About the journal
The journal Hadeeth ad-Dar of Dar al-Atbar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is intended to share the wealth and beauty of Islamic culture contained within the extensive and comprehensive al-Sabah Collection of Islamic art and the variety of scholarly and artistic activities associated with the collection.

The collection itself, ranging from early Islam to the 18th century, is organised according to both historical period and geographical region. The reference library and the publications of DAI are closely related to the collection.

DAI has sponsored archaeological excavations in Bahnasa, Upper Egypt that date to the Fatimid period. We are also involved in the Raya excavation at al-Tur, in Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. At present, our annual lecture series has been revived and is a focal point for historians and other specialists in the field. It features talks by prominent international scholars on various topics of Islamic art, history archaeology and architecture.

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Game Pieces or Weights for a Scale Mesopotamian region 8th – 9th century
- Heights vary from 0.8 cm to 2.2 cm
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- Weights vary from 3.2 g to 14.3 g
- Technique: Mosaic (millefiori)
- LNS 109 G a-p
- LNS 161 Ga, b (two top right)
History And Heritage:  
The Former Imperial Treasury In Vienna

Lecture by: Agnes Stillfried  
Presented in English  
5 February 2007

The House of Habsburg ruled over Austria from the 13th century until the end of the First World War. Celebrated connoisseurs and patrons, they assembled a magnificent art collection which is now the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, one of the six largest museums in the world. The Treasury forms a small but important part of the Kunsthistorisches collection. The lecture will focus on some of the highlights of the Treasury, documenting a thousand years of European history and presenting their historical and art-historical significance.

The Habsburgs were originally minor Swiss counts but the election of Rudolf of Habsburg as German Emperor in 1278, and the investiture, in 1282, of his sons with, among other things, the Duchy of Austria, marked their movement onto the wider European political stage. The House of Habsburg would play a major political role in European history until the end of the First World War in 1918. Rudolf ruled the German Empire - the Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nations, to give it its proper title - which lasted for almost a millennium, from 919 until 1806 and included at one time or another most of central Europe as well as large parts of France, Holland, Belgium and Italy.

Unusually, the emperor was not automatically succeeded by his son as each emperor had to be elected by the foremost princes of the empire, known as the seven Electors. This means it was quite difficult - and also quite expensive - to keep the crown in your family. However, from 1438 onwards, with one small exception, it was always a Habsburg who occupied the throne of the Holy Roman Empire.

Once the emperor was elected, he needed to be crowned, and it was important that the same precious and sacred robes and insignia were used for these coronations. The robes were originally not made for the coronations of the German emperors. On the contrary, they have different dates, places of origins, and patrons. Many were made by Arab craftsmen in the 12th and 13th centuries in Sicily. The robes came to Germany through marriage and inheritance around 1200, and from the 13th century onwards they were always used for coronations.

From 1424 until the late 18th century, both robes and insignia were stored in Nuremberg and transported to wherever the coronation took place. So the emperor wore them but once in his life.

The most spectacular piece is surely the Imperial Coronation mantle (figure 1). It was made by Arab craftsmen in Sicily in 1133/34. It is a full-length cloak, made of samite (incised silk), richly embroidered in gold and embellished with cloisonné enamel plaques, precious stones and hundreds of pearls. It shows a palm tree symbolizing the tree of life flanked by depictions of a lion vanquishing a camel, which in Arab tradition symbolizes a prince triumphing over his enemies. Despite the fact that these images are foreign to Western traditions, the mantle was so magnificent that it was henceforth used for the coronations of the German emperors. The Kufic inscription along the edge refers to the royal workshops in Palermo where it was made in the year 538.

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or 1133/34 in the European calendar. Thus we know that it was made for King Roger II, a Norman King of Sicily. But it was not his coronation robe, as his coronation had taken place in 1130.

In addition to the Coronation Mantle, the German Emperor also wore a blue Dalmatica, or Tunica (probably made together with the coronation mantle) as an undergarment. Over it, he wore a white Alb (made in Palermo in 1181, with later additions), a stola (Italy, 2nd quarter 14th century), richly embroidered gloves (Palermo, 1220), hose (Palermo, 2nd half 12th century) and shoes (1764, incorporating older fabric).

He was crowned with the imperial crown (figure 2), probably made in western Germany in 962 for the coronation of Emperor Otto I. Historically this is probably the most important object in the Treasury today. It is noteworthy not only for the exquisite goldsmith work and jewels, but every detail also has a symbolic meaning, mostly of a religious nature.

This is not surprising as the coronation took place as part of a solemn church service where the emperor was crowned by the Pope or by the foremost Archbishop of the empire. Each detail of the crown is not merely decorative but expresses the divinely legitimised right of the emperor to rule, and his claim to rule as Christ's vicar, Christ's chosen representative on earth. The jewels on the brow plate and especially the enamel plaques clearly spell out this claim.

In one Christ himself is actually depicted with the inscription per me reges regnat - through me reign all kings, a quote from the coronation liturgy.

Note also that the emperor rules in the sign of the jewelled cross on his forehead, the "crux gammata". It is both a symbol of Christ's triumph over death, and thus of his all-conquering power, and of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor of the ancient Roman Empire who lived in the 4th century A.D.

After all, the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nations saw themselves as the rightful heirs and successors of the ancient Roman emperors. The characteristic high arch of the imperial crown is actually derived from the high arch of the helmets worn by ancient Roman emperors, as are the pendilia, the now lost pendant jewelled bands attached to the sides of the crown, and the arrangement of a jewel flanked by pairs of pearls.

The "crux gammata" appears again in the large imperial cross, dated 1030. Measuring 77.5 cm x 70.5 cm, the cross was carried before the emperor in the coronation procession, and is a magnificent example of mediaeval goldsmith work. However, what the Middle Ages valued above all else were the relics it housed and which were invested with divine powers: the "Holy Lance" (actually from the 9th century), and what was believed to be a particle of the True Cross.

For his coronation oath the Emperor placed his finger on the Imperial Gospels. The codex was produced around 800 AD for Charlemagne in Aix-la-Chapelle and is one of the finest manuscripts ever written in the West: 236 pages of parchment dyed in purple with gold and silver lettering, and magnificent depictions of the Four Evangelists in a style strongly inspired by classical antiquity. They are probably the work of a Greek artist.

The ceremonial sword is another example of outstanding Arab textile craftsmanship. Made in 1220 for the coronation of Emperor Frederick II, who was also King of Sicily and continued to patronise Arab craftsmen in the royal workshops in Palermo, its scabbard consists of parchment on wood covered with linen decorated with double rows of pearls, delicate enamel and filigree work all inspired by textile designs.

These and all other objects used for the coronation were stored in Nuremberg. However, Napoleon's advance across Europe in the late 18th century forced Emperor Francis II — a Habsburg — to evacuate them to Vienna. In 1806 the German Empire was officially dissolved, and the objects remained in Vienna ever since.

Francis II was the last German Emperor, but he is also the first Austrian Emperor; Francis I. In 1804 he united the Habsburg hereditary lands — which included not only Austria but also Hungary, Bohemia and parts of what are now Poland, Italy and the former Yugoslavia — as the Austrian Empire. It lasted from 1804 until 1918.

The Austrian imperial crown (figure 3), however, was made not in 1804, but in 1602. As mentioned before, the German imperial crown did not belong to the emperor but to the empire and was only lent to the emperor for his coronation. So if he wanted to wear a crown at any other time in his life, he had to have a private crown. Most were melted down after a ruler's death, but this one has survived because it is perhaps the most magnificent crown ever made.
It was made as the private crown of Emperor Rudolf II who reigned from 1576 until 1612 and was perhaps the greatest connoisseur and patron of art ever to sit on a throne. Emperor Rudolf II was known for amassing a fabulous collection in Prague.

The famous goldsmith, Jan Vermeyen, made the crown for this art-loving Habsburg - executing perhaps the finest enamel ever made in Europe, and using magnificent jewels: diamonds, rubies, spinels, garnets and a large sapphire. Again, each detail is also highly symbolic. For example, the crown consists of three parts: the high arch derived from the Imperial crown - Rudolf was the German Emperor; the circlet like the coronet worn by a king - Rudolf was also King of Hungary and King of Bohemia; and the golden mitre like the pointed cap of a bishop but turned by 90°.

The precious stones are also imbued with symbolic meanings. For example, the eight large diamonds, harder than any other stone, symbolize Christ the invincible ruler; rubies and spinels are a symbol of being filled with the Holy Spirit; and the magnificent sapphire is a symbol of heaven - until the end of all time the emperor will rule as Christ’s regent on earth.

In the 14th and 15th century, the Duchy of Burgundy, which included not only parts of northeastern France but also what is now Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg, was the richest and most sophisticated part of Europe. In 1477 the last Duke of Burgundy died, leaving only his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, the richest heiress in Christendom. She married Maximilian of Habsburg, and magnificent objects like the small brooch made of enamel en ronde bosse (gold figures covered with enamel), a refined technique only developed around 1400, and the fabulous Burgundian court goblet made of almost perfect, translucent rock crystal, cut and faceted, illustrate the wealth of his bride.

The Habsburgs also inherited the Order of the Golden Fleece, the most respected chivalric order in the Christian world. Founded by the Duke of Burgundy in 1430, its 31 members (later increased to 51 and then 60 and 70) have to be of noble birth, truly devoted to their sovereign, Catholic, and male. However, the magnificent ecclesiastical vestments of the Order are no longer used today. They are surely among the finest embroidery ever done.

The complete set has survived; consisting of three mantles, three chasubles and coverings for the altar (figure 4). The pieces were executed between 1425 and 1440, probably in a monastery near Dijon. The best painters of the time - among them the Master of Flemalle, and his pupil, Rogier van der Weyden - were responsible for some of the designs, which were executed by the best embroiderers. Two techniques were used. One is known as needle painting, in which coloured silk threads are used to imitate painting. This was used for hands, faces, fur trimmings. It is so fine that for the iris of one eye, three to four hues were used. The second technique is couched, or or nué.
embroidery which is both time-consuming and costly. Here, countless horizontal gold threads are held down by vertical silk threads. The density of the silk is varied to achieve mottling, shadows, depth, or to let the gold shine through. The incredibly delicate embroidery truly rivals contemporary painting.

Finally, we look at some Habsburg family objects and jewels. Among them are the embroidered 18th century robes and the gold ewer and basin used for baptisms of babies born into the Imperial family. The basin and ewer weigh 10.5 kg and are richly decorated with reliefs and enamel; they are the work of a Spanish master and date from 1571.

In 1809, Napoleon married as his second wife an Austrian Archduchess, Marie Louise, the daughter of Emperor Francis I. A year later she gave birth to a son, also called Napoleon. The city of Paris celebrated the imperial birth by giving the empress a magnificent throne-like cradle made of gilded silver and weighing 280 kg. It is a piece of political propaganda, denoting Napoleon's aspirations for his new-founded dynasty, as well as a magnificent artwork. For example, the cradle rests on cornucopias symbolizing abundance and wealth, while the bed is covered with golden bees. They are Napoleon's emblem but also denote that the people of France will work as busy as bees for their good emperor. Above the baby's head hovers a victory goddess crowning him with wreaths of laurels and stars, the largest of which marked with a big "N" - for Napoleon himself. At the foot of the bed an eaglet gazing at it longingly symbolizes the small prince, hoping one day to become as bright a star as his father.

Most princely treasuries contain large jewels. They have no practical use but are spectacular show-pieces that document a ruler's power and wealth. The Habsburgs are no exception. Among other things, they owned the largest cut emerald in the world. It weighs an unbelievable 2,680 carats, and measures 10.8cm by 8.5cm by 7.2cm. Originally uncut, the emerald comes from the Muzo mines in Columbia and was probably acquired by Rudolf II around 1600.

However, in 1641, Emperor Ferdinand III commissioned his court stone-cutter, Dionysio Miseroni, with the difficult task of cutting the emerald, as cut stones were considered more valuable than uncut ones. The artist initially refused before carving only a shallow relief of acanthus leaves on the outside and following the natural shape of the stone as much as possible. Nonetheless, many carats were lost. He also carved the lid (4.9cm in diameter, 3.6cm high) from the stone, turned it around, set it in gold, and placed it on the vessel. The work occupied him for two years.

Finally the object considered by far the most valuable in the Habsburg's collection in the 16th century: the Agate Bowl (figure 5). It is the largest bowl cut from a single stone in the world, measuring an astounding 58.5cm in diameter. The softly swelling handles look more like they were modelled in pliable wax than carved from a stone which is as hard as steel to cut. The Agate Bowl is the amazing technical and artistic masterpiece of an ancient artist who probably worked at the imperial court in Byzantium in the 4th century AD. Although the stone is as hard as steel to cut, it would splinter if dropped - making it something of a miracle that the bowl has survived intact for almost 1,600 years.

But the reason it was so valuable in the 16th century was that it was considered the Holy Grail, the bowl into which blood from Christ's wounds had dropped at the Crucifixion. It was believed one could read the name of Christ in the stone. The Agate Bowl is first recorded in the Habsburg collection in 1564 when it was named an "Inalienable Heirloom of the House of Habsburg", so precious that it must never be sold or loaned and cannot belong to a single family member but to the House of Habsburg.
Some 5,000 years ago, in the southern part of Mesopotamia in the city of Uruk (today Warka) but also in Elam and in the Indus valley (Mohenjo Daro), people started to use a stylus made out of reed and clay on which they would trace signs and pictures. In other words, they began to imprint signs on clay (figure 1).

It is worth mentioning that people, for thousands of years, had been speaking and building, using their verbal, entrepreneurial and technical skills to organise their world and daily life. Writing, however, is relatively new for man, while working and speaking are as old as mankind.

The superiority of written words over spoken words seems to be evident. We all know this text: the letter kills and the spirit gives life. This reaction is against the reification brought by the written precept, especially in the law. Not understanding all the specifics related to an action can bring great judicial mistakes. Summum ius, summum iniuria, the extreme law is the greatest injustice, noted Cicero in ancient Rome. More important for us is the well known proverb: verba volant, scripta manet, words fly away, the written remains. This seems to confirm an absolute superiority of the writing over the spoken word. We can cite the superiority of a signed document over an oath, and, for the historian, the beginning of writing marks the beginning of history.

Before writing there is only prehistory. Writing is superior to verbal communication, as it overcomes the reliance on memory and provides signs on paper and other support that transcend time and can be recovered totally and accurately after years or even centuries. Through writing we have history, chronologies, and historical periods. Through writing we can conceive things in mathematics which never appeared in speech only. We have dead languages, read but not heard. It even happens that one is only able to read a language, seeing it only with the eyes, without speaking or understanding when it is spoken to us.

The invention of writing is a major shift in the life of humanity; it changed the world completely. Not only can we see it as a major step in the progress of the organisation of life, but also a modification or, better, a complexification of the brain activities by joining two different actions, speaking and doing, which were previously independent. Writing instrumentalises the word or signals the word. With writing, we have brought together two planes of human reason; the ability to speak, to conceptualise the world by means of words, and the ability to change the world by tools, artefacts.

Writing puts to work mechanisms through which language can be artificially produced. We mean, of course, all the systems
of printing, including what was written with styluses or feathers. One must notice that even if the words are the same, what a secretary is writing on his typewriter, the Achaemenid scribe on his clay tablet, the Egyptian scribe on papyrus, and a student or clerk today on his computer, is not exactly the same. Completely different rules are followed in each case, according to the tools and support available. We can also speak about the writer and the reader; one creates silence, the other can bring sound.

Writing is the signalisation of a sign. Signalisation should be studied in line with what is called deictics. [Deictics is basically the use of context to confirm meaning.] The best known of all signalisation systems is, of course, the one for driving. Every driver is supposed to master the signs or system of road signals. But the signal used for money is no less a system of signalisation, with the number on the bill indicating its value. Native Americans used smoke signals to communicate information. Everything can be used to signalise, or to indicate realities: marks on the roads, trees in the landscape. Signalisation is easy to understand as it is practised daily under multiple forms. The specifics of writing are not to signalise a reality of this creation, but a sign. And this point needs now to be explained thoroughly.

There are many ways to explain the realities of this world. The sun rises and sets. We say the sun is rising, the sun is setting, but also because he has wings. For the same reality there are many explanations. The conclusion is obvious; the explanation of a phenomenon is not to be found in the thing itself, in the world, but only in the logic of conceptualising speech.

An explanation is always the projection of logical and/or assumption-based scenarios on the reality of the world. These projections are made possible by our ability to speak. At the end, we have only the knowledge accumulated as a result of the questions we are able to ask. Science continuously questions or doubts ideology-based knowledge.

This means that the purpose of talking is not to utter words laden with meaning, but to create, with the help of words, conceptual meaning. We should not confuse the nature and reality of speech with its capacity to communicate with others. The ability to communicate through speech answers the question of purpose, but not the more fundamental question of what is talking, speaking; what do we do when we speak. Man thinks about the world, makes it understandable by developing concepts. This presentation presupposes the distinction between natural and cultural.

These principals will be applied now to the glossology, the science of the word. Our world is filled with sounds or noises. But there are no longer natural, uninterpreted noises or sounds. Whatever we hear we try to explain, to identify its origin and define what it could be.

The same is true for words. A word (sign) is a sound, but no longer natural, instead interpreted. But on the other end of the spectrum, if there is no natural sound, there is meaning in every human utterance. On one side, we recognise a sound; on the other its meaning. Now we can ask ourselves which of these two elements can be signalised by pictures or other visible elements. We could guess, but it is simpler to refer to the science of language and discover the functioning of these elements. An example will clarify the matter. If I say:

*He is blind, he does not see.* I signify the verb “to see”, but specifically I mean to have the ability to see;

*I cannot see the house, because it is hidden.* I signify the verb “to see”, but specifically I mean to perceive it through the eyes;

*I don’t see what you mean.* I signify the verb “to see”, but specifically I mean I don’t understand; and

*Long time, no see.* I signify the verb “to see”, but specifically I mean I haven’t heard you, met you, listen to you.

We have in this example four uses of the verb to see, each time with a different meaning. The same is true when we look at a lexicon, giving many possible meanings for every word. The right meaning is chosen according to the context. It simply means that the word is polysemic. This example and the use of the lexicon prove that the question of the word (sign) is indifferent to the question of meaning. The same phrase to see is irrelevant to the final signification found according to the context. The question of words and their meanings cannot be reduced to the exclusive meaning found at the end of the speech context.

To summarise this important point, in our analysis we are not dealing with sound or meaning. Instead we are dealing with a reality that has a double face (Janus): a formal semiotic definition and a formal phonological definition which are always connected.

The fact that the word has two faces appears clearly from the fact that a plural, a future, any grammatical element exists only through a phonological marker, for example, horse/horses, and come/corning. But from the phonological point of view, a difference of consonant makes a different word; son/don/ton; house/mouse.

Now we are close to our subject. At the beginning of writing which structures of speech could be signalised? Writing did not try to imitate sound or to make meaning, but was dealing, unknowingly, with the “same” the word, this abstract element which has two sides. Therefore there were only two ways open for writing to develop, to signalise the semiotic side or the phonological side.

In other words writing could only be phonographic or semiographic or as it became later and even today a mixture of both sides. Because it was easier, the signalisation started with the semiotic side.

Approximately 5,300 years ago what we call pictograms (figure 2) began to appear on clay tablets covered with signs,
representing with varying degrees of success the reality of what was seen. They are pictures and could be compared to the drawings made by children. The one who sees them can, of course, say "this is a house, a fish, a man, etc..."

But this is not the writing of a language, but only drawings. We know it's not a language because any drawing could be explained in many different languages.

But what is drawn, where should we see it on our chart, is it a meaning or only a sign (a seme)? Is it meaning or the word only? A child could say the father comes to the house or stands in front of the house, when he has drawn a house and a man in front of it. But this is his interpretation. The pictogram, although a picture of created realities, is not meaning but a seme, a sign, because it needs interpretation in a context. It is like a word which is polysemic in the lexicon, many significations are possible, but only one is acceptable according to context.

In Mesopotamia, the number of pictograms was reduced to a manageable number. Therefore the sign of the foot was used as well for standing, going, moving. In this specific case, and in some way in most of the others, the pictogram is not a meaning, a significiation, but only a seme, which will get its definitive meaning only in context. Remember the example using the verb to see. In all four sentences the scribe would draw an eye but the viewer would define it according to the overall context. This proves that writing is neither copying the sound of a language nor drawing the world, but is properly another language.

In this way a beginning of writing could be achieved. Early scribes created the signalisation for a number of items, at least all those that are not abstract. Over time, the number was reduced and this was sufficient because each sign is polysemic as demonstrated before.

This is obvious by looking at the register of all the sign books utilised by students in Assyriology. The same sign will have various resolutions (readings) according to context. One example suffices. The sign of the foot can be read GIN, DU, GUB, RA2, SA24, according to context. Very often a final sign helps to identify the way it should be pronounced, so GIN will end with NE (GIN-NE), GUB with BE (GUB-BE), DU with U2 (DU-U2), preventing the reader from making the wrong choice and misunderstanding the text.

To close this point, it can be said that the pictograms, which are drawings and not language, could signalise signs and in this way become semiograms by fitting into the structure of language. A drawing is a signal which can in some way activate the sign (seme), cause the viewer to pronounce a word which would have the capacity to say something about the world. Surely this mechanism functioned since man existed. A drawing of a lion could be immediately understood by everyone.

But the system behind this procedure led to writing. We can say that as the pictograms became semiograms writing started. This is when the possibility of signalising a sign was first approached.

4 Table of cuneiform signs showing for each sign the pictographic form (c. 3000 bc), an early cuneiform representation (c. 2400 bc), and the Late Assyrian form (c. 650 bc), now turned through 90 degrees, with the Sumerian phonetic equivalent and meaning.

Not everything could be drawn or signalised. Personal names, abstract words (justice, power, etc...) and especially all the grammatical and verbal forms could not be communicated in pictograms. The development of writing could have frozen at this point and remained a very rudimentary system of signifying the world. The Sumerian effort could have misfired and stopped, given the impossibility of extending the written word to all the spoken parts of the speech.
It should be added that from the beginning the Sumerians needed to make use of both the semiological part of the same but also the phonetic. For example, the signal for oil is 𒂊. So already, at the early stages of writing, the scribes would use the signal/sign 𒂊, meaning oil, for the prefix of the verb. But this first phonological step was not systematically exploited.

Nevertheless this path started to be followed around 2,500 BC probably because of the presence of many Semitic speaking people living among the Sumerians. The Semitic language, very different from Sumerian one, could not easily adapt to the system elaborated by the Sumerians. They needed to make use of the phonological side of the same. This means that the possible meanings of the same were left for the simple sound they represented. The form 𒐂-pa- or -ra-as, the present tense of parasu, could not have been signalled with the semiological writing as there is no meaning in these five syllables. But to signify the syllables, the Semites used material available from the semiological side without making use of its "meaning".

To summarise so far, writing is to signalise a sign. There were not numerous options possible. Given the linguistic nature of the sign, only two possibilities existed: to signalise the semiological side of the sign or its phonological one. Given the proximity between pictogram and semigram, the choice of the pictogram was obvious, to signalise the meaning. But we must remember that a semigram is an abstract element, which becomes real only in a spoken or written context (example: the verb to see). Quickly, phonography had to be used. The use of the phonetic side of the word made possible the signalisation of any sound, with its direct meaning or as an element of a larger word.

To be clear, to write for, I could use the numeral 4 and my signalisation would be achieved. Today, whoever writes "1 + love + New York" says I love New York, combining semigraphy and phonography.

Writing (signalisation) was always a possibility; the difficulty was in the reduction to pure abstract, opposable elements. Once this stage was reached, the writing of a given language became possible and then the writing of all languages. This is true because of the linguistic structure of the sign.

Every language has homophones, words with the same sound but different meanings. These are called homophones allophones. In English there are hair and hare, to, too, two, and 2, for, fore, four, and 4, fair and fare, feet and feat, threw and through. The Sumerian has abundant lists of homophones as showed by the sign lists. All these homophones allophones are written differently.

There is also the opposite: allophones homosemese. In this situation there will be homography; they are frequent in Sumerian. The reduction of the number of pictograms created plenty of homosemese. Lexical lists were created to help the student to recognise and distinguish the allophones homosemese. Similar situations still exist with our irregular verbs like to go, which, when conjugated has the same meaning with totally different phonetics.

In phonography the situation is exactly the opposite of the one found in semigraphy. Homophones allophones will be homographs, meaning written in the same way. This is most specific to Sumerian. All the grammatical elements have also a meaning, but when used as grammatical elements they keep only a grammatical function and will be therefore written like the semigram. From this practice comes a number of problems. In reading text, the reader is not always sure what he has to do with a semigram or a phonogram (a grammatical element or a sign). Should he read igi (eye) or shi (towards)?

For example, the plural of the word gurusz will be written gurusz-me- esz. Me and esz are phonograms. In semigraphy me has a meaning, while in phonography it is only a grammatical element, the part of a plural. The same could be said for all the other grammatical elements.

Allophones homosemese will be written in alligraphy. In Sumerian I can suggest some verbs whose root is different in the singular and the plural, like us2 and ug7, meaning to kill. Other Sumerian verbs, like to say, can be written as s or du1 i in different modes, like maru and hamtu.

In conclusion, writing could happen, the signalisation of the signs was possible, because the linguistic structure of the sign allowed such a relationship between activities of the homo faber (man the maker) and the homo logicos.

Two, and only two, ways were open, according to the nature of the sign (same, a purely abstract entity existing just in opposition to other signs). The easiest way to relate signal and sign was semigraphy, shifting from pictogram to semigraphy.

However, semigraphy alone would never have led to extensive writing if the other side of the same (sign) could not have been used: the phonographic side. Later there is a return to semigraphy for economy of space and work (♥ NY).

But although not on the basis of cuneiform writing, there was further progress, as writing moved from phonography to the alphabet, signalling the basic sounds of a language. At this stage, semigraphy had no place in the signalisation, which became a more abstract system of signalisation of sounds.

Writing is a late phenomenon. It was not necessarily a response to economic pressure, but perhaps to religious pressures as well. It changed something in our brain by creating a conjunction between two different activities of the individual: signalisation and conceptualisation. Since then, the world has been different and writing is an integral part of the human person.

Writing is another language that brought further advances in abstract sciences and mathematics. It lets us see what could only be conceptualised previously.
Petit Polio: History and Trauma

Lecture by: Fedwa Malti-Douglas
Presented in English
15 January 2007

Why should we be concerned today about a French Muslim comic strip artist named Farid Boudjellal? And why should we be interested in his trilogy published between 1999 and 2002 entitled Petit Polio, literally Little Polio, a series of stories about a little boy with polio? The handicap in this trilogy is a metaphor for war and historical trauma, for the memory of those wars and losses that we carry with us.

We all remember the riots in the suburbs of French cities. The violence, the hatred, the alienation expressed by the rioters. What the world saw was the image of French immigrant communities, largely North African and Muslim in origin, living in soulless housing projects, plagued by unemployment, and completely alienated from their host country.

This image leaves out an important French development of the 1980's and 1990's, the invention of a group of people called “Beurs.” Beur is a term of French slang derived from the word Arab. But Beurs are not simply Arabs. They are Frenchmen, generally born in France, not colonials, but of North African background. In terms of religion, the background is Muslim. In terms of ethnicity, it is Arab and Berber. Beur culture was fundamentally about integration, about creating a blend between North African and French cultures. It continued a blending which had begun under French colonialism.

Beur culture dealt openly with the problems of North African immigrants in France and remained fundamentally optimistic.

Farid Boudjellal is one of the leading Beur voices. The three volumes of Petit Polio are set between July 1958 and April 1960, (figure 1, 2, 3) between DeGaulle’s return to power in 1958 and the end of the Algerian War in the summer of 1962.

At the time, the Algerian War was tearing France apart, bringing the country to the brink of civil war. This drama could not but be felt strongly by Algerians living in France, like our

![Figure 1](image1.png)

![Figure 2](image2.png)

![Figure 3](image3.png)

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hero, Petit Polio, an Algerian boy growing up in the Southern French city of Toulon.

Boudjellal added another war and another tragedy to his stories: World War I and the massacre of the Armenians. He does this in the third volume by focusing on the arrival of his grandmother from Algeria. This grandmother is an Armenian, a Christian, and a survivor of the massacres. Boudjellal links these two traumas, the ongoing one of the Algerian War and the Armenians memories of the past one. We see these historical traumas through the eyes of a child where they become linked to the problems of the death of parents. In doing so, Boudjellal brings out the universal human phenomena of trauma, loss, and memory, rather than the political exercise of self-justification.

Combining painterly and cartoon conventions, Boudjellal uses water colours and adopts, for most of his pictures, a modified impressionist manner (figure 4). Boudjellal can then outline in black those figures are important for the story. In Figure 4 he’s done this with the hero, his mother, and sister.

By avoiding photographic realism or the fictitious clarity of conventional cartooning, Boudjellal reminds us that we are seeing memories. This is important because Petit Polio is not only about the artist’s memory of his childhood in the French city of Toulon, but also the memories of traumatic events which other characters carry. And even though some of Boudjellal’s subjects, like war and racism are hard, he presents them with the softness of sentiment rather than the harshness of denunciation. The soft colours of memory bathe the entire story in nostalgia for childhood.

The three volumes of Petit Polio blend together the personal motif of the loss of a parent with the more political traumas created by war and conflict. At the same time, all three volumes also trace, in a frequently humorous way, the interaction between Christianity and Islam, between France and North Africa.

In the first volume, we are introduced to the Slimani family and little Mahmoud who has a paralyzed leg and a talent for cartooning. A new family moves in; they are Christian French and Mahmoud quickly befriends their son, the fair-haired Remy, who announces that his mother is dead. In a parallel development, Mahmoud witnesses an act of anti-Arab racism. An Algerian is pulled off a trolley and severely beaten because he did not have a ticket. This creates a crisis of identity in the young Mahmoud. In the words of Remy’s father, Dr. Cosmetti, he has just discovered that he is an Algerian. But the volume ends on a happy note as Mahmoud kisses his blond-haired French girlfriend. At the same time, Mr. Slimani’s French friend and co-worker, Cesar, is called up for military service in Algeria.

But the war in Algeria rears its head in another way as well. Cesar returns to Toulon on leave, emotionally scarred by the death of his army buddy. Cesar, filled with anti-Arab rage, refuses contact with the Slimani family and picks a fight with his friend, Abdel. The fight between the two men leads to catharsis and reconciliation as Cesar sobs in Abdel’s arms.

The third volume begins when Abdel Slimani receives a telegram announcing the death of his father in Algeria. This death convinces him to bring his mother, who is now alone, to live with him in France. Mahmoud discovers that this grandmother, whom he quickly adores, is a Christian and an Armenian. The reader also discovers that Grandma Marie has her own suppressed story, that of the Armenian massacres.

Dr. Cosmetti arranges a meeting between Grandma Slimani and an Armenian colleague, urologist Dr. Ranoukian, another survivor of the massacres. Dr. Ranoukian, who was very young at the time of the First World War, tries to extract information from the older woman. But she refuses to speak of those tragic events. Dr. Ranoukian performs the circumcision on Mahmoud, required by Islam. And as the month of Ramadan and Christmas come together in 1959, we see members of the Slimani family fasting while Mahmoud gets a Christmas tree at home.

The series ends as the entire Slimani clan goes to the movies. But the feature film is called The Mongols and Grandma Marie must be led out of the theatre. The images of massacre on the screen are too much for her. In an epilogue, Marie visits Mahmoud in the hospital after his circumcision and shows him photographs of her dead family members. In the last register, Mahmoud observes “But then, they’re all dead!” to which Maria replies “No, not all”. The one survivor is herself.

Developmentally, Petit Polio moves from the Algerian War, whose shadows extend over the two volumes to the Armenian massacre which dominates the third. For a person of
North African heritage, Boudjellal’s treatment is far from extraordinary. Little Mahmoud is given a coin when he answers that he is an Algerian, not a Frenchman. In a dream sequence, Mahmoud imagines himself among the heroes of his favourite comic strip, who will help him liberate his country (Algeria is understood).

The French police are all racist brutes (figure 5). The good Frenchmen are those who object to this treatment. Little Remy is so upset by what he has witnessed that he says: “I don’t want to be French.” He has to be comforted by Mrs. Slimani. As the dark-haired lady holds the little blond head in her arms, her words take a familiar French right-wing slogan and turn it on its head. “No, Remy, you mustn’t say that! The French, that’s you, your Daddy, your Mommy ... not the others. Them, they’re not true French!”

Switching from Algeria to Armenia raises a host of issues. While in France the Armenian genocide is a protected historical fact, in that one can be prosecuted for publicly denying it, the situation in Turkey is far different. The Turkish government denies an Armenian genocide. The government admits many Armenians were killed in inter-ethnic fighting during World War I. But this was not the intention of the then Ottoman government, which was simply trying to move the Armenians because it considered them a security threat. The Republic of Turkey, the successor state, supports this argument even though it complicates Turkish foreign policy.

Evoking the Armenian massacres has the potential to reverse the conceptual structure within which the Algerian War is normally understood. That conceptual structure is that of colonialism and its enemies. On one side is European imperialism; on the other, non-European peoples who have been oppressed by European imperialism and must fight for their freedom. The Armenian paradigm reverses this model. After all, the perpetrator was the Ottoman government and the Ottoman sultan was also caliph.

The ending of the three-volume series is even more provocative. The Armenian grandmother, Marie, must be led from the movie theatre because of the scenes of massacring Mongols remind her of the Armenian massacres she herself experienced as an adolescent. Such juxtaposition implicitly compares the Ottomans with the Mongols and this comparison is potentially politically explosive.

For Frenchmen, as for most other Westerners, the Mongols represent the worst of the barbarians, pillaging, burning, and murdering as they went. In this collective memory, few Westerners remember that the Mongols had Christian allies. For Middle Easterners, Mongols are also the worst of barbarians but they are especially seen as enemies of Islam and their destruction of Baghdad in the thirteenth century remains famous. Any comparison of the Ottoman caliph with the Mongol khan would be totally unacceptable to any Muslim audience. That is, if it were made explicit.

But Boudjellal does not fall into this trap. Instead, his treatment of the responsibility for the Armenian massacres is so delicate and restrained that it approaches evasion. The Ottomans are never mentioned nor are the Young Turks who were in control of the government at that time. Boudjellal is also careful not to add fuel to potential anti-Muslim sentiments. On the contrary, Grandma Marie makes a point of explaining to Mahmoud that true Islam does not permit any anti-Christian sentiments.

“A Muslim believes in Jesus, Issa in Arabic and Mary (Miriam) Moses (Musa) and many others ... It is Muhammad the Prophet of Islam himself who requires it ... Muslim, Jew, Christian, religion is like a bridge that leads us to the Creator, before him we are all equal.”

It is also inserted into the narrative that it was Marie’s husband, a good Muslim and a haji, who saved her life back in Turkey and took her with him to Algeria. Clearly the massacres, like the other traumas, are not the fault of any religion or nation. They are part of the tragedy of human history.

Yet Boudjellal also interprets these traumas by the way he links them to personal loss. He makes several types of linkage. The first is a formal visual similarity in the arrangement of frames. Volume III of Petit Poil, for example, contains two very similar two-page spreads. Both consist of tightly rhythmic and uncharacteristic repetitions of small frames. Both are right scenes of intimate conversations.

The first represents Mr. Slimani talking to his wife about his grief over the death of his father and his concerns about his mother. In the second, Grandma comforts little Mahmoud, who is afraid that he will lose touch with his friend Remy who is moving to Marseilles. Mahmoud says: “It will be as if he were dead.” His grandmother explains that Remy is not lost as long as he is still alive.

In doing so, she draws a pointed comparison with her own situation in which all her family members have died, as have those of Dr. Ranoukian. Not only do both of these stories affect some linkage between personal loss and collective trauma (in the first, Mr. Slimani notes that his mother has always felt like a foreigner in Algeria). But their formal visual similarities link them to each together.

A more obvious way to link these two thematic strands is through the intercalating of the stories themselves. On page 53 of volume two, Boudjellal alternates between two stories. In the first, Remy’s mother explains to her son that she is going to die. The second involves the confrontation between Cesar,
filled with rage after the death of his buddy in Algeria, with Mr. Slimani who has just been released after having been beaten up by the French police.

Each story element reaches its climax on this page. Remy’s mother concludes that one must speak openly of death to children. In the bottom frame, we learn from a group of French onlookers that Cesar and Abdel Slimani have come to blows and then had a tear-filled reconciliation.

The piercing blue eyes of Cesar seem to look directly into the bedroom where Remy’s mother is with her son. Similarly, the crowd in the bottom frame can also be understood as witnesses to the pathetic conversation between mother and son. There is also balance in the representations. Mother and son are shown twice as is the menacing close-up of Cesar’s eyes.

The most obvious way of bringing the two issues together, the personal and the historical, is through a confluence of theme. One of the most important themes in Petit Pojo is the problem of being able to express loss. A kind of mutism, an inability to speak, strikes the characters. Dr. and Mrs. Cosmetti are afraid to tell their son, Remy that his mother is dying. But Remy’s struggle with non-telling is more poetic. In school, he is assigned to memorize a poem by Victor Hugo. Though he has always been good in recitation, he cannot seem to recall it every time the teacher asks him to recite. For this, he is punished repeatedly.

After Remy’s mother dies, at the graveside, Remy is asked by his father to throw the first clot of earth on his mother’s casket. Months later, Remy, Mahmoud, and the rest of the Slimani family are playing at the beach. Remy holds in his hand a ball of sand that will be used to make a sand castle. All at once, he remembers his father asking him to throw the first clot of earth on his mother’s tomb. Boudjellal shows this as an insert. In his tears, Remy tells his friends that he can now remember the poem by Victor Hugo. An incredulous Mahmoud challenges him to recite it. As the poem spins in the speech balloons, the pictures carry us gradually away from the beach and to a cemetery, ending with the tomb of Remy’s mother (figure 6). The visual journey matches the text of the poem which tells the story of an individual visiting the tomb of someone dear to him. Now we understand why Remy could not recite the poem.

A different type of non-telling torments Grandma Marie and Dr. Ranoukian. The grandmother refuses to share her memory of the massacres precisely because she cannot forget it. Dr. Ranoukian obsessively wants to hear the story but he has his own mutism. Armenian is his mother tongue and after years of study, he can understand the language of his ancestors, but he cannot bring himself to speak it. His frustrated Armenian teacher finally exclaims that what he needs is not a teacher but a psychiatrist.

Clearly, he is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as is the grandmother who has a crisis in the movie theatre. But

Cesar, too, also suffers from this disorder. He experiences an anxiety attack when he finds himself on a dark Toulon street, surrounded by people speaking Arabic.

Non-telling is echoed by non-showing. In Petit Pojo, real violence is much talked about but never shown. We see the rampaging Mongols near the end of volume three, but this is in a film, not the real life of the characters. The Armenian massacres themselves are never shown in any way. Nor do we see the death of Cesar’s buddy in Algeria. More extraordinary, the comic strip goes to considerable lengths to avoid showing us the actual physical fight and subsequent reconciliation between Abdel Slimani and Cesar. Even more striking, we never see the marks and scars on Abdel Slimani’s face after his beating by the French, though we are told they are severe and their traces must have remained on his face for a long time.

When it comes to the Algerian War, there is no open treatment of the theme of non-telling. Perhaps this is the ultimate inability to speak; perhaps Boudjellal’s work suggests that French society is not yet ready to fully tell the story of the Algerian War. Perhaps, also, as with the poem by Victor Hugo, all of us will only be able to come to terms with trauma through the mediation of art.
Al-Andalus in the Americas and in the Philippines

Lecture by: Jesús R. Gambotti
Presented in Arabic
8 January 2007

In 1462 AD the famous Spanish scholar, Issa bin Jaber, wrote his renowned volume on Islamic Sunna (Prophet’s Tradition) at Segovia, 80 km from Madrid (the capital). This Spanish book was one of the earliest publications issued in our country, 30 years after the invention of the printing press by German engineer Johannes Gutenberg, the German engineer.

Describing his Spanish Muslim contemporaries in the first chapter of his book, the author points out that they deserted Arabic and became unable to speak the language. Instead, they began using Spanish, with the exception of some Arabic religious idioms e.g. Bism-Allah ar-Rahman ar-Rohim, “in the name of God the Beneficent, & Most Merciful”, Allah Akbar, “God is the Greatest”, or As-Salam ‘alaykum – “Peace be upon you”. Consequently, the author had to write his book in Spanish instead of Arabic, declaring the situation “unnatural and agonizing”.

However, the condition of Spanish Muslims is not the focus of our interest in this lecture. Rather, we are more interested in the influence of these circumstances on their migration to America. This promoted the spread of Arab culture in the new world, in spite of the restriction put on the use of Arabic language and its limitation to what can be regarded as official culture.

At the beginning of the 16th century, a Spaniard would know little about his neighbour’s religion since everybody spoke Spanish, had the same customs and traditions. These were virtually indistinguishably, to the extent that Muslims joined in the exploration expeditions on which Christians went to America and the Philippines. However, the migration of Spanish Muslims to America was restricted at certain times by Spanish monarchs. The monarchs were not in favour of the spread of Islam among native Americans, to avoid the rise of the same sectarian problems evident in Spain at the time.

It is worth mentioning that Arab civilization was carried via Spanish vessels, not only by Spanish Muslims but also by Spanish Christians. Many Spanish Christians had assimilated the different Islamic arts such as architecture, the manufacture of ceramic tiles, woodwork, and painting, to the extent that their work couldn't be distinguished from that of Muslims.

The Fields of Assimilation of Arab Culture in the Americas and Philippines

The cultural assimilation that took place from one continent to another covered different fields. Here we highlight the art of Moresque architecture, i.e. the style of Spanish Muslims under the Christian monarchs, the manufacture of Zili, known in the Orient as Koshoni, woodwork used in the decoration of ceilings in palaces and places of worship, furniture, doors, mural painting, and painting of stucco designs for decoration. The influence covered other cultural areas as well, such as literature, including the works of Muwashah, Zajal, and Andalusian works on Sufism.

As for the religion of Islam, it was rarely reflected in the American monuments, with the exception of some inscriptions at churches and palaces. It is also evident on the ceilings of a number of Catholic churches in Mexico and Peru.

Numerous countries assimilated the cultural influence of Al-Andalus; from USA to Argentina; from Cuba and Puerto Rico to the Philippines. Each has at least one historical monument of the Moresque style already mentioned.

To be brief, we will restrict, we will restrict our presentation today to some of these countries: Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. These are the most important and most renowned countries

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in this respect. However, we should also acknowledge the existence of examples in California, Colombia, and even in the Spanish Pacific Islands.

Mexico was the first place that Spanish vessels landed in continental America, after Cuba and Puerto Rico. It was called New Spain by the Spaniards and was conquered by Brigadier Hernán Cortés, who came from a village in the area of Bani al-Aftas near Portugal. He married his Aztec interpreter, an Indian lady called La Malinche. The first Viceroy for the Spanish King was Hernán Cortés himself, who built a grand palace in El Zócalo Central Square in Mexico.

Many scholars and specialists on Atlantic Ocean coasts point to the Royal Church in the Mexican city of Cholula de Rivadavia as an example of the Moresque architectural style in Mexico. Among these experts is the Mexican professor Francisco de la Mata who published an article on this topic in a Mexican journal in 1959. The church was built for the indigenous peoples, taking examples from the model used by Spaniards before 1530, copying the Andalusian mosques in the square ground plan and the open-sanctuary towards a courtyard. Inside the church you will spot a forest of columns, as it is the case in the Cordova Mosque.

The Royal Church consists of one pavilion and eight equal wings, following the same plan used in Andalusian mosques. Columns have also octagonal angles and sides, which symbolized the Andalusian state at that time. The courtyard was surrounded by a Moresque wall with crenellations similar to those you can see in Rabat.

The wall is surrounded by 3 turrets like those used by Almoravid Sufis for prayer and worship. Its numerous domes are beautifully covered by Andalusian Zilj or tiles.

In 1935 the University of Michigan journal published another article on Islamic art in Mexican architecture by the specialist Angel Iglesias. He suggests that the Spaniards were not able to reproduce Aztec Mexican architecture, but they excelled in the reproduction of Andalusian art. He refers to the external corbels around the little church of Tlanalapa, reminiscent of Andalusian mosques. He points out that Moresque wooden ceilings are rare in Mexico, in contrast to the Columbian churches of Bogotá, Toraja, and Pasto, and in the Ecuadorian churches of Quite and in Peruvian churches in Lima, Cuzco, and Ayacucho.

A typical Andalusian inscription band encircles many windows in Puebla and Campeche. However, the most famous Andalusian style churches, apart from Cholula, are the Jesuit church of San Martín de Tepoztлотán, and the church of San Felipe in the village of San Martín Allende. Both include octagonal domes of Andalusian style with sides similar to those in Andalusian mosques. The church of Tepoztлотán dates around 1734, while the church of St. Martin dates in 1735.

Moresque Art in Venezuela

In Venezuela the Spaniards didn't establish a royal province as was the case in Mexico, but rather what was considered a governorate of a lesser degree. It was on the borders of another province namely, New Granada or modern Colombia. In Venezuela, particularly in the capital Caracas, you find more historic monuments, religious and secular, which should be attributed to Andalusian civilisation.

Caracas was given that name with reference to the Caracas tribe, who lived there when the Spaniards arrived. The Spaniards established an Andalusian village there and some of its buildings still exist.

This includes the house of Bolivar, the head of the American rebels fighting against Spain. The house of Bolivar keeps the last Spanish flag which flew in 1827 at the Port of Callao in Peru. With its courtyard, corridors, and Arab woodwork, it belongs to the Andalusian style from the time of the Granada kingdom. The Foreign Office in Caracas is built in the style of Seville during the reign of Bani Al-Abbad under the King Al'Mu'tamid, the poet King. The palace of the Archbishop, built around 1740, is famous for its Al-Muwahhid style of architecture.

The Al-Muwahhidun, were a group of devout Muslims who conquered Islamic Spain in the 12th C. and 13th C. until they were finally defeated by Christians in the Battle of Ilob, or Las Navas de Tolosa, in Andalusian Jaen in 1212. They were experts in the art of architecture, evident in a Seville congregation mosque called La Giralda and the mosque of Marrakesh al-Kutubiyya and the al-Hassan Tower in Rabat. We can see the Muwahhid influence on numerous American buildings, including the palace already mentioned.

Peru, the Pearl of Andalusia Art in America

We have to admit that the Peruvian province has been and is still the Pearl of Moresque art in America. Andalusian Islamic art in Peru is evident in internal wooden ceilings of churches and palaces, in courtyards, wooden doors, decorated tile work, turned wooden screens, and forged iron partitions executed in an unprecedented way.

The year 1985 was celebrated by both Spain and Peru as the 4th centenary of the foundation of the capital Lima, or the City of Kings as it was called in 1535. On that occasion many articles were published on the Moresque art in the country.
It seems that during the 16th C., Lima reflected many Andalusian cities in its architecture and city plan. The Sevillian style of architecture was closely copied and even the names of districts were inspired by Andalusia, e.g., the district of Alameda and the district of Albarana.

The church of Jesuit fathers, with the pure Islamic ceilings, the Monastery of St. Francis with its Sevillian Zilij on the walls, semi-circular dome, oriel of turned wood, is visible in almost every district of the city (figure 1). The cathedral hosts the tomb of the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro, in addition to the Plaza de Armas, the largest in Lima, and a multitude of Andalusian gardens and flowers.

Examples of other churches in the Moresque style are: Santo Domingo, Santa Ana (1553), La Encarnación (1562), La Concepción (1573), San Blas (1569), Santa Clara (1604), Belén (1606), etc.

However, Moresque art in Peru went beyond Lima to the rest of the country, e.g., to Cuzco, the capital of the ancient Inca Empire, and Ayacucho, where the Spanish and American troops fought a battle during the war for Peru's Independence. In Cuzco there is the famous cathedral known as Coricancha, built on the ruins of an ancient Indian temple. The doors, furniture, and ceiling are done in the pure Islamic style: the courtyard remarkably copies the Andalusian style of Cordova.

We can't conclude this chapter without referring to the South American songs inspired by Islamic heritage or to the art of Andalusia pottery all over the American countries, or to the mural decorative painting known as Fresco. In literature, we can trace the influence of the school of Ibn Arabi Al-Mursi Al-Andalusi on the work of Peruvian nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who followed the Sufi principles to achieve spiritual perfection. We must also mention the veiled ladies in Lima who observed Islamic dress for a long time, called las topados de Lima.

**Brazil and the Portuguese Andalus**

In Brazil Arab cultural elements would not differ much from those that were available in the previous Spanish provinces, although Islamic reign in Portugal came to an end around 1250, 250 years before the collapse of Granada Kingdom in Spain. Islamic influence in Brazil naturally concentrates in the Musahhidun period i.e., during the 13th C., when the Mosque of Mértola was built in the South of Portugal.

Among the Islamic elements are decorated wooden ceilings, tile work, Sevillian arches, pottery, oriel, oratories and semicircular windows of stained-glass. There are even some examples of new Moresque art which moved from the Iberian Peninsula to America during the 19th century.

Zilij or tile work, it can be seen widely throughout the city of San Luis. Diamantina, in the province of Minas Gerais, is one of the Brazilian cities famous for its Arab characteristics, such as the decorated ceiling of Sao Joao del Rey church with pine-cone stalactites.

As was the case in Portugal, we find in Brazil that many Islamic oratories had been converted into small Catholic churches. This is the opposite of what took place in Spain. An oratory or Zawyo is a small mosque which houses the mausoleum of a local saint. It has neither a minaret nor a tower. However when it is converted for use by Christian denominations, the tomb is usually replaced by a statue of a saint. Some buildings follow that model in the city of Matacinhos, including the small Chapel of the Prison of Christ.

In Brazil, Portuguese used Musahhidun arches (figure 2), which they admired, in many churches especially on the façade, as in the Church of Rosario in Ouro Preto in Minas Gerais. As for semi-circular windows of stained glass, they can be seen in Ouro Preto and San Luis, in the style of Bahrain. Oriel of turned wood can be seen in Diamantina and Olinda, where a famous house featuring the oriel can be visited. In Olinda there are also a good number of New Moresque style buildings from the 19th century.

**Argentina and the unknown Andalus**

In Argentina we discover unknown forms of Andalusia culture, which reveal Islamic characteristics similar to those in Brazil. This seems natural, since Islamic rule lasted 250 years longer in Spain than it did in our neighbour Portugal.

Among these unknown features are Arabic inscriptions, probably of Islamic content, which are plentiful there. In the city of Salta in the north there is the Convent of San Bernardo, which includes a huge wooden door that was made by a Morisco living there. It carries an inscription with the name of Allah repeatedly inscribed around it. The name of Prophet (pbuh) might be also inscribed in the same door if we make a more through study.

We also found in Argentina a good number of Andalusian oriel and Arab courtyards which were previously unknown. These appear to be based on the styles of Toledo and Castile-La Mancha rather than the art of Seville or Cordova. This is especially evident in the northern cities of Salta and Tucumán. (figure 3) As we go southwards, the Andalusian impact diminishes, as the region is cold and less populated.

The Jujuy Province in Argentina, called the silver-river governorate (dominion), was the last Spanish province in America. However, it seems that the Spaniards reached what is now Buenos Aires in time to build one last church in the late Andalusian style in the city's old quarter. This was the church of El Pilar, with its colourful
Cuba, Spain’s favourite

Cuba was among the last provinces lost by Spain in America. The loss came as a result of the war waged by the USA against our country in 1898. Cuba was just a principality (governorate) rather than royal province. Andalusian art in Cuba was transformed and modified to suit the Caribbean mentality and style.

The oldest Cuban building that can be considered as having an Andalusian heritage is the house of the De Soto family, who sailed to Florida and claimed it for the Spanish Kingdom. The house lies in the old quarter of Havana.

In addition to the De Soto house, there are many other houses and palaces in Havana that highlight the importance of Andalusian elements there. Internal wooden ceilings are quite rich, introducing bright colours to the mysterious Andalusian palette. The new colours include red, pink, yellow and green, as the Cubans tended to reflect a joyous open Caribbean spirit on their ceiling.

In addition to ceilings, we can also see Arab arches in the Muwahhid style, courtyards (figure 4), semi-circular windows and doors with the same stained glass designs noticed in Brazil. They reproduce the Gulf region windows and doors in Bahrain and other countries.

In Cuba there are more buildings and houses in the style of New Moresque school like the Basque Club, the Asturian Club and other Spanish social and cultural centres. It is noteworthy to refer to the house of the Spanish emigrant Acisclo Valle in the city of Cienfuegos.

Puerto Rico, its domes and churches

The small island of Puerto Rico, which used to belong to Spain and has been part of the USA since the American-Spanish War in 1898 doesn’t have as many wooden ceilings in the Islamic style as Cuba. However, it has some Arabic arches in churches and some Andalusian domes, as in San Pedro in San Juan. However, the style of architecture known as New Moresque spread all over Puerto Rico, as is evident in the large number of buildings following that style.

The Church of Christ, Ermita del Cristo, in the historic quarter of San Juan, is just a small oratory. It has some designs and inscriptions in the style of Muwahhidun school. There are also numerous Andalusian courtyards of Toledo style in the capital San Juan and in other parts of the country.

Philippines between Al-Andalus and Asia

A substantial difference exists between the Andalusian presence in America and that in the Philippines. This is clear to the observer, since in the Philippines one has to add to the Andalusian culture all that is Asian, especially Hindu and Buddhist cultures. It is true that in America, there were non-Spanish cultures which survived with Andalusian cultures, like Azttec, Mexican, Inca, Peruvian, but they did not have much impact on Andalusian art.

In the Philippines, it is a totally different issue. We can see there are churches similar to Pagodas, and Buddhist and Hindu temples. However, some Andalusian features are still evident, as in the church of St. Agustin in the northern island of Ilocos. It has a tower which is a replica of Qayrawan Mosque, while the façade is inspired by Buddhist temples. The St. Agustin church also has a dome inspired by the domes of Almudaina Palace on Majorca designed by architect Fernando de Herrera, a cousin of the architect who built the Monastery of El Escorial near Madrid.

The same applies to the church of Our Lady of Asunción at St. Maria on Ilocos Island. It has a bell tower shaped like a pagoda and external round buttresses similar to those of the Moresque church La Magdalena in the city of Alcalá de Henares near Madrid.

In Manila, the capital, very little survives from the Spanish period, as General MacArthur ordered the old city to be demolished with the exception of the church of St. Agustin. In the city of Vigan, there are old Andalusian streets, pottery workshops, iron partitions forged in the Ummayyad style, oriels mixing Chinese and Andalusian styles. There are few simple wooden ceilings that resemble those in Kuwait for example.

In the church of Santo Tomás de Villanueva, Magán, Ilo-Ilo, there are some Moresque windows. In the church of San Agustin in Intramuros in Manila (figure 5), there are some chairs decorated in a style similar to Arab style, with the motif recurring on its main door.
The Arab region, with its distinct geographical dimensions, served as an ideal site for various influences, including architectural ones. It has been an arena for the conflict of civilizations to define the coming future of humanity.

The individuality of the Arabs, which demonstrated its dynamics throughout history, did not need to seek new architectural modes or forms. They were in constant self-renovation, inspired by their legacy and the rich and diverse environment (figure 1). In spite of the many dynasties that ruled the Arab region, with each having its special architectural mode, the essence and the content remained unchanged.

Arab cities achieved perfection in visual topography of their roads and districts. This is evident in the main avenues (qasaba) of Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Sana'a, Tunis and Fez (figure 2). Such cities turned heads in admiration throughout the past centuries.

Early Islamic architecture assimilated the indigenous cultural elements in the region. However, this newborn art soon became self-supporting, with each province retaining its own distinctive individual style according to inherited details and changing environment, but within the framework of a unified Islamic architectural style.

Elements and content of Islamic architecture are based on Islamic jurisprudence. The Prophet’s (pbuh) tradition and the statements of Imams prescribed the relation of the mosque with the neighbourhood; the road and the nearby mosques, setting therefore, one of the basic rules of design.

Whereas the mosque symbolises the nation's unity as one group, home, on the other hand, symbolises individuality. It is where one departs from the group and restores their independent identity.

In the Islamic system, which is based on equality and justice, and in which conformity takes precedence over individuality, Muslim architects did not emphasise the façades of houses, as they were considered mere screens or partitions to protect the residents of the house. Blocks were separated by alleys, avenues and roads. Mosques, on the other hand, were the centre of the daily activities. This was the architectural perspective of the Arab city.

The rectangular architectural plan, rather than the circular, the octagonal or even the square one, was adopted in mosque designing, in order to accommodate more men praying in the first row of the congregation, as recommended by Prophet Mohammed (pbuh).

Inner courtyards first appeared in ancient civilizations, for purposes of climate, or serving inherited traditions and customs. Later, inner courtyards became a landmark of Arab architecture in both civil and spiritual buildings. The courtyard (figure 3) represents the symbol of existence, the core of the building, and the central power around which all other elements cluster.

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As mentioned, the courtyard in the Arab world is a common feature in all buildings related to religion, as it represents the symbol of life. Therefore, Arab architects, who were inspired by the description of paradise in the Qur'an, laid emphasis on this part of the building, turning it into an extensive garden, rich in greenery and running waters, like a paradise on earth.

Arab architecture is characterised by its equilibrium. This is acquired by assembling several elements around a pivot, reflecting the image of how God created the earth and its various creatures in due balance and harmony: "And the earth we have spread out; set thereon mountains firm and immovable, And produced therein all kinds of things in due balance." (Hijr Sura, verse #19).

The dynamics of Arab architectural expression were inspired by many verses in the Qur'an, describing the movement of rain, the progression of day and night, and the never-ending cycle of bringing the living out of the dead and visa versa.

Islam has always asserted the importance of water, not only as the primary substance that sustains life for humans, animals and plants, but also representing spiritual purity, which is symbolized by ablution and bathing. Water also played a significant role in the creation process as well as in the resurrection of dead. This was mentioned metaphorically in various Qur'anic verses: "And He it is Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky, That with it We may give Life to a dead land and slake the thirst of things We have created cattle and men in great numbers." (Furqan surra, verse #48-49).

For Muslim architects and artists, architectural forms were not mere geometrical patterns; rather, they were ideal formations that produce infinite shapes to represent the form and the identity in an integrated structure that reflects the aesthetic values of the Arab architecture. Indeed, Arab artists and architects had the ability to give their designs a distinctive identity that reflects their wide knowledge and high artistic skills.

Architectural analysis of many buildings in the Arab world showed that Arab architects relied on geometrical concepts, based on the circle and the square. They also used simple geometrical proportions such as 1:1, 3:2, 4:3, etc., or figural proportions resulting from regular sequences such as 2:1, 3:2, 3:5, 5:8, and 8:13. Arab architects also used the golden rectangle ratio and the five-rooted rectangle, in addition to rectangles of proportional relationship, using diagrams. This is because the relationship between the sides of the rectangle and the diagram results in well-proportioned spaces.

Essential values of Arab architecture are derived from the religious perspective, which sets rules of domestic life and family relations with a neighbourhood. The architectural analysis also draws the attention to the significance of weather and environment, which are taken into consideration in the architectural design.

Terms such as variation, harmony, consistency and equilibrium are familiar to the Arab architects who are inspired by the holy Qur'an. Excavations in buildings in Roqqa, Syria, which go back to the third year of Hejra, yielded extremely unusual flooring that gives the effect of a water surface. This theme is mentioned in the Qur'an: She was asked to enter the lofty palace: but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: this is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass... (Sura "Namil", verse #44).

The architectural legacy of Egypt is characteristic in its abundance, richness and variety, a fact that gave it the prestigious position it enjoys as a centre of a great civilisation in the Arab world. Westernisation started in Egypt during Napoleon's Campaign on Egypt in 1798. In the beginning of the 19th century, the Westernisation movement in Egypt prevailed during the epoch of Mohammed Ali who employed Italian and Turkish architects and masons, opening an era of European influence on the local architecture in Egypt.

Ali Mubarek refers to this transformation in the Egyptian school of architecture, saying that "people started to follow the European (often referred to as Rumi) style in constructing their buildings, forsaking the old style. Buildings in the then new style were either square or rectangular. Turned-wood windows and marble mosaics were abandoned for their high costs."

In order to modernise Arab society, Western civilisation was adopted on a large scale. Decoration of surfaces was introduced, using a mélange of Arab and European motifs. This new devise dates back to the Art Nouveau movement and the statements of some western architects such as Scott (1811-1878), who said that "The prime target of architecture is to decorate the architectural block."

Commendation from Arab historians for the cultural westernisation further promoted this movement in the Arab world. Philip Hatte puts it as follows: "This impact of Western Europe on the Arab world in the 19th century brought about an upheaval in the Levant, putting an end to the medieval hibernation in Syria and Lebanon, and laying the foundations for a new era. That era was entirely a period of transformation and development, the evolution of political democracy and embracing secular and innovative trends."

The above statement shows that some Arab intellectuals regard western systems and civilisation as a means of progress
and democracy. They fail to remember that democracy, equality and justice are some of the cardinal features of Islam, and that the first verse the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) received from God, the Al-Allaq sura, calls for knowledge and education.

The attack on the Arabic culture was carried on as some people in the West tried to forge a certain interpretation of the Islamic architectural thought. Burchhardt, for example, points out that the inscription of the Qur’anic verse, *Every time that he entered her (mihrab) chamber to see her...* (Sura Al-Imran, verse #37) on the mihrabs of some Ottoman mosques, suggests that these mihrabs are similar to the one in which Virgin Mary used to pray and invoking God.

However, westernisation produced an adverse outcome. It alienated the Arabs from their uniqueness, allowing them to drift away from their pedigree and ruined the values and concepts derived from both the Bible and the Qur’an.

Towards the end of the last century, some European architects attempted to incorporate traditional architectural elements from Arab heritage in their works (figure 4). This tendency led to the emergence of a special mode on the façades of buildings which depicts vernacular features represented in stucco decorations, combined with elements of the neo-classical period.

Perhaps the most remarkable architect among the Arabs was Hassan Fathi, who exhaustively researched contemporary Egyptian architecture in search of its Islamic heritage. This artist’s influence stretched beyond the Arab world by reviving environmental architectural style, combined with the traditional vernacular elements, such vaults and domes.

Abdul-Wahed Al-Wakeel, another Arab architect, was inspired by the traditional architectural elements. He tried to confirm a deep “connectedness” to our roots, and the unity of the Arab world by reproducing these elements in a new style that harmonizes with the contemporary age.

Many buildings, which were constructed in Iraq in the first half of the last century, reflect the widespread classical features of the European architecture at the time. These can be seen in the old Baghdad Airport and Al-Zahra’ Palace.

Since middle of the twentieth century, there have been serious attempts by several Iraqi architects including Mohammed Mekkyya, Refaat Al-Chaderchi (figure 5), and Hisham Munir, to revive architectural heritage in modern buildings in Iraq, with the use of new materials.

Jordan is one of the Arab countries where modern architecture still enjoys indigenous characteristics, represented in the use of local limestone in buildings. Other serious attempts to consolidate Islamic architectural elements in modern ones, are evident in the works of Rassim Badran and Ja’afer Touqan.

In North African Arab countries such as Morocco and Tunisia, certain controls were imposed in order to safeguard the architectural identity of these countries. In addition, elements from our architectural heritage were employed to create a new architectural approach which links past to the present in such a way reflecting their genuineness and their adherence to their ethnic roots.

Where do we stand now? Modern city architecture, in which form takes precedence over content, has lost its links with our rich heritage. This has produced ugly architecture, which is void of meaning and character such as we witness today.

Architecture has lost its human dimension. Human body proportions require special designs that harmonize with it. However, today’s architecture does not serve man’s welfare, or his safety and security. In the past, architecture used to be a product of interaction of the environment, and closely related to its natural resources such as wood, brick, and stones. At present, architecture reflects Arab dilemmas and apprehension. It reflects Arabs who lost contact with their environment and their national identity.

Arab architecture is now facing a great challenge that calls for a vision and a plan, in order to safeguard its originality and the continuity of its architectural distinction. This should be done in such a way that combines the old and the present styles, yielding a new approach that agrees with the current architectural requirements.
Why Ibn Al-Nafis and Why “Al-Shamel”?  

Lecture by: Yousef Taha Zeidan  
Presented in Arabic  
5 December 2006  

Two months after the publication of my book Ala’-u-din (Ibn Al-Nafis) Al-Qurashi (Ibn Al-Nafis): a Rediscovery (figure 1), the first volume of the encyclopaedia entitled “Al-Shamel fi’s Sinaa a Tibiya: The Comprehensive in Medical Profession” was published. This was considered a beginning and an end. It was the result of long years spent studying Al-Ala’ (the elevated), seeking to find the real scholar, exploring his creative and scientific achievements that go well beyond his designation as “the discoverer of blood circulation”. The first book, “Ala’-u-din”, was, in effect, the launching point for the editing of the “Al-Shamel” encyclopaedia. When the encyclopaedia is complete, it will be the largest work on science heritage that has ever been published in Arabic.

“Al-Shamel” is the largest scientific encyclopaedia written by a single person and is a marked contrast to other, shorter, collections of encyclopaedic works. Since its beginning, scientific writing took the form of short treatises and concise tips. This is demonstrated in primary works like many ancient Egyptian papyri, which are known by the names of the discoverers or the sites where they are preserved, including the Hirst Papyrus, Kahun Papyrus and the Berlin Papyrus. These include miscellaneous medical information, prescriptions, and selected texts on anatomy.

In ancient times concise scientific texts were written in Persia, India and China. Only when they were translated into Arabic did we know about them. Translations from Indian into Arabic were accomplished by Mankah—I-Hindi and Isunghul al-Hindi; translating from Persian into Arabic, we have Ibn-al Muqafa’, Al-Nubikht and Al-Balathiri. From Nabatean into Arabic, there was Ibn Wahshiya al-Nabati.

When Greece inherited ancient Egyptian and Eastern civilisations, Greek scientists and physicians wrote texts in the form of treatises, later collected as books. Euclid’s works on geometry, originally written as articles by Apollonian, then later edited and supplemented by Euclid, is just one example. Euclid’s collected works were assembled in ancient Alexandria, translated in Baghdad and became one book.

Another example is Ptolemy’s Almagest, originally written in thirteen articles, collected and translated into Arabic by Yehia bin Khaled Al-Barmaki. The same applied to the works of Aristotle before Euclid and Ptolemy. This first master initially recorded his ideas in the form of treaties and short booklets which were later gathered and produced in a book to which Porphyry from Tyre wrote an introduction.

In medical history Hippocrates and Galenius were two famous Greek physicians whose writings addressed various branches of medicine in compact form. The collection written by Hippocrates
totalled twelve books. As for the sixteen works by Galenius, they came to be known as “Alexandrians’ Selections from Galenius”, since scholars in Alexandria picked some of the treatises he wrote to publish. Both Galenius and Hippocrates were introduced through their works to our civilisation and the title “Reverenced” always preceded their names.

Our history includes the earliest elaborate scientific works, the earliest scientific encyclopaedias in human history. This may be because it is a civilisation that excelled in preservation and recording, or because knowledge expanded to a great extent during the Islamic era. Another interpretation could be that Muslims, deeply influenced by their holy book and the tradition of the Prophet (pbuh), were encouraged to preserve knowledge in writing.

In the beginning, Muslim Arabs wrote medical treatises and what they called Kaneneesh (pl. of Kennash: a book including some general knowledge, treatments, prescriptions and some diagnoses). Later they became engaged in writing longer texts, producing complete encyclopaedias such as “Al-Hawi”, “Al-Qanoun”, and “Al-Shamel”. We will introduce each in some detail in order to appreciate the value of “Al-Shamel” and its status in Arab Islamic medicine and medicine in general.

“Al-Hawi” was written by Abu-Bakr Mohammed bin Zakaria Al-Razi, a physician skilled in the treatment of all the diseases of human body. The title “Al-Hawi” (in Arabic) refers to the fact that it contains the learning of predecessors in the field. This was not the only work written by the author Abu Bakr Al-Razi (d.313AH). Other works included “Al-Mansuri, Manafic al-Aghdia” (Benefits of nourishing substances), and “The book of smallpox and measles”. However “Al-Hawi” remained Al-Razi’s masterpiece in the field of medical works. It was edited and published in 24 vols. by a team of modern Indian scholars led by D. Abdel Mu’id Khan.

“Al-Qanum fi’l Tib” was written by Al-Shaykh Al-Ra’is Abu Ali Ibn Sina, (d. 428). It is the first complete medical encyclopaedia in the scientific sense. In his introduction he says “some friends and those in need of my medical care have asked me to write a book on medicine, combining all its comprehensive and partial rules. This will combine brevity with elaborate explanation. First, I deal with general matter in both the theoretical and the
practical parts of medicine. Later, I deal with the affect of drugs. The book is divided into 5 chapters, the first is concerned with general issues in medicine, the second concentrates on drugs, the third chapter focuses on the diseases each organ of human body catches, from head to foot, whether apparent or hidden. The fourth deals with diseases unrelated to a certain organ and it also focuses on beauty. Chapter five is dedicated to the making of drugs*.

"Al-Qanoun" was first printed in Europe (Roe 1575), then it was later published unedited in Egypt. This unedited version was repeatedly copied and forged. At present, no one has edited this work and publish it in a suitable form.

"Al Shamel in the Medical Profession" is the third great encyclopaedia in the history of Arab Islamic and human medicine. In this work Al-Ala` Al-Qurashi (Ibn Al-Nafis) challenged the limitations of human time and capacity. Al-Ala` represents an extension of the medical traditions already established by scholars like Al-Razi and Ibn Sina.

However, taking the initiative to write a huge work like "Al Shamel", intended to be 300 volumes of which he could only finished 80, is important not only in the context of his being a successor for those great physicians, but also because he lived at a time when Arab history was being re-written. This coincided with the fall of Baghdad in 656 AH/1258 AD and the destruction of all records of this region's heritage by Hulagu. Thousands of manuscripts were lost, libraries were destroyed in the East and West. Mongols and crusaders were keen on abolishing Arab Islamic lore through destruction and annihilation of manuscripts. The incident of Hulagu's throwing Baghdad manuscripts in the Dejla River are famous for destroying what was recorded over the centuries.

After the fall of Baghdad, the scholars of Egypt, including Al-Ala`, began to record elaborate lengthy works, huge books, and encyclopaedias in the different fields of science. This was a tremendous change, as previously Egyptian writings were published in small booklets, treatises or scientific debates. The shift was led by scholars like Alaa u-din Al-Qurashi (Ibn Al-Nafis) who wrote nearly ten commentaries on the Ibn Sina's encyclopaedia "Al-Qanoun fi'l Tib" (figure 2) with the aim of reviving this work in the minds of people in the field. As Ibn Fadilah Al-Emiri said: "Al-Ala` was the one who encouraged people to read Ibn Sina's 'Qanoun'."

After rewriting "Al-Qanoun", Al-Ala` (Ibn Al-Nafis) began writing his encyclopaedia entitled "Al-Shamel fi'l Sinaa l-Tibya". He wrote drafts for 300 volumes and edited 80 of them before he died at the age of eighty in the year 687 AH/1288 AD. He donated the 80 volumes, his library, his house and his wealth to the Mansuri bimaristan (hospital) in Cairo, now known as Qualaun Hospital.

Parallel to Al-Nafis' encyclopaedic writing is the work of Ibn Fadilah Al-Emiri (d.749 AH/1348 AD), who wrote "Masalek al-Abasr fi Mamalek al-Amsar", a lengthy historical encyclopaedia. Similarly Shehab ed-din Al-Nuwairi (d. 732 AH/1331 AD) wrote his huge literary encyclopaedia "Nihayat al-lrab fi Finun al-Adab". Subsequently writers like Ibn Hajaj Al-Asqalani, Al-Suyti, Murtada Al-Zubidi, Ahmed Demehouri, and others carried on with similar works.

I started collecting "Al Shamel" manuscripts from libraries around the world in the late 1980s. I was expecting that most handwritten versions of the book would be preserved in Egypt; especially since Ibn Fadi Al-Emiri mentioned that he saw all 80 volumes in the Mansuri hospital in Cairo. Alas, this was just a wish.
In Egypt there were only two original parts of the book preserved at Dar-al-Kutub, the Egyptian National Library. Its index records only five manuscripts of “Al-Shamel”. Later I discovered that three of them are just photocopies of “Kitab al-lam”, included in the MS. No.81/Tb preserved in the library. In all Egyptian libraries I found only a fragment of the book in a manuscript of 194 folios at Dar-al-Kutub of Egypt.

The Bodleian Library in Oxford holds two collections of the book. The first is a manuscript consisting of 1659 folios; the other has less folios.

In the Lynne Medical Library at the Stanford University in California, there are three volumes of the book dated 641 AH/1243 AD. In reply to my letter they sent me micro-filmed copies of the manuscripts, in addition to a copy of an article published in the States in the 1930s entitled “Treasures of medical manuscripts here”.

In the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad library there is a collection of “Al-Shamel” manuscripts, consisting of 1034 folios. The Arab Manuscripts Institute in Cario had a copy of Baghdad’s version, so I managed to get a copy. I added these to parts of the book that were preserved in Cambridge, with notes confirming that this is the author’s handwriting, and all material was ready.

The moment I assembled together that quantity of manuscripts, I felt the grandeur of Ibn Al-Nafs. I also came to understand the meaning of the short piece of wisdom with which Hippocrates begins his book: Human life is short and knowledge is extended.

I started my project by drawing a tree representing the different chapters of the book, based on the available manuscripts and the references made by the author within his work. I came to the conclusion that the author intended his books as follows:

Part I, including the rules of theoretical medical information, consists of 4 chapters. Chapter 1 addresses natural issues; chapter 2, the science of diseases (pathology); chapter 3, the causes of diseases; and chapter 4, the symptoms of diseases.

Part II is divided into 3 chapters with further subdivisions. The first chapter deals with general rules, the second with surgical instruments, and the third investigates the different types of working by hand. Most of the material in Part II is lost, though we know what it would have included as the author makes references to what he wrote.

Part III consists of 2 chapters: the first is completely lost, the 2nd is totally intact. Chapter 2 is divided into 28 books dealing with drugs and this is the first section to be edited and published.

The objective of republishing “Al-Shamel” is to produce the most accurate possible text in the best form, adding footnotes, commentaries, prefaces, and glossaries, following the rules and methodology of text editing. Eventually, the first 30 volumes of “AL-Shamel Fi’l Sina Al-Tibiya” (figure 3) will be published.

First, the 28 books dedicated to nutrition and drugs can be considered the greatest pharmaceutical work in Islamic history. It exceeds all previous writings on nutrition and drugs, including famous works like Dioscorides “De Matria Medica” and “Al-Jami” by Ibn Al-Bitar, the most important references in pharmacology prior to the Al-Ala’.

Second, in his detailed investigation on drugs and nutrition, he started from the theory of temperaments, treatment by the opposite, the healing energy in human body, and energy controlling blood circulation inside veins and arteries. Al-Ala’ stressed that a physician’s interest in plants should be focused on the impact on the human body and not on their characteristics as plants. We should understand that although Al-Ala’ presented the largest pharmaceutical encyclopaedia with his 28 volumes, he didn’t intend to write about pharmacology in particular. Instead, he aimed at covering all fields related to the medical profession in order to make his book comprehensive.

Third, the language of the author remained vivid, in spite of the huge number of pages. The author was keen on clarity and detail, using easy terms, flowing phrases, and avoiding tricky statements. However, his style and the absence of dots on his letters caused the copiers to misinterpret his handwriting. They made spelling and other mistakes we have tried to correct.

Fourth, “Al-Shamel” served as a good reference for many physicians after Al-Ala’, including Al-Malek Al-Muzafar in his book “Al-Mutamid”, Al-Qusini in his “The dictionary of Physicians”, Dawood in his “Ticket”, and Al-Abdali in his treatise “On Ice, Freezing and Cold”. However, “Al-Shamel” didn’t receive enough recognition in later periods, from physicians or pharmacists using his work. This explains the seven centuries that “Al-Shamel” was virtually ignored. Also, the sheer size of “Al-Shamel” was probably behind the lack of interest in writing commentaries or copying that work.

Fifth, it is true that some treatments prescribed by Al-Ala’ in his encyclopaedia are still in use in areas of Egypt. For example, the treatment of the skin disease vitiligo was originally mentioned in the first article of the first chapter.

Noteworthy is the fact that Ibn Al-Nafs’ vitality and enthusiasm for writing never ceased. The more he wrote, the more he acquired scientific enlightenment, and carried on with his composition, which caused copyists to tire. However, he himself recorded hundreds of thousands of pages, not only giving details on food and drugs, but also citing additional stories and references. For example, talking of elder balm, he mentions the history of the plant, when was grown for the first time, why it was sacred to the Copts, and the procedure taken to ensure its cultivation and marketing.

As for camomile, he concluded his article on that plant by referring to the fact that ancient Egyptians used to sow its seeds and gather its harvest at daybreak, as a rite of the cult of their God. This might explain why people used to seek blessing in the cultivation of that plant at the time of Ibn Al-Nafs and their keenness on picking daisies at dawn!
In *Al Shamel*, we notice the author's scientific accuracy and his keenness to be comprehensive, citing the statements of both his predecessor and his contemporaries, confirming what's right and commenting on what he finds far from right. For example, in the article he wrote on lupine, he refers to some physicians' suggestions that this plant, if applied to the body externally, helps to get rid of humidity. Al-Ala' comments saying: "It is claimed that it was submitted to experimentation, however, I hardly believe that".

*Al-Shamel* is not free from scientific mistakes. The author imagined that food would pass from stomach to liver reaching intestines. This lead to some mistakes concerning the impact of some plants on human body. However, the number of errors is quite limited in comparison to the amount of original and creative scientific ideas he introduced.

As the reader might notice the style of Ibn Al-Nafis didn't change throughout the different parts of *Al-Shamel*. Al-Ala' always sought to give a full explanation of his subject, to the extent that goes beyond the limits of medicine. He often included research in other related fields. For example, writing on ice, he mentions some points related to the science of physics in order to prove his theory saying that ice is an element of heating. To support his argument, Al-Ala' mentions numerous examples indicating how ice can heat the body. Such elaborate research on the nature of ice belongs more to physics than to medicine and pharmacology.

While Ibn Al-Nafis (figure 4) answered many, many questions, there are modern questions that remain unanswered.

Where did the rest of the *Al-Shamel* volumes go? They were deposited at Al-Mansuri Hospital, now called Qualaun Hospital for Ophthalmology. Another question is how and why did volumes go to the United States, while there is no single manuscript of "Al-Shamel" written in the author's handwriting in Egypt?

In conclusion, Ibn Al-Nafis' "Al-Shamel" encyclopaedia is worthy of the interest of science historians and other historians of civilization. It will help today's experts explore a world of knowledge that stayed in the dark for many centuries.
Byzantium and the Arab-Islamic states were the two superpowers of Late Ancient and Early Medieval worlds. During this time, in spite of their antagonism, we notice an undercurrent of cultural exchanges. Actually, as is well known, the Arabs at the time of the Umayyads (661-750) were heavily influenced by the Byzantine civilisation. The most conspicuous examples are the constructions of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem built by the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (ca.690) (figure 1) and the Aqsa Mosque, also in Jerusalem, built by Walid (ca. 705-712).

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Both were heavily influenced by Byzantine art rooted in Hellenistic tradition. According to Tabari, the Byzantines offered a large amount of gold dinars to Walid for the construction of the Aqsa Mosque, sent one hundred Byzantine skilled workers to help with its construction, and forty loads of mosaic tesserae. Nevertheless, more important was the contribution of skilled local workers trained by the Byzantines. The use of a central cupola with an octagonal expansion clearly manifests a continuation of the Byzantine art, but the seeds of additional Islamic elements are already apparent. Of course, later Islamic art developed independently.

It should be noted that the Hellenic influence in the Near East appears as early as the pre-Islamic period. It is at this time that some of the Arab divinities, which had been depicted in a crude form, acquired the artistic form of the ancient Greek gods, betraying a certain fusion of religious attributes. The most conspicuous example is that of the Arab goddess of war Allāt, usually appearing in a primitive form, which later acquired the typical artistic appearance of the Greek goddess Athena in Nabatene and especially in Palmyra (figure 2). She appears dressed in a long tunic, carrying the typical weapons of Athena, a spear in her right hand and a circular shield in her left. Her petrified expression and stiffness of her posture betray the intermingling of Semitic and Greek elements. Her chest is decorated with a "gorgoneion" (horrifying monster’s head). Allāt-Athena inspires, in general, a warlike spirit and her breast plated "gorgoneion", an apotropaic feeling of awe, common characteristics of both the Arab goddess and the Greek.

As early as the fourth century A.D., conveniently considered the start of the Byzantine Empire or the end of Late Antiquity, a number of Byzantine sources deal with the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabs. Thus, the fourth century Byzantine geographer Marcianus reported on the Red Sea and the Arabs. In the sixth century Cosmas Indicopleustes wrote a fascinating book called "Christian Topography". We know little about this author. He was a Greek sailor and merchant from Alexandria Egypt, who, in spite of his surname "Indicopleustes" (traveller to India), never went to India but travelled, as is revealed in his work, extensively in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Cosmas reports on the state of the Himyarites in Yemen. He mentions the Ethiopian kingdom and its capital Adulis, which he visited at the time its King 'Ella-Asbaha was ready to invade Yemen. Cosmas offers the most valuable information concerning the date of this Ethiopian invasion of Yemen, confirming the Greek hagiographical works which report that it took place at the time of the beginning of the reign of the Byzantine emperor Justin (518–527).

Cosmas’s book is richly decorated with miniatures relevant to the narration of the text, which have not yet been studied properly. The main problem of these miniatures is whether they were made by the author himself or by professional painters in Alexandria, where the book was written, under his guidance. More important is the problem of the transmission of these pictures from the time they were made until the 9th century to which the best illuminated Byzantine manuscript is dated. In general it seems that the main lines of those illuminations have preserved their original designs in spite of some slight alterations due to the mistakes in their transmission through the centuries.

Of the illuminations which decorate Cosmas’s “Christian Topography”, two are of particular interest. The first depicts two trees with an elegant gazelle between them and two birds on the top of the trees (figure 3). An inscription in it reads: "These trees are those called "moza", Indian palm trees." Since the Greek word "indikoi" was used, it could mean Indian, Ethiopian
or Arabian, it probably means here “Arabian trees” and the word “moza” is the Arabic muz meaning “banana”. Actually, they look more like banana trees than palm trees. The two birds are irrelevant to the landscape and were placed there to fill the gap of the miniature.

This illumination is placed in the part of the text of Cosmas Indicopleustes which describes the relations between Ethiopia and Yemen in the early 6th century A.D. The trees that are depicted, whether palm trees or banana trees, belong to these countries and had been seen by Cosmas himself. Likewise, the pictures of wild animals in the 11th chapter of Cosmas’s “Christian Topography” are drawn based on his own observation in Ethiopia and the countries around the two gulfs. These drawings were part of Cosmas’s Geography, which has not survived.

The second illumination in Cosmas’s book reveals important and unique information about ships sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is connected with the adventure of Biblical loanos (Jonah) who was swallowed by a whale but survived. It depicts Arab ships sailing in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (figure 4). As far as I know, it is the earliest depiction of such a vessel. Since Cosmas Indicopleustes was a sailor, there is no doubt that the picture in his book is not an imaginary design, but was inspired by his eyewitness observation.

At Cosmas’s time (6th century A.D.), there was intense Byzantine presence in the Red Sea. The Byzantines, combining the Christian zeal with their international sea trade interests, managed to create a network of communication centres from the port of Clyisma, near modern Suez, as far as Adulis on the African side of the Red Sea and the ports of Yemen on the Asiatic side, expanding to the port of Qana in the Indian Ocean and even beyond, to the island of Tabrobane (Sri Lanka [Ceylon]).

Byzantine sources report that the Red Sea was frequented by ships of various nations: Byzantine, Yemenite Arab, Ethiopian and Persian. Merchants and missionary people sailing in the Red Sea were carried on Byzantine ships, but there is no evidence that Byzantine ships went beyond the Bab el-Mandeb, even as far as the island Tabrobane. In contrast, the Byzantine sources report that the Byzantines traveling in the Indian Ocean embarked on Yemenite, Indian or Persian vessels.

In contrast to L. Casson and V. Begley’s view that the Roman [and Byzantine] stitched vessels were better constructed than the Arab and Persian to withstand the onslaught of the strong monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean, the Arab and Persian ships were actually more flexible to withstand the stormy weather of these turbulent seas.

Two more important Byzantine texts also reveal significant information about Yemen in the 6th century, the Martyrdom of Arethas and St. Gregentius’ Acts. Although these texts, especially the first, have been thoroughly studied by N. V. Pyleskaya, I. Shahid, J. Ryckmans and others, the present author was the first to emphasize their importance for navigation and trade in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Martyrdom of Arethas offers detailed information about the social structure of Yemen in the 6th century and, moreover, it describes the difficulties of naval warfare in the treacherous waters of the Red Sea. ‘Ella Asbeha, the Ethiopian king, organised a naval expedition and the conquest of Yemen in the first quarter of the 6th century.

Although the Martyrdom of Arethas was originally written in Syriac, the Greek version has extensive references to the naval warfare between the Ethiopians under their Christian king ‘Ella-Asbeha and the Yemenites under their Jewish leader Dhu-Nuvwás [Qalib]. The description reveals an author, like Cosmas Indicopleustes, who undoubtedly was thoroughly familiar with navigation in the Red Sea.

The frequently repeated view that the army of ‘Ella-Asbeha was carried by the Byzantine fleet of the Red Sea from Ethiopia to Yemen is incorrect. No permanent fleet could be secured in the turbulent waters of the Red Sea at this period and in many centuries to follow. The Greek text explicitly reports that the Ethiopian army was carried on merchant ships of various nationalities, i.e. Yemenite, Persian, Byzantine and on a number of newly constructed Ethiopian vessels. During the transportation, a large number of the Ethiopians perished, victims of heat and lack of water.

At this time the well developed horse carrying ships by both Arabs and Byzantines were not in existence. They landed backwards, equipped with tightly closed gates which would open when the ships reached the coast and armed horsemen disembarked on horseback. Instead, the Ethiopians tied their big ships to each other; then when they were close to the coastline, their small boats known as “sandals” were placed in front of the
big ships, used as shields and thus they proceeded towards the enemies who, fully armed, were waiting for their landing.

More fascinating are a number of reliefs found in a small church of Athens, known as "The Little Metropolis". They are placed on the outside door of the church and is not known whether they were originally placed there at the time of the construction of the church or some time later. The church is dated ca.11th century. The reliefs depict oriental motives, i.e. a sphinx or a wild animal devouring a smaller one (figure 5).

In the present work I have focused my attention on the depiction of the sphinx, an attempt to trace the origin of its inspiration. Depictions of sphinxes in Greek art appear already in the archaic period (8th c.–5th c. BC). In the 6th century BC, decorative sphinxes were used in funerary monuments as apotropaic guardians of graves in Attica and other parts of Greece. Gradually, Greek sphinxes appeared in a humanized form representing an enigmatic creature with a beautiful face and an animal's body. The question that arises is whether the sphinx on the church of the Little Metropolis simply continued an older indigenous artistic tradition or a newly imported Arab-Islamic one in the 10th–11th century (figure 6).

The opinion of the present author, after a careful scrutiny of all artistic details, is that the depiction of the sphinx was a new artistic form imported from Fatimid Egypt. During the Fatimid period the trade relations between the Arabs and the Byzantines intensified and most probably textiles with depictions of sphinxes and other oriental motifs (figure 7) were imported to Byzantium and inspired local artists who created the reliefs of the Church of the Little Metropolis.

Turning our attention to the literary interrelations between Byzantines and Arabs, we should first mention the impressive translations of Greek works undertaken by the Arabs. In the famous House of Wisdom, established in Baghdad at the time of the Abbasids (750–1258), a large number of Greek works were translated into Arabic. Some of the medical works by Galen have been preserved only in Arabic. The Arabic translations of ancient Greek texts are beyond the scope of the present work.

Less known are the Arab and Byzantine epic romances, namely The Story of 'Umar al-Nu'man and Digenis Akritas and their interrelationship. We discern in these works a spirit of acculturation along the Arab-Byzantine boundaries at the end of the tenth century. I believe that there is no direct interrelationship of their written texts but only exchanges of oral narrations. It is noteworthy that the Crusades, which proved to be equally as damaging to the Byzantines as to the Arabs, inspired an Arabic epic romance, The Antor. In this romance an imaginary alliance appears between Arabs and Byzantines fighting together against the Crusaders. Most of the historical elements are imaginary, they betray a feeling reconciliation between Byzantines and Arabs.

At the turn of the 11th century, we notice that the Arab-Byzantine relations were no longer hostile and instead
impressive maritime trade relations developed. The shipwreck found in Sırgı Liman in southern Turkey reveals that by the end of the 10th century both Byzantines and Arabs used similar maritime technology for shipbuilding, as shown in this drawing of a Mamluk ship (figure 8), and maritime warfare due to their commonly shared knowledge.

The common maritime technology of Byzantines and Arabs included the theoretical aspect as it is clearly presented in the work Akkam of Ibn al-Maqzáli, who used an Arabic translation of the 10th century work by the Byzantine emperor Leo VI, known as Naumachic (Naval Warfare). It is worthy to contrast Ibn al-Maqzáli and the emperor Leo VI (the Wise). Leo VI was a wise man, as his name reveals - an intellectual who wrote a treatise on naval warfare in his closed study room, while Ibn al-Maqzáli was a proud practical Mamluk high officer, well educated, but solely intent on instructing the naval officers of the Mamluks. He proudly reported that there were fragments of Leo VI, but he knew more than Leo did. Unfortunately, the achievements of the Mamluks of the later period in naval technology and warfare had been grossly underestimated.

To end this discussion, it is worth mentioning the impressive work of the Arab historian Yahya bn. Sa’Id (10th century). The frequently repeated Orientalists’ view that there was no Arab historian well acquainted with both Arab and non-Arabic sources does not apply to Yahya bn Sa’Id. Yahya combined in his historical work a large number of Byzantine sources, i.e., Ioannes Skylitzes, Theophanes Continuatus, and others. Modern scholars have not yet written any thorough study about this great Arab historian. In general, research in the field of the Arab – Byzantine cultural relations is still a desideratum.

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**Figure 1** Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem

**Figure 2** Arab goddess of war Alat depicted like the Greek goddess Athena in Nabeṭane and especially in Palmyra

**Figure 3** Illumination from Cosmas’s "Christian Topography"

**Figure 4** Illumination in Cosmas's book tells the story of Ioan nas (Johannes)

**Figure 5** Reliefs from "The Little Metropolis" Church in Athens

**Figure 6** Sphinx from "The Little Metropolis" Church in Athens

**Figure 7** Fatimid motifs

**Figure 8** Mamluk ship, qarqara

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5. Human-headed quadrupeds flanking stylized tree. Egypt, early Islamic period.

6. Addorsed harpies on Fatimid lustre bowl.
Seek ye knowledge, even unto China:
the literature of travel in the lands of Islam

Lecture by: Carole Hillenbrand
Presented in English
24 May 2004

Islamic historical research is not for the faint-hearted, since it ideally requires a deep knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Turkish and also an ability to read the works of the great 19th century Orientalist scholars who wrote in French, German, Spanish and other European languages. These Europeans laid the foundations for the academic study of Islamic history.

Modern scholars, however, have moved from date bound chronological dynastic accounts - though these are still needed - to socio-cultural approaches, and to studies of scholarly and military elites and of Islamic humanism. The theme of travel is an excellent entree into the multi-faceted phenomenon of medieval Islamic society and civilisation, and that is why I have chosen it as my subject today.

Islam appeared first from the 620s as a religion and a community. By 750, if not before, it was also a civilisation - a civilisation, which despite political fragmentation from the mid-eighth century onwards, reached an advanced level of unity across vast geographical areas. All branches of knowledge were pursued with vigour and enthusiasm. Muslim society valued not only religious scholars but also the adab, the man of letters and ornament of polite urban society, who was a master of the secular learning long current in the pre-Islamic Near East - the heritage of Babylon, India, Persia and Greece.

Muslim scientists charted the heavens as well as the earth and determined time and latitude with the use of metal discs known as usturlab (astrolabes). In the self-confident scholarly milieu of 'Abbasid Baghdad, map-making received a new impetus because of the political and administrative needs of the empire. Cartographers drew on a direct knowledge of the Islamic world derived from extensive travel and from geographical knowledge inherited from Greece, Persia and India.

A number of literary genres deal directly or tangentially with travel, including the pilgrim guide, geographical works written by administrators and scientists, the literature of Marvels, and the riḥla (an independent travel book). A rich geographical literature grew up, aimed at both actual and armchair travellers. Some of these books are encyclopaedic gazettes; others are little more than timetables.

Many such writers came from Spain, the western extremity of the Islamic world; it bordered the lands of the infidels of Northern Europe. The impulse to travel east to the heartlands of Islam was especially strong for the Spanish Muslims. There was no comparable urge, however, to travel north, for example. Long before Europe had created its own Orientalised-imagined construct of the Islamic world, medieval Muslims had set up boundaries around their own territory, beyond which, as Edward Said and others have put it, lay the lands perceived to be those of the barbarians. The world of Christendom held few attractions to the medieval Muslims; they saw their own culture as much more sophisticated and advanced and their faith as the final revelation.

Let me now explore my first theme, the realities of travel. First, who travelled? Many different categories of Muslims were "geographically mobile". They included administrators, generals, judges and scholars. They sought patronage and learning in widely disparate parts of the Islamic world.

Whole groups travelled annually from early spring to late summer. Peasants moved during crises such as earthquake, famine, plague and nomadic invasion. But above all, people travelled on business. Merchants were constantly pushing at the boundaries of the known world. Medieval Islamic coins have

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been found by the hundred thousand in Scandinavia, and also in Russia and even in Anglo-Saxon Britain, over stamped Offa Rex. Muslim traders transported their merchandise and their Islamic faith through Central Asia to China and brought back silk and other luxury goods along the fabled Silk Road. But such men, as is so often the case, preferred to make money rather than write books. I shall make no further reference to trade, but the merchant is crucial to any assessment of medieval Islamic travel.

Travel in the medieval period was difficult, dangerous, uncomfortable and slow; wheeled vehicles had all but disappeared in the Near East by the advent of Islam. Transportation by camel was found to be much cheaper and the stark reality was that many travellers went on foot, not being able to afford a riding animal. One man scribbled on a building “I walked barefoot to this place until my feet were bleeding”. People must have disappeared without trace on long journeys. The sister of the Jewish philosopher of Muslim Spain, Maimonides, lamented that her son, who had gone off on his travels, had completely disappeared “as if he had fallen down a well.”

Travel by land needed secure routes. Caravans, which gained special prominence in the winter months when it was not possible to travel by sea, used a network of caravansaries. These “hôtels” provided secure if Spartan accommodation, where the traveller could put up under the same roof as his beast and his belongings (such buildings could house up to 400 pack animals).

Travel by sea was even more perilous. Non-seafaring Arabs, those who lived in the desert or in towns far away from the coasts, seem to have been terrified of the sea. Qur’anic resonances and pious Islamic sayings contributed to this deep-seated phobia. In the Qur’an, Jonah cries out in despair from his watery prison, and the deeds of unbelievers are likened to the “darkness on a vast, abysmal sea.” Tales of shipwrecks abound in medieval Islamic literature – real shipwrecks in travel diaries, Islamic practice. The Prophet’s own example was of paramount importance.

Before his revelations began, Muhammad had undertaken several journeys as a merchant. The Islamic calendar begins with another journey, the hijra, his historic move from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD.

Numerous sayings attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) himself extol the merits of travel, and works of Islamic law, which embraces all aspects of a Muslim’s everyday life, include a complete chapter on the proper conduct of the traveller. This clearly implies that travel was not only authorised in Islam but positively encouraged.

Take the most famous intellectual of medieval Islam, al-Ghazali (d. 1111). In his usual systematic way al-Ghazali divides travel in this world into several categories, all of which have a religious flavour. These include travel in search of knowledge; travel in order to know oneself and remedy one’s reprehensible qualities (he remarks here that if one stays at home one is never tested or, more graphically, “if water stays in one place it stinks”); travel to view the marvels of God’s creation and “to read the divine script on the cheeks of everything in existence”; and travel for the purposes of worshipping God – holy war, pilgrimage and the visitation of shrines. As well as these overtly religious incentives to travel, al-Ghazali remarks dourly that travel for sightseeing and recreation is also permissible provided only that “it is limited and occasional”.

The Prophet’s injunction to seek knowledge even unto China was viewed by many early scholars as an invitation to travel the length and breadth of the Islamic world to collect and categorise the religious sciences, Qur’anic commentaries and Islamic legal texts. Good sound learning depended on oral transmission. It was essential to sit at the feet of a great scholar and to gain knowledge from hearing him (or occasionally her) recite.
The late 11th century Spanish scholar, Ibn al-‘Arabi, who wrote a Riḥla (travel diary) describing his journey eastwards. At the age of 24 he set out with his own father to perform the pilgrimage but also in his own words “desirous of seeking knowledge’ in the utmost extremities”. As a Muslim from al-Andalus he aspired to know what scholars in the eastern Islamic world could teach him. Like other Spanish Muslims before him, once the enormous effort of the long journey had been made, he lingered in the east for many years. He stayed mainly in Jerusalem and it is clear that even before his return to Spain he was enriching those whom he met by his knowledge just as much as he was benefiting from what they knew. On his return home he passed that knowledge on to his own countrymen, most of whom did not have the means to travel themselves.

One of the five pillars of Islam, pilgrimage, involves the most important earthly journey of a Muslim’s life. The reality of the journey to perform the pilgrimage is truly extraordinary it is amazing that so many Muslims actually managed to go, given the enormous distances, the hardships endured, the expense involved, the deprivation for the family left behind. Yet go they did, ‘swayed’, as the great Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta so eloquently put it, “by an overwhelming impulse within me”.

At a human level, performing the shared rites of pilgrimage is an act of reinforcement – the unity of all believers is palpably demonstrated. If the return journey was achieved successfully, the pilgrim was treated with respect by other Muslims. At a more profound level, his journey to Makkah and his experience there changed him, enabling him to become a conduit of sacred power, able to transmit the blessing of Makkah to those at home, say, in distant Granada or Samarqand.

As a saying of the Prophet declares: “One pilgrimage accepted by God is better than the world and all that is in it”. The spiritual dimensions of this sacred journey have been put into words by many Muslims. Makkah, the place towards which Muslims pray every day, has been described as “the point on the horizon that speaks so eloquently of things unseen”. For many the experience of visiting Makkah is described as “returning home”, a foretaste of what awaits the soul in the afterlife.

In his most famous work, Al-futuhat al-makkiyya (the Makkah Revelations) Ibn al-‘Arabi, the 13th century Muslim mystic, speaks of his pilgrimage to ‘the navel of the earth’, ‘the mother of cities’ and proclaims in praise of the Ka’ba the following lines:

“You House of God! Light of my heart!...
You who in truth are the secret of existence
My sanctuary! Purity of my love!
O Ka’ba of God, my life”.

Zyara (the visitation of shrines) was also a multi-dimensional phenomenon in medieval Islam. Many Muslims could not afford to go on pilgrimage to Makkah, so they came on foot over great distances to other holy places to perform rituals and gain blessing from the proximity of the graves and shrines of holy men and women.

A favourite location was the Holy Land, which was sacred to Christians and Jews as well as Muslims, and where adherents of all three faiths would visit one another’s shrines. Muslims wrote devotional literature and pilgrimage guides on the Holy Land and mentioned Christian and Jewish sacred places as worthy of visitation. For Muslims, Jerusalem itself was second only to Makkah and Medina; indeed, it was the place where Muhammad was believed to have started his spiritual journey into heaven. Jews, Christians and Muslims emphasised the importance of their own holy sites but recognised too the holiness of those of other faiths. Not only Jerusalem, but the whole of Palestine was viewed as sacred landscape.

Missionary zeal was a powerful spur to the undertaking of perilous journeys. An extraordinary piece of travel writing, used incidentally in a recent novel “Eaters of the Dead” by Michael Crichton (of “Jurassic Park” fame), is the Risala (Letter) of Ibn Fadlan. The work is an account of a year-long journey made in 921 to the frozen north, the territory of Southern Russia, then occupied by nomadic Turkic tribes. Ibn Fadlan, a scribe, formed part of a delegation sent by the Caliph of Baghdad to a Turkic group known in the Arabic sources as the Bulghars.

Their king, who had already converted to Islam, had sent a letter to Baghdad asking for religious teachers to instruct his people in the faith. Ibn Fadlan stayed a month in Central Asia and then moved northwards to the borders of Islamic territory. Here the river Oxus froze for three months, the animals bearing the delegation walked on thick ice and the landscape was like a “friendly fire”, as Ibn Fadlan reports:

“Coming out of the bath-house and returning to the house, I looked at my beard. It was just a piece of ice that I had to melt in front of the fire”.

Progressing further north in February 922 after the river began to thaw, the journey made with Turkish camels and foldable boats of camel skin remained extremely difficult: the camels waded up to their knees in snow and the travellers’ clothing remained cumbersome:
"Each of us had on a tunic, over that a kaftan, over that a sheepskin cloak, over that a felt overcoat and a cap allowing only the eyes to show. Each (of us) also had on simple trousers, then fur trousers, socks, leather boots and then more boots, so that each of us when he climbed onto the back of the camel could not move because of all the clothes on him."

The work of Ibn Fadlan is a true piece of travel writing. It also demonstrates the enormous efforts that a Muslim would make to spread the faith far away from the warmth and comfort of Baghdad.

By far the most famous medieval Muslim traveller is Ibn Battuta, a Berber from Tangier who died in 1378. Often dubbed the ‘Marco Polo of Islam’, his long work entitled ‘Rihla’ (‘Journey’) claims to be a chronological account of trips made in a period of 29 years (from 1324 to 1353) over a vast area of the world. Indeed, he is the only medieval Muslim traveller known to have visited every Islamic country of his time as well as Byzantium, Ceylon and China.

In the usual way, Ibn Battuta set out at the age of 20 from distant Morocco in the far west of the Islamic world to study with scholars in the east and to go on the pilgrimage. However, by the time he had reached Egypt he hints at what was to be the passion of his life, globe-trotting, "to travel through the earth", and he declares that he has made it a rule "never as far as possible, to cover any road a second time".

Just like his European and Chinese counterparts, Marco Polo and Shwan Zang, Ibn Battuta did not compose the finished work which bears his name. In 1357 he dictated his experiences to the secretary of the sultan of Fez, who wrote down and edited the work. It is flawed by inconsistencies of dates, unbelievable distances covered and itineraries invented or conflated. By his own admission Ibn Battuta lost some of his notes when attacked by Chinese pirates and he must have had to rely heavily on his memory. Despite these criticisms, the travel account of Ibn Battuta remains a document of the greatest socio-cultural importance.

One of the most curious specimens of medieval Muslim travel literature is an anonymous 10th-century work entitled Kitab al-ghuraba (The Book of Strangers). Its author was a travel addict and his work is a collection of poetic graffiti which he claims to have seen. He mentions how travellers recorded their most intimate feelings of anxiety, misery, and homesickness with ink, charcoal and knife, on trees, stones, rocks, gates, doors, ships rudders, on mausoleums, mosques, minarets and caravansaries.

The dangers and discomforts of travel are taken for granted. Relationships, not only deep ones back home but also passing ones, occupy the foreground of the book. Almost all the authors of the graffiti bemoan the vicissitudes of fate which has forced them to leave their homes and families. But travel also frees them from the usual moral and ethical restraints. A number of the graffiti speak of wine-drinking and casual sexual encounters. One such graffito remarks sagely:

"Clearly then the tone of the book is distinctly secular, with few Qur’anic or other Islamic resonances. Much of the material in the “Book of Strangers” is too scurrilous to mention here. Incongruous as it may seem, the oldest manuscript of this work, recently published, is in the library of an Iranian Ayatollah."

That travellers did actually compose literary graffiti is confirmed in spectacular fashion by the example of al-Harawi (d. 1215), an eccentric scholar who was an expert in military matters, poetry and magic. A contemporary biographer remarks that al-Harawi was famous for writing his name on the walls of all the cities which he visited. It is, moreover, clear from the work of al-Harawi himself that he was indeed addicted to writing graffiti and that it involved much more than the mere scratching of his name on the monuments that he saw on his travels. He pays considerable attention to the Pharaonic marvels of Egypt and records that at Luxor there was an enormous granite statue. On it he wrote a Qur’anic inscription with a pen carved out of a palm twig and then, prefiguring Shelley’s Ozymandias, he says:

"I dated the inscription, which stretched across the whole width of the chest, and I added below: Where then are powerful, the first emperors? The treasures they amassed have disappeared and they themselves with them."

The graffiti of medieval Muslim travellers spring from that same response: all is vanity and even the greatest rulers of the world must die. This is a perennial theme and here it is given
a confident Islamic coating. Apart from recording for posterity his own presence at a famous site, al-Harawi is proclaiming the superiority of Islam over preceding revelations and civilisations.

What of my fourth theme, marvels, monster and miracles? For their descriptions of the Orient, Muslim travellers drew not only on actual observation but also on a vast treasure house of myth and folklore. Just as Europe placed its imaginary concepts of unknown lands in Asia, so did the Muslim world. Asia was the home of "9/10 of the wonders of the world" Captain Buzurg claims in his book, *The Wonders of India*.

Many of the fantastic elements in these works form an intrinsic part of the 1001 Nights tales. For example, the Sinbad cycle is a "reworking of mariners' tales about the wonders to be found in the seas of India and China". Such works draw directly or indirectly, as Watchtower has documented, on the medieval literature of classical antiquity with its accounts of fantastic journeys to the east and of mysterious and bizarre natural phenomena.

Indeed, the Greek conception of ethnographical monsters races and animals which lived in the east - survived and was transmitted to medieval Europe in the works of Marco Polo, John de Mandeville and others. The very same process occurred even earlier in the lively scholarly circles of Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba and remained alive in the Islamic world until the dawn of the modern era.

It was in the so-called Golden Age of Khorasan, namely the 9th and 10th centuries, that the impact of the fabulous was felt most powerfully and that the literature of marvels began to blossom. Later centuries incorporated this material virtually unchanged into illustrated encyclopaedias, presenting it as quasi-scientific truth. Muslim travel writers, then, drew on a vast and ancient store of marabilia, strange and amazing creatures and phenomena, which they place without a moment's hesitation next to prosaic details of their own itineraries.

The creature known as the nosnos constitutes a particularly tenacious myth. Most likely based on sailors' yarns from the Indian Ocean and beyond and referring to gibbons, baboons, orang-utans, or even pygmies, the creature with one eye and one leg. These fabulous beings, sometimes became associated in the popular imagination with the waqwaq tree of which more anon, whose location was always vague and mysterious.

Al-Gharnati places the nosnos in Sana, the capital of Yemen. Al-Gharnati writes as follows: "In Sana'a there is an Arab people ... Each of them is half-man with, half a head, one hand and one foot. They live in thickets: 'non the coast of the Indian Ocean. The Arabs call them nosnos ... They speak Arabic. They call themselves by Arab names and they declaim poetry'.

It is now time for some concluding comments. We have seen how travel pervades many overlapping genres of medieval Islamic literature; the concept of travel, underpinned by the Prophet Muhammad's own career and his carefully preserved sayings, and encouraged by the Muslim lawyers who constructed and refined Islamic jurisprudence, is a key theme across a wide literary spectrum. It embraces geographical works, pilgrimage guides, travel accounts, letters, tales of the fantastic and many others.

Travel in search of knowledge within the Islamic world helped to shape a cosmopolitan identity: this was especially important for Muslims 'on the periphery', for example those in Spain and North Africa who were accustomed to seeking education from eastern centres of learning. Such travellers left home, encountered others and returned with a sharpened awareness of difference and similarity within their own culture.

The medieval Muslim did not evince great interest in the lands outside the Islamic world. His prime concern was the House of Islam. This vast area shared similar religious beliefs and practices and recognised Arabic not only as the language of the Islamic revelation but also as the lingua franca of science and trade. Indeed, a merchant from Cordoba could travel to the Central Asian borders converse in Arabic and fulfil his religious obligations as a Muslim, unimpeded by frontiers. He would find the Arabic script everywhere too. A scholar would find himself welcome everywhere he went. Thus Ibn Battuta could become a Muslim judge in Delhi and in more sybaritic vein - the Maldivian Islands - as he chanced to go through these places on his travels.

The evidence I have presented illuminates a society which is vibrant and self-assured, with few doubts about the validity of its own socio-cultural norms. Europe, and even Byzantium, are of peripheral interest and the lands of the nomadic Turks have mere curiosity value. As for the civilisations of India and China, perceived by medieval Muslims as worth mentioning, there is little real interest in travel to these areas. They are much more an imaginary construct, a vague and alien eastern area, to be admired, certainly, but not examined or incorporated into the Muslim world view. Unlike us, they had not lost their sense of awe and wonder in the marvels of God's creation.
The Image of the Oriental Princess in the Travel Literature of Ibn Battuta and Ibn Jubair

Lecture by: Nawaf Abdulaziz al-Jehma
Presented in Arabic
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Arab libraries suffer from the lack of modern works investigating the role played by the Oriental princess and her status in medieval times, though a large number of sources and reference books were produced in that age, covering various fields of knowledge. This has been pointed out by all those concerned and experienced by the writer himself, who noticed that our sources in the field are quite insufficient. Facing such scarcity in material, the writer has resorted to medieval travel sources from the North African west, making use of relevant references.

The travels of Ibn Jubair of Valencia in the 6th C. AH/12th AD and Ibn Battuta of Tangiers in the 8th C. AH/14th AD are among the most important sources that present partial images and historical glimpses of the status enjoyed by princess in Oriental society. Seljuk Turks and Mongol Ilkhanids had great respect for their ladies. This was expressed in various titles that expressed "pride, distinction, praise and glorification", in the words of Ibn al-Hajj, like Khatun and Khund Alam. Travel literature, therefore, is considered a valuable source, helping the scholar appreciate the status of Oriental princesses in the non-Arab regions of the Arab Orient during such historic era.

The Status of Princesses

The actual information related to the status and activities of the princesses expands as it revolves around their relationships with highly-ranked men in the society. Therefore, we hear of female descendents of royal families or outstanding figures. We also hear of distinctive women in the field of social activities, though on a lesser scale.

Aristocratic women in the Seljuk court related to important figures like rulers and princes of Mosul, Transoxania and Khurasan are mentioned. As a rule we know little about them except for their names and titles according to royal hierarchy.

For example Ibn Jubair, in his description of female figures favoured by the Sultan, depicts an image of the princess arriving on pilgrimage, in the company of the Iraqi Amir of Hajj Abi Makarim Tajiktn, the vassal of the Emir of the Faithful dispatched yearly on that commission by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Nasser li dirrillah. He explains:

"The first princess is Queen Khatun, daughter of Prince Masoud, King of Armenia and the lands between the Roman domain. Of all princesses, this Khatun has the highest status due to the extensive realm of her father, who has more than 100,000 horsemen under his command. This princess has installed many benefactor establishments on the route of pilgrims. The second Khatun is the mother of Ezz-ud-din, ruler of Mosul and the wife of Qutub-e-din bin Atabek, brother of Nur-ed-din, ruler of Syria. She has [completed] many acts of piety. The third Khatun is the daughter of al-Da'qans, ruler of Isfahan in Khurasan. She is also of a very high rank, competent in the acts of piety. All such princesses are marvelous in their piety acts as well as in their royal extravagance."

Ibn Jubair was so impressed by the great respect paid by Turkish princes to their ladies, especially highlighting their political role. He wondered at the high status they enjoyed and the active role they played in the public life of Iraq during such a historic period. He gives evidence of their high status, illuminating their actual participation in running the affairs of the Kingdom. He refers to his escort to the procession of three princesses from Medina (the enlightened) to Baghdad. At that time the third Princess, who is the daughter of the King of Isfahan, withdrew from the procession towards the Eastern side of Baghdad. She carried on to Mosul. On the Western side

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Thanks to Dr. al-Jehma for the Francesco Coleman image of life in the palace (figure 1) and William Clarke Wornen image of an Oriental Princess (figure 2).
figure 2

escorting the procession of the other two princesses, namely, the daughter of Prince Masoud, and the mother of Ezz ed-din, ruler of Mosul. He records some remarks on their command over soldiers, and their management of other affairs: "These two princesses are the commanders of the soldiers with whom we ride. They have their own special troops".

Ibn Jubair couldn’t control his growing astonishment at the Masoudi princess in her “extravagance of youth and royalty. She rode on a palanquin supported by two intersecting beams set on two camels with gilt saddles following each other. They went smoothly, as fast as breeze. The palanquin had two openings in the front and at the back. The princess was fully veiled, with a golden band on her head, preceded by an advance party of attendants and soldiers. On the right she was flanked by some old riding animals, kept aside. She was followed by a procession of her maids mounted on swift animals with gilt saddles, while the breeze was waving their tassels, as they moved behind their mistresses like clouds. Her mounting and dismounting was signaled by waving of flags, beating drums and blowing of trumpets".

He concludes his narrative on the Princesses saying: "Female royalty in its generosity and festivity was elevated to an extreme of extravagance".

The magnificence of those princesses was especially evident in the reception ceremonies held on their honour by sultans and princes. This was noticed by Ibn Jubair, when the pilgrimage procession reached Mosul after performing the rites of pilgrimage. All people, mounted or on foot, preceded by the Amir and the leaders, came to receive them, celebrating their arrival. Hence the accompanying pilgrims enjoyed with their princess the magnificent reception, decorating their camel-necks in colored silk and ornamental pendants.

Al-Masudia Khatun came in at the head of her maids and her soldiers encircling her domed palanquin, which was covered in gold plaques shaped as crescents, dinars as large as palms, chains and marvelous statues. The palanquin was almost covered in those objects and as the two animals on which it was carried went creeping, the resonance of jewellery was deafening the ears. Animal necks were covered in gold, similarly were those of the maids. It was such a large amount of gold beyond calculation. This was an amazing scene, giving incentive for consideration. Except for God’s realm, all sovereigns are perishable".

Princesses of the procession were expected to concentrate only on decorative matters, displaying all that in an extremely attractive manner. Having their own properties, the princesses used them for self-subsistence and for highlighting their beauty. However Queen Khutun al-Masoudia accentuated the symbolic image of the Seljuk princesses that lived in Iraq and Persia during the 6th C AH/12th C AD. Their extravagance relied on wearing whatever was gilt or glittering, including plaques of gold, golden dinars and jewellery. All these are inseparable components of the image or rather a principal element that highlights it.

As for Ibn Battuta the traveler of Tangiers, his text focused on the relationship between the male sultan and the female princess, pointing out the significance of being a woman - for a princess was endowed with the Sultan's favour. The Sultan’s princesses occupied different ranks which were defined by the degree of love and favour they enjoyed.

The dignity of a princess is related to the nobleness of her husband, his rank, status and respect in the class hierarchy. Such nobleness is manifest at best in the princesses of Sultan Mohammed Uzbek Khan, the Sultan of Kibjak Tatars, and one of the seven Kings.

Ibn Battuta said "He had a special arrangement in his stay, his travels, as well as in all his affairs. He was in the habit of sitting after Friday prayer in the Gold Pavilion, magnificently decorated, made of wooden beams covered with sheets of gold. In its centre is a wooden throne enclosed in gilt silver sheets, supported on pure silver stands inlaid with precious stones at the top. The sultan used to sit on that bed, flanked on the right by Khutun Tighily, then Khatun Kubuk and on the left by Khatun Bilon, then Khatun Ardigi".

However the greatest importance is given to the Queen, the first wife of the sultan and to magnificence surrounding her; a feature that astonished the traveler who says: "Their departure takes place after the afternoon prayer. The queen leaves first, as she reaches her quarter she is followed by the sultan. Then each Khutun leaves in her chariot accompanied by 50 maids on horseback. In front of the chariots ride nearly 20 elderly women on horseback taking their place between the young soldiers and the chariot. Behind all, there are around hundred Mamluk
boys; while another hundred Mamluk (adults) are on horse back. Another hundred were on foot, carrying sticks, with swords tied to their waists, some were horsemen, others were just young boys”.

It is noteworthy that some texts written by Ibn Jazl al-Kabi, depending on Ibn Battuta, gave a portrait of Mongol Khutuns in Saray on the Volga River where excessive extravagance led to deviations from Islamic traditions. This evoked much argument concerning the most accurate method to interpret the issue in historical context.

He says: “each Khutun has a chariot, the house where she lives usually has a dome of gilt silver or inlaid wood. The horses drawing her chariot are usually clothed in gilt silk. The attendant looking after chariot is called (a groom). As the Khutun is seated in her chariot, there is an elderly woman called ulukhatun (minister) on her right, and another elderly woman on her left, called Qujuk khutun (chamberlain). In front of her there are six young girls known as maids. They are extremely beautiful and they seemed in full perfection.”

“On the Khutun’s head, she wears al-bightak, a small tiara inlaid in jewels and topped with peacock feathers, she is dressed in a silk robe inlaid with jewels like the cloaks worn by Romans. On the head of each of the minister and the chamberlain there is a silk mask decorated in gold and jewels.”

“Usually in front of each Khutun there are ten or fifteen Rumi or Indian boys dressed in gilt silk robes inlaid in precious stones, each holding a bar of gold or silver. Behind the Khutun chariot are nearly 100 chariots, each carrying 3 or 4 maids, old and young, dressed in silk and crowned by tiaras. Behind these chariots go 300 chariots drawn by camels and cows, carrying the treasury of the Khutun, her garments, furniture and her food, each with a special groom. This was the case with each Khutun.”

Ibn Battuta, being a conservative follower of Malik jurisprudence in Islam, was surprised by the pioneering social status bestowed by the King of Iraq and Khurasan on Khutuns in public, during the official ceremonies. He had the opportunity to be an eyewitness of this feature, during the journey to Durkhan when he accompanied the Sultan Abu-Said, who was his host: “My aim was to see the procedures taken by the King of Iraq in his travels, departure, arrival and his means of transportation”.

However, the unsurpassed discipline in the royal ceremonies were incomplete without watching the Khutuns in the company of the sultan on his excursions, when the sultan’s procession arrived a certain point, the sultan and his Mamluks would land, while “each Khutun would have her own independent quarter provided with an imam, callers for prayer, Quran reciters and drivers”.

The attitude of Ibn Jubair is rather sensitive in giving interpretation to the political events in the regions under Atabek. He compared the divided sultans to the Andalusian King of Twaf: “each had acquired a name attributed to religion, acquiring pompous titles and exaggerated attributes, with the exception of Salah-ud-din the sovereign of Syria, Egypt, Hijaz and Yemen, who was famous for generosity and justice. Hence his name was consistent with his personal traits”.

We have to admit that this more liberal attitude towards the status of Khutuns was a natural outcome of the political scene and social traditions. In the 6th C AH/ 12th C AD, the status of the Khutun becomes more obvious when we put into consideration not only the image of Sultan Khutun as idealized by Seljuk, daughter of Amir Ezz-ed-din Masud, ruler of Mosul. There is also the image of the Khutun who followed the example of the wives of Caliphs and Abbasid Emirs. Such images were well known in Iraq, but acquired more distinctive characteristics in Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic Caliphate.

Ibn Battuta is keen to point out to his reader the political role played by Khutuns and in particular by Mongol princesses. We know that after the Mongol invasion of Baghdad 656 AH, the Orient witnessed an unprecedented race among women to win the throne of Islamic Caliphate, keeping the right to mint of coinage in their name and to be mentioned in the Friday Sermon (an example is Badshah Khutun). This was in contrast with Abbasid Caliphs, who opposed such approach in compliance with jurisprudence and tradition. However Ibn Battuta’s narrative deals with contemporary political events. He noted that the Mongols had loyalty to Khutuns or princesses only, as for lay women, they never had the same status or received the same respect.

Talking of marriage within this framework, the status which the Khutun enjoyed in her previous community became more restricted by the traditions of the other society. The statement of Ibn Battuta on the conditions of Mongol Khutuns in Iraq at an age of dictatorship is rather noteworthy.

Tracing the contributions of princesses in the religious field, we will just highlight major acts of piety. These came in response to the needs of society for religious and civil constructions and could have been established as an expression of a personal desire to have an actual role in charity acts earning God’s favour. It could be also an ambition to follow the example of court ladies in the Orient.

Lady Zubaida, daughter of Jafar and the wife of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, was an exemplary woman in regards to contribution and acts of charity. However, this couldn’t possibly be achieved without abundant financial resources. It is well known that the Orient reached an excessive degree of prosperity under the Abbasid Caliphate and that wealth was quite abundant with princes, a feature that drew the attention of travelers in the Arab Orient.

Ibn Jubair’s statement about pious Khutuns and their contribution to religious and civil buildings is confirmed by endowments of water fountains for the benefit of travelers and the poor at Makkah. He describes the princesses who came on pilgrimage in the company of the Iraqi procession sent by the Abbasid Caliph. The Masudi Khaton provided water supply for travellers; she offered 30 water tanks and other 30 centers for
food supply, she also provided garments and other provisions carried on 100 camels”.

Sometimes those pious princesses, remarkable for the charity they donated every year for poor travelers, didn’t go on pilgrimage so they “would ensure that water supply was given by trustworthy people who would provide travelers with water at the usual sites along the road, in Arafat Mount, and in the Holy Mosque each day and night.”

You can hear callers for water, inviting people (travelers), who rush to him carrying their water-bags and covers to fill them. The caller would say: long live Queen Khutun, daughter of the King who is so... and so... In this way, her name is proclaimed; her acts are promoted, in an invitation for praying for her sake. God never waste the reward of good deeds.

Ibn Jubair emphasizes the piety of the Khutun through her donations to the poor. Moreover, he reported some of her deeds that reflect an image of devout princess and dedicated female. For example there is the case of the Khutun previously mentioned, the daughter of Prince Masoud who arrived on the eve of Thursday Muharam 6th, to the Mosque of the Prophet (pbuh). Ibn Jubair states that she arrived “riding in her palanquin surrounded by the palanquins of her entourage of noble descent, with her attendants and Quran reciters in front of her. Young escorts and Scythian attendants surrounding her held bars of iron in their hands, pushing people in front of her, until she reached the entrance of the Honoured Rowdo. Here, she descended under a canopy; she walked until she reached the Prophet’s shrine and read her greetings. Horses went in front of her, while her attendants were praying for her loudly and praising her.”

“She reached the small Rowdo, between the honored tomb and the minbar, where she prayed under the canopy as people rushed in her direction, and were driven away by iron bars. She also prayed in the hawd in the direction of minbar, and then walked to the western side of the honored Rowdo. She sat in the site referred to as the point where Gabriel descended. Curtains were drawn around her, while her young attendants, Scythians and chamberlains stayed behind the curtains receiving her commands. She had brought with her into the mosque two camel loads of charitable donations and she stayed at that place until night”.

Ibn Jubair had keen sense of observation. He watched how the sanctuary was packed with people, as the Khutun stayed in her place, when the arrival of the head scholar in jurisprudence, Sadr-ed-din Isfahani, was announced. He came to preach on that Friday night. His speech was fascinating, delivered in both Arabic and Persian, using different styles of preaching, among which he read a line of poetry, that recurred whenever he mentioned the Prophet (pbuh). The line referred to al-Rawdah, inviting people to pray for Prophet and render peace upon him.

Perhaps the highest degree of piety attained by Khutuns was the contribution in the architecture projects in society, an example of which was when Bibi Mariam built Mursi Mosque at Qalhat. Another example is the princess, the wife of Dawood bin Ali, who built the mosque of Balkh. She set an example in defending her people by paying ransom on their behalf.

In this respect Ibn Battuta mentions that the Caliph “got furious at the people of Balkh, due to some incident, therefore a big fine was levied on them. The women and children of Balkh came to their princess who built the mosque and was wife of their Emir, they complained to her about the fine. The princess donated one of her robes inlaid with precious stones, the value of which exceeded the fine. She sent for the Emir who came to collect the fine telling him to take it back to the Caliph. She explained that she donated it in charity to the people of Balkh, as she knew of their poverty”.

After surveying the components of the image portrayed by travelers of the Oriental Khutuns during the 6th C AH/12th C AD to 8th C AH/14th C AD examining their significance, we come to the following conclusions:

- Ibn Jubair was the first Andalusian traveler to focus on the issue related to Khutun, trying to collect all information about her. Many others followed Ibn Jubair, however, their interest in Khutun wasn’t the same as Ibn Jubair, who investigated the stages of her evolution, in the different social backgrounds in the Arab Orient. In this respect, Ibn Battuta is considered an exception, since his work can be counted as an encyclopedia on the Khutuns’ conditions in the far lands he visited. Sometimes his reports were superficial, dealing only with unique aspects that could not be generalized. Still the reader might be able to form a realistic image of the Khutun’s status then.
- Khutuns, unlike the rest of women, were not prisoners of social customs and traditions. Princess Khutun al-Masudia, daughter of the ruler of Mosul is the best example on the female status in Iraq.
- Some travel accounts present realistic images of Oriental ladies who “used to over-dress themselves in excessively decorated and colorful costumes, competing in embroidery and displaying their robes to an extent of extravagance.
- The Khutun was presented in several perspectives, varying according to the different societies which were studying her movements, customs, and describing all that in detail. This was presented within 2 frames:

  The political system and hierarchy accepted and lived by the Khutun.

  Her actual contribution in all fields of public life in the Orient, during the 6th C AH - 8th C AH/12th C AD and 14th C AD.

  A more liberal approach to evaluating the Khutuns’ status was based on the atmosphere influenced by Oriental social customs under non-Arab sovereigns. The degree of freedom enjoyed by Khutuns evokes both admiration and astonishment. This came as a result of the coexistence of different ethnic groups, as was the case in Andalusia.
Waqf and Environmental Conservation: Natural and Architectural

Lecture by: Azza Rabbat
Presented in Arabic
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Man's responsibility for environmental conservation requires adopting a comprehensive plan, starting with the individual and expanding to society at large. The plan must include legislation which promotes conservation education in particular.

The environment can be defined in two categories, the natural and the architectural. The natural environment, nature, includes earth, water, air, plants, and animals. The architectural environment consists of that which is established by the inhabitants, like schools, mosques, hospitals and roads.

Human behaviour is ruled by customs and traditions, which form the soul of a society. These create the cultural and intellectual background or environment of human society. Interaction between the above defines the relationship between the natural and architectural elements of environments. Ignorance and lack of maintenance have created serious problems in the natural environment, e.g. pollution, devastation of green areas into deserts, extinction of some creatures, exhaustion of resources through wasteful consumption.

In a Muslim society, conservation is deeply rooted in the core of Islamic culture and literature. It is defined as an important component of social structure and faith. Therefore any proper conservation act is also a pious act.

A revelation from Allah the Wise, who knows everything, the Qur'an presents wise answers for human problems. According to the Qur'an, man is created from two basic components of the environment, namely dust and water. "And of His signs is this: He created you of dust". Al-Rum (20).

Whatever is in the environment, including earth and heaven is created for the benefit of Man. This is the natural aspect of environment. "See you not how Allah has made serviceable unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth". Luqman (20).

Man is the viceroy in the earth, responsible for its development and prosperity. This is the man-made aspect of environment.

"He brought you forth from the earth and hath made you husband it". Hud (61)

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Thanks to Ms. Rabbat for the photos of some endowed sobils (fountains) in Syria.
Man is warned against damaging or misusing the environment. *Allah loveth not corrupters.*

The Prophet (pbur) applied the words of the Qur'an to his actions. The tradition of the Prophet (pbur), as reported in his Sunnah, presents a comprehensive environmental education programme. This ensures that each individual and his society will have a decent, righteous life.

A pious way of life reveals a comprehensive approach for dealing with the environment. A Muslim is asked to be kind to animals (whoever has no mercy, doesn't receive it). Cultivating, planting, and coaxing life from dead land are highly recommended activities. (*The Muslim cultivating any plant on which feeds man, animal or bird is rewarded on the day of Resurrection.*)

Another important principle of conservation is included in the following Hadeeth, which sums up what brings rewards for a Muslim after death. The list includes:

*Whoever teaches learning (knowledge) or works a river for the benefit of people or digs a well or plants a tree or builds a mosque or leaves a Mushaf for his offspring, or brings up a son who would ask for God's mercy for the soul of his father after his death.*

Water, being the essence of life, has to be preserved and kept pure and never used wastefully. Therefore it is always recommended to dig a well. The Prophet (pbur) persuaded Muslims to buy Roma's well in order to gain paradise. That well was previously owned by a man from Ghafar who sold the water to Muslims. After the Muslims bought the well, the water was given away and this set the precedence for the Muslim tradition of endowing public water fountains, known as *sobil.*

The Prophet (pbur) stressed the importance of cleanliness, not only of water but also of Man and his environment. He emphasised the responsibility of every Muslim to wash, and, as a result, public baths with donated fountains came into existence.

For the sake of public health, Islam set some preventive measures. For example, Muslims have always been encouraged to seek medical help when appropriate. An application of the above principles takes the form of *Bimaristons,* hospitals and public clinics run by *waqf* institutions.

**Scholars inherit the legacy of Prophets**

Scholars have to put into practice whatever knowledge they have learned developing general rules and legislation, which cover a large area in environmental conservation. Islamic law set the criteria asserting that harm should be always avoided at both personal and public levels. This is the desired means of judging any act.

In this respect, driving inconvenience away is given priority to seeking welfare. Mischief is to be eradicated but not by means of abuse. Carrying out this criteria, viceroys and market supervisors were always checking and inspecting markets to ensure that the above-mentioned rules were properly applied.

One of the treasurer's tasks was to make sure that animals were not overloaded or beaten or bound tightly by saddle straps. He was entitled to punish those who break the law. In this respect, conservation rules are to be strictly observed.

The *waqf* controller used to run an endowment on behalf of the owner or the benefactor. He would ensure the welfare and continuity of the endowment, maintaining its social and environmental benefits for society at large.
Linguistically, waqf means prohibiting or confinement. According to Islamic law it means that investing has to be done for the benefit of a specific purpose.

The Evolution of Waqf

The first waqf in Islam was when the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) donated seven gardens, originally owned by a Jew who fought with Muslims on the Day of Uhud. The original owner left the gardens to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and the Prophet invested the fruits of the harvest according to God's guidance. In this respect, the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) practiced the first act of waqf or endowment (giving the gardens to charity), in Islam.

Next we find Omar acquiring a piece of land in Khaybar, restricting its use exclusively to the poor on condition that it couldn't be sold, granted or inherited. The first of appropriate users included poor relatives, slaves, guests and travellers.

On the same track went the Companion and followers. They began promoting endowments after Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) donated a place in Medina called Baqee to be used to corral the horses of Muslims and another, called al-Rabatha, for charity camels.

Zaid bin Haritha was the first to follow this example, granting his horse in the way of God. He was followed by Khalid bin al-Waleed, who gave away his shields and swords to follow the way of God.

"Ye will not attain unto piety until ye spend from that which ye love." (Surat al-Imran, verse 92)

Listening to the above verse, Abou Talha endowed his garden (al-Birha). This was his favourite property. Endowments were made by all companions without exception, according to Jaber (may God be contented with him).

Endowment is an inherent characteristic of Muslim society throughout history, acting as a tool for growth and development. Endowments covered not only religious institutions (e.g. building and maintaining mosques) but also educational establishments, health centres (hospitals and clinics), infrastructure projects (bridges and roads), agricultural projects (mills and canals), commercial centres (Khans and markets), as well as investment organizations (funds providing loans for craftsmen).

Different examples are reported in Islamic history. For example, supplying places for animal care, such as dedicating the use of a specific grass field in Damascus to old horses. In Egypt, Suleyman Pasha built troughs for animals in Bulaq. Waqfs in Tunis addressed animal welfare, including burying dead cats and dogs. Other examples can be found in Syrian public places which make hygiene facilities accessible and convenient.

There is another waqf related to providing and burning incense in public places in Tripoli. Also in Tripoli, public troughs were established for pedestrians. Vizier Lala Mustafa donated a sabil for the new bazaar, the water waqf in Tripoli, and a 4 km canal for watering gardens.

Other endowments included providing cold drinking water, as demonstrated by the Umayyad Mosque endowment. Ibn Battuta mentioned waqfs that funded the paving of roads in Damascus.

All the above endowments speak to the environment in its natural terms; however other waqfs take interest in intellectual, social environment, and/or addressing the health concerns of society. Examples of these are:

- Schools considered as enlightenment centres in Islamic civilisation, for example, al-Umariyya School in Damascus. Historians confirm that: all schools in this category used to rely on waqf endowments to fund free education for all classes of society.
- Libraries were established with the aim of copying and preserving manuscripts in the pre-printing age.
- Building hospitals (bimariston) or medical care institutions, which included the bimariston built by Nur-ed- Din Bin Zanki in 1290 and the bimariston Qaymari at Damascus.
- Mosques, considered God's houses on Earth.
- Kuttabs or centers for teaching the Qur'an in villages and cities.
- Endowments attributed to set free prisoners of war, e.g. the waqf for helping Muslim prisoners of war in Tripoli 1112 AH.
- Endowments helping the poor to perform the Haj.
- Endowments providing poor brides with golden jewellery and make up in Tunisia.
- Building homes for fighters at harbours in Tunisia.
• Waqifs to maintain architectural arcades, walls, war and military bases
• Donations supporting the blind and the handicapped, for example, the farm given by Nur-ed-Din to the blind.
• Milk Foundations providing mothers with free milk and sugar, e.g. Salah-ed-Din waqf in Damascus, where mothers and their children would get their milk and sugar supply fortnightly.
• Waqf of pans and pots on both happy and sad occasions and paying for pots broken by servants. That was literally called the waqf of yoghurt.
• Funds dedicated to providing shrouds for the poor in Tripoli; also building cemeteries for the poor.
• Spending money on the two holy sanctuaries – Makkah and Medina and supporting scholars and students there.
• Allocating money for travellers in need.
• Endowments to fund the building of ferries and warships, like the Sultan Qaitbay endowments in Tripoli 882 H.

The Waqf Foundation grew to be one of the most important institutions in the Islamic world. In the Umayyad period, during the reign of Hisham bin Abdel Malik, the first diwan of waqf was established. It was independent of the state diwan and was supervised by the Judge.

In the Abbasid era, as the practice of waqf grew, it was supervised by Sodrol-Waqf, surviving as an institution independent of the sultan's diwan. The Ottoman age witnessed the growth of many endowments encouraged by rulers as they continued to promote ongoing charity. It was run by an administrative system called the waqf management administration. Scholars were the guardians of the waqf institution, to ensure its survival as an active, independent body, even when Caliphs, Sultans and Emirs financed the waqf. At that time, a simple signature on a waqf document meant its transformation into a state property. Later on the state gradually replaced the waqf institutions, taking hold of the waqf property, taxing waqf land, and usurping charity-specific waqf land.

Endowments could be either charity waqf or directed for family and relatives. Sometimes it is a combination of both. The legality of waqf and its rules endowment are defined in the Qur'an and explained in the Prophet's Sunnah. It is also deduced by Ijma, or scholar's agreement and analogy.

In Surat al-Baqara, verse 267, we read: O ye who believe! Spend of the good things which ye have earned, and of that which we bring forth from the Earth for you.

The role of Waqf in conservation

One of the virtues of Islamic society is the emphasis on charity, which has contributed to the growth of the Islamic state at the social and economic levels. Endowments have also had a positive impact on learning and conservation.

The Ottoman age witnessed the peak of waqf institution activities in many fields. Independent from the state, two major types of waqf institutions were operating:

• Charitable foundations: funding expenses to support selected programmes, including schools and mosques
• Assistance foundations: financing the above mentioned foundations

Charitable endowments were also boosted by maintaining donations that generated revenue. This included running garden plantations, digging canals, restoring of baths, and feeding animals. All these actions contributed to conservation.

According to Ibn Battuta, during the first century of Ottoman rule (1517) Damascus experienced an active architectural movement that produced a series of religious, economic and social foundations. The new architectural style caused Damascus to acquire a new look. It also fostered the growth of building activity, attributed to sultans, viceroys, ministers who built their waqf foundations in Damascus and its suburbs.

In order to identify the conservation aspects of the Ottoman endowment programmes, historical documents were examined, including those of Vizier Lala Pasha which were issued in a separate book. We also investigated other waqf documents in Damascus, specifically those in the Islamic Law Tribunal which are preserved at The Centre of Historical Documents in Damascus. Six Ottoman waqf documents representing different social classes have been selected for investigation. These were gathered from the previously mentioned centre.

The first document (971 AH/1593 AD) belongs to Vizier Lala Pasha at Quaitera village where he built and endowed mosque, a school for teaching Qur'an for children and a caravansaries for travellers. The source of the financing came from running other endowments, i.e. plantations, Khans (motels) and shops. This represents an example of social and environmental care through endowment. Lala Pasha, Grand Vizier, was the Viceroy of Damascus (971 AH – 976 AH/1593 AD – 1598 AD) during the era of Sultan Murad III, son of Selim II. He established different charity residences (Tikkios) and Khans under the Citadel of Damascus and the public bath he built at the al-Serujya (saddle makers) bazaar.

The second document (528 AH/1150 AD) belongs to The Madrasa Umariya, built to the south of Muzzaffari Masjid in Damascus and endowed by Sheikh and scholar Abu Omar Muhammed bin Ahmed bin Qedama al-Maqdisi. To provide ongoing support for the school, he donated another village, which set an example for other benefactors who donated some of their properties for the same purpose. The Umariya school could be cited as model for waqf concerned with the environment in its intellectual perspective, supporting students. In Ibn Battuta’s observations of Damascus, he describes the prosperity of waqf schools, including the Umariya madrasa.

Third endowment (654 AH/1267 AD) is related to Bimaristan al-Qaymari, situated at the foot of Qassiyon Mountain in Salhiyya, was built and funded by Emir Sayf ed-Din Abu-I-Hassan Ali bin Youssif al-Qaymari al-Kindi. To ensure
ongoing financial support, he donated villages, Khans, mills and shops to the hospital. This demonstrates the interest of Islamic waqf in health care or environmental health.

Fourth Endowment (1173 AH/1795 AD) is shown in two waqf documents by Sheikh al-Islam Rady-ed-Din al Ghazi al-Amiri. The two documents reveal how waqf spent its financial resources giving priority to functional buildings such as public baths. The two documents represent waqf attributed to a family’s descendents and addresses environmental problems.

Fifth endowment document (1181 AH/1803 AD) is for a residential building offered by Ms. Zaynab al-Sifergalani as waqf. The rent of the building would be spent on the water carriers in Makkah and Medina. Some would be also spent on the maintenance of cemeteries, supplying them with plants.

The sixth document (1148 AH/1770 AD) investigated came from the records of the Islamic Tribunal in Damascus, collected from the Historical Documentation Centre there. It is a judicial complaint raised by tenants of an agricultural plot run by waqf. They complained about the blockage of the canal carrying water to their land and endangering their crops. The head judge recommended that the canal should be cleared and maintained. He also said that it had to be done at the waqf expense.

In addition to the above there are two more Ottoman waqf establishments in Damascus which can’t be disregarded. These are the two charity residences, Tikkiyya al Selimiyya endowed by Selim I and Tikkiyya Sulaimana endowed by Suleiman al-Qanuni (962 AH/1554 AD).

Conclusion

The investigated documents come from different benefactors and indicate a strong interest from all social classes in waqf. For example, we can find a Vizier, a Muslim scholar, a middle class lady, and tenants of waqf land. They were all seeking a good life this world and in the hereafter.

The above samples were blindly chosen from a period of time between 528 AH and 1181 AH (1150 AD – 1803 AD). While most documents have been lost, the study of the surviving examples points out that different kinds of conservation was practised. They took several forms that can be summed up in the following:

- **Preservation of agricultural land**

  The relationship between agricultural land and waqf is inseparable, since farming supplied waqf establishments with income. For each plot of agricultural land the benefactor or public establishment donated, the water supply related to the endowment was also donated. Agriculture was one of the major environmental resources invested in by Muslims, especially in relationship to waqf. This can be deduced from all waqf documents.

- **Water Preservation**

  Water, being the essence of life and the principal element for the establishment of cities and civilizations, has always been preserved. In the Middle Ages, Damascus was known for its abundance of water. Ibn Jubair expressed this, saying “its land, being saturated with water was craving for thirst”. This was also asserted by Yaqt al-Hamawi, who wrote “One of the characteristics of Damascus, I haven’t seen elsewhere, is the abundance of water and rivers.” Such impression of Damascus was reinforced by waqf documents giving details on water and irrigation, distribution of water and wells.

- **Conservation through public foundations**

  Benefactors were especially interested in buildings that served society (mosques, shops, public baths, and hospitals). To ensure the continued operation of these structures, they assigned other endowments supporting them. Pure water supply was ensured for such foundations as well as drainage for impure water and dirt.

All the waqf documents studied show a commitment to preserving a healthy environment and society on the belief that this would eventually win God’s favour. Legally, the documents defined the rules of preservation for lands or buildings developed by waqf. In this context, the rules are rules for environmental conservation. Hopefully this will inspire more contemporary benefactors to dedicate their endowments to projects that promote environmental conservation and serve Muslim society.
Very little has been written about the metalwork of the Samanid period. While the architecture and the pottery of the period are comparatively well studied, the metalwork has been somewhat neglected. Recently a very brief study appeared under the title of "art and architecture" of the period, but the entry on metalwork is short.

The impetus for this study came to this writer because of an extremely rare object which was acquired by Tareq Rajab Museum not long ago. This object is remarkable not only because of its size, but mostly because of its beauty and the great attention that was given to the smallest details of the decoration by the artist or artists.

The object in question is a very large bronze incense-burner, probably the largest one known today. It was acquired by the museum quite recently. It was cast in several pieces which were then soldered together. It has extensive perforated decoration, while the details of the decorative patterns, figures and the inscriptions are chased (figure 1). The height of the object, together with its dome measures 38.5cm; the height of the square body with the supporting zoomorphic legs is 19.8cm; the height of the dome, capped by an umbrella-shaped finial, is 18.7cm; the body measures 25x25cm; the length of the handle is 14.8cm; the handle support is 27.8cm high and the corner lions on top are 9cm high. Its weight is 9kg and 470grs. Thus, the size and the weight of this object is remarkable and the only known comparable piece, both in size and even in shape and decoration, is in the Freer Gallery in Washington.

When the object was acquired by the museum it was covered with thick patina. Likewise inside it was full of dirt and clay. It was cleaned and treated by the museum's conservator Miss. Renata Nalepa. Her delicate work revealed several layers of dust, crystallised limestone, corrosion and even traces of fire which will be described further below.

To turn to a detailed examination of this object, we have to start with the side panels. Three sides of the body have similarly designed decoration: three bands, the central one which is considerably wider than the one on top and one below (figure 2). The upper one has a series of five-lobed palmettes, each emerging for a widely opened intertwined U-shaped design. The central wide band carries an inscription executed in openwork in cursive style over scrollwork. On three sides the inscription is interrupted by a round medallion which depicts a seated figure. On one panel, the inscription starts and reads:

\[ \text{Al-izz wa 'l-iqbal wa a} \]
\[ \text{"might and prosperity and..."} \]

Then it continues on the next panel:

\[ \text{l-daulat / wa 'l-sa} \text{d[at]} \]
\[ \text{"good fortune and felicity"} \]

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Then finishes on the third panel:

Wa [‘l-salāl mat wa al-sa‘adat]
"and peace (or spiritual integrity) and felicity"

We should note that the script is written in a beautiful and fully developed thuluth style, the details of the letters, particularly the hastae of lams and alifs are chased. The inscription at first appears to be an ordinary benedictory one: a praising phrase which is repeated so frequently on early and medieval metalwork. However, the above phrase, as it has been pointed out by Melkian-Chirvani, is not an ordinary saying, but a du‘a, a prayer, calling for God’s blessings to the owner of the object.

The seated figures in the round medallions are very much alike, there are only small nuances which differ. All three figures are shown sitting in cross-legged position and are flanked on either side by what appears to be support of a chair or a throne. All three figures have haloes with radiating lines, like rays. However, these haloes are not single ones as they appear on later miniature paintings, metalwork or in ceramics, but “double” ones. The inner one has series of short chased lines, as if imitating rays. They continue below the head and neck of the figures and then are connected with the garment. Of course this lower part could be a kind of a “neckpiece”, or a shawl. Such ornaments are shown on Buddhist paintings, particularly on Tibetan Tankas. The “outer” halo surrounds the inner ones and then ends on the figure’s shoulders.

A very similar ‘double halo’ is around the head of the statue of a female figure in the National Museum, Delhi. It represents a royal couple with attendants. It dates from the Sunga period. A comparison to this Buddhist sculpture may indicate that perhaps the “inner halo” is not a halo, but the hair of the figures. However, on the sculpture the figure concerned is female, while the figures on the incense-burner are most likely males.

One figure on the incense-burner is depicted in a frontal position, but his face is turned to his right. He holds an object in his left hand which may be a cup. His right hand rests on his right leg. On another panel, the figure is sitting in a similar position to the previous one and his head is likewise turned to the right. His arms are in the same position, but in his left hand he holds a different object: it could be a
flower or, it could also be a prayer-mill. On the third panel (figure 3), the figure is depicted entirely in a frontal position, facing forward and the object in his left hand is similar to the previous one. Facial details of the figures and the folds of their trousers are emphasized by chased lines.

![Figure 4]

The third band on all three panels is separated from the central one by a narrow frame formed by a double band of geometric scrolls which actually appear as a series of triangles. The third band depicts animals in the chase. On each panel there are two animals depicted, a dog and a hare. They are almost all similar, except on one panel, where the rabbit turns its head backwards. The background of all three panels is provided by a fine scroll, executed in openwork.

The fourth panel of the body is different due to the attached handle (figure 4). Above we find the same type of five-lobed palmettes, but in the middle, instead of a central band there is a large-sized wing-motif in relief flanking the handle. When one observes this panel together with the handle's support, it becomes clear that the artist here intended to represent a winged lion, a sphinx. Below to the right and left are two hares running in opposite directions.

Turning now to the handle (figure 5), in section it is an irregular octagon, since the corner panels are narrow. The sides once more depict two animals in the chase running on both sides towards the body of the incense-burner. The two top narrow panels carry intertwined scrolls forming small circles. The lower panels of the handle are plain and the flat top carries a Kufic inscription over scrollwork which reads:

\[ \text{Wa 'l-birr wa 'l-barakah} \text{ wa al-daulat ...?} \\
\text{...wa 'l-kara[mal] ...al-bari(?)} \\
\text{“and loyalty and Divine blessing and power and ...”?} \\
\text{...Divine favour and loyalty(?)} \]

The handle is supported by a large ‘leg in the shape of the protome (forepart) of a lion. To make this support even stronger, the artist attached a quarter-circle loop connecting the inner side of the leg to the lower part of the handle. The lion's head is attached to the lower part by a hinge, so that it can be opened. These two parts are fixed together by a copper nail. Below the lion's body is decorated with a fine floral scroll executed in openwork. The paw is likewise worked out in great detail and the design on the entire handle offers the details in chased lines. Special attention was paid by the artist(s) to decorate the lion's ears with chased designs, resembling a semi-palmette.

The flat top of the body around the dome reveals extensive openwork floral scroll decoration not unlike that on the protome of the lion supporting the handle, but with a difference. On two sides, flanking the base of the dome there are Kufic inscriptions turned inwards. They are identical and read:

\[ \text{Al-yumn lahu wa sirr} \]

“God's favour for him (the owner) and joy”

That is also part of a du'a and can be found on several early Khurasan bronze vessels.

Before examining the large dome, the body's four supporting legs and the four lion heads at the corners of the flat top should be described. The legs are all in zoomorphic forms in the shape of hares' protomes. The heads and the upper parts of the hares' bodies also form the corner of the vessel, while the lower solid parts are in the shapes of paws and they are the actual supports for the incense burner. The breasts are decorated with openwork and in the centre they include a round medallion with a long-eared bird inside them. The comparatively large eyes are left open and the long ears are plain without any additional chased design.

The four lion heads and necks on top at the corners are partially decorated in openwork, while the ears have chased designs, showing a semi-palmette. The eyes, just like those of the four hares, are open.

![Figure 5]
Turning now to the large dome, we may distinguish three different parts: the actual and well proportioned semi-spherical dome, the crowning chaṭra-like finial, which imitates a Buddhist stupa’s umbrella, a lotus parasol, and a large openwork leaf. The latter is actually the top part or “thumb piece” of the hinge (figure 6). An interesting small detail is that the nail by which the hinge is fixed to the body, is not made of bronze, but of copper, as is case with the nail used to attach the lion’s opening head above the handle’s support, as has already been mentioned above.

The dome’s decoration is carried out entirely in openwork and it is divided into four unequal zones or registers. The lowest narrow band, just above the base carries a series of five-lobed palmettes, identical to those which decorate the upper zone around the body. This is followed by a wide epigraphic band and is interrupted by two round medallions, each with a seated human figure. The two seated figures in the round medallions are almost identical and are similar to those to be found around the body panels. The inscription is written in the same cursive style like those around the body and is partly the repetition of the du’a which runs around the body. It reads:

“al-līz wa ʿl-ṭībāl w ʿl-dānu l lat wa...”
“glory and prosperity and good fortune and...”
“al-ʿāl jīl jāh hībībi”
“good fortune [to the ow]ner”.

One of the most interesting parts of this vessel is the crowning chaṭri-like finial on top of the dome. The chaṭri, a lotus parasol or umbrella, has serrated edges and openwork decoration, while above there is a perforated design which is most likely a lotus. The chaṭri was a standard decorative symbol and essential feature of Buddhist stupas.

That such a Buddhist architectural form like a stupa crowned by a chaṭri were accepted and used for an early Islamic bronze vessel is not surprising. Buddhism and Buddhist art exerted great influence on Islamic art particularly in Central Asia and Eastern Iran, i.e. in Khurasan. Melikian-Chirvani suggested that early Islamic incense burners imitated the forms of Buddhist stupas of the Herat region.

The Tareq Rajasthan Museum’s incense burner, however, is entirely different and one may say, monumental. The only comparable large object is the well-known and publicised incense burner in the Freer Gallery in Washington. It is attributed to Egypt and dated to the 8th or 9th century AD. However, there is a general agreement amongst scholars that this type of incense-burners owe their origin to Central Asia, or to be more precise, the "Sasanian heartland". This theory had already been refuted by Eva Baer who, while referring to the Freer incense-burner, questioned its attribution and argued that the architectural and decorative details reveal Central Asian traditions and hence, they most likely originate from the East.

Here we should examine the two incense-burners in closer detail, since it is clear that the Tareq Rajasthan Museum’s piece and the Freer Gallery example are closely related. They are nearly the same size, the Freer Gallery’s objects is only a few centimetres smaller. Furthermore both objects were cast in several sections and then were decorated with extensive openwork and chased designs. They are square in form and their flat tops are decorated by hemispherical domes which are crowned by lotus parasols. Furthermore, at each corner of the top in both examples, there are either small domes (in the Freer case), or four lion heads (Tareq Rajasthan Museum’s object). On the Freer example these domes are capped by lotuses on which large birds are standing, albeit only two of them survive. In the Tareq Rajasthan Museum’s vessel there are four lion heads, but they seem to serve the same purpose, namely symbolising the small corner minarets of the Sasanian Mausoleum at Bukhara, built at the beginning of the 10th century. It is recognised that the architect of the Sasanian mausoleum was very much influenced by Buddhist stupas.

When we look at the seated human figures on the Tareq Rajasthan Museum’s incense-burner we discover remarkable similarities to Buddhist statues and paintings. One such aspect, the "double halo" of the seated figures has already been mentioned. These seated figures, who appear like "enthroned monarchs", as indeed that would be the case of later metal and pottery vessels, are in fact Bodhisattvas. Such representation is not surprising since the artists of the period were facing such paintings every day. The statues of the figures are very much unlike those of princes or monarchs. They are seated in what is called padmasana, while their right hand is in bhūmisparsa. The left hand in every instance holds an object. In one case it could be a cup, but in the others they are holding something else. I would suggest that it is a Buddhist object or symbol, perhaps a prayer-mill. It is not proposed here that the artist(s) of the incense-burner deliberately wanted to include Bodhisattvas on this incense-burner, simply to indicate that he/she produced figures that were familiar.

From the above we may then arrive to two possible conclusions: 1/ that the incense-burner, and here I would
also include the Freer example, although it has no figural decoration, were made somewhere in Central Asia (and certainly not in Egypt), under Buddhist influence; 2/ that the representation of the figures, on the Tareq Rajab Museum's example, with the "double halo" around their heads indicates not only a Central Asian provenance, but more likely an Afghanistan origin. The figures which are depicted on Sahl ibn al-Faqih's casket, which is most likely of a Saljuq period date and on many other contemporary metal objects, betray the influence of the northern part of Central Asia here the Buddhist influence was not as strong and permanent, like e.g., Pyandzhikant or Sasanian Iran. Accordingly these would point to the southern part of Central Asia, closer to India, the home ground of Buddhism, or to Afghanistan.

The above conclusion would therefore indicate a work by the "Khurasan school". Unfortunately no metal object exists with an inscription stating that it was made at Merv. Thus, here we are on an uncertain ground as regards to the actual provenance of these two incense-burners. Hence a closer inspection of other decorative details needed which may throw light not only to their provenance, but also offer us guidance to their possible dates.

Apart from the form of these two objects, and the figures on the Tareq Rajab Museum's example, we notice three major decorative features: a/ the application of five-lobed palmettes, b/ preference for the use of geometrical patterns and c/ the representation of animal friezes.

The series of five-lobed palmettes appear three times on the Tareq Rajab Museum's incense-burner. According to Melkian-Chirvani, five-lobed palmettes played not only an important role in Samanid metalwork, but he considered them as one of their characteristics. He illustrates a tripod lamp-stand from the Kabul Museum's collection, where these patterns appear twice: on the base and on the balustrade. At both times executed in openwork in a very similar manner to those on the incense-burner.

By chance the Tareq Rajab Museum possesses a very similar tripod lamp-stand base and is likewise decorated with five-lobed palmettes in openwork. This wide band is followed by a narrow epigraphic frieze, written in beautiful floriated Kufic, around the base of the shaft. The style of the inscription is very similar to those that Melkian-Chirvani attributes to the Samanid period.

The second important decorative feature is the application of the geometric interlace which borders the lower part of the animal frieze on the dome and the upper one on the side panels. While such frieze is a frequently applied ornament in Islamic metalwork, its presence is more frequent and prevalent on early East Iranian, i.e. Khurasanian vessels. A semi-domed incense-burner, attributed by Melkian-Chirvani to Khurasan and dated to the 10th – 11th century, is decorated with such a frieze on the upper part of its body. Three more examples, also illustrated by Melkian-Chirvani, a ewer, a bottle and a small circular incense-burner, all three of similar provenance and date, each include geometric interlace in their decorations. Equally important are two bottles from the Metropolitan Museum's Nishapur excavations, both of which have identical patterns.

The third major decorative feature of the incense burner is the running animals on three panels of the body and on the dome. Animal friezes, as is well-known, were popular and frequently represented decorative motives on metalwork. They are shown either in a hunt or in a chase. Here they are clearly shown as animals in a chase. The running animal turning back its head on one panel clearly supports this.

Besides the shape and decorative patterns of the incense burner we have to examine the inscriptions, since they may provide further evidence and enable us to narrow down its date. First the Kufic inscription on the flat top of the body and on the handle requires some comments. It has already been pointed out that the contents of the inscriptions, both of the Kufic and the cursive, can be regarded as a certain dua', calling God's blessing to the owner. As to the style of these scripts, they come very close to several early examples which were illustrated by Melkian-Chirvani of the early Khurasan school, like e.g. a lobed cup, of which not only the style, but also the contents are very similar. Another closely related Kufic inscription, the signature of an artist, is on a cauldron which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, dated to the 10th – 11th century. An extremely rare and interesting Kufic inscription, the style of which comes close to those of the incense burner, is a wooden panel from a bier which is in the Israel Museum, dated to the 10th century.

All the above mentioned comparative material indicate that the incense burner is the product of the "Khurasan school". The architectural form, however, which imitates that of the stupa of Guldarra, situated in Kabulistan, points to a more easterly workshop. The most likely place was Ghazni and that has already been suggested both by Melkian-Chirvani and likewise by James Allan, who stated that very well could have been a metalworking centre until it was sacked by the Ghurids in 545AH/1150-51AD.

As to its date, the decorative details, particularly the series of five-lobed palmettes and the geometrical interlace which, as we have seen, played such an important role in Samanid metalwork, are prominent on this object. Thus, these would indicate a late Samanid period date, most likely of the early 11th century. This earlier dating for the late Samanid period is also supported by the Kufic inscriptions on the handle and the flat top.

At the same time, however, the fully developed cursive script which runs around the body and on the dome, contradicts such an early date. Accordingly, the incense burner must have been made considerably later than the introduction and general acceptance of these new cursive styles, particularly if it was made, as it is proposed here, in Central Asia. A date not earlier than the middle or rather second half of the 5th century AH/11th century AD is more acceptable. Hence this incense burner is most likely not Samanid, but Ghaznevid.
Al-Maqrizi and His Pioneering Book
AL-KHITAT

Lecture by: Nasser Rabbat
Presented in Arabic
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The Mamluk era was one of the most prolific and varied periods for Islamic historical writing. During the two and a half centuries the Mamluks ruled Egypt and Syria (1250-1517), hundreds of historical books, biographies, histories of localities and encyclopaedias appeared, more than in any previous or even subsequent age up to the present. Many famous historians emerged, including Ibn Al-Athir, Ibn Al-Jawzi and Abu Shama in Syria, and Ibn Daqmaq, Al-Maqrizi, Al-Qalqashandi and Ibn Taghri Birdi in Egypt.

We can divide Mamluk historical writing into two periods. In the first, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, writers tried to cover the whole Islamic world from the dawn of Islam; while in the second period, the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, even after the Ottoman conquest, most historians concerned themselves with short periods of local history. In contrast to their predecessors' broad and universal writings, fifteenth century historians recorded the military or repressive campaigns and daily events of local Sultans and Amirs, or wrote biographical dictionaries of local scholars or notables. This specialisation led most people to adopt a narrow introspective outlook.

However, this did not prevent some brilliant historians from transcending the circumstances in which they lived, and being ahead of their time in their thinking, analysis and historical vision, to produce conscious and authentic history. Probably one of the most important, original and innovative historians was Taqi Al-Din Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Ibn 'Abdulqadir Al-Maqrizi (1364-1442), who demonstrated a true sense of history. This is due to his precise critical spirit which emerges clearly in many of his writings.

Al-Maqrizi's Kitab al-Mawa'iz wal-I'tibar bi-Dhikr Al-Khitat wal-Athar, known as The Khitat for short, is indeed the first of its kind in the world, a history of construction, one of the most profound and objective historical studies of urban civilization in written Arab history. This book contains an almost complete architectural and human picture of early fifteenth century Cairo, of the role played by politicians and notables in the social, civic, constructional, economic, political and social life of that Mamluk city. It has a comprehensive view of Egyptian history before Islam, and a precise history of Fustat, and later Cairo, since their foundation after the Islamic conquest, through their greatness in the Fatimid age, their struggle against the Crusades during Ayyubid and early Mamluk times, until the decline when the Circassian Mamluks seized power in Al-Maqrizi's time, at the end of the fourteenth century.

The book also contains a survey of almost all important buildings in Cairo and Fustat, including palaces, mosques, hospitals, schools, Sufi institutions, hostels, churches, synagogues, streets, lanes, canals, pools, walls and gates. It consists of prose pictures almost like detailed maps, and very advanced research into natural history, archaeology, architectural planning, as well as the political, cultural and architectural history of Egypt as a geographical and administrative entity.

Khitat as a Medieval Literary Tradition

Al-Maqrizi can be considered a distinguished heir to a continuous Arab Islamic literary tradition. His book represents the intellectual culmination of the genre khitat (plural of khitot, which means the residential quarter of a specific group in an Islamic city).

The roots of this specialist writing go back to earlier trends in Arabic literature, which appeared in the early days of Islam and developed according to the needs of Islamic society during its rapid expansion. Specifically, it dates back to two earlier genres, fadral, books on the sacred aspects of cities, notably Makkah, Medina and Jerusalem, and whose popularity increased during the Crusades; and biographical dictionaries.

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Thanks to Professor Rabbat for these images of the fine details in Al-Maqrizi's Cairo.
These genres reached their height with two great works, *The History of Baghdad* by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi (1002-1071) and *The History of the City of Damascus* by Ibn ‘Asakir (1105-1176). Both books began with a brief description and history of the city, followed by biographical details of the most eminent scholars who had lived in it. *Khitat* can also be classified with geographical books known as *masalik wa mamalik*, into which political content was introduced following the Mamluks’ defeat of the Mongols and the Crusades.

*Khitat* books borrowed from these earlier literary traditions, but used the styles in a way suitable to achieve the desired purposes. *Khitat* books were not directly concerned with geographical questions, biographies of eminent people or the religious or spiritual virtues of cities, but concentrated on buildings, residential quarters, or architectural history. Where *fadail* style books concentrated on a universal or Islamic perspective, the focus of *khitat* was local.

Appearing in Egypt during the Islamic era, perhaps the term *khitat* does not apply to a literary tradition in any other Islamic country. Although there are books called *khitat* from other countries, they do not meet the standard of the intellectual tradition found in Egypt. There are various reasons for this, primarily the strong national feeling among Egyptians, even before the emergence of rationalism as we know it.

This feeling found expression in *khitat* books, particularly after the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate, which was independent of Baghdad and rivalled its claim to Islamic legitimacy. This revived an Egyptian feeling of uniqueness and importance.

Only two *khitat* books written before Al-Maqrizi’s work survive, one by Muhay Al-Din Ibn Abdulzahir, compiled between 1267 and 1285, and the other by Ibn Daqiq, compiled between 1391 and 1406. Ibn Abdulzahir, who lived in the early days of the Mamluk state appears to have tried to collect everything about Cairo under the Fatimids before it was destroyed or fell into disrepair. So his book was an attempt to remind people and preserve images. Unfortunately only about one third of Ibn Daqiq’s book still survives. What remains are a collection of information on quarters in Fustat, and possibly the rest of it was about quarters in Cairo.

Al-Maqrizi’s book, written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, was a qualitative turning-point in knowledge and criticism. The importance of this huge book (two volumes, each of more than 500 pages) was not limited to preserving architectural and historical information about Cairo and other Egyptian towns and villages, which would otherwise have been lost. It lies also in the spirit of the book and the motives of its writer, which evoked a positive understanding and sympathetic response among his contemporaries and followers in Egypt and elsewhere.

**Al-Maqrizi’s *Khitat* as a Register, a Reminder and Criticism**

Al-Maqrizi’s book attracted attention of his contemporaries and followers, as evidenced by numerous manuscripts in libraries of the world (more than 170 manuscripts, 35 in Istanbul alone). It is also evident in the many subsequent books which quoted from it, or even followed its pattern, or completed it. To this day, in spite of changing criteria and different fashions, the book continues to serve as a model.

There are many reasons for this popularity and the continued interest which goes beyond the details of the book’s content to include basic characteristics of its direction and purpose. Its
tle, objective and analytical comprehensiveness, and its author's social, personal and religious Sufi background all contribute to the ongoing fascination with the book.

Perhaps what most endears Al-Maqrizi to a modern reader is that his book is a lively, critical reformist study that one seldom finds in the medieval heritage. Al-Maqrizi began life like most medieval scholars: studying under the great scholars of his age, taking advantage of his family connections, and trying to win the favour of princes and men of influence. But suddenly, without any obvious reason, he decided to stop currying favour with the great. Instead, while still a young man, he withdrew to his house to study, write and worship in the way of Sufism.

This decision was apparently the outcome of years of suffering from sectarian, political and opportunist conflicts, the rat race for positions, corruption and bribery. Al-Maqrizi lived in close quarters of these things because of his contact with the Sultan Barquq, his son Faraj, and their senior state officials. After them came the Sultan Al-Mu'ayyid Shaikh, who favoured Al-Maqrizi at the beginning of his reign and then dismissed him for no obvious reason.

The positions he held during that period, notably that of muhtasib [supervisor of the markets] in Cairo, gave him the opportunity to see with his own eyes the rot that was eating away at the Mamluk state. He also observed the increasing corruption in various classes of society.

Maqrizi's experience as muhtasib sharpened his talent and gave him the necessary expertise and information he used to write two important booklets, Ighathat al-Ummobi-Kashf al-Ghumma about the economic predicament facing Mamluk society in the early fifteenth century, and Shudhur al-Uqud bi-Dhikr al-Nuqud about the Mamluk state's monetary policy. After these, came the Khitat, which included all his architectural, economic and historical information.

The first signs of disgust appeared in this deeply religious scholar when he accompanied Sultan Faraj Ibn Barquq and his entourage in Damascus between 1407 and 1412. The Sultan repeatedly offered him a post as a judge there, but he refused. After Faraj was killed and power passed to Al-Mu'ayyid Shaikh in 1412, Al-Maqrizi returned to Cairo, and only left it twice, once for the Haj and once to stay in the vicinity of Makkah.

He spent the second half of his life (1412–1442) in relative seclusion. He wrote and compiled a collection of informative books, including Itti'az al-Hunafa' bi-Akhbar al-'Alimma o-Fatimiyun al-Khulafa, a work sympathetic to the Fatimid dynasty, which was condemned by the prevailing mentality. The title and contents of this book reveal Al-Maqrizi's pro-Fatimid leanings (he believed he was descended from them). Finally came his great and important book, Al-Suluk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Muluk, about the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras from his personal viewpoint. In this same period he wrote 19 booklets and the large biographical dictionary, Al-Muqaffa Al-Kotbir, though he died before completing the dictionary. Throughout this period, he was busy with his main book, the Khitat, which took more effort than any of his other writings, and he died without perfecting it.

Pupil of Ibn Khal'dun

Al-Maqrizi was a pupil and friend of Ibn Khal'dun during the years that brilliant thinker spent in the Mamluk Sultanate as a judge or a teacher in the most prestigious schools in Cairo and Damascus. Al-Maqrizi admired his teacher's profound thinking, and Ibn Khal'dun's concept of civilization had great influence on Al-Maqrizi's thinking and analysis of the history of Cairo in his Khitat.

In my view he surpassed even Ibn Khal'dun in his depth and comprehension of Khal'dunian theory. For although Ibn Khal'dun was more capable in his theoretical thinking and analysis, he confined his analysis to North Africa's past and did not allow himself to apply his bold critical theory to the North African or Mamluk present in which he lived (with some surprising and intelligent exceptions).

It is not entirely clear why he refrained from criticism. It may have been his astuteness and obvious desire to keep all channels of communication open with authority, even with the terrifying invader Tamerlane, with whom Ibn Khal'dun was trapped for many months during the siege of Damascus in 1400. Ibn Khal'dun finally wrote him a memorandum on the history and geography of North Africa, although he was well aware that Tamerlane's purpose in this was to prepare to invade the area.

The Khal'dunian theory related to the phases of construction and destruction vis-à-vis the rise and fall of states seems to
have been the organising principle for some of Al-Maqrizi's books, including the Khotot. He used the Khalqunian analytical framework to organise and present the massive information he had collected about the history of Cairo and Egypt. Khaldun posited that no individual dynasty or society can permanently remain at a high level of development; soon after maturity is attained decay sets in (just as individual plants and animals achieve the maturity natural to their species and then decay.)

It seems that he managed to use the theory to present a recurring cycle of "rise and fall" in the growth of Cairo's construction, as a tool to discuss the city's fate under the rule of successive dynasties in the Islamic era. Al-Maqrizi used the architectural, economic, population and construction situation of Cairo as a reflection of the state of the government in these successive periods, in a way reminiscent of Ibn Khaldun's opinion on the history of dynasties. He concludes with a total condemnation of the decline of the situation, from which there was no hope of recovery in his lifetime under the Circassian Mamluks.

He tried to analyze the manifestations of corruption and demonstrate their results in the decline of the Mamluk economy, the spuriousness of the currency, the disintegration of society and the ruin of Egypt's urban civilization. He adopted a new methodology to arrive at the criticism he wanted: he criticized the state, society, the economy, the politics, the culture and some customs and traditions by following up their construction and architectural effects. Thus he made architecture and urban construction indicators of the health of society and the state. This established new historical evidence from which a researcher could read the history of Egypt and Cairo and other cities by comparison. This also was an unprecedented methodology in Arab culture.

Al-Maqrizi's introduction explains the main aim of this encyclopaedic book: fear that the residential quarters and the beauty in his city would disappear because of the deterioration during the critical and troubled age in which he lived. There were internal conflicts at the beginning of the Circassian Mamluk period, with a coup d'état led by the adventurer Barqum, who destroyed the Qalawun dynasty which had ruled for over a century (1280-1382). He needed time, effort and politics to establish his rule and be accepted by the different sectors of the Mamluk army.

The Black Death, which hit the Mediterranean basin in 1348-49, had terrible effects, killing more than one third of the inhabitants and changing the rate of economic growth. The Mamluk state, unlike European countries which also suffered from it, was unable to recover afterwards. Then Tamerlane's overwhelming invasion at the beginning of the fifteenth century destroyed the economy of Syria, which complemented that of Egypt, annihilated the artisan classes in Syria's cities, and drained Egypt's resources by forcing it to equip and fund the Mamluk army. But the main reason for the decline, Al-Maqrizi believed, was the Mamluk corruption and their departure from the true path. He accused them of devouring all wealth, regardless of the ruin that resulted from their greedy and short-sighted methods of enriching themselves.

So Al-Maqrizi used ruin, fear of oblivion and the desire to preserve memories of a happy past as a factor to arrange many chapters of his book. Greedy princes plundered awqaf (religious endowments) and destroyed their economic and civic role by seizure, substitution and arbitrary sale, innovations which Al-Maqrizi claimed the Circassians introduced. Many of Cairo's new quarters, which flourished in the early Mamluk period, especially Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad Ibn Qalawun's time, disappeared or deteriorated, some into ruins.

At this time, the standard of living declined. The rich came to wear broadcloth instead of silk, and were forced, by poverty, to remove and sell the beautiful artistic gold and silver ornamentation from their brass utensils. The splendid festivals
stopped, their joy was gone, and lanterns were no longer lit on festive nights, boats carrying revellers no longer plied up and down the Nile, and luxury markets disappeared. The rulers became increasingly greedy, taking everything they could. Judges and officials gained their appointments through bribery.

These images, which we see repeated today to some extent, gave this book a clearly pessimistic rhythm, so that the reader cannot avoid feeling Al-Maqrizi’s pain as he watched the worsening ruin of his city. Al-Maqrizi also criticized openly, giving clear examples of Sultans and princes who caused ruin and corruption.

He expressed the essence of his view on the decline of Mamluk power in a paragraph which is one of the most precise political analyses I know. He used Ibn Khaldun’s theory brilliantly, after adapting it to suit the Mamluks’ special regime with its artificial group solidarity and its ruling class made up of one generation which does not pass on the government to its sons, but imports a new group of Mamluks to preserve the group solidarity and replace it at the summit of power.

The strict and precise Mamluk system, whose principles were laid down by founding fathers like Al-Zahir Baybars and Al-Mansur Qalawun, enabled them to become “masters who govern kingdoms, commanders who fight for God’s cause, politically astute so that they exaggerate in showing courtesy and deter tyrants or aggressors”, to quote Al-Maqrizi’s view of their state’s magnificent past. This system, which enabled them to establish a stable hierarchy, was followed by their successors until its foundations were undermined in Barquq’s reign in Al-Maqrizi’s lifetime.

Under this system a Mamluk could only rise to the rank of Amir after passing through many strict stages of military, religious and moral training. “His morals were refined, he had good manners, reverence for Islam and its people were mingled into his heart, his arm was strong in shooting arrows, he was skilled with a spear and lither riding a horse. Some would become experts, writers, poets or skilled mathematicians”.

This was all over in Al-Maqrizi’s view. In the days of Al-Zahir Barquq, “the Mamluks were permitted to reside in Cairo and marry. So they came down from the citadel, married women from the city, loitered in idleness and forgot those customs. Conditions disintegrated in the days of Al-Nasir Faraj Ibn Barquq. The import of Mamluks continued, but men who in their countries had been sailors, stokers of ovens, water carriers and such... The Sultanate’s Mamluks became the most despicable, inferior people, with the lowest standing and the meanest spirits in worldly matters, and the most averse to religion.”

This was the main point of Al-Maqrizi’s biting criticism: the Mamluk Sultanate’s departure from the principles of justice and Islamic law caused the ruin of the country. But with the penetrating gaze of an historian and analyst, he was able to understand the relationship between the prosperity of the city and the justice of the Sultan. He identified the wound, analyzed its causes and showed its results. Perhaps for this reason he is so distinct from other Cairo historians before and after him from Mamluk times to the nineteenth century.

As demonstrated in this book, Al-Maqrizi was a pioneer of several types of historical and social analysis which later appeared in nineteenth century Europe. Important fields of social science were developed from Al-Maqrizi’s application of his version of Ibn Khaldun’s theory, including economic history and the more comprehensive form known as the history of civilizations.

Al-Maqrizi has maintained his position as Cairo’s leading historian, and the primary source for modern Egyptian historians. Today’s historians do not treat him only as a source of information; many of them have adopted his work as an intellectual and methodological model. Some even imitate his language, like Ali Pasha Mubarak in his book “Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida”, which picked up where Al-Maqrizi’s Khatat left off in the fifteenth century. But Mubarak’s Khitat, unlike Al-Maqrizi’s, does not contain social concerns or criticism, nor even indicate that there is a direct connection between urban construction and politics. This is interesting as the book was written to enumerate the achievements of the Khedive Ismail, Mubarak’s patron, and his son Tawfiq after whom the book was named.

Admiration for Al-Maqrizi and his Khatat is not confined to historians, but has extended to leading novelists like Gamal Al-Ghiti in his work Khitat Al-Ghitoni. It has also influenced a literary genre that is not widespread in Arabic literature: science fiction, specifically stories of time travel.

Al-Maqrizi appears in one of the most satirical modern Egyptian novels, Rihlat Al-Tarashi Al-Halaji by Khair Shalabi. In this fantasy novel, the narrator Ibn Shalabi (the author himself) travels through Cairo’s past without having the slightest control over his journey through time. We follow him being thrown from one Cairo age to another, before and after the city was built, passing through the Fatimid, Tulunid and Mamluk eras. In his journey through time he meets other characters beyond time like himself, such as Ibn Al-Hakam, Ibn Taghri Birdi, and Stanley Lane-Poole, author of a book on the history of Cairo. But the most important of them is Al-Maqrizi, who acts as Ibn Shalabi’s guide in everything related to Cairo’s political and architectural history. When Ibn Shalabi tells Al-Maqrizi what happened to Khan Al-Khalili in the twentieth century, the latter sighs, and says, “Nothing remains but the name... Ah Egypt, how many names your memory keeps!”

This sums up Al-Maqrizi’s standing in contemporary Egyptian consciousness, as the author of the broadest, most comprehensive and deepest book on Egyptian history in the Middle Ages. It is he who has preserved the memory of many places that have disappeared, by preserving their names. He has preserved the description of these places and the stories told about them, giving them an historical dimension despite their disappearance. Al-Maqrizi’s Khitat, in our age replete with nationalism, has become a refuge and depository of the national heritage.
Mughal Gardens:
Golden Shadowed Waters

Lecture by: Mrs. Patricia Jellicoe
Presented in English
1 March 1999

The finest age of Mughal Gardens and architecture was between 1525 with the first Mughal Emperor Babur’s conquest of Hindustan and the deposition of Shah Jahan, his great, great grandson, in 1658. The inspiration for the Mughal garden is the 6th BC Achemenian Persian “Pairidaezea”, created by Cyrus the Great. Persian cultural influence descended throughout its once vast empire down the succeeding Greek, Arab and Mongol centuries to the Timurid period and its capital at Samarkand.

Timur’s descendant, Babur, five generations later described “the garland of gardens” surrounding Samarkand. His vivid and touching journal describes, between battles, the beauty of flowering fields, and his creation of the Bagh I Wafa - The Garden of Fidelity - near Kabul, his capital. A Mughal miniature c.1590 shows it as the classic chahar bagh – the Garden of Four surrounded by the pomegranate and orange trees he planted around the central pool. From India later, he sent trees and shrubs back to the Bagh I Wafa, which remained his favourite garden and where, eventually, he was buried.

The chahar bagh - or Garden of Four - is the basis of all Persian garden design. The conception of this division into four is an ancient one. Arama, the Hindu “Paradise of Restfulness,” was four years old, and in describing the Garden of Paradise, the Book of Genesis says:

“And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became into four heads.” Both Eden (Adan) and Paradise (Firdows) are referred to in Qur’an as idealised gardens, and to the Muslim believer, paradise is a garden. The cross, formed by the intersection of the water channels, has been the symbol of the meeting of humanity and God in many religions - while water, itself, is the source and symbol of life.

A more complex symbol, much used by the Mughal, is the octagon. Evolved from the squaring of the circle, it symbolises the reconciliation of the material side of man, represented by the square, with the circle of eternity - a Muslim symbol decorating many Mughal buildings. The gardens are often sub-divided into 8 parts; flower-like 8 lobed carved pools and octagonal pavilions are to be found in most Mughal gardens, while the 8 pointed star is featured on decorative tiled walls and on the inner ceilings of buildings and belvederes.

Babur and his followers found India, with its dust-laden winds, hot and humid so he felt the need to create a new environment. Water was to play an important part - in the garden, in pools, channels and fountains, and indoors, in baths.

At Gra, he found the eastern bank across the river Jumna repellent, but it was on this unfavourable site that he created a series of magical Mughal gardens. The Ram Bagh, originally Arom Bagh or Garden of Rest, was probably the first. While the planting at Ram Bagh has been much altered, the structures remain. The water supply was superbly engineered into the site.

Persian gardens depended upon underground water channels or Qanats; an Achemenian invention. Here, water would have been brought from a well by a canal built on arches to allow irrigation of the ground at a lower level. The narrow water courses bisecting the gardens were lined with dressed stones, and trees were planted at intervals in small, square opening along the channels.

Gulbadan, Babur’s most-loved “rose-body” daughter, described a royal entertainment such as one for the birth of his son, Humayan: “There was a raised platform on a pleasant spot,

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Thank to the Aga Khan Development Network and the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation for the photos
and a pavilion of red cloth with a lining of Gujarati brocade, and 6 canopies of silk and brocade, each of different colour, and a square enclosed of cloth and painted poles."

In India, the chabutro or raised stone platform, often in the centre of a tank or water channel, would have been covered with a rich carpet and a canopy of brocaded silk, from which the Emperor could enjoy the spectacle of spring blossoms on the fruit trees, the fragrance of jasmine and the favourite rose and narcissi bordering the parterres. In the gardens there would be octagonal pools and pavilions, while behind was the Zenana (women’s quarters) with its private garden, various buildings and the hot bath (figure 1).

The creation of Garden Tombs was a Mughal tradition followed by all the great Mughal Emperors. All wealth went to the Emperor on death, so nobles as well as royals spent with abandon during their lifetime, vying with each other in magnificence. At death, the central pavilion emerged as a mausoleum, while the gardens were given into the care of holy men and the fruit from orchards sold to support their upkeep. This may be why these garden tombs have survived, while hundreds of pleasure gardens have disappeared.

Of the many splendid garden tombs of the Mughal period, Humayan’s is one of the first and is the earliest Mughal garden plan known to survive without alteration (figure 2). His imposing mausoleum was a turning point in India’s mausoleums, with its synthesis of Persian and Indian traditions internally, and externally, with the Central Asian double dome allied to Indian chattris - or roof pavilions. It is the fore-runner of a later recurrent theme in its red sandstone and dressings of white marble.

Another important innovation is its central position in the garden, typical of the Persian chahar bagh, here subdivided by minor causeways into 32 smaller plots. The causeways have narrow water channels in the centre, ancestors of the broad canals characteristic of the later Mughal gardens. Shallow tanks centre the crossings of these causeways and scalloped red sandstone in the water channels mark the fall in ground levels.

The Red Fort in Delhi, begun in 1639 by Shah Jahan, great grandson of Humayan, took some 9 years to complete. At the fort, two major gardens form one grand design: the Hayat Baksh, the Life-Giving Garden, and the Mahtab Bagh, or Moonlight Garden. Though the latter no longer exists, much of the Hayat Baksh remains.

Hayat Baksh is a water garden. Its central pavilion stood in a pool full of fountains from which 4 canals terminated in small water pavilions - the Sowon and the Bhodon - names linked to the months of July and August, when the ladies sat in the pavilion of the month to enjoy the prevailing breeze.

Along the terrace to the river was a water parterre terminating in the beautiful little Shah-Burg pavilion, with its own fountain and water chute. The extraordinary opulence, which earned the Western world’s awe of “The Great Mughal”,

can be imagined by this description: “Each of the canals had 3 rows of fountains and the central pool had 49 fountains inside, and 112 on the 4 sides, each one plated with silver. Waterfalls fell from the pavilions and in the Chini-kanos, the arc-shaped niches below them, gold and silver pots with silver flowers were placed by day, and candles glittered at night.”

Shah Jahan, travelled with his father, Jahangir, when he was young, as the latter had done with Akbar. Both father and son contributed to the gardens of Shalimar and Vernag.

The approach to these Kashmir gardens is most beautiful by water, over Lake Dal. The choice of site for Shalimar Bagh (figure 3) was Jahangir’s, with Shah Jahan, when still a young prince, joining him in the design.

Known then as Forah Baksh - the Bestower of Joy - the name Shalimar Bagh - Abode of Love - is said to date from the 6th c. Amid its all-pervading peace and calm, one senses Nur Jahan’s influence in the refinement of detail and proportion. The design is simple: a small river is diverted into a broad, shallow canal leading to the wide, rectangular basin. This is where the main pavilion - the Black Marble Pavilion - is set, surrounded on all sides by rows of fountains in the basin’s waters. The great pavilion is the central point which draws the garden together, and from which the 4 vistas open.

Located in the Zenana garden, the Black Marble Pavilion was built in 1630 and has a cascade of 2 ledges with a sharper drop in levels in order to force the water up through the large number of jets in the tank surrounding it. Under each of these 2 levels are double rows of Chini-Kanos or “pigeon holes” in

figure 1

figure 2
which lamps were placed in the evenings, to glitter behind the cascading sheets of water. The Black Marble Pavilion is possibly the finest example of a Mughal Baradari, although much altered since.

Below it the design broadens and the changes in level are a little sharper, until it reaches the Diwan I Am, the Hall of Public Audience, in which the Emperor sat on his black marble throne above the water. Another black marble throne – above Diwan I Am and below the Black Marble Pavilion – is in the open and centred in a pool by the cascade in the garden of the Diwan I Khos – the Hall of Private Audience.

While grapes, apples, almonds, and peaches no longer fill the gardens, the sheer quality of Shalimar is the result of the two Emperor’s finest gifts – Jahangir’s flair for site and Shah Jahan’s magnificence in building. No wonder then, as at the Red Fort in Delhi, the same Persian quotation appears at Shalimar (figure 4): “If there be a paradise on the face of the earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.”

Jahangir and Nur Jahan are said to have loved Vernag above all other places; Jahangir’s wish was to be buried there. Vernag is a sacred spring – vir-nog being Indian for a snake and snake worship an ancient religion in Kashmir. Though most of the Mughal buildings have long gone, the site is of a special beauty in its simplicity and contrasting light. The darkness under the low-arched entrance opens onto a sunlit, blue-green, deep octagonal pool in which the darting flashes of golden fish play as in Jahangir’s day. Behind the complex of domes and niches around the tank, rise hillsides of dark deodars. To the north, the main canal, 1,000 feet long by some 12 feet wide with a smaller canal forming a cross axis, pours into the River Jhelum from its surrounding meadows and poplar trees.

Nishat Bagh, Garden of Gladness, is the largest and most spectacular of Kashmir’s gardens. One of the non-royal gardens, it belonged possibly to Nur Jahan’s brother, Asaf Khan, Comptroller to Jahangir and father of Muntaz Mahal, Shah Jahan’s adored wife. The garden is seen at its best in the autumn when the red and gold of the trees and the translucent quality of the lake appear against the blue mountains behind. Approaching by boat, one glides under an arched bridge to an inner lake, on whose far side is a pavilion mirrored in its waters, while above it stretches a stupendous garden. With no need for the protocol of a Royal garden, Nishat Bagh is divided into two gardens only: the Pleasure Garden and the Zenana Terrace.

One of the garden’s finest features is the 20 foot high retaining wall running the whole width of the Zenana Terrace under immensely tall charan trees; while from the 3 storeyed gazebos at each corner the ladies could look beyond the garden over terraced fields and popular groves towards the waters of Lake Dal. The main feature of the garden is the great 13 foot wide central watercourse, treated as a series of canals, each dropping with a cascade to the terrace below. Fountain jets mark the centre of the water channel; descending steps on either side marking the terrace levels, while reflecting pools add to the beauty of the design.

A special feature of Nishat is the number of stone and marble thrones set in the water channels. What more idyllic way for the Mughal Emperor and his ladies to pass the evening, cooled and soothed after the day’s heat by the lapping waters surrounding them, reclining in brocaded trousers on soft carpets and silken cushions, served on gold and silver and from jade cups, the jewels on their diaphanously gauzed breasts shimmering and glinting like fireflies.

Jahangir’s love for his Persian wife, Mihr Un Nisa, daughter of Ghyas Beg, a Persian refugee who became Prime Minister, was overpowering. A pretext was found for the murder of her husband and he [Jahangir] later married her, though at age 36 women in India were considered old!

Even amongst the royal women, who from their palaces directed businesses and owned ships and merchandise, Mihr Un Nisa was distinguished by her character and courage. She designed brocades, silks and jewels, wrote poems in Persian, and shot tiger through the screens of her howdah on an elephant’s back. Elevated to the title of Nur Jahan – Light of the World – she shared almost every attribute of royal power with Jahangir, who, like all his family, was addicted to drink and opium. With her Persian heritage she influenced Mughal India’s architecture and was the driving force behind the incredible number of palaces, pavilions, tombs, and gardens which they created together.

Jahagir’s love for Kashmir and his talent for seeing the potential of a site has bequeathed to us the famed gardens of Achabel, Vernag and Nishat Bagh in Kashmir, Wah Bagh in Rawalpindi, Khushru Bagh in Allahabad and the Lake Palace of Udaipur. His son, Shah Jahan, joined him in the finest and most mature of his achievements, the Shalimar Bagh in Kashmir. His brother-in-law, Asaf Khan was involved in Nishat Bagh, while Nur Jahan created the small jewel of Itmad I Dowlah and its garden at Agra as a memorial to both her parents, and the Bagh i Dilkosho for the Emperor.
Here in the Diwan i Khas (figure 5) or Hall of Private Audience, stood the Peacock Throne - the most splendid of 13 thrones! The 2 principal gardens were the Machhi Bhawan, or Fish Square, named for its sacred fish, and the Anguri Bagh, the Grape Garden. The white marble domes of Moti Masjid mosque can be seen from the pillared cloisters of the Machhi Bhawan, many of whose marble fountains and tanks were carried off in the 18th c by the Jats for the gardens at Deeg.

The Anguri Bach was the Zenana garden where Jahanara remained with her father, Shah Jahan, during his imprisonment by his son, Aurangzeb. The Khos Mahol, or Private Palace, is reflected in a raised marble tank at the centre of the four parterres.

The Anguri Bagh may derive its name from the decorative vine leaf pattern inlaid on nearby pavilions. Tavernier, the French jeweller, however, tells of a portico "which Cha Jean had a design to have adorn'd all over with a kind of lattice work of Emeralds and Rubies." "But," he says, "this design which made such a noise in the world, and required more riches than all the world could afford to perfect, remains unfinished, there being only 3 stalks of a vine in gold with their leaves ... and enamelled ... with emeralds, rubies, and granite wrought into the fashion of grapes."

The Taj Mahal (figure 6), created by Shah Jahan and famed throughout the world in photographs, is more lovely than ever imagined. The perfection of the mausoleum is its ethereal beauty amid the emerald green gardens. Legend has it that Mumtaz Mahal herself had chosen the site as the result of a dream. His best-loved wife, with whom he shared all the secrets of State, Mumtaz Mahal accompanied Shah Jahan on all his expeditions and travels, and died after the birth of her 14th child. Her body was brought back to Agra and laid to rest in these gardens during the 22 years it took to complete the mausoleum, Shah Jahan's memorial to her, in 1654.

The garden is a classical Chohor Bagh, or Garden of Four, but the mausoleum is placed, not in the centre, but at the end of the garden on a raised platform, and framed by 4 minarets, to form the climax of the whole design. The restoration and replanting initiated by Lord Curzon in 1903, with the original avenue of cypress trees forcing the perspective towards the tomb, has meant that much of the rest of the garden layout goes unseem. It was almost certainly planted with blossoming fruit trees between the cypress, symbols of immortality and regeneration, with shaded walks under taller trees at either side, while many partners were described by Bernier as full of flowers.

The white marble museum is flanked on either side by two red sandstone buildings, a mosque and an assembly hall. The retaining walls and the flagged paths of the garden are also in shades of red. Behind the mausoleum, four smaller octagonal pavilions mark the corners of the terrace platform which lies across and halfway down the deep retaining wall as it plunges down to the wide sweep of the river Jumna, across which a black marble mausoleum was to have been built by Shah Jahan for himself.

At the centre of the garden is a large raised tank, at its corners are carved Mughal flowerlike, lobed surrounds, reflecting, in a mirror image, the mausoleum. From the tank, on the cross axes to the long central canal are 2 smaller red sandstone pavilions. To the south is the great red sandstone gateway, with its exterior cloisters to which the poor were admitted three times a week during the rainy season to receive the Emperor's charity.

The Taj Mahal combines, in perfect harmony, the great building traditions of Central Asia, Persia and India. Its double dome, its tall Iwans, and the inlay, whose many details are of infinite subtility. The ripple design on the tomb's platform is symbolic of the water in which it would normally have been set. The inscription around the central arch of the tomb is graduated so that the effect of perspective is offset, the letters reading from below as though of equal size. The semi-precious stones around the base of the dome, fortunately inaccessible to the marauders, glitter as each stone catches the changing sunlight. Below, as though ribboning the building, is the carved marble frieze of Kashmir's flowers, so loved by all the Mughals. In India's silk-soft evening light, the exquisite building seems to float, the culmination of the poetic homage of a man to his beloved.
An Introduction to the Arabic Translation of *Storia dei Musulmani* by Michele Amari

**Lecture by:** Moheb Ibrahim

Presented in Arabic
8 January 2002

In 1965 the renowned Orientalist Amberto wrote: “whatever has been written in Arabic on the island, being little, is either lost or probably undiscovered until now. Whoever attempts writing the history of that Islamic era, having no sources, with the exception of some Sicilian incidents recorded by some contemporary Arab historians who witnessed those events!”

Ritzitano adds: “the writers of Islamic chronicles recorded only miscellaneous local events as the island was only a minor province within the great Islamic Empire.” Other Orientalists hold the same opinion, that little interest was given to Sicily conquered by Muslims. This has been interpreted as an evidence of the marginal status the province had, lying on the western stretch of the Islamic Empire. Reviewing what was said by Ritzitano and other Orientalists on the sources of that study during the second half of the 20th century might explain the difficulties that Amari faced in writing his book *Storia dei Musulmani* in the second half of the 19th century.

In his introduction Amari mentions the story of the Maltese Monk, confirmed later by other major Italian authors. He is accused of exposing two forged manuscripts originally in Arabic, as he pretended, keeping the original Arabic text and displaying the Italian copies. The first manuscript was entitled *The Diwan of Sicily*, including the correspondence of the princes of Sicily with Aghlabid and Fatimid emirs in Afriqiya (Tunisia today).

The second is entitled *Diwan of Egypt* including the correspondence of Norman princes of Sicily to the Fatimid Caliphs in Egypt regarding local affairs. The forger assembled, in the two chronicle manuscripts, miscellaneous issues including geographical and statistical issues, besides some fake inscriptions of the coins he had already forged. When his fabrications were discovered he was sentenced to imprisonment in the citadel. Later the punishment was reduced and he was detained in an elegant villa which he had bought with the revenue of his fabrication. One of the ministers had persuaded him to improvise *Diwan of Egypt* in order to prove the existence of a Sicilian law restricting the barons’ power in favour of the expansion of the Emir’s power.

Michele Amari was born in Palermo on July 7, 1806. He spent early childhood with his grandfather, the renowned lawyer. He moved to live with his liberal father after the death of his grandfather.

Amari's masters were mainly of the clergy, except one: a secular master who aroused his interest in learning and had a great impact on him. Michele Amari had a strong faith in the independence of Sicily from the Bourbon Napolitano kingdom. This was first propagated in a short paper he wrote in 1835, confirming that Sicily had been always an independent kingdom. In 1839, he wrote another paper persuading the establishment of an Italian union which would combine equally free states. The writer, motivated by a strong national feeling, carried on defending his views, studying the history of Sicily and its political movements.

The Bourbons found his ideas dangerous, transferred him to Napoli, but with the help of friends he managed to go to France. On his arrival to Paris, Amari met many expatriate Italians and some French intellectuals. In Paris he started to learn Arabic encouraged by the school of Professor Di Sasi and Professor Michand and other Orientalists. In his voluntary exile, he kept in contact with the fans of Italian unity. Gradually he was convinced that Sicily should be part of a unified Italian state rather than being an independent state within a conferral union.

In 1848, Michele returned to Sicily and joined the Italian Revolutionary Movement. He became a member of the Parliament, a finance minister and a representative of the revolutionary movement in Paris. After the failure of that movement, he returned to Paris and held the position of the curator of Arab manuscripts in the National Library.
There he began collecting material for the Arab Sicilian Biblioteca, which was issued in Arabic. This included historical, geographical and literary material from Arab manuscripts. Later he translated The Biblioteca into Italian. Once published in Italian, The Biblioteca became the primary source for his book Storia dei Musulmani.

After the unification of Italy, he held the position of a history and Arabic language professor and chair; he also held the responsibility of the ministry of education and became a member in the Senate. At that time he reviewed The Arab Sicilian Biblioteca and prepared for the 2nd edition of the Storia dei Musulmani, which was issued after his death. Amari died in Florence in July 16, 1889 and the 2nd edition included some editing, additions, footnotes, and remarks; completed by the Orientalist Carlo Alfonso Nalino.

With this last work Amari aimed at completing the written history of the island, filling the gap that existed in the Islamic era of that history. He relied on documented events derived from original Arabic manuscripts unfolding the circumstances of Arab conquest, the people's conditions and the impact of Muslims. This came through direct reading of these manuscripts in Arabic and through the study of inscriptions and coins, based on reliable sources.

He planned to analyse the impact of Muslims on Sicily, especially during the rule of the Normans. At that time the Arab influence was reinforced and the Sicilian identity emphasised, overcoming the Normans in number and inclinations, moving to conquer Southern Italy.

While writing Storia, Amari followed an enlightening comparative method, expressing an objective approach, investigating the authenticity of narrations, evaluating their significance by means of reasoning and documented evidence. He would reject whatever is unreasoned or illogical, using a comparative approach and deductive conclusions.

In assembling the material for his book Storia dei Musulmani he relied on 70 manuscripts among them are: Riyad a nufus, Cambridge History, Al-Boy an, works of Ibn al-Athir, Nuiyri, Ibn Khalidun, Al-Tijani, Ibn Hawqal, Al-Idrisi, Ibn Jubair, Al-Mawardi Ibn Abd Rabbu, Ibn al-Qutiya, Ibn Khalikan and others. The writings by European Orientalists were also consulted, including Di Sassi, Gregorio, Tardia, Morso, Spinelli, Carrozi, di Farji, and Douzy.

In this respect Amari says: "I collected historical shards, geographical description, biographies, works of poetry and prose written by the Arabs of Sicily, besides all Arabic texts written by Sicilians or Arabs on Sicily and its inhabitants. I also found rich material with the help of my friends in Leiden, Cambridge, Heidelberg, Madrid, Petersburg, Tunis and Constantinople."

The incentive for the translation of this book goes back to the fact that only small parts, translated from other
languages, had reached history scholars, who showed great interest in reading this complete reference book translated directly from its original language. This was even more important, as it deals with a historical era which is very special for Arabs and Muslims. As for the method of translation, some points have to be summed up showing the characteristics of Amari's style and method which has to be considered while translating:

1. The book is written in an archaic language.
2. Sometimes the language is too brief, in others, it is too elaborate; sometimes it is followed a descriptive approach, at others, it is narrative.
3. Some Arabic names and topographical names written in Italian might sound inaccurate to the reader, which made it necessary to edit these names.
4. The names of some sources and authors cited in vol. I and II appear different in volume III.
5. Topographical names written by Arab historians have different pronunciations; however, they appear in the translation in their modern pronunciation, referring to both in the footnotes.
6. The author cites the Italian translation of plenty of Sicilian Arabic poetry. We had to look for the original Arabic texts, written by Sicilian poets.
7. The material of the book is translated, whether we agree or disagree with the author in some respects. The matter is left to Arab historians to discuss the author's views.

In my opinion the book is not just a history book, but rather a history of the civilization of Muslim Sicilians. It is engaged in not only the history of Muslim conquerors but also with that of Muslim Sicilians (Sicilians converted to Islam). I might differ with the opinion that Amari's book seeks to emphasize the role of Sicilian people under the Normans, restoring its own identity and its role in the reign of Sicily, making the best use of their own potentialities. The following step was to emancipate the south of the Italian Peninsula, giving them their freedom.

In writing about the Berber tribes that invaded Sicily before the Roman Empire, then writing about Sicily under the Roman and Byzantines, Amari was actually paving the way for the beginning of the 3rd chapter on Islam and the conquest in Sicily. Talking of Normans was just an opportunity to explain the conditions of Muslims and their contributions on the island after the fall of Islamic reign.

This can be proven by weighing the content of the book. Storia dei Musulmani is published in three volumes, each volume in two books. Only two chapters from the first book deal with Sicily before and during the rule of Romans and the beginnings of Christianity in Sicily. In the third chapter the writer discusses the beginnings of Islam and its establishment, the overthrow of Persians and Byzantines by Muslims. He carries on with the various aspects of Islamic conquest and Islamic presence in Sicily.

This continues until the end of the first book's ten chapters. In the second book which consists of 12 chapters, he talks about Byzantines and the narrations about them in Western and Arabic sources; the rest of the chapters deal with Islamic conquest and its consequences.

The 2nd volume consists of two books, the 1st of which deals with Sicily under Islamic rule and the continuation of conquest in parts of the island and the conditions of Christians there. The 2nd book carries on with the same line, dealing with battles fought by Muslims in the southern Italian peninsula.

The 3rd volume also consists of two parts, the first of which deals with Sicily under Muslim rule as it began to decline. The Norman Conquest and the conditions of Norman Kings and Muslim Sicilians are discussed here. The 2nd part mentions the battles fought between Normans and Muslims in Africa leading to the victory of Normans. The role of Muslims is highlighted in the account of King William (the Pious) and Frederick II. All this gives evidence that Muslim Sicily is the core of the book, and not as claimed by some, a mere historical narration of a certain era intended to disclose the merits of the people of Sicily.

Amari credited the success of Muslims in conquering Sicily to the injustice suffered by Sicilians under the Byzantines and their social conditions, as well as the deterioration in the military and religious domains. He mentions the Muslim technique for conquering the country, sending messengers first, launching quick raids, followed by the settlement of some Muslims in the conquered areas. He mentions the request extended by Ophimio to the Muslims of Afriqiya to help Sicilians get rid of Byzantine rule in 827 AD.

Amari reports on the landing of Asad Ibn al-Furat in Mazara, his victory there and progress towards Siracusa before his death. He also criticizes the Muslim sieges of Castro Giovanni, the arrival of assistance from Afriqiya and from Andalusia until the siege and fall of Palermo is completed. He criticizes the extension of Aghlabid operations in new lands on the island, their earliest naval battles against Byzantines and their capture of new cities, namely, Palatini and Calpalota, Corleone and Grottini.

The book cites the request of Napoli, part of the Italian peninsula, for help from Sicilian Muslims against enemies in 136 AH. Subsequently, Napoli offered naval help to Muslims in their siege of Messina on the eastern edge of the island. The relationship between Muslim rulers in Sicily and Napoli continued on. Napoli used to help Sicilians in conquering parts of the southern peninsula, reaching the Adriatic Sea. This meant the weakening of Byzantine naval power as well as the weakening of the Pope and his state and reducing his influence in the southern area, being engaged in other battles.

He also describes the attempt of the people of Afriqiya to attack Rome and Haethiya, their defeat in Ostia, their capture of Bari in the south, their attempt and their failure to conquer Salerno. The departure of the Byzantines from Sicily is also mentioned as well as the battles of Muslims in Calabria and Pola, the conquest of all parts of the island and its division into
three valleys namely: Wadi Mazara, Wadi Notto and Wadi Dimoni (Valley of the Devil).

The 2nd volume, with its two books (3rd and 4th), focuses on Islamic society in Sicily and system of sovereignty and administration there. It describes the conditions of soldiers, the competition between Arabs and Berbers and the conflict between them, the tendency to autonomy, the arrival of Ibrahim bin Ahmed in Sicily and the emergence of his kingdom there, establishing the city of Ruqada, participating in the attack on Calabria and Clozansa. Here the author writes about the divisions in Afriqiya and how the Berber fought against Aghlabids in 901AD.

Amari tries to estimate the size of the Muslim population in Sicily, their traditions and the statements of Ibn Hawqal concerning them. He mentions the number of cities, forts and villages and the population there, as well as the natural resources such as minerals, forests, agriculture, crafts and trade. He also focuses on architecture, inscriptions calligraphy and coins. The Sicilian "Tari" was struck and was initiated by Napoli, Salerno and Amalfi since its value was well recognized.

Amari mentions Muslim studies in the fields of Astronomy, Mathematics and Geography. He also mentions the book of medicine by Said Ibn Ibrahim, the studies in the field of philosophy, Qur'an recitals, jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism. There is a reference to men of letters and linguists who came to Sicily such as AL-Qahtani, Ibn Rachiq, Ibn Abdel Barr, Jaffar bin al-Qata and his son Ali. Samples of poetry and prose are cited, including the works of Ibn al-Tubi, Ibn al-Sabbagh, Ibn Bishr, al-Belnobi, Abi al-Arab and Ibn Hamdis who described the life of young nobles. He also mentioned Ibn Tazi and Raziq the poets.

The 3rd volume discusses the causes of the decline of Islamic reign in Sicily and the operations by Mijahed al-Amiri in Dania
and Sardinia and his return to Spain. Then he mentions the Normans, their disciplines, conditions, and their raid on Messina, their battles with Muslims, their occupation of one city after the other and their war with an Arab warrior called Binafert, who wasn’t mentioned in Arabic manuscripts. These battles took place in Sicily and Calabria.

The book describes King Roger’s omnipotence over Sicily, his instructions to prevent some Muslims from changing their religion and the organisation of his state in the Muslim style. These rules applied in government offices, Emiri property, taxes, customs and minting of coins. He deals with Roger’s war against Berbers, his agreement with them and his pact with al-Mahdiyya then its occupation and the occupation of Susa and Safakis. Later on he talks of the reformation by King Roger in the administration of kingdom, his organisation of court offices in the Islamic style, his interest in geography, his commission of Al-Sharif al-Edrissi to write in this field and to make a map of the world which was executed on a huge silver ball.

The book cites some poetry and its rhythms in Muwashshahat and Zagal. Then it moves to archaeological monuments, mining, agriculture, seeds, gardens, handicrafts, trade, navigation and the similarity between Arab art in Egypt and its counterpart in Sicily, the Arab origin of pointed architecture in European architecture, the decorative arts, inscriptions on the Moriall church portal, the influence of Arabs on Sicilian poetry and the Arab traditions that were established in the Sicilian mind.

Amari reported that Muslims were progressing eastwards in their conquests. They fought battles that had different results. Their forces stopped at Palermo and in ten years (831-841) they would have full control of Wadi Mazara, where they resided and transferred farmers to cultivate the farms they captured. In the subsequent 18 years (841-859), they were overcome after a fierce resistance in Wadi Notto, a rough, difficult land with mountains of less height than the mountains of Wadi Mazara and valleys of lesser width.

As Muslims established themselves in Wadi Mazara and Wadi Notto (860) they progressed to Wadi Dimoni, an area consisting of the Apennine mountain range and the Etna volcano (the fire mountain as it was called by Muslim historians). It is a well fortified region, conquered with great resistance.

Arabs divided Sicily into three valleys and the Normans adopted the same division. This carried on till the year 1818. Amari recorded that Arabs repeatedly attacked the area south of the heights and the fort of Castro Giovanni, which is the old name of the city called Enna.

According to Amari, Judge Abu’l Fadl, cited by Abou Ali, mentioned that Sicily had 18 cities, and more than 320 castles. However, Ibn al-Qatta pointed out that the island had 23 cities, 13 forts and countless farms. This inconsistency in the number of forts and castles is possibly due to the fact that, according to Amari, Abul Fadl’s castles were the upper fortifications of people living in villages and farms, which couldn’t be counted by the writer quoted by Ibn al-Qatta.

Amari presents a philological study of some common names, suggesting a new interpretation. For example, the name Sarocens given by Byzantines to Arabs, eventually describing all Muslims, has an uncertain derivation. San Jeronim “thinks they are the sons of Hagar, others think they are desert men”. However Amari thinks this word as a phonetic transcription of the Arabic word Sharqiyin, distorted in Greek and written with “s” sound as there is no “sh” sound.

Concerning the name Berbers, Amari doesn’t agree with European scholars who think that Arabs derived this name from Latin. He thinks that Arabs derived the name from the Arabic word barbar, which describes talking in a rough dialect. Moreover, the original meaning of the word in Greek is consistent with the Arab one. Gibbon noticed that the word ‘barbar’ in the Iliad referred to talking in a rough manner.

Amari often resorts to logic when accurate information is missing. He mentioned that the number of Muslim Sicilians in mid-10th Century (972) was around 750,000, relying on the number of boys circumcised on 8 April 962 with the son of Al-Muiz. Their total number was 15,000 and they were granted gifts of clothes and other small objects equivalent to 100,000 dirham by Al-Muiz. They were age seven like the son of the caliph. Amari admits that “the number of the boys certainly doesn’t refer to the number of Muslim population in the whole island; however, it can give an approximate estimation of their number”.

In the footnotes he mentions that the number of male boys age seven is nearly 1% of the population according to statistics in France and some Italian regions. If we suppose that half of the 15,000 is at the age of 7, the other half is above eight, then the Muslim population of Sicily in 972 reaches 750,000, which is consistent with other calculations based on other suppositions.

Amari wonders in another example: “Where and when was the pointed arch in the Arab style built for the 1st time?” He carries on saying: “this can’t be deducted from a few European studies in the regions adjacent to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers”. Amari confirms that building in this style coincides with the extension of the sacred mosque in Makkah and that “necessity has resulted in such beautiful form because of the lack of space”. The style was later adopted in all Muslim worlds. Amari confirms the adoption of Arabic style of architecture in building Al-Khalisa (937) in the capital of Sicily. Some Arabic inscriptions still survive in Trinini as well as in Bab al-Bahr. They are also visible in Ziza palace and Cuba palace.

In some cases Amari resorts to narrative style, describing a battle between Muslims and Constantini, called dthot al –Sowari which was the 1st naval battle fought by Muslims. This narrative style was often derived from Ibn al-Athir.

In conclusion we adopt the same view Amari reached at in the end of the third volume, “the only confirmed conclusion” is that Muslim conquest brought to Sicily, from the 9th Century until the 11th Century, such prosperity and progress not experienced in other regions in Italy. This civilization flourished during 12th Century and most of the 13th century in the Italian Peninsula and contributed to its progress.
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