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The Journal of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah Issue 21

On the cover:
LNS 29 R
Prayer rug woven from silk, cotton and wool.
Turkey, Ottoman, late 16 century AD
125 cm. W.; 172 cm. L.

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The Pioneers of the Berlin Carpet Collection

Abridged from a lecture by Friedrich Spuhler

The last four decades of the 19th century saw the rise of ‘World Exhibitions’ in Europe. Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Persia and India presented their handicrafts, products and goods in capitals such as Paris, London, Vienna and Berlin. Near Eastern buildings were reconstructed like film sets to create a bazaar-like atmosphere in which “exotic foreigners” acted in costume, assisted by elephants and camels borrowed from the local zoos.

The Bible’s description of the Holy Land, the fairy-tales of 1001 nights and the rare and expensive travels to the Near East arranged by agents such as Thomas Cook, created an enthusiasm for new artistic trends today known as ‘Orientalism’. Oriental subjects and scenes were favoured by European painters and goods from these World Exhibitions, particularly carpets and kilims, found their way into avant-garde households and ateliers. Anatolian kilims, woven in two identical halves were favoured as curtains and the so-called ‘Persian’ carpet, at that time a synonym in Germany for all oriental hand woven carpets, became a part of middle class living rooms and libraries, filling them with the flair of a foreign world. For a century (1880-1980) the Persian carpet, particularly in Germany was a symbol of wealth and individuality. While the general public became curious to see antique and sometimes incomplete carpets in their museums.

The German art historian Julius Lessing was in Paris during the World Exhibition of 1867 as observer for a German newspaper. In 1868 he bought the first kilim for the Berlin Museum, which was a Balkan weaving (Figure 1). The Fair led to his engagement at the newly founded Deutsche Gewerbe Museum (German Trade Museum), later renamed by him Kunstgewerbe Museum (Applied Art Museum).

After the period of these World exhibitions, dozens of carpets remained in museums, because it was cheaper than shipping them back. When compared to the masterpieces shown two decades later in 1891 at the first great exhibition of Oriental Carpets in Vienna, these ordinary pieces from a nineteenth century bazaar show the immense art historical development that took place in such a short time; the result of a sudden enthusiasm for Near Eastern carpets and crafts in general.

One milestone was J. Lessing’s publication of 1877 entitled Altorientalische Teppichmuster (Old Oriental Carpet Designs), the first book to be written on the subject of Oriental carpets. Its subtitle describes it as a collection of patterns ‘after paintings and originals from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century’. The initial assumption that too few original carpets had survived appeared to make it necessary to refer to painted reproductions, but after ten years of collecting this fear proved unfounded. He also defined the purpose of publishing these drawings, “to make them more useful for the applied arts in Germany”, and commented elsewhere that “these designs represent such excellent models for our contemporary carpet production that their re-introduction is deemed most desirable by the author”. Up to this time at least, the acquisitions can be considered as a design collection to serve as models for new carpets.

Dr. Friedrich Spuhler was born in Kaiserleutern in the year 1938. After gaining his Ph.D. in the History of Islamic Art and Science and Classical Arabic language from Berlin Free University. He became the Curator of the Classical Carpets and Textiles at the Berlin Museum for Islamic Art from 1966 to 1985. Dr. Spuhler has authored carpet and textile catalogues for the Keir Collection, the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art, Thyssen-Bornemisza and currently is preparing the carpet catalogue of The al-Sabah Collection. He is a collector of carpets and textiles. His gallery is currently housed at Potsdam-Babelsberg.
The decision to use dated European paintings for designating different design-groups of hundred years old carpets became the major pillar for dating them. This approach, the ante-quem date, is called the Berlin School method (because it was favoured by art historians like Wilhelm von Bode, Friedrich Sarre, Ernst Kühnel and others in their publications based on the Berlin Collection.)

J. Lessing’s second publication, Orientalische Teppiche/Vorbilder Heft 13 (Design Book, left No. 13), 1891, contains the first observations about carpet collecting in Berlin. In retrospect, without detracting from the value of this original collection, we can describe it as an assembly of design examples, and the fragmentary condition of a piece, in no way affected the decision not to purchase it. The two decades of extensive collecting activities ended with two important events. The first was the opening in 1891 in Vienna, of the first comprehensive exhibition of Oriental carpets from every period of their history. The second was the publication of the Berlin Safavid white ground animal carpet by Wilhelm von Bode.

Bode’s enthusiasm for Oriental carpets, which he shared with “artists and the art loving public”, was fired by the exhibition in the Berlin Gewerbemuseum and the two exhibitions in Vienna in 1873 and 1891. In 1892, he confessed: “I exploited the opportunity to acquire such genuinely old carpets from the art market for the benefit of our public collections in Germany, and of my friends and my own home.” He also assisted the Kunstgewerbemuseum to acquire important pieces. During the last two decades of the 19th century, European cities such as Vienna, Milan, Florence, London, Paris and Berlin were in the grip of what can only be called 'Oriental carpet fever' - comparable to a similar 'epidemic' during the last fifteen years of the 20th century.

In his memoirs, von Bode, who was an expert in Italian paintings, gives us an insight into the carpet treasures in Italy at that time which he came to know intimately in the course of his many journeys to that country. The lecture gave an illustrated list of the pieces Bode hunted down, and the following is a selection of Bode’s enormous collection, created with little money, great intuition, and at the perfect time in history.

Bode purchased the brilliant whiteground animal carpet (Figure 2) in 1889 in Geneva. As used in a synagogue someone had “cut the figures of the genies out” in all four corners by reducing the carpets length. Nevertheless, parts of the robes give an idea of their former elegance among clouds. The design structure is typical of Medallion carpets of the beginning 16th century, with a large almost round central medallion - (wild ducks and cranes fly among bands of clouds) - the horizontal cartouches
and the big shields are symmetrically arranged on both sides of the medallion. Some of the animals are of Chinese origin like the dragon, the Khilin, the phoenix; and some are Persian such as the tiger, lion, water buffalo, stag and different birds. Both groups are characteristic of Safavid miniature paintings at the beginning of the 16th century, to which as early as 1892 AD when the piece was the major subject of his famous publication, von Bode had dated the carpet. In 1945 this work of art was badly damaged by bombing despite being stored in Berlin’s ‘safest place’: the mint. A later reconstruction of at least one quarter failed aesthetically because pieces from the front and back were joined side by side, even sometimes overlapping. A sad little heap of patches survives in our storage.

The dragon-phoenix carpet fragment (Figure 3), which was bought in Rome in 1886, features a stylised dragon on the ground and a phoenix attacking him from above. Bode, the famous connoisseur of paintings, found the same stylised dragons in a painting in Siena’s Spedale della Scala, by Domenico di Bartolo (1440–1444 AD). This was therefore given as the anti quem date for the carpet. For decades until the Konya carpets of the 13th century were found in the Ala al-Din mosque, Berlin housed the oldest Turkish carpet. At least eight pieces of a similar age, mainly from Anatolia, were found in the last two decades in Tibet and have found their way into western collections.

The carpet with large borders showing stylised birds (Figure 4) was bought in Venice in 1888. Bode was impressed by its large border. For a hundred years it was not recognised other than "a 19th century Shirvan" as classified by Erdmann; it entered the Berlin Carpet Catalogue (No. 27) as probably 16th-17th century AD. Later it was correctly dated as 15th century by V. Enderlein in his booklet on W. v. Bode (No.10).

The archaic carpet illustrated in (Figure 5) was only published 100 years after Bode’s acquisition in the Berlin Catalogue (No. 26). The stylised two-headed animal - also called the "push me, pull me" forms one group with other types of "early Turkish animal carpets" and could also be of 15th century AD origin.

The yellow ground carpet with offset octagon repeat (Figure 6) is a glamorous early "Holbein"-type, repeating only one major gol form. The colours and the clear design are not unlike Seljuk ornamental design. The proposed date, about 1500 AD, was made using radiocarbon dating.

Bode gave the Small Pattern ‘Holbein’ Carpet (Figure 7) to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1882. It is like an examples of a design book: major gol in two shade and minor tile-like gols repeat on a chequered ground (blue and dark green). The late stylised border shows ornamental "closed" Kufic.
Very few complete Holbein carpets survive worldwide. They were obviously much used in European churches and in a few noble houses. Not a single one has survived in Turkey, only in Transylvania.

The large pattern Holbein carpet (Figure 8) with huge octagons formed by concentric coloured stripes completely fill the two rectangles of this small carpet. The triangle corner elements are small, like the border stripes with its light blue wine on an aubergine ground. One could suggest that the border is lacking a major stripe. Happy colours of minimal shrub-like elements in combination with yellow and white stripes create a joyful carpet.

The unique and extremely beautiful Mamluk prayer rug (Figure 9), purchased in 1888, has drawn the same response from every carpet enthusiast for the last century. The monochrome wine-red niche with its beautifully shaped mihrab and the clear octagonal water basin in the lower middle is of a clear plan. The little ewer in the middle of a papyrus-shrub gives the composition a romantic touch. The horizontal panel on top of the niche displays an alternating row of Cypress trees and palms. The red ground inner border stripe with the lively curved yellow cloudbands is in dramatic contrast to the small patterned, tone-in-tone main border. In 100 years of intensive search, no competitor to this unique prayer rug has been uncovered.

The classic Ottoman prayer rug (Figure 10) was acquired in 1889 and first published by Bode in 1901 in his famous Monograph Vorderasiatische Knüpfteppiche (Knotted Carpets from the Near East). A second edition was published in 1914 with the assistance of Ernst Kühnel. Henceforth the book became known as the 'Bode-Kühnel' and it has become the standard text on classical pile carpets, and has been published so far in four German and two English editions (Bode/Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*). The drawing we admire so much displays the highest demands of Ottoman court design. The flowers on the white cotton-ground border are drawn as delicately as in contemporaneous brocades, ceramic tiles and painted ornaments in general. Extremely small pillars support the elegantly curved niche. The plain wine-red ground is the perfect contrast to the sophisticated floweret. The border is comparable to LNS 29 R in the al-Sabah Collection (featured on the cover).

The Padishah kilim (Figure 11) was in the collection of the Empress Friedrich in Friedrichshof Castle near Berlin. Three related examples all show the same dragon and phoenix scene in the central medallion, and on each piece one can read four times the word "padishah" which means sovereign and indicates a noble Persian order.

The "Graf" dragon carpet (Figure 12) was named after the previous owner Theodor Graf from Vienna. This formerly seven metre long carpet was found in 1891 in a mosque in Damascus. It also belonged to the large carpets that were destroyed in the mint such as the white ground animal carpet discussed above (Figure 2). Bits and pieces, many with a dark burned surface left by the flames, are preserved in the storage.

In 1884 Bode discovered the so-called synagogue carpet (Figure 13) with a Munich antique dealer who got the piece from a Tyrolean church (Austria). Different interpretations were proposed for the tree-like design: Monumental stylised flowers in a symmetrical repeat arranged along the stem. A more fantastic interpretation of the big flowers is that of a closed door domed by a roof in a triangle shape, not unlike a torah-shrine. This led to it being called a
Synagogue Carpet. Undisputed is the fact that this is the oldest Spanish rug that we know of.

A very private person, W. v. Bode was a carpet and Islamic Art enthusiast. As director of the paintings gallery he was a famous scientific authority. As director general of all the Kaiserlichen Museen since 1905 he had the vision of a “Pavilion of the Arts of Asia” (to include Islam, India and the Far East). Three decades ago, in the 1970s when the new Museums were built in Berlin Dahlem, we came very close to this idea but nowadays this prophetic idea has been slowly killed by petty infighting.

Bode’s collection was never concentrated on conventional types. Not a single Medallion-Ushak, or Lotto carpet in one of their many variations was represented. He followed his instinct for the unusual: half of a group of four exotic pieces acquired between 1883 and 85 were joined to his private collection and the other half to the Kunstgewerbemuseum. As they did not fit into any classification they remained unpublished by Sarre, Küchel and Erdmann for almost 100 years. About 20 years ago, the lecturer presented this phenomenon at the third ICOC in Washington in 1995. Erdmann had become director of the museum and was the world’s leading carpet expert. In his handwritten notes Dr. Spuhler found the explanation for this error: All pieces not fitting into clearly defined groups were called “degenerate” and were given a late date by Kurt Erdmann.

One of such previously excluded carpets is a large reciprocal shield design carpet (Figure 14). Today, this carpet can be considered as one of the most fascinating examples of its type with its extraordinary aubergine and apricot colours, typical of the Konya area. The slender cloudbands and the architectural design are not dissimilar to Seljuk or early Ottoman geometric designs. Further research may point to an even earlier dating. The major difference to the “classical” categories are the individual treatment of many details, especially its irregularity in design - individuality and spontaneity being unknown in the export-orientated production. In these examples we admire the products of the individual weaver and the works of art that we are good enough for his family and the neighbourhood. Not favoured by the export dealers they have become extremely rare in Europe. In the past two decades they have become favourites
among a handful of collectors while established Museum collections still have problems - besides a lack of money - in accepting them. How prophetic was Bode's selection! and what a duty for the Berlin Museum to continue this tradition!

As noted above, Julius Lessing expressed his fear in 1877 that too few originals had survived to enable him to continue his design record. This fear was totally unfounded and a few selected masterpieces will show how rich the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin was in this respect, before more and more other European Museums like the V&A in London, The Musee des Tissus in Lyon and the Louvre in Paris became competitors in this market.

In prayer rug in (Figure 15) an intensive red dominates the field and a small angular band outlines the field of the mihrab. From its apex hangs a small lamp and an octagonal water basin marks its lower centre. The clear floriated Kufic forms an extremely well balanced border-design on a green ground. In every respect - use of colour and impressive simple design - this prayer rug is a masterpiece of unique artistic value.

In 1904 the Islamic Museum was inaugurated with its highlight the reconstructed Mshatta Facade. Until 1905, the above mentioned carpets were part of the foundation of the most important carpet museum of its time. Other priorities in collecting the so far neglected aspects of Islamic Art were introduced after 1905 and during the periods of war (1914-1918) and inflation.

Friedrich Sarre was appointed in 1904 by Bode as head of the newly established Islamic department. He is known as the author of important, mostly large sized, carpet folios with excellent reproductions, and was the initiator of the monumental exhibition (with over 3500 objects): "Meisterwerken der Kunst" in Munich in 1910, and he wrote the accompanying text to the carpets and ceramics displays. His travels in 1895 to Asia Minor and in 1899/1900 to Iran provided the main sources for his study of Iranian architectural monuments. His volumes remain unique until today. On these travels he collected ceramics, metal- and woodwork as well as some famous carpets. His entire private collection, including the carpets, was joined to the museum collection after a long and sometimes painful process. And long after his death two other famous carpets were acquired from his daughter. One of which is a Vase Carpet Fragment (Figure 16), which is without any doubt one of the earliest if not the earliest example of this group, decorated with a firework of fantastic flowers and an enormous range of at least twelve colours.

This fascinating period of Lessing's, Bode's and Sarre's years of acquisition was followed by a period of disaster -World War II- when in 1945 Berlin lost 80% of it's large sized oriental carpets. The collection never really recovered from this tragedy although Ernst Kühnel and Kurt Erdmann as the respective heads of department were highly motivated. This new beginning could be marked by two examples.

A brilliant large sized example with a large medallion Holbein-Carpet, four medallions and three rosettes in an additional top row (Figure 17). Furthermore, the magnificent floriated central Kufic border, the fantastic interlaced central stars and the corner elements raise it to the level of the best examples of this rare category. Whereas, Kurt Erdmann's most attractive carpet acquisition was an Ushak-Saph of the 17th century (Figure 18). A fiery red against a dark blue sky. In Erdmann's files was a small black and white photograph with a further part of this carpet, obviously made between 1951 and 1957 when he was professor for Islamic Art at Istanbul University. The carpet is in the best sense of the word an eye-catcher and number one on the visitor's list.

In the 15 years of the lecturer's curatorship, the museum did not acquire more than three pieces, one of which is without any doubt a royal commission judging from its size (7.65 x 3 m) and the quality of the animal- and flower-design, possibly to be positioned horizontally in front of a throne (Figure 19).
Painting in Mid Seventeenth Century Iran
The Suz u Gudaz by Nau'i Khabushani

Abridged from a lecture by Massumeh Farhad

The Safavid dynasty of Iran (1501-1722) is associated with some of the most extraordinary paintings and exquisite illustrated manuscripts such as the Shah Tahmasb Shahnameh (Book of Kings), completed between 1522-1545 and the Haftaurang (the Seven Throws) by Jami completed between 1556-1666.

While recent scholarship has offered invaluable insight into the production and patronage of these and other 17th century Persian paintings, it has paid little attention to 17th century work, with the exception of Riza Abbasi, the celebrated painter of the court of Shah Abbas I. Active from 1657 to the time of his death in 1695, Riza Abbasi is particularly admired for his innovative use of lines and his bold experimentation with colour. His work has become the embodiment of 17th century Persian aesthetics and a standard for assessing and often dismissing later Safavid pictorial art. It was the influence of Riza that left subsequent artists no alternative but to follow the European mode, which ultimately led to a decline in the traditional art of Iranian painting.

Riza Abbasi's artistic legacy notwithstanding, the 1658 Suz u Gudaz (the Burning and Melting) by the poet Muhammad Riza Khabushani Nau'i, at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, suggests that later 17th century painting is a far more complex than a simple imitation of European mode. Following Riza Abbasi's death in 1635, not all 17th century painters embraced Western pictorial conventions with equal enthusiasm or to the same degree. Riza's best known student and follower, Mu'in Mussawar, who was active between c. 1630 and 1690, rejected European concepts and like his master continued to explore the artistic potential of pure line and colour. Sheikh Abbasi on the other hand, who was also active in the mid-17th century, looked towards India for inspiration, favouring idealised figures and Indian costumes in his compositions, which are notable for their soft palette, smoothly engraved modelling and receding landscape settings. These were new concepts in Persian painting.

The development of a broader and more diversified system of patronage may explain why artists needed to identify themselves by signing their work. This became fashionable during the 17th century Iran. To consider later Safavid paintings according to the norms of the past, or to identify these manuscripts as European is misleading and undermines their distinct features, both historical and artistic, within the heterogeneous figurative culture of the mid 17th century.

Suz u Gudaz by the poet Nau'i presents a dramatic departure from early Safavid illustrated manuscripts, which tended to be familiar Persian classics such as Firdusi's Shannameh, Nizami's Haftaurang and Sa'di's Bustan. Set in India, the text recounts a true story of a young Hindu woman committing Satī (widow burning) - killing herself after her husband's death in an expression of self annihilation - a rather unusual subject for a Persian text. Curiously the Suz u Gudaz enjoyed far greater popularity in Iran than in India. At least five copies and two detach

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of the most celebrated manuscripts, such as the 'Ramayana'. Nau'i certainly enjoyed the privileges and generosity of his learned patron and reportedly was weighted in gold for his poetry. Muhammad Riza Khabushani died in 1610 at Abdulrahim's court.

In general, Nau'i's work was praised by his contemporaries, who considered him one of the most accomplished poets among the tezeh guyan (fresh speakers); the term referring to what is more commonly known as the Indian style of poetry or sabke Hindī. Coined only in the 20th century, the term tends to be somewhat misleading. The style was actually developed by Persian poets in the late 15th century and subsequently moved to India. Equally popular in Iran, central Asia, Ottoman Turkey, as well as India, it was known in the contemporary sources as the New style.

This new (Safavīd/Mughal) style is viewed as a literature of decline for its use of convoluted syntax, colloquialism and unusual similes and metaphors. It is criticised for its excessive preoccupation with style and rhetoric at the expense of a true expression of ideas and emotions. This style has undermined its communicative and artistic aspect and its remarkable literary diversity. Later 17th century painting has suffered from the same narrow approach.

Nau'i modelled his book Suz u Gudaz on Nizami's celebrated late 12th century Khusru wa Shirin. In his introduction he claims that Daniel summoned him to his garden to commission the work. Nau'i composed a tragic love story of a young Indian couple based on a true story of a young widow committing Sati.

The only known Mughal copy of the Suz u Gudaz includes 3 illustrations, which were executed as tinted drawings, and have been attributed to the 1630s. Although this copy constitutes the earliest illustrated Suz u Gudaz, neither the style, nor the choice of composition bears any resemblance to those of Safavīd copies, which must have been created independent of the Mughal copy.

The Walters Art Gallery copy of Suz u Gudaz is the most elaborate of all existing copies. Its colophon is signed and dated 1068 AH (1657 AD); and illustrated by Muhammad Ali al-Mashadi, a most prolific painter, who seems to be one of the few painters who actually owned their own manuscripts. He was the son of Malik al-Hussayni, another well-known painter and a contemporary of Riza Abbasi. He was responsible for his son's artistic training. Muhammad Ali's style emphasised line over colour and depicted relatively simple compositions. Small and intimate in scale, frequently representations of idealised youth, young women, or elderly sheikhs. Some of his drawings were inspired earlier Safavīd
must have clearly inspired Muhammad Ali and especially Muhammad Yusuf, whose earlier work tended to be more traditional in style and conception.

Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Qassim and Muhammad Yusuf were three artists who clearly were aware of the incipient Libra of each other's work. But at the same time, each artist manipulated and modified certain formal and iconographic elements to create his own visual interpretation of the same story. With no single homogeneous style dominating late 17th century art, it seems to rely even more strongly on the idea of imitation as a principle of creativity that helped to shape the perspectival framework of the viewer. It allowed the artists to establish their identity and simultaneously add a personal imprint to the tradition of Persian painting. Like contemporary Safavid/Mughal poetry, the quest for the new was pursued by making it afresh and thus innovating and invigorating their artistic heritage.

Except for the Shahnamma, no other text enjoyed such fame as the Suz u Gudaz epic. While copies of the Firdusi's national epic were illustrated throughout the 17th century, all 5 extant copies of Suz u Gudaz, as well as the Chihil Stun wall painting, were created within a relatively short period of time, which spans from the late 1640's to the 1650's. In explaining Safavid interest in this text, it can be argued that even though the story is set in Mughal India, and the hero and heroine are Hindus, its theme is inspired by a well known Persian mystical concept: self annihilation as means towards union with the beloved. The final scene of Sati is an apt and fitting metaphor.

The sudden demand for Nau'i's text was prompted by a number of historical and political events at the time. The province of Qandahar was of great strategic importance to both the Mughals and the Safavids. In the first half of the 17th century it became the stage for military conflict between these two powers. The Safavids succeeded in regaining control of the strategic fort in 1649. This triumph remained the single most important military victory during the reign of Shah Abbas II. Mitradust a certain Mughal official died during the siege. His widow insisted on committing Sati on her husband's pier. Before her death, she prophesied that the Mughals would fall, and Qandahar would fall to the Safavid in 40 days, which became true.

The reference to Nau'i's Suz u Gudaz transformed it into an important literary expression of contemporary Persian realities. Many people shared an interest in this event and five further copies of the epic were commissioned as souvenirs by certain patrons from the elite. These copies were made during the reign of Abbas II at a time of peace, tranquility and prosperity, which promoted commercial and political contacts with Europe and India. These relationships continued to flourish and led to the development of a new Persian aesthetic, which echoed the taste of a more diverse and cosmopolitan urban elite. A new style of pictorial vocabulary was forged in which European and Indian elements were skillfully infused into a more prominent Persian style.

Exposed to new visual sources, painters selected certain European and Indian concepts to innovate traditional Persian painting. They forged a new style, which reflected contemporary interests and concerns. The result was a range of different modes of pictorial expressions, of which Muhammad Ali's illustrations of his personal copy of Suz u Gudaz was one of the most potent manifestations.

In short, mid 17th century painting was a creative pictorial tradition in the making, both imitative and innovative, familiar and new, whose distinct features come into full focus only when viewed within the particular aesthetic, cultural and historic context of this period.
From the Mediterranean to India

Trade in the Red Sea in Antiquity

Abridged from a lecture by Walter Raunig

The earliest great civilizations came from the East; from the Euphrates and Tigris, the Nile, the Indus, and Iran. Alexander the Great, ruler of Macedonia, a small and relatively minor state in south-east Europe, was very much aware of these great states and their individual cultures. His goal was to conquer the Persian military might, which was a permanent threat to his country, and to extend his own power and build an empire in which Western and Eastern knowledge and culture could be united. His early death in 323 BC hindered the realisation of his vision. His huge empire was broken up into various individual states that were often in conflict with each other. Nevertheless, Alexander's achievements did lead to a mutual exchange of ideas, knowledge and abilities in all cultural spheres, on a scale that had never previously been realised. Present day archaeological finds demonstrate Hellenistic influence in political, religious, economic and artistic life as far as India and Central Asia.

Early sea travel took place close to the coastlines, or, if on the open sea then only for relatively short distances, for example in the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and in the Far East and eastern Asia. However, for the early sailors, even these journeys were an outstanding achievement. Those from the East included the Arabians, Indians, Malaysians and Chinese and from the West came the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans. The first great sea expedition that we know of took place on the Red Sea during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut (1488 – 1468 BC). It was the journey of the Egyptians to Punt, which as far as they were concerned, lay to the extreme South (present day Eritrea and Ethiopia). They brought back ivory, skins, living animals, incense, incense plants and many other objects of value.

A good five hundred years later, King Solomon commissioned the Phoenicians to sail down the Red Sea to the country of Ophir in southern Arabia. It is possible that they also sailed to Africa on the opposite side. They traded for prized woods, precious stones, ivory, living animals and gold.

We know from the writings of Herodotus, the first known historian, that between 596 and 594 BC, during the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho (609 – 593 BC), Phoenician sailors rounded the whole of Africa, starting in the East and returning via the West. Herodotus also describes the journey of Skylax of Karyanda (assigned by the Persian King Darius I), who between 518 and 516 B.C. sailed down the Indus and the north-western part of the Indian Ocean into the Gulf, and then down the coast of Arabia and into the Red Sea.

About two hundred years after this, it was Alexander who was interested in exploring the southern seas. Within the framework of his great eastern campaign, he sent Nearchos, in the year 325 – 324 BC, with a hundred ships along the north-eastern coast of the Indian Ocean into the Gulf. He also sent Hieron of Soli to explore the southern Arabian coast.

The Ptolemies, Alexander's heirs in Egypt also explored the South. They built stopping points along
the African coast and the Red Sea as far as Eritrea. Of particular importance to them was the importation of elephants for use in warfare along with other valuable goods.

We don’t know exactly when, how or by whom, the Indian Ocean was crossed for the first time. It is generally accepted that the latest possible dating is during the reign of the Ptolemies when the Indian Ocean was crossed by Indians. This could only have been achieved if they had had some knowledge of the monsoon winds.

Towards the end of the 2nd Century BC the first known European, the Greek Eudoxus of Kyzikes, managed to cross the same ocean, albeit with the help of an Indian sailor. Not long after this, about 100 BC, Hippalus who was also Greek and who may well have accompanied Eudoxus on his journey, gave western sailors an exact and detailed account of wind conditions in the Indian Ocean. From this time onwards it was possible for merchants from the West, from Egypt and other Mediterranean countries, to sail directly from the strait of Bab al-Mandib across the ocean to India. This route was considerably shorter than the one previously used and as a natural consequence, sea fare notably increased in this part of the world. It is possible to conclude that the discovery of the wind conditions in the Indian Ocean was of similar importance for sea faring between Europe, Africa and Asia, as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

During the last few decades of the first century BC in particular, and in conjunction with the consolidation of Roman power in the Orient Pax Augusta, positive conditions evolved for lively and well-ordered long distance sea trade. Strabo writes that many a ship left Myos Hormos or Berenike—two important harbours on the Red Sea coast of Egypt—sailing for India. Some of them even sailed as far as the Gulf of Bengal. He also writes that in the year 20 BC the Emperor Augustus received his first diplomatic visit from India while staying on the isle of Samos.

In those days there was a great demand for oriental luxury goods in Rome. The most highly desired articles were frankincense, myrrh and other sweet smelling spices, valuable hard woods such as ebony, animal skins such as leopard skins, ostrich eggs and feathers, rhinoceros horns, precious stones, pearls, tortoise shell, ivory, fine silk and cotton, large quantities of pepper and cinnamon, and many wild animals for the coliseum! During Caesar’s reign a giraffe was even brought to Rome. In return, various goods were exported. Glass, ceramic and ironware, linen, works of art and artefacts as well as tin, copper and lead.

But of great interest is the fact that the imports were also paid for with money – golden coins in large amounts. The flow of gold in the direction of India must have been immense. A large part of the gold in India seems to have come from the Roman Empire. Pliny the Elder informs us that Rome paid one hundred million Sesterces annually for luxury goods from Arabia, India and other parts of the East. It is difficult to convert this enormous sum into dollars, pounds or euros, but we know that in Pliny’s time a quarter or half litre cup of best-quality wine cost one Sesterce.

The exotic goods were brought from the East to Egypt, the Levant, Rome and other centres of the empire. And where did these articles come from? South-Arabia, Northeast- and East Africa, from India, Southeast-Asia and China. Wealthy Roman citizens bought a wide variety of such goods.

Anyone interested in the ancient history of the Near East, particularly in the ancient history of the Mare Erythraeum, a term that in classical times included the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, knows the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, written by a Greek merchant from Egypt in the
second half of the first century AD. This guidebook was written for sailors and merchants travelling in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. The Periplus is the standard classical account of the region, but sadly its author remains anonymous.

It is evident that the writer was well acquainted with the Erythraean Sea and made several journeys along the African and Asian coasts. Not only did the Periplus provide valuable information about the geographical, meteorological, climatic and commercial conditions to sailors and merchants in those days, it also allows the modern reader to know the nature of and, to some extent, even the amounts, of imported and exported goods during the time of the Roman emperors.

That the author himself was a sailor is apparent. He was obviously very sharp and had a balanced judgement when it came to practical realities. Living as he did in Alexandria, Berenike or Myos-Hormos, his descriptions of the distant countries on the coasts of the Erythraean Sea were naturally given from the point of view of Egypt. Information that had little or no relevance to shipping or trade is incidental. Historical events or ethnological relationships are only mentioned superficially, and inland locations are only referred to in the context of trade. Although the text displays an irregularity of style and grammar, indicating a non-educated Greek, the overall style of this sailing manual is by no means inferior. The writer's simplicity and directness make him particularly credible.

Furthermore, the author of the Periplus is, in some cases, more knowledgeable than the famous Ptolemy, who lived later than him (100 – 178 AD). He mentions, very accurately, for example, the inward movement of the southern coast of East Africa in a westerly direction (afterwards forgotten and subsequently unknown for one thousand years in Europe!) and the joining of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

One of the ancient Aksumite stelae. Mussolini brought it from Aksum in Ethiopia to Rome; since 2004 it is back in Aksum

The text, which is still in print today, is organically structured in sixty-six paragraphs; the first eighteen describe the route along the African coast, starting from Myos-Hormos in Egypt and ending at the coast of Tansania. Paragraphs 19 – 66 give an account of conditions along the coasts of Arabia, Persia and India, as far as the river Ganges — and Myos-Hormos was once again the starting point.
Two parts of the journey are described in such a way as to imply a re-telling of reported, rather than first-hand experience. One account followed the coast of East Africa, south of Opone (which lies South of Cape Guardafui) and the other, the Eastern coast of India. As the style of these descriptions is as equally concise as his preceding accounts, they are generally assumed to be reliable.

During the centuries that followed the Periplus, sea trade continued world-wide and played an important part in the exchange and interaction of goods, ideas and knowledge between the countries of Asia, Africa and Europe. Our present understanding of the past has been gleaned from old records and archaeological findings.

It is important to remember that although many Greek and Roman ships sailed the seas beginning their journey in the West, the same seas were also crossed by people coming from the East. Arabs visited the coasts of Africa, Persia, India and China; Indians sailed to Africa, Arabia, Persia and China and the Chinese sailed to Java, India and later even to Africa.

We may read in Cosmas Indicopleustes' Christian Topography, that even in the sixth century AD, Roman coins were still to be found at all borders of the then known world. The annals of the Chinese Sui-dynasty record that in the hinterland of the Yellow River (Hoang-Ho) around 560 AD, Western coins were still in use. The major religions were spread along the trading routes of the Near and Middle East. Christian missionaries followed the same routes to Ethiopia, Southern Arabia, India, China, and created religious communities in these distant countries.

From the fourth century, Western merchants lost their influence within the trading sphere in and around the Indian Ocean. Arabs, Persians and Indians regained their previous monopoly as intermediary traders between the East and the West and from this time onwards even began to negotiate directly in the buying and selling of goods. Efforts were made by Rome and Byzantium with the help of the Aksumite-empire, to regain their previous direct trading contacts, on land as well as sea, but with little or no success.

With the expansion of the Arab empire from the 7th century onwards, Western sea trade in the Erythraean Sea ultimately came to an end. From this time on, India was assumed to be at a more or less unattainable distance and became a sort of fairy-land of people's imagination. Until the great journeys of the Portuguese at the end of the 15th century (Vasco da Gama) and the beginning of the 16th century, India was never again reached by any European as far as we are aware of – with the exception of Bishop Sigelmo in about 880 AD, Henry of Morungen before 1200, Marco Polo in 1293 and John of Montecorvino in 1291.
The issue suggested here is: how credible is the written official document? The pattern being addressed here is the official British documents concerning the Arabian Gulf region during the colonization period. Can we trust these documents that they reflect the truth as it occurred? This requires identifying the author of the document and the circumstances in which it was written and then how to apply it. It is the researcher’s right to doubt the content of the text before him, if it appears that there is an exaggeration in that content in comparison with other documents, or inequality between the different parties as evident in the colonization treaties and agreements. Also if the content of the document was biased to one of the parties, or on the account of one of the parties; and finally the contradiction that may be seen in the content in comparison with other documents regarding certain incidents.

We are about to study a critical issue, that is doubting the document’s structure in respect of its text and content, its interpretation and the circumstances of its implementation, based on the motives of writing the document, the circumstances that affected its writing and the how to apply it, demonstrated through examples from official British documents concerning the Gulf region, which were written in the colonization period for purposes of the dominance circumstances and the British interests.

The definition of a document

The general definition of a document as the historians concur is that “it is the original that proves the occurrence of incident, it might be a written work, artefacts, coins or others; the document is the original reference for the historical incident”. The document may be written, for instance official documents or matrial documents, or possession ones; or may not be written, such as artefacts of stones, metal pieces, pottery, woods, minted coins, gravestones, and others. It might be said that history is made from documents, which are the remains left by the ancestors’ thoughts and works; it is the main and perhaps the only source of historical knowledge. Historians have agreed that the sources of ancient history are archaeological finds, the sources of the Islamic middle ages are manuscripts, and the sources of the modern and contemporary history are written documents. All are considered documents whether they are material, manuscript or printed.

The motives of writing a document

A document may be written in a certain style according to the purpose of its writing, that may be a political, ideological, economical or social one, therefore one needs to be aware of the nature of the current circumstances and their environment during the writing of the document. Documents are often written after a period of time has lapsed since (long or short) the occurrence of the incident. In such cases the matter would be more complicated, especially if such documents were the only ones dealing with the same incident. The motives of writing the historical document vary according to several factor.

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First - The political and ideological motives: Since the end of the 18th century Britain strived to sign treaties with the Arabian Gulf region’s rulers. The political goal was to counter rivalry from other international powers, and to reinforce its existence in the region. These treaties used apolitical issues to fulfill political ends, such as cooperating with the British authorities in its quest against the slave trade in the region, on humanitarian grounds. Also, ideological movements used to record their activities to help them refine their thought, and defy other ideologies. Colonization was of an economical expansion ideology, for which it worked very hard.

Second - The interest and economical motives: With the embark of geographical discoveries in early 16th century, the Portuguese arrived in the East and the Arabian Gulf region. Their attempt to reach gold mines in Africa and spice plantations in the Indian subcontinent, required dominance on the naval trade routes in order to monopolize it. In the habit of European colonization after the industrial revolution, officials documented these actions in their letters, explorers noted down their observations in the Gulf region in their journals, and merchants documented their transactions with the colonizing authorities as well as with their associates or foes.

Third - Individual and Social motives: Why do people record the biographies of rulers and leaders? Why do people write biographies of celebrities or various sects? Biographies are driven by social or political goals, and often these biographies and journals of elites were either written by themselves or by others drafted for this mission, so they talked about their distinctions, and sometimes exaggerated their praise. Others wrote in the contrary, because they were oppressed, or were drafted by the opposite parties, hence these writings were rather unrealistic both in reporting the incidents themselves or their magnitude and to what extent were they influential.

Forth - Scientific motives: Throughout history some have recruited themselves. Throughout history some have recruited themselves for serving science and homelands, a few who sought the truth. Some of the western explorers and orientalists who came to our region in the past, were genuinely motivated by knowledge and epistemic. They recorded the political, economical or social events that they witnessed. We, here in Kuwait, would not have known of Kuwait’s economical and social conditions in the 17th century and the second half of the 18th century during its early history, was it not for the writings of some European explorers such as Niebour, Buckingham, Belly, and others.

Utilizing and employing documents: When a researcher starts to interrogate documents, as the judge interrogates the witnesses, several matters would surface, which are not immediately apparent in the text before him, but lay beyond the text in both its sense and meaning, in the targets and style of writing, the choice of terminology and expressions and the nature of the subject the document is dealing with. The following are some examples of the process of utilizing and employing documents in the Arabian Gulf region.

First - The British authorities and documents: The British authorities asked J. Lorimer, who was a The British authorities asked J. Lorimer, who was a British official with a wide expertise in the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Gulf region affairs, to write the history of the Gulf during the British colonization period. So he wrote fourteen volumes of which half are historical and half are geographical. We would not disagree upon the importance of this source in the regions’ modern history, but the question is: what is Lorimer expected to write being commissioned by the British? Is this source free of colonization influences?! Furthermore, the British authorities used to decide whom does the translation of the treaties and agreements concluded with the region’s rulers, so are those translations accurate and reliable?

Second - The rulers of the region and documents: Each Gulf government has a centre for documents attached to it directly, but most of them do not welcome researchers. The question is: given that these countries have centres of researches and documents in its universities or other establishments, why would each has a special centre for documents, often unavailable to researchers? Is the target not to maintain the country’s historical documents, to select that which shows its positive role utilizing as may be needed, and to hide, ignore or disregard the documents, which are related to a certain historical period? Recent studies found alteration, concealment
Doubting an official document

Aattentive examination of a document should not accept the face value of the text, but investigate the writer of the document and his source, as knowing the position of its writer helps with revealing the extent of that documents' credibility. The actual author of the document is the official influential power, which had the authority and the means, so it shaped the contents according to its interests and discourse, reporting incidents of interest and ignoring disadvantage facts. In most of the case, we do not have an analogous document for comparison, so how would we judge if what was stated in the document is the truth as it took place? Also, documents regarding a certain incident might confuse the historian to its domain, he would see just what those documents have recorded, for example the British documents about the Gulf did not depict the miseries of people in the region during its dominance, why did it not report human life loses among citizens during incidents like Britains' warfare against al-Qawasim in the second decade of the 19th century, and in the war of uniting the Saudi Kingdom?

Before examining a text and its content and discovering the political or economical motives behind it, we should not doubt a document unless it exhibits one of the following flaws: exaggeration, alignment, inequality or contradiction. This could be demonstrated via examples of those documents doubted, and we will start with the exaggeration and what is counted in some and why?

Exaggeration

In the British documentary centres there is a great number of the British official documents concerning the Arabian Gulf region, among which are documents related to forbidding slave trade in the region during its colonization. By studying those documents, we would find out that the British authorities in the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Gulf exaggerated the depiction of that trade, and reported it as a critical phenomenon, which must be fought, but it was not. The justification for its campaign, as it claimed, was for humanitarian regards and to apply measure to ban this trade. In fact, this decision was taken due to the transformation of the European economics from agriculture, during the feudal era - where it counted on physical power- to industry after the industrial revolution since the 1760's. The British authorities' prohibition of slave trade in the Gulf region was part of its justification for interfering in the region.

Figure 2. Extract from Holmes Concession.- Eastern and General Syndicate Ltd. (EGS/Gulf)

The letter number R/15/1/2001/2015, sent from the assistant of the foreign minister in the Indian government to the British political resident in the Gulf, dated June 9th 1898, brings up the size of slave trade in Mascat, warns of its danger, and states the necessity to fight it. Towards the end of the letter it gives a list of the figures, names and ages of the slaves being traded in. In total, they were ten, two women and eight men, between the ages of 12 and 32. Also, the document sums up the total number of slaves traded in 1900 to 11, and in 1901 to 9.

Assessing these data one concludes that the number of kidnapped or traded slaves was minimal. The British authorities deliberately exaggerated the status of the slave trade in the Gulf region. It included the case of slavery in its treaties with the regions' rulers to achieve political targets. Here we notice the exaggeration of the British authorities in presenting such kind of trade in the region and its role in encountering it.
Contradiction

Reading some of the official British documents concerning the Gulf region exhibit yet another concern, the contradiction between what the document cites and what has actually happened, or the contradiction between the document itself and another document from another source.

That is not due to confusion or misunderstanding on the part of the British authorities, but rather displays the change in the British policies towards the region in response to changing circumstances and interest, causing such contradictions. British authorities at that time were against the Wahhabi movement, yet it signed the Darenen treaty in 1915 with their political representative, King Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud. They were against slave trade, yet they tolerated some rulers of Oman who were trading slaves. They were against smuggling weapons, yet not against the weapons trade itself.

Alignment

Some official British documents dealing with cases and problems in the region in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, exhibit the British alignment to its interests on the account of the local powers, or its alignment to one party against the other. It was not an impartial judge as much as it was the major party that decided and sometimes imposed its opinion on the negotiators, being the super power. One of such documents which exhibit alignment in a number of cases and problems are those related to the second border agreement with Kuwait in al-Aqir.

The British position in al-Aqir agreement 1922 regarding the Kuwaiti borders was aligned against Kuwait, which lost a significant part of its southern territories, as was delineated in the 1913 agreement between the British and the Ottomans. The British authorities represented Kuwait in that agreement since it was responsible for the foreign affairs according to the protectorate agreement. The British position was shaped by the English-American rivalry on the Kuwaiti and Saudi oil. The negotiation records between the British oil companies and Kuwaiti government bear witness to that alignment.

Inequality

Were the British agreements and treaties with the officials in the Arabian Gulf region signed between equal parties? If all those agreements and treaties were the result of oppression, and influenced by the British interests shortly before and during its dominance on the region, what would these agreements and treaties consist of? Some would argue that the interests were mutual and the passions were balanced, for Britain was seeking its interests, and the regions' rulers were keen on maintaining their dominion. Theoretically, this was the case. However, when reading the texts of those agreements and treaties, and analyzing the contents, it is obvious that those agreements and treaties were not signed between equal and comparable powers, but in fact between the British authorities and the weak local powers, or that Britain sometimes signed those agreements herself on behalf of some local powers.

When reviewing the petroleum agreements between the British authorities and the regions' rulers, the inequality is quite obvious. For instance, the negotiation records between Kuwait and the British oil companies reveal that such agreement were mostly biased towards the British end. For Example Holmes Concession- Eastern and General Syndicate Ltd. (EGS/Gulf), dated July 6th 1928, states the following (Figure 2):

5th: "The company shall be free and at liberty to export, sell and dispose to any place or people or country it may wish to and in any manner it may desire the oil and its products won from the condensed territory and the Sheikh and those acting under Him shall not interfere with the internal management of the company, but the Sheikh shall have the right to keep a general eye over the doings of the company, And He shall have the right to levy, and the company undertakes to pay Him, on all the oil and its products exported, a custom duty of one per cent (1%). In calculating such one per cent (1%) on the oil exported, the value of the oil at the wells producing same shall be used".

Conclusion

Although one needs to refer to these documents, which in many cases are the only source of important historical events, this does not mean accepting their entire content. It is quite clear that there were political, and economical interests influencing the formulation of a lot of the regions' documents by the British. Also, the general political and social circumstances played a role in preparing the scene for writing the documents in such a style and content. This is a problem due to that 95% of the documents dealing with the incidents in the regions were official. Therefore, comparing the British official documents with each other is not effective, because the others are also official documents.

We should admit that the British documents are characterized by two main qualities: the direct association between those documents and the historical incident, and the degree of details in those documents. Nonetheless, this does not void our doubt in those documents, which reveal a great deal of exaggeration, contradiction, alignment and inequality.
Art is a product of the environment in which it developed, and textiles design, a highly sophisticated art form, was no exception. For one thing, geo-climatic conditions have always dictated the basic material of which it was made or composed; for another, socio-cultural factors would influence the design of the fabric and its use. In the case of Islamic textiles, this latter factor was discernable in the development of a distinctive style of creative expressions, closely linked with the religious beliefs of the people. In consequence, it transcended national boundaries and geo-climatic factors, and identified, instead, with the regions where it took roots and formed an integral part of their cultural heritage.

In his *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning*, Titus Burckhardt, had pointed out that: "The substance of art is beauty", which in Islamic terms means a divine quality and that the art is perhaps itself imbued with a touch of the divine. The study of Islamic art, and any sacred art for that matter, undertaken with an open heart, would lead to an understanding of the universal reality in which humanity was rooted. A creative expression, a non-verbal language, through which we may penetrate the essence of a cultural ethos that leads to a deeper understanding of those who created the fabrics and those who were the patrons.

If we examine the roots of Islamic thought and creative expression we see that Islam arose from a basically nomadic or semi-nomadic environment, despite the fact that through its extensive trade, the Arab world was influenced by the rich cultural heritage of the Byzantine, Persian and even Indian and Chinese empires. However the birth of Islam and its belief in an austere mode of living unencumbered by possessions, led to a way of life that revolved around their beliefs. And this Islamic way of life and creative expression evolved within a very short space of time. Absorbing the sensibilities and aesthetics of the cultures conquered by Islam, the Arabs gave these cultures a new strength by discarding the opulent for the more austere and by introducing a more controlled aesthetic approach to creative expression.

The earlier prohibition of figural representation led to the development of geometric and flowing rhythmic forms. The arabesque became the norm of expression, while geometric forms were imbued with deep meaning and significance.

It is amazing that within a very short period, Islamic Art developed its own very definite style, which was closely linked to the beliefs and faith of its people, the very essence of their lives. It was possibly because of this faith, that although they absorbed the skills and creative expression of Coptic, Byzantine and Sassanian (which had the Mesopotamian influence) traditions, nevertheless even their early expressions contained an Islamic identity. This dual influence was very strong in the evolution of the new style of textiles, and combined

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the inheritance of abstract Semitic thought with the Arabic script, the sacred language, and spread from Spain to the Indian Muslim courts.

In addition there was another important influence to this development - the establishment of weaving workshops with which caliphate had close links, either directly or through its Governors. These workshops influenced the style of production as their work met specific requirements of the court-weaving establishments known as Dar al-Tiraz, or Tiraz khanah in Persian were ateliers originally attached to the caliphate, which wove clothes especially for the caliph and his court. Robes were also woven as gifts for princes and courtiers, as a sign of recognition and honour by the caliph and they carried his name or blessings and the name of the person for whom it was intended in the woven border (Figure 1). These robes were taken to many parts of the world; references are made to robes travelling from the Fatamid court to Spain and in later times to robes being received by the Indian Sultanate courts from Syria and Egypt in the 12th century.

The Tiraz khanah workshops were set up soon after the Arabs had settled in a particular area and they produced cloth for the court and for the clergy. The tiraz khanah of the caliph al-Mutawakkil was known for its creation of a range of new textiles. The descriptions of woven fabrics are quite detailed and there exists an extraordinary description of the weaving of a shawl with a velvet edge (al-qatifa) which is probably the origin of velvet. Coptic weavers had already created a woven looped cloth in which the loops were made from the wefts, but velvet is created from a looped extra warp. It is likely that velvet may have evolved in the Tiraz Khaneh of the caliphate.

Several elaborately woven garments with brocaded patterns evolved in the looms of Syria, and it is likely that extra weft-weaving with floats may also have developed there before being introduced to Persia and India. Also, these workshops began to weave a type of cloth that adhered to the prohibition of wearing silk next to the skin. This led to the development of mashru (Arabic which means 'that which is permitted') which is a striped textile worked in cotton warp faced cloth with a silk weft, whereby the silk was on the face and the cotton on the reverse, thus conforming to the prohibition but with a rich silk finished surface patterned with stripes in the resist ikat technique. This style was developed in Syria and spread throughout the Islamic world. The himroo weaving (Persian Hamruh which means 'similar') is another double weave of cotton and silk with extra weft silk brocaded patterns which also observed the prohibition. This textile was a weft-faced cloth with extra weft designs which enriched the fabric. In India this style of weaving was developed in the Deccan and became much in demand in the later Muslim courts of the Malayam region. The extra weft brocade probably evolved from this tradition which retained a base cloth of linen or cotton.

After being conquered by the Fatimids in 969 Egypt established their own tiraz factory. It is reported that a tiraz factory in Alexandria produced a range of textiles for the caliphate. The close ties between Egypt and the Maghreb led to a mutual exchange in
arts and crafts. Al-Qayrawan, which was built under Islamic influence, had professional male weavers organised into guilds and famed for their silk, linen and cotton weaves. Master weavers expelled later from Andalusia also came and settled here.

Spanish Islamic textiles were introduced from Egypt and Syria around the mid-8th century AD. According to records from the period it is possible that they were ordered by the caliphate and sent from Syria. However, after the 10th century AD, Spanish textiles took on their own distinct style. Al-Idrisi (1099-1166 AD) notes that Andalusia had nearly 800 looms. The well-known textile Veil of Hisham (naming the Cordoban ruler Hisham II, r. 976-1009 and 1010-1013 AD) appears to have been woven using a tapestry technique and has Kufic lettering. The famous textile known as 'Tapestry of the Witches' has a dominant figure of a winged sphinx flanked by peacocks. Andalusian production enriched the silk weaving tradition of the area in the 14th to 17th centuries AD.

The richest textile traditions were associated with Iran, Turkey and India. The fact that tribute from Iran was paid in the form of textiles from all the provinces from Gilan to Sistan to Khorasan, Nahawand and Susa is indicative of the importance of the industry. However, very few examples of the early period have survived, making it difficult to assess the stylistic development. Sassanian influence remained as is seen in a fragment containing the tree of life with confronted hawks and horses at the base of the tree, which belong to the tradition of sun worship. This influence continued throughout the Seljuk period as figurative delineation became more pronounced. However, the combative element found in Sassanian designs is subdued and the animal figures are highly stylized.

For example an important historical textile of woven silk (known as the St. Josse shroud, kept in the Louvre and dated before 961AD) has a magnificent pattern of elephants with griffins woven between their legs (Figure 2). The piece carries an inscription in Kufic "Glory and happiness to Qa'id abu al-Mansur Bukhtakin, may God continue his prosperity". It was woven for Bukhtakin, Governor of Samanid in Khorasan and was possibly woven in Nishapur during the 10th century AD. The use of confronted animals is very much in line with Persian tradition.

The Safavid court of Iran was known for its elaborately woven patterned textiles and sumptuous apparel. The palaces were also decorated with elaborate textiles and the tented cities of encampment gave the greatest opportunity for weavers to demonstrate their talents. The Shahs added to the advances in the industry by inviting masters from other parts of the world to settle in the area. Armenian weavers, some of whom migrated from Bursa, were encouraged to settle in Isfahan which became the cultural centre of the world. The court of Shah Abbas (r. 1588 - 1629 AD) produced the finest fabrics. Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din Ali Naqshaband Yazdi was a member of this court. He was a poet, collector, master designer and painter, who held his own in the court. Silk fabrics made and signed by Khwaja Ghiyath al-Din were greatly valued not only in Persia, but also in other areas. Akbar in Ain-e-Akbari remarks on the fact that the gifts received from the Persian court included signed silks of Ghiyath al-Din, which he prized highly. By this period, the Persian Court had evolved its own style of costume and had begun to weave silk textiles with elaborately figurative designs in silk and gold brocade, as well as velvets, the finest of which were the voided velvets (Figure 3). In turn, Persian Miniatures depicted elaborately woven upper garments.

It is known that Bursa was an important trading centre in Turkey whose main export was silk from Iran. It was almost certainly used by Turkish weavers as their sericulture only took off in the 16th century. The fact we know that the Seljuk sent a tribute of 2000 rolls of brocaded silk from Erzinca and 4000 rolls from Anatolian cities to Rashid al-Din the Ilkhanid vizier, indicates that a sizeable silk industry existed. The earliest surviving piece, dated to the 13th century, contains a decorative pattern of rondels containing confronted lions and with a flora background. It has an inscription with the name 'Ala' al-Din Keykubad (r. 1220-1237), son of Keykhusrow. The ground is a brilliant crimson colour with the pattern worked in gold thread. This colour combination was also popular in later silks.
Figure 3. Fragment of voided crimson velvet with pattern of stacked rows of large cintamani [Sanskrit meaning wishgranting jewel] LNS 11 T. (leopard spots/tiger stripes) brocaded with silver thread. Ottoman Turkey, first half of the 9th century AH/1500-1550 AD.
Figure 4. Manuscript folio (LNS 297 MS) from the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza (The tales of the Emir Hamza). The scene demonstrates the textiles used in clothing women, men and horses. Mughal India, circa 373 AH/1565 AD.
Although Bursa was the silk weaving centre of Turkey, weaving was also introduced in Istanbul where the most typical and important textile was *seraser*, a satin silk covered with rich gold thread in bold ‘j’ patterns. Velvets, brocaded silk and striped *aleycha* were also woven in the same style.

The Topkapi has preserved 1000 kaftans worn by the Sultans. The Ottoman Court had a very rich style of brocaded fabrics but figurative work was not commonly seen. An early robe with a bold sun design is reminiscent of earlier motifs and reflects the style of Central Asian *Sozanis*. The style was an elaboration of flower motifs, including the tulip and carnation richly brocaded and, in the earlier pieces, enclosed within an ogival surround, further unified with a flowering trellis. In later textiles large flowers dominate and appear encrusted in gold on a brilliant coloured silk ground. Another interesting group of textiles are tents, tomb covers and banners, which are of extraordinary richness and very much a part of the Islamic tradition as can be seen in miniature paintings.

In India, Akbar wooed master weavers from Persia and gave them grants of land and other privileges so as to keep them and their descendents in India. The description of the Emperor’s wardrobe and the great attention that was paid to ensure the finest textiles and robes, as well as the descriptions of how the king himself created the elaborate *doushala*, and the *doubie shawis*, so that there should be no wrong side, is indicative of the high level of craftsmanship and aesthetic skill at the Mughal court (Figure 4).

One of the areas that is often neglected in Islamic textile studies are those that were created in South East Asia in particular Indonesia and Malaysia. Although Islam came later to these parts, it spread rapidly. The Malaysians created cloth with Arabic script using the ikat technique. However the most extraordinary textiles are those created using the *batik*, little dots made using dye resistance technique. Gold brocade *songket*, hand-woven traditional Malay fabric with gold and silver threads, and gold embroidery of Islamic influence were developed in Sumatra in particular Aceh. Islam was introduced to this region by Indian and Arab traders and it is believed that *songket* was first introduced by Indian weavers and embroiders who settled in the area. However the style developed by the locals was quite distinct.

The descriptions of the ateliers in several Islamic texts are indicative of the importance given to textiles and of interest in textile ateliers. Barani, the first known Muslim to write a history of India 1285–1357 AD, writes that in 1343-44 AD Muhammad bin Tughluq (Sultan of Delhi, 1325 -1351) sent a robe to the Abbasid caliphate. He ordered that the name of the atelier (dar tiraz Djamay zarbaft kamali) be included in the tiraz inscription. Ibn Fadl Allah al-Omari writes in his book *Masalik al-Absar fi Mamalik al-Amsar*, that the royal ateliers employed 4000 silk weavers who wove brocade *zarkis* for the Sultan, his wives and the court. Qalqshandi writes that the Sultan of Delhi has a dar al-tiraz in which there are 4000 manufacturers of silk *khazzaz* making all types of textiles for *khil’a* and *kiswa* [robes of honour]. Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351-1388AD) abolished several taxes, two of which related to textiles - indigo dyeing and chapa printing - two very important arms of the textile industry.

Islamic Textiles have also had other expressions linked to the Sufi tradition. The great Sufi Bahá’ al-Din Naqshbandi of Bukhara (d. 791AD) is linked to the traditional master weavers/designers of Varanasi, who regarded the great Sufi as their Pir (master). This community of weavers were known as Naqshband, the creators of jacquard, and the non-repetitive brocade pattern that made them famous throughout the world. The Sufi traditions of Central Asia and Iran had a tremendous influence on textiles; the rhythmic act of weaving was linked to ‘zikr’, the repetition of God’s name as they wove. The namad makers of Mazendaran who have a traditional link with a Sufi order believe that the making of a Namad is done through 38 rhythmic movements and the creators would often enter into a state of *halt*. The fact that the craft guilds were headed by masters who were part of the Sufi tradition indicates a close link to the organisation of the *khanegah*. The initiation of a novice into a Sufi order was similar to the introduction of an apprentice into the guild. In fact the survival of many a Sufi order in Central Asia under the repressive domination of the Soviet Union is due to the fact that many a Sufi tradition was sheltered within the craft community.
Abbasid Numismatics
In Arabian Metropolitan Centres

Abridged from a lecture by Abdullah ibn Jassim al-Mutairi

The Dinar and Dirham were mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth. The Dinar was mentioned in "Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold will readily pay it back; others who if entrusted with a single Dinar will not repay it unless thou constantly stoodest demanding", Surat Al 'Umran (Chapter-verse 75). Whereas the Dirhem was mentioned in "The Brethren sold him for a miserable price, for a few Dirhams counted out, in such low estimation did they hold him", Surat Yusuf (Chapter 12- verse 20). Not only does the research in the history of numismatic represent a great importance in the coinage history in terms of the artistic value, the mental savor, and the material advantage, but also in terms of the historical importance. Through these coins we can reveal a lot of facts disprove a lot of claims and correct a lot of historical mistakes.

The Islamic currencies themselves are a fair witness on the various countries that contributed in the Islamic conquests and the expansion of the Islamic religion, for the different cities and dates of mints show the extent of the prevalence and power of the Islamic reign. Since the early Islamic reign, the caliphs, sultans, and Amirs have monetized coinage throughout the Islamic world, varying between gold Dinars [from Latin denarius], silver Dirham [from Greek Drachm] and copper Fibles [from Latin follis], throught Islamic history, and hence becoming a rich subject for those concerned and those adoring the Islamic heritage. The currencies are called in Arabic nuqad derived from the word naqd [money]. Also, they are called maskukat [struck], most likely because derived from the mould on which it is monetized.

Yemen

Abbasid rule in Yemen lasted for seventy years, with more than forty governors appointed by the caliph in Iraq. Yemen's importance as a centre for minting Abbasid coins started during al-Mansur's reign, but to date, the only golden and silver coins uncovered are those attributed to Harun al-Rashid's caliphate. In 156 AH, the first copper fils were commissioned by the caliph al-Mahdi ibn al-Mansur during the time of his father's rule and were assigned to Yemen although the mintage city remained anonymous. However, there are coins from the time of Harun al-Rashid's caliphate bearing the name of the capital San'a'.

Unfortunately, the caliphate of al-Mahdi and al-Hadi has not so far yielded any mintage traces. As for al-Rashid (r. 170-193 AH), he ordered the first silver Dirham to be minted in San'a' in the year 172 AH. He also ordered the production of several dirhams through several governors, the lecturer has four of these dirhams dated 180 AH, bearing the governor's name Abd Allah ibn Mus'ab.

Yemeni Dinars found during al-Rashid caliphate are scarce. Yet there exist a unique dinar from this period bearing the name of the governor al-Ghaitri ibn al-'Ata, the uncle of Zubida, al-Rashid's wife. To the best of his knowledge, the lecturer does not know of any extant dinars from Muhammad al-Amin's reign (193-198 AH). There is however one dirham attributed to one of al-Amin's governors of Yemen, dated 195 AH (in the National Museum of Qatar).

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Al-Ma'amun Caliphate 198 – 218 AH

During the period 202–205 AH some Dinars were inscribed with the name Muhammad or al-Ifriqi. These names were thought to denote either Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Ifriqi, the military commander assigned to Yemen by the vizir al-Fadl ibn Saahl, or possibly Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Ziyad. Although there is no evidence to prove the dinars’ provenances, the fact that they were found in Yemen suggests that they were minted there. The first Dinar known to have been minted in Yemen was in 215 AH, bearing two inscriptions, one of which was “Allah’s is the command in the former and the latter”, which was also used on coins produced in other regions under the Abbasid caliphate since 207 AH. The mintage of this type of dinar continued from the caliphate of al-Mutasim (r. 218-227 AH) until the reign of al-Muqtadir bi-llah (r. 317-320 AH). Some of the dinars were inscribed with the names of governors, such as the one minted in the reign of al-Wathiq bi-llah (r. 227-232 AH) and ordered by Itakh (the Turkic) the governor of Yemen. Its inscriptions read as follows:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse
Middle inscription: To Allah- Muhammad is the messenger of God – al-Wathiq bi-llah
Reverse
First Margin Inscription: Allah’s is the command in the former and in the latter; and in that day believers will rejoice
Second Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah, this Dinar was minted in San’a in 230 AH
Middle inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no partner, Itakh

Dirhams minted in Yemen are rare, but Dinars are even more scarce. It is widely known that Yemeni currencies were minted in the capital San’a and not in any other Yemeni region or city. So where mintage only set in San’a, and then the coins were transferred to other provinces? Although other provinces were subordinate to the Abbasid sovereignty, there is no evidence of minting outside of San’a. There is only one exception, a dinar minted in Zabid bearing the name of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir bi-llah minted by As’ad ibn Ibrahim, one of the rulers of Banu Ya’afur at Zabid in 313 AH. However, this dinar is generally not believed to be Abbasid as it was minted after the independence of Yemen in 312 AH, as the year 312 AH was the last year of direct control of Yemen by the Abbasids. In general, Yemeni minted Dinars are smaller and lighter than their counterparts from other regions.

Banu Ziyad State in Zabid 204-422 AH

The Banu Ziyad became the first autonomous state in Yemen during the Abbasid rule. Its boundaries were confined to the province of Tihama. The Banu Ziyad’s first capital was the city of Zabid. Its founder and first autonomous ruler was Muhammed ibn Abd Allah. The coins that have so far been discovered from this state, are attributed to the reigns of Abu al-Jaysh Ishaq ibn Ibrahim and his brother Ali ibn Ibrahim. Golden dinars minted in Zabid are the only coins found to date; no silver coins have yet been uncovered. The lecturer owns a unique dinar commissioned by Abu al-Jaysh Ishaq ibn Ibrahim and minted in San’a. Despite its political autonomy, Banu Ziyad had strong ties with the Abbasid caliphate. Friday speeches praised the Abbasid caliph and his name was inscribed on the mint, along with that of the Banu Ziyad ruler. Some of the inscriptions of the Banu Ziyad dinars are different from familiar Abbasid slogans. For example the quotes on the Dinar of Abu al-Jaysh Ishaq ibn Ibrahim read:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: Truth hath come and falsehood hath vanished away.
Middle Inscription: To Allah- Muhammad the messenger of God – al-Mut’i’ l-llah- Ishaq ibn Ibrahim
Reverse
First Margin Inscription: Allah’s is the command in the former and in the latter; and in that day believers will rejoice
Second Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah, this Dinar was minted in San’a in 365 AH
Middle Inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no partner
Banu Ya'fur State 225 – 393 AH

Banu Ya'fur is considered to be the second independent Yemeni state after gaining autonomy from the Abbasid caliphate, in 225 AH with supremacy over the Shabam province. During the reign of As'ad ibn Ibrahim (282-331 AH), the Banu Ya'fur state expanded its influence reaching as far as San'a in the South and the Hashid territory in the North. Ya'fur ibn Abd al-Rahim al-Hawaly was the governor of San'a, appointed by the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tamid 'Ala Allah. Despite the State's political autonomy; its allegiance and amity were to the Abbasid caliphate.

They remained loyal to the caliph praising his name in the Friday speeches as before. During the reign of al-Muqtadir, numerous dinars were commissioned by the ruler As'ad ibn Ibrahim bearing only the title of the Abbasid caliph, without specifying his name, and using the same Abbasid slogans. The minting technique and the light weight of the currency also distinguished the Ya'fur dinars from those of the Abbasids. In support of the Abbasid caliph, As'ad attacked the Qarmites in the al-Mudhaykhira province, killed Abdullah ibn Ali ibn al-Fadl al-Qarmati and dispatched his head to the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir bi-llah in Baghdad. Banu Ya'fur ruled for almost 162 years with six consecutive sultans, the last of which was As'ad ibn Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Qahtan.

In general, the Ya'fur mintage style is similar to that of traditional Abbasid coins. The Emirs did not inscribe their names on the mint unless it was necessary. The Ya'fur currency is considered to be one of the rare species minted in Yemen, and those bearing the name of the Emirs are considered particularly uncommon. The 335 AH dinar commissioned for Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn Ya'fur was the first coin in the lecturer's collection and is only the fifth piece known in the world to date of this mintage. The piece bears the title 'Emir' [prince] with no indication of his name. The dinar's inscriptions are as follows:

Obverse
First Margin Inscription: Commissioned by the Emir
Second Margin Inscription: Allah's is the command in the former and in the latter; and in that day believers will rejoice
Middle Inscription: To Allah- Muhammad the messenger of God – al-Mutaffifin- Ishaq ibn Ibrahim

Reverse
First Margin Inscription: Minted in San'a
Second Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah, this dinar was minted in San'a in 365 AH
Middle Inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no partner

Ayyubid State in Yemen (569 – 626 AH)

While he was still a vizir, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi sent his brother Turan Shah (known as Shams al-Din) to Yemen to head a big military force. When Turan Shah reached Yemen he arrested the banu Malidi sultan, Abd al-Nabi ibn Ali, and a group of his followers. Then he marched to Aden ending the rule of Banu Zari', then to Abu Dhi Hila were he eliminated the remnant control of al-Salihiya dynasty and abolished the Banu Hatim state in San'a'. After establishing Ayyubid rule over all Yemeni States apart from al-A'ima State in the North, Turan Shah returned to Egypt.

Ayyubid rule in Yemen lasted for almost 57 years with five consecutive Ayyubid sultans, the last of whom was al-Mas'ud Yusuf ibn al-Kamil during whose reign the Ayyubid regime came to an end in 626 AH. The Ayyubids minted dinars and dirhams. Extant dinars are unique and scarce due to the lack of gold at the time, but dirhams were minted in large quantities, especially during the reign of al-Mas'ud Yusuf. The Ayyubid state declared its religious and political allegiance to the Abbasid caliphate. Both the Abbasid caliph and the Ayyubid sultan were praised in Friday speeches and their names were inscribed on Ayyubid mint.

The following is an example of an Ayyubid dinar; which is one of the unique species attributed to the sultan Turan Shah and minted in Aden in 575 AH. The dinar bears the following text:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse
Middle Inscription: The great sultan, king of Yemen, Shams al-Dawla, Turan Shah

Reverse
Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah this dinar was minted in Aden in 575 AH
Middle Inscription: Al-Imam, There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, al-Mustadi' bi-amri-llah, Emir of the Faithful

Banu Rasoul State (626 – 858 AH)

The Rasoulid state was established on the ruins of the Ayyubid state. Its first sultan al-Mansur Nur
al-Din Omar ibn Ali ibn Rasoul was the viceroy of the last Ayyubid sultan in Yemen. He started to establish himself by appointing his most trustworthy and loyal figures in the fortresses and other strategic sites to spread this rule. He used his position to commission currencies bearing his name, commanded preachers to mention his name in Friday speeches, finally declaring his supremacy over the country and acquiring the title of al-Mansur, after obtaining the formal permission from the Abbasid caliph al-Dahir bi-llah (622 - 623 AH) in Baghdad. Eventually al-Mansur came to dominate Ta‘iz, Iba, San‘a and other Northern territories.

The currencies of the Rasouliid State are characterized by the rarity of its dinars and the abundance of its silver dirhams; the latter was poorly minted and alloyed with ordinary metals. However the currency is unusual in that it bears zoomorphic images at its centre.

Despite the fact that al-Mu’tasim bi-llah (640 - 656 AH) was killed by the Mongol commander, Hulagu during his attack on Baghdad in 656 AH, the rulers of the Rasouliid State continued to inscribe the name of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu’tasim bi-llah on their specimens until the end of the Rasouliid state in 858 AH. Unlike currencies of other regions subordinate to the Abbasid caliphate, the Rasouliid currency was not influenced by the political turbulence, neither its quality or slogans. The political turbulence negatively affected the minting process in the Abbasid provinces, where the names of viceroy, governors, and their followers became more prominently inscribed on the coins than that of the caliphs. Also, the quality of the mintage, be it gold or silver, varied with the fluctuation in the might of the caliphate, the coins were minted from pure gold, but later as the caliphate became weaker in the final decades prior to its fall, it was alloyed with lesser metals.

Oman

During the early period of the Abbasid caliphate no serious attempt was made to spread its supremacy over Oman. Hence no Abbasid currencies were minted in Oman until the end of the second century AH, with the exception of two copper pieces, one of which is a copper fils minted in Sahar dated 141 AH, bearing the name of the governor Ruh ibn Hatim. This coin is preserved in the Tubingen University Collection with the following inscription:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah, this fils was minted in San’s in 141 AH
Middle Inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no partner

Reverse
Margin Inscription: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth
Middle Inscription: Ruh ibn-Muhammad the Messenger of Allah-Hatim

Until the reign of caliph al-Mu’tasim bi-llah (r. 289 - 295 AH) no golden dinars, or silver dirhams were minted in Oman. The first dirham minted in Oman was commissioned by the ruler Ahmed ibn Muhammad al-Safar and dated 290 AH. Not mentioning his family name, al-Safar inscribed his first name along with the name of the Abbasid caliph on the currency.

Banu Sama State (281 - 316 AH)

After a long period of internal conflict, peace was restored to Oman when the Banu Sama appealed for the support of Muhammad ibn Nur (or Muhammad ibn Eri), the Emir of Bahrain, appointed by the Abbasid caliph al-Mu’tadid bi-llah. The banu Sama ruled for almost 35 years, and the transfer of their capital from Bahla to Sahar port revived trade in the region.

The rarity of the Banu Sama dirhams is considerable: among the best known examples are those commissioned for the ruler Ahmed ibn Hilal and Abd al-Halim ibn Ibrahim. The following is an example of a dirham minted in 304 AH and commissioned by the ruler Ahmed ibn Hilal.

Obverse
Margin Inscription: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse

An example of a dirham commissioned by Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Wejih, in Oman in the year 348 AH
Middle Inscription: **To Allah- Muhammad the messenger of God – al-Muqtadir bi-llah**

Reverse
First Margin Inscription: **Allah's is the command in the former and in the latter; and in that day believers will rejoice**

Second Margin Inscription: **In the name of Allah, this Dirham was minted in Oman in 304 AH**

Middle inscription: **There is no God but Allah, He has no partner, Ahmed ibn Hilal**

**Banu Wajih (317 – 355 AH)**

In 317 AH, a local Omani family emerged to declare its authority over the country under the leadership of Yusuf ibn Wajih. Despite swearing allegiance to the Abbasid caliphs al-Muqtadir, al-Qahir bi-llah and al-Radi bi-llah, Banu Wajih nevertheless inscribed their names on coinage and prayers were performed on their behalf. The following is an example of inscriptions on the Youssif ibn Wajih dirham which was minted in Oman and dated 317 AH.

Obverse
Margin Inscription: **Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse**

Middle Inscription: **To Allah- Muhammad the messenger of God – al-Muqtadir bi-llah**

Reverse
First Margin Inscription: **Allah's is the command in the former and in the latter; and in that day believers will rejoice, in Allah's help to victory**

Second Margin Inscription: **In the name of Allah, this dirham was minted in Oman in 317 AH**

Middle inscription: **There is no God but Allah, He has no partner, Yusuf ibn Wajih**

Also, there are some dirhams attributed to the last Waja' ruler Omar ibn Youssuf (r. 341 – 350 AH) the brother of Muhammad ibn Yusuf. A quarter dinar was recently excavated bearing the name of Omar ibn Yusuf, which was minted in Oman at the Ra'as al-Khayma Emirate in 350 AH. The Waja' currency is rare and its dinars are even scarcer.

**Banu Buwayh State (362 – 440 AH)**

The Qarmates entered Oman at the request of its people to overthrow the Buwayhids. In response, Nafi' the mandator of Yusuf ibn Wajih appealed for support from Persia. The Buwayhids imposed their sovereignty by minting their currency in Oman in 362 AH following the traditional Abbasid style. Their coins were inscribed with the names of the head of the Buwayhids, the grand Emir (amir al-omara'), Rukn al-Dawla Abu Ali, the Abbasid caliph, as well as the Buwayhids governor in Persia and his son.

The following is an example of the most important Buwayhid dinars minted in Oman; of which only two examples survive intact. The dinar's inscriptions read:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: **In the name of Allah, this dirham was minted in Oman in 436 AH**

Middle Inscription: **The Emir, Muhammad the messenger of Allah, Ghlyath ibad il-llah , Qasim Chaliph of God, Abu klikjar**

Reverse
Margin Inscription: **In the name of Allah, this dirham was minted in Oman in 436 AH**

Middle Inscription: **There is no God but Allah, He has no Partner, Shahinsah, the Great, King of Kings, Muhly Din il-llah**

Unusually, this dinar does not have any of the Qur'anic verses usually inscribed on Islamic currency since Abd al-Malik ibn Marawan started his monetary reform in 77 AH.

**Banu Makram (390 – 432 AH)**

In his book entitled *The History of Currency in Oman* Mr. Robert Doran has mentioned that Abu Muhammad al-Husayn ibn Makram was appointed by Baha' al-Dawla al-Buwayhi as the governor of Oman and the controller of trade in the Arabian Gulf from 390 – 394 AH. By the first third of the 5th century AH, Abu Muhammad and his descendants started to play a crucial role in the history of Oman. After the destruction of Siraf, trade flourished in Oman and the country became a significant trade centre in the region.

Al-Husayn ibn Makram started minting in the style of the Buwayhids, with the same slogans and inscriptions. However the dinar carried the name of "Makram", which distinguished it from the original Buwayhids dinars and dirhams. Since 410 AH, the Makramid currency adopted a new style including verses from the Qur'an in the middle of the coins, such as that of Surat al-Ikhla's (Chapter 112). This illustrates the conflict between the Makramid governor and the Buwayhids ruler in Persia, showing that the governor acted independently.

The lecturer's collection has more than 10 examples of Makramid dinars which bear different quotes. One is a Makramid dinar attributed to Abu al-Husayn ibn Makram, minted in Oman in 409 AH, with the following inscription:

Obverse
Margin Inscription: **Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religion**

An Abbasid dinar in the name of the caliph al-Mu'tadid bi-llah, minted in San'a' in 291AH
however much idolaters may be averse

Middle Inscription: Say, He is Allah, the one! Allah, the eternally Besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him

Reverse

First Margin Inscription: al-Adil- Shahinsah -the sultan of the State and Giyath al-milla wa al-din [the saviour of religion and nation] - Imad al-Din Abu Shuja’

Second Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah, this dinar was minted in Oman in 409 AH

Middle inscription: There is no God but Allah - al-Qadir bi-Illah- Falak al-Um

Najd al-Yamama (165 – 170 AH)

al-Yamama, capital of Najd had been a province of the Abbasid caliphate since the establishment of the Abbasid sovereignty in 132 AH. However, no currencies were minted in al-Yamama and no mint existed before the reign of al-Mahdi. He commissioned some silver dirhams with slight differences to be found between them.

A dirham has also been found to have been minted during the reign of al-Hadi, dated 169 AH. The last dirham to be attributed to the al-Yamama mint is dated 170 AH. The mint stopped producing dirhams after this time for no explicable reason. The following are inscriptions from a 165 AH dirham minted in al-Yamama:

Obverse

Margin Inscription: In the name of Allah this dirham was minted in al-Yamama, in the year 165 AH

Middle Inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no Partner

Reverse

Margin Inscription: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, He is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse

Middle Inscription: Muhammad the messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, The caliph al-Mahdi- Hajar

Al-Hijaz (Mekka 201 – 306 AH)

From the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate in 132 AH, Mekka became under Abbasid authority. Ahmed ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Abbas was appointed as governor of both Mekka and Madina. Abbasid sovereignty over Mekka lasted until 306 AH, during the reign of al-Muqtadir bi-Illah, while its supremacy over Madina ended in 248 AH, during the reign of al-Musta’in bi-Illah. No excavated coins have been attributed to Meckka from the period of the reign of al-Saffah until that of al-Ma’mun. There is no record of Mekka acting as a production centre like other capitals. The mint at Mekka ceased production for an unknown reason, and later resumed during the rule of al-Musta’in bi-Illah. Acting as a temporary mint, dinars were produced in Mekka with some interruption unlike other centres. It was active only on certain occasions and by the order of the caliph. During the reign of al-Muktafi bi-Illah silver dirhams were minted more abundantly.

With the Qaramites’ raids on Mekka the Abbasid mintage came to an end. Mr. Samir Shamma’s collection includes a dinar commissioned for the caliph al-Muti’ il-Illah (r. 334-363 AH), minted in Mekka in 354 AH. It reads:

Obverse

Margin Inscription: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah,

He it is who hath sent his messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may make it conqueror of all religion however much idolaters may be averse

Middle Inscription: To Allah, Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, al- Mut’i’ il-Illah, K

Reverse

First Margin Inscription: Allah’s is the command in the former and in the latter, and in that day believers will rejoice

Second Middle Inscription: In the name of Allah, this dinar was minted in Mekka in 354 AH

Middle Inscription: There is no God but Allah, He has no Partner

It was claimed that this dinar is an original Abbasid coin. However, the letter ‘K’ inscribed below the name of the caliph al-Muti’ il-Illah indicates it is not purely Abbasid. As the Ikshid’s minted currency in Mekka following the Abbasid style, but added the letter ‘K’ in reference to the first letter of the Ikshid ruler’s name Kafr, inscribed below that of the caliph.

These are but some examples of various species minted in Yemen, Oman, Najd and Hijaz, whether Abbasid in origin or attributed to subordinate provinces loyal to the Abbasid caliphate. ☞
Library Gifts

Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah has benefited from a seasonal deluge of gifts-in the form of books for the library. Our many friends across the world have made these thoughtful gestures, which are truly appreciated. Their kind consideration for the restoration and improvement of the library will be of benefit to many scholars, now and in the years to come.

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painters such as Riza Abbasi. It can be argued that Muhammad Ali’s single pages should not be seen as independent self-contained images but rather as a series of variations on themes that interested his patrons. The originality of Muhammad Ali lies in his adaptation, transformation and Persianisation of a new concept, mainly in modelling and shading.

Safavid fascination with these artistic principles has been attributed to the influx of European travellers, merchants and diplomats. Luxury European goods shaped the taste of Persians and quickly came into vogue all over Iran.

Yet another source of European style painting was the Armenian suburb New Julfa. It was notable for its many churches and private residences, embellished with lavish religious and secular paintings. New Julfa was also home to numerous painters, manuscript illuminators, goldsmiths and silversmiths, who worked either independently in local workshops, or in at the Safavid court ateliers. To enrich this visual mix even further, Mughal painting which was embracing European pictorial conventions and subject matter since the later part of the 16th century.

The original source of Muhammad Ali’s style is too difficult to identify. To a large extent, the principle of modelling and shading served a very different purpose for him and his peers than for either European or Mughal painters. Instead of using these conventions uniformly, to create a sense of optical naturalism and an approximate visual appearance of the figures and their settings, they were transformed into two-dimensional decorative designs and employed to draw attention to selected compositional features.

As is evident in the paintings of Suz u Gudaz, modelling was generally relegated to the secondary feature of a composition, usually the background such as rocks, grassy areas and trees, while figures are devoid of any suggestions of mass and volume. For the Safavid painter, modelling was not meant to create a sense of depth but was used to define individual forms and enhance their surface design. Far from receding visually and conceptually in his composition, the setting gained greater visual weight suggesting a new pictorial balance between the figures and their background, an idea that contradicted the European notion of pictorial hierarchy.

Thus, Muhammad Ali’s paintings still conformed to traditional Persian pictorial norms in which separate elements were given equal emphasis and were defined by their relationship to each other rather than their place within a perceptual scheme. His selective use and Persianisation of modelling and shade seem less of an attempt to emulate European style but rather a search for new ways to innovate and expand traditional Persian painting.

During the 1640’s and 1650’s, Muhammad Ali collaborated with Muhammad Qasim and Muhammad Yusuf. Their work together offers a fascinating and complex synchronic view of Persian painting practices in the mid 17th century. Their individual paintings, drawings, and manuscript illustrations share many of the same thematic and stylistic elements, especially a preoccupation with adapting and integrating new artistic concepts into traditional Persian painting.

According to a notation the Suz u Gudaz manuscript, now in the Jerusalem Museum, was signed and dated by Muhammad Qasim in 1657. Active from 1635 to the late 1650’s, Muhammad Yusuf, a contemporary of Muhammad Ali, worked closely with the artist, as is evident of a number of manuscripts they worked on together. Muhammad Ali’s copy closely modeled after Muhammad Yusuf’s.

Muhammad Ali’s Suz u Gudaz illustrations, also, suggest his awareness of a third unsigned and undated copy, now in the collection of the Chester Beatty Library. The paintings of this manuscript are attributed to Muhammad Qasim. Among the three painters, Muhammad Qasim was probably the first to introduce modeling and shading into his landscape settings. This stylistic innovation, at the paradox of Riza Abbasi’s more schematised landscape elements,