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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Lathe-turned and carved elephant ivory box with silver mounts, inscribed in Arabic ‘There is no Victor but God’, and praising the sultan Probably Granada, Spain, 8th century AH/14th century AD
Oral discourse grows out of an emphasis on interpersonal involvement between speaker and audience, and relies on social context and shared interpersonal context for meaning. Gestures, facial expressions, sounds and the overall circumstances around a face to face articulation make it easy for both to understand what is being communicated and eliminates ambiguity. The performer can always adapt his/her words based on the characteristics of the people listening and on the particular communication forms that are appropriate to their audience’s dispositions and their specific context. On the other hand, literary strategies for communication, which is done without face to face interaction, focus on content of text, rather than the personality of the writer.

Written literature is individual in both production and consumption, as the author is cut off from the reader who is not related to him in any way. In the process of writing, the writer does not seek to establish a relationship with the reader, but rather, to convey a message to an anonymous recipient. An oral performance is based on establishing a direct relationship between the performer and the audience, creating a unity with the speaker influenced by the special effects of the performance, events and characters. The purpose in to engage the audience rather than having them looking at it in a critical or neutral way.

Writing separates the writer from the reader and the text from the circumstances surrounding the writing process. Thus the reader who deals with a text which was written by an unknown author is able to scrutinize it objectively, without being influenced by the producer of the work. This fact enhances the reader’s ability to criticize and analyze.

Writing is also different from oral performance in that the writer has a chance to think about the fine details of their work. Writing is done in isolation and the writer can always review and edit what they’ve written, until they are satisfied with the final product. Similarly, the reader can read silently, detached from the writer; they can read slowly or fast and stop reading whenever they wish.

Contrary to written literature, neither the speaker nor the audience in oral communication have the benefit of time and forethought that writer and reader enjoy. The processes of performing and receiving in oral contexts are direct; the communicator conveys the output directly to the public with whom he has a relationship and continuous interaction. In some cases the moment of performance is the precise moment of ingenuity. The improvisation of the spoken words on the part of the performer and its ephemeral effect on the audience require repetition and prolixity, which constitute essential tools in oral literature. In oral literature, repetition could be employed to emphasize or to disambiguate meaning, but in most cases it is resorted to by the performer for the sake of taking breath and giving themselves a chance to consider the next part of the performance. Repetition also gives the audience a chance to follow even a complicated plotline, as the listener, unlike the reader, has a limited memory and is unable to go back to the beginning of the text to refresh their memory.

In pre-literate societies, memory played a key role in memorising and promoting works of literature. Having said that does not mean that the memory of the illiterate people is sharper than that of literate people, it is only a matter of training and habit. The pre-literate societies model their literature and knowledge in general, in such a way that makes it memorable. Repetition, synonyms, parataxis and assonance in prose writing, rhymes and meter in poetry, and other characteristics of oral style, are not only aesthetic elements or tools to smooth the progress of the work, but also to make memorisation possible. Therefore, pre-literate societies depend largely on conventional modes in thinking and expressing their thoughts.

As there is a close relationship between literature and its cultural milieu, researching the differences and similarities between oral and written literature leads, necessarily, to research in the nature of pre-literate cultures and the intellectual structure of the oral communicators, their artistic views, the way they organise, save and retrieve knowledge, and the difference between pre-literate societies and literate ones.

Originally, words are sounds, i.e. oral. However, sometimes, we tend to forget this fact because we use the words in writing regularly, to the extent that we cannot remember a word without visualizing its spelling. We have lost the ability to understand the way in which the pre-literate person can imagine words as mere sounds without linking them mentally, to spelling and written forms. The illiterate person cannot imagine that the chain of phonemes consists of words that can be separated, and that words consist of separable letters that can be redesigned to compose other words.

Spoken words are a chain of sounds in sequence happening in an ever moving time. This constant imposes some constraints on the language, because the elapsed time cannot be retrieved. It is also impossible to utter more than one sound at a time, because words must follow each other like a necklace beads, i.e. one after the other. No one can listen to more than one source of speech; otherwise, it will be noise or ruckus. Writing, on the other hand, transfers the sounds through time and through space on a visual medium, i.e. the page.

Homer described words as “winged” because once they are uttered they fly in the air. However, writing seemed to break the wings of words and fix them onto paper. With the invention of writing, man started to connect language with eye sight. This transformation from ear to eye meant the transformation of speech from an ephemeral event to something lasting in a place to which we can refer whenever we want. We can pause at a certain word; look at it carefully without affecting the writing on the surface of the paper. However, we cannot stop the [live performance] to meditate on a word or an utterance because stopping the [performance] simply leaves silence.

The existence of spoken words is ephemeral, as it is linked to the speaker and to the transient moment of speech performance, at the end of which the words die out. Therefore, the continuity of this existence is based on the continuity of words, the repetition of performance and the presence of the speaker. Spoken words are, therefore, ephemeral while written words are documented on paper. Writing preserves text permanently on a written page, creating a permanent physical existence that is independent from the producer, does not end by the death of the performer. The eternal existence of the written text materialises when it is put on paper, while spoken words are just a possibility of existence in the mind of the performer and cannot be materialised unless they are performed as sounds uttered by the performer at the moment of the performance.

Language and writing are two qualities (attributes) unique to human beings. While language is a biological quality that co-existed with man ever since of creation, writing is a cultural feature that was acquired by human beings at a later time. During his lengthy existence, man spoke thousands of languages most of which have moved into oblivion without leaving any trace, because the written word had yet to be discovered.
Writing words on paper suggests organisation, arrangement and other concepts pertained to our physical experiences related to space such as movement and sight. Doubtlessly, arranging words in composed lines on paper has an impact on the ideas being expressed in words and on human perceptiveness and means of saving, retrieving and organising their/her mental repertoire.

Culture is a series of intercommunication processes; and both means of communication and production of information are important as they include generating, saving, analysing and developing human knowledge. Both also contribute to changing relationships among the concerned people. By giving utterance a formal and permanent shape, writing may be scrutinised in a different way than spoken words are, a fact that enhanced criticism and helped in developing rationality and logic. Also, writing increased the accumulation of knowledge, as the nature of communication had changed from direct personal relations, a cardinal feature of oral communication, to written text.

Writing is not only an apparatus for recording and saving information, but also an efficient means of organising, categorising knowledge and bringing it under various logical and critical studies. Recording utterances by writing and looking at them help to compare various texts, in order to realise ambiguities, contradictions, mistakes, coordination and coherences that could be established as language rules. Documenting different accounts of a poem, a story or a historical event in writing makes it easier to see the differences in the outlooks than if they were told orally. Hence, Arabic grammar, poetry scales and other achievements were discovered only after the development of writing in the second Hejri century. In the same period, differences in the accounts of the Jahili poetry became problematic and questionable.

The requirements of oral narration and the requisites of the plot over facts and historic credibility lead inevitably, to confusion between history and myth, and between reality and imagination. An oral (folk) poem, for example, often expresses historic and social events in a symbolic language, using stereotypical imagery and conventional patterns imposed by oral style and literary requirements, but it does not, necessarily, reflect reality. Over the time, these symbols and imagery might be received by someone who, remote from the events that were memorialised in the poem, interprets the poem literally -as if the events actually took place.

The mechanisms of oral narration tend, by nature, to transfer historic events to literary elements and life realities to visionary scenes. This could lead the recipient, inadvertently, from realistic thought to mythical one. In the absence of other information receptacles in oral societies, memory enforces its mechanisms on the spoken words, ensuring their perpetuity and circulation among generations. These mechanisms constantly transfer historic events into mystical motifs by altering the spoken words artistically to make them easy to memorise.

The absence of written texts that can be referred to as sources for verification means the absence of mechanisms for correcting the text and putting it back in its original form should deviations occur over time. The more the story diverts from the original account, the more diverse and different its recounting becomes. It is hard to find differences in various accounts of a story if the original one is not documented in writing.

Moreover, the lack of geographic and historic sense on the part of the narrator make him unaware of many contradictions he might fall into, such as speaking of separate events as if they were synchronous, and of distant locations as if they were neighbouring places. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see popular or folk narrators recount stories in colloquial speech and attribute them to characters from pre-Islamic era who spoke classical Arabic.

Over the past years, the notion of progress in development policy has been heavily disputed. For the World Bank, the IMF, the development aid ministries of the industrial nations, the European Community, and all levels of international economic cooperation, it is gradually becoming clear that supposedly reliable concepts have become questionable. The development policy of the United Nations has also distanced itself from a purely quantitative idea of ‘progress’ as pure economic growth. The question of ‘human development’ that has been raised since the late 1980s, for instance at the United Nations summit in Rio de Janeiro, in the report of the UNESCO World Commission for Culture and Development, and in the relevant conferences and discussion papers of the World Bank (as well as in the Report of the World Decade for a Cultural Development: 1988-1997 issued by the United Nations Organization in New York), is becoming increasingly urgent. These aspects were also discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the World Social Summit in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Progress is no longer conceived as a secular religion, a religion of collective salvation. This Prometheus vision of progress, science, and technology has accompanied man on his technological ascent and has been valid since the European-American Age of Enlightenment, since Francis Bacon, Descartes, and Montaigne, has come under fire. The vision of the 18th century industrial revolution with its Aristotelian notion of a progressive, linear history of human evolution is being called into question. The man of the Renaissance and the Cartesian man were absolute masters, rulers over creation. This form of progress was marked by a millenaristic [the belief by a religious, social, or political group or movement in a coming major transformation of society, after which all things will be changed] promise of salvation with its own eschatology, of which Karl Loewith aptly spoke. The omnipresence of science and technology replaced the figure of God.

In all development theories, this vision has been shaken to its foundations by ecological awareness for well over thirty years. In view of the scarcity of resources and the ecological threat to our planet, the demand for a long-term and sustainable development policy that requires a different way of understanding and dealing with rationality has become top priority, as the Brundtland Commission already pointed out in 1983.

In view of this, why is a change of paradigms in international development policy so desperately needed? First of all, because we must assume that there is not only a single modernity, but multiple...
modernities, various cultural incarnations of modernity, according to specific cultural and religious historical prerequisites. Modernity manifests itself in various forms, both Western and non-Western.

For thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, the ‘project of modernity’ is still universally valid in all debates. Others see ‘multiple modernities’ as a result of the different cultural and religious historical prerequisites of the various cultures. That gives rise to the question of a ‘global ethic’, of universal standards that are valid for all cultures, and of the kind of relativity that has been suggested by Amartya Sen and Edward Said, for example. Universality stands against particularly and multiplicity. This problem is particularly important for the notion of ‘dignity’ as an anthropological prerequisite for human rights. This is where a balance must be found.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, so it reads in the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, which primarily reflects the Judeo-Christian culture, including its tendency to consider itself universal. Only if we succeed in understanding the various ethics that influenced the thoughts and actions of the founding cultures, religions, and mythologies of the global civilization in a profound anthropological sense, do we stand a chance to reach standards of action in the political discourse of human rights. The demand for universalisation and equality must be linked to a commitment to the differences between cultures.

That brings us to the problem of reciprocal acknowledgement of differences. As Martin Buber pointed out, the Other is always an ‘I’. An intersubjective relationship must be established between what is different and what is common. The cultural differences of mankind took form in the universal historical process. The plurality of cultures is a treasure of human evolution. No one can judge or even condemn other cultures from a bird’s-eye view: there is no meta-cultural standpoint. The idea is to understand, rather than to judge. Is the concept of human rights only compatible with the Western notion of human rights, along with its ethical and legal foundations? Can the contents of a certain culture only be judged by its own standards? Cultural relativism does not justify the conclusion that cultures are in every respect dissimilar mouthes, to use Leibniz’ metaphor, and have nothing at all in common. Culture-specific characteristics are based on universally valid conditions. Each culture offers different answers to anthropological questions that are basically the same. Thus, there are crystallization points that pervade all cultures. Existential parameters are in our sights. Human dignity is one such constant anthropological factor.

With this in mind, does the abstract human being referred to in the Declaration of Human Rights cover more than the concrete view of man that was formed during the European-American Age of Enlightenment and has been held since Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and John Locke? That is to say, the participant in the modern Western-style market economy? To what extent do human rights actually serve to ‘ideologically’ justify the existing cultural, economic, and political supremacy of the West over the peripheral nations? How can we reconcile the reinforcement of religious and cultural identity with our own idea of human dignity?

We must not start from an unhistorical understanding of human rights that can be imposed upon the various cultures like a template. The anthropological philosophy of Max Scheler or Ernst Cassirer teaches us that human nature is not a fixed quantity, no solid core around which culture forms like a crust. Rather, there is a talk of a ‘natural culturality’ that leaves a great wealth of cultural-historical possibilities open. In the millions of years of human evolution, there is no ‘Archimedean point’ that would allow us to overlook the entire historical world.

Hence, there is no ‘universal ratio’, because a plurality of logics of thought and action exist in the multitude of cultures. Therefore, it is not admissible to refer to an allegedly timeless, clearly recognizable ‘human nature’. Ultimately, human nature is historically open-ended. The Western ‘logos’ is not universally valid, and it cannot even survive without the ‘myth’ that is also common in other cultures in Asia, Latin America, or Africa. The intellectual historical roots of human rights can be traced back to various traditions, for example to the divine stature of all men that shines through in the Bible, or to the cosmopolitanism of Stoic philosophy (the word dignitas was first mentioned in Cicero’s De Officis from the year 44 BC).

Concepts of human rights also appear in other, non-Western traditions, especially in man’s calling as God’s viceroy (the official administrative deputy of a ruler or head of state) on earth in the Qur’an, or in the right of resistance that is entrenched in black African mythologies. These reflections show that human rights are certainly not a sole privilege of the Occident.

The history of politics is always a history of law. The Stoic school of thought, or even before, the enlightening narratives of the Jahwists and the Theurgic Dei, the first legal principles that were laid down in the 16th century by the Jesuits in Paraguay or Bartolome de Las Casas for the protection of the Indians in Spanish late scholasticism, then the critique of domination on the part of British liberalism, and the self-understanding of the subject in German idealism: all these bear witness to the experiences and efforts that were involved in the writing of the first article of the Declaration of Human Rights.

From a universal-historical point of view, human rights obviously do not belong exclusively to the Western legal culture. Christian charity has parallels in Islamic or Buddhist charity, and in the Confucian ethics that influenced the thoughts and actions of the founding cultures, religions, and mythologies of the world civilisation in a profound anthropological sense. We have to seek ‘multiple modernities’ as a result of the different cultural and religious historical prerequisites of the various cultures. That gives rise to the question of a ‘global ethic’, of universal standards that are valid for all cultures, and of the kind of relativity that has been suggested by Amartya Sen and Edward Said, for example. Universality stands against particularly and multiplicity. This problem is particularly important for the notion of ‘dignity’ as an anthropological prerequisite for human rights. This is where a balance must be found.

The basic idea of the inviolability of human dignity is common ground, albeit space- and time-dependent. Therefore, it has brought forth different religious, ideological, and cultural ways of life. Hence, the human rights movement has been pluralist from the start. The 1948 United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights was made under the dominance of the Western industrial nations, but its universal validity is now being put to the test. Equal rights for different cultural ways of life must be the aim. The compatibility of universal standards with cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity is centre stage. That implies a human right to being different. It might be phrased as: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In their cultures, they seek to express their dignity in different ways and to respect freedom and justice. Therefore, not only ‘nature’, but ‘cultures’ also deserve respect.”

Human rights are the ethical foundation of a key term that describes a global culture that needs no justification, but faces the conflicts between the historical singularity of cultural phenomena and the Western claim to universal validity that is expressed in the history of the first 18th century and the doctrine of natural law that does not only concern the French and Americans today, but claims universal validity. The idea of a monolithic, synchronized global civilization is not only a reduction of the universal historical process with its cultural diversity, but also a cosmic imbalance and a denial of the human creation that is expressed in the individual founding mythologies of the world religions and their concepts of dignity.

A monolithic global culture would be a politically unviuable and unsafe artificial creation. Ultimately, it would be an act of Western arrogance or even Occidental cultural provincialism, which can appear under different guises. The quest for mutual understanding between cultures as a prerequisite for coexistence in the global civilisation at the beginning of the 21st century must overcome all forms of cultural positivism. Human rights are certainly universal, but they are interpreted in different ways. Plurality remains the specific characteristic of the conditio humana.

Basicly, a new form of cosmopolitanism is called for. The term ‘cosmopolitan’ goes back, at least, to the history of the fourth century BC, who coined the expression ‘citizens of the cosmos’. Each citizen, polites, belonged to a city, polis, to which he owed loyalty, and that could help us in the human rights debate. The cosmos was the World-not only the earth, but the universe. The traditional cosmopolitan knew that human beings are different, and he aspired to learn from these differences. He tried to combine both ideals: universal concern for the Other and respect for legitimate differences. In this tradition, a civic humanism is needed today: unity in multiplicity, multiplicity in unity.

How do these reflections bear on the notion of progress? What role does the anthropological-cultural dimension of development policy play?

Understood in a holistic-anthropological sense, culture becomes the decisive factor of geopolitics. This is especially true in economic matters such as work ethics, organizational capability, attitudes toward time, and present-, past-, or future- orientedness, with all their effects on the various levels of innovation capacity and investment
decisions in the individual cultures of Europe, North and Latin America, Asia, Africa, Russia, and Japan.

Modernisation and Westernisation are not always one and the same thing. Western traditions of modernity are not the only valid embodiment of an authentic modernity. In development policy, we must take the plurality of cultures into account, as a characteristic of human evolution. It is obvious that cultural diversity and biodiversity are interrelated, and variety is a vital factor of global civilisation because it has opened possibilities and action options that allow sustainable development and lasting prosperity.

One of the most important responsibilities of the global civilisation is to realise these action options for the future by accepting the cultural heritage of mankind. The development of cultural creativity can only be understood against the backdrop of natural and cultural diversity. It is important to bear in mind that human beings are not only citizens of nations, but primarily members of cultures and religions. Today almost 200 nation states are represented in the United Nations organization, but there are thousands of religious and cultural traditions, and not always are they congruent. That is what lies at the root of conflicts.

There is tension between the technological homogenisation of the world and the preservation of cultural and religious differences. The internationalisation of economy, its centrifugal force that is increasing all around the world, conjures up archaic traditions in the spiritual-religious sphere; fundamentalism of every description takes on the form of anti-modernism. The universalisation of the earth is gaining momentum through the world economy and technocracy. Along with the planetisation of the world economy, however, the political, ethical, and religious structures of the planet are breaking apart. The ever-faster growing cosmopolitan trade and exchange of information through the media go hand in hand with extreme territorial nervousness.

The 'global village' is experiencing nationalisms, be they secular or religious: the kind of segregation and tribalisation that manifests itself as civil war and conflicts over cultural and religious identities. Political integration does not follow on the heels of economic integration, say in the APEC and ASEAN nations, with the GATT agreement, the Andean Pact, or the MERCOSUR agreement in Latin America. Secular-economic totalisation is confronted with an unleashed cultural-religious Balkanisation as an antipode to the threatening standardisation and homogenisation of the globe. That goes for Algeria as well as Iran, India, parts of China, Chechnya, former Yugoslavia, the unrest in Africa and Sri Lanka, in large parts of the former Soviet Union, and in Latin America. There seems to be an anthropological thermostat, so to speak, that has a correcting effect on the cultural integrity of mankind at the beginning of the 21st century.

What follows from this for development policy? What is actually 'modern'? In what sense can there be an Islamic, Confucian, Indian-Hindu, or Latin American modernity? How would 'other' modernities differ from Occidental modernity? Is Islam, in all its complexity, truly faced with the alternatives of Makkah or mechanization? How does the relationship of tradition or modernity manifest itself? The aim must be a balance between the affirmation of cultural characteristics and the universal principles of modernity, without one excluding the other. Military and technocratic disarmament alone will not suffice; cultural disarmament is also required.

Culture is more than folklore; it is the decisive factor of realpolitik. There is nothing neutral about technology; it needs to be 'acculturated' to the individual cultural and religious traditions if it is not to destroy human identity. The notion of 'multiple modernity' serves as a compensation mechanism and escape route in peace politics. There can be no peace between nations as long as there is no peace between cultures and religions.

In conclusion, what implications does this have for the notion of progress? Over the past 500 years, we have experienced the universalisation of the Western model of civilisation and a flattening of historically grown cultural and religious traditions. Affirming the multitude of logics of thought and action in the world and giving non-Western forms of rationality a chance to express themselves might be a way out.

Today, we are seeing an unprecedented simultaneous manifestation of all cultures and nations in the world. 'Progress' must be understood in accordance with this multitude of cultures with its various cosmologies and value systems. 'Culture' is a vector of development policy and a factor of regulatory policy. The aim of development policy should be to truly understand all conceivable factors that influence nations and economies.

The dimension of cultural history is underestimated in realpolitik, and yet it is essential in order to approach the logics of thought and action, the inner motive force of a society and its economy. Operational 'planning elements' should be worked out in development policy to ensure the sustainability of project measures through targeted analyses of the cultural environment. Technically correct projects might otherwise fail.

Economy is only a part of or even a result of cultural and religious historical traditions; there can be no such thing as independent universal rationality. Each national economy has its own 'cultural capital'. Western rationality is merely a subset of a future planetary civilisation.

The core question is why certain cultures develop a dynamic economy and a stable political system and others do not. We can no longer believe in an absolute global culture, but are forced to acknowledge the openness of a pluralism of cultures. The same is essential for the notion of progress. Culture and technology have to be compatible. An economic and technological development that goes against prevailing cultural values is bound to fail. That is true for Russia as well as the Islamic cultures, for the notions of karma and reincarnation in India which lead to a work ethic that differs from that of Shinto with its consensus principle in Japan, or for Latin America with its 16th century transcendent Catholic scholasticism and its prophetic past that reaches back to Bartolome de Las Casas and thus has other prerequisites than the pragmatic Calvinist heritage of the matter-of-fact Protestantism of the early pilgrims who brought forth in North America with its 19th century 'Manifest Destiny'.

With regard to the notion of progress, we must distinguish between purely quantitative economic growth on the one hand and development in the sense of 'human' progress on the other. Economic growth alone is not the same as development. Modern science and technology lead to a mechanistic understanding of the universe that is not necessarily shared by non-Western cultures.

‘Unification without unity’, as Octavio Paz once called it. Global civilisation ought not to be centralistic and monotheistic, but diverse; not continental, but ‘archipelagic’: a civilisation of the agora and not of the arena, in keeping with the notions of dignity and progress, as Raimundo Panikkar says.

Technological progress alone is not the same as sustainable development. Estrangement and the loss of identity are imminent. The notion of human ‘happiness’ also varies in different cultures, as does the wealth of traditional and indigenous knowledge that could be of greater value in development policy than imported and exogenous technology.

In search of ‘the good life’ in various cultures, it is important to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative growth. Material growth alone does not mean ‘human progress’ and growth of civilisation. We Westerners should try to find a balance and avoid haughtiness. More than ever, meta-political wisdom is needed to convert a teaching civilisation into a learning civilisation. Self-knowledge is the first step to understanding the world in a polylogue of civilisations in the 21st century.
The Journey of the Traveler Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Harawi: Signatures on Visited Sites

Nawaf al-Jehma
Presented in Arabic
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Little is known about the traveller Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Harawi (d. 611 H/1217 AD). From his name we understand that he originally came from Herat, however, he was born in Mosul. He toured many parts of the inhabited world, writing his name on the most important monuments that he visited. Ibn Khallikan, the historian, saw some of these and recorded each, saying: “He was keen on seeing every land, sea, valley, and mountain; leaving his signature on every site he visited.”

In the introduction of his book, al-Harawi explains his motivation for writing it as follows: “some friends asked me to recount the places I visited, the wonders I saw, the buildings, the statues, the monuments and the talismans I came across on my journey in the inhabited quarter…. Here I begin from Aleppo and its provinces, moving to Damascus, Palestine and the Holy Land, Egypt, with its upper and lower parts, countries overlooking the sea, Morocco, sea islands, the land of Romans, Diyar Bakr, Iraq, India, the two holy shrines, Yemen and the land of Persia, in which there were no prophets, however, it was inhabited by a great number of mystics and holy men. This book is concentrated on visited sites only.”

The importance of this book lies in the fact that it presents the experience of an oriental mystic traveller who toured the Islamic world east and west. It also highlights the interest in “holy places geography”, the spiritual journeys which were described by travellers east and west the world of Islam. This explains the huge amount of travel books attributed to that age.

Al-Harawi’s journey records many accounts of events and monuments he witnessed or heard about from reliable contemporaries. His book confirms other travel sources, including the works of Ibn Jubair and Ibn Battuta in the 6th-8th centuries AD. It was regarded as the only source for what was known as the geography of holy places in the Arabian East during the Crusades. As early as the 13th century his book was considered a reliable source for historians and authors of geographical lexicons.

In his Muṣārāt al-Buldan, Yaqut al-Hamawi frequently cites Al-Harawi in the sections related to Syria and Palestine. This is also confirmed by modern European studies in the material on Crusades, the description of Constantinople, and the eruption of Etna volcano in 1175 in Sicily.

Al-Harawi refers to other books by him that did not survive, entitled Locations of the Earth, of longitude and latitude and A book of Monuments, Wonders and Statues. Among his works is a book on politics entitled Al-Harawi’s admonition regarding war strategies, including everything a king needs to know on the arts of politics and war. A manuscript of this book is preserved in the Khadivian Library in Cairo.

Basically, al-Harawi relied on memory in writing the account of his journey, since most of his drafts and papers were lost as his ship had an accident near Acre in 1192. On the other hand, he states explicitly that in some cases he relied on the reports of others in describing places he never visited.

“One of my books had been taken by Richard, the King of Crusaders, who wanted to meet me but that was not possible. Others were lost in a shipwreck. I visited so many countries a long time ago; that I forgot most of what I had seen. Such rank is rarely achieved by travelers or mystics, except by someone who toured the earth, recording what he saw in his heart, with his pen.”

At the end of the book he writes: “Most of my books were either taken by Europeans or sank in the sea. This motivated me to write a book entitled: Locations of the Earth, of longitude and latitude. This has enough information for researchers.”

Near the end of his life al-Harawi was awarded great status by the governor of Aleppo, a son of Saladin the Ayyubid. Malek al Dahir favoured him because of his extensive knowledge of magic. This appreciation was expressed by building the al Harawiyya School on the outskirts of Aleppo, where al-Harawi was later buried. Ibn Khallikan mentioned that he had visited his tomb.

Historical Background
The 6th century AH/12th century AD was an age of political unrest in the Arab world. It witnessed the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in the East and the start of the Zangid revolution, and in particular Nur ad-Din movement. With the retrieval of Aleppo in 579 AH/1169 AD Sultan Saladin regained the kingdom of Nur ad Din on both the political and military levels, following a policy of accord between Sunni and Sufi sects. The Crusades were another source of conflict in the region.

Manuscripts of the Journey
Signatures on Visited Sites by al-Hawari was published by The French Institute for Arabic Studies, Damascus in 1953. In editing the book numerous manuscripts were consulted, the most important of which are:

- The manuscript at Cambridge University Library (DQq92) dated in 692AH/1202AD
- The manuscript at National Library in Paris (5972), dated in 697AH/1298 AD
- The manuscript at the collection of Bashir Agha, Istanbul (Ayyoub Library) No 109 , dated in 855AH/1455AD
- The manuscript at Taymouriya Library No 152, written in Hama in 977AH/1569 AD
- The manuscript at Berlin No 543 , dated in 1050AH/1640 AD
- The manuscript at Oxford No 17 MS Clarke or., dated in 1058AH/1648AD
- The manuscript at Dar al Kubut al Dhahiriya , Damascus in 43 p, dated in 1068AH

Reading al Harawi’s Signatures on Visited Sites
Al-Harawi was never among men of religion, including Sufis; however, he enjoyed a mystic spirit that prevailed through the journey. He showed great interest in mysticism and sought the blessings of saints. His religious tendency is a major characteristic of the book and explains his interest in prophets, scholars, holy men, and their miracles. He never missed an opportunity to visit the burial place of any of them. Our traveller was supported by Sufis and clergymen that could be described as people of God. His knowledge of magic also helped to support him, in the words of Ignaty Yulianovich Krachkovsky.

He was keen on immortalizing his name after his death, since monuments survive after the death of people. This explains why he inscribed his name on each site he visited, examples of which were seen by Ibn Khallikan half a century later.

Al Harawi began his journey in Aleppo, describing the city and its districts, then moving on to Homs [city in western Syria], Ba’albek, al Biqa’a, and Damascus with its mountains, and villages. He travelled southwards towards Howran, al Balqa’, and Tabariya. He stayed for some time in Jerusalem before heading to Asqalan.

Arriving in Egypt, he toured its cities, describing holy places and monuments in Cairo, old Cairo, Upper Egypt, Damietta, Rosetta and Alexandria. From there he went to Islamic West, where he visited
Morocco, Sicily, Cyprus, Constantinople and the land of Romans. He then headed to Northern Syria, visiting al-Khabar, Diyar Bakr, the island of Ibn Omar, and Mosil, before moving to Iraq, where he stopped in Samarra, Baghdad, Kufa and Basra. From there he left for Hijaz, visiting Mecca and Medina then Yemen. His last station was in Isfahan, which concluded his tour in Persia.

Description of Islamic Holy Places

The religious character is strongly evident in the book, since its theme is religious. Mausoleums and Holy places represent an important expression of prevailing medieval Islamic culture. These religious institutions were active centres, attracting the poor and the followers of various religious sects. For this lecture, the concentration will be on the two cities of Jerusalem and Hebron.

As he began his journey from Aleppo, Syria was the first country to be explored. This took place after the visit by Benjamin of Toledo (564 AH/1168 AD), and few years earlier than the Valencian Ibn Jubair’s visit (579 AH/1183 AD).

Between 1173-1174 he stayed in Jerusalem, which was in the hands of Crusaders at that time. He was keen on documenting the places he visited in Palestine, namely, Tabriya, Nablus, Hebron, Asqalan and Jerusalem, and the surrounding area. He was keen on recording what he saw in Jerusalem, motivated by worry that such Holy Sites would collapse or be destroyed by the Crusaders.

It is remarkable that al-Harawi confirms in his book that Europeans did not make any changes in the monuments, either in the designs or inscriptions. This is a testimony of a contemporary traveller, which is important today, especially in the context of modern attempts to distort such historical monuments.

Al-Harawi is unique in showing great interest in historical inscriptions during Crusades. That is why his texts have acquired high esteem as a source of dating religious monuments in this blessed area. Describing the Dome of the Rock, he says: “It is the site from which the Prophet (peace be upon him) began his heavenly journey. His foot mark could still be seen stamped there. At the time of Crusades, I saw the rock in the North of the dome, surrounded by an iron fence. However, it is situated now in the East of the dome supported by a bench underneath, on which it is built. Its width reaches a full span, with a height of two cubits and a circumference of four cubits. Under the Dome of the Rock, there is The Cave of the Spirits, which might include the grave of Prophet Zakaria (peace be upon him). Around the ceiling of the dome, the inscription reads: In the name of God Most Gracious, Most Merciful God! There is no God but He, the Living the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize him, nor sleep. His are all things in the Heavens and on Earth. Surat al Baqara, verse 255. The script is all gilt.

“The dome is mounted on a structure with four doors. When I visited in the year 569 AH during the Crusades, there was a depiction of Suleiman bin Dawoud (peace be upon him) opposite to the door leading to The Cave of Spirits near the iron fence. To the west there is a lead door with a depiction of the Christ in gold encrusted with precious stones. The Eastern door next to the Selsela dome has an arch inscribed in the name of Al Qi'am bi Amr ‘Allah (peace be upon him) opposite to the door leading to The Cave of Spirits near the iron fence. To the west there is a lead door with a depiction of the Christ in gold encrusted with precious stones.

In his description of al Aqsa Mosque he mentioned that it included the Mihrab of Omar bin Khattab, unchanged by Europeans. On the ceiling he stated that he read the following inscriptions: In the name of God the most Gracious, most merciful (Glory to God who did take His Servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque , whose precincts We did bless. (Surat al Isra’, verse 8) This dome was commissioned by our master the minister , and the favourite friend of Amir al Muminin, Abu ‘l Qasim Ali bin Ahmed , may God support him and bring him victory. It was completed by the end of the month Thi ’ Qi’da , in the year 426AH.

It is remarkable that al-Harawi’s account of Al Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock agrees with what is mentioned by travellers from Morocco and Andalusia, who visited the Jerusalem during the 7th and 8th centuries (13 - 14 AD), such as Al Abdri (688 AH/1289 AD) , Ibn Battuta (725 AH/1325 AD) and Al Balawi (737 AH/1336 AD).

The interest paid by al-Harawi to al Aqsa Mosque and to the Dome of the Rock is comparable to that of Arab geographers and travellers giving detailed description of the two monuments. That is why al-Harawi can be considered one of the best travellers to Holy places in Jerusalem and Hebron during the Crusade occupation of the region.

Al-Harawi visited Hebron, aware of its high status, seeking peace by praying for the prophets. As an eye witness, al-Harawi wrote: As I entered Jerusalem in 569AH, I met, there and in Hebron, with clergymen who told me that during the reign of King Baudouin in Jerusalem, part of the cave (where Prophets were buried) became sunken. As some Europeans went in, with the King’s permission, they found the bodies of Ibrahim, Isaac
and Jacob (peace be upon them). Their wrappings were worn out and they were bending on the wall with bare heads, and lamps above them. The King commissioned them new wrappings and ordered the opening to be blocked in 513 AH.

Moroccan travelers like Ibn Battuta and al Balawi in the 8th century AH/14th century AD confirm the validity of al-Harawi’s account concerning the graves. However, they don’t agree on the site of Joseph’s grave, as Moroccan travellers thought it was in the Hebron Sanctuary whereas al-Harawi thought it was in Nablus.

Near Hebron there are many visiting places and mausoleums. Al Harawi mentioned that he visited Bayt Jibrin the land referred to in the Qur’an in the context of the story of Moses (peace be upon him): O my people, enter the holy land which God has assigned unto you, and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown to your own ruin. (Verse 23) They said: 'O Moses in this land are people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it. Once they leave, then shall we enter.' (Verse 24). It was said that the city referred to here is Arilha or Amman, the latter sounds more accurate.

Asqalan was described as a holy place including Ibrahim’s well before he dug it with his own hands. It also includes the sepulchre of al-Hussien. It used to contain his head, which was later transferred to Cairo in 549 AH as Crusaders occupied the city. Al-Harawi mentioned that he spent the night at Ibrahim’s mausoleum where he had a vision of Prophet Mohammed, bringing the good tidings of Islamic conquest in Jerusalem and Asqalan before the battle of Hittin in 583 AH. Al-Harawi stated that he had recorded and dated what he saw on the southern side of the mausoleum wall. Jerusalem and Asqalan were conquered in 583 AH. This inscription was witnessed by many traders and soldiers and it is dated 570 AH.

Description of Christian Holy Places
Some Christian travellers wrote their accounts of the visits they paid to holy places under the reign of the Crusades. Among them is Saewulf whose journey was between 1102-1103 AD, Daniel 1106-1170 AD, Euphrosine 1162-1172 AD, Benjamin of Toledo 1162-1170AD, and Theodrich 1171-1173.

Al-Harawi describes in detail the Holy churches in Palestine, eg. the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, pointing out its importance as a place of pilgrimage for Christians. He also referred to the Syriac Orthodox (Jacobite) Church, which contains a well where Christ washed, and where Samaritans were converted to Christianity. It is usually highly respected and visited by them. He also mentioned the structure that is believed to be built on the site of the Christ ascension to Heaven, and the Mount Zion church, said to have the table at which Christ had dinner with his disciples.

He admired the Church of the Nativity church greatly, noting “This church includes antiques and remarkable marble architecture inlaid with gold, its date, unchanged, goes back to more than 1200 years, and it is carved in wood. The site of the palm tree is still there. It includes the mihrab of Omar bin al Kattab, unchanged by Europeans till now.” Referring to other places of visitation he mentions the tomb of the Virgin Mary and Sulwan Spring, the water of which is comparable to that of...
Zamzam. He also mentioned the tomb of Raheel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, sons of Jacob. He mentioned Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.

**Jewish Places of Visitation**

It was only when al-Harawi reached Nablus that he began to write in detail about the Jewish visitation places, including the mountain that witnessed the binding of Isaac. “Jews pay that mountain great respect as it is mentioned in the Bible, and the Sumerians pray there, and believe that a spring under a cave is sacred as well. The number of Sumerians in the city is really great.”

Al-Harawi agreed with Benjamin of Toledo concerning that sect, describing their belief and that their number was approximately one thousand. Al-Harawi referred to the tomb of Yousha’ bin Noun (Moses’s servant) at a village called Awarta on the road from Jerusalem to Nablus.

**Historical Events**

Not only did al-Harawi describe visitation places, but also he included some historical events in his account. There were some political and military references, with some reports told by common people. Among these is a reference to the Hittin battle in 583 AH/1187 AD. As al-Harawi noted: “the Crusader Kings fell captive, Jerusalem and the rest the coastal area and other cities were conquered.” As he passed by Acre, he referred to its tower where Al-Harawi referred to the tomb of Yousha’ bin Noun (Moses’s servant) at a village called Awarta on the road from Jerusalem to Nablus.

One of the most important accounts in al-Harawi’s book is of his meeting with the head of the Muslim community in Sicily. The commander, Abu’s Qasim bin Hemoud known as Ibn al Hajar, sent with him a letter addressed to Sultan al Mansur al Muwahidi, asking him to send a campaign against Sicily, which was under the reign of the Normans. According to Ibn Jubair, the King of Sicily came to know of that plan and confiscated all the money the al-Harawi had. Ibn Jubair refers to that event saying: “As I met him, he complained about his condition and the condition of the island inhabitants, which would bring the listener to tears, and cause much pain”, Ibn Jubair reports that al-Harawi said “Iwish I were sold with my family, if this would bring me back to the land of Islam.”

His geographic reference to volcanoes in Sicily is best demonstrated by his description of the eruption of the Etna Volcano in 1175 AD. Not only did he not believe the stories of others about the volcano eruption, but also he gave his own report: “I saw only black stones with holes like those used for feet. They were falling from that mountain, in the direction of the sea.”

Arabic sources confirm that the volcano was active during 10th – 12th centuries, a fact recorded by a number of Arab geographers and travellers. Jubair recorded also the earthquakes that accompanied the eruption of the volcano. Such references provide important information in geographic studies related to the evolution of that volcano and the time it was active during that period of medieval ages.

**Conclusion**

Al-Harawi’s journey is an important source for the study of religious conditions, specifically the mysticism of that time. The book also gives an account of saints’ mausoleums and their miracles. His interest in that sphere enlarged the scale of the journey, which was an incentive for him to visit farther places.

• The text of the journey was quite condensed, as the author did not focus on the description of social and economic aspects of life during that important period. Rather, he concentrated on mausoleums and religious sites in Greater Syria.

• Al-Harawi ignored details related to Crusades and their influence on Syrian society.

• The journey report is rather brief on the description of social life; however, it includes much geographical and historical information as well as descriptions of architectural monuments. This makes the text worthy of study.

• The journey notes are important documents, but lack a comprehensive vision.

• The image presented by al-Harawi of the sacred places in Jerusalem and Hebron under Crusader rule, reflects his intellectual and cultural background as a mystic. Hence, his perspective is completely different from that of a scholar or a politician.

Those adopting such an attitude towards scientific heritage, however few they are, ignore the past completely and undervalue any attempt to recognize the importance of the work. According to these dissidents, any attempt at connecting history with the present will not withstand any rational analytical approach. This can only work as a means of boosting a sense of national or cultural pride. Human history, as they claim, records no examples of past glories being transformed into the genetic order of a nation, to be eventually part of a renaissance.

As they quickly skimmed works from the past, they were looking only for a consistent philosophy that could be combined into one culture putting forth original ideas. At this point began the confrontation between imitation and renovation, fundamentalism and modernity, the rational and the absurd. Arguments would continue fruitlessly over these and other contrasting ideas.

With the exception of some individuals who take an interest in the history of Islamic (or Arab) scientific heritage, we rarely find contemporary literature taking into consideration the Islamic perspective in subjects like the “history and philosophy of science and technology”. Other issues like the terminology, methodology, and philosophy of science in Islamic culture are still waiting for analytical, academic study. On the opposite side, advocates of exploring our scientific heritage often have occasional opportunity to discuss such issue in international forums and conferences, related to the history and philosophy of science.

**International interest in scientific heritage**

According to the contemporary science historian Jean Dhombranes, Mathematics professor and former President of L’Academie Internationale d’Histoire des Sciences (1983-88), “Scientific heritage is a field that still needs much work”.

Recognising this, academics in the USA have recently published works of scientists like Galileo in Italy, Newton in England, Gaius in Germany, Descartes, Laplace, and Lagrange in France.

However, Jean Dhombranes considers the work accomplished to be incomplete. “There is no mention of non-Western scientists. Furthermore, mathematicians and astronomers are better presented than geologists and natural history scientists in general. This can be unfair in some way. We are still able to identify those who wrote their commentaries on Euclid from Thabit ibn Qurra to Umar al Khayyam, who was not only a poet, but also a mathematician.”

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Such zeal for Western heritage should be balanced by the recognition of scientists from other civilizations that contributed to the formation of scientific and technological progress over many generations. This is also true of the scientists from Islamic Arab civilization who were active for more than eight centuries, illuminating the world. However, most of their works and manuscripts were lost, others are dispersed in different parts of the world waiting for serious investigation.

If we are to benefit from the lessons of history, we must realize that not only does the history of science indicate different stages of development, but also it proves that the problems we face today are not completely new. Therefore, we can be inspired by the methods through which such problems were treated in the past.

Here the importance of an Islamic Arab scientific heritage revival becomes quite evident. This includes taking contemporary sciences back to their roots, in the societies where they were born and recognizing the circumstances that encouraged the growth of new ideas. Here we come to realize that all scientific facts from different epochs are not equally important when surveyed by the historian; which also applies to the status of scientists and their scientific achievement.

Scientific heritage from a national perspective

Looking at the issue from a national perspective, we can find a parallel for this in Europe, where the history of European science is given much interest in the context of finding the roots of European science. In Florence in 1991 a forum was held to discuss “the history of science and scientific culture in Europe” in order to boost the efforts leading to the revival of scientific heritage and the position held by the history of science and technology in modern Europe. A report on this forum defines science today as “knowledge with no memory,” paying no attention to the past. It seems that scholars have enclosed themselves in the present concerning recent sciences. This might have increased the activity of the scientific project, but ultimately it will act against productivity.

Participants in the forum, concentrating on the issue in its European context, expect that science history will play an important part in the future and have an important role in the field of education, especially in basic training programs and later during actual service. This is also applicable to researchers, engineers, art and humanities students, allowing them an easy understanding of the science and technology movement and an apprehension of its methodology and problems.

Refuted claims and biased opinions

Our scientific heritage includes much of the pioneering role played by Islamic Arab civilization in the history of humanity, as confirmed by unbiased historians. However, this role is underestimated by others who try to date science theory to the era of Plato and Aristotle in Greek civilization, or the age of Renaissance and scholars such as Francis Bacon and Descartes. There are others who praise what is called “Jewish science” or “Christian science”. There is also reference to the “golden age of Semitic genius” in the Babylonian and Assyrian civilization.

George Sarton (1884-1956), one of the modern advocates of Arab civilization, could not hide his ethnic prejudice. In his “Introduction to the History of Science”, he writes of what he called the Greek miracle and how it excelled its adjacent civilizations. He confirms that “interest should be limited to the culture of our predecessors …… as a matter of fact what we really concentrate on is our culture, which is derived from Greek or Jewish origins, though our interest could involve others. However, the claim that it is the best culture is inaccurate and might generate hostility among neighboring countries.”

In his book entitled “Science in History” John Desmond Bernal could not hide his bias towards Greeks, Persians and Romans. He presents various unbased accusations against Islam and Muslims. According to Bernal, Islam has generated a surviving culture compared to the one not quite progressive. On the other hand he claims that Arabic language is responsible for concealing the great role played by Persians in Islamic Eastern Science. Muslims have created barriers between natural and human sciences, since they limited themselves to translating Greek science and philosophy, ignoring Greek humanities. Bernal limits the scope of Muslim achievement to the preservation of the heritage of the Ancients. He thinks that most Muslims were satisfied with the classical heritage in science; they didn’t have ambition to develop it or to introduce revolutionary changes in the field.

One can see prejudice practiced by historians writing on science history and technology, with the aim of raising national feeling. They seek to confirm the myth of the supremacy of Aryan race, asserting that science cannot be but Western. Joseph Nedham in his seven volume work on “Science and Civilisation in China” (published in 1954), tried to explain why progress in China did not follow the same track followed in Europe, suggesting that European Renaissance science and technology are international.

Some historians made an attempt to approach Islamic culture through studying its scientific heritage. As they did that, they considered matters that can be classified under Islamic belief, propagating misconceptions about Islam. In an article entitled “Science in service of religion”, David King, through his study of Islamic Arab heritage, promotes mistaken ideas about Islam.

Jean Charles Sorina in his book “History of Medicine” follows the same track, suggesting that Muslims founded their science of medicine on the sayings of the Prophet, and that the work of Avicenna in “Al Qurn” lacks any practical use for patients. Inconsistently, he admits that this book has remained one of the basic sources for scientific fact and a compulsory study in European universities for eight centuries. Such bias toward western science against the cultural achievements of other nations, and Muslim nations in particular, devalues Islamic Arab thinking and the originality of Islamic science.

This creates motivation for scholars to search Islamic heritage and the attempt to find the origins of Islamic Arab culture, trying to modify it for the modern age, with the conservation of its genuine characteristics. We have to appreciate the efforts of western scholars in the field of Arab science, as they have better institutions and specialized periodicals into which they can arrange their efforts, and the history of science should be objective; it is not acceptable anymore to write the history of science with any kind of bias that leads to the attribution of scientific invention exclusively to a particular race.

Modern exploitation of scientific and technological heritage

The value of exploring our scientific and technological heritage can go beyond its historical importance. It can enrich the young people with self-confidence and critical thinking, helping them to develop scientific approach and methodology. This can bring about different cases of plagiarism practised by those who translated our Arab Islamic heritage. It may also reveal the Arab Islamic origin of modern sciences such as optics, genetics, ecology, geology, astronomy. Some advanced scientific theories and inventions have been discovered in the Islamic history, such as the laws of movement and gravity introduced by Ibroni, Baghdadi and Hamadani, centuries before Newton. However, time should be taken into consideration when reading such texts. There is no exaggeration in saying that only few scholars could assimilate Newton’s book “Principia” written in 1678, in the following three centuries, because of its difficult subject and language. Only in 1750 were the Newton formulas were put in their familiar form by Euler the scientist.

The contribution of each Muslim scientist should be defined in order to make fair attribution to each work in a chronological order. Scientific methodology can be traced in works of Islamic heritage, such as Ibn al Haytham in the Introduction of his book “al Manadher” in comparison with Francis Bacon and others. His work entitled “Doubts on Ptolemy” can be compared to Carl Popper’s idea of “falsifiability”. The scientific revolution initiated by algebra of Khwarizmi, Ibn al
Haytham optics and Hamadani’s gravity, are to be considered in the light of Thomas Kuhn’s writings.

Scientific manuscripts include useful information as stated in Al Buzjani’s work on astronomy and mathematics, giving detailed information on taxation, gathering tribute, and military salaries. Ibn Zahr of Seville wrote on the internal conflicts and conspiracies that took place in Morocco during the reign of Muravid dynasty, surprisingly in a book on medicine. In a book written by Al Karji entitled “Surveying Hidden Water” one can find linguistic and theological information.

Scientific heritage has been utilized in practical fields, an example of which is the use of geological information included in Hadrami’s work in a geophysical survey in Yemen. The work explored its mineral resources, with the result of discovering important mines rich with zinc, iron, lead, and silver.

An accurate account of earthquakes in the Arab Islamic region during the last few centuries is available in works of early Arab scientists like Al-Hamadani and Shafi’i. Such works are considered documented records of the phenomena of earthquake in the region that will help in future studies or maps of expected earthquakes. Dr Abdulla Youssif al Ghunim used these records and published a book entitled “Arab Record of Earthquakes, their events and consequences in the Geophysical Survey in Yemen.” The work explored the region’s geophysical survey and considered it important in studying the region’s geological resources.

In the field of herbal medicine many Arab books were written, and are currently studied in India, China and Pakistan at special institutions. Practical research is in process in countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia and some Western scholars advocate the revival of teaching Arab medicine and developing necessary regulations for use by physicians and pharmacists. A series of experiments on many of the recipes included in Arab medical treatises is currently underway.

Islamic architectural designs including arches, domes, and architectural decorations are being studied in order to appreciate the beauty of Islamic architecture and to guide restoration works. Here we refer to research carried out on Islamic architecture at the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment (formerly The Prince of Wales’s Institute of Architecture).

Books on Arab science and technology can help teachers create the education of simple equipment, based on sketches included in Arab works. Those machines found in al Jazari’s “Automata” provide several opportunities for this.

Finally, a review of Arab scientific heritage can be effective in refuting claims raised by those who underestimate Islamic civilization on the basis of scientific criteria. Here the importance of scientific heritage becomes evident, as the evidence covers a period of more than fifteen centuries and a large geographic area. It is important to restate that scientific heritage and to republish it in modern language, preserving the heritage and the standards of writing, and preserve their verses in manuscripts.

Islamic architecture is equally rich in works related to botany, zoology, and agriculture, like that of Abu Zakariya Yahya ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Al-Awwam Al-Isbihi of Seville. Will Durant, the historian described his work as the most comprehensive medieval work on agriculture.

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<th>Understanding Oral Poetry of Arabia and the Legacy of a Cultural Tradition</th>
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<td><strong>Oral poetry of the Arabian Peninsula is often known as nabaṭi verse. This is its name in present-day Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. In southern Arabia, however, it is called humaini or al-shi’r sha’bi and as-shi’r al-‘āmi ‘popular poetry.’ I will refer to it simply as ‘oral poetry.’</strong></td>
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When scholars who have studied this poetry speak of it as being “oral,” what do they mean? Is it spoken but not written? Many renowned nabaṭi poets are liṭāf, their poetry being the act of writing, and preserve their verses in manuscripts.

And what about the register of Arabic in which it is composed? Is it one of the local dialects spoken on the Arabian Peninsula? This does seem to be one of this poetry’s distinguishing characteristics, so deeply rooted is its language in the words and expressions of the dialect spoken by the poet. Yet, the level or depth of the dialect can vary from one poem to the next even in the works of the same poet. Perhaps the division between the dialect and the standard language is a matter of degree rather than of kind, the variation subtly signalling differences in subject matter, the background or personality of the poet, his educational level, and the occasion for which the poem was composed.

While questions of speaking and dialect are important, they are not the only or even the most interesting features of oral poetry. One of these is that an oral poem is a public performance, in which a poem is often composed in the same instant that it is heard by an audience. It involves the entire body - and the different senses of hearing and vision - in a dramatic act. We miss this quality when we focus too narrowly on the poem’s text, which most scholars of Arabian oral poetry have done. One only has to recall that the recitation of the nabaṭa qaṣīdah or ode was traditionally accompanied by the rabābah, a one-stringed viol, played by a professional singer, to realise the performative nature of this verse.

The fact that oral poetry is performed is connected with another of its distinguishing features, which has to do with the fact that it is produced on and for specific occasions (in Arabic these are the munāsibat). Among occasions we might distinguish between ritual and historical situations or events. Oral poetry is often inseparable from wedding celebrations, religious festivals or formal dispute mediations and does important symbolic work in them.

**Oral Poetry in Tribal Yemen**

An ethnographic example from northern Yemen might help make the performance and occasionality of oral poetry seem less abstract. Yemeni tribesmen compose a poetic genre that is well-known elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world, the qaṣīdah, but I want to lay aside this genre in order to concentrate on two lesser known oral poems, the zāmil and the bālah.

Were I to concentrate solely on the linguistics of the zāmil poem, on its nature as a text, I would note that it is composed of two lines, with each line divided into two hemistichs, the ends of the hemistichs rhyming with each other (AB/A/B). I would also note that the line has a meter, the most

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And that is not all. The two groups are positioned, one in front of the other, and they march in a simple dance step on the wadi floor towards their destination, be it the wedding groom's house, a mosque or the meeting place at which a dispute is to be mediated. In this way the arts of poetry, music and dance are combined in one performance. All of this makes the art of oral poetry more complicated than one might suppose, if one focused merely on the text.

As for the content of the poem, we would note that the first line is usually an embellished greeting addressed to the poem's recipient who is referred to in honorific terms. For example, “O Najī, generous one, greetings as many as the rain drops that fall in spring”.

This is followed by the second line that carries the main meaning or punch line. For example, “Do not raise the marriage price, God preserve you!” which signals that the poem was composed at a wedding and was meant to persuade the father of the bride not to ask for more in bride wealth than was reasonable or the groom could afford. This is a common problem in fact and one which was widely criticised.

But all of this tells us little about the poem's dramatic performance. A zāmil poem has to be chanted on a particular melody (not sung, for there is a difference in the minds of tribesmen between singing and chanting). The poet must fashion a verse that is musically pleasing. In addition to being chanted, the poem is performed collectively by a “chorus” which divides into two groups, the first of which chants the first line of the poem, the second the final line of the poem, the two alternating in their chanting of the lines for several minutes on end until a new poem is composed on the spot.

Let us also bear in mind that a zāmil poem is addressed to someone, and as such, is meant to provoke another zāmil poem which echoes its challenge in rhyme, meter and melody. Usually there is not just one response but several are forthcoming, the variously linked poems forming a rhetorical bouquet in which social issues are discussed and debated in the course of a single ritual occasion.

Unlike the zāmil, the bālah poem is very limited in its use, being composed for only one occasion, the samrah or evening’s entertainment at the groom’s wedding celebration. The complexity of its performance more than makes up for its limited use.

A chorus of two groups (ṣaffeyn) forms a circle in the middle of a reception hall (or mafrāj as it is called in Yemeni Arabic) in which the samrah is held. One of these groups recites one half of the poetic line or hemistich, the other the second half, the two groups alternating in the chanting of the two halves for several minutes until the next line of the poem is produced. They deliver their lines in a high male voice, bordering on a falsetto, and part of the performance has to do with the physical stamina needed to chant in this manner for minutes, and sometimes hours, on end. The chorus determines the particular melody or lahn on which the poetry is to be chanted, there being several such melodies to choose from in the oral tradition, and they perform this melody on a set refrain that they repeat over and over again until the audience has remembered it. As they are doing so, they grasp each other around the waist and move in a slow counter-clockwise direction in a short, shuffling step.

Unlike the zāmil in which a single individual is the originator of the verse, bālah poetry is composed by more than one poet. In fact, the poets compete with each to see who can produce the best and wittiest lines on the spot, making up what they call a game. He steps inside the circle made by the two groups of the chorus, cups his hand next to his mouth (like the muʿadhthīn chanting the call to prayer), and proceeds to chant the first part of his line while moving slowly in a counter-clockwise direction. He then waits for the chorus to pick up his offering before he goes on to produce the second half of his line, after which he steps out of the circle and back into the audience. If something goes wrong (the meter is off or the rhyme does not work), the chorus shouts, “Harf maksus!” ‘A broken hemistich!’, obligating the poet to come up with a correct line or cede his turn in the performance, which would reflect badly on his artistic skills and ultimately even on his person as an honourable tribesman.

In the middle of the poem there is a special routine called the daʾwah w-jiḥābah ‘a challenge and retort or answer,’ in which poets playfully tease each other, the trick being that the poet who has been challenged must respond at least in kind or better than his challenger in verse. This calls for quickness of wit. In any given performance there might be several sets of duelling poets, and the audience has to track the lines of poetry in terms of these ongoing poetic battles in order to enjoy the full complexity of the game.

I would argue that in the minds of tribal Yemenis, the zāmil, the bālah, and the qaṣ̱īdat form one system. Evidence for this is found in the many qaṣ̱īdat poems that begin as zāmil-s, which the poet expands into the longer ode when he feels the inspiration to do so, and this is possible because they share meter and rhyme schemes. It is also telling that the poem of the bālah is referred to as a qaṣ̱īdat, suggesting yet another connection between the genres. The best poets are able to move from one genre to the other, depending on the occasion.

A Peninsula-Wide Poetic System?

To what extent is the system of poetic genres I have just described for Yemen to be found elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula? It would seem that today the only genre still composed outside of Yemen is the qaṣ̱īdat. But what about in the last fifty years or more? To attempt an answer to this question we have to look at collections and analyses of poetry published in the twentieth century, both by Arab and non-Arab scholars. Are traces or vestiges of the oral poetic genres I have described for Yemen found in them?

By far the most helpful text for answering this question is The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins (1928) by Alois Musil, a Czech Professor of Oriental Studies who was fluent in Arabic and travelled extensively with the Rwala Bedouin of northern Arabia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Chapter 10 of his book is devoted to what he calls “poetry,” but the only verse form it covers is the qaṣ̱īdat. The rest of the book, however, is filled with dozens and dozens of examples of verse which are not in the qaṣ̱īdat form, though the Rwala clearly consider them to be poetry nonetheless. They are tied to specific ritual occasions such as festivals or everyday activities having to do with the Bedouin way of life and are obviously performed.
According to Musil, the Rwalla also composed qaşīdah which is very short and expresses the delights and two lines in length, some were longer, and these in poet so wished. I found the same thing for the poems on camel raiding and inter-tribal warfare. He hajēni For example, there is a verse-form called zāmil ‘O uncle, Gharawi’s daughter//Yā w-alyā takhaţţat b-al-haTHāwi//tabghīni w-an arīdahā//when she goes by in her fringed kerchief//she takes away my little heart in her hand.’

There is only one other study of tribal poetry on the Peninsula which provides a broader picture of oral poetry than we usually find. It is the work of the Saudi Arabian scholar, Saad Abdullah Sowayan. Sowayan mentions a verse form called Hajęni in Najd that has strong resemblances to the Rwala poetry of the same name. He also mentions the sāmri, sung at night during wedding festivities and performed in a dance. But it is the arDhih or galTih that I want to draw particular attention to. Sowayan describes its performance though he did not apparently record it or study its text.

The performance of the arDhih or galTih clearly resembles the Yemeni zāmil, though the latter involves more than two poets and would appear to have a more elaborate content. In both genres poets challenge each other. The resemblance between the two genres is even more pronounced than that, however.

The verses of the duelling poets are repeated by the groups of singers who arrange themselves in two lines, standing up and facing each other with some space between them for the duelling poets to move in. Singing is accompanied by hand clapping only, with no drums or other instruments. This makes it easy for anyone present to join in the singing. Duelling poets do not come up with their verses one verse right after the other. It takes a few minutes for a duellist to decipher the meaning of his opponent’s verses and form the proper response to them. Each verse, therefore, is repeated several times by the singer, until one of the poets comes up with the next verse. If a poet lingers in composing his verses, the singers shout at him, ‘lēt “You have been topped”, which signals his defeat.

Unfortunately, Sowayan does not study this genre, telling us that the qaşīdah is the primary focus of his research. And he is not alone. I have found the same focus in the study of oral poetry by nearly all scholars. To be sure, the qaşīdah is worthy of study – but so are the other genres of oral poetry that existed historically on the Peninsula, or so I hope to have shown.

Another form of a poetic duel, called riddiyah, involves two poets, and consists of a few rounds of exchanges between them, each round consisting of two verses. The first poet steps forward and improvises two verses in which he greets the assembled audience-participants and, at the same time, asks for a challenger to come forward and face him. A second poet answers the challenge with two verses of his own following the rhyme and meter established by the first poet, who in turn retorts with two more verses. These two verses are answered by the second poet, and so on until the end of the riddiyah. A riddiyah is thus actually the work of two poets, but it is viewed as one unit and its verses all have the same rhyme and meter. Although it follows the established patterns of rhyme and meter, it is different from the regular qaşīdah in structure and function and it is composed in performance.

Conclusion

Does it make sense to reconstruct today and perform the oral genres in that poetic system? Would it even be possible, given that the social life this oral poetry was so much a part of has changed beyond all recognition?

To be sure, the Arabs of the Peninsula no longer engage in camel herding or raiding, but they still have marriage ceremonies, festivals, and other occasions in which playfulness can take the form of poetry. Reinventing this poetry and its performance would require extensive fieldwork in the next decade or so before all the tribesmen who once practiced this tradition die out. Additionally, extensive archival work could be undertaken, and I have in mind not only the hundreds of poetic anthologies that have been printed in the last century or more: for years Kuwait television (and I know that Saudi Arabian television did the same) had a program on nabāṭī poetry, and among its segments there surely must be recordings of tribesmen performing poetry other than the ubiquitous qaşīdah. It would be a fascinating project, one that would help us see how rich and varied the oral poetry of the Arabian Peninsula was, much richer indeed than our focus on the qaşīdah would lead us to believe.

Thanks to Professor Caton for the photographs included in this article.
Iranian Painting and Georgian-Iranian Cultural Relations from Safavid till Qajar Time

Irina Koshoridze
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Iranian-Georgian relations have a long and complicate history, which started in Achaenid and Sassanid time and continues until the 1830s, when the whole Caucasian region and Georgia finally were lost.

A rich collection of Safavid manuscripts and documents is kept in the National Centre of Manuscript – the most interesting part is the collection of documents (up to 511 items). The most elaborated, artistically executed and richly decorated are the firmans of Safavid shahs (figure 1), which deal with Georgia. These documents were issued to the Georgian nobility and the local Christian Church, in Isfahan by the Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), Shah Safi (1629-42), Shah Abbas II (1642-66), Shah Suleiman I (1666-94), Shah Tahmasp II (1722-32). Most of the documents which survived were issued by Shah Sultan Hussein (1694-1722).

The text of the documents is short. It is enclosed within an ornamental frame on both sides (mainly adorned with stylized floral motifs), while the area designed for the text proper is covered with details relevant to the framing ornament. Frequently, the space between the lines is also filled with a row of floral décor, gold rectilinear and wavy bands, or a jagged black contour.

The text and its decorative frame are mainly set within an artistic or gold-coloured border executed on paper of different colours and quality. This is an independent illuminated frame stuck to the edge of the text; the seals on the documents are often attached at the centre of the decorative frame, above the text; it is assigned a special artistic function. These are circular, dome-like or quadrangular seals of the Shahs issuing the documents, placed in rosettes and frame done in enamel-like technique. The beginning of the document is characteristically executed with high artistic style; with mellow as well as sharp and intensive blending of colours. Such artistic concept of the document stands close to the ‘unwans of Iranian manuscripts in terms of its function and manner of execution, colourfulness and exquisite filigree technique.

The Georgian illuminated manuscripts although demonstrate the Oriental tendencies in the artistic life of the country. The famous poem of 12th century Georgian Poet Shota Rustaveli survived only in the 17th century versions. Most of them are executed in the oriental especially Isfahan school painting style: a high technique of miniature painting, total dependence on the traditional schemes of Iranian concept, striving of professional masters to continue – on Georgian soil – the artistic tradition of illumination of first-class Iranian manuscripts, stemming from Behzadi and Riza Abbasi. Two 17th c. manuscripts of Shota Rustaveli’s are richly illuminated (5006) and bears the typical late 17th century stylistic features – Muin Mussavir and Muhamad Zaman. There is the group of the Georgian manuscripts where the text and its decorative frame are mainly set within an artistic or gold-coloured border executed on paper of different colours and quality. Flowers, animals, birds or angels often are depicted on these borders.

Another extremely interesting group of the documents is Georgian-Iranian bilingual, which expressed the formal dependence of the Georgian King on Iran’s government. The earliest bilingual document is dated by 1580.

In bilingual documents the distribution of text and ornament differs from the structure of an Iranian document. At the beginning of the document the ornamentation is represented in the form of a headpiece. The principal part of the document is an extensive Georgian text. The Iranian text, as a rule, is a brief version of the Georgian text. It frequently occupies the upper or lateral area of the document, or is written on a separate leaf. Unlike the Iranian method, the placement of the seal and the signature in a bilingual document are at the end of the text. Another difference between the manuscripts is the use of parchment, traditional for Georgian manuscripts, instead of paper, which is typically used in Iranian documents.

One of the less studied and very real topics in Islamic art is the problem of provenance and sources of Iranian easel painting and its relationship with the Georgian school of painting. Several articles have been dedicated to this topic and often well-known scholars have totally different opinions on the subject. The introduction to the Iranian court of Georgian dress (mainly the cut of the waist with loops for buttons as described by Chardin), Georgian shoes (high heeled shoes), Georgian style of headdress and coiffure were mentioned by many European travellers (Chardin, Herbert). The same style of dress appears at the Georgian court life half century earlier, confirmed by the Georgian visual material and contemporary accounts of the Italian missionaries living in Georgia at that time. Taking into account the strong position of Georgians at the Safavid Court, it was possible that they influenced contemporary taste with new trends of the high fashion of that time; Zand and Qajar time.

After the fall of the Safavid dynasty Georgians still were under Persians control and had normal relations with the Afshar ruler of Iran - Nadir Shah. Erekle (future Erekle II), the young prince of the eastern Georgian kingdom of Kartle-Kaheti, was one of the respected persons at the Shah’s court.
Close relations continued in Zand times (1750-93) when Georgia was de facto independent. The palace of Erekle II in Telavi – capital of the eastern Georgian kingdom, built in mid 18th century, is a close reproduction of Kerim Khan’s Palace in Shiraz.

According to Georgian sources the first palace was built here during the reign of Archil II, when he moved the capital of Kaheti kingdom from Gremi (1664). The fragments from Archil’s palace and the floor plans remain. This building was partly reconstructed by Erekle II according to modern Iranian taste. This was done between 1750-62, when he ruled the Kaheti kingdom.

The palace is built on a hill, with a wonderful view of the Kaheti Valley. The palace complex was surrounded by monumental walls and large, circular corner towers. The palace itself is a rectangular building: the central hall had high ceilings and corner towers. The palace itself is a rectangular building: the central hall had high ceilings and corner towers. The palace itself is a rectangular building: the central hall had high ceilings and corner towers. The palace itself is a rectangular building: the central hall had high ceilings and corner towers. The palace itself is a rectangular building: the central hall had high ceilings and corner towers.

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Usually the interiors of these palaces were richly decorated with stucco, mosaic or mirror-work, and oil paintings. Unfortunately the Erekle Palace was reconstructed many times and now it has no decorations. There are some differences: The talar (throne) space in a Georgian palace is narrower but the audience hall is wider, which shows also the difference between Iranian outdoor and Georgian indoor ceremonies. It may be that this was partly inspired by the new tendencies in the Georgian policy toward the Russian Empire. The throne itself was designed in the Russian Imperial style and the crowning of Erekle II shows him a Zand turban and Georgian dress but with Russian Imperial regalia.

Many exquisite artefacts from Zand and Qajar period are kept in the Georgian National Museum. The Museum holds one of the best miniature portraits of Kerim Khan (figure 2). It depicts the kneeling Kerim Khan facing left and looking right. He is wearing the dark dress with long sleeves and fur coattail. He has a black beard and is wearing the Zand red turban. At the right top of the miniature is the inscription “Kerim Khan Zand”, at the low right part of the miniature is another inscription with the name of the painter, “Nazar-Ali”.

Another miniature depicts an embracing couple turned to the right but looking at each other. They both are wearing the costumes of Zand period; the woman’s dress has looped buttons on the breast and the man is wearing a dress with buttons and long Astrakhan hat decorated with textiles on one side. The miniature has a round shape elongated from the top to bottom; narrow and wide borders with floral design surround it. The faces, the style of dressing, the soft modelling, and shading is similar to the other miniatures and therefore we can suggest that it be attributed to the same time period.

The manuscript shown here (figure 3) consists of 122 pages of poems by Iranian poets such as Firoudsi, Saadi, Nizami, Omar Khayyam. The poems are written on a very fine paper; the inscription is written with black ink and is richly decorated with gold. The manuscript is missing the beginning and the end pages where the date and place or the name (or names) of the calligrapher would be.

The Qajar oil paintings are the most important part of our Iranian collection. The collection reflects all the stages of development of the Qajar School of painting. The most important paintings are dated at the time of Fath Ali Shah.

The department houses two most outstanding portraits of 18th-19th centuries. One of them is of a young Abbas Mirza and the other is the portrait of Fereiduni, the legendary “Shahnameh” hero. These portraits reveal both a half-tone mellow modelling of the faces, characteristic of the paintings of the Zand epoch and typical ceremonial costumes in loud and colourful tones as well as various other attributes typical to Qajar art. Fereiduni’s portrait is signed by a painter Haji Aga Jani. The portrait of Abbas Mirza is more attractive with soft modelling and shadowing. The style reminds us the style of the painters of the first generation at Fath Ali Shah court – Mir Ali and Mirza Baba. Despite the fact that the painting is not signed, it’s very close to their styles.

The portraits of dancers, musicians and the Iranian beauties A Woman with a Mirror, A Woman with Golabdani, A Dancer with Castanets (figure 4), A Dancer with a Tambourine, and A Dance kept in the Museum of Arts are the best works of early Qajar paintings. They are recognised for their refined, bright, decorative and colourful artistic style. Although all these portraits show common stylistic traits, it is possible to distinguish different artists with their peculiar manner of painting.

Other paintings, like A Woman with a Parrot and A Young Man with a Falcon, also belong to the early 19th century. These paintings have more decorative motives, they are more colourful, emphasizing graphical, line-based forms and they are characterized with a strikingly refined vision. Two other paintings, Musician and A Woman with a Deer, bear more similarities with the principles of easel painting. The background and the figure are slightly turned to the depth of the picture introducing the perspective characteristic of European art. Mellow modelling, the result of European influence, converges with the desire for presenting details and attributes of the costumes, a trait more characteristic of Iranian art.
There are also important paintings from the time of Muhammad Shah in the department. One of the highlights is the portrait of the Shah seated on a chair throne wearing traditional official costume and jewellery in the style and ceremonial features developed by his grandfather, Fath Ali Shah. This portrait is one of the unique and early portraits of this Shah.

Lovers’ portraits again appear in Qajar paintings in the times of Muhammad Shah. Two oil paintings of the same kind are among the collection of the museum. They present full-length figures: Lovers with their Servants (figure 5). Both portraits are similar compositionally and in the manner of painting and presumably one artist painted them. Stylistically they stand close to the oil paintings of Fath ‘Ali Shah’s time and were executed in the early period of Muhammad Shah in the department. One of the donors portraits, second, European-Russian paintings of the same kind are among the collection of the Historic-Ethnographic Society from the collection of a noble family (Andronikashvili) and were identified in the inventory of the Georgian National Gallery (1912) as examples of Iranian art. Later with the same label they were displayed in the first permanent exhibition of the Georgian National Gallery, after they moved into the Oriental Collection of the Metekhi Museum, and finally, in 1954 they were placed in the collection of the newly opened Oriental department of the State Museum of Fine Arts.

Academician Shalva Aminanashvili was the first scholar who separated these two pictures from other easel paintings of the Qajar period and identified them as very important examples of the Georgian-Iranian school. Later other scholars paid special attention to the Youth in Black, they also thought that this picture was the best example of the artistic relationship between Georgia and Qajar Persia.

The easel painting Youth in Black is quite big in size (179x84 cm). A man with an elongated clean shaven face is depicted in full length at an open balcony, with the cloudy sky behind. His body is turned to the right and he is facing to the right. He is dressed in a long, black, “kaba” cut at the waist over the horizontally cut, black and white vest. On the waist he wears a striped coloured cumber band, from where the handles of the sword and dagger appear. Both handles are richly decorated with precious stones. The youth is holding the clock which is attached to the belt. He is wearing high-heeled grey shoes represented en face. On the head he is wearing a black Asstrakhan hat decorated with a narrow striped colour fabric.

He has black curly hair, elongated face, with stretched eyebrows and eyes, a straight nose and small lips. His face, with soft modelling, is painted in warm pink and golden colours. The dress is typical for the Early Qajar period - Iranian nobles dressed in similar clothes till the year 1834, during the reign of the Fath Ali Shah. The style of the painting is close to early period Qajar paintings; for example Said Mirza’s Joseph Beautiful and the portrait of Mohamed Mirza. But there is a difference between these pictures; Iranian paintings are independent easel paintings, when Youth in Black is somehow connected with another picture Woman with child.

As in the other picture, in Woman with child the woman is represented full length, turned slightly to the right and facing the youth in black. Her left hand is in the same position as the young man, on her waist (in absolutely the same gesture as at the portrait of the youth), her right hand on the head of the little boy who is standing next to her, with head turned to her. The woman wears a delicate black dress cut on the waist with buttons on the breast and white plisse border around the dress. She is wearing a long multicoloured belt and a red short turred coat over the dress. In contrast to the man’s dress, which is typical of early period Iranian clothes, she wears different dress. It is not typical of a Zand or early period Qajar costume, but it is similar to the costumes of 18th – 19th century Georgian women from the mountain region of Khevsureti, which reflected the archaic levels of Georgian traditional costume.

At the same time, the style of the depiction of women is much more closely linked to the faces of Georgian women from the works of the Tbilisi School of the 1840’s and 1850’s.

One more interesting detail, which differentiates this woman from beautiful Iranian women, is that until the beginning of the 20th century, there is no conceilation of Iranian women in fine art. The types of women represented tend to be men’s entertainers or literary heroes. The faces are never specific and depict only the typical features and tendencies of the epoch.

There are several facts which prove that in these two paintings members of one family are depicted. These two pictures have the same size, compositional setting, the persons are facing each other, and they both came into the museum from one family. One more confirmation of the above is that we often meet these motifs in paintings of the Tbilisi School (depiction of one family in several pictures, later the paintings were hung together on one wall).

It’s clear that the paintings (Woman with child, Youth in Black) are the works of skilful professional artists, familiar with the artistic tendencies of Iran in that period. At the same it’s a different world perception, which is much more linked with Georgian artistic trends.

**Figure 1:** Pinman of the Sataf 1420-44, Oil/Canvas, 135 X 87, Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Art, Georgian National Museum. Inv. No. sxm/ag 156

**Figure 2:** Portrait of Karim Khan Zand. Artist Muhammad Baqir Shiraz, Iran, late 18th cent., AD. Cardboard, opaque watercolours, varnish, 24.5 x 16 cm. Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Art, Georgian National Museum. Inv. No. sxm/ag 138

**Figure 3:** Portrait of Fath Ali Shah. Artist Muhammad Baqir, Shiraz, Iran, early 19th cent., AD. Cardboard, opaque watercolours, varnish, 24.5 x 16 cm. Shalva Amiranashvili Museum of Fine Art, Georgian National Museum. Inv. No. sxm/ag 917.