-Din Ashhari
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 36 (no. 13, V&A, luster)
10. **Jamal al-Din Muhammad Isfahani,**<sup>8</sup>
  - Freer Gallery of Art, F1941.11
11. **Jamal al-Din Saqa**
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 14 (luster, Ades, Gurgan no. 88)
12. **Mahasti, Khwarazmshah, or Abu al-Faraj Runi**
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 16 (Keir coll.?, luster jug)
13. **Majd al-Din Baghdadi (see Shirvani, p. 628, no. 3698), or Razi al-Din Nishapuri (Ghouchani):**
  - a. Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90);
  - i. \*Ghouchani 1992, p. 75, no. 61;
  - b. Plotnick no. 62 (underglaze);
  - c. Plotnick no. 76 (luster)
14. **Malik Tughanshah (Shirvani, p. 284, no. 1031):**
  - \*Ghouchani 1992, no. 60;
  - Plotnick, no. 86 (luster),
  - Plotnick, no. 91 (luster);
  - Christie's, 26 April 2012, no. 97 (underglaze).
15. **Mawlavi (?) Attr. Jalal al-Din Rumi (?):**
  - \*Ghouchani 1992, 67;
  - Plotnick no. 76 (luster);
  - Plotnick no. 91 (luster);
  - Berlin I 528 (1529: yp no. 77?), dated 613
16. **Rashid al-Din Vatvat (d. 1182) (Nafisi, 1960, p. 140, 11., 1778, 1780)**
  - Cosmos no. 52 (luster fragment of bowl, LACMA)
  - Rashid al-Din Vatvāt/Atsiz Shāh
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 34 (no. 8, Ades coll., luster, Gurgan no. 90)
17. **Razi al-Din Nayshapuri**
  - Ghouchani 1987, p. 36, no. 14 (luster, Ades, Gurgan no. 88)

3 G. Böwering, "Abu Sa'īd Fazl-Allah," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1/4, (1983), pp. 377–380.

4 <https://ganjooor.net/babaafzal/>; Chittick, "Baba Afzal."

5 J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Anwari," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 11/2, (1986), pp. 141–143.

6 Julie Scott Meisami, "Ḥasan-e Gaznavi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, x11/1, (2003), pp. 33–34.

7 F. de Blois, *Poetry of Pre-Mongol Period, Persian Literature*, vol. v, 2004, p. 494.

8 Durand-Guédy, "Jamal al-Din Esfahani."

18. **Sadr Khujandi (Shirvani, p. 384, no. 1838)**  
 – Plotnick no. 95 (luster)
19. **Sayyid Ashraf (Shirvani, p. 534, no. 2988);**  
**(Ghouchani: Seyyed Hasan Ghaznavi, Sharaf**  
**al-Din Shofruh, Shams al-Din Tabasi, Tāleb**  
**Jājarmi):**  
 – \*Ghouchani 1992, pp. 16 & 75, no. 62;  
 – Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze)
20. **Sharaf al-Din Shufruh or Shams al-Din**  
**Mobarakshah Sanjari Sistani**  
 – Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 10, Gulbenkian, un-  
 derglaze)
21. **Zahir al-Din Taj al-Kuttāb Sarakhsi**  
 – Ghouchani 1987, p. 35 (no. 11, V&A? under-  
 glaze);  
 – al-Sabah, N.7 (underglaze)
- Anonymous (?), quoted Shirvani 1375/1996, p. 299,  
 no. 1147:  
 – Plotnick no. 56 (underglaze)
- Anonymous (?), *Nuzhat*, p. 216  
 – Ghouchani 1987, p. 37, no. 15 (priv. coll., luster)
- // *Nuzhat al-majālis*, Shirvani, p. 517, no. 2860:  
 – Plotnick no. 60 (underglaze)
- There are about 20 poets identified (although some  
 poems are attributed to several poets; the attribution to  
 Mawlavi cannot be correct). The proportion of “anony-  
 mous” vs. “attributable” poems is almost 50%; the same  
 ratio concerns poets quoted on one single occasion vs.  
 two or more quotes.

## Tentative List of Tiles with Quotations from the *Shāh-nāma* in a Trilobed Arch

### References:

- Tiles are arranged:
  - By series of décor (Friezes 1 to 8).
  - According to *Shāh-nāma*'s sequence (volume, page, line, hemistich a/b).
- Text references follow J. Mohl's "jibi" edition (Tehran, 1345/1966); all translations are my own.
- Order number is followed by present location or sale catalogue; history, condition, and dimensions are added when known.

Bibliography is limited to ASMC and Masuya unless tiles are published only elsewhere.

- Tiles appearing in ASMC publications (ASMC 1985, 1991, 1996) are not arranged "catalog-wise" by this author; order numbers between square brackets are thus my own.
- Masuya refers to Tomoko Masuya's thesis, *Chart XVIII: Shāh-nāma quotations on 6-1-G Tiles* (pp. 716–720).
  - Her numbers 1 to 25 correspond to tiles with identified inscriptions (to which ISL (SMB-PK) 1. 4/67,35 must be added; see hereafter no. 1.13).
  - Numbers 26–27 are inscriptions with several possible identifications.
  - 28–31 are unidentified inscriptions with ASMC's suggested identifications.
  - 32–35 are unidentified inscriptions.
  - 36–38 are repaired and 39–40 are fragments (to which three unnumbered items are added).

### Frieze 1. (54 Tiles and Nine Fragments, Nos. 1.1 to 1.63)

#### Vol. 1: 16 Tiles

*Na bini ma-ranjān du binanda rā* / If you do not see, do not torment both your eyes.

(Mohl jibi 1, p. 3, l. 5b)

- 1.1. Sotheby's, *Islamic Works of Art*, London, 16–17 April 1985 n°286.  
Incomplete; upper band missing.  
Dim. H. 22,5 × W. 29,8 cm
  - ASMC 1991 [n°1], p. 91, note 118 and Figure 11.
  - Masuya 1
- 1.2. – A second, complete tile, with same hemistich; present location unknown (found on Pinterest, without any references)
  - Unpublished (?)

*Dar andisha-i sakht ki ganjad u* / Who could enclose Him in his harsh mind?

(Mohl jibi 1, p. 3, l. 10b)

- 1.3. Sotheby's, *Islamic Works of Art*, London 15 October 1986, n°100.  
Dim. ca. 30 cm by side.  
According to ASMC, this tile was previously in the collection of M. Riahi. Reproduced in the catalogue *Le Mille e una notte*, Faenza, 1990, no. 64, p. 98.
  - ASMC 1991 [n°2], p. 91, note 120 and Figure 12
  - Masuya 2

*Khīrad-i tira-u mard-i rawshan ravān* / The dark spirit and the man of enlightened soul.

(Mohl jibi 1, p. 4, l. 21a)

- 1.4. Shangri La, DDF 48.346.1; Sotheby's Parke Bernet Galleries, 16 Feb 1943.  
29.8 × 29.8 cm
  - Unpublished

*Kazinat risad nik u bad bigumān* / Without doubt, from this good and bad will come for you.

(Mohl jibi 1, p. 4, l. 28b)

- 1.5. Malaysia Museum, Kuala Lumpur, IAMM, 2003.10.17.  
29.8 × 29.8 cm

- Heba Nayel Barakat, *The Arabesque, an Introduction*, Kuala Lumpur, IAMM, 2018, cat. no. 34, Figure 164.

*Zi har dānishi chun sukhan bishnuy* / When you will listen to the words of each wisdom.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 5, l. 34a)

- 1.6. Shangri La, DDF 48.346.2; Sotheby's Parke Bernet Galleries, 16 Feb 1943.  
29.8 × 29.8 cm
- Unpublished

*Zi garmish pas khushki āmad padid* / Its heat, then its dryness will become patent.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 5, l. 40b)

- 1.7. Private collection, Japan.
- Masuya 3 (Pl. 202-a)

*Gavāhi diham kin sukhanhā zi ust* / I attest that these words are his.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 8, l. 102a)

- 1.8. Olympia Auctions, Arthur Millner – *Islamic, Indian, Himalayan and South-east Asian Art*, Thursday 6th November 2014, Lot 342. [https://www.auction.fr/\\_fr/lot/a-kashan-lustre-pottery-square-tile-a-kashan-lustre-pottery-square-tile-decorated-16047184](https://www.auction.fr/_fr/lot/a-kashan-lustre-pottery-square-tile-a-kashan-lustre-pottery-square-tile-decorated-16047184)  
30.00 cm. H × 30.00 cm. W
- Unpublished

*Ki khudh parvarāni va khudh bishikari* / You tear down (those) that you have nourished.

(Mohl jibi I, p.57, l. 538b)

- 1.9. Laurin, Guilloux, Buffetaud, Tailleur, *Art d'Orient*, Paris, Drouot, 14 mars 1983, no. 87.  
30 × 30 cm
- ASMC 1985 [n°1], p. 274, note 41 and Figure 4.
- Masuya 5

*[Ki ruya]sh zi khurshid nikutar [ast]* / Whose face is more beautiful than the sun.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 123, l. 384b)

- 1.10. Uto Auktionen, *Islamic Works of Art, the Kitāb gi collection and others*, Zurich, 4 November 1976, no. 1156, ill. p. 42.  
30 cm by side.

- ASMC 1985 [n°2], pp. 274–5, note 42 and Figure 5.
- Masuya 6

*[Zi sar tā] pāyash bi-kirdār-i ājj / bi-rukh* [*bihisht va bibālā chu sāj*] / From head-to-toe resembling ivory/the face like heaven and the loftiness of the teak-tree.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 123, l. 385a–b)

- 1.11. V&A 1696–1892. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O342412/fragment-unknown/>  
Length: 25.0 cm max, Height: 26.9 cm, Depth: 2.2 cm
- Tiles from this series with more than one hemistich are exceedingly rare.

- ASMC 1985 [n°3]; ASMC 1991 [n°8], p. 112, note 165 and Figure 23.
- Masuya 7

*[Yaki izad]i bar sar az mushk tāj* / A divine creature crowned with musk.

(Mohl jibi I p. 128, l. 525b)

- 1.12. *Vente Collection de M. Porcher-Labreuil*, Nice 19–21 March 1934, p. 25 no. 142 and Pl. VII; Paris Drouot, 1986 (Picard/Arcache).  
Incomplete, refilling.
- ASMC 1991 [n°13], p. 147, note 244 and Figure 29.
- Masuya 8

*[Furu mānd Sindukh]t az in guft [u guy / pasand āmadash Zāl rā juft uy]? / Sindukht was perplexed by these words / She agreed in matching Zāl with her.*

Text reconstructed according to ASMC. (Mohl jibi I, p. 144, l. 904a)

- 1.13. Berlin, Museum Islamischer Kunst, Nr. 1. 4/67.35.2
- Fragment found at Takht-i Sulaiman; the height dimension given by the museum online data (36.3 cm) cannot be correct; width: 18.4 cm; thickness: 3.6 cm.
- Naumann (1976), pl. 6b no. 122.
- ASMC 1985 [n°4] p. 276; ASMC 1991 [n°9], p. 113, Figure 24.
- Masuya, unnumbered (between 8 and 9)

*[Kuj]ā bāra-i tu kunad mu-i tar* / On the place where its hair will be wet.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 165, l. 1410a)

- 1.14. Uto Auktionen, *Islamic Works of Art*, Zurich, 4 November 1976, p. 42 no. 1158.  
Broken, parts missing.  
– ASMC 1985 [n°5] pp. 277–78 and Figure 6; ASMC 1991 [n°6], p. 110 and Figure 21.  
– Masuya 28

*Girāzanda āhu birāq andarun* / The proudly-walking gazelle, inside the meadow.  
(Mohl jibi I, p. 245, l. 32b).

- 1.15. Eghvard church, Cat. 23.  
incomplete; back with number 29 ou 69  
– Gyuzalyan, ill. 11  
– Donabédian & Porter, Cat. 23, Figure 48.

*Gulābist gu'i bi-juyash ravān* / You would say that rose-water flows in the rivulet.

(Mohl jibi I, p. 245, l. 34a)

- 1.16. Parke-Bernet 1977 n°35.  
– ASMC 1985 n°6 (Figure 16)  
– Masuya 9

#### Volume II: 4 Tiles

*Chinīn guft bā nāmdārān[-i jang]* / So he spoke to the reputed lords of war.

(Mohl jibi II, p. 28, l. 587a)

- 1.17. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid, no. 73/58/P1/56; Ex Colección Santa-Olalla.  
H. 21.7 cm; incomplete.  
– *Catálogo de la Exposición de Antigüedades Persas*, Madrid 1971, no. 638 and p. 104.  
– ASMC 1985 [n°18]; ASMC 1991 [n°12] p. 120 and Figure 28.  
– Masuya 26 (several possible identifications)

*Suy-i band kardanash bi-shitāftand* / They made haste to tie him/it.

(Mohl jibi II, p. 38, l. 37b)

- 1.18. Daussy-Ricqlès, Drouot 22 juin 1992, no. 18 (former Abrami collection).  
– Masuya 10

[?] *chi guft ān hunar-juy-i bā-hush* / (...) so spoke this clever and wise.

(Variant of Mohl jibi II, p. 199, l. 2362a)

- 1.19. London private collection.

W. 30.5 cm; H. 30.5 to 31.2 cm.

- ASMC 1991 [n°10], p. 113 and Figure 25.  
– Masuya 29 (unidentified, with ASMC's suggestion)

*Ki u dād bar nik-u bad dastgāh* / He has given the rule on good and bad.

(Mohl jibi II, p. 333, l. 1250b)

- 1.20. Gemeente Museum, Den Hague, no. 0558623; Ex J.W.N. Van Echterbergh collection (OKI-343),  
W. 30.2 cm, H. 29.9 to 30.5 cm.  
<https://www.kunstmuseum.nl/en/collection/tegel-2?origin=gm>  
– ASMC 1991 [n°5], p. 98 and Figure 17.  
– Masuya 27 (several possible identifications)

#### Volume III: 3 Tiles

*Binih gush-u dil-rā bi-āvāy-i chang* / Listen from hear and heart to the song of the harp.

(adapted from Mohl jibi III, p. 149, l. 49b)

- 1.21. Firenze, Museo Bargello. From collection of Louis Carrand, before 1895.  
<https://www.controradio.it/islam-i-firenze-arte-i-collezionismo-dai-medici-al-novecento/>  
– ASMC 1985 [n°7] (Figure 14); ASMC 1991 p. 111.  
– Masuya 30 (unidentified, with ASMC's suggestion)

*Zi changāl-i yuzān hama dasht gharm* / The whole plain is made angry by the claws of the cheetahs.

(Jibi III, p. 151, l. 113a).

- 1.22. Eghvard church, Cat. 17  
The back has 50 (?) inscribed.  
– Gyuzalyan, ill. 12  
– Donabédian & Porter, Figure 47.

*Va z'ān bar sarat niz payghāra nist* / One could not blame you because of this.

(variant of Mohl jibi III, p. 292, l. 2035b)

- 1.23. Artcurial-Briest-Poulain-F.Tajan. Arts d'Orient et de l'Islam Quatre Collections Privées. (12 Mai 2014, lot 275); previously Kevorkian, Paris; collection X. Guérand-Hermès. <https://www.artcurial.com/sites/default/files/pdf-catalog/2017-09/2365.pdf>  
29,5 × 29,5 cm  
Restored, completed.

- ASMC 1991 n°7 Figure 22
- Masuya 11

*Volume IV: 11 Tiles*

[*Hamān mīva-ash*] *chun chīrāgh-i bihisht* / (This very fruit,) like a beacon from paradise.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 90, l. 2061b)

1.24. (Sotheby 1985 n°146)

Incomplete.

- ASMC 1991 [n°11], Figure 26.
- Masuya 12

*Faridun-u Hushang-i Yazdānparast* / Faridun and Hushang, worshippers of God.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 118, l. 2723a)

1.25. (Parke-Bernet 1970 n°109)

- ASMC 1985 [n°8] Figure 17; ASMC 1991 p. 115, Figure 18.
- Masuya 13

*Zi lāla farib u zi* [*nargis shakib*] / The coquetry of the tulip and the (patience of the narcissus).

(variant, Mohl jibi IV, p. 245, l. 1542a)

1.26. Victoria & Albert Museum, 550–1900 <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O345626/fragment-unknown/>

Length: 17.0 cm, Height: 28.9 cm, Depth: 2.8 cm

Incomplete; the back has traces of an inscription.

- ASMC 1996 (included in his frieze 111), p. 13, Figure 5.
- Masuya 14? (she refers to “Parke Bernet 1970”)

*Chu bidār kardi jahān rā bibin* / When you will wake up, look at the world.

(Mohl jibi IV, 245, l. 1545a)

1.27. Eghvard church, Cat. 49.

The back has *chahārdah* (“fourteen”) inscribed.

- Gyuzalyan, ill. 10.
- Donabédian & Porter, Figure 50.

*Kunun khwurd bāyad may-i khush gavār* / Now (we) must drink this exquisite wine.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 281, l. 2391a)

1.28. British Museum 1878,1230.573.1; bequeathed by John Henderson, 1878. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1878-1230-573-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1878-1230-573-1) Height: 29.70 centimeters; Width: 30.30 centimeters

- ASMC 1985 [n°10], Figure 8.
- Masuya 15

Same hemistich.

1.29. Eghvard church, Cat. 13  
Incomplete.

- Gyuzalian Figure 8–9
- Donabédian & Porter, Figure 46.

*Havā pur khurush-u zamin pur za jush* / The air is full of clamors and the earth is shuddering.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 281, l. 2392a)

1.30. Kuwait, private collection; sold at Drouot, C. Boisgirard & A. de Heckeren, *Arts d'Orient. Collection du Dr. C. Lacoux et à divers*, Paris, Drouot, 21 mai 1980, n°49.

- ASMC 1985 [n°11], Figure 9.
- Masuya 16

*Khunuk ānka dilshād dārad binush* / Happy the one who drinks and feels contented.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 281, l. 2392b)

- 1.31. Eghvard church, Cat. 53.
- Not in Gyuzalyan.
- Donabédian & Porter, Figure 53.

*Hama kuh pur lāla-u sunbul-ast* / The whole mountain is covered with tulips and hyacinths.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 281, l. 2395b)

- 1.32. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, B60P2146; The Avery Brundage Collection; previously O. Homberg's collection.
- Aimée Froom, *Persian ceramics*, 2008, n°33
- Masuya 17

Same hemistich.

1.33. Reza Abbassi Museum, Tehran.

(unpublished) <https://www.picuki.com/tag/kashantiles>

*Gul az nāla-i u bibāladh hami* / May the rose thrive from his [the nightingale's] complaint.

(Mohl jibi IV, p. 281 l. 2396b)

- 1.34. Qazvin Museum.
- ASMC 1985 [n°12], Figure 10.
- Masuya 19

**Volume v: 8 Tiles**

*Agar dust gardad turā pād shāh* / If the king has a liking for you.

(Mohl, Jibi v, p. 94, l. 1020a).

1.35. Daussy-Ricqlès, Drouot 22 juin 1992, no. 18 (former Abrami collection).

– Masuya 20

*Birahna chu zāyad zi mādar kasi* / Naked like one just born to a mother.

H. 1 (Mohl jibi v, p. 98 l. 118a)

1.36. Manzi collection, *Catalogue des faïences anciennes (...) composant la collection de feu M. Manzi*, Paris, Galerie Manzi, Joyant et Cie, 21 mars 1919, no. 178 (28 cm by side).<sup>1</sup> The tile is now in Mohtashemi collection: <https://www.amirmohtashemi.com/artworkdetail/834584/17919/takht-i-soleyman-tile>

– ASMC 1985 [n°13], p. 284.

– Masuya 21

*Kunun bar gul-u nār u sib u bihi* / Now over roses, pomegranates, apples and quinces.

Mohl jibi v, p. 330, l. 1288a.

1.37. Eghvard church, Cat. 7.

– Gyuzalian, ill. 4

– Donabédian & Porter, Figure 43.

*Chu bini rukh-i sib bijāda rang* / When you will see the ruby-colored apple-face.

Mohl, jibi v, p. 330, l. 1289a

1.38. Eghvard church, Cat. 43.

– Gyuzalian, ill. 5

– Donabédian & Porter, Figure 49

*Shavad āsmān hamchu pusht-i palang* / The sky will become like the back of the panther.

(Mohl jibi v, p. 330, l. 1289b)

<sup>1</sup> The tile is reproduced in this catalogue under no. 178, facing p. 42. The notice (p. 32) mistakenly mentions a signature by Yūsuf ibn ‘Alī, of the Abu Tahir family; it also refers to the *Exposition des Arts Musulmans*, no. 429 (G. Migeon, M. Van Berchem and C. Huart, Paris, 1903) from which the mistake is repeated.

1.39. British Museum, 1878,1230.573.2.

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1878-1230-573-2](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1878-1230-573-2)

Height: 29.70 cm; Width: 30.30 cm

– ASMC 1985 [n°14], Figure 11.

– Masuya 22.

Same hemistich.

1.40. Eghvard Church, Cat. 51.

– ASMC 1996, Figure 2.

– Gyuzalian, ill. 6–6a.

– Donabédian & Porter, Figure 51.

*Burumand-u buyā bahāri buvad* / When the spring will be filled with riches and scents.

(Mohl jibi v, p. 330, l. 1290a)

1.41. (UCAD 7641) *L’art de l’islam*, pl. 24.

– ASMC 1985 n°15

– Masuya 23

*Havā rāst gardad na garm u na sard* / The air will become pleasant, neither hot nor cold.

Mohl, Jibi 5, p. 330, l. 1291a

1.42. Rezā ‘Abbāsi Museum, Tehran.

Unpublished

**Volume VI: 1 Tile**

*Hami āmad az bustān bu-i mushk* / A scent of musk was coming from the garden.

(Mohl jibi VI, p. 48, l. 33b)

1.43. (UCAD)

<https://art.rmngp.fr/fr/library/artworks/carreau-a-l-arc-trilobe-lustre-metallique-moule-technique-decor-sous-glacure-rehauts-de-couleur-decor-sur-glacure-ceramique-siliceuse>

– ASMC 1985 [n°16], Figure 12.

– Masuya 24

**Volume VII: 3 Tiles**

*Chu az khanjar-i ruz bugrikht shab* / When the night escaped from the sword of the day.

(Mohl Jibi VII, p. 9, l. 136a)

1.44. (al-Sabah, Kuwait)

– ASMC 1985, Figure 13.

– Masuya 25

*Nagashti sipihr-i buland az baram* / You did not circle the height of heaven out of my burden.

(Mohl, *jibi VII*, p. 215, l. 3b)

- 1.45. Art Curial, Hermès. Boisgirard, 27/05/2011 n°110.  
[https://www.auction.fr/\\_fr/lot/carreau-a-arche-trilobee-iran-art-ilkhanide-1270-1275-2917806](https://www.auction.fr/_fr/lot/carreau-a-arche-trilobee-iran-art-ilkhanide-1270-1275-2917806)  
 0,3 × 29,5 cm  
 Unpublished

*Rasānanda-i ruzi-i fil-u mur* / Daily provider of elephants and ants.

(variant of Mohl *jibi VII*, p. 229, l. 357b)

- 1.46. Christie 1986 n°264.  
 – ASMC 1991 [n°4], Figure 16  
 – Masuya 31

#### *Unread/Unreadable and Variants: 8 Tiles*

Unread.

- 1.47. Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art.  
 – Masuya 37  
 Unread  
 1.48. Doha, MIA, no. TI.96.2002.  
 Unpublished?

*Magar mihrigān āyad bād-i tu* / Unless autumn will come from your wind.

(variant)

- 1.49. Rotterdam Museum Ethnology, no. 64820.  
 – Masuya 34

[see Figure 34]

*Bakhshad har āngah ki khurram shavad* / He will bestow delight on every place.

(variante)

- 1.50. Eghvard church, cat. 11.  
 Number *chihil-si* (43) written on back.  
 – Gyuzalyan, ill. 3  
 – Donabédian & Porter, Figure 45.

Unread.

- 1.51. Uto Auktionen, 1976 no.1155.  
 – Masuya 36

Variant? (... *jāmi-i may-i zard khwurad*) / ... will drink yellow wine from the cup (?)

- 1.52. Museo d'Arte Orientale, Torino.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran,\\_mattonella,\\_xii-xiii\\_sec.JPG?fbclid=IwAR1uFFQ33CQWhyjSGKcm3suKqKPtvbMMFKbS5jocfhsUoTReVDxSC-vYt-w](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iran,_mattonella,_xii-xiii_sec.JPG?fbclid=IwAR1uFFQ33CQWhyjSGKcm3suKqKPtvbMMFKbS5jocfhsUoTReVDxSC-vYt-w)  
 Unpublished?

Unread, composite.

- 1.53. Islamic Works of Art from the Collection of Harrison M. Schaek, Toronto, Waddington's Auction House, 2011. tile is 13" (= 33 cm) by 13.75". 19 Nov. 2018, lot no. 81.  
[https://www.lot-art.com/auction-lots/Kashan-Calligraphic-Luster-Tile-Persian-13th-14th/81-kashan\\_calligraphic-19.11.18-hudvalauctioneers](https://www.lot-art.com/auction-lots/Kashan-Calligraphic-Luster-Tile-Persian-13th-14th/81-kashan_calligraphic-19.11.18-hudvalauctioneers)  
 Unpublished

Unread, composite.

- 1.54. Private collection.  
<https://www.agefotostock.com/age/en/Stock-Images/Rights-Managed/IAM-WHA-052-0199?fbclid=IwAR13iiUBd32XoFAorBPGSbG41b7JocExOt-B8IwYID2onXhYCrIVIZ9RffI>  
 Unpublished

#### *Fragments (Possibly from Frieze 1)*

- 1.55. Berlin I. 4/67.35

Masuya sn

- 1.56 – *Du abru- (?)* / Two eyes-brows (?)

(Mohl *jibi*, v, p. 67, l. 380a)

MNC sn

Unpublished

- 1.57 –

MNC 6924

Unpublished

- 1.58. –

MNC sn

Unpublished

- 1.59.–1.60

Muze-ye melli

– Masuya 39–40

1.61–1.62: Ganjine-ye Melli, Tehran  
– Masuya, unnumbered (F., p. 720).

1.63. – Zulfabad  
– Sedighian, 2011: 1195 and ill. 3.

#### Frieze II: 3 Tiles (2.1. to 2.3.)

*Ki man shāristān-am ‘aliyam darast* / I am (like) palace and garden, ‘Ali is my gate.  
(slight variant of Mohl jibi I, p. 8, l. 101a).

2.1. Sèvres, MNC 18289, don Stora.  
28.6 × 21.3 cm  
– ASMC 1991, pp. 93–94; 1996, pp. 9–10 and Figure 1.  
– Masuya 4 (included in Frieze 1)

*Bi pālīz bulbul binālad hami* / In the meadow shall thus the nightingale complain.  
(Mohl, jibi IV, 281, l. 2396a)

2.2. San Francisco  
– Masuya 18 (included in Frieze 1)

*Hami shād dārad zi Nushin Ravān* / Unceasingly joyful thanks to Nushin Ravān.  
(variant of Mohl jibi vol. VI, p. 158, l. 1865a)

2.3. Leipzig, Kunstgewerbe Museum (reproduced in Walter Schultz, *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei*, Leipzig, 1914, I pl. A)  
– ASMC 1996, pp. 10–11, Figure 4.  
– Masuya 32 (included in Frieze 1)

#### Frieze III (4 Tiles and 2 Fragments, Nos. 3.1. to 3.6.)

*Khīrad dast girad bi har du sarāy* / Wisdom will over-spread on both palaces.  
(Mohl, Jibi I, p. 4, l. 19b)

3.1. Christies, 7 October 2011, no. 181.  
30.5 × 29.5 cm  
Unpublished?

*Ki āmad piyāda gav-i tāj baksh* / The crown-bestowing hero came walking.  
(Mohl, Jibi II, p. 39, l. 55a)

3.2. Sotheby, 25 April 1996.  
29.4 × 30.5 cm  
– ASMC 1996, p. 15, Figure 7.

*Bidīn din-i khurram bimānam dirāz* / In this delightful religion I shall dwell for long.  
(Mohl, Jibi II, p. 98, ligne 10b)

3.3. Christies 18 October 1994, no. 297.  
30.3 × 30.9 cm  
– ASMC 1996, p. 14, Figure 6.

[see Figure 8]

3.4. Victoria & Albert Museum, no 542-1900  
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O280535/tile-unknown/>  
Height: 19.6 cm, Width: 30.3 cm, Depth: 4 cm  
– ASMC 1996, pp. 15–16, Figure 8.

3.5. Sèvres, MNC sn  
Unpublished

[see Figure 9]

3.6. Sèvres, MNC sn  
Unpublished

#### Frise IV (Two Tiles: 4.1 and 4.2)

*... sirishta nabud/bi dād u dahish ...* / [he] was not made of / By justice and generosity.

(Mohl, Jibi I, p. 57, end of l. 532b–beginning of l. 533a)

4.1. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge C.43-1924.  
Tiles mixing subsequent hemistiches are very rare.  
– Firuza Melville, Zahhak from Cambridge and Bahram Gur from Geneva: Two Unpublished Lustre Tiles with Shahnāma Verses, in G. van den Berg & C. Melville, *Shahnāma Studies* 11, Leiden, Brill, 2018, p. 320, Figure 12.1.

*[Du abru kamān va] du nargis duzham* / Two eyebrows like a bow and two cruel narcissus.

(Mohl jibi V, p. 67, l. 380a)  
4.2. Victoria & Albert Museum, no. 544-1900  
29.8 × 31 cm  
– ASMC 1996, p. 19–20, Figure 12  
– Firuza Melville, “Zahhak from Cambridge,” p. 321, Figure 12.2.

**Frieze v (Seven Tiles, 5.1 to 5.7)**

*Hamash sarv-i bālā hamash mushk muy* / All in all a tall cypress with musk-scented hair.

(Mohl, Jibi III, p. 154, l. 177b)

5.1. Eskanazi Museum, University of Indiana, Bloomington, accession no. 1961.72 a.

Unpublished?

*Khunuk ānki dīlshād dārad bi-nush* / Happy the one who drinks and feels contented.

(Mohl, jibi IV, p. 281, l. 2392b)

5.2. Christies 18 October 1994; Kuala Lumpur – ASMC 1996, Figure 9.

*Kharāmān shuda sarv hamchu tazarv* / The strutting cypress became like a pheasant.

(Mohl, Jibi v, p. 319, l. 1022b)

5.3. Deniz & Pierre Darier collection, Geneva. 26.5 × 28 × 3.5 cm  
– **Firuz Melville**, “Zahhak,” p. 324, Figure 12.3

*[Hamā]n zir-i angush[tari-ye mushtari]* / ... under the ring, (like Jupiter).

(Mohl jibi VI, p. 177, l. 2312b)

5.4. Fragment, Rudolf Naumann collection.  
– ASMC 1996, pp. 16–18, Figure 10.

*Agar māh dārad du zulf-i siyāh* / If the moon has two black curls.

(Mohl, jibi VII, p. 101, l. 2373b)

5.5. Eskanazi Museum, University of Indiana, Bloomington, accession no. 1961.72b.

Unpublished?

*Du rukhsāra tābān bi kirdār-i māh* / Two shining cheeks resembling the Moon.

Variant

5.6. Fogg Museum of Art 1958-47.

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a7/Frieze\\_Tile\\_with\\_Inscription%2C\\_Birds%2C\\_and\\_Flowers%2C\\_c.\\_1270s%2C\\_Ilkhanid\\_dynasty%2C\\_probably\\_Takht-i\\_Sylayman%2C\\_Iran\\_-\\_Sackler\\_Museum\\_-\\_DSC02487.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a7/Frieze_Tile_with_Inscription%2C_Birds%2C_and_Flowers%2C_c._1270s%2C_Ilkhanid_dynasty%2C_probably_Takht-i_Sylayman%2C_Iran_-_Sackler_Museum_-_DSC02487.JPG)

– ASMC 1996, Figure 11.

– **Firuz Melville**, “Zahhak,” p. 325, Figure 12.4.

*Gulafshān kunad chun sarāyad sukhan* / He who sings these words will be scattering roses.

Variant

5.7. Rezā Abbāsi Museum Tehran.

Unpublished

**Frieze VI (Four Tiles, 6.1. to 6.4.)**

*[bar-ān sifat-i] siminash mishkin kamand* / His/her silvery appearance and musk-like hair-locks.

(Mohl, jibi I, p. 123, l. 386a)

6.1. Private collection.

[https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/Persian-School/414914/Moulded-frieze-tile-made-for-the-palace-of-the-Mongol-Sultan-Abaqa-Khan,-c.1270-75-\(ceramic,-frit,-underglaze-and-lustre-overglaze\).html](https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/Persian-School/414914/Moulded-frieze-tile-made-for-the-palace-of-the-Mongol-Sultan-Abaqa-Khan,-c.1270-75-(ceramic,-frit,-underglaze-and-lustre-overglaze).html)  
Unpublished?

*[Sikandar biyāmad] bi-shahr andarun* / Alexander came inside the city.

(Variant, composite?)

6.2. Brooklyn Museum, no 42.212.21.

24 × 25.8 cm

– ASMC 1996, p. 22, Figure 14.

*rāgh ... bi kirdār-i sarv-i buland* / The meadow ... like a tall cypress.

(variant composite?)

6.3. London, 1990.

ASMC 1996, pp. 24–25, Figure 15.

Composite

6.4. London sale, 1990.

– ASMC 1996, p. 25, Figure 16.

**Frieze VII (One Tile)**

*[bi digar za dushm-]ān hami just rāh* / With the other, trying to escape from the enemy.

(Fragment, Mohl, jibi III, p. 141, l. 116b)

7.1. (Uto Auktionen) Oriental Art Auctions (orientalartuctions.com), Islamic & Asian Art, 29 March 2020, no. 44.

[https://www.lot-art.com/auction-lots/TWO-KASHAN-TILE-SHARDS/44-two\\_kashan-29.3.20-orientartauc](https://www.lot-art.com/auction-lots/TWO-KASHAN-TILE-SHARDS/44-two_kashan-29.3.20-orientartauc)

Dim. 20 × 22.5 cm

- ASMC 1996, p. 21, fig 13
- Masuya 33 (included in Frieze 1)

**Frieze VIII, with Anvari's Qasida  
No. 83. (Seven Tiles 8.1. to 8.7., Plus  
Fragments)**

8.1. [afz]ār / 'umra-hā dar [imārat-at ...] end of verse  
14/beg. of 15.

Gayer Anderson Museum, Cairo.

8.2. ... *khanjar* ... (bayt 29?)

Reza Abbasi Museum, former "Collection T.L. Jacks," H.  
41 cm.

A.U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, (reprint Tokyo, 1971)  
vol. x, p. 726, Figure B.

8.3. [zi Ir]ān hamvār / ān qadr-i qudrat-i qazā paymān  
va ān (end of bayt 33/beg. bayt 35)

Chicago Art Institute, no. 1939.368; 41.5 × 28.9 × 4.2 cm  
<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/30631/tile-fragment-with-figure-in-a-niche>

8.4. [Himmatash rā chu] bahr-i istizhār ... end of bayt  
41.

Sotheby's, *Arts of the Islamic World*, London, 25 Apr 2018,  
Lot 114. 44 by 49 cm. Provenance: Private collection,  
Lyon, France, early 20th century. Purchased at "M.A.M  
Indjoudjian, 26 rue Lafayette, Paris." <https://www>

[.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/arts-of-the-islamic-world-l18220/lot.114.html](https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2018/arts-of-the-islamic-world-l18220/lot.114.html)

8.5. Composite, unread.

Khalili collection, no. POT1532, 41 × 47.5 cm; <https://www.khalilicollections.org/collections/islamic-art/khalili-collection-islamic-art-cornice-tile-pot1532/>

**"Small" Frieze with Anvari's Qasida (?)**

8.6. Composite

Reza Abbasi Museum, Tehran

H. c. 31 cm

8.7. Composite

Art Curial, Paris 2014, Former collection Xavier Guérand-Hermès, 31,5 × 40 cm; <https://www.artcurial.com/fr/lot-carreau-lustre-au-personnage-tronant-takht-i-sulayman-art-il-khanide-vers-1270-ad-2497-131>

Fragments:

– Brooklyn Museum no. 86.227.69; 14 × 10.2 cm.

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/124888>

– Vente Sabourin, Châtellerault 10/11/02, lot no. c; 29 × 11 cm, (formerly Chavaillon collection).

## Luster Stars & Crosses at Doris Duke Foundation, Shangri La

Below are unpublished notes concerning some series of tiles from DDF Shangri La, written after my scholar-resident in 2010. Notes concerning the mihrab dated 1265 (48.327), the frieze signed by Yusuf ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Tahir (DDF48.347), a funerary panel in form of a mihrab (48.348); and two tiles inscribed with verses from the *Shāh-nāma* (DDF48.346.1–2) have already been dealt with in preceding sections.

To these important pieces, a series of stars and crosses decorated in luster should be added. Among more than one hundred star-tiles in the DDF collection, only a selection of items with inscriptions has been considered here, taking as a basis the preliminary report established by Tomoko Masuya (unpublished, 10/17–10/28/05). Eleven of these stars are partially or wholly dated (about 10%). Their size, decorative scheme, epigraphic program, and style show certain diversity as to their origin and chronology. The motives, either figurative or abstract, as well as the epigraphic bands, either in Persian or in Arabic, probably point out to different original uses. It could be considered that the figurative tiles with Persian verses were originally intended for palace decoration, whereas the tiles with quotations from the Quran would have been made for religious places; however, these distinctions are only a conjecture, as the information concerning the original building to which the tiles once belonged is, most of the time, null.

### Group of Stars and Crosses from the Imamzadah Yahya at Varamin, c.600–661 and Associated Items

Three half-stars and two crosses (48.361), one dated 661/1262, are clearly coming from an ensemble reported to have once adorned the Imamzadah Yahya in Varamin.

The tiles measure 30.5 cm approx. in diameter, and are decorated in plain luster, with non-figurative

patterns, together with an epigraphic band on a white ground; all the fragments have quotations from the Quran (see T. Masuya report for details).

Other star-tiles at Shangri La, of similar dimensions (30.5 cm), and also on plain luster, situated on the spandrels over the entrance to the Mihrab Room, surely do not come from the same building but probably date from the same period.

48.267. Seven complete luster crosses and two split tiles. Two fragments of cross show animals in the field and could be earlier than the following, as suggested by Tomoko Masuya (early 13th c.?). The other fragments and complete crosses are decorated with non-figurative motifs and are bordered with verses in Persian; they probably date from the mid-13th c.

Six large stars combine with the above-mentioned crosses; all but one belong to the 13th c.; the exception is 48.272, a star probably dating from 19th c., slightly smaller than the rest of these tiles (29.5 cm).

Four of the five stars below were originally painted with figurative subjects; they can be compared with a pair of tiles of similar size, housed in the British Museum;<sup>1</sup> however, these latter tiles have Quranic inscriptions only, whereas all these stars at DDF show Persian verses. Other tiles of similar characteristics, with figurative subjects and Persian verses on the epigraphic band, include a star dated 661/1263, with three riders, signed by Fakhr al-Din, and a fragment of a star with a polo player on horse, now in the Museum of the Shrine of Fatima, Qum.<sup>2</sup>

48.268. Star, 13th c. The field is filled with a flourished bush and surrounded by foxes and hares (with some heavy repaints); the epigraphic band has Persian verses.

<sup>1</sup> Venetia Porter, *Islamic Tiles*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> A.U. Pope, "New Findings in Persian Ceramics of the Islamic Period," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, v, 2 (1937), pp. 155, fig. 5 and 157, fig. 7; the dimensions of these tiles are not specified.

48.269. Star, 13th c. The field is occupied by a turbaned horseman over a foliated ground (lacks, repaints); the epigraphic band has Persian verses.

48.270. Star, mid-13th c. The field is decorated with a centrifuge floral pattern; the epigraphic band has Persian verses.

48.271. Star, 13th c. This star is probably made of two different fragments; the upper part shows a bearded prince surrounded by six *ghulāms*, or young boys, whereas the lower part displays a running horse. The epigraphic band has Persian verses.

48.273. Star, 13th c. This star is heavily repainted and might be made of fragments of different origin. Three persons are shown on an exterior ground; the epigraphic band has Persian verses.

### Stars Dated 663/1265 and 665/1265–66 and Associated Tiles, with Epigraphic Band on a White Ground

O. Watson counts about thirty stars dated *Ramadan* 663/June 1265 (PLW n°31). The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, has a star dated *Ramadan* 663/June 1265, quite similar in design (Avery Brundage Collection, B60P2034, diam. 20.5 cm. Quran XCVII; see *The Legacy of Gengis Khan*, cat n°79, fig. 140 et p. 123); other stars from the same group include: Metropolitan<sup>3</sup> and LACMA (2 items). However, these tiles do not seem to be related to a specific building.

48.284. Star dated “Ramadhan year 663” (Diam. 19.1 cm) Star with monochrome luster, slightly tainted with turquoise on the edges; centrifuge floral composition; the epigraphic band displays Quran 97, followed by the mention: *katabahu dhalika fi shahr al-mubarak ramadhan sana thalath sitin wa sitami’a* (?), “this was written in the blessed month of Ramadhan, year 663.”

48.292. Star, undated (19.7 × 19.4 cm) (2nd half of 13th c.) Star painted in monochrome luster; the left part is heavily repainted. The field is occupied by a centrifuge

floral pattern. The band quotes, among others, Quran 114. Tomoko Masuya suggested (and I agree) that this star probably belongs to the series dated 663.

48.280. Star, dated 665 (20.3 × 20.3 cm)

Star painted with monochrome luster, broken, maybe made of different fragments. The field is filled with a flowered bush, in reverse over a vermiculated ground. The band has Persian verses, among which are Ghouchani n°61 and p. 40.

Several groups of stars with this date are listed by Watson (PLW n°32: Imamzadah Ja’far, Damghan (Louvre OA 6319), n°33 (smaller dimensions, same provenance), n°35: inscription in reverse; cf. Carboni & Masuya p. 19 n°14). It should be noted that the stars reportedly coming from the Imamzadah Ja’far in Damghan were probably originally coming from another building, may be a palace; this fact would explain the presence of both Persian verses and figurative motifs.<sup>4</sup>

48.279. Star, undated (20.0 × 20.3 cm) (late 13th c.)

Intact, with exception of the upper right point, the star displays a composition of rotating split-leaves, in reverse on luster ground, enhanced with cobalt and touches of turquoise. The band quotes Quran 110 and 112.

(See Louvre OA 6319)

### Undated Stars, 2nd Half of 13th c., with Persian Epigraphic Band on White Ground

48.227. Star, undated (20.3 × 19.7 cm) (2nd half 13th c.)

At least two main fragments compose this star, whose composition seems continuous (centrifuge floral design inscribed in a cobalt star, with touches of turquoise). The epigraphic band has, in its inferior half, a distich quoted by Ghouchani (n°3); the other inscriptions, also in Persian, are unread.

(See Louvre OA 6319)

3 S. Carboni & T. Masuya, *Persian Tiles. The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 1993, p. 16, no. 11.

4 Wilber, *The Ilkhanid Period*, cat N.13, p. 111, states that the monument in Damghan does not belong to the Ilkhanid period; a part of the structure is related to the early Seljuq period, whereas an annex is datable of the 15th century AD.

48.229. Star, inscription unreadable (20.3 × 20.3 cm) (2nd half 13th c.)

Broken in five pieces, the star seems complete; the field is occupied with two persons with nimbi, facing each other, with a cypress between them. The main lines of the drawing are made with cobalt, enhanced with turquoise; however, these oxides have severely fused during the firing. The lustre décor is partially preserved on the ground of the central composition, but almost completely erased on the epigraphic band, of which only a few words, probably in Persian, remain.

(See Louvre OA 6319)

48.240. Star, undated (21.6 × 22.2 cm) (late 13th c.)

Intact, with exception of the inferior point, the star shows a radial floral composition, with stems blossoming in three or five petals, alternatively painted in cobalt and touched with turquoise, on a vermiculated luster ground. The epigraphic band quotes the first six distiches of the *Shāh-nāma*, with a slight variation in their order (1, 2 – incomplete, 4, 5, 6, 3).

48.243. Star, undated (20.3 × 20.3 cm) (late 13th c.)

The field has a composition of whirling split-leaves, alternatively drawn in cobalt or touched with turquoise, on a luster ground. The epigraphic band has, among others, Ghouchani n°38 (?) and 87.

(See Louvre OA 6319, 2nd row, middle: D2)

48.260. Star, undated (20.3 × 20.0 cm) (late 13th c.)

Almost intact (a bit missing on the right point), the star shows a composition drawn in cobalt, made of interlacing split-leaves, on a luster ground with flowers in reverse and touches of turquoise. The epigraphic band has several Persian verses, among which Ghouchani n°2.

48.384. Star, undated (Diam. 21 cm) (late 13th c.)

This star is heavily repainted; the field, limited with a cobalt line, displays a seated young man with a nimbus, wearing a dress decorated with cobalt arabesque scrolls, sided with vegetal stems in cobalt with touches of turquoise; two spandrels, upper left and right, are also painted in turquoise. The text of the band, probably in Persian, is almost illegible.

48.386. Star, undated (Diam. 20.6 cm) (late 13th c.)

The field (with some repaints) is occupied by a tent, in cobalt and turquoise, under which a young man with a nimbus is seated. Two plants and two birds, in cobalt and turquoise, are on each side. The epigraphic band has Persian verses among which Ghouchani n°87.

(See Louvre OA 6319, bottom right: E3)

48.391. Star, undated (Diam. 21.9 cm) (late 13th c.)

Neatly vertically broken in two halves, the star has a field bordered with a band of pearls between two cobalt lines; the center has a flowered plant with a stain of turquoise in the middle, painted in reverse over a vermiculated ground. The epigraphic band has several Persian verses (unread).

48.392. Star, undated (Diam. 21.3 cm) (late 13th c.)

The star is broken (between 9 and 12 o'clock); the field, painted in reverse reddish luster enhanced with cobalt strokes and touches of turquoise, displays a flowered plant; on each side are two hares back-to-back, looking at each other. The epigraphic band has several Persian verses, among which Ghouchani n°87 and 96.

48.400. Star, undated (Diam. 20.0 cm) (late 13th c.)

Almost intact, this star is in a reddish luster, without addition of other oxides. The field, quite erased, shows two mammals (foxes?), back-to-back on both sides of a cypress, on the bank of a pond where two fishes swim. The band has several Persian verses among which Ghouchani n°48.

### Lustre Stars with Epigraphic Band in Reverse on Cobalt Ground

The stars with inscription in reverse do not seem to appear before 665/1266–67 (cf. Carboni & Masuya, p. 19 n°14); if the first examples are quite easily readable, those of a later date tend to lose legibility. As for the stars with epigraphic band on white ground, those in reverse use Persian verses as well as the Quran. The diameters of the stars vary from 19.4 to 21.9 cm.

Only one star in the DDF collection is dated (717/1317). O. Watson only lists a single star with this date

(PLW n°117, Iran Bastan). The other stars can be dated between late 13th and early 14th century. The latest examples of Ilkhanid stars with inscription in reverse could be the series dated 729/1329 in the British Museum (1907, 6.10, 2).<sup>5</sup>

48.251. Star dated 717/1317, Persian (19.7 × 20.3 cm)  
Probably made of two distinct fragments, with repaints at their junction, the star has a field with a feline passing from right to left, and a flying bird following it in the same direction. Both animals show repaints. The band has, in its inferior part, a fragment from Ghouchani n°61, and in its upper part, Ghouchani n°87.

48.255. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 19.1 cm) late 13th c.? (The following stars are presented in a tentative chronological order)

This star has a curious and interesting iconography: the field has two persons with nimbi face to face; to the right, a young man with rich garments and wearing a Mongol hat is seated. In front of him stands a bare-headed man, with a growing beard; the rear-ground shows some plants and flowers. The epigraphic band has Persian verses (unread).

48.282. Star, undated, Persian (diam. 20.6 cm) late 13th c.  
The field, enclosed in an octagon, shows a seated hare looking back over a flourished ground. The epigraphic band has the opening verses of the *Shāh-nāma*.

48.258. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 20.0 cm) late 13th–early 14th c.

Broken, with the left point clearly added, the star features a field occupied by four cheetas over a flourished ground. The epigraphic band has Persian verses (unread).

48.283. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 18.7 cm) late 13th–early 14th c.

Broken but complete, the star displays, in an octagon, a bird perched on a flourished branch; the drawing is hasty and careless. The band is integrally occupied by a

quotation from the *Shāh-nāma* (Ghouchani n°35: Story of Rustam & Suhrab).

48.221. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 19.7 cm) early 14th c.

The field is divided in eight segments forming a radiating composition of eight lozenges, each one filled with a similar floral motif. The epigraphic band has the two opening verses from the *Shāh-nāma*.

48.222. Star, undated, Persian (19.7 × 19.7 cm) early 14th c.

At least two fragments form this tile; its field, enclosed in an octagon, shows a whirling floral motif. On the top half, the band of the octagon is filled with a two-thread tress, whereas, in the bottom half, the band features a Greek tress. The epigraphic band, in the top fragment, has Ghouchani n°30; the text in the bottom fragment, in Persian, is unread.

48. 226. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 20.3 cm) early 14th c.

Broken in several fragments, the star shows a field with a bird flying from left to right; the bird is similar to a phoenix/*simorgh*, but without the tail panache of feathers. The epigraphic bandeau has, among others, Ghouchani n°61.

48.232. Star, undated, Quran (19.4 × 19.4 cm) early 14th c.

Broken but complete, this star features a bird of the phoenix/*simorgh* short-tailed kind, flying from right to left. The bandeau has Quran 97:1–3. This example is very close to British Museum 1878, 1230.563 (3 tiles under that number: one with a floral motif – dated 729? – with quotation from Quran, two others with birds and Persian verses).

48.234. Star, undated, Quran (21.0 × 21.0 cm) early 14th c.

The field has three flowered stems; the bandeau has Quran 110:1–3.

This tile is very close to British Museum 1878, 1230.563.

48.241. Star, undated, Persian (21.0 × 21.9 cm) early 14th c.

<sup>5</sup> Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, p. 196, N. 122.

The field shows a short-tailed phoenix/*simorgh*, flying from left to right. The bandeau has the opening verses from the *Shāh-nāma*.

48.248. Star, undated, Persian (20.6 × 19.1 cm) early 14th c.

The star is broken and has some repaints; the field features a bird flying from right to left, painted in cobalt and turquoise. The bandeau has among others Ghouchani n°87 and 30.

48.256. Star, undated, Quran (20.0 × 20.0 cm) early 14th c.

The star is broken in several fragments. The biggest part has a field occupied by four quarters, each filled with a four lobed floral pattern. The bandeau has among others Quran 110: 1–3; the inscription is not of accurate execution.

48.257. Star, undated, Persian (20.3 × 19.4 cm) early 14th c.

The star is made of several fragments; the field shows a pair of mammals (dears?) on a flourished ground. The bandeau has the opening verses of *Shāh-nāma*, together with a fragment of Ghouchani n°87.

48.259. Star, undated, Persian (20.6 × 20.3 cm) early 14th c.

Besides the points (upper left and right, bottom left and right), the star is complete; its field has five birds with crests, flying from left to right, on a cloudy ground. The bandeau has mainly Ghouchani n°2.

48.281. Star, undated, Persian (20.6 × 20.3 cm) early 14th c.

The field, on this complete star, has two birds (waders?) with interlacing necks, painted in cobalt and turquoise, over a ground with flourished plants. The bandeau is entirely inscribed with Ghouchani n°61.

48.294. Star, undated, Persian (20.0 × 19.1 cm) early 14th c.

The field of this star displays a tent under which a young man with a nimbus is seated; behind the tent some flourished plants grow. The bandeau has among others Ghouchani n°61.

48.295. Star, undated, Quran (diam. 20.3 cm) early 14th c.

The field has a short-tailed phoenix, flying from right to left, over flourished plants. The bandeau has Quran 110.

### Stars Dated 738/1337–38 and Associated Items

At least five stars, now in the jambs and spandrels opening to the Mihrab Room, display the date: 738/1337–38.

They have a diameter of approximately 20.3 cm (from 19.7 to 21.3 cm), although several are made of different fragments of diverse origins. They all have an epigraphic bandeau on a white ground; the epigraphic program of these stars shows mainly Persian verses, although some items have quotations from the Quran instead; as pointed out before, one could assume that these two kinds of epigraphic program were not originally intended for the same kind or building (secular or religious). The motifs in their field are painted in luster, enhanced with cobalt and touches of turquoise, these latter are not systematic, though.

Watson has listed several groups of stars with the date “738”; one of these groups of tiles refers to the Imamzadah Muhammad al-Hanafiya, on the Kharg island. The majority of its tiles are still in situ, although one seems to be at the Ashmolean Museum (Watson, PLW, p. 196 n°125). A second group, with dates between Rabi‘ I and Jumada I 738/October–December 1337, comes from the Imamzadah ‘Ali ibn Ja‘far in Qum; however, their diameter (23.4 cm) is superior to the one of our stars (Watson PLW n°126). A third group is made of eleven stars dated between Rabi‘ I and Jumada II 738/October 1337–January 1338. Some of them show the mention “in Kashan” (see 48.291); they are scattered among several collections (Ettinghausen 1936b; Watson, PLW, p. 196 n°127). A star, now in British Museum (1947, 1110.3; diam. 20.8 cm), has some Persian verses followed by the date 738, in numerals, which seems traced by the same hand than star N. 48.253.<sup>6</sup> The star in the British Museum, like some examples in DDF collection, is

6 The same hand might have written the date in yet another star (48.218), also in numerals, although its text is from the Quran.

made of two halves, obviously coming from two different stars. This fact probably points out to an early re-use of these tiles.

That patronage, either official or non-official, of the building and its embellishment (particularly of Shiite shrines) continued even after the fall of the Ilkhanid dynasty (following the death of Abu Sa'īd in 1335) might be surprising. However, since the very beginning of the luster tile production, in the first years of 13th c., one can see that the orders, most of them non-official, are absolutely regardless of the political situation of the central power.

### *Group with Persian Inscriptions*

48.214: Star, dated 738/1337–38 (17.8 × 20.3 cm)

The star is made of two fragments of different origin; the left one, with an epigraphic bandeau bordered with cobalt and a thin line of luster, displays a nice *naskhi* script, quoting some verses from the *Shāh-nāma* (Story of Sohrab); The field, enclosed in an octagon, has a floral motif of leaves over a vermiculated ground. The fragment on the right, bordered by a thick luster line over cobalt, has a similar ensemble composition, but the central motif is a bunch of flowers with a simple clasp, with touches of turquoise over a ground of scroll-leaves. The bandeau, written with a somewhat careless script, has some Persian verses (unread) and finishes with the date (written in words): 738.

48.215: Star, dated *jumada al-akhir* 738/December 1337–January 1338 (21.0 × 20.6 cm)

Two (or three?) fragments compose this star, although the main composition (octagon made of eye shaped motifs closing each point of the star; field with bunch of flowers, slightly different on each half) seems continuous. The left fragment has, among others, Ghouchani n°87, together with other Persian verses (unread). The bandeau of the right fragment, also in Persian (unread), finishes with the: *katabahu (?) jumada al-akhir sana 738* (in words).

48.253: Star, dated 738 (in numerals) (18.4 × 20.3 cm)

Although cut in two fragments, the star is almost complete. The field has a floral composition of split leaves

painted in cobalt with touches of turquoise, mainly whirling from right to left around a four-petal flower (also in cobalt and turquoise) from which six three petal flowers emerge, over a vermiculated luster ground. The bandeau has Persian verses (unread) and finishes with: *katabahu (?) fi 738*.

48.291: Star, dated 738 (in words) (20.0 × 19.7 cm)

Vertically fractured in two halves, the star has a third fragment (upper left), belonging to another star. The main composition in the field figures a cypress, painted in cobalt and enhanced with turquoise, standing over a mound made of three circles with the same colors; The field has some floral motifs in reverse over the luster, vermiculated ground. The bandeau has several Persian verses (unread); the additional fragment has the date 738 (written in words), followed by the mention "*hijri nabavi (?) bi-maqam Kashan*."

### *Stars with Incomplete Dates*

48.224: Star, dated *Dhu al-Qa'da* year [73]8/probably May–June 1338 (19.7 × 19.1 cm)

The star, with the exception of the upper and lower points, is complete; the epigraphic bandeau is bordered with a cobalt and luster line, whereas the field has, in reverse over a luster ground, two mammals (deer?) painted in flat cobalt, the one to the left enhanced with turquoise. The bandeau has Persian verses (unread), and finishes with the date: "*Dhu al-Qa'da sana thaman*," the end of the date being lost. It is possible that the star belongs to the series dated 738.

48.264: Star, dated *Jumada* (20.3 × 20.6 cm)

The star is composed of fragments from three different tiles; the main composition is enclosed in an almost circular shape, made of eye-shaped patterns blocking each point of the star. However, three different motifs are used to fill the points: in the left fragment, straight single leaf; in the right fragment, three petal-leaves; in the bottom fragment, single leaf turning leftwards. Only the "eye" motifs, painted in cobalt, are enhanced with turquoise. The field displays two different motifs of intersecting split-leaves. The bandeau has several Persian verses, among which Ghouchani n°6 (?) and

48; the fragment at the bottom has the incomplete date: “*katabahu fi jumada*” (written on the month of Jumada).

48.228. Star, undated (20,6 × 20,3 cm) (early 14th c.)

The star is broken in several fragments and has some repaints. The field displays a vegetal stem painted in cobalt with touches of turquoise, emerging from a pond; on each side, is a bird back-to-back. The bandeau has several Persian verses among which, Ghouchani n°90 or 91 (fragment) and n°77.

48.237. Star, undated (20,3 × 20,3 cm) (early 14th c.)

Broken, with some gaps and repaints, the star is filled with a circle of “eyes” painted in cobalt and enhanced with turquoise. The field displays a floral stem with a four-lobed clasp, probably with a pair of birds back-to-back (the one on the right is missing). The bandeau has, among others, Ghouchani n°14 and 76.

48.254. Star, undated (20,3 × 20,0 cm) (early 14th c.)

Broken, with gaps and repaints, the star shows a field enclosed in an octagon with a short-tailed phoenix-like bird, flying from right to left, over a flourished ground; one touch of turquoise at the center of the bird and at each point. The bandeau has several Persian verses among which Ghouchani n°87.

48.266. See Stars with Quran quotations.

48.287. Star, undated (20,3 × 20,3 cm) (early 14th c.)

Almost complete (the upper right point comes probably from another tile), the star has a composition enclosed in an octagon, showing a bird with a nimbus (parrot?)

on a flourished branch, in reverse over a vermiculated luster ground. The bandeau has several Persian verses (unread).

#### *Group Inscribed with Quran Quotations*

48.218. Star, dated (in numerals) 738 H. (21,0 × 21,3 cm)

Although broken in four fragments, the star seems complete; the field, enclosed in an octagon with trilobes painted in cobalt and turquoise in the points, shows a kind of bird, unfortunately quite erased (may be a harpy) standing on a flourished branch. The bandeau has an Arabic inscription (unread) and finishes with the date “738” in numerals.

48.276. Star, undated (20,0 × 20,0 cm) (early 14th c.)

Broken, with gaps on the upper and upper left points, the star displays a radiating composition; eight rays, resembling Kufic letters painted in cobalt divide the space, each division, in the shape of an irregular lozenge, is filled with a floral motif in luster with a slight touch of turquoise. The bandeau has Quran: 110.

48.266. Star, undated (17,8 × 20,0 cm) (early 14th c.)

Two fragments of similar composition, form this star; the field is enclosed by sixteen intersecting lobes painted in cobalt, the intersection touched with turquoise. The points on the left half have simple leaves, turning alternatively leftwards and rightwards; the points on the right half have three-petal leaves turning leftwards. The field of each half is slightly different, with floral pattern on luster ground. The bandeau on the left has a quotation from the Quran (110: 1–3), whereas the right one has some Persian verses (unread).

## Catalogue of Persian Luster Tiles in Eghvard Church, Armenia

The numbers (1 to 56) represent cavities, either filled with tiles or empty.

1: (Gyuzalyan, ill. 2)

Square, molded luster tile, with some words probably from *Shāh-nāma*.<sup>1</sup>

Cavities 2 to 6 are empty.

7: (Gyuzalyan, ill. 4.)

*Kunun bar gul-u nār u sib u bihi*, numbered 44.

H.1 jibi v, p. 330, l. 1288.

8–9 = empty

10: Luster star tile, diam. 21 cm. Gyuzalyan notes that the first *rubā'i* is unknown (*Ay man zi ghamat chu abr-i bahman giriyān ...* Las, I cry of your pain like the cloud of springtime)<sup>2</sup>; Ghouchani has published the second *rubā'i*, attributed to Razi al-Din Nayshapuri.<sup>3</sup> Most of the dated stars from Takht-i Suleiman published by Ghouchani are dated between 670– and 674/1271–1276.<sup>4</sup>

11: *Bakhshad har āngah ki khorram shavad* (variant?), numbered 43

Gyuzalyan, ill. 3

12 = empty

13: *Kunun khwurd bāyad may-i khush gavār*

H. 1 (jibi IV, p. 281)

Gyuzalyan, ill. 8.

14–15 = empty

16: hexagonal monochrome turquoise.

17: *Zi changal-i yuzān hama dasht gharḡ*, numbered 50 (?)

H.1 (Jibi III, p. 151, l. 113).

Gyuzalyan, ill. 12

18–22 = empty

23: *Girāzanda āhu birāq andarun*, numbered 29 or 69

H. 2 (Jibi I, 245, l.32).

Gyuzalyan, ill. 11

24–42 = empty

43: *Chu bini rukh-i sib bijāda rang*, numbered 46

H.1 jibi v, p. 330, l. 1289a

Gyuzalyan, ill. 5.

44–48 = empty

49: *Chu bidār kardi jahān rā bibin*, numbered 14

H. 1 (Jibi IV, 245)

Gyuzalyan, ill. 10.

50 = empty

51: *Shavad āsmān hamchu pusht-i palang*, numbered 47

H. 2 (jibi v, p. 330)

52: hexagonal Monochrome with Armenian monogram.

53: *Khunuk ānki dīlshād dārad binush* (jibi IV, p. 281)

Not reproduced by Gyuzalyan.

54–56 = empty

1 Gyuzalyan (p. 157; 27,5 × 35,5 cm); he points the presence of an impact, probably from a bullet. The number 29 (بیست نه) is written on its back. On this series, see Mélikian-Chirvani, *Les frises du Shāh-nāma*, (frieze 10), pp. 35–63, ill. 42–48.

2 Gyuzalyan, p. 155–156 et ill. 1; les dimensions indiquées sont fournies par cet auteur.

3 Ghouchani, p. 75, no. 61.

4 Idem, p. 27.

## Glazed Ceramics in India's Archaeological Surveys (Quoted from *Indian Archaeology. A Review, from 1955 to 2001, ASI*)

The dates of the troves concerning glazed ceramics often lack precision; thus, four rather vague categories are used to sort these findings:

1. Pre-Islamic
2. Medieval/Muslim/unspecified
3. Pre-Mughal/early medieval
4. Late medieval/Mughal

Unfortunately, the location of this archaeological material's storage and registration data are not specified.

### 1 Pre-Islamic

#### *Bihar*

**Antichak**, District Bhagalpur (Bihar), (proto-Bengali script?): "A few green-glazed sherds were also found in the overlying debris." ASI, 1960–61, p. 4.

**Taradih**, District Gaya: "Period II was distinguished by the appearance of iron. (...) Evidence of paddy husks in big pots and glazed surface, of the black-and-red and black wares was also significant." ASI, 1983–84, p. 12.

**Taradih** (Bodh Gaya), District Gaya: "Period III was marked by the appearance of iron. (...) Some of the black-and-red ware sherds have glazed surface." ASI, 1986–87, p. 24.

**Senuwar**, District Rohtas: (Period I-B, lithic) "... twenty-five beads of polycrystalline glazed ware ..." ASI, 1986–87, p. 28.

#### *Gujarat*

**Shikarpur** (Valmiyo Timbo), District Kutch: "The pottery is typical Mature to Late Harappan (...) Another interesting ware is glazed ware of various grades." ASI, 1987–88, p. 15.

**Shikarpur**, District Kutch: "... Harappan habitation (...) The ceramic industry was represented by (...) Reserved-slip, glazed and polychrome wares." ASI, 1988–89, p. 10.

#### *Haryana*

**Khokhrakot**, District Rohtak: "Phase III-B (Kushana) ... Large jars with thick brown glazed ware were also found." ASI, 1986–87, p. 35.

#### *Madhya Pradesh*

**Ujjain**, Madhya Pradesh, (Period II?) "The use of lime bricks with glazed surface was noticed ..." ASI, 1956–57, p. 27.

#### *Uttar Pradesh*

District Kanpur Dehat, **Musanagar** (UP): "Period v (Gupta and post-Gupta) ... Another interesting find was that of a typical pottery made of husk-mixed clay, treated with some glazed material." ASI, 1995–96, p. 104.

**Sonkh**, District Mathura: "Remarkable also are green-glazed pottery tubes and fragments of early Kushan date (Kanishka period)." ASI, 1972–73, p. 34.

**Mathura**, District Mathura: "Period III (circa first–third century AD: Saka-Kushan) ... terracotta figurines (...) including a glazed example." ASI, 1974–75, p. 50.

### 2 Medieval/Muslim/Unspecified

#### *Andhra Pradesh*

District Anantpur, **Sasanikota** (Andhra Pradesh): "... glazed red ware ..." ASI, 2000–2001, p. 1.

#### *Arunachal Pradesh*

**Naksaparat**, District East Kameng (Arunachal Pradesh): "... medieval settlement datable between the thirteenth and sixteenth century AD. (...) Ceramic industry is represented by red, brownish, glazed and celadon wares ..." ASI, 1988–89, p. 5.

### *Assam*

**Ambari, Gawhati**, District Kamrup: "... a fragment of Celadon Ware and sherds of local glazed ware, showing green, silver, cream and red surface-colours were also found." ASI, 1968–69, p. 3.

**Ambari, Gauhati**, District Kamrup: "Phase IV was distinguished by the use of medieval glazed ware." ASI, 1970–71, p. 4.

**Ambari**, District Guwahati (Assam): "Apart from the kaolin wares, Muslim green-glazed ware of the Ahom-Mughal period and Chinese celadon ware of the fifteenth–sixteenth century AD were also found in the upper layers." ASI, 1987–88, p. 9.

**Ambari**, District Kamrup (Assam): "The important antiquities of the period, assignable to thirteenth–sixteenth century AD were dishes in glazed ware and bowls of Chinese celadon ware." ASI, 1988–89, p. 6.

### *Bihar*

District Bhagalpur **Champa**, (Bihar): "Period III was mainly represented by a dump of loose soil, at the basal level of which some glazed sherds of the medieval period were found." ASI, 1970–71, p. 5.

District Monghir **Karnachaura**, (Bihar): "Period II, belonging to medieval period, is represented by glazed ware showing typical floral designs ..." ASI, 1979–80, p. 14.

District Muzaffarpur **Vaisali**, (Bihar): "a few sherds of the Muslim glazed ware ..." ASI, 1960–61, p. 6.

District Patna **Maner**: "The topmost layer below the humus had yielded mixed materials of different periods as well as a number of green glazed sherds of the medieval period." ASI, 1984–85, p. 12.

District Patna **Maner**: "The topmost layer yielded mixed materials of different kinds including green glazed sherds of early medieval period." ASI, 1985–86, p. 12.

District Patna **Maner**: "Period IV (...) The upper level of this period showed only mixed material which included also sherds of green glazed ware of medieval period." ASI, 1988–89, p. 8.

District Patna **Maner**: "From the topmost layer were recovered mixed materials including sherds of green glazed ware of medieval period." ASI, 1992–93, p. 6.

District Patna **Maner**: "The uppermost deposit, represented by layers 2 and 1, has yielded mixed materials of different kinds including some fragments of green glazed ware of medieval period." ASI, 1997–98, p. 17.

District Rohtas **Basnara** (Badalgarh): "Sunga-Kushan pottery and Muslim Glazed ware." ASI, 1985–86, p. 12.

District Rohtas **Birnagar**: "Sunga-Kushan pottery and Muslim Glazed ware." ASI, 1985–86, p. 13.

District Rohtas **Majhiaon**: "Muslim Glazed ware." ASI, 1985–86, p. 13.

District Sahebganj **Rajmahal**, Jhimjhimia-Khalistan, (Bihar): "Earlier explorations of the area had yielded (...) grey and Muslim glazed wares, Chinese porcelain, Persian tiles, etc." ASI, 1987–88, p. 12.

"Period III was marked by the appearance of green, yellow and bluish glazed ware as well as Chinese porcelain of the medieval period. (...) A few pieces of Persian tiles were also met with." ASI, 1987–88, p. 13.

District Sahebganj **Jhimjhimia-Khalistan**: "Period IV was represented by glazed ware of different shades like green, yellow, and bluish, and Chinese porcelain of the medieval period." ASI, 1988–89, p. 9.

District Saran **Chirand**, (Bihar): "Period V followed after a long desertion of the site. The associated pottery consisted of the glazed ware ..." ASI, 1971–72, p. 7.

District Saran **Manjhi**: "Period IV (...) Apart from the ordinary red ware, a few pieces of the glazed ware were also reported mainly from the late levels of the site." ASI, 1983–84, p. 16.

### *Delhi*

**Delhi**: "... within the area between Hauz-Khas Enclave and Moth-ki-Masjid. Sherds of glazed pottery and large soakage-jars, internally plastered with lime, were discovered ..." ASI, 1969–70, p. 59.

**North & West Delhi**: Jhatikra, "... medieval ceramics including ... glazed ware both with sandy friable core and terracotta core ... and a piece of Chinese porcelain." Sakraoti Nagli, west bank of Najafgarh drain: "... glazed ware with sandy-friable core and discs made out of them were found. A sherd of Chinese celadon, (...) were also collected." ASI, 1991–92, p. 15.

*Gujarat*

District Banas Kantha (Gujarat): "... sherds of glazed ware (...) were also discovered." ASI, 1970–71, p. 12.

District Bharuch **Ghandar**: "glazed ware of medieval period ..." ASI, 2000–01, p. 182.

District Jamnagar, **Dwarka**: "Polychrome glass bangles and glazed pottery were also found in layer 5." ASI, 1979–80, p. 28.

District Kheda (Gujarat): Glazed Ware (GW) at Khanpur, Semal. ASI, 1975–76, pp. 13–14.

District Mahesana **Anhilwad Patan**: "The ceramics obtained from the excavation include: red ware represented by stemmed bowls, vases, etc.; black ware with pots, lids, etc.; glazed ware with red or buff base and green or blue glaze; Chinese porcelain and Celadon ware." ASI, 1978–79, p. 68.

District Mahesana **Umta**: "... no clear chronological sequence of structures could be traced and only pieces of Sultanate and Mughal bricks and lime flooring, pottery fragments including black and red wares, pieces of glazed ware, glazed roof tile ... were found." ASI, 1987–88, p. 17.

District Panch Mahals, **Pavagadh Hills**: "Other finds include pot-sherds of plain-black, red and glazed wares ..." ASI, 1979–80, p. 99.

District Vadodara, **Karwan**: "The ceramic industry is represented by the typical glazed ware (pl. XVII B and C) of blue, cream and green varieties ..." ASI, 1977–78, p. 22.

District Vadodara, **Vadapadra**: "The ceramic industry is represented by the occurrence of Medieval red-and-black, plain burnished black, burnished red and glazed wares, besides a few sherds of the Celadon Ware." ASI, 1975–76, p. 16.

*Haryana*

District Gurgaon **Mewat Area**: "Kushan red ware and bricks (...) were found besides medieval glazed ware." ASI, 1997–98, p. 54.

District Karnal, **Daulatpur**: "Period IV (...) belonged to medieval times and was distinguished by its characteristic glazed pottery." ASI, 1968–69, p. 9.

District Rohtak, **Meham**: "Glazed ware" ASI, 1978–79, p. 9.

*Karnataka*

**Hampi**, District Bellary (Karnataka): "The ceramic assemblage comprised the Chinese porcelain, glazed ware and earthen ware ..." ASI, 1995–96, p. 27.

*Madhya Pradesh*

District Bhind **Ramakot**: "medieval glazed pottery" ASI, 1978–79, p. 11.

District Dhar **Mandu**: "... stone beads, a stone seal and glazed ware of medieval period at Mandu." ASI, 1975–76, p. 76.

District Morena **Kutwar**, (MP): "Pieces of glazed ware besides Ming blue and white porcelain was also found." ASI, 1996–97, p. 65.

District Rajgarh **Sarangpur**: "medieval painted and glazed pottery." ASI, 1985–86, p. 54.

District **Sehore** (Madhya Pradesh): "From the top of the mound were collected Muslim Glazed Ware with a few grey and black sherds." ASI, 1975–76, p. 30.

**Ujjain**, Madhya Pradesh (Period IV, Muslim): "a few sherds of coarse and dull grey ware and glazed sherds of indeterminate shape" ASI, 1956–57, p. 28.

District Ujjain **Karadia**: "Gupta and medieval pottery and glazed ware ..." ASI, 1990–91, p. 95.

*Maharashtra*

District Ahmadnagar **Nevasa**, , Period VI (medieval): "glazed pottery and Celadon ware." ASI, 1955–56, p. 11.

District Ahmadnagar **Nevasa**: "Associated with these structures were glazed bowls (fig. 5) and dishes, Bahmani coins and hundreds of polychrome bangle pieces." ASI, 1960–61, p. 21 & fig. 5.

District Aurangabad **Bhokardan**: "Period II (...) Pieces of Chinese Celadon Ware, glazed pottery and polychrome bangles belonging to later period were also obtained from the site." ASI, 1973–74, p. 20.

District Aurangabad **Daulatabad**: "The ceramic industry is represented by red slipped ware, local glazed ware, Chinese porcelain, celadon ware and other common types of medieval pottery." ASI, 1988–89, p. 46.

District East Khandesh **Bahal**, "The pottery was crude and red and grey in colour, but the Mughul glazed ware and Chinese Celadon ware, together with the polychrome Bahmani bangles and stray coins, were sufficient to date the Period" (1300–1700). ASI, 1956–57, p. 18.

### *Manipur*

District Imphal **Mongjam**, (Manipur): "... a piece of glazed ware ..." ASI, 1984–85, p. 56.

District Imphal **Sekta**: "In the top layers were fragments of glazed ware and porcelain." ASI, 1994–95, p. 59.

District Senapati **Nongpok-Keithelmanbi**, (Manipur): "... pieces of glazed ware." ASI, 1984–85, p. 56.

### *Meghalaya*

**Phulbari and Singrimari**, District Garo Hills (Meghalaya): "The remains consisted of brick-built structures and pottery, including medieval glazed ware." ASI, 1971–72, p. 76.

### *Punjab*

District Fatehgarh Sahib **Brass**, (Punjab): "Typical knife-edged bowls and glazed ware sherds along with other shapes (...) comprised the main types of this period." ASI, 1994–95, p. 64.

District Fatehgarh Sahib **Brass**, (Punjab): "The pottery collected from these layers comprised (...) dishes of glazed ware ..." ASI, 1996–97, p. 90.

**District Ludhiana**: Muslim Glazed Ware (MG) found at Bahlolpur, Baundal, and Khera. ASI, 1973–74, pp. 22–23.

**District Ludhiana Sanghol**: "Period VII, pertaining to medieval times, was represented by a thick but disturbed deposit yielding glazed ware sherds ..." ASI, 1969–70, p. 32.

District Patiala **Brass**: "The medieval period is represented by ceramics such as knife-edged bowls, incense burners, glazed ware ..." ASI, 1990–91, p. 59.

District Patiala **Brass**: "The medieval period is represented by the presence of knife-edged bowls and incense burners, glazed sherds ..." ASI, 1991–92, p. 91.

**District Ropar**: "Muslim glazed pottery." ASI, 1973–74, p. 23.

**District Sangrur** (Punjab): "... Sunga-Kushan, Gupta, early medieval and Muslim glazed wares ..." ASI, 1994–95, p. 64.

### *Tamil Nadu*

**District Chengal-Pattu** (Tamil Nadu), Mangalam: "glazed pottery of medieval period,"

Puducheri: "glazed pottery of medieval period," ASI, 1990–91, p. 65.

**District North Arcot**: "A habitation site, datable to the medieval times, was also noticed at Valayambattu which yielded glazed ware." ASI, 1977–78, p. 50.

Pondicherry **Arikamedu**: "Not only are there sherds of Chinese celadon and Islamic blue glazed pottery, but several domestic pottery forms and fabrics are certainly medieval." ASI, 1991–92, p. 90.

### *Uttar Pradesh*

District Agra **Nagla Devjit**: "... besides sherds of glazed ware (...) datable to the medieval period ..." ASI, 1978–79, p. 101.

District Agra **Birchhabili Tila**, Sikri: "The main pottery types in Period III include (...) glazed ware ..." ASI, 1999–2000, p. 168.

**Districts Allahabad, Banda, Mirzapur and Varanasi**: "a few glazed pottery were also collected." ASI, 1975–76, p. 44.

District Allahabad **Jhusi**, (UP): "Period V (...) glazed ware including the bichrome glazed ware." ASI, 1994–95, p. 71.

District Barabanki **Nawabganj Tehsil**: Baburigaon "glazed ware" ASI, 1996–97, p. 112.

Barauli (Jata): "glazed ware"

Bhitari (Ahmad Nagar): "glazed ware"

Kaserwa: "glazed ware"

Kheoli: "glazed ware"

Sahiyari: "glazed ware (medieval)"

Sipahiya: "glazed ware (medieval)"

Sultanpur: "glazed ware (early medieval)"

Turkani: "glazed ware (medieval)"

Umara (Fatehpur): "glazed ware" ASI, 1996–97, pp. 114–118.

**District Barabanki, Baddosarai**: "glazed ware"

Gaura: "glazed ware"

Kanakpur: "glazed ware"

Kandraul: "glazed ware"

Kintur: "glazed ware"

Mahadeva: "glazed ware"

Semrai: "glazed ware" ASI, 1998–99, pp. 174–176.

**District Bareilly**: "A glazed ware sherd of medieval period was also recovered." ASI, 1991–92, p. 105.

**District Bareilly**, Idgah-ka-Khera: "glazed ware"

Nad-ka-Khera: "glazed ware (medieval period)" ASI, 1999–2000, p. 175.

- Districts Basti and Gorakhpur **Urusara**: "glazed ware," ASI, 1991–92, p. 106.
- Districts Basti and Siddharth Nagar (UP), Bhaukari: "glazed ware of medieval period"
- Chhitahi-Majharia: "glazed ware"
- Ghosiari: "Medieval red ware and glazed ware"
- Kotia: "Medieval red ware and glazed ware"
- Mundiar II (Dakharwa): "glazed ware" ASI, 1996–97, pp. 128–133.
- District Budaun **Binawar**: "Glazed ware," ASI, 1978–79, p. 21.
- District Budaun: Rafiabada, Sheikhpur, Sirsa Ther, Unaula: "Glazed ware," ASI, 1978–79, p. 22.
- District Dehradun (UP): "The site seems to have been under occupation also during medieval times, as evidenced by the finds of basins, storage jars in red ware of medium to thick fabric and medieval grey and glazed wares." ASI, 1972–73, p. 33.
- District Etah **Atranjikhera**: "The complex yielded a variety of glazed ware, including Chinese Celadon ware." ASI, 1979–80, p. 76.
- District Farrukhabad **Mohammadabad**: "... red ware of Sunga-Kushana period and glazed ware of medieval pottery were encountered on the mound." ASI, 1985–86, p. 115.
- District Farrukhabad **Kannauj**: "... porcelain and glazed pottery." ASI, 1986–87, p. 123.
- District Fatehpur (UP): "... red and glazed wares from Barrainchi, Chachinda, Chhedani, Salaraha and Sultanpur Ghaos." ASI, 1977–78, p. 83.
- District Ghazipur **Bhitari**: "The technique of fabrication of the glazed pottery from Bhitari (...) was studied by undertaking chemical analysis of several sherds from the site." ASI, 1960–61, p. 110.
- District Gorakhpur **Sohagaura**: "Period IV (medieval times). The pottery included (...) the typical glazed ware showing multi-coloured patterns in white and turquoise blue." ASI, 1961–62, p. 56.
- District Kanpur **Tahsil Ghatampur**: "... red and glazed wares." ASI, 1970–71, p. 39.
- District Kanpur **Jajmau**: "The associated ceramic industry includes wheel-turned red ware of medium to coarse fabric and glazed ware (...). In glazed ware, two varieties, one with sandy texture with mono-or bi-chrome glaze without design and the other with glazed surface and bearing paintings, were encountered. The shapes include ring-based vases, bowls and dishes. Other important finds include ... potter's stamps." ASI, 1973–74, p. 31.
- District Kanpur **Nayapurva**: "... a few sherds of glazed ware ..." ASI, 1992–93, p. 94.
- District Lucknow: "... a large number of medieval sites with sculptures and glazed pottery ..." ASI, 1969–70, pp. 41–42.
- District Mainpuri (UP): "... Sunga-Kushana pottery and a few sherds of glazed ware." ASI, 1977–78, p. 58.
- District Mirzapur, Balapur: "glazed ware"
- Gaipura: "glazed ware"
- Kushaha: "glazed ware"
- Sikara Kalan: "glazed ware" ASI 1997–98, pp. 182–183.
- District Mirzapur **Barkachha Kalan**: "glazed ware," ASI, 1999–2000, p. 192.
- District Moradabad **Sarthal Khera**: "The medieval glazed ware with red gritty core has either one or both sides glazed uniformly in different shades of green." ASI, 1975–76, p. 56.
- District Raebareli, Kathwara (Harchandpur): "glazed ware"
- Koteshar Mahadeva (Sataun): "glazed ware"
- Sandiram (Amawan): "glazed ware"
- Uttarpara: "glazed ware"
- Ahora Rampur (Parshadepur): "glazed ware"
- Kithawan (Salon): "glazed ware"
- P. Rudra (Salon): "glazed ware"
- Jais: "glazed ware"
- Lihi (Tiloi): "glazed ware"
- Reotidih (Tiloi): "glazed ware"
- Sarai Mahesha (Bahadurpur): "glazed ware"
- Tinera (Tiloi): "glazed ware"
- Itaura Buzurga (Unchahar): "glazed ware"
- Pure Durga Bakhsh (Unchahar): "glazed ware"
- Rasulpur (Rohnia): "glazed ware" ASI, 1998–99, pp. 202–207.
- District Rampur **Bamnipur**: "Sherds of medieval glazed ware, Chinese pottery, lustrous black ware and red ware were collected ..." ASI, 1971–72, p. 80.
- District Sitapur: "medieval sculptures and glazed ware." ASI, 1968–69, p. 39.

**District Sitapur (UP):** "... a large mound at Nimsur on the bank of the river Gomati (...) and Muslim glazed wares." ASI, 1969–70, p. 44.

**District Sultanpur Kurwar:** "... red and glazed wares." ASI, 1977–78, p. 85.

**District Sultanpur Kurwal:** "... red and medieval glazed wares from a mound at Kurwal near Garh." ASI, 1975–76, p. 78.

**District Sultanpur Garha:** "The pottery found at Garha consists of black-slipped ware, NBP ware and associated ceramic types, besides sherds of red ware and medieval glazed pottery. (...) Occurrence of glazed ware at Garha is associated with the period of Muslim occupation in the area some time after the twelfth century A.D." ASI, 1986–87, pp. 84–85.

**District Sultanpur Kusi Tali, Naraini, Dhapapa, Papar Ghat, Isauli, Patela, Galibsahid, Jurapatti, Narhi Khas:** "Muslim glazed wares." ASI, 1986–87, pp. 89–93.

**District Sultanpur Isauli, (UP):** "glazed ware." ASI, 1994–95, p. 78.

**District Unnao Neotini, (UP):** "... red ware and glazed ware of the medieval period." ASI, 1983–84, p. 172.

**District Unnao, Maharajanj:** "glazed ware" Neotini: "glazed ware" ASI, 2000–01, p. 153.

**District Varanasi Rajghat:** "Period VI (circa 1200–1700) was characterized by the glazed ware wearing a variety of floral designs." ASI, 1960–61, p. 39.

### *West Bengal*

**Mangalkot, District Burdwan:** "Exploratory digging was taken up at a place called Aral, revealing a 4–80 m thick deposit belonging entirely to Muslim occupation. The period is characterized by glazed ware, red-slipped ware, a few pieces of porcelain and black-slipped shallow dishes with painting in white." ASI, 1987–88, p. 114.

**Mangalkot, District Burdwan:** "The upper levels of this site yielded sherds of glazed ware, ordinary mat red and buff ware." ASI, 1988–89, p. 91.

### *Nepal and Others*

**Districts Bhairwa and Taulihawa (Nepal):** "In a rain-gulley within the *mauza* of Parora were found a large number of glazed sherds, possibly of medieval date." ASI, 1961–62, p. 71.

**Maldives:** "... a number of potsherds of red-ware, glazed ware and celadon ware (fig. 10) were collected from Kurumathi, Kudahuvadu and Landu Islands during explorations and excavations. (...) sherds of glazed ware and celadon ware show floral decoration. Among them one glazed ware sherds has a single perforation. The striation marks observed on the pottery indicate fast wheel manufacturing technique." ASI, 1986–87, p. 176.

## 3 Pre-Mughal/Early Medieval

### *Bihar*

**District Patna Maner:** "The topmost layer has yielded mixed materials of different kinds including early medieval green glazed sherds." ASI, 1986–87, p. 26.

**District Patna Maner:** "... materials of different kinds including green glazed sherds of early medieval period ..." ASI, 1987–88, p. 12.

**District Patna Maner:** "The well in question belongs to the early medieval period and is sealed by layer 2A which yielded mixed materials of different kinds including green glazed sherds of early medieval period." ASI, 1989–90, p. 11.

**Maner:** "Period III (...) curiously enough its lower levels (Id to Ic) are marked by the occurrence of Pala antiquities along with stray occurrence of green-glazed sherds of early medieval period, while its upper levels (Ib to Ia) are characterized by the greater frequency of green glazed sherds along with fewer Pala antiquities." ASI, 1991–92, p. 7.

**Maner:** "The uppermost deposit yielded mixed material of different kinds including some fragments of green-glazed ware of early medieval period." ASI, 1995–96, p. 6.

**Maner:** "Period IV (...) The layer question, yielded, in addition to the mixed material of different kinds, a good number of green glazed sherds of early medieval period." ASI, 1996–97, p. 8.

**District Saran Chirand, (Bihar):** "Period V followed after a long desertion of the site. The ceramic industry of this Period was distinguished by the Pre-Moghul Glazed Ware and other common red and black wares." ASI, 1972–73, p. 8.

District Vaishali **Hella Vazpur**, (Bihar): "... layer 2 characterized by the mixed materials such as fragments of green glazed ware of early medieval period." ASI, 1999–2000, p. 16.

### *Delhi*

**Purana Qila**, Delhi: "The Sultanate Period (...) A significant feature of the Period was the use of glazed ware, both of sandy friable as also of normal texture," ASI, 1969–70, p. 5.

**Makhдум Sahib Mosque**, Delhi: "Phase I. The pre-Mughal glazed pottery is conspicuous by its absence. Phase II. The pre-Mughal glazed pottery makes its appearance (...) Phase III (...) Dish of red ware having glazed polish and paintings indicate the initial experimentation to produce the glazed pottery locally (...) A copper coin of Bahlol Lodi (1451–1488) was also found." ASI, 1973–74, p. 11.

**Lal-Kot**, District South Delhi: "The Phase II of Rajput period is characterized by the occasional appearance of plain glazed ware of ordinary terracotta core (...) The presence of glazed ware of ordinary core indicated that this phase was much closer to the Turkish invasion of Delhi as during the Muslim period its use was plentiful." ASI, 1991–92, p. 12.

"The significant feature of Sultanate period was the use of plain and painted glazed ware, both of sandy-friable with whitish gritty core (pl. XI C) as well as ordinary terracotta core with associated red ware, black-slipped grey ware and thick grey ware. The under-glaze decorations are patterns painted with brushes mostly in brown or black picked out with blue or greenish blue. Most of the sherds are painted with one colour – green, blue, greenish blue, pink or brown. The important shapes of the glazed ware are shallow dishes and bowls with ring base, decorated with floral and geometrical painted designs. A medium size vase with elongated body and ordinary glazed red ware is remarkable. Chinese celadon is represented by a few sherds from the upper layers and its indigenous seems to have become very popular having sandy friable brownish white core and greenish surface. Among other finds (...) fragments of Persian glazed tile with Arabic legends ... terracotta glazed tiles. (...) Another notable figure of this period was the use of plenty of circular discs or

gamesmen like hop scotches made out of glazed ware mostly with gritty core. The Chinese porcelain pottery is totally absent at the site which along with other evidences suggests that after the Tughlaq period the site was fully uninhabited." ASI, 1991–92, pp. 14–15.

**Lal-Kot**, Delhi: "Pottery of Period II ... plain and painted glazed ware, both of sandy friable variety with gritty whitish core (pl. v B), as well as ordinary terracotta core ... Occasionally Chinese celadon pottery and its local variety were also collected. For the first time four sherds of Chinese porcelain ware were also found from the top levels of Period II." ASI, 1992–93, p. 12.

### *Goa*

**Chandor**, District South Goa: "The pottery of phase III consisted of (...) a deluxe ware, i.e., glazed of West Asian origin (Iran-Iraq). The glazed ware is characterized by copper sulphate colour on either side of the body and a thick, soft and fine cream core."

"Some test pits were also laid in Santavada (...). Though limited, the glazed ceramic from the temple site, chapel of Santiago, rampart and a test pit in Chola area, all indicate the practice of trade with the outside world during phase III at the fort of Chandor." ASI, 2000–01, pp. 23–25.

### *Gujarat*

District Panch Mahals **Champaner**, (Gujarat): "Of the finds obtained from this site mention may be made of Pre-Moghul Glazed Ware, porcelain and Celadon Ware, besides the local burnished red and black wares." ASI, 1972–73, p. 12.

District Panch Mahals **Champaner**, (Gujarat): "The table ware is represented by neatly-made and well-polished small *lotas* and bowls with stand besides glazed pottery. (...) A glazed ware showing a white sandy friable fabric looks almost like an imitation of porcelain ware. Imported pottery is represented by Chinese porcelain and Celadon Wares." ASI, 1974–75, p. 15.

### *Haryana*

District Hissar **Agroha**: "Period v (twelfth to thirteenth century AD) is represented by glazed and dull red wares." ASI, 1979–80, p. 31.

District Karnal **Raja Karna Ka Qila**, Kurukshetra: "Period III was characterised by the use of *lakhauri* bricks and Pre-Mughal glazed ware." ASI, 1971–72, p. 24.

District Karnal **Panauri**: "sherds of glazed ware ... of early medieval period." ASI, 2000–01, p. 40.

District Kurukshetra **Thanesar**: "The Rajput period (circa eighth to twelfth century) ... Scanty evidence of glazed ware was noticed in upper levels." ASI, 1987–88, p. 29.

"The Sultanate period (thirteenth century to first quarter of sixteenth century) was marked by a sturdy red ware and glazed wares." ASI, 1987–88, p. 30.

District Kurukshetra **Harsh-ka-Tila**, Thanesar: "Rajput Period. A few sherds of plain glazed ware were also noticed in the late levels of this period." ASI, 1988–89, p. 22.

"The Sultanate period (...) was marked by red and glazed wares, the latter variety having two types – white with sandy friable texture and normal pottery fabric of red medium core with crackled glazed surface having paintings. Important shapes in the glazed surface include shallow and deep dishes and small-sized vases." ASI, 1988–89, p. 23.

### *Madhya Pradesh*

District Dhar **Bhojasala**, (Madhya Pradesh): "porcelain fragments and pre-Mughal glazed pottery." ASI, 1972–73, p. 14.

### *Orissa*

District Puri **Khalkatapatna**, (Orissa): "The Chinese celadon wares, along with the egg-white glazed and glazed chocolate ware of Arabian origin, were found with the indigenous pottery. The discovery (...) conclusively suggest that Khalkatapatna was a port-town having maritime trade both from the east as well as the west (...) On the basis of material evidence, the site was under occupation between circa twelfth–fourteenth century A.D." ASI, 1984–85, p. 59.

### *Punjab*

District Hoshiarpur **Zahura**, (Punjab): "pre-Mughal glazed ware." ASI, 1969–70, p. 31.

District Ludhiana **Sanghol**: "Period VI (...) was marked by the occurrence of pre-Mughal glazed Ware and associated finds." ASI, 1968–69, p. 26.

### *Uttar Pradesh*

District Allahabad **Jhusi**: "The Period V at the site is represented by the early medieval pottery particularly the glazed ware ..." ASI, 1997–98, p. 170.

Allahabad **Anand Bhawan Campus**: "... the early medieval period, yielding glazed and other contemporary pottery ..." ASI, 1973–74, p. 26.

District Gorakhpur **Sohagaura**, (UP): "Period V ... A few sherds of the Glazed Ware have also been found (...) coins of the Sharqi Sultans of Jaunpur." ASI, 1974–75, p. 47.

District Jhansi **Erich**: "Medieval pottery comprised a few glazed sherds at the top level (12th–14th c. AD)." ASI, 1989–90, p. 101.

District Lucknow **Ramasare Purwa**: "Period III ... was characterized by knife-edged bowls and other early medieval wares, including glazed ware." ASI, 1996–97, p. 153.

District Meerut **Kaseri**: "Period VI (...) The pre-Mughal glazed ware was also in use." ASI, 1969–70, p. 43.

District Sultanpur: "In addition, a few fragments of medieval glazed pottery, straight-sided trough with externally thickened rim (...) comprised other finds. (...) datable between AD 1000 and 1500." ASI, 1995–96, p. 111.

### *West Bengal*

District Maldah **Baisgazi** (Ancient Gaur): "The important findings include glazed bricks with floral painted designs, moulded bricks, porcelain sherds, glazed ware ..." 2004–2005, p. 8.

District Murshidabad **Lakshmi Hatir Danga**, (West Bengal): "Examples of Pre-Mughal glazed Ware were also found." ASI, 1971–72, p. 50.

## 4 Late Medieval/Mughal

### *Andhra Pradesh*

District Chittoor **Rani Mahal**, Chandragiri Fort, (Andhra Pradesh): "A large quantity of glazed stoneware was recovered (...). Most of the fragments were of the Mughul period, showing typical floral designs in blue picked up with white." ASI, 1956–57, p. 83.

District Hyderabad **Golconda**: "Glazed tiles were found to be used in the inner apartments." ASI, 1971–72, p. 1.

### Assam

**Ambari**, Guwahati, District Kamrup: "... layer 3 (32 cm) yielded cultural materials of the late medieval (Mughal-Ahom) period as determined by the green-glazed pottery."

"Pottery was found in enormous quantity and consisted of among others, the distinctive green-glazed ware. The pottery is bright red in colour and of very fine fabric. Both the exterior and the interior surfaces are glazed with shining green colour, the common shapes being bowls and dishes. The most characteristic pottery of the early medieval period consists of white or buff coloured kaolin wares. (...) The unique kaolin pottery of Ambari could be labelled as 'Ambari' wares and is a distinctive feature of early medieval cultural phase of the Brahmaputra Valley." ASI, 1989-90, p. 9.

### Bihar

**Pataliputra** (Patna), "Period v (1600 and later) yielded glazed ware, a silver coin of Shah 'Alam ..." ASI, 1955-56, p. 23.

### Delhi

**Purana Qila**, Delhi: "The Mughal Period (...) The distinctive ceramics of the period included: (i) glazed ware; (ii) a de luxe egg-shell thin ware with elaborately decorated exterior; (iii) the Chinese Celadon Ware; and (iv) the Chinese porcelain." ASI, 1969-70, p. 5.

**Purana Qila**, Delhi: "Of the Sultanate and Mughal Periods no structures could be encountered in the area under excavation. However, some interesting finds belonging to these Periods included: sherds of glazed ware; animal and human terracotta figurines; earthen lamps; a few pieces of Chinese porcelain of the Ming Period; and a few coins, including that of Muhammad Tughluq (AD 1392-1412) [sic]." ASI, 1970-71, p. 11.

**Purana Qila**, Delhi: "Notable antiquities from the deposits of the Mughal Period consisted of fragments of coloured tiles, terracotta finials with numerous incised and stamped designs, and sherds of glazed ware, Chinese Porcelain, Celadon Ware and a paper-thin *de luxe* grey ware ..." ASI, 1971-72, p. 7.

**Salimgarh Fort**, District Central Delhi: "The Mughal ceramics included local glazed ware, Chinese porcelain,

red ware containing typical decorated pottery." ASI, 1994-95, p. 6.

### Goa

**Saint-Paul College** (1541-43), Old Goa, District North Goa: "The blue and green glazed chips with which the walls were adorned were also collected from the site." ASI, 1991-92, p. 16.

**St. Augustine Church**, Old Goa, District North Goa: "The area under excavation has yielded a large number of glazed tiles. Blue and white Chinese pottery of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been reported in profusion. (...) Excavation near the new guest house uncovered the remains of massive east-west running wall with offsets. The trench yielded a large number of Chinese pottery and Islamic glazed pottery." ASI, 1991-92, p. 18.

**Old Goa**, District North Goa: "Another important find from the area of the Local Tribunal da Inquisicao (Palace of Inquisition) is the Islamic glazed pottery. The ware recovered from Old Goa include deluxe ware and terracotta glazed ware. The Palace of Inquisition was originally the Palace of Adil Shah, which was converted into the Viceroy's Palace, after the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese from the Bijapur army in 1510." ASI, 1992-93, p. 14.

### Haryana

District Gurgaon **Harnol**, (Haryana): "Period VI belongs to late medieval period (...) remains of which were noticed by the top levels represented by layers 1 to 7 having associated red ware and glazed ware." ASI, 1997-98, p. 40.

District Kurukshetra **Thanesar** "The Mughal period (...) Ceramic evidence included fine Mughal wares, both plain and decorated (pl. XII), glazed ware, grey ware, stone ware and sherds of Chinese porcelain (pl. XIII A) some of which contain inscriptions in Chinese characters." ASI, 1987-88, p. 30.

District Kurukshetra **Harsh-ka-Tila, Thanesar**, (Mughal period) "The pottery of this period comprised of red ware, grey ware, glazed ware and porcelain. This year fairly good quantity of glazed ware and porcelain was recovered. (...) Also found were two inkpots, of which

one is glazed having three perforations on the shoulder for suspension and another having four holes with inscription in Persian characters on the lower surface." ASI, 1990–91, p. 22.

### *Jammu & Kashmir*

**Dablehr**, Muggoali, District Jammu: "Late medieval pottery including glazed ware." ASI, 1983–84, p. 35.

### *Madhya Pradesh*

**Burhanpur** town, District Nimar East: "Sherds of glazed ware and grills with fine jali-work of the late medieval period also occurred at the site." ASI, 1960–61, p. 60.

### *Maharashtra*

District Aurangabad **Daulatabad**: "... besides various types of sherds of Chinese porcelain – one with Chinese characters, celadon ware, Kushana ware (gritty white ware), local glazed ware and other common types of late medieval pottery." ASI, 1984–85, p. 51.

District Aurangabad **Daulatabad**: "... besides thin pottery, Chinese porcelain ware (one with Chinese letters), Celadon wares, local glazed and other common types of medieval period ceramics." ASI, 1985–86, p. 57.

District Aurangabad **Daulatabad**: "The ceramics included red slipped ware, local glazed ware, Chinese porcelain, Celadon ware and other common types of medieval pottery." ASI, 1986–87, p. 60.

**Aurangabad** (near Bibi-ka-Maqbara): "Sherds of Chinese porcelain, glazed ware ..." ASI, 1984–85, p. 149.

### *Tamil Nadu*

District Chengai Anna **Siriperpandi**, (Tamil Nadu): "... late medieval site with glazed pottery." ASI, 1988–89, p. 79.

**District Chengai Anna** (Tamil Nadu) Agil: "glazed ware of late medieval period." ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Gudapakkam: "Medieval habitational site yielding glazed ware." ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Kattugudalur: "late medieval glazed ware." ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Kattukaranai: "Late medieval glazed ware" ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Kiliyanagar: "Late medieval glazed ware" ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Mattur: "Late medieval glazed ware" ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.  
Mogalvadi: "Late medieval glazed ware" ASI, 1989–90, p. 95.

Neman: "Late medieval glazed ware and porcelain" ASI, 1989–90, p. 96.

Timmapuram: "Late medieval glazed ware" ASI, 1989–90, p. 96.

### *Uttar Pradesh*

District Agra **Fatehpur Sikri**: FPS-I "The ceramic industry consists mainly of plain red ware as well as painted black-on-red and glazed wares. (...) The glazed ware is represented by shallow dishes (rikabi), often painted in bright colours depicting floral motifs."

FPS-II: "The ceramic industry includes glazed, Chinese porcelain, black-on-red and thin grey wares. Thin grey ware of fine fabric which represents the de luxe ware of the assemblage, shows incised and painted decoration of floral, geometrical and criss-cross patterns. A few sherds of fine polychrome ware, bearing paintings in bright colours were also found." ASI, 1977–78, p. 51.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: "Pottery recovered during the excavation included red ware, glazed ware, Chinese porcelain and the typical Mughal de luxe ware showing decorations. (...) Sherds of the decorated ware bear fragmentary inscription in Arabic characters." ASI, 1978–79, p. 56.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: (FPS-II, hammam): "The inner chamber has a running dados measuring 1–10 m high on all sides having fine square green glazed tiles, a few of which are still extant. One of the existing square tiles on the north-eastern side of the wall measures 14 × 14 cm."

Karkhana/Mint: "Ceramics include the Chinese blue and white, Celadon, glazed and red pottery. (...) A few tiles in red, yellow, green and blue colours were also found." ASI, 1979–80, pp. 71–72.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra (Khushbu-khana): "The pottery included Chinese, glazed, red, buff and black wares."

FPS-II, Treasury: "Pottery recovered from the excavations included red ware, glazed ware. Some of the sherds of the Chinese porcelain bear Chinese scripts (Pl. 54) and symbols on bases showing designs which

represent mystic animals, landscapes, floral patterns and a bearded man (...) Glazed wares discovered were of two classes, one represented a whitish colour and of sandy texture, whereas the other represented the normal pottery fabric with a crackled glazed surface with painted designs. Blue glazed tiles were also encountered." ASI, 1983–84, pp. 83–84.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: FPS-1 Jodha Bai Palace: "Pottery included red and glazed wares and Chinese porcelain. (...) A fragment of a crackled glazed ware had a circle, divided into four segments each enclosing typical chevron lines." ASI, 1984–85, p. 84.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: "During excavation ceramics were found in abundance, which comprise porcelain, red ware and glazed pottery. Some sherds of porcelain bear Chinese inscriptions. Common shapes are vases, large dishes, bowls, large storage jars, inkpots and chilams."

"As usual the pottery of the year included Chinese, glazed, red, grey and buff wares." ASI, 1985–86, pp. 73 & 75.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: "Ceramics include Chinese porcelain, glazed and red pottery. Some sherds of Chinese porcelain bear inscriptions in Chinese script." ASI, 1986–87, p. 74.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra (FPS-1): "Pottery recovered during excavation included red ware and glazed ware." ASI, 1987–88, p. 104.

(FPS-VIII): "Phase III yielded debris of medieval period, marked by structural activities. (...) Besides, sherds of red ware and glazed ware were recovered in abundance from the upper level of the phase." ASI, 1987–88, p. 105.

**Fatehpur Sikri**, District Agra: "Period v was represented on the surface of the mound by the presence of the remains of medieval structures and corresponding wares i.e. the red ware, glazed ware and crackled glazed ware ..." ASI, 1988–89, p. 82.

District Agra **Mahtab Bagh**: "The fountains were linked with each other by underground pipeline made of glazed terracotta pipes for uniform supply of water." ASI, 1996–97, p. 106. **Mahtab Bagh**, Agra: "The important antiquities from the site include Chinese and glazed Mughal pottery (...) and blue glazed tiles." ASI, 1979–80, p. 74.

District Etah **Atranjikhhera** (U.P.): "From the uppermost levels of the site came glazed pottery and coins, the latter being assignable to early Turkish to the late Mughul rulers." ASI, 1960–61, p. 35.

District Farrukhabad **Kanauj**: Period IV (late medieval): "The bricks, glazed ware and other pottery of the Period indicated its late medieval date." ASI, 1955–56, p. 20.

District Hardoi **Babbarkhera**: "The site yielded red ware of the Sunga-Kushana period and Mughal glazed ware including associated wares." ASI, 1985–86, p. 115.

District Meerut **Alamgirpur**: Period IV (late medieval): "There were also fragments of glazed ware." ASI, 1958–59, p. 54.

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These essays are the revised and updated versions of four lectures given in the Yarshater Lecture Series, at SOAS in London in 2013. They concern some aspects of the arts from pre-modern Iran and India, namely, the “making of” of Persian illustrated manuscripts, the iconography of Kashan wares, the use and re-use of luster tiles in Ilkhanid Iran, and the glazed tiles made in three Indian sultanates (Delhi, Bengal and Malwa). These four topics share concepts of influence and impact, although inflected on different modes. The productions they embody represent many poles of influence, even if working on different scales, from the extensive diffusion of products, techniques, and systems to almost isolated productions.

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