Hadeeth ad-Dar
Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah
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About the journal

Hadeeth ad-Dar is a publication of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah. Every year, the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah organises a series of lectures known as the Cultural Season. Hadeeth ad-Dar was created to share these lectures with academic and cultural institutions and Friends of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah around the world. Cultural Season 15 will get underway in October 2009 and, as with previous years, will present scholars in a wide variety of fields related to arts and culture in the Islamic world.

The Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is a government cultural organisation based on a Kuwaiti private art collection. Since its inception in 1983, DAI has grown from a single focus organisation created to manage the loan of the prestigious al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait to become an internationally recognised cultural organisation.

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Contents

02  5 January 2009
Books of Stars, Mechanical Devices, and Maqamat and Animal Fables: Image and Genre in Medieval Arabic Manuscripts
David Roxburgh

08  19 January 2009
The Islamic Arab Achievement in Translation
Ahmed Elman

12  9 March 2009
War and Trade at the Epoch of the Crusades and the Role of the Indian Ocean: the World’s First Globalisation
Werner Daum

17  16 March 2009
Calligraphy in the Mughal Albums in the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art
Claus-Peter Haase

23  6 April 2009
Arms Fit for a Prince: Highlights from the Collection of Historical Arms and Armour in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna
Agnes Stillfried

27  20 April 2009
Images of Makkah and Madinah in an Islamic Prayer Book
Jan Just Wittkam

LNS 118G
Translucent yellowish greenish glass cup
Possibly Mesopotamian region
9th – 10th century
H: 7.8 cm max. diam. 8.5 cm
The practice of illustrating texts written in Arabic flourished after 1000 CE and peaked in the 1200s. The majority of such books were about science, principally astronomy, fine technology, medicine, and pharmacology, with a smaller number devoted to belles-lettres. The parameters of the illustrated "Arabic book," as it came to be called, as an artistic tradition were defined by Richard Ettinghausen in his book Arab Painting published in 1962. Ettinghausen established a canon by identifying key illustrated manuscripts in collections worldwide, described their artistic features and developments, and offered a framework for their study. Other scholars have developed Ettinghausen's ideas, but we still lack a comprehensive account that advances complex analyses of word and image, explanations of the cultural impulses that sustained a desire for pictures in the face of presumed doubts about their legitimacy, and the factors that shaped the formal appearance of images.

Recent years have witnessed renewed study of illustrated Arabic manuscripts, including Dioscurides' De Materia Medica (The Materials of Medicine). This treatise on drugs dates to ca. 50-70 CE and is one of many Greek and Hellenistic texts transmitted to Arab culture. Illustrations to this text offer cures for human ailments, its pages peppered with illustrations of plants, and include double-page paintings depicting Dioscurides with his students. These developed author-portraits responded to Greek and Byzantine models, but developed an iconography to highlight a specific Arab concern for the transmission of knowledge and its modalities of education over generations. We have Eva Hoffman to thank for these ideas.

Other manuscripts of the De Materia Medica contain images that are not required by the text at all, specifically, complex scenes showing figures preparing raw materials and refining them for the production of medicines. Such visual surplus in painting—where the image exceeds its supposed functional purpose of documenting and describing—is not limited to Dioscurides' book. One could also consider the Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya (The Book of Useful Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices) completed by Isma'il b. al-Razzaq al-Jazari for his patron Mahmud b. Muhammad b. Qara Arslan b. Dawud b. Suqman b. Artuq in the late 1100s. Al-Jazari's text represents the culmination of knowledge about fine technology, a branch of engineering concerned with mechanisms and controls required for making automata. Al-Jazari's work traces its ancestry to the Banu Musa b. Shakir, three brothers active in Baghdad in the 800s CE who developed Hellenistic era works on Pneumatics and Archimedes's studies on water-clocks. In his preface, al-Jazari

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notes its thoroughness of description and that for every specimen (shaki) he has drawn a picture annotated with letters for guidance. Al-Jazari's intensely descriptive text finds its parallel in not only polychrome painted images but also monochrome drawn elements. In polychrome and monochrome, these images offer diagrams for the construction of each machine and are annotated with ciphers and numerals keyed to passages in the text.

Unlike earlier illustrated copies of this text, and those of the Banu Musa, painting is fully developed but the surplus elements of the images do not enhance the reader's comprehension of text. In essence, we face a paradox of a text whose information is super-abundant but a series of illustrations that do not fully exploit it along strictly functional lines. This paradox highlights the sometimes fallacious thinking about the relation of words and images in Arabic books, or at least that we have a long way to go to understand them correctly and in more nuanced ways.

The line-based mode of visual expression used in illustrated copies of the Automata invokes another category of scientific text that has been better studied. It is 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi's Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabita (Book of Constellations of the Fixed Stars), a work on astronomy completed before 986. In his book al-Sufi built on Ptolemy's description of single stars and constellations and used Arab sources and Bedouin traditions of the Kitab al-anwa' (Book of rain). Facing pages of al-Sufi's book show constellation diagrams in a doubled form—one shows how the constellation is seen in the sky and the other on a celestial globe. This is a stark visual system intended to enhance the visibility of the stars and permit the labelling of those that had names. Legibility was not only important for the subject matter at hand, but also for the easy transfer of such constellation maps to the surfaces of celestial globes.

In looking to forms of illustration and image not addressed by Ettinghausen—a study dominated by polychrome painting with the one figural exception of the Book of Stars—one could go further than the typical art historian has been willing to consider visual aspects of calligraphy, studying how writing utilizes visual effects we more readily associate with drawing. Such conventions had a long history and were fully developed in works of science, such as one finds in the treatise on surgery (Kitab al-tashrif li-man 'agiza' an al-ta'if) of Abu al-Qasim al-Zahrawi (d. 1010; Cordoba), where surgical techniques are described alongside the instruments used for each procedure.
In moving beyond the contributions of Ettinghausen and others, there is much to be done with the Arabic book, especially in thinking through the relations between words and images, and the various ways in which they collaborate to produce effects and meanings.

The *Maqamat* (Assemblies) of Abu Muhammad al-Qasim b. 'Ali al-Hariri (1054-1122) is a tour-de-force of Arabic literature: although it is a text about the persuasive power of language delivered through the living voice, part of its brilliance could only be appreciated by seeing the letters of the Arabic alphabet written on paper. This applied to palindromic sentences and to sentences written entirely with, or without, diacritical marks. Despite its many difficulties and arcane language, some 700 copies were authorized during the author's lifetime and no less than eleven illustrated copies are extant from the early 1200s and 1334. By far the best-known illustrated copy is the example dated 1237 (Ramadan 634), copied and illustrated by Yahya b. Mahmud b. Yahya b. Abi al-Hasan b. Kurriha al-Wasiti. The manuscript is now in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 5847).

Although al-Hariri's name became synonymous with the genre, he records his debts to al-Hamadhani (968-1008) in the preface to his *Maqamat*. Al-Hariri composed his *Maqamat* between 1101 and 1108. Much scholarship about the *maqamat* genre has focused on the relation between the texts by al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri, in addition to the origins of the genre. Scholars have linked al-Hamadhani's and al-Hariri's *Maqamat* to earlier works by al-Jahiz, al-Dinawari, and al-Tanukhi, for example.

While literary historians have not ceased to work on al-Hariri's *Maqamat*, the same cannot be said for art historians. The last comprehensive effort to discuss the manuscripts of the *Maqamat* was made by Oleg Grabar in 1984. Grabar marshalled all known copies of al-Hariri's *Maqamat* from the 1200s to 1300s to prepare the groundwork for an examination of how the text was visualized and integrated with painted images. Ultimately, his interest migrated to other questions; how the illustrated *Maqamat* participated in the widespread contemporary production of illustrated books—described by Ettinghausen as an "efflorescence" of the arts—and how a range of objects, including books, reflected the interests of a clientele who seemed to favour figural subjects.

For Grabar, the *Maqamat* embodied the priorities of a literate, Arabic-speaking, urban society that was now becoming a patronage class in its own right. In 1995, Shirley Guthrie picked up on this idea. Seeing an interest in representing daily life in the paintings of the *Maqamat*, Guthrie approached them as a form of social reportage, as visual records approaching ethnography in the perspectives they offered of now distant cultures. Guthrie also responded to Ettinghausen's notion of a pictorial and content-
based realism beginning in the art of the Fatimids from the late 900s to 1179 and continuing under the Seljuq and Ayyubid dynasties through the 1200s.

Non-existent are studies that attend to the ways that the images function in relation to the text. The absence is easy to explain because art historians’ assessments disabled such an approach. In 1959, David Storm Rice remarked that the text requires no illustration and suggested that the illustrations are a distraction—through a rather risky deductive method, he argues that no extant copy from al-Hariri’s time is illustrated, including a manuscript copied by the author’s grandson in 1182. In 1962, Ettinghausen opined that the artists of the Maqamat were “oblivious to the philological pyrotechnics of the Maqamat”; in 1974, David James observed, “The illustrative potential of the fifty tales is meagre”; and in 1984, Grabar asked “What do these images do to a text which was only valued for its verbal acrobatics?” concluding that the “purpose and success of the story lie exclusively in its language, not in its narrative.”

The recent occasion of producing a facsimile edition (London: Touch@art, 2003) of the 1237 Paris manuscript did not stimulate any modifications to Grabar’s earlier position. His observations yield a conundrum for art historians: if al-Hariri’s Maqamat is not about the frame-stories, narratives advanced in fifty components, but is rather about feats of language that could not be visualized in forms commensurate to the complexity of the text, why are so many Maqamat illustrated? Indeed, why is al-Hariri’s text one of the most heavily illustrated Arabic texts and why is visual narrative the pictorial mode of choice?

This conundrum is easily enough abated if one restores the visuality of written text. Al-Hariri’s text is a form of verbal play, a text constructed to explore language and its possibilities through the letters of the alphabet. Two of the most obvious manifestations of al-Hariri’s play are the palindromic sentences and sentences written entirely with, or without, diacritical marks. On a sensorial register, these effects are more readily seen than heard. Moreover, in copying out al-Hariri’s text, al-Wasiti organised it to structure monologue and dialogue and to show species of writing, including a sequence of riddles set apart from the text. The formal patterning of text emphasizes structures of discourse and speech through visual means. To counter art historians, one can say that the written Arabic was a sufficiently adequate visual manifestation to obviate pictorial attempts at literal translation of al-Hariri’s ingenious and arcane literary meanings.

There is also a maqama in which written versions of text play a prominent role. In maqama 7, of Barka'id, near Mosul, a blind man and an old woman arrive at the mosque. As the preacher gives his sermon, al-Harith watches the couple move through the mosque, dropping pieces of paper into the laps of people who might be charitable towards them. The pieces of paper are inscribed with writing done in various colors. When one falls into al-Harith’s hands he reads the text to discover verses of alliteration and clever plays on words. When they are finished, the woman collects the papers and money but finds out that one paper is missing. In exchange for it, al-Harith asks the woman to reveal the name of the person who composed it. She tells him he comes from Saruj. Al-Harith figures out it is Abu Zayd, fears that he has really gone blind, and later finds him (when Abu Zayd opens his eyes to reveal perfect eyesight). In its use of the written texts, this maqama further thematises the
written aspect of language and the visual nature of discourse.

A second dimension to the word/image conundrum—which has persisted as a red herring—has to do with the modern critical reception of al-Hariri's *Maqamat*. Though early literary historians favoured its verbal acrobatics and learned language, recent approaches to the fifty *maqamas* have restored the importance of narrative and also suggested a thematic coherence across the assemblies. These problems between word and image can also be addressed by a shift of emphasis. What happens if we view the *Maqamat* text as a particular form of collaboration with images? Instead of emphasising what is perceived as an irreconcilable difference between the capacities of word and image—and lamenting the absence of improbable visual manifestations of text—can we think of *content* not only as information but also as theme? If we understand the text of the *Maqamat* as thematising discourse, then the theme of narrative would be an appropriate choice for the illustrations precisely because of its discursive potential. It is hardly surprising that the frame stories should have been the artist's primary choice.

Another way to consider the collaboration between text and image in a manuscript copy of al-Hariri's *Maqamat* involves the effect of the paintings as a whole. Their cumulative effect is to render a visual morphology—a recurring, repetitive pictorial means for showing settings, staging discourse between groups or pairs of figures, for example—and always to emphasize the act of communication. Discourse is suggested by the pose of the figure sitting or standing, the tilting of the head, and variations in hand gesture, including the outstretched open hand or hands, the raised and extended arm, the pointed finger. A finger held to the lip signals astonishment or cogitation. In nearly every painting, regardless of the number of figures, we see a speaker and his audience. Our apprehension of communication in process is enhanced by animated bodies that assume various positions in relation to each other. The visual language of discourse is made especially dramatic by the abrupt contrast of painted surface against unpainted ground. The absence of frames lends the image an immediate relationship to text.

Though the *Maqamat* need be read in no particular order—each one of its fifty components stands alone—al-Hariri's *Maqamat* begins with a preface and ends with a confession, which finds a penitent Abu Zayd in Basra. By the time of its illustration, a fixed sequence of the fifty assemblies was maintained, though this is no guarantee that the reader read the assemblies in numerical order, one through fifty. The *Maqamat* as a text was an aggregate of parts whose coherence lay not in structure but in theme. The illustrations function in a different way. While the illustration of a *maqama* obeys the anecdote's autonomy, each *maqama* conceived visually as a chain of cause and effect,
the cumulative effect of the illustrations has a different result.

Just think of rate of illustration. In some copies of al-Hariri’s Maqamat, there is an illustration on nearly every folio. In the Paris manuscript of 1237, the 168 folios have 99 paintings; the St. Petersburg manuscript, ca. 1225-35, has 358 folios and 98 paintings; the London manuscript, dated 1256, has 155 folios and 87 paintings. A high rate of illustration allowed for several images to be given to an individual maqama and to inspire a sense of coherence across the Maqamat. Morphological patterns in picture-conceptualization also create a visual coherence across the manuscript by their recurring paradigms. Although the narrative moments do not add up to an overarching sequence, their high rate of appearance and repetitive form give the impression through accumulation of a persistent theme.

There are other ways by which one can consider the specific collaboration of text and image to have occurred in al-Wasiti’s version of illustrating al-Hariri’s text, but the limited scope of this synopsis does not permit elaboration. To close, there is one specific story in the Maqamat that encapsulates the overall message of the work. (Here the didactic function of al-Hariri’s text is stressed, a point he makes in the preface to the Maqamat, viz. that the work is instructive and not only entertaining where he also invokes the reception of Kalila wa Dimna by Ibn al-Muqaffa’). For Maqama 18, named after Sinjar, al-Wasiti illustrated the text with four paintings arranged as two double-page compositions. A caravan stops at Sinjar, where a merchant giving a wedding feast invites all classes of people from the town and visitors. After the heavier dishes were eaten, a glass vase of sweetmeats was presented. When Abu Zayd got sight of the vase, he fled the room and said he would only return when the vase was taken away. When asked to explain his actions, he answers that he once owned a slave girl and spoke to a friend about her many accomplishments. The friend told the governor about the slave girl and the governor took the girl and gave her to the prince. Since then Abu Zayd vowed never to stay in the company of something that could not be kept secret. Because glass was transparent, he could not sit opposite the vase.

We are more than well aware of the symmetry between Abu Zayd and his ideal presented through the metaphor of the glass vase. Whether animate or inanimate, physical properties should be such that a secret, or a true nature, is not disclosed. Opacity is favored over transparency. And of course, throughout the maqamas, Abu Zayd enacts this ideal when he appears in various guises that make him unrecognizable. He uses language to ensnare his prey, rendering transparent language opaque.

Thanks to Professor Roxburgh for the illustrations for this lecture.
The Islamic Arab achievement in Translation

Ahmed Etman
Presented in Arabic
19 January 2009

One of the main features of Abbasid translation movement is multiplicity of sources, combining extreme west and extreme east in its evolution and its impact. Translation tributaries came from different languages and sources, stepping over religious, ethnic and colour boundaries. Muslim Arabs, Persians, Indians, Syrians, Romans and others contributed to those translations and reaped their fruits. Some of the contributors were even from heathen culis. They all worked under an Islamic Arab umbrella, where no distinction was held between Arabs and non-Arabs except by piety and perfection of work. There is no exaggeration in the claim that such translation movement embodies the “Islamic concept of peace” based on brotherhood among nations and integration of civilisations as well as cultural dialogue. In this respect, we won’t stop at some conflicts that took place in the Islamic caliphate instead we trace a general dominating attitude embodied in the Abbasid translation movement, a remarkable feature of which is cultural and linguistic multiplicity.

Generally speaking, one can say that Abbasid Baghdad in this style revives the ancient Alexandrian model when Ptolemaic Alexandria was the cultural capital of the Mediterranean, with all its western and eastern civilisations. Alexandria inherited ancient Eastern Civilisations, in particular, the ancient Egyptian civilisation as well as the Greek classical civilisation, then exported all that to Rome and the West. Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city embracing different races, with numerous ethnic groups with different languages. Talking of Cleopatra, Plutarch (lived in 100 AD) mentions that she knew eight languages, including Arabic, switching easily from one language to another.

This Alexandrian model was in the mind of Al-Mansour, the Abbasid Caliph, as he laid the foundation for Baghdad. Al-Ma'mun completed the picture when he established “Bayt al-Hikma” with the aim of accomplishing the mission of translation. ‘Bayt al-Hikma’ recalls the Mouselion (the temple of the muses) in Alexandria, which was a research centre or a university. Similarly, physicians, scientists, philosophers, and men of letters contributed to the movement of translation.

Ibn Abi Usaybia in his book *Mifta'h al-Tib* (Part I p. 108): “These books were abridged by Alexandrians from Galen’s work, writing their digest, claiming that they could substitute the main texts of Galen’s books”. In his book *Kitab Akhbar al-Hukama* Ibn al-Qifti (P.71) says: “It was the Alexandrians who established Dar al-Elm in Alexandria. They also founded the medical research council, writing

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commentaries and digests to facilitate their comprehension and transportation in case of travel".

The earliest reference to the conveyance of Alexandrian learning to Baghdad was the German ophthalmologist Max Mayerhoff. Mayerhoff published an article in 1930 that is considered to be a turning point in the studies of Arabic translations from Greek.

To sum up what has been mentioned, Baghdad was the inheritor of the Alexandrian heritage. It is definitely Alexandria Nova, carrying on with the same mission of conserving ancient learning for future generations of humanity. However, Baghdad surpassed Alexandria in some respects due to historical evolution. It was capable of connecting the Far East (India, China) to the western heritage of the Greeks. Later these achievements were transported to Morocco and Andalusia in Spain.

Translation has been always relevant to advancement. The Abbasid translation movement aimed at making progress in the fields of science and improving the State role in economic and administrative fields. Abbasids realized that other nations were more advanced in scientific research (what we now call "technology"), and that such works should be transferred to the Islamic world as an essential requirement for progress. Consequently they translated the views of the encyclopaedic Aristotle.

Al-Khwarizmi wrote Mafateeh al-ulom (Clues of Sciences) and Al-Farabi wrote lhsa al-ulom (Enumeration of sciences). Many other philosophers wrote on the subject of science, which reflected genuine interest in science, the philosophy of science and the development of education in Arab schools. Greek sciences were translated, beginning with medicine (Galen and Hippocrates), mathematics starting with arithmetic and geometry, mechanics or the science of mechanical devices (Euclid and Archimedes), geography, astronomy (Ptolemy) physics, alchemy, agriculture, botany, pharmacology, optics, phonetics and music.

In the early stages it was a word for word translation, difficult to understand, especially when Greek terms were written in Arabic letter as in the case of "astrolabe", which was replaced later on by the Arabic word "saheefa", the most famous of which for its accuracy was that designed by al-Zurgali. Undecipherable translations were later edited by skilful translators. Very often we read on a text: "translated by... and edited by..."

In the beginning texts were translated from Greek into Syriac then into Arabic. Later on Greek works were translated directly into Arabic. The work of Hunayn bin Ishac is a model for accurate scientific translation. He was born in al-Hirah near Euphrates River. He belonged to the Ebadi, an Arab Syriac speaking tribe. A Nestorian Christian, he excelled in four languages: Syriac, Arabic, Greek, and Persian. This reflects linguistic and cultural multiplicity during the Abbasid era, particularly in Baghdad.

Hunayn left us a list of Galen’s works that reached 129, of which Hunayn translated 100, evidence of his comprehensive knowledge of Galen’s work not available even in Greek sources. What makes Hunayn’s work more distinctive is that the original Greek sources of some of his translated works have been lost, with the result that Hunayn works are the only source available for modern scholars. Some scholars talk of Galenus Arabus referring most information on Galen in the Arabic translations done by Hunayn.

Hunayn’s style of translation relied on a comparative study of different manuscripts of the same text. This allowed him to reach perfection, preparing an accurate or at least acceptable Greek text. Therefore he began with textual criticism or editing which required extensive linguistic knowledge.

Arabic translation didn’t only cover Greek texts, but also extended to Persian and Indian heritage as in the magnificent work of Abu-al Rayhan al-Bayruni (d.440 AH/1048 AD) comparing Indian learning and that of the Greeks. The book is entitled Tahqiq ma’l’hind min Maqula Maqbula aw Marthola.

Arabic translations established a link between Indian and Greek civilisations, relying on historical information about the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th Century BC. Alexander reached Central Asia and established strongholds of Greek culture in Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana. This blended with the prevailing local Indian culture there.
Marv in Eastern Persia was a meeting point of civilisations and commercial exchange in the region. The route between Marv and Baghdad was quite busy as all kinds of cultural and commercial exchanges took place. Caliph al-Mamun, founder of the "Bayt al Hikma" was born here. This gives us an idea of why he established "Bayt al Hikma", and why the Barmakids had advocated the translation movement they held high administrative posts in the Abbasid era. They were patrons of translations from Persian, Greek and Indian. Their earliest origins came from Indian Bactria.

In a book entitled Tabaqat al-Umum by Sae’d al-Andalusi we read: "In the year 156 H. a scholar from India presented Caliph al-Mansour with a book on arithmetic known as Al-Sind Hindi in the movement of the stars. Al-Mansour ordered the book to be translated into Arabic and that a second book be adapted from the original source in order to be used in the study of the planets. This was accomplished by Mohammed bin Ibrahim al-Fazari and the book was entitled Al-Sind Hind al-Kabir.

The term "Ilm al Kalam" in Arabic is the equivalent of "logos" in Greek which means "logic" or "Kalam". This developed in Islamic Arab culture only after the translation of Aristotle. However, many Arab philosophers criticised Aristotle's views and presented new philosophical issues related to Islam, prophethood and the universal vision of life from an Islamic Arab point of view.

One of essential challenges faced by Muslim Arab philosophers is the issue of conformity between religion and philosophy. Averroes confirmed, three centuries before the European renaissance that Islam is not necessarily an antagonist of philosophy.

Physica and Topica by Aristotle were among the early Greek works to be translated into Arabic. It was already exploited by those engaged in religious argument whether Muslim/Muslim or Christian Muslim argument. Abbasids were equally interested in Aristotelian logic as well as Muslim jurisprudence.

According to Sae’d al-Andalusi (P.49): Abdullah bin al-Muqafa the Persian orator and the scribe of Abu Ja’far al-Mansour, translated Aristotle's treatises on logic, including analytics. He also translated (from Syriac) the Introduction to Aristotle's categories written by Porphyry of Tyre in Greek, known as the Isagoge. He translated it in an easy decipherable text. His translation of the Indian book Kalila wa Dimna was the first Persian text to be translated into Arabic.

Recently the issue of the oriental roots of Greek and Roman civilisations has been raised in the study of Martin Bernal in his book Black Athena published in three parts. The first part has a subtitle: Afro-Asiatic roots of Classical civilisation which was translated into Arabic in 1997, as part of the National Translation Project sponsored by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Culture.

The introduction of Greek literature to Arabs came through Aristotle's work. According to Ibn al-Nadim, Aristotle's Poetica was translated to Arabic thrice. The version by Matta bin Yunis al-Qinai (d.328 AH/940 AD) still survives today. He was the head of the Aristotelian school in Baghdad. We still have four summaries of Poetica written by Al-Kindi (d. 252 AH/780 AD), Farabi (268 – 338 AH/870 – 950 AD), Ibn Sina (d. 428 AH/1037 AD) and Averroes (514-586 AH/1198-1162 AD) The work of Averroes was translated into Latin during the 12th century by Hermannus the German, becoming the principal source on Aristotle's Poetica until the original Greek text was published for the first time in 1508, during the Renaissance in Italy.

This raises the question why did Arabs avoid translating Greek poetry. First of all their knowledge of Greek poetry was limited as it was derived from texts on philosophy and medicine by Aristotle and Galen. Many literary idioms were incomprehensible to them since it was relevant to unknown arts like tragedy and comedy.

However some Greek literary forms found their way to Arab literature such as the art of historical narration common in Hellenistic tradition, the art of gnomy. This included the narratives and wise sayings attributed to Alexander the Great and Homer. Some stories mention that Arabs had translated the Iliad into Arabic and that Hunayn ibn Ishak used to recite the Iliad in its original language in Baghdad. However there is no evidence of that translation.

The interpretation of this attitude could be the Arab pride in their own poetry, so strong that they consider themselves the best poets on earth. Another reason could be Al-Jahiz's idea that poetry
is not able to be translated (Kitab al-Hayawan, Cairo 1938-1945- Part I). However, the strongest reason behind avoiding the translation of Greek poetry is its strong relationship to mythology. This might be have been seen as irrelevant to Arabic poetry and therefore not worth translating. This has changed in modern Arabic poetry, for example in the poetry of the Apollo school, Salah Abdel Sabour, Badr Shaker al Sayab, Abdel Wahab al-Bayati, Adonis, and more.

The cultural harvest of the translation movement can be summed up in the following points.

First, the assimilation that took place in Arab Islamic Civilisations paved the way for a comprehensive renaissance in all branches of science and learning. Arabic translations became reference material for scientific researchers, making the Arabic language the language of international culture and science.

Second, Arab achievement in translation travelled from East to West, in Andalus and Sicily. There, in the 12th century, a broad translation movement began from Arabic into Latin. One of the most renowned centres for translation then was Toledo, where outstanding translators practiced such as Gundisalvo and Gerard of Cremona who came from Italy to Toledo and returned with more than 81 Arabic works translated into Latin. There was also Hermanius the German who translated many Arabic works into Latin, the most important of which are Averroes’s summaries of Aristotle’s “Poetica” and “Rhetorica”. Certainly, this highlights Arab Renaissance in its Golden Age.

Third: The Arab translations later translated into Latin helped other civilisations benefit from the fruits of Arab relations with ancient oriental cultures, especially in Persia and India. Much of this was transferred to Europe through Latin translations from Arabic. Therefore one can say that east and west came together through translation, which formed an essential element in the structure of Modern Western Civilisation.

Fourth: The European Renaissance, from the 15th century, focused on Latin rather than Greek works. Westerners were more familiar with Latin works than Greek. Translations of Arab translations into Latin had a remarkable role in the revival of Greek heritage in the European Renaissance. It was through Arabs that Western Europe was introduced to Greek works, especially those of Aristotle and Galen.

Fifth: Arab translations of Greek texts saved many works whose original versions have been lost. In addition, some undecipherable terms in old manuscripts were corrected and others were explained. Arab translators, by necessity, often had to edit old Greek texts. Many modern European editions refer to Arabic translations especially in connection with Aristotle, Galen, and new Platonism.
War and Trade at the Epoch of the Crusades and the Role of the Indian Ocean: the World’s First Globalisation

Werner Daum
Presented in English
9 March 2009

The Crusades – the roughly 200 years from 1099 to 1291 – loom large in our memory. They are history – but history of the kind that does not go away. Our collective understanding, however, does not correspond to the reality of the period where war and trade, conflict and criss-cross alliances between Muslim rulers and crusader states alternated. The terrible fourth Crusade of 1204 that destroyed and plundered Constantinople, is the most obvious example that the crusades were not a simplistic conflict between “East and West”. The dominant feature of the period was trade, not conflict. Modern critical historical reading also tells us that the flamboyant battle stories in both Muslim and Christian sources with their tens of thousands of victims must not be taken at face value.

![Image of medieval scene]

The enormous progress Europe had made from about 1000 on, in agriculture, textile production, machinery, and particularly in mining meant that trade relations with the wealthy and civilised Arab world increased considerably. The Arab world, centred on Cairo and Alexandria, also had more goods to offer than before, such as luxury textiles, paper, and the products from India and Yemen, such as cotton, dyes (indigo, madder), spices, sugar, and soap.

In the Treaty of 1192, Saladin guaranteed the Christian merchants free trade in all his lands. In Akkon (Acre), which remained in Christian hands during the full period of the Crusades, Muslim merchants, many of them from Mosul, thrived. The treaty concluded on February 18, 1229 between al-Malik al-Kamil Muhammad, the Sultan of Egypt and Palestine, and formally also Lord of Yemen, and the Roman (German) Emperor Frederick II, contained many paragraphs on trade. Saladin, in his treaty with Pisa’s envoy Ilebrando (September 25, 1173) secured imports of weapons, timber and tar.

As this will be referred to again, it may be mentioned here that iron production had greatly increased in Europe, particularly in Germany, that long strong timber (indispensable for ship-building and the roofing of palaces) had become very scarce around the Mediterranean and was now traded

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displaced Basra and the Gulf route. Trade from Cairo via Aden to India increased dramatically in the 11th and particularly the 12th century.

Thanks to the "Geniza" documents, we are very well informed about the Jewish merchants' trade at this period. We can generalize the picture gained from these Jewish sources for all commercial activities which were of course mostly in the hands of Muslim traders.

A pious custom among Jews and Muslims meant that documents containing the word "God" should not be discarded. They should instead be "buried" in a particular room or niche in a Mosque or a Synagogue. When the "Geniza" ("burial place" for documents) of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo was opened at the end of the 19th century and its contents dispersed to libraries all over the world, thousands of business letters (because of the word "God" in the greetings) dating mostly from the 11th to 13th centuries were retrieved. They paint the most vivid picture of India trade that began to thrive in this period. Its centre was Aden and the main products were textiles, dyes, spices, medicines, wax, wine, paper, and in particular metals, such as copper, tin, lead, iron. The intensity and indeed almost normality of this first truly intercontinental trading network may be gleaned from the following few examples:

In 1130, three Jewish silversmiths, one of them from Morocco, travelled from Aden to Ceylon, looking for work there.

From 1132 to 1149, Abraham ben Yiju, a Tunisian Jew, ran a copper and bronze factory in India, on the Malabar coast:

Letter dated 1139, sent from Aden to India: "I received your shipment of iron, from the Nukhada Ibn Abi al-Kata'ib..." But the ship of Sheikh Abu al-Hasan bin Ja'far sank near Aden. Divers recovered about half the iron, but the pepper is lost."

A letter of 1140, from Aden to India, in reference to an order for bronze ewers, lamps etc, describes in great technical detail the requirements for their production and decoration; the raw material needed was sent to India on the same ship.

The year 1173: The Opening of the Indian Ocean

The story of Saladin is well known. I can therefore limit myself here to those elements that brought Ayubid rule to Yemen, and thus, consequently,
initiated the process of unification and Islamisation of the Indian Ocean.

In 1171, Saladin dissolved the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo, and established himself as ruler in Egypt (in addition to Greater Syria). In 1172, after the mutiny of his black troops, Saladin sent his brother Turanshah into Upper Nubia and Northern Sudan. From there, in 1173, Turanshah crossed the Red Sea, conquered Mecca, and marched southwards. Yemen is not plundered (Turanshah to his soldiers after the capture of Aden in 1174: "We did not come to plunder this city, but to make use of its income") - instead, the world's most modern centralised administration was established, a mercantilistic system was introduced that encouraged local production and exports, and an intelligent tax and customs system was created.

The Ayyubids were drawn to Yemen by a mixture of coincidence (the Sudan campaign) and opportunity (crossing the Red Sea and becoming the Guardians of Mecca), but most of all by very straightforward politico-religious-economic motives: there were still two small Isma'ili/Shi'a kingdoms in Yemen that had much relied upon the now vanquished Cairo Fatimids (the Sulayhids, in Dhu Jibla, and the Zuray'ids in Aden), but the main prize was of course the lure of the lucrative India trade centred on Aden.

The Ayyubids ruled Yemen for only half a century. In 1228, one of their lords, al-Malik al-Mansur 'Umar, shook away his allegiance to Cairo and took power for himself, thus establishing the Rasulid dynasty. The following 220 years of Rasulid rule in Yemen were the most splendid and brilliant period of the Middle Ages in Southern Arabia. The most important Sultan of the Bani Rasul was its second ruler, al-Malik al-Muzaffar Yusuf, 1249-1295, whose kingdom encompassed Mecca in the North, and all three major ports on the South Coast: Aden, al-Shihr, and Dhofar.

Domination of the Indian Ocean and navigation through those vast watery expanses also needed instruments, and navigational sciences, and their encouragement by the ruler himself. Al-Muzaffar Yusuf's son and successor, Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf 'Umar made himself a beautiful nautical instrument, an astrolabe. He is the only ruler, European or Oriental, ever to have done so. He also authored a treatise on instruments that not only describes the manufacture of his astrolabe, but also contains the earliest description of the compass in an Arabic scientific work. Both the treaty (in Cairo, Dar al-Kutub) and the astrolabe (Metropolitan Museum, New York) have been preserved. The astrolabe is dated 690 H (1291) and bears the inscription: "This astrolabe is the work of 'Umar ibn Yusuf ibn 'Umar ibn 'Ali ibn Rasul al-Muzaffari with his own hand and to the best of his ability in the year 690 Hijra".

The Nur al-Ma'arif
A few years ago, a unique manuscript was discovered in Yemen, and given the title "Nur al-Ma'arif". It contains the tax and economic statistics of the last years of al-Muzaffar, as well as statistics on trade and customs in Aden. Among other things, we learn that civil servants and soldiers paid income tax! (1%)

The importance of this manuscripts can not be overstated. It is (apart from the above mentioned Geniza documents) the only detailed economic source material from the Islamic world during the High Middle Ages.

As it is well known, trade in the Indian Ocean functioned with the monsoons, allowing two seasons from India to Aden and return, and the other leg from
Aden to Cairo, or, to be more precise: to ‘Ayydhab, on the Red Sea, and from there by caravan to the Nile, and by ship to Cairo and Alexandria (in June from ‘Ayydhab to Aden, return journey in October).

Just like in medieval Europe (“Stapelpflicht”), direct trade was not permitted: goods from India (and China) or Egypt (and Europe) had to be unloaded in Aden, taxes be paid, and then transhipped in the other direction.

Main exports of Yemen were dyes (madder = fuwa, wars = Memecylon tinctorium), paper, incense, cotton, and, above all: horses. It is interesting to note that all paper required in India had to be imported – there was no paper production in India.

India exported: pepper, clove, cinnamon, ginger, cotton, timber, iron, and porcelain from China. Exceptionally, ships from China sailed directly to Aden, such as in 1303 a ship owned by ‘Abd al-Aziz b. Mansur, loaded with silk, musk, diamonds, Jade-vessels and other luxuries, paid 300,000 Dirhams in dime alone. Egypt exported textiles, paper, mastic, saffron, antimony, potash, sugar, and soap. The Nur al-Ma’arif gives us the details for hundreds of products, and the rates for the three customs taxes perceived at the Aden Customs House:

They not only provided commercial stability (through their tax-system), and security (through the galleys), but also strong and methodological political backing to the gradual spread of trade and religion. The main vehicle for this was regular “presents” to 64 judges and Imams in 46 Indian cities, such as robes of honour, money, prestigious inlaid metalwork, and sometimes luxury enamelled
glass vases, the commercial export of which from Aden was formally prohibited. One such Rasulid glass vase was unearthed in China (today in the Freer Gallery in Washington). The al-Tibi rulers of the small but economically important Kish-Island state on the Eastern shore of the Gulf received fine “Mamluk” style copper vessels, inlaid with gold, and horses with lavishly decorated headgear.

There is no other word for it: this is the world’s first globalisation. The Indian Ocean became a unified commercial entity, built upon a shared and expanding faith, actively promoted by the Rasulids of Yemen. It was this period and to a large extent these policies that made Indonesia, India and Pakistan into today’s most populous Islamic countries.

Back to the Crusades

While trade between Europe and the Near East never stopped, undisturbed by the Crusades, the Church nevertheless relentlessly tried to prevent at least the delivery of strategic goods to the Muslims. As has been said above, the Muslim states were more and more depending on European timber (for shipbuilding and construction), weapons, iron, other metals, and tar (ship-building, made from Northern pinewood or from coal).

Many decrees and councils therefore imposed embargoes for these goods on the (mainly) Italian traders. The number and the frequency of these injunctions show that the embargoes were only rarely observed. Embargoes, just like today, did not work. On the contrary, they encouraged substitution, mainly from India (timber, iron), but these goods were much more expensive, due to the long transport routes, and thus aggravated the economic drain due to Europe’s rising productivity and attractive commodities.

We mentioned above that horses were Yemen’s main export commodity. This was not known until the discovery of the Nur al-Ma’arif. Their sale by auction was monopolized in the “halqa” in Aden, where breeders from the highlands offered them for sale, while the Nukhadas of the India ships were bidding. The Aden Customs House charged both an import (from highland Yemen) and an export duty (for export to India) of respectively 60 and 70 Dinars. Horses were shipped to India in great numbers, as every Indian prince depended on Yemeni horses for prestige and warfare.

Horses died quickly in India, breeding was impossible. The reasons for this are not known, perhaps, because the Indians lacked veterinarians, while the veterinary sciences were highly developed in Yemen itself, to the point that the above mentioned Sultan al-Asraf wrote himself a treatise on veterinary sciences (“Al-mughrib fi al-baytara”). It seemed only shrewdly logical that the Rasulids did not allow Yemeni veterinarians to travel to India, thus securing an immense export trade in horses, and a very considerable continuous income.

Yemeni horses also played a decisive role in the last episode of the Crusades (18 May 1291). Marco Polo reporting on the siege of Akkon, the last stronghold of the Crusaders, wrote “the Sultan of Aden provided 30,000 horses for the Muslim forces”.

Thanks to Dr. Daum for the illustrations for this lecture.
One cannot deny that in the historic Islamic cultures collections of art were assembled, with zeal and demand for quality, with both admiration for the old masters and an inclination to encourage further development and new artistic presentations. The means for such collections existed mainly in courtly circles, venues that appealed to artists and allowed new stylistic development to spread quickly. How carefully and considered these new trends were established in the Islamic arts is best studied in the development of Arabic calligraphy, especially in Iran, Mughal India and the Ottoman Empire.

It is said, that Arabic calligraphy is fine when it is well legible; when it is illegible, it is art. What is assembled here seems to belong to the latter, celebrated in Mughal India in a rather late period with the re-evaluation of the old Ta’liq ductus [ductus: the writing line; direction and sequence in which letters were written]. The first example (figure 1) shows fragments of exemplary alphabets in this ductus (mufradat: typical letter combinations), but combined with what the owner believed to be a treasure: one line in the handwriting of Yaqut al-Mustasim, the famous late 12th/early 13th century calligrapher in Baghdad, who developed the plain Nashk ductus to a most sober and elegant script. The combination of these on one leaf conveys us the taste of the collector, whom I believe to be close to or even identical with Shah Jahan. The scribbled handwriting in a ductus derived from nastaliq is probably by Shah Jahan himself, from a smaller album, and is equally illegible.

The second Ta’liq folio is a letter of which one wouldn’t believe the late date 1152/1739, signed by one Khallilullah (figure 2). First I thought it might be the famous court artist under Shah Jahan, who died 1625-6, but the reading of the date makes it impossible, and I haven’t found biographical notes on this one, but it seems to have been pasted on an imperial album leaf format because of its inventions and artistic freedom.

There is no slavery to the rules for the shape of letters, and their raison d’être seems to be to amuse the eye by the string and flow of swelling forms
already in the form of a "hilya", as they were called later, and created mainly for showing the mastery of a calligrapher or the exams work of one of his pupils. The first was signed in Tabriz in early 980/1573 (not shown), the second, in large Naskhi ductus with intermediary lines, partly diagonally written, in Figa'-ductus. These continue the Arabic text, but in addition give the details where Hajji Maqsud-i Tabrizi wrote them, here in Shiraz in Shawwal 980/late 1573 (figure 3), and in the third one in 982/1575 (figure 4) he has arrived in India, but doesn't know the name of the town he is in, "in one of the cities of India". He became a known teacher, and many Mughal calligraphers followed his "Iranian style" (sabk-i Irani), including Haydar Ali ibn-i Muhammad Murad (of the Naqshbandi revivalist family).

Other examples of the taste of the "collector" is a leaf with two great Arabic lines in Thuluth ductus, and lines in larger and smaller Naskhi in Persian. Another type of pasticcio from the Mughal albums combines calligraphies with drawings, like on this famous page with calligraphies by Sultan Ali Mashhadi in the Topkapı Saray (figure 5).

Leaves from an album assigned by a librarian's remark to the emperor Jahangir deserve special attention. It includes a Safavid calligraphy dated by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri in his last year of life, 971/1563-4, and a colourful leaf showing the high Safavid style with a fine Nasta'liq version of the Shiite Arabic poem prayer to Ali, written by one Khalilullah (figure 6), and the beautiful verses in Eastern Turkish (Chaghatai) at the sides written by one Sayyid Ali bin Muhammad.

The Berlin collection came to the National Museums of Germany (or Prussia) by chance. In 1888 the library of the Hamilton family was bought

Among the latter is the calligrapher Maqsud from Tabriz, well known from a short note in Qadi Ahmad Qumi's treatise on calligraphers, and also from some preserved original works. There were some surprising discoveries made from the information on three Berlin leaves, signed by him and collected in one album, which describe his long journey from Iran to India. The shape of the larger and smaller lines on the paper and the type of calligraphy is
at a London auction by the then Royal Museums. The collection contained Lady Hamilton’s collection; Admiral Hamilton’s — collected during the war against Napoleon, and other art and book collectors’ drawings, manuscripts, and books. Lady Hamilton was the daughter of another great 19th-century collector, William Bedford, who had a unique passion for things Mughal. Most probably the great albums in the British Library, surely of Imperial origin, also went through his hands.

21 albums from the Hamilton library ended up in Berlin and are dispersed among the State Library (the Jahangir Album), the Museum of Asian Arts (8, mainly with Indian subjects, but also one album with calligraphy only) and our Museum of Islamic art with 12, now taken apart and kept as nearly 500 single leaves. The origin of the albums was disparate: two came in the original form of the Mughal Imperial library via collectors in the East India Company, the bulk of the Jahangir Album, other parts of which are in London and Windsor Castle and another Jahangir album of calligraphy and large pictures. Another one of Imperial format but unknown origin, which may be from Shah Jahan, but most came through an official of the East India Company, Monsieur Polier, of Swiss origin, who sold them to Bedford after 1791. From the uniform comments on many leaves and the late Mughal style of many marginal illuminations, we can conclude that some very knowledgeable secretary (munshi) bound them together from court material with many additions from the bazaar, some as late as the early 1790s.

To show the “backside” of at least one of the Imperial leaves, I present you my favourite picture, a portrait of the famous white elephant in the Imperial herd (figure 7): the inscription emphasizes that it is the portrait of the elephant, the prince Dara Shukoh riding on him is just a scenario figure. Also in Polier’s collection, a less elegant scribe has re-used two Shamsas of the Iranian late 18th century type and inserted his name rather irregularly with high-flowing titles. They were the front-pages of two of the 16 Polier albums in Berlin.
Many famous Iranian calligraphers did not go to India; one was exiled from Herat to Central Asia, Bukhara, like Sultan Ali al-Katif al-Mashhadi or al-Harawi, whose name is pasted together from three fragments at the end of a Nasta’liq alphabet over three leaves. They are contrasted with another alphabet by another, nearly contemporaneous Sultan Ali, “Mir”, in the Topkapi Saray collection.

Fragments of writings of three of the great masters are combined on one leaf, certainly as a pride of the collector (perhaps Shah Jahan) and as examples for disciples – Muhammad Husayn Tabrizi, Sultan Ali (Mir -), and Sultan Muhammad Khandan (figure 8). That the great masters did their exercises is evident from the remark of “copying” (sawwadahu) by Mir (Sultan) Ali; a leaf with fine drawings shows the predilection of the collector for fineness, with a prose text by a fine, but unidentified calligrapher. And another leaf from the same album shows the copy of one Nurullah, perhaps the famous court calligrapher of Aurangzeb after Mir Ali (“marqadahu”).

Sometimes it is difficult to believe the signatures, but we shall come across some examples of the artist’s pride and self-awareness, so the monumental signature of Mir Ali as-Sultani (figure 9) must be believed to be his own. That the timid pupils tended towards finer strokes is not always convincing.

The Mu’izzuddin Muhammad al-Husaini work (figure 10) appears brave and “normal”.

So we should seek its contemporaries, and we find the ingenious, overwhelmingly inventive Mir Imad (died 1614), who is especially known from the St. Petersburg muraqqa’ (album), preserved in its original Imperial form (figure 11). Mir Ali Sultan’s calligraphy is spread very widely (he lived for nearly 90 years) and often combined with fine illuminations, like here with two animal drawings (figure 12), or, in the case of a Topkapi Saray album, with illuminations of the most famous Ottoman ornament painter, Qara Memi.

Mir Imad’s style was revolutionary, but remained personal and did not influence the Ottoman schools which are so famous today. Even his pupils
and copyists did not follow the eccentric forms of his calligraphy, apparently, as the lines by Sayyid Abdullah from Tabriz, later in India known as Jawahir-raqm, show (figure 13).

Modern collectors especially like the exercise or pen probe pages (siyah mashq, Ottoman qaralama), one by Imad was recently on the London art market. The same leaf contains a painting by the equally "modern" Payag (figure 14). Which one is the front side?

A comparison of the Berlin imitation of Imad with an original in the St. Petersburg muraqqa shows the distance between them. Imad can only be compared to Imad: The lively strokes of letters and the end slopes raised like two crossed swords show the independent ideas of this master outside the normal calligraphy schools. Even a comparison with Mir Ali al-Katib, the famous forerunner in Safavid Iran, shows the achievements of changes by Imad.

Other exercise leaves are to be found in the albums, like the one by the mentioned Jawahir-raqm (figure 15), dated 1094/1683. He spreads the more conservative style of e.g. Muhammad Darwish Samarqandi, dated 1042/1632-3. He was the representative of the Central Asian School of calligraphy much represented in India and apparently liked at the court of Aurangzeb.

The combination of calligraphy with illuminations got even closer so as to form one leaf in the combined arts: this was especially appreciated at the prince's court of Dara Shukuh, the unfortunate son of Shah Jahan. His poems and Sufi works show him to be a very sensible artist, but his name had to be erased even from his outstanding
calligraphies before the eyes of his father. We would not expect that this calligraphy was always in the same album together with the double portrait with his father, as it is now in the Polier album. In a London collection another leaf with an erased Dara Shukuh signature seems to have the same origin.

The calligraphers sometimes invented poems in order to show their typical mastery, like Maulana Muhammad Kharras (1st half of 17th c.) and the later Hidayatullah Zarrin-qalam (figure 16). To this school belong most of the masters of the 18th century, among which one Abdullah Tabbakh (not to be confused with the Iranian calligrapher of the 17th/18th centuries) may have been the munshi who for Monsieur Polier bound together the leaves from various sources.

But let us end with one of the daring Nasta'liq calligraphers, who was so proud of his pen and inspiration that his signature was contrary to the often acclaimed Muslim modesty (figure 17). Nurullah al-Husayni signed his name directly parallel to that of Muhammad the Messenger (Rasul Allah).

**Figures:**

- Figure 1: I.4600 f.1r
- Figure 2: I.4594 f.29r: Qolby letter. Mir Khalil Allah 1152/1739 (nicht: "padshah-i qalam" d.1625-6)
- Figure 3: I.4600 f.18r H. Maquid-i Tabrizi 14 Schaw.980 Schiraz 1573
- Figure 4: I.4600 f.13v H.Maqud-i T., 982/1575 in India
- Figure 5: I.4600 f.8r + Sultan Ali, TKS
- Figure 6: I.4596 f.11r Khalifullah
- Figure 7: Elephant with Dara Shukuh
- Figure 8: MIKI.I.5001 f.23-1 Muhammad Husain Tabrizi, Sultan Ali, Sultan Muhammad Khondan
- Figure 9: I.4595 f.19 very large: Mir 'Ali as-Sultani
- Figure 10: I.4596 f.8 Mu'izzuddin Muhammad al-Husaini
- Figure 11: I.4596 brave + cute, ingenious muraqa. St. Petersburg: Mir 'Imad
- Figure 12: Mir 'Ali - - with animal figures
- Figure 13: I.4594 f.15 Mir 'Imad - imitated by Soyyid Abdullah (Jawahir-raqam)
- Figure 14: Sam Fogg, mashshakhu 'imad Allah - original and copy
- Figure 15: I.4592 f.3r Swinton Album, qaralama, ascribed to Jawahir-raqam Tabrizi, d.1064/1653
- Figure 16: I.4596 f.7 + I.4594 f.12 poem by Maulana Muh. Kharras, 1st half 17th c., + Hidayatullah Zarrin-qalam
- Figure 17: I.4596 f.6 Nur Allah al-Husaini
Arms Fit for a Prince:
Highlight from the Collection of Historical Arms and Armour in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna

Agnes Stillfried
Presented in English
6 April 2009

The Kunsthistorisches Museum’s Collection of Historical Arms and Armour is one of the finest and best-documented of its kind in the world; and although most of its holdings are European, it also includes some magnificent examples of Arab armour. The collection was assembled by art-loving members of the House of Habsburg, the former Emperors of Austria, and its holdings include over 3,000 magnificent objects, some a thousand years old. Although the main focus is on the period between the 15th and the 17th century, Europe’s golden age of plate armour (figure 1).

The collection’s main focus is on armour and weapons not used in battle, but parade armour — hugely expensive show-pieces that were made in connection with some important political events: an imperial Diet, a coronation, a treaty, a campaign, a wedding. Until the 17th century, important political events were always celebrated with a spectacular tournament — knights fighting on foot or on horseback, with sharp or blunted weapons, lances or swords, in single combat or group fights (each, of course, requiring a special made-to-measure suit of armour for each participant), with the festivities sometimes lasting weeks. The ideals of chivalry lived on in these courtly spectacles long after the invention of firearms had made plate-armour all but obsolete in battle. In a way, these tournaments and jousts were stylized fights or battles in which members of the nobility documented their valor and chivalry, and the prince his wealth and magnificence. These suits of armour are spectacular works of art that combine politics and craftsmanship to become unique political and art-historical documents.

However, in the first half of the fifteenth century, plate armour — a suit of armour completely encasing the wearer’s body — had been developed, fulfilling, at least for a short period of time until the introduction of firearms, man’s dream of invulnerability on the battlefield. Initially these suits of armour were worn by knights in battle; later, however, they were only worn for jousting. Tournaments were initially a way for knights to practice and prepare for war, but in time they became courtly spectacles.

The most important production centres were Milan in northern Italy, Augsburg and Nuremberg in southern Germany, and Innsbruck in Austria. To make a suit of armour, billets of steel or wrought iron were hammered into flat plates, initially by hand, later by water-driven tilt-hammers. This was usually done before the plates reached the armoury. There the plates were cut to size (think of this as bespoke tailoring, as all parade armour was made-to-measure), with a set of clothes of the patron serving as a model. Next, the cut pieces were hammered into shape on small anvil or over metal formers, with the iron annealed [heat treated] only when making bulging pieces such as helmets from a single plate. After the edges were stiffened by

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bending them over wire, the armour was provisionally assembled. This was the most important step, as all the pieces had to fit snugly over another to provide both maximum protection and ease of movement. After polishing and cleaning the armour was decorated in one or all of these techniques: fire-gilding, heat-bluing, embossing, engraving, etching, or damascening. The final step was to assemble all the pieces, join them together with rivets, buckles and leather straps, and add the lining. It took a year or more to make a suit of armour, which consisted of up to 170 individual pieces. The price was astronomical; think the equivalent of €50,000 or more for a single suit of armour — making jousting a truly princely pastime that has been compared to Formula One racing.

But despite the huge costs, such a suit of armour was not a lifetime investment: parade armour followed and reflects fashion. So decoration, the shape of shoes, or the location of the waist changed in accordance with ever-changing men’s fashion. Compare, for example, the Early Renaissance armour made for a German prince, Frederick, Elector of Palatine, by the Missaglia workshop in Milan in 1449, which exudes power and strength, the smooth metal polished but undecorated, with the delicate grace of the late-Gothic armour made for Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg only a few decades later (by Lorenz Helmschmid in Augsburg in 1484 for the wedding of Maximilian’s uncle). This is the finest and most complete late-Gothic armour to have survived and the delicate craftsmanship is breathtaking: the gauntlets, for example, look as though they were made of lace not metal (figure 2). By 1512, when Maximilian commissioned the parade armour for his grandson, the future Emperor Charles V, then aged 12, from Konrad Seusenhofer in Innsbruck, fashion had changed again. The long pointy shoes are replaced by wide, round-toed ones, and the “pleated skirt” of the armour is modeled on contemporary Netherlandish fashion. The slit puffed sleeves favoured by the Lansquenets (the feared early-16th century German soldiers) were also imitated in iron, as in, for example, the Lansquenet Armour commissioned by Emperor Charles V for his captain of the guard, Count Rogendorf, in 1525. The ability of artists to transcend the limitations of the material is truly breathtaking.

But despite this emphasis on fashion and style, all parade armour is also highly-developed, technically refined, over-heavy sports equipment, designed to protect the wearer from harm, or at least from grave injury, during the dangerous sport of jousting. Each form of tournament required special armour: participants in tournaments fought on foot with sword, axe or mace wore skirted armour; for jousts — single combat by mounted knights fought either with blunted or sharp weapons, the so-called joust of war — their armour consisted of cuirass, pauldron, vambrace, tassets and helmet. Here the shield was firmly attached to the breast-plate, leaving the knight’s hands free to hold the reins and control the 3.5 m-long lance, with which he tried to unseat his opponent — something that took a lot of practice. The horses also wore protective armour, which also prevented them from seeing or hearing anything during these
marital games – so they would not bolt or refuse to advance. Naturally, these chargers were sturdy mounts, not delicate Arabs, able to carry a rider dressed in up to 40 kg of armour. All tournaments were strictly regulated, with the number of blows exchanged agreed upon beforehand, and judges present to guarantee “fair play”. When saddles with higher pommels made unseating one’s opponent almost impossible, knights scored points by hitting certain areas of their opponents’ armour, such as his shield or helmet. As only members of the aristocracy were allowed to participate, and it is impossible to see the face of a man wearing a helmet, symbols and signs evolved to help identify them: heraldry.

In all this there is obviously also a strong element of dressing up. Spectacular all’antica armour such as Negroli’s celebrated armour for Francaco Maria della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino (signed and dated 1532 – figure 3), or the spectacular “Milanese Armour” commissioned by Emperor Ferdinand I for his son, Archduke Ferdinand II, regent of Bohemia, in 1547 allowed the wearer to dress up as one of the celebrated heroes of ancient Rome, something close to the heart of every Renaissance prince. Initially, these armours imitated classical models, but from the middle of the 16th century their form is contemporary while a wealth of decoration brings to life the myths and heroes of classical antiquity.

At the sixteenth-century Habsburg court, knights dressed up not only as classical heroes but also as Turkish or Moorish warriors. In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire was fast advancing into Europe, laying siege to Vienna for the first time in 1529. Throughout the century, the Habsburgs and the Divine Porte were almost continually at war, interrupted only by truces during which the Habsburgs often had to pay tribute money. But, influenced by 16th century European literature – Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso and Tasso’s La Gerusalemme Liberata, convoluted tales set in the time of the Crusades that celebrated the chivalry and bravery of both Christian and Muslim knights – noblemen of the Habsburg courts were happy to dress up in these costumes, some of which have survived in the collection.

The collection also includes a number of objects that combine western and oriental traditions in a fascinating way: one example is the armour commissioned in 1555 by Prince Nicholas IV Radziwill, at the time the richest and most powerful prince in Poland, from Kunz Lochner in Nuremberg (figure 4). While constructed like western armour, the decoration is clearly influenced by Arab examples: all surfaces are etched with a pattern of entwined ribbons, which was gilt and then varnished in black, white and red to imitate enamel – creating an
effect more colourful, rich and carpet-like than the articulated decorations found on contemporary western armour. Another important example is the helmet and armour of Stephan Barthory, who became Prince of Transylvania in 1571 and was elected King of Poland in 1575. Barthory received the helmet, produced in the imperial armory at Istanbul, as a gift from the Sultan; he then commissioned the magnificent matching armour from an anonymous German armurer around 1560. The artist elegantly imitates the gold damascened arabesque decoration of the helmet on the breastplate. Helmet and armour of Sinan Pasha were commissioned from another anonymous German armurer as a gift for the Ottoman Grand Vizier. As an inducement to sign the extension of the truce of 1592 between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, Sinan Pasha had particularly requested gifts of armour; but since the negotiations collapsed and war broke out again, the armour was never sent to Istanbul and remained in Vienna. Again, we find a rich carpet-like all-over decoration of etched and gilt ornaments on heat-blued ground. In order to increase the gift's desired oriental splendour, five large bronze medallions set with semi-precious stones were added to the breast-plate.

Examples of “real” Arab craftsmanship entered the collection either as spoils of war or diplomatic gifts. A wonderful example is the magnificent adarga, one of only two to have survived. It probably once belonged to the last Nasrid King of Grenada. This traditional Moorish shield consists of two cow-hinds sown together in the shape of a double oval, its centre stiffened by a pole. The outside of this splendid piece is plain, but the inside is filled with a wealth of delicate silk embroidery (figure 5). The saddle of Ghiar Khan (identified by his tughras), the Khan of the Crimean Tartars 1678-83, was among the spoils of war left behind after the Ottoman army hurriedly abandoned the second siege of Vienna in 1683. The magnificent saddle, made in the imperial workshop of Sultan Mehmed IV, was incorporated into the Austrian imperial collection. However, the delicate leather and linen quivers for bow and arrows, also examples of the high craftsmanship of the imperial workshops in Istanbul, were probably diplomatic gifts, as was the wonderful leather bottle (figure 6) sent to Emperor Rudolf II in 1581 by Sultan Murad III with an invitation to attend the circumcision of the crown prince. Rudolf declined, so a letter written on September 12, 1581 by the Venetian ambassador at the court in Prague to the Doge in Venice tells us, but sent a necklace and cup valued at 4000 guilders as a return gift.
Images of Makkah and Medina in an Islamic Prayer Book

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The two most holy places in Islam are Makkah and Medina. Between these localities in Western Arabia the early sacred history of Islam took place and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 CE) found fulfilment.

The divine revelation as it is now embodied in the Qur'an, the 'Holy Recitation', is divided into two categories, the parts that were revealed in Makkah and those that were sent down in Medina. Makkah and immediate surroundings are the focus of the yearly pilgrimage, one of Islam's five pillars, and Medina's sacred places are visited by vast numbers of believers.

In both the human and the sacred geography of Islam the two places play an important role. This can be gathered from illustrations in Islamic manuscripts. Sometimes Makkah is depicted there as the very centre of the world (figure 1), which one should interpret as its having a central place in Islamic thought, rather than as being in the geographical centre of the world. The focal function of the Ka'ba is sometimes emphasized in the illustrations in manuscripts by a circle (figure 2) which in all directions of the compass contains the names of the towns, regions and countries from where the believers perform their daily ritual prayer, using God's House as their orientation point.

Medina too has been depicted in many ways in the manuscript literature. And here, as in the images of Makkah, we see sometimes iconographical elements, however schematically drawn, that serve to evoke to reader and viewer alike, the idea of the sacred locations of Islam. They are not meant to describe these holy places, but serve another purpose. By force of association they strengthen the bond between the believer and the sacred grounds of his religion.

In images of Makkah, we see, of course, a representation of the Ka'ba, sometimes also the walls of the Great Mosque, the minarets, the many gates which are sometimes even given their names. And we see such images in all degrees of sophistication, from very simple to most elaborate, from sketchy to detailed and colourful, usually in a two-dimensional projection but sometimes even drawn in perspective.

Apart from illustrations on paper there is an iconography of Makkah on other materials (tile and ceramic) as well. Such images of Makkah and the books of which they are part are not meant to be pilgrim guides. Yet, the numerous manuscripts of the work Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn by the Persian author al-Latīf (d. 1526 CE) can indeed be read as an account of the pilgrimage to Makkah and Medina (figure 3). Tiles and separate images on leaves of paper probably served as souvenirs to be purchased by pilgrims (figure 4).

This was important in a period in which the culture of the image was not as advanced as it has become nowadays. But the pilgrim's guide, a genre (Manāsik al-Hajj) which indeed exists in Islam, is usually devoid of illustrations and prescribes to the pilgrim how to move, and where to say which prayers, so that the ritual is validly performed. With
the many manuscripts of the prayer book Dalāl al-Khayrāt (‘A Guide to Happiness’), written by the Moroccan mystic and activist Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūṭi (died c. 1465 CE), this is different. The numerous manuscripts which exist of this text often include illustrations of Medina and later also of Makkah.

Its author, al-Jazūṭi lived in a time of political upheaval. The kingdom of Morocco was torn by civil strife and the threats of the Portuguese, who invaded the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of the country and caused there much suffering. Al-Jazūṭi founded a branch of the Shādhiliyya tarṭqa which tried to bring back order in chaos.

An effective resistance against the Portuguese was organised. Zāwiya’s Maghreb_and West African term for an Islamic religious school or monastery from Tiemcen (north-east of Morocco, now in Algeria) on the Mediterranean to well into the Wādi Drah in the South-West of the country were populated by al-Jazūṭi’s followers who divided their time, so to speak, between mystical contemplation with pious ritual on the one hand and with fighting the unbelievers on the other.

It is probable that al-Jazūṭi composed his prayer book in order to give his followers a liturgical text that, when collectively recited, increased the internal coherence of the group. This apparently worked out well and the prayer book Dalāl al-Khayrāt in the course of time gained an immense popularity, soon transcending the geographical boundaries of Morocco and finding its way East, all over the Sunnī world.

The great variety of manuscripts, from the very simple to examples of highly developed book art, shows that the book also became widespread in all social strata of Islamic society. This popularity continues today, and the Dalāl al-Khayrāt is recited from court circles in Morocco to ḥadīth sessions as far East as Java in Indonesia, from Central Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa. The number of manuscripts of the text in private and public collections must count in many thousands, and the spread of printing in the world of Islam has added innumerable editions and commentaries to the existing manuscripts.

The structure of the prayers is of the Tašliya type, the imploring by the believer of blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad, a way of praying which is sanctioned by the Qur’ān, in Sūrat al-Ahzāb, āya
56. The main body of the prayer book consists of communal litanies (Awrād) to be said on specific days of the week (eight in total, from Monday through Monday). Important basic materials for these prayers are the epithets of the Prophet Muhammad (Asmā al-Nabi), of which al-Jāzūlī compiled list of 201 from a great variety of sources, and which he reproduces in the introduction of his prayer book. Another subject in the introduction of the work is a short description of the burial chamber inside the mosque of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, and this is where the illustrations come in.

It is this description which has given rise to the first set of illustrations in al-Jāzūlī’s prayer book: These represent the burial chamber in the mosque in Medina (al-Rawḍa al-Mubāraka) itself, which is usually depicted, in various degrees of graphical sophistication, in the form of a niche with a lamp, under which the position of the graves of the Prophet Muhammad and of the first two caliphs, Abū Bakr and Umar, are indicated (figures 5 and 6). Sometimes the grave of the Prophet’s daughter Fāṭima is added, usually somewhat separated from the three other graves.

Illustrations of this type are nothing but a graphical expansion of the text. It seems that the short description of the burial chamber had invited, if one may say so, the illuminators of the manuscripts of the Dalā’il al-Khayrāt to show the burial chamber, not in a naturalistic way, but with a simple design in a flat projection, with a symbolic representation of the essential elements of this most holy part in the Medinan mosque. This is the first shift in the illustration pattern in the Dalā’il al-Khayrāt, from a non-illustrated to an illustrated book.

The second shift must have started shortly afterwards, already in the early sixteenth century. Suddenly the single illustration of al-Rawḍa al-Mubāraka, the burial chamber in the mosque of Medina, is expanded by a second illustration, now of the pulpit (minbar) and sometimes with the prayer niche (miḥrāb) as well, apparently in the same mosque (figures 7 and 8).

The illustration is easy enough to interpret, yet its presence there causes a problem. Why are the pulpit and the prayer niche shown here? They are not described in the text of the Dalā’il al-Khayrāt, whereas the burial chamber is indeed mentioned. Why then is there this second illustration, if it is not solicited by text in al-Jāzūlī’s prayer book? If the answer to this question is not found in the prayer book, one should therefore look outside it and find an authoritative text in which both the grave of the Prophet Muhammad and his pulpit are mentioned, and which may have served as an inspiration to the illustrators.
It did not prove to be very difficult to find such a text in the Hadīth, the Prophetic Tradition, where it is said, in the Sahīh of al-Bukhārī and in other canonical collections that the Prophet Muḥammād has said: 'Whoever stands between my grave and my pulpit, it is as if he is standing in the Gardens of Paradise.' It is evident that the illustrators have added to the value of the prayer book, by providing an extra element which is not a graphical expression of the text, but which adds a pious implication by putting the reader in a place (figure 9) where he can imagine himself to be standing in nothing less than 'the Gardens of Paradise.' It is a brilliant invention.

For the North African manuscripts of al-Jazāʿīrī's Dalālī al-Khayrāt the illustration pattern stops here. But for the manuscripts of the prayer book which were made further to the East, Egypt, Turkey, Central Asia, India, South-East Asia, there is yet another development ahead. Suddenly, and I date this more or less in the second half of the eighteenth century, there appears an entirely different pattern of illustrations in the copies of the Dalālī al-Khayrāt.

We still see the mosque in Medina, with burial chamber, pulpit, prayer niche and all its other iconographical elements, on the one hand, but this is now preceded by an image of the Great Mosque of Makkah. It is an attractive double image (figure 10) in the manuscripts of the prayer book, but once more it poses the problem: 'Why is this image of Makkah added here?'

Although Makkah is an overall important place, it is not mentioned in the Dalālī al-Khayrāt at all. Why then nevertheless that image of Makkah? The same line of reasoning as employed in order to find an explanation for the previous shift of illustration patterns can be used here: Namely by
assuming that if the illustration does not visualise a passage in the text, it must be the representation of something which is outside the text, but nevertheless important.

If that is so, it suffices to look for it, and to do so more or less in the same way as we did when searching for an idea or concept that could have caused the addition of the Prophet’s pulpit and prayer niche. The new shift in the illustrations, by the addition of an image of the Great Mosque of Makkah to that of the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina (figure 11), could provisionally be dated as to have taken place after the middle of the eighteenth century. I have not seen any dated manuscript of the *Dalail al-Khayrāt* with Makkah-Medina double image from before the second half of the eighteenth century, yet I cannot exclude there are indeed earlier ones. Maybe the period in which this change in illustrations took place can give an explanation.

The eighteenth century was a period in which important ideological and religious reform movements in Islam emerged, several of which still exist today. One of the best known of these is the Wahhābī movement, and the *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* by founder Muḥammad b. Abd al-Wahhāb comes to mind as a possible source of or cause for the change in illustration patterns in the manuscripts of *Dalail al-Khayrāt*. Anything that diverts the believer’s attention from God is considered polytheism.
It may well have been that the rather exclusive focus on the Taṣliya of the Prophet Muhammad had become offensive to the more austere believer. The depiction of the grave of the Prophet may have been offensive as well, as it suggests a habit of visiting graves. Whatever may have caused the inclusion of an image of the Great Mosque of Makkah in al-Jazuli's prayer book, it might be considered as an ideological correction of too exclusive a focus on the Prophet Muḥammad.

With the Makkah-Medina double image ends the final shift in illustration patterns in the Dalāl al-Khayrāt. These illustrations (figure 12) can be seen in the printed edition of the prayer book as well, but there is a tendency, especially in the more modern editions, to omit the illustrations in the introductory part altogether. With that the presentation of the prayer book has come full circle, and those unillustrated modern printed edition look in many ways just like the unillustrated earliest manuscripts of the work. In between these points in time lies a period of some five hundred years during which thousands of copies of the Dalāl al-Khayrāt were made, many of a high artistic quality, all expressing a deep and pious belief in Islam and a great respect and love for its Prophet.
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