THE SHAMSA IN IRANIAN ILLUMINATIONS

by

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Abstract

All too often Islamic art is presumed to be purely decorative and devoid of meaning. This is especially true of illuminations. Although some scholars - notably Martin Lings - have dealt with the symbolic function of illuminations in general, the specific symbolism of the shamsa has been overlooked. The references to the sun and light that are evident in other forms of illumination, such as the surlawh, are especially pronounced in the shamsa. The reason for this is the precise symbolism that, in combination with general stylistic trends, molded the form of the shamsa in Iran.

A research trip to the major manuscript collections of Great Britain and Ireland provided the visual data necessary for the study. The large number of examples located, ranging in date from 1240 to the early to mid-17th century, made possible a thorough examination of the stylistic development of the shamsa as well as a study of the role it played in the overall decorative program of a manuscript.

A study of pre-Islamic Iranian concepts of kingship proved these to be the main source of the royal symbolism of the shamsa. The shamsa symbolizes the sun that shone

from the head of Sasan, grandfather of Ardashir, founder of the Sasanian dynasty, indicating one who has captured the Royal Fortune (farrah) and thereby rules by divine right. It also expresses the cosmological-specifically solar - exaltation of the monarch who is equated with the sun: the monarch is the centre of the terrestrial world as is the sun the centre of the cosmos.

A comparison of the various elements of the shamsa with Islamic theological doctrine revealed the shamsa also to be a material expression of the nature of the Divine, with a major source of its symbolism deriving from esoteric Islam - in the form of both Sufism and Shi'ism. The emphasis placed on light in the overall development of Islamic theological thought and the concept of Divine Unity (tawhid) are the prime contributors to the interpretation of the shamsa as a symbol of the Divine.

In order to determine the origins of the concept of employing a large, frequently inscribed, roundel (or shamsa) to mark the beginning, end or individual sections of a manuscript, it was necessary to look at both Byzantine and Hebraic art as well as the evolution of the Qur'anic roundel. It was determined that although each of these factors - in combination with the developing royal and divine symbolism - contributed to the appearance of the shamsa in the 13th century, the

ultimate catalyst was the renewed interest in Greek medical and scientific treatises that exposed Islamic artists to the Greek practice of using a roundel (either inscribed or containing a divine symbol) to introduce a manuscript.

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

ABBREVIATIONS AND COLLECTION LOCATIONS

Bib. Nat.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
BL	British Library, London
BM	British Museum, London
BOD	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CBL	Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
IOL	India Office Library, London
JRL	John Rylands Library, Manchester
Topkapi Saray	Topkapi Saray Museum Library, Istanbul

Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva

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Because so few shamsas have been published, this study would not have been possible without the research trip made to England and Ireland in August and September, 1987, for which the Department of History in Art so kindly provided financial assistance. My parents must also be thanked, not only for their financial assistance with this trip, but for their continuing assistance throughout my three years of study in Victoria as well.

My introduction to and research at the various libraries and museums in England and Ireland that I visited was as academically rewarding as it was

enjoyable. This was due to the helpful assistance and patience of a number of individuals, namely David James, Islamic Curator of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, who was forced to abandon his office for a week in order to supervise my research and who willingly provided translations whenever needed; Colin Wakefield of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, who permitted me access to his personal notes regarding the Arabic manuscripts in the collection; Muhammad Waley, Curator, Persian and Turkish Section of the British Library, London; Ursala Sims-Williams of the India Office Library, London; and Glenise Matheson, Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts, John Rylands Library, Manchester. I would especially like to extend my thanks to the staff of each of these institutions and the British Museum, for it was they who had to contend with the seemingly never-ending stream of manuscripts I requested. I must also thank Michael Knight of the Seattle Art Museum, Volunteer Park, who, on short notice, allowed me to view the Islamic treasures hidden in the depths of the museum's basement.

Finally, my sincerest thanks go to Sonia Lochner, who for the past year has had to suffer through the trials and tribulations of the writing of this thesis and has so patiently listened to my continual and extended phone calls with pleas of "Help!"

DEDICATION

To all my fellow graduate students--but especially Sonia, Janis, Dominic and Ron -- who are not merely 'fellow students,' but have become true friends, and without whose friendship I am certain this thesis would never have been completed. To the hope that we all fulfill our 'art historical' dreams.....

Introduction

As an adornment to the word of God, illuminations play an important role in the art of Islam. Despite this, studies of the arts of the book have tended to focus more on miniature painting than on illuminations. The most extensive discussion of illuminations is still that by Richard Ettinghausen, first written in 1939.[1] Much more recent are Martin Lings' book, The Qur'anic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination (1976), and a short, but informative article by Oleg Akimushkin and Anatol Ivanov (1979).[2] While numerous other authors have dealt briefly with illuminations, few make any mention at all of the shamsa, the focus of this study.

A shamsa may be defined as a large roundel that most often stands alone on a manuscript page (e.g., Figure 40). Some shamsas, however, may be set between upper and lower borders (e.g., Figure 7). Others may be totally encircled by a decorative frame (e.g., Figure 31) or even set against a patterned background (e.g., Figure 43). The identifying quality of a shamsa - evident in each of the examples cited - is its distinctiveness: in each case the shamsa stands out clearly from the background space,

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[1] Richard Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," A Survey of Persian Art, ed. A.U. Pope and Phyllis Ackerman (1939; rept. Ashiya, Japan 1981), V, 1937-74.

[2] In Basil Gray ed., The Arts of the Book in Central Asia 14th-16th Centuries (London 1979), 35-57. Hereafter referred to as Arts of the Book.

even when the background is elaborately decorated.[3]

Shams is the Arabic word for 'sun,' and, as Martin Lings has pointed out, shamsa means 'little sun.'[4] Other forms of illumination that will be referred to are the 'unwan (an illuminated heading) and surlawh (a full-page illumination, usually a frontispiece).

The thesis advanced here is that the function of the shamsa is not purely decorative, but rather primarily symbolic. But before considering the symbolism involved, the reader must gain a clear picture of the form of the shamsa: thus, Chapter I deals with the stylistic development of the shamsa from its initial appearance in Iran in the 13th century until its relative demise in the 17th century. During this time span the main ruling dynasties of Iran are the Il-Khanids (1258-1335), Timurids (1370s-1506) and Safavids (1501-1736). Other dynasties important to the discussion are the Qara Quyunlu or Black Sheep (who rule in Tabriz and Shiraz during the mid-15th century) and the Uzbeks (who rule Herat, Bukhara and Samarkand variously beginning in 1509).

The shamsa may be interpreted as both a symbol of

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[3]See Chapter I, 'Why A Stylistic Analysis of the Shamsa?'

[4]Martin Lings, The Qur'anic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination (London 1976), 74. Hereafter referred to as Qur'anic Art.

royalty and the Divine. It represents the just and orderly rule of a divinely sanctioned monarch. At the same time, it represents the cosmological exaltation of the ruler who is regarded as the terrestrial equivalent of the heavenly sun. This symbolism derives primarily from pre-Islamic Iranian philosophies that are assimilated by the Islamic rulers. The divine symbolism of the shamsa, however, is based almost exclusively on Islamic theological doctrine, esotericism - both in the form of Sufism and Shi'ism - being the prime contributor to its development. The concepts of Divine Unity (tawhid) and God as light are the most important aspects of this symbolism. The study will conclude with a discussion of the origins of the shamsa - a somewhat complicated matter that necessitates an examination of Byzantine and Hebraic manuscripts.

Appendix I lists all manuscripts containing shamsas and single page shamsas included in this study. As numerous manuscripts contain more than one shamsa, the total number included in the study is well over one hundred. Although book illustrations (often only black and white ones were available) had to be relied upon in some cases, a research trip to Great Britain and Ireland made possible a firsthand examination of more than three-quarters of the examples. Thus, the majority are drawn

from the following collections: the British Library, London; the British Museum, London; the India Office Library, London; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the John Rylands Library, Manchester; and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

For all Islamic manuscripts, dates are given both according to the Gregorian calendar (anno Domini, A.D.) and the Islamic calendar (anno hegirae, A.H.), with the Gregorian date appearing first (e.g., 1240/637). Only the Gregorian date is given for historical data and non-Islamic manuscripts or other works of art.

To simplify reading, Arabic and Persian words have been transliterated without diacritical marks.

I

The Form of the Shamsa: Its Role and Stylistic Development

The Role and Placement of the Shamsa

Before attempting to interpret the symbolism of the shamsa, or any work of art for that matter, one must become well-acquainted with all aspects of its physical form and with its development over time. This is the aim of this first chapter: to look at the role and placement of the shamsa within a manuscript and to document its stylistic development from its initial appearance in the first half of the 13th century through to the early to mid-17th century.

To this end it must first be noted that in Iran the inclusion of a shamsa in a manuscript is the exception, rather than the rule, in both secular manuscripts and Qur'ans. This holds true even under the Timurids in the 15th century when use of the shamsa peaks. Moreover, the presence or absence of a shamsa is not in itself an indication of the overall luxuriousness or importance of a manuscript; even in the most magnificent manuscripts a shamsa was not a mandatory element.[1]

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[1]In light of the symbolic interpretation of the shamsa and the apparent importance of this symbolism (to be discussed in the following chapters), this finding is surprising. This apparent contradiction between the

(continued...)

The shamsa most often is used to introduce a manuscript, and thus commonly appears on the 'a,' or recto, side of the first folio. But if the manuscript is a diwan, or anthology, there may be several shamsas, one introducing each individual work contained within the manuscript.[2] Similarly, in a Qur'an a shamsa may introduce each juz', or section, as in the trilingual Qur'an in the John Rylands Library in Manchester (Ms. 26-38/761-73).[3] There also exist a small number of manuscripts in which a shamsa has been placed on the last folio.[4]

An introductory shamsa may be followed by either a

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[1](...continued)
importance and prevalence of the shamsa will be examined in the Conclusion.

[2]For example, a) IOL Ms. No.132, Anthology of Diwans, ff. 1a, 9a, 48a, 76a, 88a and 97b, 1315/714, Tabriz or Maragha; and b) CBL Ms. 294, Anthology, ff. 7a, 46a and 79a, early 15th/9th century, Shiraz.

[3]This extensively illuminated Qur'an contains no information indicating where or when it was copied. A. Mingana states that the style of script suggests it was copied in the 15th/9th century (A. Mingana, Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library [Manchester 1934], column 27). David James, however, believes the manuscript is of Turkish origin and dates to the first half of the 14th/8th century. (Conversation with D. James, September, 1987.)

[4]a) CBL Ms. 1466, Qur'an, ff. 331b (Figure 2) and 332a (identical), 1278/677, Konya; b) BOD Ms. Elliot 251, Rumi's Mathnawi, folio 334a (set within an illuminated page), c. 1455-65/859-69, prob. Shiraz; c) CBL Ms. 227, Araba'in Hadith, folio 9b, 1557/964, Mashhad (an identical shamsa appears on folio 1a, Figure 48); and d) BL Ms. Add. 24944, Kulliyyat of Sa'di, ff. 356b and 357a, 1566/974, Shiraz.

simple 'unwan or a series of elaborate surlawhs. In a few manuscripts the shamsa is preceded by one or several introductory pages of illumination.[5] In no case, however, has a shamsa been found to stand completely alone, serving as the only illumination.

Approximately two-thirds of the shamsas studied have a plain or sparsely-decorated gold centre bearing an inscription. An inscribed introductory shamsa may serve as an ex libris, bearing the name of the patron, or recipient of the manuscript if it was a gift, and often is further embellished with a dedication and verse panegyric (e.g., Figure 17, dedicated to Ibrahim Sultan ibn Shah Rukh). The title of the manuscript as well as the name of the author may also be indicated or may stand alone in place of the patron's name. In an anthology, a shamsa may serve as a table of contents, listing the titles of the various works included in the manuscript (e.g., Figures 29 and 47). It is slightly more common for a shamsa in a Qur'an to bear an inscription, in which case it will be either a Qur'anic verse or indicate the

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[5]For example, a) CBL Ms. 121, Musibat-Nameh of 'Attar, 1429/833, Herat (folio 1 is blank except for a handwritten note; folio 2a is covered with gold floral illumination; ff. 2b and 3a are a double-page illuminated frontispiece; on folio 3b is a miniature with illuminated border; on folio 4a is the shamsa; and b) BOD Ms. Elliot 215, Jami's Kulliyyat, 1556/963 (the shamsa is preceded by a double-page illuminated frontispiece).

chapters of the Qur'an contained in the manuscript.[6] If the shamsa is not inscribed, some or all of this information may appear on the following page.

Of the shamsas which have no inscription, some clearly never were intended to have one, for in their composition there is no space for one as the centre of the shamsa is totally filled with an arabesque or some other decorative motif (e.g., Figures 2 and 27). But many other uninscribed shamsas clearly were intended to bear an inscription for they have the same type of plain or sparsely-decorated gold centre as the inscribed shamsas (e.g., Figures 3, 34 and 36).

There are probably a number of reasons why the inscription was not added. The most obvious may be that the shamsa simply was never completed. In most cases, though, this explanation seems doubtful if the rest of the manuscript is in a finished state. One might conjecture further that if the manuscript was made to be sold, the purchaser, for some reason, never bothered to have his name inscribed on the shamsa. But this, too, seems unlikely in light of the high quality of many of the manuscripts, for most commercially produced

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[6]The following Qur'ans each contain a shamsa that bears no inscription: a) CBL Ms. 1466, ff. 331b (Figure 2) and 332a, 1278/676, Konya; b) CBL Ms. 1518, folio 1a (Figure 27), 1464/868, prob. Shiraz; c) CBL Ms. 1545, ff. 1b and 2a (Figure 40), Iran; and d) Private Collection, 1585/994, Samarkand (Figure 37).

manuscripts did not receive such careful attention. A more plausible explanation is that the surface script simply has worn away with time. Yet another, rather intriguing, possibility is proposed by Sir Charles A. Murray in a note within a Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i in the British Library (Ms. 1374, c.1550/957). Writing in Tehran in 1858, he suggests that the manuscript may have been stolen from a royal library, and the inscription on the shamsa erased by thieves wishing to hide the manuscript's origin.

From this discussion it can be deduced that (apart from its symbolic function) the role of the shamsa is very straightforward and pragmatic: it is a marker or 'signpost' signaling the beginning, end, or individual sections of a manuscript. Inscriptions may enhance this role by providing information on the contents of the manuscript and the individual responsible for its creation. But this role is not exclusive to the shamsa, for it often is fulfilled by other forms of illumination, such as the 'unwan or surlawh, and in these cases the shamsa may be omitted. Working within the accepted stylistic trends of the time, the type and amount of illumination included obviously depended upon the individual tastes and finances of the patron.

Why a Stylistic Analysis of the Shamsa?

The shamsa is unique with respect to other illuminations in that it is a relatively large, distinct form. This distinctness, or separateness, is the primary identifying characteristic of the shamsa and is the result of the overall 'power' of the shamsa contour.[7] The majority of shamsas are set against a plain background: in comparison with the surlawh, for example, more background area is visible, so there exists a greater contrast between positive and negative space, causing the contour to be more prominent. Even when not set against a plain background, the integrity of the shamsa contour is maintained.

In some shamsas of the 14th century, specifically those produced in Shiraz under Inju patronage during the first half of the century, the shamsa is placed between upper and lower borders, at times with some type of illumination at either side as well (Figure 7). Even in these examples the contour is prominent, although understandably much less so than in examples completely devoid of any extrinsic illumination. In Il-Khanid

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[7]The contour may be defined as the exterior edge of the shamsa perceived as an unbroken line and exclusive of any additions not directly attached to the main body of the shamsa. Hence, in the shamsa illustrated in Figure 47, the protruding, attached medallions are a constituent part of the contour, but not the rays, for they extend from an outline drawn after, and detached from, the main body of the shamsa.

shamsas of the late 13th to mid-14th centuries, contours are mildly indented and forms are large, rather robust, and clearly defined (Figures 3-9). If rays are depicted, they are short, somewhat stubby, and much thicker than anything to be seen in later eras. Often the rays serve to fill in the indented spaces of the contour (e.g., Figure 9). Thus, the contour and rays create a solid, compact form, which, even in the more delicate arabesque examples from the 1306/706 and 1314/713 manuscripts of the World History of Rashid al-Din (e.g, Figures 4-5), make the shamsa seem almost totally impenetrable.

At this stage shamsa and background are still predominately separate forms, neither encroaching on the other's domain, but this changes somewhat with the Timurid era. In the 15th century style of Herat, the shamsa contour most often is perfectly circular with no indentations, and thus appears even tighter and more controlled than in the preceding era. But this is offset by the rays, which are more numerous, more delicate, and, more important here, much longer. Consequently, they penetrate the background area, lessening the distinction between shamsa and surrounding space (e.g., Figures 20-21).

Unlike those of Herat, shamsas produced in Shiraz during the first half of the century are often characterized by deeply indented contours that, like the

rays of the Herat artists, tend to break down the barriers between shamsa and background, or positive and negative space (e.g., Figure 17). Artists of both centres are moving toward the same end, but do so through different means. The altering of the contour on the part of the Shiraz artists is, however, more effective in reducing the distinction between positive and negative space than is the Herat artists' addition of longer, more numerous rays.

In the first half of the 15th century, shamsas, especially those of Shiraz, frequently are characterized by pendant forms extending from their upper and lower points (Figures 15-19 and 23). But while these early examples generally are of a relatively simple form, some shamsas from the end of the century exhibit much more elaborate pendants stretching from either end of the shamsa (Figures 31-32). Less frequently, the shamsa is totally encircled by protruding medallions (Figure 33). The outcome of this tendency toward increasing intricacy is an ever greater breakdown of the boundary between object and background, which results in the total integration and absorption of the shamsa into the surlawh in many manuscipts produced under Safavid patronage in the 16th century (e.g., Figures 44-45).[8] This is

[8]By this stage the roundel no longer warrants the name 'shamsa.' This point will be discussed further below.

anticipated also by the placement of the shamsa within a border, the irregular inside edge of which encroaches upon the background space of the shamsa (Figures 31-32).

This is not, it must be stressed, the case with all Safavid shamsas. Many retain their distinct form, often with ornate pendants, but just as often without them (e.g., Figures 39 and 46). Shamsas of the contemporary school of the Uzbeks, based in Herat, Bukhara and then in Samarkand, however, never exhibit the complex contours and pendants of the Safavid school. In contrast to those of their western rivals, Uzbek shamsas retain the tightly controlled, perfectly circular contour seen in 15th century Herat (e.g., Figures 34-38).

Thus, it is obvious that the relation of contour to background is a major stylistic feature of the shamsa, one that never appears quite as prominent in other forms of manuscript illumination. The stylistic changes in the contour of the shamsa are a useful device, in conjunction with other stylistic motifs, for the determination of the date and provenance of a manuscript.

The Il-Khanid Era

In moving from an analysis of just one aspect of the shamsa to a broader study of the stylistic development of the shamsa as a whole, the first era to be dealt with is the Il-Khanid. From this era only eleven manuscripts

containing shamsas were located, ranging in date from 1265/664 to 1340/741. Of these, the provenance for only six manuscripts is certain, two each being produced in Tabriz, Maragha and Shiraz (Figures 3-9).[9] (Each of the two Tabriz manuscripts contains two shamsas.) A third manuscript (IOL Ms. 132), an anthology containing six shamsas, has been assigned to Tabriz by Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray.[10] For reasons which will be made clear later, an attribution to Maragha may be equally possible. This manuscript and the other four of uncertain provenance have been excluded from the stylistic analysis.

Besides these eleven Il-Khanid manuscripts, there are three others from this era that will be referred to, even though at least two - and probably all three - were produced beyond the realm of Mongol rule. The first is a 1240/637 Arabic copy of Dioscorides' De Materia Medica. It contains the earliest located shamsa (Figure 1),

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[9]See Appendix I for a list of all Il-Khanid manuscripts, including those of uncertain provenance.

[10]IOL Ms. 132, An Anthology of Diwans, ff. 1a, 19a, 48a, 76a, 88a and 97b, 714/1315 (no illustrations available). Any following statements regarding the Il-Khanid shamsas of Tabriz, unless indicated otherwise, refer only to those in the two World History of Rashid al-Din manuscripts. The India Office anthology is excluded from the Tabriz grouping due to the uncertainty of its attribution. For attribution see a) Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray, Persian Miniature Painting (1933; rpt. New York 1971), 46; and b) David Talbot Rice and Basil Gray, The Illustrations to the World History of Rashid al-Din (Edinburgh 1976), 29, 36, note 30.

which, as it consists of a series of concentric gold bands, is in a style quite different from Il-Khanid examples, but typical of Baghdad, the city in which the manuscript was produced. The second manuscript is a Qur'an in the Chester Beatty Library (Ms. 1466, Figure 2). It was produced in Konya and is dated 1278/677. As will be seen below, the identical shamsas that appear on folios 331b and 332a employ a particular type of leaf motif that is useful in distinguishing between the shamsa styles of Maragha and Shiraz. The last manuscript in this group is the trilingual Qur'an referred to above (JRL Ms. 26-38/761-73).

The small number of examples of certain provenance available, and the fact that they are spread over a period of forty years, makes it difficult to formulate definite statements regarding the style of one region versus that of another. Nevertheless, the shamsas originating from the three cities named above - Tabriz, Maragha and Shiraz - display several distinct stylistic traits. Therefore, based on this research, which is clearly far from exhaustive, tentative definitions of these regional styles will be suggested.

The Il-Khanid Leaf Motif

While Tabriz and Maragha were under Il-Khanid rule during this period, Shiraz and the surrounding province

of Fars were controlled by the Inju dynasty from 1303 until mid-century.[11] Despite their identical Il-Khanid origins, the shamsas of Tabriz and Maragha differ considerably in style. In fact, the differences are greater than those between the shamsas of Maragha and Inju Shiraz. One relative similarity between the styles of Shiraz and Maragha is the use of a vegetal, or leaf, motif (e.g., Figures 7-8). But though the consistent use of the leaf motif serves as a link between the styles of the two cities, distinguishing them from that of Tabriz, closer examination reveals definite differences in the precise type of leaf each employs.

While the tri-lobed leaf motif associated with Maragha appears in manuscripts attributed to various regions outside the Il-Khanid domain,[12] within Iran it appears in none of the shamsas known for certain to have been produced in either Tabriz or Shiraz. It may be seen in the interstices of the shamsa on folio 1a of the 1338/738 Maragha manuscript (Figure 9); encircling the

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[11]The Inju rulers were initially sent to Fars as governors of the Il-Khanid state, but by 1325 were only nominally controlled by the Il-Khanid rulers, for all intent and purpose ruling the province independently. Norah Titley, Persian Miniature Painting (London 1983), 38.

[12]For example, a) Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, Ms. 3550, Qur'an, XLV, 30-31, 1304/704, Iraq; b) CBL Ms. 1465, Qur'an, ff. 2b to 3a, 14th/8th century, Egypt. Both examples are illustrated in Lings, Qur'anic Art, plates 48 and 40, respectively.

surlawh that follows it is a slightly different version with rounded instead of pointed leaves (Figure 10). In the 1297/697 Maragha shamsa (Figure 8), this same tri-lobed leaf motif is employed, but with the addition of single-lobed leaves fanning out from either side. A very similar but less refined version of the motif is found on the two shamsas in the 1278/677 Konya Qur'an in the Chester Beatty Library (Figure 2). Here the central tri-lobed leaf is again pointed.

Another Iranian manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library (Ms. 1435), dated 1195/592, offers clues to the stylistic source of the motif. Four arc-like bands on folio 116b (Figure 12) of this earlier manuscript are filled with precisely the same leaf motif that is found on the 1297/697 Maragha shamsa (Figure 8). In each corner of the page is another vegetal, palmette-like motif, the central portion of which is a tri-lobed leaf. Yet a third variation of the motif appears on this page, this time as five individual, smaller, tri-lobed leaves. In the centre of each of the two ovoid medallions on folio 1a of the same manuscript (Figure 13) is a more elaborate version of the motif. And extending from the side of this surlawh is an intricate palmette that must be viewed as yet another variation of the same basic tri-lobed leaf motif. The main difference between the tri-lobed leaves of this manuscript and those of the 1297/697

Maragha shamsa is that in the former the upper lobe is usually slightly pointed.

From these examples it seems clear that the simple tri-lobed leaf motif of the late 13th and 14th centuries evolved from the more intricate side-palmette, such as that on folio 1a of the 1195/592 manuscript. Similar side-palmettes can be found even in the earliest illuminated Qur'ans of the 9th and 10th centuries. But the motif of the tri-lobed leaf with single-lobed leaves fanning out from either side does not seem to appear in manuscript illumination before the late 12th century.

One further example of the tri-lobed leaf motif is to be found in the India Office Library's 1315/714 Anthology of Diwans (Ms. 132), referred to above. The outer border of the shamsa on folio 48a (for which no illustration is available) is the same as the border of the surlawh in the 1338/738 Maragha Qur'an (Figure 10), both consisting of several rows of rounded tri-lobed leaves. The presence of this motif suggests the possibility that the Anthology, assigned to Tabriz, as noted previously, by Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, may instead be a product of Maragha. While the other shamsas in the manuscript likewise employ vegetal motifs, none conform as explicitly to the styles of Maragha or

Shiraz.[13]

While each of the shamsas from Tabriz and Maragha appears on an undecorated page, those from Shiraz, as noted in the discussion of the contour, are bounded by wide upper and lower borders (Figure 7). Around each border are leaves fanning out from a small circle placed midway along each side of the border. Use of this single-lobed, oblong leaf - the first of the two leaf motifs characteristic of Shiraz illumination - apparently was restricted to the borders. The more intricate second motif, on the other hand, is associated with the shamsa proper. It consists of a bud-like form placed at each indentation of the shamsa contour with a series of curving, pointed leaves filling the spaces between the buds. An examination of the lotus motif, prominent in the decoration of both shamsa and border, shows it to be the probable stylistic source of both Shiraz leaf motifs. While the three central petals of the lotus suggest the bud-like form of the shamsa leaf motif, the central petal alone, from which other petals fan outward, in turn suggests the circle-and-leaf motif of the border.

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[13] If indeed produced in Tabriz, the less-refined quality of the manuscript would suggest the existence of lesser workshops within the capital, not under court patronage and working in a style distinct from the more elegant style seen in contemporary copies of Rashid al-Din's World History (Figures 3-6).

The lotus serves as a stylistic link between the schools of Shiraz and Maragha, for it appears in the illuminations of both centres. But despite this, there is still a clear distinction between its use in the two schools. In another surlawh from the 1338/738 Maragha Qur'an, there are four badly effaced roundels, in each of which is a lotus (Figure 11). Protruding from each roundel is a palmette, the centre of which consists of the tri-lobed leaf motif typical of Maragha illumination. This tri-lobed leaf motif is repeated in the outer border. Although lotus and palmette may appear together on one page, it is the tri-lobed leaf, derived from the palmette, which always dominates in Maragha. In Shiraz, the lotus plays a more prominent role, not only in its complete form, but as the source of the two leaf motifs. Hence, typical of Maragha is the dominance of the palmette and its derivative forms; typical of Shiraz is the dominance of the lotus and its derivative forms.

Geometric Interlacement under the Il-Khanids

The styles of all three cities are united in their use of geometric interlacement. Of all the Il-Khanid shamsas, only those in the India Office Library's Anthology of Diwans (Ms. 132) and the one on folio 149a of the 1306/706 Edinburgh copy of Rashid al-Din's World History (Figure 4) do not exhibit this trait. Moreover,

while in the 1330s geometrically interlaced bands create rounded petal-like lobes that dominate the whole form of the shamsa (Figures 7 and 9), in earlier shamsas geometric interlacement plays a more subdued role (Figures 3, 5-6 and 8). (And of these, only that in Figure 3 does not employ rounded interlaced forms, and instead consists of two interlaced squares.)

Typical of the Il-Khanid era is the use, as in each of the examples cited above, of two interlaced bands. But one shamsa, in the British Library's 1334/734 Ta'rikh Ta'bari (Ms. Add. 7622, no illustration available), anticipates the characteristic style of Timurid geometric interlacements: the use of what initially appear to be two interlaced bands, but is in fact just one continuous band.

Geometric interlacements, in particular interlaced squares, are an old and common motif dating back many centuries. A pottery bowl from Nishapur[14] and a detached Qur'an page in the Chester Beatty Library (Ms. 1406, Figure 14) are 10th century examples of interlaced squares. Roundels embellished with geometric interlacements are a favourite decorative motif used in the 'unwans of Qur'ans by the late 11th century (Figure 66). And in Qur'ans from the late 12th century, one finds

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[14] Illustrated in Islamic Art, Sotheby's sale catalogue for 25th June 1985, Geneva, plate 207.

marginal roundels consisting of the same type of white geometric interlacements as are employed for the shamsas of Shiraz and Maragha in the Il-Khanid era. In two of these Qur'ans (CBL Ms. 1438 and CBL Ms.1435, Figures 67-68), these roundels most often take the form of interlaced triangles or rosettes. These, or similar roundels, surely influenced the shamsa illuminators employed by Il-Khanid and Inju rulers.

In all the shamsas presently under consideration, (except for that on folio 19a of the 1314/713 Geneva copy of Rashid al-Din's World History [Figure 5]), the geometric interlacements contain a series of tiny black strokes, crosses or circles. Folio 149a of the 1306/706 Edinburgh World History (Figure 4) has no interlaced bands, just concentric circles, but these, too, are decorated with tiny strokes. No matter what form these strokes, crosses or circles take, they add a sense of weight and depth to an otherwise, plain white band.

It seems possible that these marks evolved as a sort of shorthand for more elaborate lines drawn to represent braided rope. In the Vienna A.D. 512 copy of Dioscorides' De Materia Medica (Figure 58), the braiding is carefully delineated. In the 10th/4th century Qur'an page (Figure 14) this gives way to a sort of circular motif, but one that is still more intricate and more suggestive of braided rope than the markings used in later years

(Figures 3-4, 6-9 and 67-68). The variety of motifs used to decorate these later interlacements may be a result of the various models employed by the artist or may simply be due to differences in artistic preference.

The Arabesque

Despite their relation to the schools of Maragha and Shiraz through a common reliance on geometric interlacements, the Tabriz shamsas form one unified and highly distinguishable group (Figures 3-6): unlike other Il-Khanid shamsas, those of Tabriz make extensive use of the arabesque, or interlaced stylized plant forms.[15] Of the four shamsas, in only one, folio 137a in the 1306/706 Edinburgh manuscript (Figure 3), must the arabesque share its role as principal motif.[16] In order to gain a clearer understanding of the style of these shamsas, it is necessary to digress somewhat at this point and move from the study of the shamsa in the Il-Khanid era to that of the arabesque in all eras.

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[15] Titus Burkhardt points out that, strictly speaking, both types of interlacement are but two different modes of the arabesque. For the purposes of this study, however, the term 'arabesque' will be used in reference to the stylized plant forms only. Burkhardt, Art of Islam, Language and Meaning (London 1976), 56. Hereafter referred to as Art of Islam.

[16] In this shamsa the arabesque does not form one continuous flowing line, but rather, between each indentation of the octagonal 'star' there appears a separate arabesque, which is not joined to the arabesque in the neighbouring indentation.

This leads to the identification of two distinct types of arabesque. The first to appear in Iranian illumination is that seen in the Tabriz shamsas. Due to its basic similarity to the classical ornamentation referred to as 'grotteschi,' it may be dubbed the formal, 'grotteschi' arabesque. It employs no floral motifs,[17] but rather relies exclusively on stylized leaves and the continual thickening and thinning of the vine. A mandatory element after the Il-Khanid era is the small cartouche or diamond-shaped medallion interspersed evenly throughout the arabesque and often appearing as a mere thickening of the vine (e.g, Figures 22-25 and 48). The interlaced knots of the Tabriz shamsas (Figures 4-5) may be seen as the precursors of the medallions, for like them the knots function as anchors in the never-ending flow of the arabesque. In keeping with the more formal, restrained nature of the grotteschi arabesque, a very limited range of colours is employed. The vine is always gold, and the background usually is a deep blue. Typical is the use of just one or two other subdued tones, such as black and brown with touches of white (Figure 48). Because of its very formal nature, created to a great extent by the regular interspersion of the medallions,

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[17]It should be noted that the one exception to this is the shamsa on folio 137a of the 1306/706 Edinburgh manuscript (Figure 3), which incorporates highly stylized lotus blossoms.

this arabesque generally is not suitable for filling in large spaces, but rather lends itself best to use as a border motif, the way that it is most often employed.

The trait that most easily distinguishes the second arabesque type from the first is its abundant use of clearly delineated flowers (e.g., Figures 21, 30 and 40). The very formal, refined nature of the grotteschi arabesque here gives way to a free-flowing, swirling vine that almost playfully spreads itself across broad expanses, and thus often serves as a background cover. But it, too, may employ cartouches, as it most often does in the Timurid era, in which case it is likely to be used as a border motif. Unlike the gradual swelling and thinning out of the grotteschi vine, from which leaves only gradually appear, in the informal, floral arabesque, flowers and leaves suddenly and very clearly emerge from the fine, delicate vine.[18] Colour is the final distinguishing trait of these two types of arabesque, for though the vine again is most often gold, the floral arabesque employs a myriad of colours that adds to its sprightly, informal character.

But despite their rather diverse natures, artists at

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[18]It should be noted that under the Mamluks in the 14th century this distinction between arabesque types is blurred by the almost overbearing Mamluk penchant for the Chinese lotus. Thus, in Mamluk illuminations even the very formal grotteschi arabesque is replete with floral motifs (though non-floral examples appear as well). For examples see Lings, Qur'anic Art, plates 64 and 67.

times incorporated both types of arabesque into the same shamsa, as in the 1429-30/833 manuscript of 'Attar's Book of Affliction for Shah Rukh (CBL Ms. 121, Figure 20). The greater part of the shamsa is covered by the informal, floral arabesque, but in each of the four gold medallions is a small arabesque of the formal, grotteschi type. The addition of these four rather sedate arabesque medallions provides the perfect balance to the more vigorous style of the rest of the shamsa.

The floral arabesque could not be found in any Il-Khanid illuminations. It is possible, however, that examples of its use will eventually be located, for, though rare, it is not unknown in 14th century illuminations of other regions, as one Mamluk manuscript proves.[19] Under the Timurids in the 15th century, the two arabesques seem to have been equal in terms of popularity, but in the 16th century, pure examples of the grotteschi arabesque are decidedly rare (e.g., Figure 48). Not too surprisingly, a kind of hybridization of the two types often seems to have taken place (e.g., Figure 35). But while this results in the relative demise of the pure grotteschi arabesque, the pure floral arabesque manages to survive alongside the hybrid forms.

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[19]National Library, Cairo, Ms. 9, Qur'an, vol.I, ff. 1b to 2a, 1369/770, made for the Mamluk Sultan Sha'ban. (The floral arabesque appears around each of the inscribed cartouches.) Illustrated in Lings, Qur'anic Art, plate 70.

Colour in Il-Khanid Shamsas

In their use of various shades of gold with added touches of reds and rusts, Shiraz shamsas reflect the generally favoured colour scheme for shamsas produced in the 14th century. In the Tabriz shamsas, the gold arabesque is placed against a dark greyish-blue background. This creates a definite, although very limited, sense of depth that is absent in other Il-Khanid shamsas. The 1338/738 Maragha shamsa (Figure 9), however, employs the bright blue and gold colour scheme seen in Qur'ans made for Sultan Uljeitu (1304-16).[20] It is this blue and gold combination that will prevail under both the Timurids and Safavids.

In 1335 the last of the Il-Khanid sultans, Abu Sa'id, died. With his death came the dissolution of the empire into numerous small states. Twenty years later another dynasty, that of the Injus in Shiraz, came to an end as well: in 1353 the Muzaffarids came to power after killing the last Inju ruler. Although an abrupt change in style would be highly unlikely, the end of these two dynasties does seem to have signalled a change in the style of the shamsa. Few manuscripts have survived from the Il-Khanid era, but even fewer from the period between

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[20]For example, National Library, Cairo, Ms. 72, Qur'an, 1313/713. Illustrated in Lings, Qur'anic Art, plates 54-59.

their downfall and the invasion of Timur. Only one shamsa from this period was located. It is in a 1340/741 Persian collection of historical anecdotes by Muhammad 'Aufi (BL Ms. Or. 4392, no illustration available). Although the shamsa bears an inscription to a vizier named Hasan al-Din Siraf, no precise provenance has been determined. What is interesting is that at this early date this shamsa already exhibits the basic 15th century Timurid style of Herat.

The Timurid Era

A total of forty-two manuscripts containing shamsas were located,[21] a considerably larger sampling than was available for the Il-Khanid period (Figures 15-33). These manuscripts range in date from 1405-10/809-13 to the end of the century. Of the seventeen manuscripts of certain provenance, eleven were produced in Herat, four in Shiraz, and one in each of Tabriz and Samarkand. All but three of the manuscripts of uncertain provenance, including some probably produced in Shiraz circa mid- to late century, are in the style associated with Herat. The two manuscripts from Tabriz and Samarkand are also in the Herat style. Thus, despite the dearth of examples

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[21] It should be noted that a few of these 'manuscripts' are in fact detached single-pages and are recorded as such in the list of Timurid shamsas in Appendix I.

from Tabriz and Samarkand, it may be justified to group Herat, Tabriz, and Samarkand together as one shamsa style. Hence, the distinction that will be made below between the Herat and Shiraz shamsa styles may equally well be made between Tabriz and Shiraz or Samarkand and Shiraz.

It is important to note the methodology employed in determining the origin of a manuscript. In some instances the place of production is actually named in the colophon. But more often than not the origin was ascertained from other information provided in the manuscript, such as the name of the patron, calligrapher, copyist, or rarely, the name of the illuminator. For example, a manuscript in the India Office Library, the Diwan of Kamal-aldin Isma'il (Ms. 1023), is dated 1499-1500/905 and signed by the calligrapher Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi. Sultan 'Ali is known to have resided in Herat from about 1470 until 1507.[22] Thus it can be assumed that the manuscript was produced in Herat, an attribution that accords with the style of the manuscript's shamsa.

It should also be noted that in determining the stylistic characteristics of each school, only those manuscripts of certain provenance were used. One problem, however, is that during this period, as in most

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[22]M. Bayani, Ahwal wa Athar khush nevisan: nasta'liq nevisan (A History of Nasta'liq Writing) (Tehran 1966), I, 241-66, referred to in Gray ed., Arts of the Book, 30.

following eras, there was a great movement of artists. By the second half of the century the style associated with Herat was very wide-spread, making it difficult to pinpoint each actual place of production. Therefore, manuscripts said to be in the 'style of Herat' may in fact have been made elsewhere.

The Timurid Style of Shiraz

Shamsas produced in Shiraz during the early years of Timurid rule are characterized by the use of delicate, naturalistically portrayed floral sprays, an almost exclusive use of the colours gold and blue, and an obvious fascination with fine detail (Figures 15-19). Unlike the contemporary shamsa style of Herat, in Shiraz the arabesque, if used at all, is relegated to a secondary position. Another noticeable difference between the two styles is the fact that in Shiraz the background of the design often is unpainted, so that the natural colour of the page becomes an integral part of the overall colour scheme (Figure 18). Tiny accents of orange, and at times pale green as well, are the only other colours normally used. All Shiraz shamsas located are embellished with upper and lower pendants.

Although the earliest example of a shamsa found in the Shiraz style is dated 1418/821 (CBL Ms. 117, Figure 15), there exists a Qur'an dated 1375-76/777 which is

decorated in this same style.[23] As this manuscript predates Timur's invasion of Iran by five years, the illumination style obviously did not originate with his artists. They, therefore, were building on an already well-established stylistic base.

Two of the earliest Shiraz shamsas included here (Berlin, Ms. I.4628, 1420/823 and BOD Ms. Ouseley Add. 176, c. 1435/839, Figures 16-17) were produced for Ibrahim Sultan, Timur's grandson. In 1414 Shah Rukh took control of Shiraz, deposing his nephew, Iskandar Sultan. He then appointed his son, Ibrahim Sultan, governor of the city and the province of Fars. Ibrahim remained in control of the region until his death in 1435. Evidence of the obviously fine atelier inherited by Ibrahim from his ill-fated cousin is provided by the exquisite manuscripts written for Iskandar Sultan,[24] such as the British Library's Anthology of 1410-11/814 (Ms. 27261).

Of the two manuscripts referred to above that were made for Ibrahim Sultan, the shamsa in the later manuscript, the circa 1435/839 Shahnama (Figure 17), is the finer. The main decorative motif is the

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[23]Pars Museum, Shiraz, Ms. 417.MP, 1375-76/777. Illustrated in Lings, Qur'anic Art, plate 60. (It must be noted that since no other illustrations of this manuscript are available, it is not known whether or not it contains a shamsa.)

[24]Titley, 45 and 48.

characteristic floral spray placed against a blue background. The obvious interest in the naturalistic portrayal of flowers possibly may be a carry-over from the Inju era when naturalistically depicted lotuses were a dominant motif. But other traits of the earlier period are gone. The central gold star and the smaller gold medallions have no heavy outline, for the geometric interlacements that defined and joined/separated the main elements of 14th century shamsas are not to be seen in Shiraz at this time.

The shamsa exudes a sense of delicate perfection which is in dramatic contrast to the robustness of Inju shamsas. But the loss of perfect symmetry, caused by the addition of the upper and lower pendants, manages to keep this perfection in check. And the almost overwhelming delicacy is counterbalanced by the arabesque that fills not just the upper and lower and pendants, but the small radial pendants as well. While the tiny detail of the floral sprays seems almost to vibrate, the arabesque creates a rhythmic, flowing sensation that calms and steadies the floral vibrations. The arabesques flow across the surface, while the vibrating floral sprays hover above it and threaten to lift off the page or drift back into its depths. Thus the arabesque is perceived as heavier and more stable, possessing a strength that counters the delicacy of the floral sprays.

At times, in the hands of lesser artists, the concern with small, delicate detail results in a style that can only be described as 'nervous' or 'sketchy.' This is especially evident in the earliest of the Shiraz shamsas, located in a 1418/821 copy of 'Attar's Five Mystic Mathnawis (CBL Ms. 117, Figure 15). Another trait that can prove detrimental to the design is the characteristic use of gold set against the natural, unpainted colour of the page, for, if overdone, it has a tendency to weaken the design. But despite all these apparent pitfalls, at its best the style is one in which delicate, finely wrought motifs are imbued with a dynamism that rivals the more vigorous, more controlled forms of Herat.

The Timurid Style of Herat

Upon the death of his father, Timur, Shah Rukh moved the Timurid capital from Samarkand south to Herat. Because of the patronage of the sultan and his son, Baysunghur, the city became a major centre of book production. One of the two earliest shamsas produced in Herat during this period adorns Baysunghur's 1429/833 Shahnama (former Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran, Figure 20). The other, produced in the same year, is in the Chester Beatty Library's manuscript of 'Attar's Musibat-Nameh, or Book of Affliction, made for Shah Rukh (CBL Ms.

121, Figure 21).

These two shamsas illustrate the basic style associated with Herat. As noted previously, under the Timurids the use of one continuous band of geometric interlacement supplants the Il-Khanid preference for two interlaced bands. Most Herat shamsas resemble the Baysunghur Shahnama shamsa (Figure 20) in its use of a wide interlaced band with the familiar 'braid' markings. Less common is the style of the Shah Rukh shamsa (Figure 21) in which the interlacement has been reduced to a fine, undecorated line. In a few shamsas there is no interlacement at all, only a wide band with the interior 'braid' motif (e.g., Figure 22).

The second dominant motif of the Herat style is the arabesque. Both styles of arabesque discussed above- the formal, grotteschi and the more informal, floral arabesque - are extensively employed, and in fact either one or the other - or both - appear in almost all shamsas of the Herat style. Under the Timurids, both types normally incorporate medallions or cartouches (e.g., Figures 21-22). In this respect the Baysunghur shamsa (Figure 20) is somewhat unusual, for its arabesque contains no real medallions. Another difference between this shamsa and most others produced in Herat during the first half of the century is the presence of the floral sprays, characteristic of Shiraz, which fill the spaces

between the seven small roundels. This early use of a Shiraz motif may be explained by the fact that when Shah Rukh deposed Iskandar Sultan in 1414, he took artists from the Shiraz atelier back to Herat, thus causing new motifs to be introduced into Herat illumination.[25] As noted in the discussion of the contour, another feature of the Herat style at this time, and one obviously not affected by the presence of Shiraz artists, is the prevalence of the solid, perfectly circular contour from which extend the long, elegant blue rays.

The Spread of the Herat Style to Shiraz

Although the name of the main ruling dynasty is employed for the whole of the 15th century, there exists another dynasty that is of importance to this discussion, namely the Qara Quyunlu, or Black Sheep, one of the two federations of Turkman tribes ruling in Iran at the same time as the Timurids. (The other tribal federation, the Aq Quyunlu or White Sheep, has no bearing on this discussion.) In 1436 Shah Rukh assigned Jahanshah of the Qara Quyunlu the governorship of Tabriz. After the death of Shah Rukh in 1447 and of his son Ulugh Beg in 1449, Jahanshah seized complete control of Tabriz. In 1453 he took Shiraz and appointed his son, Pir Budaq, governor of the surrounding province of Fars in 1455. It is Pir

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[25]Titley, 48.

Budaq who is of interest here, for, as Basil Gray observes, he was to become "the first established patron of the arts of the book among the Turkman."[26] It is his patronage which was largely responsible for the mid-century introduction of the Herat style of illumination into Shiraz.

Unfortunately, Pir Budaq's continued rebellions against his father's rule put an early end to his patronage, and eventually his life. He spent only five years in Shiraz, his father having forced him from the city in 1460. He was sent to Baghdad, but there, six years later, he rebelled for the last time: his father had him executed in 1466.[27] His atelier was probably the most important of his day, and his patronage attracted the major artists to his court. A superb manuscript of Rumi's Mathnawi, now in the Bodleian Library (Ms. Elliot 251, Figures 24-25), was copied for him, probably in Shiraz. The style of the illuminations indicates that the artist was one of the many from Herat whom Pir Budaq employed. The two different shamsas that introduce the manuscript are in the style of the 1429/833 Baysunghur shamsa, but are even more lovely, and the style seems to have now reached its perfection. The divisions of space are smaller, and the blue rays have

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[26]Gray ed., Arts of the Book, 4-5.

[27]Ibid., 5.

become more intricate and more numerous, increasing the delicacy and overall elegance of the shamsas.

An interesting feature of the shamsa on folio 1b (Figure 24) is the wide band of gold braid, a characteristic of Baghdad illuminations from an early date.[28] This does not necessarily indicate that the manuscript was produced after Pir Budaq's removal to Baghdad, for artists from that city surely would have been attracted to his court in Shiraz, just as they were to the courts of Iskandar Sultan and Ibrahim Sultan in the first half of the century. Moreover, artists from Tabriz were taken to Herat by Baysunghur in 1421. These artists had been part of the atelier of Sultan Ahmad Jalayr, whose court fluctuated between Baghdad and Tabriz, depending on the political conditions of the day.[29] According to Basil Gray, "we must envisage a circular movement of artists of the book in the first quarter of the 15th century between the four centres of Tabriz, Baghdad, Shiraz and Herat, though each of these retained or developed its own tradition."[30] The occurrence of motifs such as the gold braid may be

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[28]This is the main feature of the earliest shamsa located, on folio 1a of the Bodleian Library's 1240/637 copy of Dioscorides' De Materia Medica (Ms. Arab d.138, Figure 1).

[29]Titley, 50.

[30]Gray ed., Arts of the Book, 3.

evidence of the lasting effect of this movement of artists, an effect that would have been heightened by the movement of artists to Shiraz in mid-century.

In the Bodleian Library there is a manuscript of Amir Khusrau's minor poems (Ms. Fraser 65). It was copied in 1456/860 for a great-grandson of Timur, Mirza Shah Mahmud, who resided in Herat. The shamsa on folio 2a of this manuscript (Figure 26) is very close in style to the shamsas in the Bodleian Library's Mathnawi (Figures 24-25). All three shamsas have a formal, grotteschi arabesque border (although the medallions are much more prominent in the Amir Khusrau shamsa). The geometric interlacements in the shamsas on folio 2a of each manuscript are much more intricate than those found in other contemporary manuscripts and provide evidence of an obviously strong interest in geometry on the part of the artist. Mainly as a result of the patterns created by the interlacements, there is a greater floral quality to the overall design of these shamsas than to many other 15th century examples (e.g., Figures 21-23).[31] Even the colour scheme used in each is similar: the same medium shade of blue with gold (compared with the deeper blue of other shamsas, such as in Figure 21). Thus, the style

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[31]The similarity between the Baysunghur Shahnama shamsa (former Gulistan Palace Library, Tehran, 1429/833, Figure 20) and the shamsa on folio 1b of the Mathnawi manuscript under discussion (Figure 24) must also be noted.

and date of the manuscripts suggest the possibility that once the Amir Khusrau manuscript was completed, the illuminator moved on to Shiraz where he worked on Pir Budaq's Mathnawi manuscript.

Another manuscript, a Qur'an dated 1464/868 in the Chester Beatty Library (Ms. 1518, Figures 27-28), provides further evidence of this mid-century movement of artists. The manuscript opens with a shamsa in what for the time is a rather heavy version of the Herat arabesque. Surprisingly, following this shamsa is a double-page surlawh in the delicate floral-spray style of Shiraz. Even the colour schemes are totally different, each page exhibiting colours normally associated with its respective style. The Shiraz-style surlawh is in blue and gold with the gold often set against the plain, unpainted page, while the Herat-style shamsa, as would be expected, is in more varied and vibrant colours.

The presence of two such distinct styles within one manuscript is curious indeed. If it is the result of the movement of artists from one centre to another, it might also suggest the possibility of artists becoming equally adept in the execution of both styles. The chance, however, that the shamsa simply was added later in the century once the earlier Shiraz style had been totally displaced by that of Herat cannot be totally ruled out. Nor can the possibility that the manuscript, begun in

Herat, was completed in Shiraz a short time later.

Shiraz-produced shamsas completely done in the Herat style do exist, as has been demonstrated. No evidence, however, has been found for the reverse case, namely, Herat-produced shamsas completely in the Shiraz style. Herat artists chose only to assimilate individual Shiraz motifs, such as the floral spray.[32] The more influential of the two contemporary styles, the Herat style was also the more enduring, for the 1464/868 Qur'an discussed above (CBL Ms. 1518, Figures 27-28) appears to be the last manuscript to employ this delicate Shiraz style of illumination. The Herat style was, however, to be seen for many more years; in fact, in the last three decades of the century the Herat style was pervasive, and the style used by artists of both Herat and Shiraz became one and the same. As will be seen, in the hands of the Uzbeks, the Herat style even retained its basic form to the end of the 16th century.

The Shamsa in the late 15th Century

During the first half of the century in Shiraz, shamsas with pendants and irregular contours are the norm. But throughout the century the Herat style of shamsa most often is a simple circular form, although as

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[32]Because of this fact, it is assumed that CBL Ms. 1518 was produced in Shiraz.

early as 1435/838, occasional examples may be found which are slightly ovoid with upper and lower pendants (Figure 23). Such examples remain the exception, however, until the last years of the century.

Two Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i manuscripts in collections in the Soviet Union clearly illustrate the changes evident in some shamsas at the end of the century (Figures 31-33). In the 1492-93/898 Khamsa, the shamsa introducing Laila and Majnun (Figure 31) is in the established Herat style which uses the wide interlaced band and has a regular, circular contour. Only the elaborate pendants may be considered new. This is the basic form which will continue with the Uzbeks in Samarkand and Bukhara.

The shamsa in the undated, later 15th century Diwan (Figure 33) also uses the wide interlaced band, here with the familiar 'braid' motif, but now defining numerous small areas of space. There is an intricacy, almost a 'busy' quality, that is new to the Herat style. Another expression of this move towards greater intricacy is found in the small triangular medallions radiating out from the edge of the shamsa. The form seems to be set in motion by this multitude of small shapes.

Introducing Sabyai Sayera (Figure 32) in the Khamsa is another shamsa which might be seen as a further step in this development. Interior contours are gone: there

is now no interlaced band defining shapes, separating one form from its neighbour. The breakdown of the exterior contour is aided by the placement of the shamsa within an elaborate frame, making it less distinct and less obvious. Despite its simpler outline, this shamsa seems even more intricate than the one in the Diwan (Figure 33). What has taken place is a dissolution of the boundaries of space: what remains is an explosion of the larger, clearly defined forms of earlier years and a loose gathering up of the fragments. It is this form which will serve as a main source of inspiration for Safavid illuminators.

The Safavid and Uzbek Era

Forty manuscripts,[33] dating from the start of the 16th century to the mid-17th century, are included for the Safavid and Uzbek era (Figures 34-43 and 46-48). Although almost as large a sampling as for the Timurid era, it is much more poorly documented. While in terms of the Timurid era the provenance is certain for two-thirds of the examples, here it is certain for less than half. To make matters worse, the eighteen manuscripts of known provenance are spread among seven cities: Tabriz (3), Qazvin (2), Shiraz (1), Mashhad (2), Herat (2),

[33] As in the Timurid era, some of these are actually detached single-pages. See Appendix I for a list of all Safavid and Uzbek shamsas included in this study.

Bukhara (3), and Samarkand (5).

In the Il-Khanid period the sampling was indeed small: six manuscripts of known provenance divided among three places of production. But the shamsas attributed to any given city always had similar characteristics distinguishing them from those of other places of production. Under the Timurids, regional differences were visible mainly during the first half of the 15th century, after which time the Herat style became pervasive: it could no longer be assumed that a Herat-style shamsa had indeed been produced in Herat. In the 16th and early 17th centuries similar problems of attribution arise. The clearest regional differences are between the areas controlled by the Safavids and those controlled by the Uzbeks. Moreover, although shamsas produced under the Uzbeks in Herat, Bukhara, and Samarkand form one basically cohesive group that carries on the Herat tradition of illumination, the Safavid shamsas of certain provenance, while being distinct from those of the Uzbeks, form a very disparate group. But before delving into the more difficult problem of Safavid shamsa style, the shamsa style of the Uzbeks should be examined.

Herat, Bukhara and Samarkand

The Timurid dynasty came to an end with the death of its last great patron, Husayn Bayqara, in 1506. His son, Badi'al-Zaman, lost Herat to Shaibani Khan Uzbek (d. 1510) in 1509. In the west, the Safavids were in control: Shah Isma'il had taken Tabriz in 1501. After Isma'il's 1510 defeat of Shaibani Khan and seizure of Herat, the Uzbeks centred their power in Bukhara and Samarkand. This did not, however, mark the end of Uzbek influence in Khurasan, for they continued to launch raids into the area throughout the century: Herat changed hands on several occasions.

As noted above, the ten manuscripts from Herat, Bukhara, and Samarkand, which together contain a total of fourteen shamsas, may be viewed as one group (Figures 34-38). The dates of these manuscripts reflect the perpetuation and gradual eastward movement of the Timurid style of Herat under Uzbek patronage: the Herat manuscripts range in date from 1510 to 1511; Bukhara manuscripts from 1534 to 1548[34]; and Samarkand manuscripts from 1580 to 1602.

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[34]The main Uzbek capital was Bukhara, but though "the city had fallen into Uzbek hands in 1500, there is little sign that Herat painters had migrated there before the 1520s." Feliz Cagman and Zeren Tanindi, The Topkapi Saray Museum, The Albums and Illustrated Manusrcipts, trans. and ed. J. M. Rogers (London 1986), 157.

Under Uzbek tutelage the basic Herat style, with its solid, circular contour, extensive use of the arabesque, and clearly demarcated interior spaces, continues largely unchanged until the last decades of the century.[35] But by the turn of the century, simple concentric circles replace the earlier, more intricate division of interior spaces through the use of geometrically interlaced bands and lines. Four of the eight shamsas that date from the first half of the century (e.g., Figures 34-36)[36] but only one of the five that date from mid-century to the first decade of the 17th century (Figure 37) make use of geometric interlacements. This change is one of the traits that distinguishes the Samarkand shamsas from earlier Uzbek examples. Another is the colours used for all but one of the Samarkand shamsas. While the 1585-86/994 shamsa (Figure 37) still uses the pure blue and gold of the Herat school, the others are painted mainly in dull, muddy shades of blue, reddish-orange and green; even the gold is less brilliant, as a result of being

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[35]Three of this group vary slightly in that they do not have the strictly circular contour of the others: a) BOD Ms. Elliot 255b, Jami's Subat-alabrar, folios 1b and 2a, 1535/942, Bukhara; b) CBL Ms. 215, Tuhfat al-Ahrar (Gift to the Free), folio 1a, 1548/955, Bukhara; c) BL Ms. Add. 24983, Khamsa of Amir Khusrau, ff. 1a and 80a, 1511/917, Herat. Although the contour of the shamsa on folio 1a is basically circular, it is embellished by the addition of numerous pendants that encircle the whole form as in Figure 33.

[36]The other is BL Ms. Add. 24983, Khamsa of Amir Khusrau, folio 1a, 1511/917.

less thickly applied.

One final feature indicative of the Samarkand school, at least in the first decade of the 17th century if not earlier, is the use of a cloud-like motif in the centre of the shamsa (Figure 38). Although the shamsa illustrated here is from an undated manuscript of unknown provenance (BOD Ms. Elliot 247), the cloud motif matches so closely that of a shamsa known to have been produced in Samarkand in 1602/1011 (IOL Ms. No. 122, no illustration available) that it seems probable both originated from the same workshop.[37]

Despite these new traits, the shamsas of Samarkand still fall clearly within the old Timurid Herat tradition of a circular form with clearly demarcated interior spaces in which all motifs are oriented toward a common centre. A comparison of an early 17th century Samarkand shamsa (Figure 38) and the 1456/860 shamsa made in Herat for Mirza Shah Mahmud (Figure 26) shows that in a century and a half the motifs may have changed, but the basic concept has remained the same. Another comparison, this time between the 1585-86/994 Samarkand shamsa (Figure 37) and the 1429-30/833 shamsa made for Shah Rukh (Figure 21), shows that in some cases a century and half has

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[37]Another Samarkand shamsa of certain provenance decorated with the same type of cloud motif is IOL Ms. No. 301, Shahnama, folio 6a, 1600/1008. The shamsa on folio 1a of this same manuscript has no cloud motif.

effected almost no change at all: here the tradition of Herat has remained almost completely intact.

The Dissolution of Boundaries in Safavid Shamsas

Of the twenty-nine shamsas of both known and unknown provenance that cannot be attributed to Uzbek patronage,[38] six may be seen as forming one group (Figures 39-41).[39] Perhaps the purest examples of the style of this group are the identical shamsas that introduce an undated, circa mid-16th century Qur'an in the Chester Beatty Library (Ms.1545, Figure 40). In these shamsas, the regular, very smooth outlines of the interior forms of Timurid shamsas have evolved into jagged, indented outlines that allow the forms to intrude upon the background space. All that prevents the forms from totally dissolving into this surrounding sea of finely wrought, densely applied arabesque is a thin, barely perceptible outline. Although most members of the group are divided by circular bands (e.g., Figure 39), the overriding aim of all is the same: to break down the

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[38]This excludes BOD Ms. Elliot 247, which has been attributed to Uzbek patronage on the basis of style.

[39]a) Bib. Nat., Paris, Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, 1526/933; b) BL Ms. Or. 2265, Khamsa of Nizami, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1539-43/946-49; c) CBL Ms. 1545, Qur'an, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), no date; d) CBL Ms. 218, Gulshan-i-Raz (The Rosebed of Mystery), folio 2a, no date; e) Keir Collection, VI.36, single page, mid-16th century; and f) Private Collection, Shahnama, 1576-77/985, Qazvin.

boundaries between forms.

While in the Il-Khanid shamsas of Shiraz and Maragha there is a general flatness, in the Tabriz shamsas the arabesque, set against a dark ground, creates a definite sense of depth, but one which is very limited and consists only of a foreground and background. In the Timurid era, the perception of depth increases. In areas where the forms are outlined, the movement from one layer of space to the next is very exact and regulated. But in these Safavid shamsas the sense of depth has increased vastly, and the transition between spatial layers is smoother than ever before. Even when outlines do exist, they no longer control and restrict. Yet despite this new 'freedom,' the design is never haphazard. As with contemporary Uzbek shamsas, order is still the prime concept around which the design is planned, and all forms remain oriented toward a common centre.

Another five shamsas form a second stylistic group that may be seen as a sort of subset of the first group (Figure 42).[40] To differentiate between the two groups, they may be referred to as simply the primary and secondary styles. In the shamsas of this latter group,

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[40]a) CBL Ms. 1548, Qur'an, folio 2a, no date; b) Keir Collection, Ms. VI.30, Qur'an, c. second quarter of 16th century; c) CBL Ms. 139, Sa'adat-namah (The Book of Felicity), folio 1a, 1562/969; d) BL Ms. Add. 24944, Kulliyyat of Sa'di, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1566/974, Shiraz; and e) CBL Ms. 1534, Qur'an, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1573-74/982.

the arabesque is coarser and sparser, and spatial transitions are less smooth, usually because of the presence of a rather heavy, 'Chinese,' curling cloud-like outline around some elements. Nevertheless, the curving, irregular contour of the interior forms and the exterior contour exhibit a desire to merge or interlock the component parts of the shamsa and to lessen the severity of the movement from shamsa to surrounding space.

Yet a third group exists, which consists of three examples of shamsas that have been integrated into a surlawh, or full-page illuminated frontispiece, and thus may be referred to as surlawh-shamsas (Figure 43).[41] But despite this integration, in each the star medallion still bears the identifying characteristics of a shamsa and therefore warrants being referred to as such.

A distinguishing feature of the shamsa was stated to be its distinctness or separateness, the result of a clearly defined and accentuated contour. In each of these examples, the contrast in colour between shamsa and background and the relative simplicity of the immediate background space maintain the integrity of the contour and prevent the shamsa from totally disappearing amidst a sea of surrounding forms. Yet while maintaining its

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[41]a) BOD Ms. Arab d. 98, Qur'an, ff. 1b and 2a, 16th/10th century; b) Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva, Qur'an, c.1550-70/978-98; c) Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, Ms. No. 3310, Qur'an, 1581/989, Qazvin.

distinctness, the indented contour softens the move from positive to 'negative' space. Thus the shamsa expands into the surrounding space, yet is not absorbed by it. This is not the case with the roundel on the page following Figure 43 (Figure 44), which, therefore, cannot be categorized as a shamsa. Furthermore, the orientation of parts about a common centre and the resulting effect of radiation[42] characteristic of all shamsas studied so far is evident in the shamsa (Figure 43), but absent in the roundel (Figure 44). Although other surlawhs may employ odd-shaped central medallions (Figure 45), they, too, can be seen as having originally evolved from a combination of the shamsa and the surlawh.

Figures 43 and 44 may be seen as the two final stages in the development of the shamsa, the first stages in this integration process being the expansion of the shamsa into the background space (e.g., Figure 33) and the placement of the shamsa within an illuminated border (e.g, Figure 31), both of which lessen the distinction between shamsa and background. As has been shown, the star medallion in Figure 43 has retained the basic traits of a shamsa despite being surrounded by other forms. But gradually the shamsa is simplified and integrated into the surlawh more completely, until it is no longer a

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[42]The term 'radiation' will be discussed further in Chapter III.

distinct form (Figure 44). It is now just one of many forms that blend together to create the overall pattern of the surlawh. No longer is it a shamsa, but just a simple roundel.

There was not, however, a clearly defined, sequential development leading to this final, total integration and 'loss of identity' on the part of the shamsa, with each new form supplanting the earlier form. Even after the appearance of the final stage of development, the shamsa continued to appear, frequently in combination with the totally integrated, 'non-shamsa' form (as evidenced by the occurrence of Figures 43 and 44 in one manuscript). In none of the manuscripts included in this study, however, does a 'non-integrated shamsa' (e.g., Figure 42) appear together with a surlawh-shamsa. This supports the view that the latter was indeed regarded as a shamsa and bore the same symbolic meaning, for there obviously was no need to repeat the same form on successive pages.

The fifteen remaining shamsas, all but four of which are of unknown provenance, form a very eclectic group. Many exhibit traits of the above groups in combination with the more clearly demarcated spaces of the Timurid style. One notable member of this group, which will be discussed below, is the shamsa that adorns the Houghton Shahnama (Figure 46).

Thus, of all the shamsas produced in this era that have not been attributed to Uzbek patronage, half exhibit - to varying degrees - a desire to 'dissolve' spatial boundaries through the merging of forms. But determining where and under whose patronage this style developed is difficult: of the fourteen manuscripts that exhibit this basic stylistic trend, both the date and place of production are known for only four, and the date alone is known for another three manuscripts.[43] Through these manuscripts, however, the style can be linked to Tabriz, Shiraz and Qazvin. And at least one of these manuscripts - Tahmasp's 1539-43/946-49 Khamsa of Nizami- was the result of royal patronage, though the high quality of most others suggests a similar origin.

As was pointed out earlier, shamsas in the primary style were produced in Herat as early as the last decade of the 15th century (e.g, Figure 32). Undoubtedly, the style was transported to Tabriz by artists taken from the Herat atelier after the Safavid capture of the Timurid capital in 1510. The earliest securely dated shamsa in the primary style produced outside Herat is in Tahmasp's

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[43] a) Bib. Nat., Paris, Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, 1526/933; b) BL Ms. Or. 2265, Khamsa of Nizami, 1539-43/946-49, Tabriz; c) CBL Ms. 139, Sa'adat-namah, 1562/969; d) BL Ms. Add. 24944, 1566/974, Kulliyyat of Sa'di, 1566/974, Shiraz; e) CBL Ms. 1534, Qur'an, 1573-74/982; f) Private Collection, Shahnama, 1576-77/985, Qazvin (for Isma'il II); g) Bastan Museum, Tehran, Ms. No. 3310, Qur'an, 1581/989, Qazvin.

1539-43 Khamsa of Nizami made in Tabriz (Figure 39). Although evidence is slim, it would seem that the secondary style developed later than the primary style, and eventually elements from both were combined to result in what has been termed the surlawh-shamsa style.

The combining of styles is suggested by two facts: the similarity of design between most members of the secondary group and those of the surlawh-shamsa group (Figures 42-43); and the latter's incorporation of the finer, denser arabesque of the primary style. The only dated shamsa in the surlawh-shamsa style (Iran Bastan Museum, Ms. No. 3310) is dated 1581/989, though the style may have been introduced as much as three decades earlier.[44] But, as noted above, a strictly sequential development is not being suggested, for there probably was a time when all three variations of the style were being produced.

The six other securely dated shamsas in this style[45] (besides Tahmasp's Khamsa of Nizami) were produced between 1562 and 1581. It is known that in the mid-1540s, shortly before the transfer of the capital to

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[44]Anthony Welch dates the Qur'an in this style in the Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan as c. 1550-70. A. Welch and Stuart Cary Welch, Arts of the Islamic Book (Ithaca, New York 1982), 82.

[45]Namely, the basic style of all three groups (primary, secondary and surlawh-shamsa) in which forms are merged through the 'dissolving' of spatial boundaries.

Qazvin in 1548, Tahmasp became decidedly more devout, and his once-avid interest in painting and the other arts of the book waned greatly. The result was the breakup of his atelier and the dispersal of its artists. But Qadi Ahmad refers to paintings by Tahmasp in the Chihil Sutun in Qazvin, which indicates that he did not totally turn away from his former interest in painting.[46] That Tahmasp may indeed have been the patron of many of the shamsas in these three main stylistic groups is suggested by their generally high quality and the rather curious fact that half of the fourteen examples are Qur'ans. This is a marked contrast to the generally lower quality of the fifteen shamsas of the 'eclectic' group, only one of which adorns a Qur'an. This would seem to suggest that the purer, 'dissolved' style of these three groups tends more often to be associated both with royal (or at least high aristocratic) patronage and with Qur'ans, the latter perhaps resulting from Tahmasp's new devoutness

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[46]V. Minorsky trans., "Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, son of Mir-Munshi (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)," Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Washington 1959), 182. Hereafter referred to as "Calligraphers and Painters."

and its subsequent influence on other patrons.[47]

Another possible patron was Tahmasp's nephew, Ibrahim Mirza (1543-76), who, like his uncle, was an astute and gifted patron of the book. It has been noted by Titley[48] that many of the finest manuscripts produced in Qazvin date to the 1570s. Since Ibrahim Mirza resided in Qazvin from 1568 until his death in 1576, he may have been responsible for their production. But because the origin and date is certain for so few of the manuscripts included here, they might just as well have been produced under his patronage earlier in the century, during his governorship of Mashhad, Qa'in, and Sabzavar (1566-68).

What has evolved is a clear picture of a Safavid style of shamsa, but which cannot yet be identified with a particular city. What is more, though this 'dissolved' style emerges as the dominant, most extensively employed style, it is not the only one. Fully half of the Safavid shamsas defy categorization, being produced in a variety of styles and combinations of styles.

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[47]It should be noted specifically that the three surlawh-shamsas are all found in Qur'ans. This is the only time in any era that a particular style of shamsa is associated exclusively with one type of manuscript. All other styles in all other eras are used in both secular and sacred manuscripts so that the shamsa itself offers no sure indication as to the type of manuscript it adorns.

[48]Titley, 103.

The Houghton Shamsa

The Houghton Shahnama is the single most important manuscript of the Safavid era. It was begun under the patronage of Shah Isma'il and finished by his son, Tahmasp, in circa 1537. The shamsa that graces this magnificent manuscript is beautiful, but somewhat problematic (Figure 46). Following the Timurid tradition, it employs one continuous, narrow white band of interlacement to join the gold cartouches that protrude from the central rosette. And the fine arabesque in deep blue and red is no different from so many other Safavid arabesques. The upper and lower pendants, too, are typically Safavid, and though not seen in any of the shamsas illustrated here, may be found as marginals decorating many Qur'ans of the time.[49]

But this shamsa is still unique. The basic rosette design and the wide gold band act together to imbue the shamsa with a robust, exuberant nature not seen in shamsas since the Il-Khanid era. The source of this would seem to be not the delicate Timurid shamsa style brought to Tabriz from Herat, but rather the native Turkman painting style. The broad, rounded forms of the shamsa seem almost to echo the more rounded figure and facial types of Turkman paintings of the last half of the fifteenth century. But the robustness of the forms is,

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[49]For example, CBL Ms. 1545, Qur'an, no date.

nevertheless, tempered and refined by the delicate arabesque and the fine band of interlacement. The result is a fusion of the more delicate Timurid style and the more exuberant Turkman style, similar to the fusion seen in several of the paintings in the Houghton Shahnama.

There is one other shamsa (Bib. Nat., Supp. turc. 762, Figure 47), dated 1564-65/972, that would seem to suggest that Turkman influence did not end with the Houghton shamsa.[50] It, too, is an eight-lobed rosette with a delicate arabesque background and a small, inscribed, central rosette. Here the interlacement is a much wider band and encircles eight roundels that serve to accent the shape of the shamsa. It has the same quality of robustness as the Houghton shamsa, and here too it derives from a combination of large, rounded forms. But the influence of this style in Iran obviously was slight, being overpowered by the more favoured shamsa style of finely outlined, merging forms.

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[50]Although this manuscript has been attributed to Mashhad, the question mark that follows the attribution in the text below indicates the relative uncertainty with which it has been made. This shamsa, therefore, has not been included in the group of two manuscripts known to have been produced in Mashhad. Attribution made in E. Yu. Yusupov ed., Miniatures Illustrations [sic] of Alisher Navoi's Works of the XV-XIXth Centuries (Tashkent 1982), plate 215.

The Double Shamsa

The earliest occurrence of a double shamsa is in the circa 1278/676 Qur'an from Konya (Figure 2, folio 331b only). Like most later examples, these two shamsas are identical, but unlike most they appear at the end of the manuscript rather than at the beginning. No other examples are found for more than a century and a half. Then, in the 1430s and 1440s, in both Shiraz and Herat, several double shamsas appear set within illuminated pages with angels in each corner (Figure 19).[51] Although the shamsas are identical except for the inscriptions, the angels usually are in different poses and hold a variety of objects. Another very notable double shamsa from the Timurid era introduces the Bodleian Library's copy of Rumi's Mathnawi produced for Pir Budaq circa 1455-60 (Figures 24-25). What is noteworthy about these shamsas is not only their exquisite quality, but also the fact that they are not identical, as are almost all other examples.[52] In the 16th century the double shamsa

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[51] See also, a) M.H. Vever Coll., Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, Khamsa of Khwaju Kirmani, 1438/841, Herat. Illustrated in Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, plate LIII-B, 57a; b) Keir Collection, Khamsa of Nizami, 1442-44/842, prob. Shiraz. Illustrated in Basil Robinson, E. Grube, G.M. Meridith-Owens and R. Skelton, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, The Keir Collection, (London 1976), plate 25, III.83 (the other half of Figure 19). Hereafter referred to as Keir Collection.

[52] The only other non-identical double shamsa is in CBL Ms. 183, Bustan of Sa'di, ff. 1b and 2a, 1510/916, Herat.

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becomes increasingly common, reaching its greatest popularity in the third quarter of the century. Of the manuscripts included in this study, double shamsas appear in approximately one-quarter of those of the 16th century, but in only one-seventh of the 15th century manuscripts.

A rather perplexing problem concerns the placement of the shamsa on the page. Instead of being placed in the centre as one would expect, both single and double shamsas are normally set close to the inside edge of the page. In the case of a double shamsa, such an arrangement would make the two shamsas appear more of a 'matched set' than if each were placed precisely in the centre of the page. Does this then indicate that single shamsas are simply the sole-surviving half of what was once a double shamsa? Undoubtedly the answer is 'yes' in some cases, but certainly not all. It would seem to be too coincidental that so many 16th century double shamsas have survived in comparison with so few in previous centuries. Tradition, in fact, seems to be the reason for the off-centre placement of the shamsa.

In the earliest illuminated Qur'ans an indispensable element of the frontispiece is the protruding side palmette (e.g., Figures 13-14), which in later centuries (by about the 14th century) is frequently replaced by a side ansa (e.g., Figures 10-11). In order to accommodate

either the palmette or the ansa, the main rectangular portion of the frontispiece had to be placed off-centre, close to the inside edge of the page. Within the body of the manuscript, the pages of text were similarly placed off-centre to make room for the illuminated marginal roundels (e.g., Figure 12), which among other things were used to mark every fifth and tenth verse. (It may in fact have been the practice, even in undecorated Qur'ans, to place the text off-centre so that marginal decorations could possibly be added at a future date.)

Thus it would seem that by the time the first shamsa appeared in 1240 there already was a well-established tradition of placing any text or decoration, not in the centre of the page as would be expected, but close to the inside edge. That this practice continued - although not exclusively so - right through the Safavid era is illustrated by the placement of the miniatures in many manuscripts, such as the Houghton Shahnama. There can be no explanation for the wide, empty, outside margin seen in these miniatures other than tradition. From this it can be deduced that the off-centre placement of the shamsa was also the result of tradition, even in the case of the single shamsa. It can be assumed, therefore, that the ratio of single to double shamsas that have survived is a fair and accurate representation of the actual numbers produced in each era.

Changes in Vision

In each era a relationship between the style of the miniatures and that of the shamsa may be seen to exist. The style of each evolves from the vision of the artist, the manner in which the world is viewed at that point in history. In the Il-Khanid era, shamsas are drawn in a very robust and straightforward manner, each form being clearly and concisely presented. One's vision is very focused. There are no extraneous forms that distract the eye from the main features. There is a limited sense of depth. Even in the arabesque examples from Tabriz this is true.

Depth is also limited in Il-Khanid figural painting. Vision again is focused, the figures most often being large, taking up the greater part of the picture surface. Only one scene is presented, and no more information is given than is needed to relate the story at hand.

With the Timurids comes a new way of seeing things. The limited, very focused vision of the Il-Khanid era gives way to a broader vision. In miniatures, figures are smaller, and more of the surrounding environment is included to create a more complete picture of the events depicted. The long rays of the Herat shamsa and the irregular contour of the Shiraz shamsa move into the background, encompassing, both physically and metaphysically, a greater area of space.

The greatly increased use of architecture in miniatures may be seen as directly related to the use of carefully outlined forms in the Herat style of Timurid shamsa. The obvious interest in geometry, much greater than in the preceding era, and the resulting compartmentalization of forms within the shamsa are conceptually equivalent to the important role now granted to architecture. Like miniatures, shamsas are more intricate, involving a greater number and variety of forms than ever before.

The Safavids carry these developments even further. In miniatures there is an almost 'universal' vision. Broad areas of space are depicted in one small painting. The observer is presented, not just with the main scene, but also with any number of ancillary scenes. The artist is creating a total environment and an infinite amount of space. Each scene is distinct, yet is part of the overall picture. One space blends into the other in the same manner that the irregular, finely outlined forms of the shamsa now seem to blend together. The deep-blue, never-ending arabesque of the primary style shamsas creates a background of infinite depth that pulls the eye into the deepest recesses of the universe. These shamsas reflect an increased sense of transcendence and ethereality which coincides with the move in miniatures to depict as much of the universe as possible.

Over the centuries there has been a definite change in vision, which is especially clear when the Safavid style is compared to the clearer vision of the earlier eras. In the Il-Khanid era, the forms are simple, clear and concise. There is a sense of control that appears not intentional, but rather a result of the simple robustness of the forms. In Timurid illuminations there is a sense of 'intentional' control that is revealed in the more refined, more reserved shamsas of the time. But late in the era, this gives way to an increased intricacy that begins to blur the clearer vision of earlier times. Under the Safavids, vision becomes less focused as forms merge and depth increases. The forms threaten to dissipate and merge into one. The surlawh-shamsa style seems to be the final step along this path and the first towards the demise of the shamsa in Iran.

II

The Shamsa as a Symbol of Royalty

There are two aspects to the interpretation of the shamsa as a symbol of royalty: it may be seen as a symbol of justice, order and the divine right to rule; it may also stand for the superior nature of the ruler who is set above all other persons. The monarch is assigned cosmological attributes specifically through being associated with the sun.

Justice and the Divine Right to Rule

The first aspect of this symbolism evolves from the commonly-held pre-Islamic view of the ruler's role as leader and of his relationship with god. The Sasanian text, the Denkart,[1] states that "God is absolute lord of both worlds; the King is his representative on earth."[2] Thus, the king was seen as ruling by divine right, which placed him in a preeminent position above all other

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[1]The Denkart contains a summary of the twenty-one Nasks or books of the Avesta, which, strictly speaking, is the only sacred book of Zoroastrian beliefs. The present form of the Denkart dates from the 9th century, but, like other Pahlavi texts, "almost certainly reflect[s] the theological views of the last century of Sasanian rule." R.C. Zaehner, The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism (New York 1961), 25-26. Hereafter referred to as Dawn and Twilight.

[2]The Denkart (ed. Madan), 401.3-5, quoted in Zaehner, Dawn and Twilight, 297.

humans. This concept of the king continued into the Islamic era, for in the 12th century Nizam ul-Mulk wrote that "God most high in every age chooses someone from among the people and adorns him with kingly virtues and relegates to him the affairs of the world and the peace of his servants."[3]

According to Richard Frye, this idea of a special relationship, or covenant, between the god(s) and the king originated in the Near East as far back as the third millennium B.C., and he suggests that the ring is symbolic of this covenant.[4] Rock carvings of the investiture of Sasanian kings, such as that of Ardashir II (A.D. 379) at Taq-i Bustan (Figure 49), in which the king is depicted receiving a ring from a god, provide evidence that this symbolism was employed in pre-Islamic Iran.

Even in pre-Zoroastrian times (as early as 900 to 775 B.C.), the king's divine authority to rule was interpreted as Royal Fortune (x'areno or farrah), meaning something 'obtained or desired' or 'welfare or well-being,' but which was lost if Right/Order (Arta) was

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[3]The Siyasat Nama, Persian text ed. by Schefer (Paris 1891-3), 5, quoted in Ann K.S. Lambton, "The Theory of Kingship in the Nasihat ul-Muluk of Ghazali," Islamic Quarterly I.1 (1954), 49.

[4]Richard Frye, "The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran," Iranica Antiqua 4 (1964), 38.

abandoned.[5] Interpreted as Royal Fortune, x'areno or farrah may be seen as relating to "prosperity, order, and the sun as a bestower of good things."[6]

Papak, son of Sasan and father of Ardashir, founder of the Sasanian dynasty, is said to have dreamt of "how the sun shone from the head of Sasan and made the whole world bright."[7] The dream was interpreted as indicating that, "He who was seen in the dream, either he or one of his children will come to sovereignty over the world, since the sun and the white and caparisoned elephant are [a sign of] mastery and riches and victory."[8] The Sasanians, therefore, regarded kingship as closely associated with light and splendour in general and the sun in particular, for the sun symbolized mastery and righteous rule. Thus, the farrah of the kings came to be symbolized by a nimbus of light or fire about the head of the ruler, recalling the sun which shone from the head of Sasan.[9] Manichean and Christian influence resulted in a

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[5]H.W. Bailey, Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books (1943; 2nd ed. Oxford 1970), 2-3 and 23-24. Also see Said Amir Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam (Chicago 1984), 90-91. Hereafter referred to as The Shadow of God.

[6]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 90.

[7]The Karnamak i Artaxser i Papak, quoted in Bailey, 59.

[8]Ibid., 59-60.

[9]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 92-93.

change in the meaning of farrah, from 'Royal Fortune' to simply 'glory,' a less precise definition, but one which, nevertheless, could be applied only to "kings, gods or prophets, [and] not the ordinary fortunate man."[10] But whatever the precise definition of the term, farrah did not remain with the ruler who abandoned Right/Order (Arta). Thus, as the guardian of righteousness, it was the ruler's duty to maintain the order of the realm.[11]

Zoroastrianism developed this belief to the point that religion and justice or order were seen as almost one and the same.[12] The Denkart states that "religion is royalty, and royalty is the religion."[13] Good Religion is the basis of Good Government. Good Government, of course, is based on justice, order, and the ensuing well-being of the people. In turn, there can be no Good Government if there is no Good Religion, each being wholly dependent on the other.

The mandatory well-being of the people was by no means limited to spiritual well-being, for the

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[10]Bailey, 61-62.

[11]It must be pointed out that under the Sasanians 'justice' and 'order' are used, "not in a legal sense, but rather more in a moral [and] ethical sense." Lambton, 50.

[12]R.C. Zaehner, The Teachings of the Magi (New York 1976), 85 and 89-94.

[13]The Denkart (ed. Madan), 47.6, quoted in Zaehner, Dawn and Twilight, 296.

Zoroastrian ethos equated justice and order with material prosperity. Thus, in the early 12th century, in his treatise the Nasihat ul-Muluk, al-Ghazali, in reference to the pre-Islamic rulers of Iran, writes that they "rightly" proclaimed that "religion depends on kingship, kingship on the army, the army on wealth, wealth on material prosperity and material prosperity on justice."[14]

When in A.D. 226 Ardashir I defeated Ardavan, putting an end to the Parthian dynasty, he restored Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Achaemenids, rulers of the first Iranian Empire. He was seen as having captured the Royal Fortune (farrah), and viewed himself as being the restorer and Lord/King of Right/Order (Arta).[15] He was restoring right and order with respect to both the spiritual and material worlds, for he was reinstating the one good faith and good (Iranian) rule.

The concept of monarchy that developed in Iran after the 7th-century Arab conquest was greatly affected by this pre-Islamic view of the ruler's role. One way in which it filtered into later Iranian thought was through Arabic translations of Sasanian texts dealing with

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[14]Lambton, 54. Page 47, note 1: Lambton notes that in his preface to the Tehran edition of the Nasihat ul-Muluk (1315-17), Jala Huma'i suggests that the date of composition was 1105-06/499.

[15]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 91.

kingship and government, one of the most influential being The Covenant of Ardashir, translated in the 8th century.[16] The assimilation of the theory of kingship expounded in these tracts was politically advantageous for the Islamic rulers of Iran. Moreover, contemporary poetry shows that the Abbasid caliphs' claim to legitimate rule as the heirs to the Mantle of the Prophet "was effectively buttressed by their claim to righteous sovereignty as the source of prosperity of the realm."[17] Material prosperity, as noted above, was an important link in the equation of religion and justice. He whose realm was prosperous obviously was a just ruler, and only just rule was divinely sanctioned and therefore legitimate. By the 10th and 11th centuries, this concept of justice was seen as testimony to the sultans' "direct and autonomous divine sanction" to rule.[18] Like the Sasanian kings before them, they were seen as having captured the Royal Fortune (farrah), which now carried the meaning of 'divine effulgence.'[19]

Another literary genre responsible for the diffusion

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[16] Ibid., 93. For information on this text see M. Gringnaschi, "Quelques spécimens de la littérature sassanide conserves dans les bibliothèques d'Istanbul," Journal Asiatique 254 (1966).

[17] Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 94.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

of pre-Islamic theories of kingship and statecraft was that known as Mirrors for Princes, works written by Islamic authors for the edification of rulers. Among the better known examples are the early 12th century Nasihat ul-Muluk of Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali and the late 11th century Siyasat Nama of Nizam ul-Mulk, reference to both of which has already been made. Each of these treatises relies heavily on Sasanian practices, much more so, in fact, than on those of Islam.[20] As noted above, al-Ghazali restates the Sasanian belief that religion and justice are interdependent, but speaks only of justice as a necessary trait for a true sultan.[21] Similarly, Good Religion was granted only a secondary position in Nizam ul-Mulk's theory of kingship, justice now being considered the concept of prime importance.[22] He also sees the "theory of divine effulgence (Farr-e Izadi) as superseding the classical theory of the caliphate."[23]

Firdausi's Shahnama, which was completed in the early 11th century, provided yet another means for the perpetuation of Sasanian thoughts and ideas in the

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[20]a) Lambton, 51; and b) Roger M. Savory, "Iran - A 2,500 Year Historical and Cultural Tradition," Iranian Civilization and Culture (Montreal 1973), 83. Hereafter referred to as "A 2,500 Year Tradition."

[21]Lambton, 54.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 94-95.

Islamic era. While the Mirrors for Princes basically are 'how to' manuals that deal with all conceivable aspects of kingship, the Shahnama is a semi-mythical, poetical account of the heroic deeds of the pre-Islamic kings. The basic premise throughout is that these kings ruled by right of the theory of divine effulgence or Royal Fortune (farrah). By exploiting this history as their history, the Islamic rulers not only saw to the continuation of the pre-Islamic cult of the ruler, but legitimatized their rule, for it could now be seen as deriving "from immemorial antiquity and not from recent conquest."[24]

Several centuries after this link with the past had been firmly established, it was exploited further by the Safavids, the ruling Shi'a dynasty of the 16th to early 18th centuries. Shi'ism considers the first three caliphs to be usurpers, believing instead that the line of descent from the Prophet proceeds directly from 'Ali, the fourth caliph according to the orthodox Sunni view and the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin. They hold 'Ali's son, Husayn, who is the third Shi'a Imam, in especial reverence, the day of his martyrdom by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid being the main Shi'a holy day. It is purported that Husayn's son, Zayn al-'Abidin, was married to the daughter of Yazdigird III (d. 651), the

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[24] E. Burke Inlow, "The Divine Right of Persian Kings," Journal of Indian History 45 II:134 (1967), 417.

last Sasanian king, thus creating a genealogical link with the past.[25] This meant that as Shi'as, the Safavid claim to the throne of Iran could be seen as stronger than that of non-Shi'a Muslims, and the pre-Islamic heritage, replete with all its trappings of kingly glory, could truly be claimed as their own heritage.

The radiant disk of the shamsa may be seen as an evolution of this theory of the divine right to rule by those who possess the Royal Fortune (farrah), for the the nimbus of light signifying the divine effulgence of the ruler has been translated into the radiant disk of the shamsa.[26] According to this interpretation, the shamsa is a symbol of justice, power, righteousness and order, in short, a symbol of good government.

But while the visual analogy to the sun and light is clear in shamsas of the Timurids and Safavids, it is less so in Il-Khanid shamsas, which generally are very floral, taking the form of a rosette. The importance of the rosette as a symbol of royalty has, however, been outlined by Richard Ettinghausen in his study of the floor mosaics of the Great Audience (Bath) Hall of

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[25]Savory, "A 2,500 Year Tradition," 85.

[26]It should be recalled here that shamsa means 'little sun.'

Khirbat al-Mafjar.[27] Ettinghausen has shown that the rosette motif may be traced back to the pre-Islamic era, and that even under the Achaemenids it may already have borne royal associations: one reason for this belief is that it is the only motif decorating the tomb of Cyrus the Great. In the rock carvings at Taq-i-Bustan, rosettes in combination with senmurvs - mythical beasts with royal connotations - adorn the robe of the Sasanian king, Khusrau II.[28] This same pattern is found in the 'Palace' compound at Khirbat al-Mafjar.[29]

Of the numerous examples of its use cited by Ettinghausen, the rosette most often is formed by a varying number of heart-shaped petals separated by slender, pointed sepals that extend the full length of the petals, resulting in a radiating form. This radiating quality is an important identifying trait of the 'royal' rosette.

In the rock carving of Ardashir II's investiture at Taq-i-Bustan (Figure 49), a nimbus of light radiates from the head of Mithras who stands on a half-rosette

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[27]Richard Ettinghausen, From Byzantium to Sasanian Iran and the Islamic World (Leiden 1972), 36-39. Hereafter referred to as Byzantium to Sasanian Iran. Also see Florence E. Day, "The Tiraz Silk of Marwan," Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld, ed. George C. Miles (Locust Valley, New York 1952), 39-52.

[28]Ettinghausen, Byzantium to Sasanian Iran, 36 and plate XXII, fig. 76.

[29]Ibid., 36 and fig. I.

(possibly affirming the rosette's divine associations[30]). Ettinghausen proposes that at Khirbat al-Mafjar Exedra V of the Bath Hall served as the throne apse and that the throne sat on the half-rosette from which radiates a glorious sunburst mosaic (Figure 50). He then relates this to the relief of Mithras, stating that the king would have 'sat' on the royal rosette with a 'nimbus of light' - symbolizing farrah - radiating out from behind him. The half-rosette, as Ettinghausen points out, "seems to be the core of the larger design," as both rosette and sunburst are defined by radiating lines.[31] This pattern may be related to that of the Il-Khanid shamsa, in which a central rosette-like form is encircled by radiating strokes (e.g., Figures 7 and 9). The 'royal' rosette encircled by rays may, therefore, be seen as bearing the same symbolic meanings as does the more purely solar shamsa of the Timurids and Safavids.[32]

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[30]This may very well have been an evolution of the Buddhist practice of depicting the Buddha seated on a lotus - a half-rosette.

[31]Ettinghausen, Byzantium to Sasanian Iran, 39.

[32]The use of the rosette as an interlinear roundel in even the earliest illuminated Qur'ans must also be mentioned (and will be dealt with more thoroughly in Chapter IV), for this practice no doubt had some bearing on the preeminent position granted the rosette under the Il-Khanids. Use of the floral shamsa in Qur'ans would suggest that it indeed was not strictly a royal symbol; Chapter III will deal with the individual elements of the shamsa and how each may be interpreted in terms of Islamic doctrine.

The Cosmological Exaltation of the Ruler

In the second aspect of the royal symbolism of the shamsa, the ruler is assigned cosmological attributes, being equated with the sun as the most important element of the cosmos. Although the shamsa as a symbol of royal justice and order is indicative of the ruler's superiority, in this other side of royal symbolism the sun is employed to represent the superior nature of the ruler in a much more direct and assertive manner.

Many elements of the court ritual of the ancient Iranians provide evidence of the cosmological exaltation of their kings. It is known that at the coronation ceremony of the Achaemenid kings, such as Darius III (d. 331 B.C.), the new king was clothed in a starry robe symbolizing the ruler's new, elevated position as the Cosmic Ruler.[33] He was considered to have been 're-born,' and, commensurate with his new role, adopted a new throne name.[34] Cyrus the Great (559-29 B.C.), founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, likewise pictured himself as the Cosmic Ruler, for he proclaimed that he was 'King of

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[33]George Widengren, "The Sacral Kingship of Iran," Studies in the History of Religions, The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress of the History of Religions, Rome, April 1955 (Leiden 1959), 253-54.

[34]Richard Frye, The Heritage of Persia (New York 1962), 95.

the four quarters of the world.'[35] Earlier Near Eastern dynasties saw their rulers in a similar light, applying to them titles such as 'Axis and Pole of the World.' The Babylonian king was not only 'King of the Universe,' but the 'Sun of Babylon.' This latter title derived from the conception of the material kingdom as a mirror of the heavenly realm of the sun,[36] for as the sun was the centre of the cosmos, so the king was the centre of the material world.

This concept was common to all of the Near East and was manifested visually in the form of circular cities, such as the Parthian city of Darabjird and the Sasanian city, Firuzabad. Each city was divided into four equal parts with gates situated at the four cardinal points of the compass.[37] Probably from this pattern evolved the plan for the city of Baghdad, construction of which was begun by the Umayyad Caliph al-Mansur in 762. Like its pre-Islamic counterparts, Baghdad was circular with gates at the four main compass points. In the centre of the city stood the caliph's palace, above which rose the Green Dome. The original population of the city was

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[35] Inlow, 413.

[36] H.P. L'Orange, "Expressions of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World", Studies in the History of Religions, The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress of the History of Religions, Rome, April 1955 (Leiden 1959), 482.

[37] Ibid., 481-82.

planned by al-Mansur so that "all the various ethnic, tribal, and economic groups of the Muslim empire were represented."[38] Although cities such as Ardashir's Firuzabad may have been based on a circular plan primarily for reasons of defense,[39] there can be little doubt as to the intended symbolic significance of al-Mansur's Baghdad. Certainly the caliph was to be viewed as if in the centre of the universe, surrounded by all the peoples of the world, like a reflection of the sun surrounded by the heavenly bodies.

It is interesting to note that Baghdad was named Madinah al-Salam, the City of Peace, for, having assimilated the pre-Islamic doctrine of farrah, the caliph would believe that only a righteous and just ruler - one who possesses farrah - could bring true peace to his people. Thus, the naming of the city may be interpreted as an attempt by the caliph to assert his divine right to rule, not only as an heir to the Mantle of the Prophet, but also as one who has captured farrah and maintains Right/Order (Arta). In two aspects, therefore, the city exhibits the Islamic adoption of pre-Islamic philosophies.

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[38] Oleg Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art (New Haven, Connecticut 1973), 68.

[39] Roman Ghirshman, Persian Art, The Parthian and Sassanian Dynasties, 249 B.C.-A.D. 651 (New York 1962), 35.

Further visual proof of the cosmological exaltation of the ruler exists in the form of ancient Iranian rock carvings and seals. There are several rock carvings that depict the enthroned king carried in a ceremonial procession by rows of servants or slaves. One example cited by H.P. L'Orange is the tomb of the Achaemenid king, Darius I, at Naqsh-i-Rustam, near Persepolis.[40] King and throne move solemnly towards the moon and the winged ring, symbol of Ahura-Mazda. L'Orange sees the king as adjusting "himself to the movements of the heavens, thus manifesting his own astral power."[41] The movements of the heavenly bodies determine the fate of the universe just as the movements of the king determine the fate of his subjects.

L'Orange illustrates an Achaemenid seal (Figure 51) that similarly affirms the concept of the ruler's cosmological exaltation.[42] At the top of the seal is Ahura-Mazda encircled by the winged world ring. Beneath this, set within another world ring, is the image of the king. L'Orange points out the transformation of the Egyptian solar disc into the Near Eastern world ring, symbol of the cosmos. He then states that "in this double-picture we find an expression of the true Eastern

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[40]L'Orange, 486 and plate VII, fig. 6.

[41]Ibid., 486.

[42]Ibid., 489.

conception of the relationship between heaven and earth, of the reflection of cosmos in the sublunary world, of heavenly kingship in earthly, of the sovereignty of the Sun in that of the Great King. Two cosmocrators, two Suns, stand before us."[43]

Ammianus Marcellinus, a Byzantine historian, recounts that Arsak (c. 250 B.C.), founder of the Parthian dynasty, "was the first to be honoured by being counted as a divine person," and that "he was placed among the stars according to the sacral custom of [his] country."[44] Henceforth, kings were deemed to be Brothers of the Sun and Moon whose true domicile was among the stars. In a letter to the Byzantine Emperor Constantius, the Sasanian ruler, Shapur II (r. 325-379), refers to himself as, "King of Kings, partner with the stars, brother of the Sun and Moon."[45]

Another Byzantine historian, Theophanes, records the capture of the Sasanian city of Ganzaca (Ganjak) in 624 by the Emperor Heraclius. There, in the dome of the palace of Khusrau II (r. 589-628), the emperor found the image of the king, "as though enthroned in Heaven, and

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIII 6, 4-6, referred to in Widengren, 246.

[45] Ibid., XVII 5, lf.

around it the Sun and the Moon and the Stars."[46] Other accounts tell how the building "seemed to revolve on its axis with the help of horses pulling with a circular motion in a subterranean room."[47] What is especially interesting is Theophanes' statement that the sun moved about the image of the king, as if the king had now assumed a superior position.

The importance that the early Persian kings attached to cosmology and astrology is evidenced further by Firdausi's account of Khusrau's throne room. The throne itself is said to have revolved according to the seasons and the signs of the zodiac, with models of all the heavenly bodies in turn revolving about the throne. So precise was this reconstruction of the cosmos that one could use it to cast horoscopes, tell time, and plot the passage of the heavens across the earth.[48] From these two accounts, it is obvious that the Persian kings did, indeed, see themselves as superior beings whose rightful place was amongst the stars, and whose terrestrial rule was analogous to the rule of the sun in the heavens. As L'Orange states, "The king amongst his vassals and satraps is a picture of the heavenly hierarchy: just as the stars surround the Sun in the firmament, so the great

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[46] L'Orange, 484.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

lords surround the king in his palace."[49]

The superiority of the king and his relation to the sun was exemplified further by the belief that the true nature of the king was fire.[50] This was revealed by the nimbus of fire or light radiating from his head, which was equally symbolic of kingly glory or divine effulgence. It should also be recalled that farrah was related to the sun as a bestower of good things as well as being associated with light and splendour. As a result of his true nature, few could ever behold the king's exposed face. This tradition is thought to have been transmitted to the Sasanians from Indo-Iranian times, for according to Manu's law (VIII 9) "the radiance of the king is like that of the Sun, it burns the eyes like the Sun."[51] Thus, Widengren relates that when entering the presence of the king, it was necessary to place one's hands over the eyes in order to protect one's self from the intense radiance of the king. One accompanied this action with the exclamation, "Misuzam, I am burning up!"[52] Similarly, there is an ancient Indo-Iranian tradition which tells of the king who veiled his

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[49] Ibid., 484-85.

[50] Widengren, 245.

[51] Ibid., 247.

[52] Ibid.

face whenever he left the palace "so that the universe might not be consumed by his exasperated glances".[53]

The assimilation by Muslim Iran of the first aspect of the pre-Islamic theory of kingship - namely the concept of the right to rule based primarily on the establishment and maintenance of Right/Order (Arta) - was paralleled by its assimilation of the second aspect of the theory: the cosmological exaltation of the ruler.

From the number of extant treatises, such as the Great Conjunctions[54] by Abu Ma'shar (d. 886) and The Book of Instructions in the Elements of the Art of Astrology[55] by al-Biruni (d. 1048), it is clear that the pre-Islamic interest in astrology and cosmology continued in medieval Islam. Considering the high regard in which Firdausi's Shahnama was held and his account therein of the throne of Khusrau, the rulers of Muslim Iran surely would have been well-aware of the cosmological characteristics assigned their pre-Islamic counterparts. Probably the earliest actual evidence of this awareness and the incorporation of the concept is the round city of

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Latin version (De conjunctionibus, etc.) by Joannes Hispalensis, Augsburg, 1489; reprinted, Venice, 1515.

[55] BL Ms. Or. 8349; trans. and ed. by R. Ramsey Wright, London, 1934.

Baghdad.

The royal symbol of the Seljuq dynasty (1037-1194) consists of a lion surmounted by a rising sun. Interpreted in light of the first aspect of royal symbolism presented here, the rayed disk of the sun represents farrah, the divine effulgence of the ruler. The power and strength of the lion has long caused it to be universally employed as a symbol of royalty. Hence, in combination with the rising sun, the lion may be seen as specifically representing the power and strength of one who rules by divine right.

But this is not the sole interpretation possible, for the Seljuq royal symbol may also be seen as a direct attempt to express the cosmological exaltation of the ruler. Even before the Seljuq adoption of the sun-lion motif, it was well known as the symbol of the constellation Leo. Willy Hartner points out that "the combination of the lion and the sun can be traced back to a remote antiquity, as far as the fourth millennium B.C., when the heliacal rising of the constellation Leo took place about the time of the summer solstice. Thenceforth, the lion was considered a decidedly solar animal."[56] Therefore, the sun-lion motif - a recognized astrological symbol - would serve as a very apt expression of the

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[56]Willy Hartner, "The Pseudoplanetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconographies," Ars Islamica 5:2 (1938), 119.

perceived cosmological character of the ruler.

A number of late 12th/early 13th century bowls from Northern Iran are decorated with a motif that consists of a face - sometimes of a distinctly leonine nature, sometimes more humanoid - encircled by long rays, which appears to be an evolution of the Seljuq sun-lion symbol.[57] That these are more than simple, straightforward references to the constellation Leo is suggested by the fact no bowls decorated with any of the other signs of the zodiac have been located. It appears, therefore, that the motif, in all its various forms, carried a special meaning: like its Seljuq ancestor, it may ultimately have been seen as symbolizing the exalted position of the ruler.

The frequency with which astrological motifs were used to decorate metalwork produced in Iran, Egypt and most other regions of the Near East during the late 12th to early 14th centuries has been noted by Eva Baer.[58] A study of the iconographical programs of these objects makes the theory of the exaltation of the ruler

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[57]For example, two fritware bowls in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Nos. 1978.2311 and 1978.2256). Illustrated in Eastern Ceramics from the Collection of Gerald Reitlinger (London 1981), 107, fig. 302 and 109, fig. 306, respectively.

[58]Eva Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting: A Note on Medieval Islamic Iconography," Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture, ed. Abbas Daneshvari (Malibu 1981), I, 13-19. Hereafter referred to as "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting."

explicitly clear. As Nicholas Lowick says, these motifs, which included the twelve signs of the zodiac as well as personifications of the seven planets of ancient astronomy (namely, the sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars Jupiter and Saturn) "formed part of a popular near-eastern cultural stock, with which even the least educated would have been familiar."[59]

The use of these motifs often seems very straightforward and uncomplicated: a simple representation of well-known astrological symbols. One such example is a late 13th/early 14th century Mamluk bowl in the Bargello Museum (Figure 52). In its centre is a sun surrounded by personifications of the other six planets, which in turn are encircled by the twelve signs of the zodiac; each motif is set within a medallion. On many other examples, however, an enthroned figure occupies the central medallion. Sometimes the figure has rays emanating from its head (Figure 53), at other times rays encircle the whole medallion (Figure 54).

A Syro-Mesopotamian basin dated 1274/673 also displays a central medallion encircled by signs of the

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[59]Nicholas Lowick, "The Religious, The Royal and The Popular in The Figural Coinage of The Jazira," The Art of Syria and The Jazira, 1100-1250, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art (Oxford 1985), 172.

zodiac (Figure 55).[60] The medallion contains a courtly scene with an enthroned figure, above whom two flying genii hold a crown. Two attendants and two musicians are also present as well as two lions. Neither the ruler's crown nor the medallion itself is adorned with rays. Despite this, the placement of the ruler within the centre of the zodiac - the centre of the cosmos - makes it clear that he is being equated with the sun. Two other elements also point to this: the two lions- 'decidedly solar animals' - at the foot of the throne; and in the medallions placed directly above and below the ruler there appear Aries, the sun's sign of exaltation, and Libra, the sun's sign of dejection, respectively.[61] Thus, this basin is a vital link in the interpretation of the astrological scenes common on metalwork of this era, for here there can be no doubt that the central medallion illustrates the cosmological - specifically solar- exaltation of an enthroned ruler.

The interpretation of the central figures in Figures 53 and 54 now becomes clear. For the latter example, a late 12th/early 13th century inkwell, however, Baer has

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[60] On the interior sides of the bowl are six medallions with figures. Because of the poor quality of the only reproduction available, it cannot be determined if these are personifications of the planets or simply depictions of kingly pastimes.

[61] This placement of Aries and Libra was not seen in other examples where the presence of rays made the solar nature of the figure unmistakable.

proposed two possible interpretations: it may represent the sun threatened by Jawzahr, the pseudoplanetary node of the moon's orbit responsible for solar and lunar eclipses and symbolized by the dragon heads of the armrests of the throne,[62] or it may indicate the figure's cosmological exaltation.[63] In fact, once the solar nature of the enthroned figure in the Syro-Mesopotamian basin has been determined, there can be no doubt that it is indeed a depiction of the exalted ruler whose 'true domain is amongst the stars.' The role of Jawzahr is to affirm the ruler's exalted position as the 'sun.' Moreover, on the sides of the inkwell the various signs of the zodiac are each depicted with their planetary lords (the planet that occupies that particular sign of the zodiac according to the system of domicilia). Jawzahr is also depicted. Thus, if imagined flat, the enthroned figure once again appears in the centre of the zodiac.

As for the simple sun depicted in the central medallion of the late 13th/early 14th century Bargello bowl (Figure 52), it, too, symbolizes the exalted ruler. By this date the iconography of the cosmologically exalted ruler is well established. Hence, a simple sun

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[62]For the development and identification of Jawzahr imagery see Hartner.

[63]Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 14.

such as is seen here is easily interpreted as a symbol of the ruler.[64]

Poetry inscribed on metalwork of this period substantiates this interpretation of these images. A 6th century poem by the Arabian poet Nabigha al-Dhubyani on a 13th century penbox refers to the king as the 'sun' and all other kings as stars that will be invisible when the 'sun' has risen.[65] Contemporary poetry was more commonly used and conveys the same basic message.[66]

But by the late 13th/early 14th centuries, the once-common practice of adorning metalwork with astrological motifs comes to an end: "only the sun in the form of a radiant disk is retained."[67] This turn of events was

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[64]Baer sees each of the examples presented here as conveying "some kind of mental association between the princely image and the heavenly bodies" ("The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 15). This statement, however, is much too weak, for each example presents a very definite statement regarding the nature of the ruler. She also appears to accept the sun motif on the Bargello bowl (Figure 52) as nothing more than a simple depiction of the sun, failing to recognize its symbolic meaning. This all seems to result from the fact that although she notes the presence of the lions and the placement of the constellation Aries on the Syro-Mesopotamian bowl (Figure 55), she fails to recognize their symbolic importance (and that of Libra) in the overall iconography of the basin.

[65]R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge 1941), 121-23 (for complete Arabic text see Le Diwan de Nabigha al-Dhubyani, ed. H. Derenbourg [Paris 1869], 83), referred to in Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 17.

[66]Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 17.

[67]Ibid., 15-16.

evidenced beyond the borders of Iran as well and in different media. Nicholas Lowick has shown that a wide variety of astrological motifs played a major role in the decoration of late 12th and 13th century coins of the Jazira.[68] But as with contemporary metalworks, "by the final decades of the 13th century astrological signs such as the lion-and-sun, or simply a sun-face, were the only pictorial types still used in the Jazira or in any part of the Near East with the exception of Syria."[69]

Lowick's research has shown that coins were minted in the Jazira by order of the ruler himself, rather than some lower official.[70] Considering, also, that the ruler's name always appeared on the coin, he believes it logical to assume that the ruler would be sure to have seen - and approved - any image imprinted on the coin. This link between the design of the coin and the ruler indeed suggests that the sun-face motif bore a distictly royal interpretation; namely, it served as a reminder of the king's superiority over all others due to his perceived cosmological attributes, thus accounting for its survival long after the demise of all other

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[68]Medieval geographers divided Mesopotamia into two regions: al-Jazira and al-Sawad. The Jazira was bounded to the south-west by Syria, to the north and north-east by Armenia, to the east by Azarbaijan and to the south by Iraq.

[69]Lowick, 172.

[70]Ibid., 169.

astrological motifs.

Baer stresses that in medieval Islam this exaltation, or apotheosis, of the ruler was of a purely secular nature; although the ruler may have been verbally and visually placed among the stars, it was but a means of recognizing his superiority, not asserting his divinity. In concluding her discussion of late 12th to early 14th century metalwork, Baer states that 14th century artists "may have used different formulas to express these ideas."[71]

Whether one considers the overtly solar form of Timurid and Safavid shamsas or the floral shamsas of the Il-Khanids, with their tiny rays and subtler reference to the sun, the shamsa was clearly one of these 'different formulas.' By the late 13th/early 14th centuries, the traditional analogy of the king as the 'sun' was so firmly established and understood that the elaborate iconographical programs formerly used to express the cosmological exaltation of the ruler could now be reduced to a simple sun with no loss of meaning. But this iconography was not adopted by manuscript illuminators until the mid-14th century.[72] The earliest shamsa

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[71]Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 18.

[72]The shamsa introducing BL Ms. Or. 4392, a portion of the first book of Jami'ul-Hikayat dated 1340/741, is (continued...)

illuminators were building primarily on the Seljuq tradition of the rosette-like, interlaced marginal roundel used in some Qur'ans.[73] Perhaps the almost exclusive use of gold in combination with the radiating rosette-like form of these earliest shamsas was seen as a sufficient reference to the sun (and the nimbus of light of one who has captured the Royal Fortune [farrah]), making the long elegant rays of later years unnecessary.

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[72](...continued)
encircled by numerous small rays and is much more 'solar' than Il-Khanid examples (no illustration available). However, it is not until the early years of the 15th century that shamsas exhibit the long elegant rays that make them appear so explicitly solar.

[73]Excluding the 'Byzantine-style' 1240/637 shamsa in BOD Ms. Arab d. 138 (Figure 63), the style of which will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

III

Symbolic Expressions of the Divine

S.H. Nasr sees Islamic art as "a reflection in the world of matter of the spirit and even of the form of the Qur'anic revelation."[1] The intent here is to show that though the shamsa is a small part of this grand reflection, it is a vital part, indeed. But while the symbolism of the shamsa is derived from both the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of the Revelation, it is through the esoteric symbolism that the higher realm of the Divine is more clearly expressed. It is, therefore, not to the Shari'ah or Divine Law that governs one's day-to-day manifest behaviour, but to the Tariqah, the mystic Way that guides one's inner being towards realization of union with the Divine, that one must turn for the interpretation of much shamsa symbolism. Like all Islamic art, the shamsa "crystallizes in the world of forms the inner realities of the Islamic revelation and, because it issues from the inner dimension of Islam, leads man to the inner chamber of the Divine Revelation."[2]

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[1]Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity, The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture, Intro. by S.H. Nasr (Chicago 1973), xi.

[2]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality (Albany 1987), 7.

This last statement points out the purpose of Islamic sacred art,[3] which is to assist in one's quest of the Divine[4] through the use of sensory forms that function as "spiritual suggestion."[5] More precisely, these forms serve to assert surah II:115 of the Qur'an, which states: "Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance. Lo! Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing." It is this constant remembrance of God which is the goal of worship.[6]

The Qur'anic revelation may be seen as inspiration, or the descent of Divine Grace. Conversely, through human effort or aspiration, man attempts to ascend towards the realm of the Divine, the prototype of this ascent being the Night Journey (laylat al-mi'raj) of the Prophet. The basis of man's ascent is the remembrance of

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[3]According to S.H. Nasr, sacred art is a specific class of traditional art, one which more clearly and directly reflects spiritual principles. Islamic Art and Spirituality, 68.

[4]It must be remembered that, although in Nasr's opinion this is the only function of Islamic art, in Chapter II it has been shown that, in the case of the shamsa at least, other interpretations or functions do exist.

[5]Frithjof Schuon, Understanding Islam (London 1976), 134.

[6]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 4 and 8.

God.[7] In this sense, contemplation of the shamsa, the symbolism of which derives from the Qur'anic revelation and thereby serves as a remembrance of God, can be seen as assisting in the actualization of one's mystic quest for God. In Martin Ling's words, sacred art in general, and calligraphy and illumination in particular, may be viewed as a "Jacob's Ladder of return" to God, which makes it possible "in a flash of wonderment, to approach more nearly and penetrate more deeply the Divine substance of the Qur'anic text."[8]

The Link Between Art and Esoteric Islam

It is in the actual production of art that the link between art and esoteric Islam, whether it be in the form of Sufism or Shi'ism, is to be found. The craft guilds, Sufi orders, and Shi'as all bear a special devotion to 'Ali. Because of this shared devotion, the guilds often ally themselves with a particular Sufi order. Although Sufis also consider Abu Bakr, the first Orthodox caliph, as one of their greatest "spiritual ancestors,"[9] it is 'Ali who, next to the Prophet, is regarded as the key to the esoteric dimension of the Revelation; the Prophet

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[7]Frithjof Schuon, "The Quintessential Esotericism of Islam," Studies in Comparative Religion 13:1/2 (Winter/Spring 1979), 7.

[8]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 14.

[9]Martin Lings, What is Sufism? (London 1975), 101.

himself is credited with having said, "I am the City of Knowledge and 'Ali is its Gate."[10]

In his treatise on calligraphers and painters (written *circa* 1606), Qadi Ahmad refers to 'Ali as the originator of calligraphy,[11] and in an earlier treatise written in 1544 on the same subject, Dust Muhammad has recorded the popular Iranian tradition that it was 'Ali who first revealed to mankind the beauty of the arts of painting and illumination and their function as a complement to calligraphy.[12] 'Ali is also the patron of all guilds (*asnaf*) and chivalric orders (*futuwwat*).[13] Members of the guild thus "derived direct spiritual inspiration from the very heart of the Islamic message."[14]

In order to assist in one's quest of the Divine, the *shamsa* need not necessarily be created by an artist totally conversant with the symbolism of the forms he

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[10] *Ibid.*, 101, note 2.

[11] Minorsky, "Calligraphers and Painters," 44. Annemarie Schimmel notes that, "It seems ... that Kufa was indeed one of the important centres for the art of writing, and the political connection of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib with this city accentuates the generally maintained claim that 'Ali was the first master of calligraphy." Annemarie Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (New York 1984), 3.

[12] Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, 183.

[13] Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, 6-7.

[14] *Ibid.*, 70.

employs. Although it is accepted that sacred art derives ultimately from "inspiration in the fullest sense," that inspiration need not flow directly from artist to object.[15] Moreover, masters of the guilds normally were initiated into a Sufi order. The other guild members then emulated the art of the master,[16] "thereby guaranteeing the spiritual validity of forms for the artist,"[17] despite the possible lack of total understanding. (This presupposes, of course, that the artist had been raised and still lived within the bounds of tradition.)[18] As a result, the anonymity of much sacred art is not only fitting, but probably a deliberate acknowledgment that the forms employed are not an expression of the artist himself, but rather derive from an ultimately higher source,[19] for it is not within the power of man to create symbols; rather he is transformed by them.[20]

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[15]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 13.

[16]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 70-71.

[17]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 10.

[18]"A tradition is a Divine norm which maintains the permanence of and continuity of the particular people who hold it. It relates the whole of life to certain principles which transcend the human plane...it is religion in its most universal aspect." Laleh Bakhtiar, Sufi, Expressions of the Mystic Quest (London 1976), 26.

[19]Ibid., 14.

[20]Ibid., 26.

The Principle of Divine Unity

Islamic esotericism sees symbols, and in fact all objects of the material world, in terms of the "the external and the internal, the sensory and the spiritual."[21] Beneath the external, sensible form (zahir or surat) lies the object's inner meaning or true essence (batin or ma'na),[22] which is an expression of Divine order. It is the sensible form which leads to an understanding of the inner meaning. Only the Divine Self (al-Dhat) is just itself.[23]

This is the principle of Divine Unity (tawhid), the foundation of the Islamic faith. It is expressed in the profession of faith, the Testimony or Shahadah, which states that 'there is no god but God' (la ilaha illa 'Llah) and 'Muhammad is His Prophet' (Muhammadun Rasulu 'Llah). To the Sufi, 'there is no god but God' asserts the metaphysical distinction between the Absolute and the relative, for only Allah is absolute, only Allah truly is, all else being but a reflection of the Divine.[24] Comprehension of this derives from recognition of the inner spiritual unity of all beings despite the

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[21] Schuon, Understanding Islam, 134.

[22] a) Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 5; and b) S.H. Nasr, Sufi Essays (London 1972), 123 and 130.

[23] Nasr, Sufi Essays, 129.

[24] Ibid.

multiplicity of external forms, or, in other words, that there exists unity in multiplicity.[25]

On the other hand, multiplicity in unity is expressed by the latter portion of the Shahadah: 'Muhammmad is His Prophet.' As the messenger of God, Muhammad is the vehicle by means of which the Word of God was dispersed to mankind. All that is positive in the universe therefore derives from God and hence is united.[26] Islamic art as a whole, and the shamsa in particular, may be seen as "the result of the manifestation of Unity upon the plane of multiplicity."[27]

In the shamsa, the principle of Divine Unity is expressed primarily through the visual emphasis placed on the centre. As mentioned in Chapter II in the discussion of royal symbolism, one is always, without exception, acutely aware of the centre of a shamsa. This is the result of a number of factors, most obvious of which is the frequent contrast between a plain or sparsely-patterned, usually gold centre and the intricate patterning of the rest of the shamsa (e.g, Figures 8, 16, 22 and 40). Of equal note is the division of most shamsas into a series of concentric circles which draw the eye towards the centre (e.g., Figures 2, 9, 15, 25

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[25]Bakhtiar, 9.

[26]Nasr, Sufi Essays, 129.

[27]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 7.

and 46). Safavid artists at times are rather subtle in their use of this principle of concentricity. The Timurid shamsa illustrated in Figure 25 consists of just such a series of concentric circles, each of which encloses a distinct group of motifs. In the Safavid shamsa in Figure 40, however, the artist has abandoned the stricter control of the clearly delineated concentric circles. Here the various elements are united by a system of concentric circles that is only visually perceived, not physically delineated.

The orientation of the individual motifs within each concentrically arranged part of the shamsa is another effective means of emphasizing the centre. The points and finials of motifs, such as the arabesque, tend more often to radiate outward from the centre (e.g., Figures 9 and 30) rather than moving in a circular direction around the centre. The centre normally is accented further by the addition of encircling rays (e.g., Figures 9, 15 and 36), and/or by the radiating protrusions or peaks of an irregular contour (e.g., Figures 3, 8, 17 and 39).

But while one's vision is drawn forever inward to the centre, at the same time it is forced forever outward to the edge of the shamsa and then into the space beyond. The eye thus becomes caught in a perpetual movement of apparent contraction and expansion as it moves continuously in and out, from centre to surrounding

expanses, but with the centre always remaining the prime focus of attention. This expresses the concept of Divine Unity (tawhid), for despite diverse forms of manifestation, all creation is united with the indivisible Divine Spirit, the One, the Centre, the aim of all mankind being the return to this Centre, and the subsequent realization of one's union with God.

The symbolic importance of the centre is evident as well in the daily rite of prayer during which one must face Mecca. Hence, during prayer the devout may be seen as radiating outward from, and thus encircling, the physical centre of Islam, the Ka'bah, symbolized in Sufism as the Divine Essence. Prayer, therefore, "integrates man into the rhythm of universal adoration and...into its centripetal order."[28] If a schematic diagram were to be made of this five times daily event, it would be the pattern of the spider's web that would emerge - the same basic pattern of the shamsa as outlined above. The symbolic importance of the spider's web is such that Martin Lings feels that few other natural symbols can surpass its impact on the decorative arts of Islam.[29]

Frithjof Schuon speaks of the radii and concentric circles of a spider's web specifically in terms of

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[28]Schuon, Understanding Islam, 39.

[29]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 115.

radiation and reverberation, and sees them as representative of the two aspects of the relationship that exists between Creator and created.[30] The continuity of this relationship, or the link between man and God, is expressed by the term radiation. Reverberation, on the other hand, indicates the discontinuity of the relationship, or the distance that exists between Creator and created, for the concentric circles, which are like echoes of the centre, symbolize the boundaries dividing the various levels of the sacred hierarchy of the universe. In the words of the Sufi poet 'Attar (c.1119-1230), "He is Near to us; we are far from Him."[31]

In the Islamic doctrine of Majesty (Jalal) and Beauty (Jamal),[32] one of the Names of Majesty is 'He who Contracts' (al-Qabid) and one of the names of Beauty is 'He who Expands' (al-Basit). As Martin Lings has noted, the hadith, 'I was a Hidden Treasure and wished to be known, and so I created the world,' expresses this contraction/expansion (or reserve/display) relationship

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[30]Frithjof Schuon, "Atma-Maya," Studies in Comparative Religion 7:3 (Summer 1973), 130.

[31]Mantiq at-Tayr, quoted in Lings, Qur'anic Art, 116.

[32]For a more detailed discussion of this material see a) Bakhtiar, 14 and 66; b) Lings, Qur'anic Art, 17 and 116; and c) Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 167.

"almost in so many words."[33] From this it can be seen that expansion and Beauty relate to the Qur'an or fully revealed text, for God 'expanded'[34] to make Himself known to man, establishing a link between man and God. Thus, 'expansion' is synonymous with Schuon's usage of 'radiation.' As it is through Beauty that the Divine radiates and expands to create the world, which is a manifestation of His splendour and glory, 'Attar's words, "He is Near to Us," expound the cosmological concept of multiplicity in unity. Contraction and Majesty, on the other hand, are related to the Guarded Tablet or Hidden Book and, thereby, are indicative of the distance that exists between man and God. Schuon speaks of this relationship in terms of 'reverberation;' 'Attar expresses it as "we are far from Him." It is, in fact, the metaphysical concept of unity in multiplicity.

Majesty and Beauty, however, must never be seen as mutually exclusive, for each represents different yet simultaneous aspects of the One, which are inseparable and always act as a unit. Hence, man may be seen as proceeding from, and united with, God through both contraction and expansion (or reverberation and

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[33]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 17.

[34]As Lings points out, the terms 'contraction' and 'expansion' are to be understood from "the point of view of creation, for it goes without saying that the Creator in Himself is not subject to phases." Lings, Qur'anic Art, 17, note 21.

radiation) and can return to Him only through the reverse process. The pattern of the spider's web, and thus the shamsa, may then be seen as symbolizing both the relationship between Creator and created, and the Way (tariqah), the path leading back to the One, the result of which is realization of union with Allah.[35]

Tariqah - The Mystic Path

Of the numerous stages of the Way, the three main ones are contraction (qabd), expansion (bast), and finally, union with the Truth (wisal bi'l-Haqq). The first stage is associated with the manifestation or theophany of the Divine Names of Majesty, as well as with piety and asceticism.[36] During this stage there is a contraction of the soul as one's vision turns inward. The soul is purified by mentally divorcing oneself from the material world in order to prepare for the eventual expansion of the soul beyond the material confines of the manifest world. To explain this stage Martin Lings uses the very apt symbolism of pruning a tree or shrub, for this too may be seen as a form of purification. He states that "pruning, like a qabd of the soul, is a

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[35] In his discussion of Mamluk and Il-Khanid illumination, Martin Lings employs the symbolism of the spider's web, but limits his discussion to full-page geometric frontispieces, making no mention of shamsas. See Lings, Qur'anic Art, 116-117.

[36] Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 167.

diminishment with a view to an increase which will go far beyond what was there before the sacrifice."[37] In the words of Allah (LVII:11), "Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan that He may double it for him and his may be a rich reward?"[38]

The second stage, expansion or bast, is associated with the Divine Names of Beauty and with joy and ecstasy.[39] It is related to growth in the same manner that qabd was related to sacrifice.[40] In this stage, the purified soul expands until it can embrace the whole of the Universe and move toward the pure grace of the Divine. The result of bast is expressed by the 13th century poet Sa'di who says: "I am joyful in the world because the world is joyful in Him."[41]

The final stage is reached when all spiritual states (hal) and stations (maqamat) have been attained and one is capable of fully contemplating the Face of the Beloved.[42] The devotee now knows that in truth there exists only God, all creation being a mere reflection of

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[37]Lings, What is Sufism?, 82-83.

[38]Ibid., 83.

[39]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 167.

[40]Lings, What is Sufism?, 82.

[41]Quoted in Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 167.

[42]Ibid.

the Divine, and that union with God, therefore, has always existed.

The Visual Expression of the Mystic Path

The examination in Chapter I of the stylistic development of the shamsa over more than three centuries has shown that although stylistic variations do occur, there is a surprisingly distinct continuity of form, because of the strength of the symbolism that evokes the forms.

The calculated distribution of motifs within the boundaries of the exterior contour forcibly draws the eye to the centre. Although this concentric arrangement of motifs has been equated with the various levels of the sacred hierarchy of the universe and seen as indicative of the distance between man and God, the power and force of the centre suggests that the spiritually strong will overcome these barriers. Each shamsa displays a powerful centripetal force which almost demands the contraction (qabd) of the soul and the subsequent inward search for the Divine within one's own being. In some Safavid examples (e.g., Figures 40-41), the absence of clearly defined outlines encircling the individual motifs creates an ethereal and transcendent aura implying the presence and power of the Divine.

At one and the same time this centripetal force is

aided and countered by the forms that expand outward from the exterior contour of the shamsa. While illustrative of the continuity of the relationship between man and God, they also symbolize the second stage of the Way, expansion (bast), in which one's soul moves beyond the confines of self and expands to embrace the entire universe. The forms explode outward into the universe, yet still pull one back towards the centre and realization of the Divine Unity of all creation. Il-Khanid artists expressed such expansion not through the use of long, elegant rays, but rather through the motifs found within the exterior contour of the shamsa. In the 1338 Maragha shamsa (Figure 9), the interlaced and overlapping bands set up a spinning motion that projects the eye both inward and outward and that is no less effective than the use of longer rays by Timurid and Safavid artists.

Beauty

Each shamsa has been designed with God and, therefore, beauty in mind, for beauty "fundamentally belongs to the Creator, who through it projects into the world of appearances something of His being."[43] The shamsa - and all things of beauty - is thus a remembrance

[43]Frithjof Schuon, "The Degrees of Art," Studies in Comparative Religion 10:4 (Autumn 1976), 206.

of God and of His expansion through Beauty to create the world. The Hadith Sharif states that "God is beautiful and loves beauty."[44] As a reflection of the Divine realm, the beauty of the material world may be seen as preparing man for Paradise which, according to the Qur'an, is the reward of all true believers.

For the Sufi poet Jalaloddin Rumi (c. 1207-73), "the very existence of beauty was the most direct proof of the existence of God."[45] He was "particularly sensitive to the spiritual efficacy of beauty, that 'splendour of the Truth' which for him was always the gateway to the inner courtyard of the Divine Mysteries."[46] To the Sufi, therefore, beauty is liberating and has the power to lead one from the confines of material existence to an illuminating knowledge of the universe.[47] According to Sufi doctrine, beauty is a reflection of the Divine and, when based on the cosmic laws of order, proportion, and unity, is objective, and exists whether or not the viewer is receptive to its hidden meaning and liberating powers.[48]

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[44]Quoted in Basil al-Bayati, Community and Unity (New York 1983), 118.

[45]S.H. Nasr, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," Studies in Comparative Religion 8:2 (Spring 1974), 86.

[46]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 127.

[47]Ibid., 104.

[48]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 10 and 21.

Harmony

An inherent part of beauty is harmony and, specifically in Iranian thought, it is through harmony that Unity most clearly manifests itself.[49] A harmonious and orderly cosmos is evidence of the existence of God, for without divine guidance there could be only chaos. It follows that Islamic art, derived from divine principles, must exhibit this same sense of harmony. In all shamsas there is indeed a harmonious combination of forms and colours. One of the most common motifs throughout the years is the geometric interlacement that clearly delineates, but also joins, the individual elements of the shamsa into a harmonious whole (e.g., Figures 25 and 29).[50]

As colour will be discussed further below, it is now sufficient to note its use with respect to harmony. Gold and a deep blue are the dominant colours employed in each era, blue serving to offset the brilliance of the gold. The use of these two colours throughout a shamsa assists in unifying the design. In most shamsas (e.g., Figures 21 and 41), the extensive use of blue and gold creates a feeling of relative peace and tranquillity that,

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[49]Burkhardt, Art of Islam, 45.

[50]As noted previously, use of the interlaced line continues in the 16th century primarily in the eastern centres under Uzbek rule, namely Herat, Bukhara and Samarkand. During this period its use in Safavid shamsas is uncommon.

especially in Figure 41, balances the explosive nature of the design. Harsh or impure hues are rare though not unknown. Most often they serve as accents, such as the minuscule flowers adorning an arabesque. Generally there is a harmonious and balanced use of colour throughout that mirrors the peace and harmony of Paradise.

The artists further added to the harmony of the shamsa through the use of symmetry. In the Timurid style of Herat and in 16th century Bukhara and Samarkand, the majority of shamsas are circular. But from the early 15th century onwards one finds many bilaterally symmetrical examples as the use of ovoid-shaped shamsas and upper and lower pendants becomes increasingly popular (e.g., Figures 22 and 31).

Even within the contours of the shamsa, there is a carefully planned and executed use of symmetry with each individual part reflecting the overall symmetry of the whole (e.g., Figures 21 and 25). This very evident striving for a perfectly balanced form reflects Islamic art's preoccupation with paradigms of cosmic order.

Rhythm

In the decorative arts rhythm is the visual translation of time into spatial dimensions. It is one of the most significant aspects of illumination and is expressed in the shamsa by three different means. The

first of these - the perceived contraction and expansion of the whole form - has already been considered. The other two sources of rhythm are geometric interlacement and the interlaced stylized plant forms of the arabesque.

The need to discuss geometric interlacement has arisen several times previously in this study, a clear indication of its enduring and important role in Islamic shamsa illumination. Its significance derives from the fact that, in combination with the arabesque, it is one of the most overt symbols of Divine Unity used by artists. Islamic metaphysical doctrine, like that of most theologies, sees one's ultimate goal as the return to God. The Qur'an (II:156) states: "Lo! we are Allah's and lo! unto Him we are returning," and (XLII:53), "Do not all things reach Allah at last?" Geometric interlacement and the arabesque are symbolic of this return, for despite the complexity of the path these elements create within the shamsa, there is always a final return to the point of origin.[51] And there is, of course, an implication of infinity in a line that has no beginning and no end. It possesses a sense of timelessness that "is consciously sought in all traditional art as a complement to the static earthly existence."[52]

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[51]Burkhardt, Art of Islam, 63.

[52]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 45.

On folio 2a of the Bodleian Library's 15th/9th century Mathnawi manuscript made for Pir Budaq (Figure 25) is one of the most intricate examples of geometric interlacement to be found in a shamsa of any period. Like many shamsas, it also employs the vegetal arabesque. The weaving, wandering movement of the eye following the line of either of the two forms of interlacement sets up an endless rhythmic motion which, in Sufi terms, emulates the continual flux of the universe and its "perpetual renewal with each Divine Breath."[53] For others, it brings to mind the rhythmic recitations of the Qur'an, which occur "not only on the earth but throughout all the degrees of the universe."[54] Lastly, this visual motion adds to the overall beauty of the form, and beauty, of course, is an attribute of Allah and thus a reminder of His universal presence.

Light

Especially in examples of the Timurid and Safavid eras, there is a strong and immediate identification of the form of the shamsa with the radiant light of the sun. Both the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam are replete with symbolic references to light and the sun. The most frequent is that which equates God and light.

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[53]Bakhtiar, 17-18.

[54]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 75.

The Light Verse of the Qur'an (XXIV:35) proclaims: "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth," and "Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will."

Light is a very precise symbol of the nature of the Divine, for just as the refraction of white light into the colours of the spectrum is able to take place with no change in the physical nature of that light, so Allah too may 'divide' himself into a multiplicity of 'colours' yet remain undivided.[55] The symbolism of God as light is enhanced further by the fact that objects are visible only due to the presence of light, and in this same sense the universe and all that is in it - including the light of the sun - exist only because of the presence and will of the Divine Spirit.[56]

The subservience of physical light to divine light is expressed by the poet al-Mutanabbi (d. 965) who states that "The rising sun owes its light to you. / Just as the moon owes its light to the sun."[57] As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the soul of the mystic reflects the Divine Light of Allah and, therefore, is symbolized by the moon.[58]

In the opening pages of the Mathnawi, Rumi (c. 1207-

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[55]Burkhardt, Art of Islam, 76.

[56]Ibid., 77.

[57]Quoted in al-Bayati, 120.

[58]Bakhtiar, 59.

73) applies the traditional symbolism, in which God and the sun are seen as being of a like nature, to his friend and spiritual guide, Shamsoddin:

> If He should become naked in thy vision,
> Neither wilt thou remain nor thy bosom
> nor thy waist.
> If the Sun, by whom this world is illumined,
> should approach a little (nearer),
> all will be burned.[59]

Being both tremendum and fascinans the sun is "the perfect symbol of that God who is kind and loving and, at the same time, a consuming fire."[60]

As do all metaphysical doctrines, Sufism views gnosis (ma'rifah) in terms of light or illumination. Ma'rifah results in the final stage of the Way, realization of union with the One, and thus one's attainment of the final stations of extinction or annihilation (fana') and permanence (baqa). It is often viewed as a form of death, because once the splendour and glory of God is truly known, the mortal self seems of little consequence or value even though physical life continues. Or as Rumi explains it, it is like the light

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[59]Jalalu'ddin Rumi, The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (London 1977), I, 11, lines 138-139 and 142-143. Hereafter referred to as The Mathnawi.

[60]Annemarie Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun (London 1980), 62.

of a candle in front of the sun.[61]

> Go die, oh Sire, before thy death,
> So that thou wilt not suffer the pain
> of dying.
> Die the kind of death which is entrance
> into light,
> Not the death which signifies entrance
> into the grave.[62]

It is a theophanic light which one cannot see, but rather which makes one see. As the light of the sun makes objects visible, so the light of the knowledge of God makes the true essence of all things visible.[63]

The Prophet is said to have stated that the first thing God created was the Universal Intellect or Spirit, the luminous centre of all creation.[64] It is "not part of the substance of God, but radiates from [Him] as light shines forth from the sun. In human beings, this Intellect is God."[65] Rays of light in turn emanate from the Intellect to pierce the soul of man, thereby bringing about the realization of one's union with God (through

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[61]Rumi, The Mathnawi, III, 3671-74, referred to in Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun, 66.

[62]Nasr, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," 83.

[63]Bakhtiar, 25-26.

[64]Victor Danner, "Shahadah," Parabola XI:1 (February 1986), 50.

[65]Corpus Hermeticum, trans. A.J. Festugiere, 'Les Belles Lettres,' chapter entitled "D'Hermes Trismegiste: Sur l'intellect commun, a Tat," (Paris 1945), quoted in Titus Burkhardt, Alchemy, Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul (London 1967), 36. Hereafter referred to as Alchemy.

the Intellect or Spirit). Realization - the return to God - may be seen as the reabsorption of rays of sunlight back into their luminous source. It is a reabsorption which must continue all the way back to the source of the Intellect itself, which is God.[66]

The Universal Intellect is identified with the light or reality of Muhammad.[67] It is therefore through him that the knowledge of God passes to man. This is the Shi'a doctrine of the Muhammadan Light in which Muhammad is the key to the esoteric teachings of Islam. It is believed that a Primordial Light passed from one prophet to the next until it reached Muhammad, the last true prophet, from whence it was passed on to the Imams. Initiation into the inner dimension can only take place if one is attached to this light through the Imam, so light again becomes symbolic of the knowledge of God. This doctrine parallels that of the initiatic chain (silsilah) of Sufism.[68]

Light is also a symbol of the Revelation or Word of God. Two verses may be quoted in which the Qur'an specifically refers to itself as light: "O mankind! Now

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[66]Danner, 50.

[67]Keith Critchlow, Islamic Patterns, An Analytical and Cosmological Approach (London 1976), 59. Hereafter referred to as Islamic Patterns.

[68]Nasr, Sufi Essays, 111.

hath a proof from your Lord come unto you, and We have sent down unto you a clear Light" (IV:174) and, "Thou (Muhammad) knewest not what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our bondsmen" (XLII:52). Nasr notes that Arabic and Persian literature as well as everyday language consistently associate light with a joyful soul and proper functioning of the intellect, and that in folk tales light is equated with truth.[69] This affirms the symbolic interpretation of the Qur'an as light, for a joyful soul, properly functioning intellect, and truth may all be viewed as dependent upon belief in the Word of God. Moreover, al-minarah translates literally as 'the place of light,' and so it is from the place of light that the faithful are called forth to proclaim their faith in the Word of God in the form of daily prayer.[70]

A further point of interest concerns the letters of the alphabet, without which the physical manifestation of the Word of God would not be possible. One explanation of their origin states that a point of light emanated from the pen that had inscribed Grand Destiny upon the Guarded Tablet. This point of light wandered about the cosmos, eventually transformed itself into the letter alif, and from it all the other letters then sprang

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[69]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 51.

[70]Ibid.

forth.[71] Once again there is a clear association between light and the Word of God.

The symbolism of light is the major focus in the writings of Yahya ibn Habash Amirak Suhrawardi (1155-91). By the early 14th century Suhrawardi's Theosophy of Light (hikmat al-ishraq) had come to play an important and influential role in the intellectual life of Iran, a role that was especially great under the Safavids. So pervasive was his influence that almost all philosophical thought between the 13th and 16th centuries was affected by his teachings. His great influence can be noted in both Sufi and Shi'a theology.[72]

Suhrawardi and his followers see all life as symbols of light and the universe as a hierarchy of light. At the top of this hierarchy is God who is absolute light, the Light of lights, an infinite and limitless essence. At the opposite pole is non-being or darkness, which man fears because the constituent element of his soul is light.[73]

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[71] Abdelkebir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi, L'Art Calligraphique ou la Célébration l'Invisible (Casablanca 1976), 32.

[72] S.H. Nasr, "The Spread of the Illuminationist School of Suhrawardi," Studies in Comparative Religion 6:3 (Summer 1972), 143.

[73] a) Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, Iran - Royalty, Religion and Revolution (Canberra 1980), 136; and

(continued...)

Colour

Because of its luminous nature, gold is deemed to be the solar metal and the corporeal equivalent of light,[74] and, therefore, it is frequently associated with the Divine. To the alchemist it is pure spirit, the original, uncontaminated soul that freely and perfectly reflects the Divine Spirit.[75] Thus, gold symbolizes the state to which one returns by following the mystic path. As Rumi says: "Make a journey out of self into Self, O master, / For by such a journey earth becomes a quarry of gold."[76]

One of the Hermetic sciences, alchemy uses the symbolic language of the transmutation of lead into gold to explain the transformation of the soul. Concealed by this symbolic language, the esoteric secrets of alchemy could be understood only by the initiated.[77] Although metallurgical processes could be, and it is assumed that

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b) Fritz Meier, "The Mystic Path," The World of Islam, ed. Bernard Lewis (London 1976), 119.

[74]Burkhardt, Art of Islam, 80.

[75]Burkhardt, Alchemy, 72.

[76]R.A. Nicholson, Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz (Cambridge 1952), 111, quoted in S.H. Nasr, "The Sufi Master as Exemplified in Persian Sufi Literature," Studies in Comparative Religion 4:3 (Summer 1970), 149.

[77]Bibliothèque des philosophes chemiques (Paris 1741), referred to in Burkhardt, Alchemy, 28.

they originally were, carried out by alchemists, they were regarded as no more than "outward supports" or "operational symbols" for the inward process of transforming the soul.[78]

Unlike Sufism, alchemy does not see its final goal as the annihilation or extinction (fana') of the soul. Instead its goal is only the return to the soul's original, purified state. The fundamentally cosmological viewpoint of alchemy nevertheless was incorporated into both Christian and Islamic mysticism. This was possible because alchemy's goal of a purified soul is one of the necessary stages in the mystic's quest.[79]

The bond between the guilds and the Sufi orders that was mentioned earlier was also the result of the popular adherence to alchemical doctrine. The transformation of materials that is the object of all artisans could be seen in light of the alchemical transmutation of lead into gold.[80] Thus the link between alchemy and mysticism extended to all the arts. Since "within the framework of an organic civilization oriented towards man's highest goal, a craft can only have meaning when it serves a spiritual way,"[81] the actual process of

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[78] Ibid., 23 and 92.

[79] Ibid., 73.

[80] Nasr, Sufi Essays, 48.

[81] Burkhardt, Alchemy, 92.

producing an object, rather than just the final product itself, could be seen as symbolic of the mystic quest.

It has been shown that the overall design of the shamsa can be interpreted as symbolizing the stages of the Way. But when the symbolism of alchemy is taken into consideration as well, the physical act of making the shamsa - the transformation of the pigments and paper at the hands of the artist - becomes a symbolic act for that artist. The transmutation of materials that he carries out mirrors the transmutation that his soul is undergoing. The use of gold in the shamsa, therefore, calls to mind the alchemical transmutation of lead into gold and, thereby, is symbolic of the purification of the soul. Since purification leads to realization of Divine Unity, gold is symbolic of Allah as well. This symbolism is enhanced by the identification, referred to above, of gold as the solar metal and the corporeal equivalent of light, which has already been shown to be one of the dominant symbols of God.

Shi'ism also was greatly affected by alchemical doctrine. Evidence of this fact is to be found as early as the first century of Islam in the writings of the first Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and especially in those of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. And interestingly, Jabir ibn Hayan, a 7th century Sufi and Shi'a who viewed his own writing as a mere recounting of the teachings of

his master, Imam Ja'far, is "the most celebrated of all Muslim alchemists."[82]

In the Il-Khanid era, shamsas are most often almost exclusively in shades of gold, but, as has been noted above, in all later eras the combined use of blue and gold predominates. Blue, of course, always is associated with the sea and the sky. The great expanse of each causes blue to be identified with infinity and the Infinite. As the colour of the sky, it has always served as a symbol of the heavens. White, like gold, is a symbol of light and so symbolizes Divine Unity.[83] This explains its frequent use for the geometric interlacement joining the various elements of the shamsa. The fact that no other colours are as consistently or extensively used as are blue, gold and white suggests that other colours are symbolically less important in shamsa illumination.

Qualitative Mathematics

Modern man perceives only the quantitative aspect of numbers, but during the Middle Ages, in both the Christian and Islamic worlds, this was not the case.

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[82]S.H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (London 1978), 14. Hereafter referred to as Islamic Cosmological Doctrines.

[83]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 48.

Then every number or geometric form was seen as possessing a qualitative and symbolic aspect that was as important as its quantitative value.[84]

To the Brotherhood of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa), a 10th century group of anonymous Shi'a scholars with Sufi propensities,[85] the qualitative value of numbers led to an understanding of the Divine, for numbers are the "spiritual image resulting in the soul from the repetition of Unity."[86] Simply, numbers were seen as a "projection of unity."[87] By and large these beliefs of the Ikhwan were held also by the Hermeticists, Ishraqis and the Sufis, and in fact are an important part of Islamic cosmological doctrine as a whole.[88]

As has been noted already, the circle, one of the three basic geometrical shapes, is the shape of the majority of shamsas produced by the Timurids in 15th century Herat (e.g., Figures 24-27) and by the Uzbeks in Herat, Bukhara and Samarkand in the 16th century (e.g., Figures 36-37). In many other examples from all periods, the contour of the shamsa may be slightly, or greatly,

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[84]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, xiii.

[85]Nasr, Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, 36.

[86]The Rasa'il (Cairo 1928), I, 25, quoted in Nasr, Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, 49.

[87]Nasr, Islamic Cosmological Doctrines, 49.

[88]Ibid., 21-22.

indented, but the basic shape, nevertheless, is clearly circular (e.g., Figures 8, 17 and 40). Moreover, it also has been noted previously that it is common for a shamsa to be divided into concentric circles (e.g., Figures 2 and 25).

The circle is the primary cosmological symbol and represents wholeness and unity.[89] Having no beginning and no end it is the perfect symbol of eternity and the eternal God. In this respect it may also be seen as representative of infinity and God's role as the Infinite. Its symmetrical shape suggests harmony and divine order, which by implication symbolize the contrast between spiritual order and temporal chaos.[90] Perhaps most importantly, the circle is a symbol of the heavens,[91] "not merely the visible heavens but the invisible, spiritual heavens of which the visible heavens themselves are a reflection."[92]

The other two basic geometrical shapes, the square and the triangle, are distinctly delineated only in Il-

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[89]Critchlow, Islamic Patterns, 8.

[90]Madeline H. Caviness, "Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing," Gesta 22:2 (1983), 104.

[91]Critchlow, Islamic Patterns, 102. This point will be discussed further below.

[92]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 61, note 22.

Khanid shamsas (e.g., Figure 3).[93] But even when they are not an explicit part of the final design, they can be perceived as having formed the underlying basis of the design, usually by being inscribed within a circle. In most instances, these basic geometrical origins of the shamsa are implied by the symmetrical arrangement of the individual elements (e.g., Figures 26, 29, 31, 34 and 40).

The most common division of elements is into multiples of four. Divisions into eight (e.g., Figures 17 and 34) and twelve (e.g., 22) dominant parts are favoured, although divisions into four (Figure 40), sixteen (e.g., Figures 33), and twenty-four (e.g., Figure 32) dominant parts are used also. Divisions into eight, and multiples thereof, call to mind the octagonal Divine Throne and the eight angels who support it.[94] In Chapter II, the prominent role that astrology and the twelve signs of the zodiac played in Iranian life was discussed. A reflection of this is the frequent division of the shamsa into twelve, and then twenty-four parts.

Shamsas based on two overlapping triangles and thus divided into six parts are less common (e.g., Figure 26).

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[93]Also, BL MS Or.2676, Jami'ul-Hikayat by Muhammad 'Aufi, folio 4a, 732/1332, prob. Shiraz (no illustration available). Two overlapping triangles are clearly delineated in this shamsa.

[94]Ardalan and Bakhtiar, xiii.

The symbolism employed is that of the Seal of Solomon, Solomon being a symbol of perfection, wisdom and compassion to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.[95]

The Diffusion of Mysticism in Iran

The basic premise of this chapter has been that esoteric Islam, primarily in the form of Sufism, served as a major source of inspiration for shamsa illuminators. In order to prove the validity of this premise, it is necessary to look at the role that Sufism played in the lives of the Iranian people.

Beginning its spread in the Seljuq era, Sufism expanded rapidly in Il-Khanid Iran. Prior to Ghazan Khan's conversion to Islam in 1295, the 'ulama, guardians of orthodox Islam, lacked official Il-Khanid support. As a result, the control of religious life fell largely into the hands of local Sufi shaykhs, thus facilitating the spread of Sufism.[96] But the diffusion of Sufism was not limited to the masses. The Il-Khanid rulers, as well as Rashid al-Din, vizier for both Ghazan (1295-1304) and Uljeitu (1304-16) and a great patron of manuscripts, and his son Ghiyath al-Din, are known to have not only supported Sufi shaykhs, but also to have been responsible

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[95]a) Critchlow, Islamic Patterns, 58; and b) Bakhtiar, 95.

[96]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 29.

for the building and endowment of many khaniqahs, or Sufi convents.[97] Contemporary accounts by Hamd Allah Mustaufi, an Il-Khanid superintendent of finances, historian, geographer and poet, tell of the high esteem in which the Order of Ardabil and Safi al-Din (1252-1334), the first Safavid head of the Order, were held by the Mongol rulers.[98] Moreover, many members of the Il-Khanid aristocracy, including amirs and others holding political positions, actually became disciples of Sufi shaykhs, in particular the shaykhs of Ardabil.[99]

This growing attachment in Iran to esoteric Islam was the result of the presence of Shi'ism as well. In fact, from the 13th century onwards one is able to discern an "elective affinity on the part of the Sufi masses for ideas and stories about the lives and miracles of the holy Imams."[100] Shi'a influence is visible also

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[97]M. Murtazavi, "Tasawwuf dar Dawreh-ye Il-Khan," Tahqiq dar bareh-ye Dawreh-ye Il-Khanan-e Iran (Tehran 1963), 89-130, referred to in Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 29-30.

[98]Michel M. Mazzaoui, The Origins of The Safawids: Si'ism, Sufism, and the Gulat (Wiesbaden 1972), 46. Works by Mustaufi referring to Safi ad-Din are a) Tarih-i Guzida (731/1330), ed. 'Abd al-Husain Nawa'i (Tehran 1958-61), 675; and b) Nuzahat al-qulub (741/1340), ed. Guy Le Strange, Gibb Memorial Series XXIII, 1913, and translated by Le Strange in Gibb Memorial Series, XXIII-2, 1919, text, 81; transl., 83-84.

[99]Roger Savory, Iran Under the Safavids (Cambridge 1980), 10.

[100]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 31.

in the person of Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274), an important Shi'a philosopher and theologian who acted as a counsellor to the first Il-Khanid ruler, Hulagu (c. 1217-65). It was because of his sway over Hulagu that the Imami centre of Hilla managed to avert destruction by the Mongol army. The ties which subsequently developed between the Il-Khanid court and the religious aristocracy of Hilla may explain Ghazan's predilection for Shi'ism and Uljeitu's temporary conversion to Shi'ism in 1309-10.[101] Obviously, the esoteric element of Islam, both in the form of Shi'ism and Sufism, was influential in the development of 14th century Iranian theological thought.

This situation was to continue under Timurid rule. In fact, according to H. A. R. Gibb, during this era "it became an almost hopeless task for the theologians to attempt to stem the popular tide" of Sufism that "swept over the whole body of Islam."[102] In Iran this was largely the result of the continuing presence of the Order of Ardabil. As had their Mongol predecessors, the Timurid rulers paid homage to the Sufi shaykhs, especially those of Ardabil. Gibb notes that while Timur (1335-1405) was "outwardly respectful" to the 'ulama, he was "positively humble" in the presence of the Sufi

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[101] Ibid., 29.

[102] H. A. R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, An Historical Survey (London 1949), 144.

shaykhs.[103] And the Safavid historian, Iskandar Munshi, has recorded that Shah Rukh visited Khvaju 'Ali (d. 1427), the third shaykh of Ardabil, and the tomb of Shaykh Safi al-Din.[104] Roger Savory notes that although it was Shah Rukh's practice to visit the tombs of the celebrated shaykhs of the various regions through which he passed, "his visit to Khvaju 'Ali is particulary interesting in view of the manifestly Shi'a tendencies of the Safavid Order," and "it appears that the political benefits of such an action outweighed in the mind of the Sunni ruler any religious antipathy he may have felt."[105]

Obviously the Order of Ardabil was perceived as a serious threat to Timurid rule. But although the main source of this threat was the Order's increasing military power (which culminated in the last quarter of the 15th century), at this point the Safavids were still ardent Sufis. The growing intensity and diffusion of their military power can only have expedited the spread of Sufism.

Evidence of the political influence commanded by the shaykhs of Ardabil is provided further by an account of

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Iskandar Munshi, Tarikh-i 'Alam-ara-yi 'Abbasi, trans. R.M. Savory, Persian Heritage Series, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, no. 28, 2 vols. (Boulder, Colorado 1978), vol. 1, 28, referred to in Savory, Iran Under the Safavids, 15.

[105] Savory, Iran Under the Safavids, 15.

Timur's freeing of Anatolian captives taken after his defeat of Sultan Bayezid at Ankara in 1402.[106] The captives were members of the Order of Ardabil, and the release was made at the request of Khvaju 'Ali. This also indicates that by the first quarter of the 15th century the influence of the Order of Ardabil was so great that it stretched even beyond the borders of Iran. In fact, the presence of Safavid supporters in eastern Anatolia was regarded as a severe threat to Ottoman rule in that region.[107]

It was incumbent upon each Safavid disciple to make a pilgrimage to Ardabil to be "spiritually enriched by an audience with the Shaykh."[108] But in the second quarter of the 15th century during the rule of Khvaju 'Ali's son, Ibrahim, the vast number of adherents prevented each from receiving a private audience with the shaykh. This obvious spread of Sufism and Safavid power had been achieved in great part through a vast organization of followers which allowed the Safavid shaykhs to maintain contact with their Sufi disciples throughout Iran and even beyond its borders. The chief official of this organization, which was strengthened under Ibrahim's

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[106] Silsilat al-Nasab-i Safaviyya (c. 1660), 48, referred to in Savory, Iran Under the Safavids, 14.

[107] Savory, Iran Under The Safavids, 16.

[108] Ibid.

rule, was the khalifat al-khulafa, a position that might be dubbed the "special secretariat for Sufi affairs."[109]

As in the Il-Khanid era, in the Timurid era Shi'ism continued to play a role in the religious life of predominately Sunni Iran. Arjomand speaks of the "religiously promiscuous ambience" of late 15th century Iran in which Sunni poets composed poems in praise of the Imams and there existed a general reverence for the house of the Prophet, Fatima and the twelve Imams, and especially 'Ali.[110] And it is known that the Timurid prince Husayn Bayqara (1438-1506) supported the Nurbakhshi Shi'a order.[111]

Coinciding with the Safavid Order's increasing military power was its decreasing emphasis on Sufism in the late 15th century. The culmination of these two tendencies was Isma'il's assumption of the Iranian throne in Tabriz in 1501 and his proclamation of Ithna 'Ashari or 'Twelver' Shi'ism as the state religion, along with the institution of a mandate for the suppression of Sufism.

Although Isma'il was the first of the Safavids to

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 106.

[111] Ibid., 115.

profess Shi'ism,[112] his predecessors had displayed a noted penchant for Shi'a doctrine.[113] Like his successors, Isma'il not only destroyed many of the Sufi orders, but he desecrated the graves of their ancestors as well.[114] This persecution seems not to have been religiously motivated, but rather was a political act aimed at the eradication of the Sufi orders which the Safavid rulers saw to be potential centres of rival political power.[115] In light of their own rise to power, it is not surprising that the Safavids should attempt to prevent any such similar accumulation of military strength on the part of other Sufi orders.

But this 16th century suppression of the Sufi orders did not seriously affect the Sufi virtuosi or the individual Sufi ascetic. Because these individuals tended not to be associated with any particular order,

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[112]Qutb ad-Din Muhammad ibn Ahmad Nahrawali (d. 1580-81), Kitab al-i'lam [Tarih al-qutbi al-musamma Kitab al-i'lam bi-a'lam Bait Allah al-haram fi tarih Makka] (Mecca 1950-51), 233-34, referred to in A.E. Mayer, review of M.M. Mazzaoui, "The Origins of the Safawids," in Iranian Studies VIII 4 (1975), 274.

[113]Savory, Iran Under the Safavids, 15 and 23.

[114]Hafiz Husayn Karbala'i Tabrizi, Rawdat al-Jinan va Jannat al-Janan, 2 vols., J. Sultan al-Qurra'i (Tehran 1965), 490, referred to in Said Amir Arjomand, "Religious Extremism (Ghuluww), Sufism and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722," Journal of Asian History 15 (1981), 10. Hereafter referred to as "Religious Extremism."

[115]Arjomand, The Shadow of God, 109.

they presented no political threat to the ruling powers. Both before and during the Safavid era, Sufi virtuosi, many of whom were artisans, poets, and scholars, appear to have been as prominent as those associated with a specific order. During the years of the Safavid persecution, it was these individuals who were primarily responsible for carrying on the Sufi tradition.[116] It must not be forgotten, however, that to a certain extent the esoteric tradition was carried on also by the Safavid adherence to Shi'ism.

Beginning in the years of the reign of 'Abbas II (1642-66), the emergent Shi'a hierocracy became increasingly antagonistic toward all Sufis. This finally resulted in the ascendancy of the hierocracy over Sufism in the years of Sultan Husayn's rule (1694-1722). As a result of this and the Afghan invasions, after 1722 "recluse Sufis remain on the scene as the only surviving bearers of the mystical tradition of 'high' Sufism."[117]

Throughout the Safavid era the tradition of esoteric Islam was retained largely through the works of the great Sufi poets. In the Safavid era these poems "continued to exercise an attraction which no theological condemnations could uproot."[118] Each century prior to the Safavid era

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[116]Arjomand, "Religious Extremism," 22-24 and 28.

[117]Ibid., 28-29.

[118]Gibb, 163.

produced at least one shining star: 'Attar in the 12th century, Sa'di and Rumi in the 13th century, Hafiz-Iran's greatest mystical poet - in the 14th century, and Jami in the 15th century. The mystical nature of their poems justifies the theological and metaphysical interpretation of the symbolism of the shamsas introducing the finest manuscripts of their works. It is notable that two of the most beautiful shamsas to be found are in a copy of Rumi's Mathnawi (Figures 24-25), a poem which is in fact an esoteric commentary on the Qur'an.[119]

The Shamsa as a Reflection of the Dome of Heaven

Before concluding, the relationship between shamsas and domes must be considered, for this relationship substantiates the belief put forward here that the shamsa is a symbolic expression of the Divine. In their study of architecture in Islamic painting, Michelle de Angelis and Thomas Lentz point out the similarities between architecture and illumination, noting that Safavid (and Timurid) frontispieces reveal that "in manuscript design the same principles of framing are used as in images of buildings."[120] The placement of the various elements of

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[119]Nasr, Islamic Art and Spirituality, 121.

[120]Michelle de Angelis and Thomas W. Lentz, Architecture in Islamic Painting (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1982), 16.

the illumination - whether it be a surlawh, 'unwan or colophon - suggests "tile friezes and dadoes as well as the opulent royal carpets used by the Safavid court artists to animate wall and floor surfaces in paintings."[121] But of especial interest here is their view of shamsas as reflections of domes.

Karl Lehmann has traced the development of the dome from its use in pagan structures to Christian churches and tombs, determining that even in its earliest usage the dome was seen as representing the heavens.[122] In fact, this symbolism was even applied to flat ceilings, such as that of the southern adytum of the Temple of Bel (early 1st c. A.D.) in Palmyra in which Bel/Jupiter is encircled by personifications of the other planets and by the signs of the zodiac.[123] This dome and that of Khusrau referred to in Chapter II illustrate that the symbolism of the 'dome of heaven' was employed in the East as well.

In Islam, the frequent similarity between the

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Karl Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," The Art Bulletin 27 (1945), 1-27.

[123] Thus, the popular iconographical program of late 12th to early 14th century metalwork, in which the signs of the zodiac and personifications of the planets encircle the 'sun' (Figures 52-55), derives ultimately from pagan ceiling decorations. Baer, "The Ruler in Cosmic Setting," 16, plates 9 and 14; also see Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," figures 3 and 9.

decoration of domes (both interior and exterior) and shamsas suggests a strong symbolic relationship between the two forms. In the Great Mosque in Isfahan (1088),[124] the main decorative element of the north dome is geometric interlacement, resulting in a form very similar to the marginal roundels of Seljuq Qur'ans and Il-Khanid shamsas (e.g, Figures 7 and 9). De Angelis and Lentz note that in Timurid and (especially) Safavid Iran the combined use of "arabesque and floral patterns to suggest layers of space" is seen in both shamsas and domes.[125] Thus, the greatly increased perception of depth that imbues the form of Safavid shamsas with a sense of transcendence and ethereality is, for example, also evident in the exterior decoration of the domes of the Lutfullah and Royal Mosques in Isfahan.

Lehmann states that "a persistent relationship exists between ceilings and floor decorations. In most cases, we see projected upon floors the schemes which were originally developed on ceilings. Sometimes as early as the 1st century B.C., we meet a direct representation of a ceiling on a floor as if reflected in

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[124] Illustrated in Richard Ettinghausen and Oleg Grabar, The Art and Architecture of Islam: 650-1250 (New York 1987), 262, fig. 274.

[125] de Angelis and Lentz, Architecture in Islamic Painting, 16.

a mirror."[126] Thus, the pattern of the curved dome, which may be perceived as enveloping the viewer, evolved into a flat, circular floor pattern. This same transference of the design from a curved to a flat surface occurs when the 'dome of heaven' is represented on a manuscript page in the form of a shamsa.

The houris or angels placed in the corners of some Timurid shamsas (Figure 19) may be traced back to corner figures 'supporting the heavens' in pagan structures. Although the earliest example of such figures noted by Lehmann is in the early 5th century Etruscan Tomb of the Monkey in Chiusi where sirens support a central ceiling motif, he states that the concept of sirens as "heavenly demons of astrological character" is of Eastern origin and that Etruscan concepts of astrology derived specifically from Mesopotamia.[127] In the corners of the dome of the 1st century A.D. Temple of Bel referred to above, winged sirens are also seen. Further research would be necessary to determine if there exists a direct line of descent leading from these pagan examples to the

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[126]Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," 5. Lehmann is referring to the work of a) L. Curtius, Rom. Mitt., L. (1935), 349ff; and b) Charles R. Morey, Early Christian Art (Princeton 1942), 31.

[127]Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," 2-3.

Shiraz angels.[128] In light of the divine symbolism of the shamsa, however, it does seem likely that they are the Muslim counterparts of the ancient, pagan sirens supporting the dome of heaven.

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[128]They may be seen as relating specifically to the angels that accompanied Muhammad during his ascent to heaven as depicted in paintings of the event such as that by Sultan Muhammad on folio 195a of Tahmasp's Khamsa of Nizami. The angels thus would be seen as encircling the dome of heaven to which Muhammad ascends.

IV

The Origins of the Shamsa

Although the earliest shamsa known to this author is that which introduces a manuscript produced in Baghdad in 1240/637 (BOD Ms. Arab d.138, Figure 1), there are indications that shamsas may have appeared much earlier. The 1240/637 shamsa is in fact in a style quite distinct from that which evolves under Il-Khanid tutelage in the latter part of the 13th century, for it is a much closer translation of Greek roundels than is anything that follows. It is not surprising, then, that it adorns an Arabic copy of a well-known and popular Greek scientific treatise, Dioscorides' De Materia Medica.

One must, therefore, look to Greek art to determine the origins of the Islamic introductory roundel - or shamsa. But before doing so, it must be determined if a climate conducive to the interchange of artistic ideas existed between the two cultures, and if there is any other visual proof of such an interchange having taken place.

Because meaning and origin are at times so closely intertwined, much of what has been discussed in Chapters II and III under 'meaning' might as easily be termed 'origins' and placed in this chapter. Since repeating this material would serve no useful purpose, all that is

dealt with here are the main factors contributing to the appearance in the late 13th century of what can be recognized as the 'Il-Khanid shamsa'. It is from this inscribed form, the various elements of which may be seen as simultaneously expounding Islamic doctrine and indicating the exalted role of the ruler, that the shamsas of all later eras evolve.

The Interchange of Artistic Ideas

Throughout the centuries, wars, allegiances against common enemies, and trade brought Islam into contact with Byzantium. But one of the major reasons for contact was a continuing quest for knowledge. To this end, scientific and medical treatises were eagerly translated and copied, and thereby served as a major medium for the transference of artistic styles. This interchange of knowledge and artistic styles was accelerated by the establishment of great libraries and scriptoria, such as the Temple of Wisdom (dar al-hikma), built in the 9th century in Baghdad by the Caliph al-Mu'mum (813-17), for which vast numbers of Greek manuscripts were imported from Byzantium to be translated into Arabic.[1]

East-west trade routes passed through major Iranian cities, and the Il-Khanids especially are known to have

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[1]W. Heffening and J. D. Pearson, "Maktaba," Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden 1987), vol.VI, 198.

encouraged trade in both directions, bringing them into direct contact with both Chinese and Byzantine merchants. Notably, Tabriz, the capital of all Il-Khanid rulers except Hulagu (d.1265), lay at the crossroads of the major caravan routes and thus was an important cosmopolitan centre.[2]

Several Byzantine rulers, among them Michael VIII Palaeologos (1258-82), worked to establish close ties with the Il-Khanids.[3] One means of accomplishing this was through the marriage of Byzantine princesses to Il-Khanid rulers: in 1265 Michael VIII's daughter, Maria, known as Despina Hatun, was married to Abaqa (d. 1282),[4] and in 1306 Andronikos II's sister, another Maria, was married to Uljeitu.[5]

Hulagu was also married to a Christian, a member of one of the Nestorian Christian communities that lived within the boundaries of Il-Khanid rule.[6] These communities served as yet another link with the Christian lands to the west.

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[2]Rice and Gray, 2-3.

[3]Ibid., 3.

[4]B. Spuler, Die Mongolen in Iran (Leipzig 1939), 67 and 107, referred to in Rice and Gray, 3.

[5]Steven Runciman, "The Ladies of the Mongols," Eis Menemne K.I.Amatou (Athens 1960), 46ff, referred to in Rice and Gray, 3.

[6]Rice and Gray, 3.

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In addition to contemporary written accounts, the art of the two cultures provides evidence of contacts between Islam and Byzantium. In 937 the Byzantine emperor sent a letter to the 'Abbasid Caliph; the letter was written in Greek in gold letters with an Arabic translation in silver.[7] Such opulence was not unusual, for official Byzantine documents frequently were written in gold on blue vellum. The result of this, and possibly other such letters, was that chrysography (writing in gold) became common in Qur'ans and in the decorative headings of secular manuscripts. Furthermore, there exist several 10th century Qur'an leaves written in gold Kufic script on blue vellum.

There are a number of Seljuq frontispieces that consist of numerous small, inscribed roundels grouped together to form a rectangle. These appear to be based on Byzantine bookbindings, wherein the roundels contain portraits of saints. But, typically, the borrowed form has been altered to meet Islamic needs, for each roundel is filled not with a portrait, but with script.[8]

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[7]A. Mez, Renaissance des Islam (Heidelberg 1922), 167, referred to in Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," 1944.

[8]Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," 1948 and plate 926A. An example of a Byzantine bookbinding is Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, cod. lat. 1.101, gia Reserv. 56, late 9th/early 10th century. Illustrated in

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A similar process of 'Islamicization' takes place in some figurative painting, notably in the numerous scientific and medical treatises copied in the late 12th and first half of the 13th centuries.[9] Both the great number of extant examples and the style of these manuscripts suggest a flourishing interest in the copying of Byzantine scientific treatises at this time, accompanied by a new wave of Byzantine artistic influence. Although most of these manuscripts appear to have been produced in Syria or Iraq, they are of interest here because of the appearance of the shamsa in Baghdad at this time.

In many of these manuscripts, such as a 1229/626 copy of De Materia Medica (Topkapi Saray, cod. Ahmed. III 2127), the introductory author portrait indicates that the artist was copying either a Byzantine model or an earlier Arabic copy of a Byzantine model.[10] On folio 1a

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[8](...continued)
Beckwith, Early Christian and Byzantine Art (Markham 1979), 199, fig. 167.

[9]For a more detailed discussion of this see a) Kurt Weitzmann, "Greek Sources of Islamic Scientific Illustrations," Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Herzfeld (Locust Valley, New York 1952), 244-66; and b) Richard Ettinghausen, Arab Painting (New York 1966, 1977), 67-97.

[10]Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 67-70; folio 1a of this manuscript is illustrated on page 69. It is interesting to note that the formal author portrait, as seen in these manuscripts, seems to have been employed by Islamic artists only when the source was either an

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of this manuscript there appears a seated Dioscorides set within an arched frame. The composition of the scene as well as the full, heavy robes engulfing the figure indicate that the model derived from a classicizing evangelist portrait of the type introduced into Byzantine art during the 10th century Macedonian Renaissance. The Muslim artist, however, has not blindly copied his Byzantine model: what would surely have been a bare-headed Byzantine Dioscorides has here been 'Islamicized' through the addition of a turban. On folio 4b of the 512 Vienna copy of De Materia Medica (cod. med. gr. 1), Dioscorides is depicted along with Heuresis, the personification of Discovery or Invention, who holds a mandrake root above a dog. But in Islam a bare-headed woman is regarded as unacceptable and a dog as unclean, so in order to 'Islamicize' the scene, the artist of the 1229/626 manuscript omitted these details.[11]

As for Byzantine art, it could not remain unaffected by its contacts with Islam. The decorative motifs in a number of Greek manuscripts produced in Italy in the 9th

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[10](...continued)
original Greek manuscript or a copy of it. Illustrations of original Islamic texts did not include it.

[11]Ibid.

and 10th centuries illustrate this.[12] Despite their Italian production, these manuscripts can be regarded as indicative of current Byzantine styles. Clearly produced for the Greek community, they were in all likelihood decorated either by artists brought from the eastern capital or by students of these artists. One notable example of this group (Patmos grec. 33) was produced in Reggio di Calabria, across the Strait of Messina from Sicily, which was invaded by Islam in 827 and remained largely under Islamic rule until the fall of Palermo to Roger the Norman in 1071.[13] The zoomorphic motifs drawn in profile in these manuscripts - most common is the peacock - are modeled after those found in Islamic fabrics and embroideries produced in the 10th and 11th centuries both in Spain and in the area around Baghdad. Sasanian textiles are, however, the ultimate source of these motifs.[14] In other manuscripts (e.g., Vatican Ms. grec. 354), the treatment of the birds and animals is

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[12]For example, a) The Monastery of Patmos, Ms. grec. 33, Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus, 941, Reggio di Calabria; b) Laurentian Library, Florence, Ms. cod. Conv. Sopp. 202, A Collection of the Treatises of Pseudo-Denis the Areopagite, 9th century, Italy; c) Vatican Library, Ms. grec. 354, Gospels, 948/49, Italy; d) Vatican Library, Ms. grec. R.IV.18, The Text of John of Damascus, before 1030, Italy. Illustrated in Andre Grabar, Les manuscrits grec enlumines de provenance italienne (Paris 1972), catalogue nos. 11, 12, 28, and 48, respectively.

[13]Denis Mack Smith, A History of Sicily, Vol. 2, Medieval Sicily (London 1968), 3 and 14.

[14]Andre Grabar, 34-35 and 48.

more linear and schematic, suggesting the designs on 9th and 10th century ceramic plates from Nishapur.[15] Even more direct Islamic influence is evident in a manuscript in the Vatican Library (Ms. grec. R. IV. 18) that is decorated with a gold heading with side-palmettes in the style of the earliest illuminated Qur'ans. The projecting motifs at either end of the headings on some folios in the Patmos grec. 33 manuscript also appear to be derived from Qur'anic headings.[16]

In the first half of the 14th century (especially the 1330s), the figurative art of many Byzantine manuscripts is noted for its "dry execution, lack of vitality" and a general "absence of creative power."[17] In contrast to this, the non-figural decoration of the frontispieces exhibits a newly-found verve and energy, which Hugo Buchthal feels can only be attributed to the influence of Islamic art. The frontispieces of Gospels, lectionaries, and other religious texts of this era consist of broadly intertwined arabesques interspersed with lush vegetal forms. The circular, square, or quatrefoil centre of these frontispieces may contain the

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[15] Ibid., 48, fig. 168. For examples of Nishapur ceramic plates see Ettinghausen and Grabar, The Art and Architecture of Islam, figures 230 and 240.

[16] Andre Grabar, 34.

[17] Hugo Buchthal, "Toward a History of Palaeologan Illumination," The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art (Princeton, New Jersey 1975), 161.

title of the text or an author portrait. This "regeneration" of non-figural ornament "has no parallel in the figural work" of the time.[18]

The Development of the Introductory Roundel in Greek Art

In ancient papyrus scrolls, the author portrait was the most common type of illustration, and the available evidence suggests that the medallion portrait in particular was the favoured form.[19] But with the introduction of the codex at the end of the first century A.D., the medallion portrait gradually ceded its position of preeminence to the full-page seated author portrait. This was not the end of the medallion portrait, however, for it continued to be used for several centuries more, as is evidenced by its extensive use in the margins of the 9th century Greek Sacra Parallela manuscript (Paris, gr. 923).

In a scroll, the medallion portrait normally served to introduce a new section of text and thus appeared at the top of a column of text. Or, if length necessitated the division of the text into several scrolls, a medallion portrait might introduce each new scroll. The

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[18] Ibid., 161, figures 16-17 and 21-28.

[19] a) Kurt Weitzmann, Ancient Book Illumination (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1959), 116-17; and b) Kurt Weitzmann, Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination (London 1977), 11.

in Majesty; this form frequently adorns the domes of churches. In the early Christian era, a dome or apse may have been decorated by a cross - at times set within a medallion - placed against a starry field, as in the 5th century mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. Thus, in the Christian era, the classical tradition of the medallion portrait expanded to include the placement of a portrait or symbol of the Divine within a medallion.

As stated above, after the introduction and establishment of the codex, the full-page seated author portrait was the favoured form of author portrait. In many manuscripts, an introductory medallion continued to be used - in conjunction with a full-page author portrait - but its role had changed: it now normally enclosed one of the above-mentioned symbols of Christ (Figure 56), an inscription (Figure 57), or, as in the 512 Vienna De Materia Medica, a portrait of the patron (Figure 58).

A number of scholars have noted the similarity between this latter roundel and the frontispiece of a 10th/4th century Qur'an (CBL Ms. 1406, Figure 14),[23] for in both the main motif consists of two interlaced squares set within a circle. It is generally accepted that the

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[23]As noted in Ettinghausen and Grabar, The Art and Architecture of Islam, 394, note 80, the first scholar to note this similarity was Grohmann in T. W. Arnold and A. Grohmann, The Islamic Book (Leipzig 1929), 125 and note 107.

earlier Byzantine roundel, or at least a later copy of it, served as the model for the Qur'an frontispiece.[24] Muslim artists, however, may already have been familiar with the motif from other sources, such as 5th to 7th century Coptic textiles.[25] Therefore, it would appear that Byzantine illumination should not necessarily be credited with introducing a new motif to Muslim artists, but with having introduced a new use for a familiar motif.

If Muslim artists did indeed know of the 512 Vienna manuscript, then they were familiar with its title-page as well: an inscribed roundel in the form of a laurel wreath, at the apex of which is a small medallion containing a cross (Figure 57). This is the earliest example of an inscribed introductory roundel, although earlier Byzantine examples surely once existed.[26] Roundels such as this usually were inscribed with the

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[24]Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 168.

[25]Illustrated in Heinrich Gluck, Die Christliche Kunst des Ostens (Berlin 1923), plate 37.

[26]Andre Grabar (33 and note 37) says that the earliest example of a roundel inscribed with text is the now-lost frontispiece of the Syrian Rossano Gospels of the 6th century. He states that although such frontispieces are to be found in Greek and Syrian manuscripts of the 6th to 9th centuries, they are relatively rare. In contrast, roundels (or cruciform motifs) with a central cross or other motif are quite numerous in Syrian manuscripts. The material encountered during this study, however, suggests the opposite: that roundels inscribed with either the title or a longer text are more numerous than those adorned with crosses, etc.

title of the manuscript[27] or perhaps a short epigram on the author, as in a 9th century manuscript in Milan.[28] The 1240/637 shamsa (Figure 1) is similar to the Milan roundel and other Greek examples in that it is formed by a braided gold band. But unlike the Milan roundel, which is set on a page decorated with gold palmettes and two harts drinking from a vase, the shamsa is placed on a plain, undecorated page.

It appears clear that the ultimate source of the Byzantine introductory roundel was the medallion portrait of ancient papyrus scrolls. Even though the introductory author portrait in medallion form came to be superseded by the full-page seated philosopher/evangelist portrait, use of an introductory medallion did continue. But now in place of a portrait, a cross or inscription (usually the title) was inscribed in its centre, thereby establishing a Byzantine tradition of circular, non-figurative frontispieces. Although the concept of the introductory roundel spread to other cultures that came in contact with Byzantium - most notably the Hebrew and

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[27]Otto Pacht notes that "medallion-titles" occur only rarely in Carolingian manuscripts or in Byzantine manuscripts after the 10th century. Pacht, Book Illumination in the Middle Ages (New York 1986), 150.

[28]Illustrated in Andre Grabar, no. 2, fig. 11.

Muslim communities - there were other factors that played a role in the development of the shamsa as well.

The Roundel in Hebraic Manuscripts

One indication that the shamsa may have appeared in Islamic manuscripts at an early date is the existence of circular frontispieces in Hebrew manuscripts of the late 9th century.[29] A manuscript produced in Palestine in 895 for a member of the Karaite community contains several frontispieces and finispieces each consisting of a decorative roundel set within, but not attached to, a basically square frame (Figure 59). In the corners of the pages are palmettes of the type found in contemporary Qur'ans. Several of the roundels are stylized vegetal rosettes derived from Sasanian art, though in the example illustrated here, the roundel is formed by the familiar motif of two interlaced squares; as in the 10th century Qur'anic example (Figure 14), a rosette, not a portrait, fills the centre of the roundel.

The Jewish community of the Middle East was under considerable Arab-Muslim influence, one example of this being the frequent copying of Hebrew Bibles in Arabic script.[30] Close contacts also existed between Iran and

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[29]a) Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 169-10, 191; and b) Ettinghausen and Grabar, The Art and Architecture of Islam, 123, fig. 105.

[30]Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 169-70.

the Karaite community. Thus, the existence of introductory roundels in late 9th century Hebrew manuscripts suggests that Islamic examples of a similar date may once have existed.

The same basic design concept employed for the 9th century Hebrew finis- and frontispieces (Figure 59) appears almost 300 years later in the end-shamsas of the 1278/677 Konya Qur'an (Figure 2). Once again an uninscribed roundel that combines geometric interlacement with vegetal motifs is set within a basically square frame, though this time the corners are not filled with Qur'anic palmettes, but with small rosettes similar to those frequently used as interlinear markers in Qur'ans (Figure 69) and the same as those placed between the palmettes in the Hebrew frontispiece. It would seem that these two pages evolve from the same tradition, a tradition that may indeed have resulted in the appearance of the shamsa in Islam long before the 13th century.

A notable difference, however, and one probably resulting from the influence of Qur'anic marginal and interlinear roundels, is the addition of rays to the Konya shamsas. This strictly Islamic trait adds a solar quality that is somewhat lacking in the earlier Hebrew examples.

The Evolution of the Qur'anic Roundel

Left to its own devices, the Byzantine introductory roundel might never have played a very significant role in Iranian illumination. But partly because of the inspiration of Qur'anic illumination, it evolved into an important and prominent motif: the shamsa.

Many of the earliest (10th century) Qur'an frontispieces consist of a circular form set within a rectangular frame (Figure 60), quite possibly a development of the Byzantine circular frontispiece. The central roundel often is encircled by an outline with small bumps or knobs that anticipate the radiating strokes of later shamsas. But while this tradition of circular frontispieces no doubt 'paved the way' for the development of the shamsa, it is the Qur'anic interlinear and marginal roundels that played the greater role in the its development.

Many of the earliest Qur'an pages are decorated only with coloured diacritical and vowel marks. Already by the 9th century, however, some pages exhibit decorative roundels. These are functional as well, for they are used to mark divisions of the text, such as every fifth and tenth verse, the end of each day's reading, and points requiring prostration.[31] Some roundels are relatively simple rosettes (Figure 61), while a few are

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[31]Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination,", 1939.

very intricate (Figure 62). Many of these examples have an outline resembling another row of 'petals' (Figure 61); some have an outline with dots placed at the divisions between petals;[32] and some are encircled by a series of tiny dots (Figure 62). In each case the 'outline' echoes the main form creating a distinct sense of radiation: this is the first step toward the 'solarization' of the Qur'anic roundel. In the examples cited, the outline is either gold or black.

In the 10th century blue outlines are also used, but more often for the whole frontispiece or a large marginal palmette rather than for the smaller roundels. A significant change occurring in this century is the addition of rays emanating from small black dots on the outline (Figure 63). Despite the small number of rays used at this stage and the basically floral form of most roundels, there is an overall increase in the solar quality of the roundels.

The 11th century witnesses three main changes in the illumination of Qur'anic roundels. There is now frequent use of an interlinear roundel that employs numerous elongated petals, which also create a sense of radiation;

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[32]For example, National Library, Tunis, Rutbi 198, Qur'an, Surat al-Anbiya, XXI, 50-54, 10th/4th century, prob. Kairouan. Illustrated in Martin Lings and Yasin Hamid Safadi, The Qur'an, a Catalogue of an Exhibition of Qur'an Manuscripts at the British Library (London 1976), no. 17, plate II.

a small dot is placed at the tip of each petal (Figure 64). While these roundels can still be termed 'floral', in others of the time the floral quality is greatly lessened by a new angularity evident in the 'petals' (Figure 65). At times the floral quality has in fact been totally obliterated and the 'petals' reduced to simple, straight lines.[33] Finally, as in the previous century, many roundels are encircled by rays, but now the number of rays used is vastly increased (Figures 64-65). Each of these new traits serves to strengthen the sense of radiation and, hence, the solar quality of the roundel.

Qur'ans of the 11th century also are noted for their use of interlaced roundels within 'unwans (Figure 66). Furthermore, at this time purely decorative marginal roundels appear, whereas previously each had served a functional role as well. A marginal roundel may now be placed at the bottom of a page with no purpose other than to balance an upper roundel marking a new chapter (Figure 66).[34] Many of these roundels are attached to the decorative frame encircling the text and appear to be a combined roundel/palmette form. In fact, a great variety of marginal roundels are found in Seljuq manuscripts,

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[33]For example, The Keir Collection, London, Qur'an, Part 4, III, 199 - IV, I, early 11th/5th century, Iraq or Iran. Illustrated in Lings and Safadi, catalogue no. 33.

[34]Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," 1950.

almost all of which, whether or not they are embellished by protruding rays, emphasize an outward radiation of the component parts.

Many 12th century roundels are elaborate, interlaced forms (Figures 67-68) that probably served as models for late 13th and 14th century Il-Khanid shamsas. Although Greek art undoubtedly is the ultimate source of the interlaced roundel, it is expressive of Islamic doctrine and therefore became a popular Qur'anic motif. For this reason interlacement became a dominant element of shamsas in all eras.

Mention should be made of the use of interlaced roundels in the apex of some domes in the 13th century cathedral of San Marco in Venice.[35] Placed in the centre of 'the dome of heaven' - where most often a cross or the head of Christ would be depicted - and surrounded by scenes from the life of Joseph, the roundels would seem to bear divine associations. At this stage, however, it is impossible to say if these divine associations evolve from Greek art itself or are the result of the role played by the interlaced roundel in Islam, wherein it so often is used to illuminate the word of God.

In the 13th century, some Qur'anic roundels begin to exhibit very long rays, a feature that does not appear in

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[35]Illustrated in Gluck, plates 88 and 89.

shamsas until the Timurid era; in Il-Khanid shamsas rays are short and stubby, radiation being expressed by the orientation of the component parts of the shamsa. Some 14th century Qur'anic roundels are in the arabesque style of shamsas adorning contemporary copies of the World History of Rashid al-Din, and thereby exhibit the close association that often exists between Qur'anic roundels and shamsas (Figures 4-5 and 70). Throughout this and all periods, simple interlinear rosette-like roundels (Figure 69) continue to be employed in combination with the more elaborate interlinear and marginal roundels.

The Appearance of the Shamsa in the 13th Century

Although no pre-13th century shamsas are known to exist, other types of non-figurative frontispieces clearly were an accepted part of Islamic manuscripts at least from the 10th century (Figures 13-14 and 60). The tradition of non-figurative introductory roundels, however, was well-established in Greek illumination by the early 6th century and provided the basic inspiration for the shamsa (as well as the circular Hebrew finis- and frontispieces). But it has also been shown that the use of a free (unattached) - sometimes very elaborate- marginal or interlinear roundel was a well-established tradition in the illumination of Qur'ans long before the 13th century; and the similarity that often exists

between Qur'anic roundels and shamsas suggests that inspiration for the shamsa did not derive from Greek illumination alone. Moreover, though the earliest shamsa known to the author (Figure 1) is in the rather simple style of many Greek roundels, this style was soon supplanted by more elaborate shamsas (frequently in the interlaced style of small Qur'anic roundels and some large 9th century Hebrew roundels). But one important feature of the Greek roundel was retained: an unadorned central space in which an inscription - usually the title - is placed. (Qur'anic marginal roundels often are inscribed also [Figures 61 and 64], such as those that bear the word sajdah, meaning 'prostration').[36]

The Il-Khanid shamsa may therefore be seen as having evolved from the Greek concept of an inscribed, introductory roundel, the tradition of the Qur'anic roundel, and what the 1278/677 shamsa (Figure 2) suggests may have been an earlier tradition of uninscribed roundels set within a square frame. Thus, small inscribed roundels were used in Qur'ans, and uninscribed introductory roundels/shamsas possibly were known; but the final impetus for the inscribed shamsa set against an undecorated page came from Byzantine art. In fact, the introductory roundel, or shamsa, might never have actually 'caught-on' if it had not been for the

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[36]Lings, Qur'anic Art, 72, note 33.

established tradition of the Qur'anic roundel, use of which had established a definite association between free (unattached) roundels and the word of God.

But what caused all these elements suddenly to merge in the late 13th century? Part of the answer is the renewed Islamic interest in Byzantine scientific treatises that occurred in the late 12th and 13th centuries, and which re-introduced the Islamic artist to the concept of an inscribed, introductory roundel, such as that in the A.D. 512 Byzantine De Materia Medica (Figure 57). In addition to this was the current state of the Qur'anic roundel, which by the 13th century had developed into an important element of Qur'anic illumination. The necessary impetus to elevate the roundel from a position of secondary importance to one of primary importance came in the form of the Byzantine roundel.

But one other factor cannot be overlooked: the iconography of the cosmological exaltation of the ruler. As was discussed in Chapter II, by the late 13th and early 14th centuries the sun as a radiant disk is all that remains of the earlier, more elaborate iconographical cycles in which the cosmological exaltation of the ruler is expressed through his association with the various signs of the zodiac and personifications of the planets. This is true in both

metalwork and coinage. But though the solar aspect of early shamsas is slight, rays being only short and stubby, it is an aspect not seen in either Byzantine or 9th century Hebrew roundels. While the addition of rays to Il-Khanid shamsas should be seen as resulting from their use on Qur'anic roundels and thus the result of Islamic doctrine, it must also be regarded as a reference to the solar exaltation of the ruler, which at this time can be expressed by the radiant disk of the sun alone.

Also in Chapter II were noted the royal associations implied by the use of the rosette, and the fact that in most Il-Khanid shamsas the geometric interlacement takes on a distinctly floral quality. Hence, in Il-Khanid shamsas the geometric interlacement and rays may each be seen as symbolic of both royalty and divinity. The simplified iconography of the cosmological exaltation of the ruler that had developed by the late 13th century in other media was one of the factors that prepared the way for the appearance of the shamsa in the Il-Khanid era. At the same time as there was developing a clear, concise iconography symbolizing the exalted position of the ruler, the Qur'anic roundel was reaching a critical point of prominence and elaborateness. The catalyst for the appearance of the shamsa was the re-introduction of the Byzantine inscribed, introductory roundel to Islamic artists in the 13th century.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have presented the shamsa as both a symbol of the divine and of royalty, basically sacred and secular interpretations and thus what might appear a somewhat contradictory situation. But the possibility of being read on many different levels only serves to strengthen and increase the value of a symbol, and one interpretation need not be seen as negating another. Moreover, when used in a secular manuscript, a shamsa need not be seen in secular terms only, as strictly a symbol of royalty. In fact, because of the strong solar quality of most shamsas and the numerous and well-known metaphors of God as light, it is doubtful that a shamsa could ever be seen purely in secular terms. Use of a shamsa not only asserted a ruler's divine right to rule and his role as terrestrial sun, but it should also be seen as an attempt to show that the monarch's rule emulates the wisdom and justice of the rule of Allah. This same attempt at emulation explains the appearance of shamsas in manuscripts commissioned by lesser aristocrats, perhaps viziers or governors of the provinces - personages not necessarily of royal blood. They wished to equate their rule to that of the monarch and perhaps that of Allah as well.

The full and intricate interpretation of the shamsa

probably evaded many patrons. Instead of seeing it as specifically symbolizing the concept of Divine Unity, the Way, or the cosmological exaltation of the ruler, they saw it in more general terms as signifying the glory and splendour of Allah and the wealth and opulence of the ruler. The statement made in Chapter I - that even in the most magnificent manuscripts a shamsa was not a mandatory element - now can be understood: when seen in more general terms the shamsa can be dispensed with and the display of wealth and opulence relegated to other, more elaborate forms of illumination such as the frontispiece or surlawh. (It is also possible that shamsas were used more by patrons who had a specific reason for doing so, such as a name that associated them with light or the sun.[1]) This situation would also seem to explain the gradual disappearance of the shamsa in Iran in the late 16th and 17th centuries, for perhaps as time progressed the more esoteric and erudite interpretations of the shamsa became lost. Working in

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[1]For example, the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan was known as Shihab al-Din (Blazing Light of Faith), and at least three shamsas may be credited to his patronage. Two of these are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, one of which is illustrated in Anthony Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World (Austin, Texas 1979), 9, plate 85; the only illustration known to the author of the other, very similar shamsa is in Danner, 57; the third shamsa is illustrated in Milo Beach, Grand Moghul (Williamstown, Massachusetts 1978), 129, plate 21. (I must thank Anthony Welch for bringing to my attention the possible association between a ruler's name and his use of a shamsa.)

conjunction with the Safavid tendency toward increasing intricacy in illuminations, this loss of identity or uniqueness enabled the shamsa to be gradually integrated into the surlawh. Although there are few 17th century Iranian shamsas, the mid-16th century dispersal of artists from Shah Tahmasp's atelier caused many artists to move to India, the fortunate result being the continuation of the tradition of the shamsa under Mughal patronage well into the 17th century.[2]

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[2]Although beyond the scope of this study, some of the most beautiful and most spectacular of all shamsas were produced for Mughal patrons.

Figure 1: BOD Ms. Arab d. 98
Dioscorides' De Materia Medica
folio 1a
1240/637, Baghdad
7.5 cm diam.

Figure 2: CBL Ms. 1466
Qur'an
folio 331b (same as 332a)
1278/677, Konya
4.7cm diam. (shamsa only)

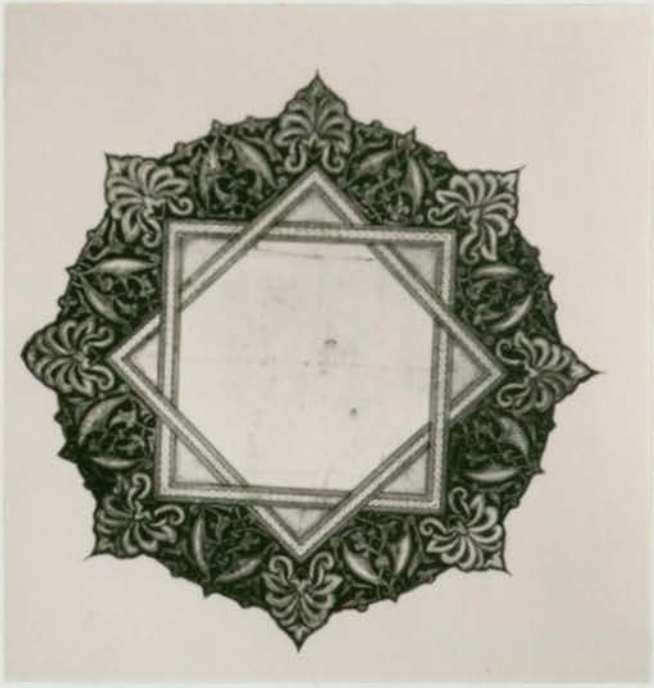

Figure 3: Edinburgh University Library
Ms. Arab. 20
The World History of Rashid al-Din
folio 137a
1306-07/706, Tabriz

Figure 4: (from same ms. as above)
folio 149a

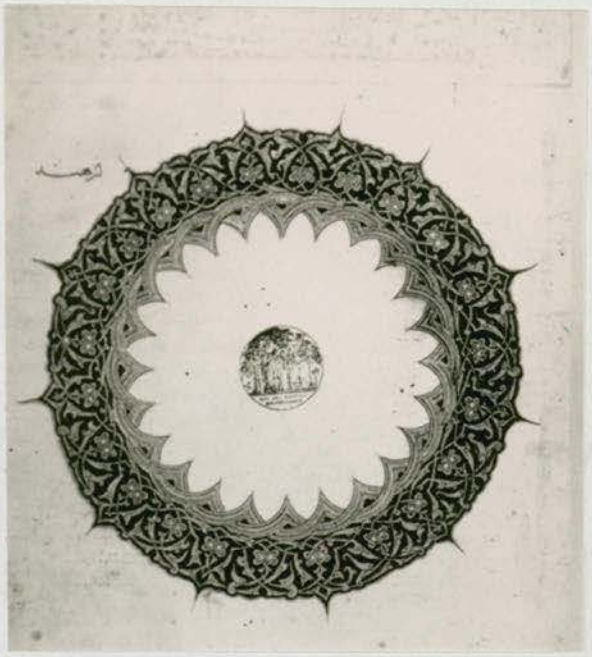

Figure 5: Coll. of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan
The World History of Rashid al-Din
folio 19a
1314/713, Tabriz

Figure 6: (from same ms. as above)
folio 42a

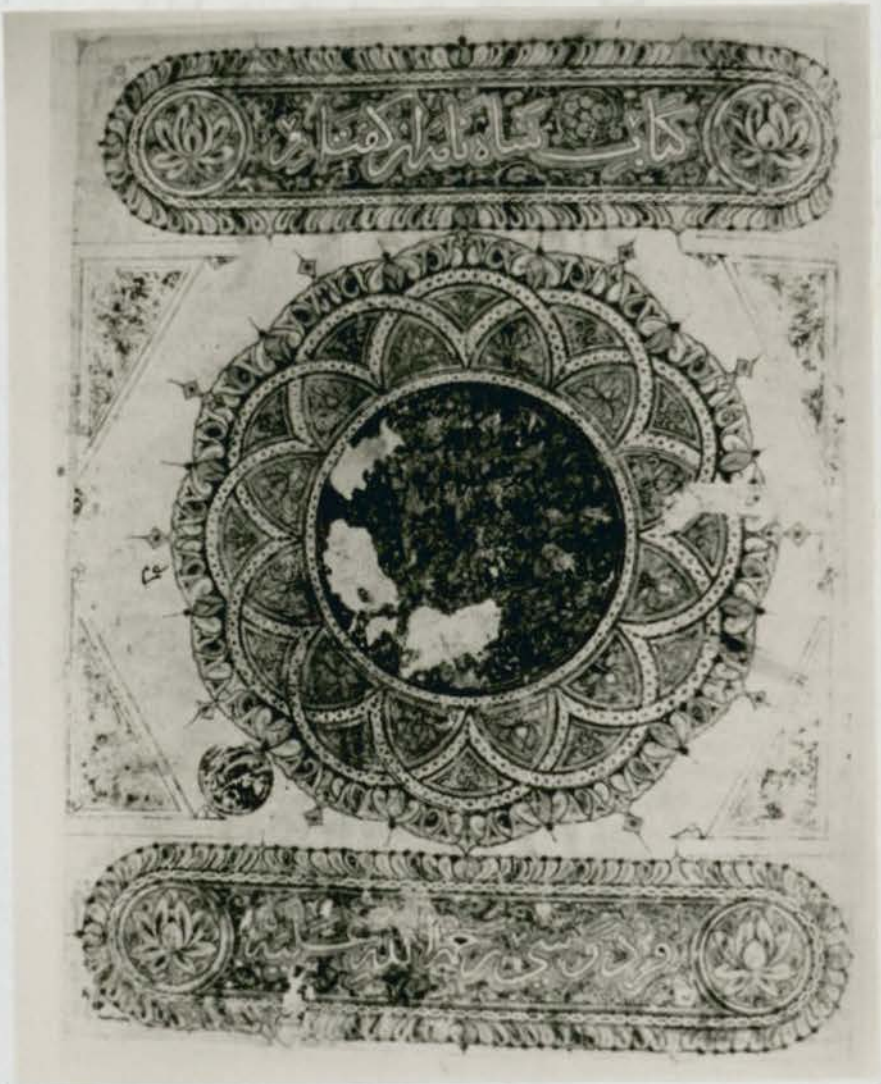

Figure 7: Topkapi Saray, Hazine 1479
Firdausi's Shahnama, folio 1a
1331/731, Shiraz
37.5 x 29 cm

Figure 8: Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 500
Manafi' al-Hayawan
1297-98/697, Maragha

Figure 9: CBL Ms. 1470
Qur'an, folio 1a
1338/738, Maragha
10.3 cm diam.

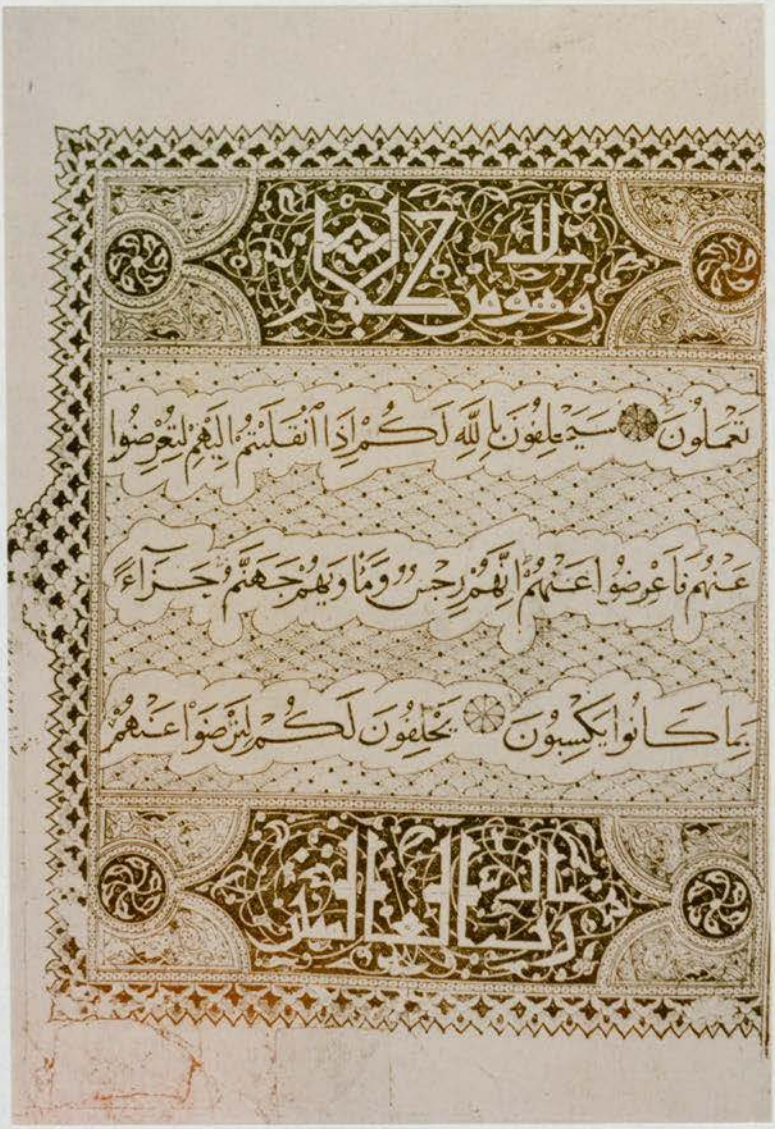

Figure 10: CBL Ms. 1470
Qur'an
1338, Maragha
31.8 x 22.9 cm

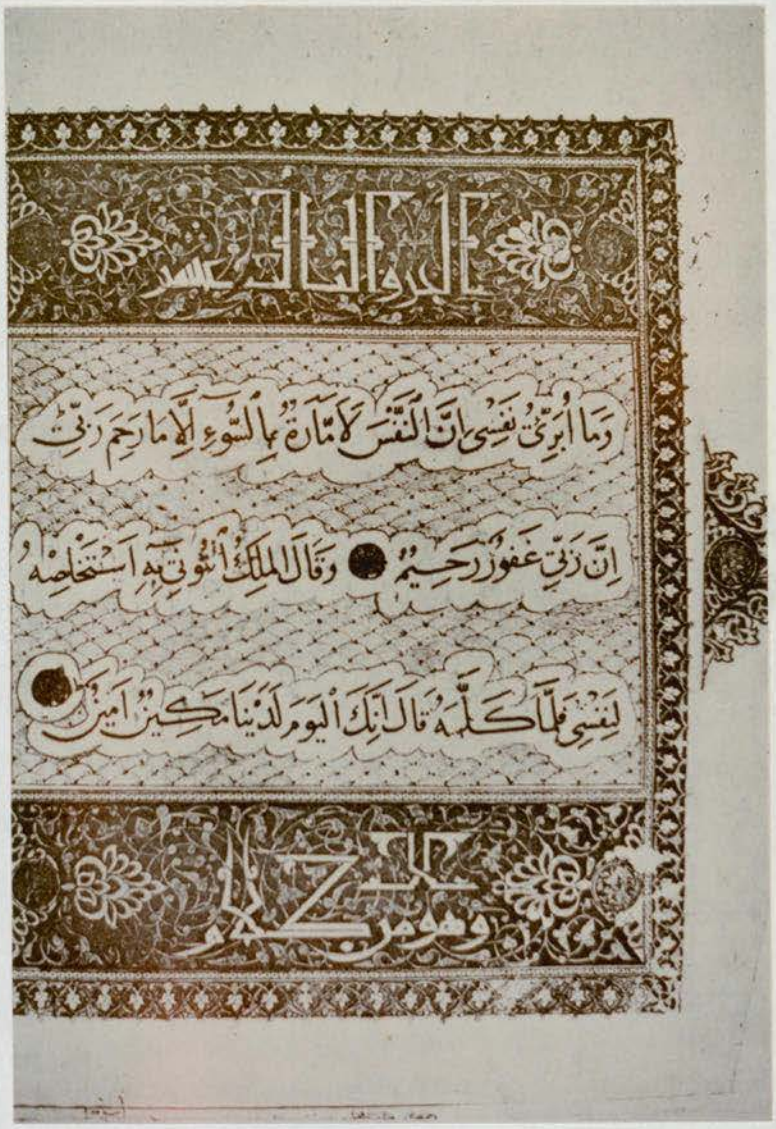

Figure 11: Boston Museum of Fine Arts
Qur'an
1338, Maragha
31.1 x 22.3 cm
(same ms. as Figures 9 and 10)

Figure 12:
CBL Ms. 1435
Qur'an, folio 116b
1195/592
21 x 14.5 cm

Figure 13: (same ms. as above) folio 1a

Figure 14: CBL Ms. 1406, single page from a Qur'an, 10th/4th c., 12 x 28.5 cm

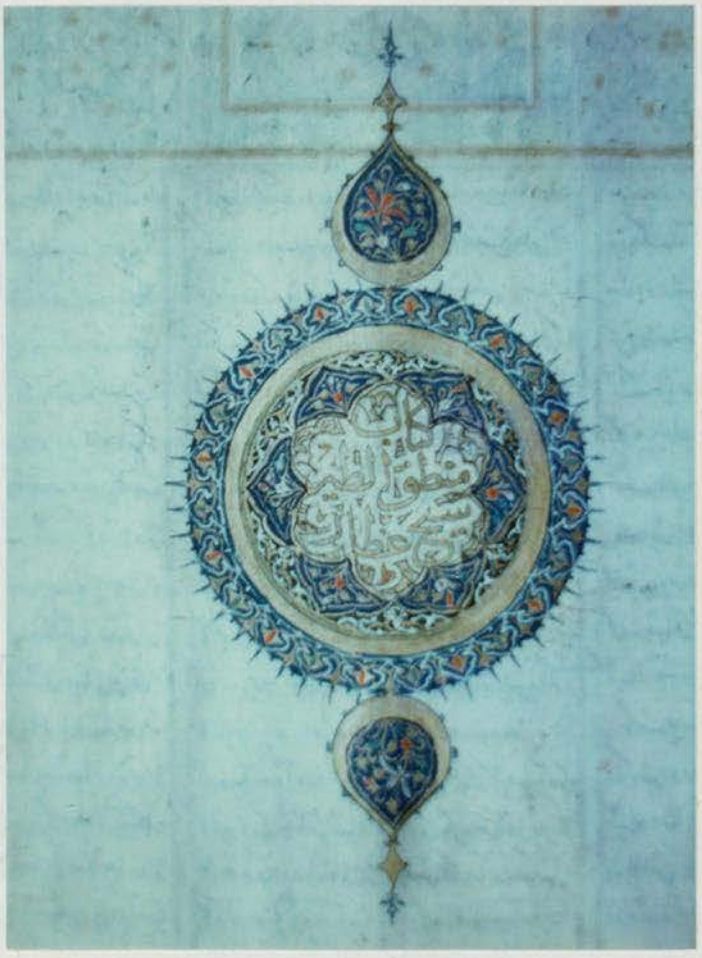

Figure 15:
CBL Ms 117
'Attar's Five Mystic Mathnawis
folio 73a
1418/821, Shiraz

Figure 16: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin,
Islamisches Museen, East Berlin,
Ms. I.4628
Anthology for Baysunghur
folio 1
1420/823, Shiraz

Figure 17: BOD Ms. Ouseley Add. 176
Firdausi's Shahnama
folio 12a
c. 1435/839, Shiraz
16 cm diam.

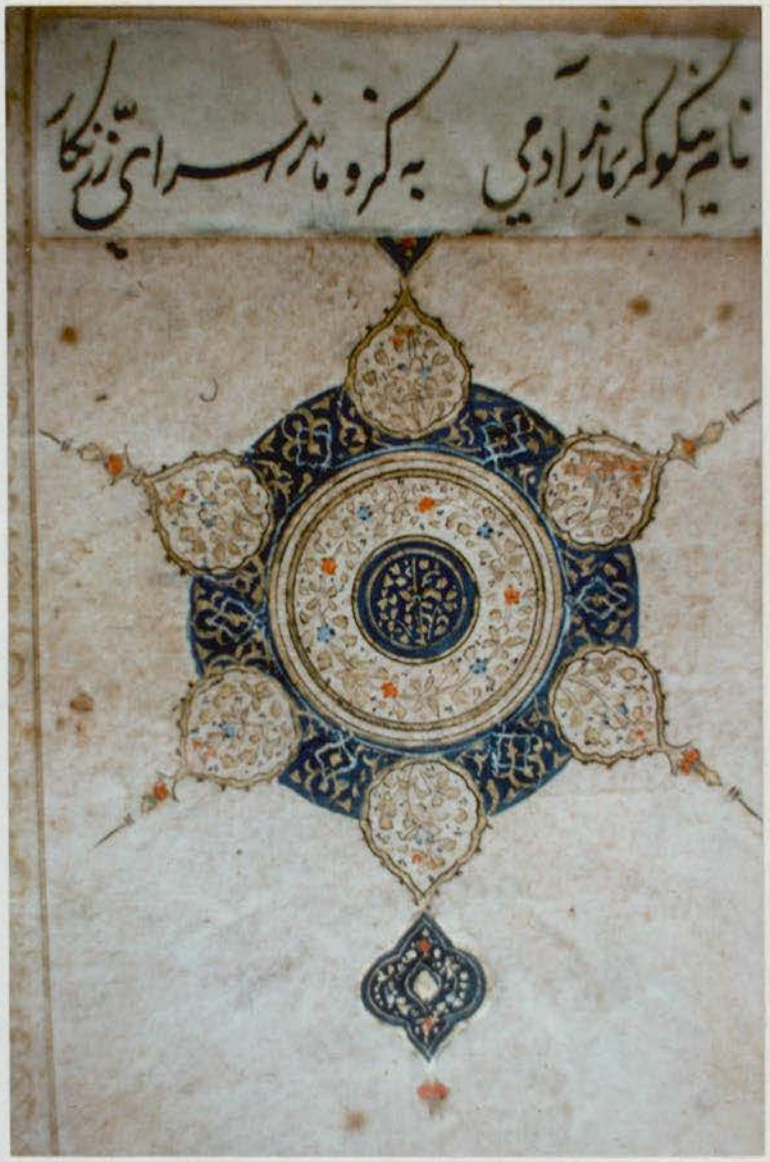

Figure 18: CBL Ms. 294
Anthology
folio 7a
c. 1440/844, Shiraz

Figure 19: Keir Collection, Ms. III.82
Khamsa of Nizami
folio 1b (same as folio 2a except for angels)
1442-46/842-44, Yazd or Shiraz
25.5 x 17 cm

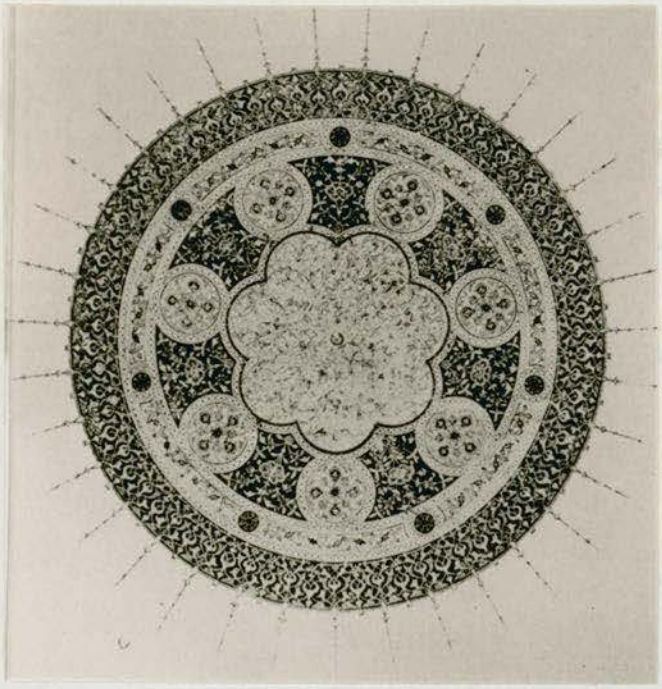

Figure 20: Gulistan Palace Library, Ms. No. 61
Firdausi's Shahnama
1429-30/833, Herat

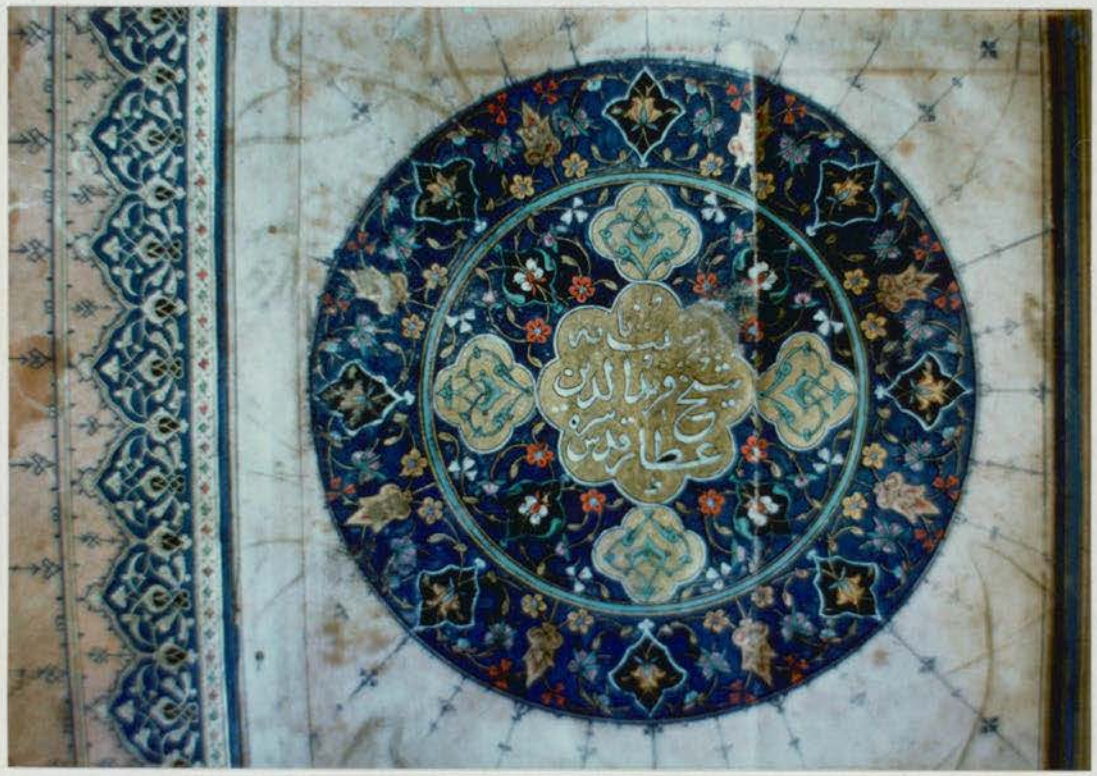

Figure 21: CBL Ms. 121, 'Attar's Musibat-nameh, folio 4a,
1429-30/833, Herat, 6.5 cm diam.

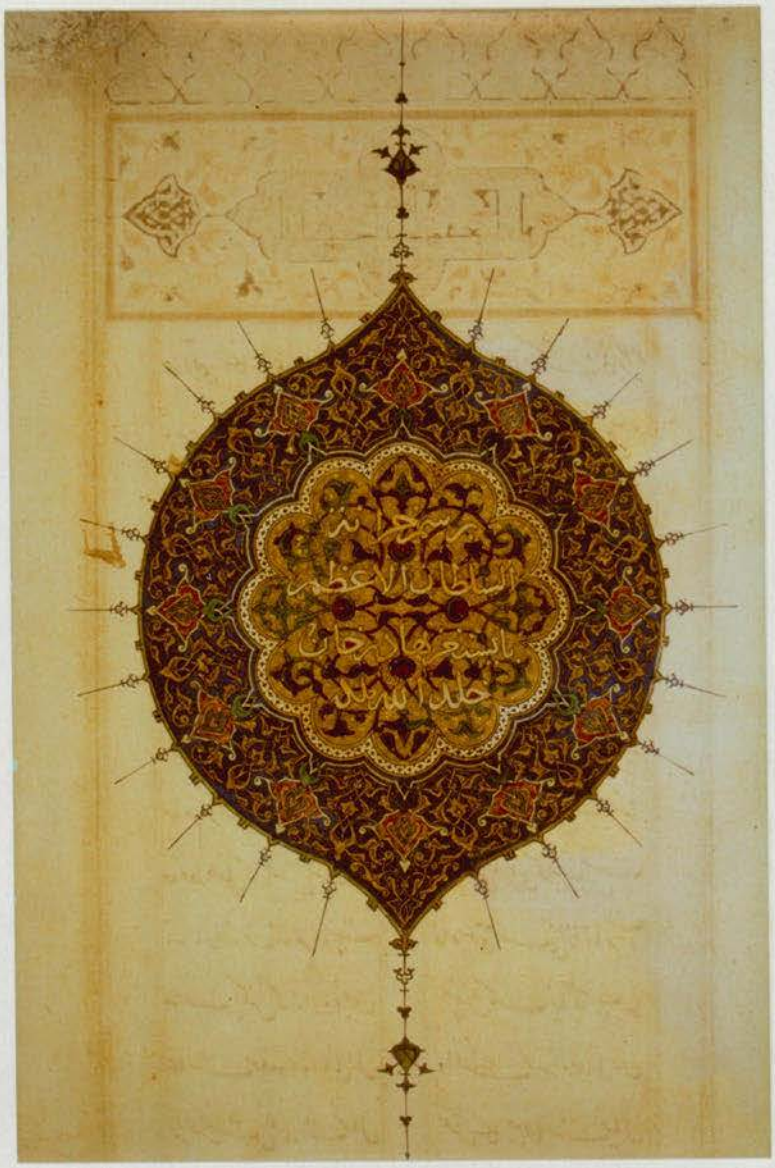

Figure 22: BOD Ms. Elliot 210
Kulliyyat-i-Iamd
folio 1a
1431/834, Herat
7 cm diam.

Figure 23: BOD Ms. Elliot 121
Selections from Amir Khusrau'a ghazals
folio 1a
1435-36/839
6.7 cm diam. (without pendants)

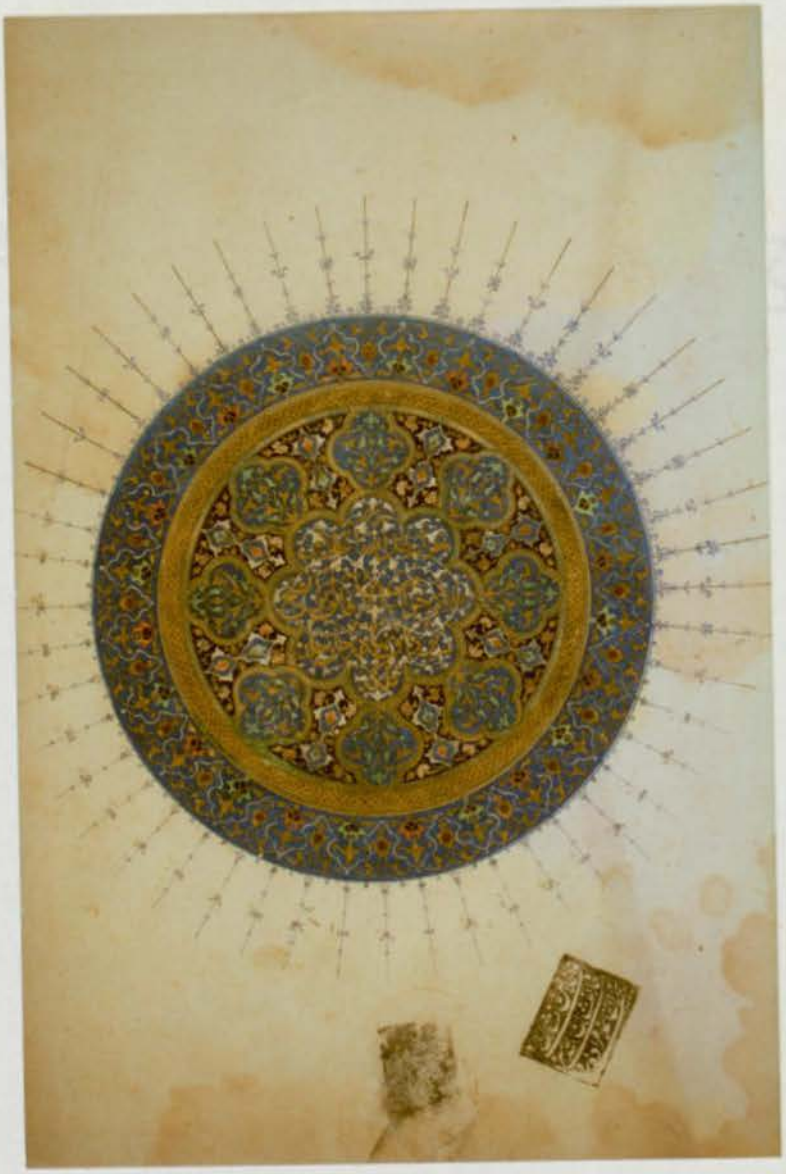

Figure 24: BOD Ms. Elliot 251
Rumi's Mathnawi for Pir Budaq
folio 1b
c. 1455-65/859-69 (but prob. prior to 1458/861), prob. Shiraz
10 cm diam.

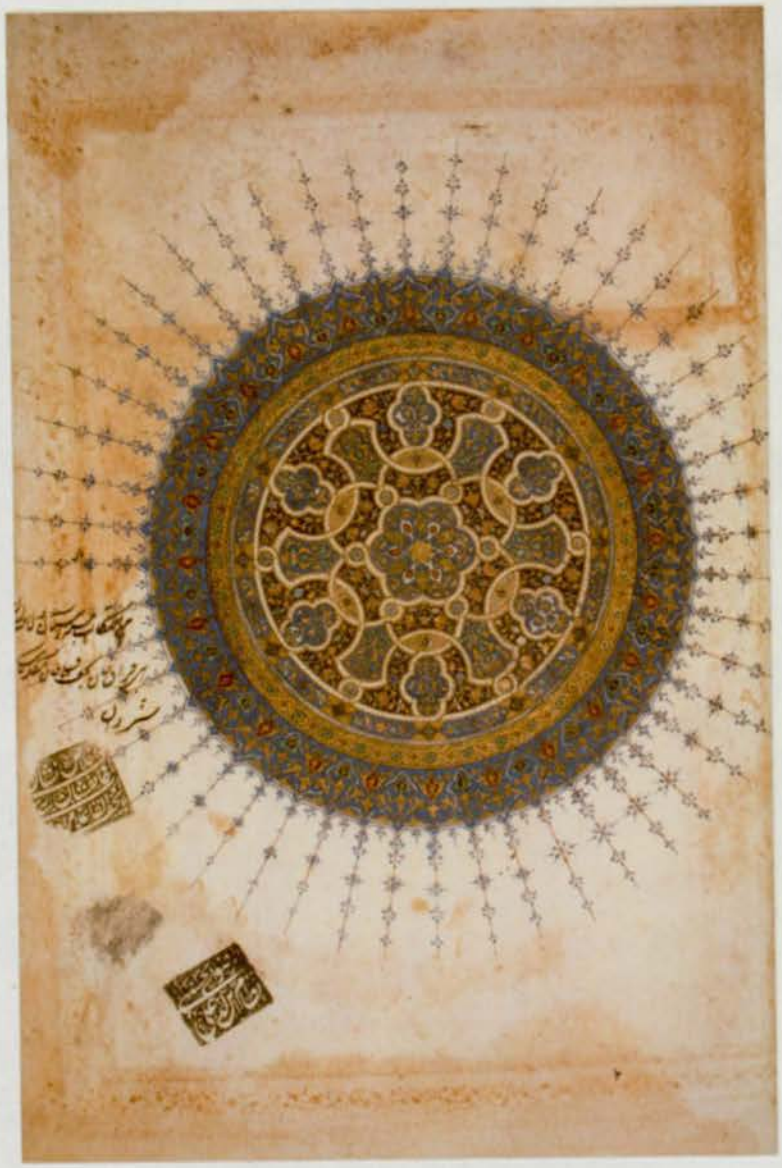

Figure 25: BOD Ms. Elliot 251
Rumi's Mathnawi for Pir Budaq
folio 2a
c. 1455-65/859-69 (but prob. prior to 1458/861), prob. Shiraz
10 cm diam.

Figure 26: BOD Ms. Fraser 68
A selection of Amir Khusrau's minor poems
folio 1a
1456/860, Herat
6.8 cm diam.

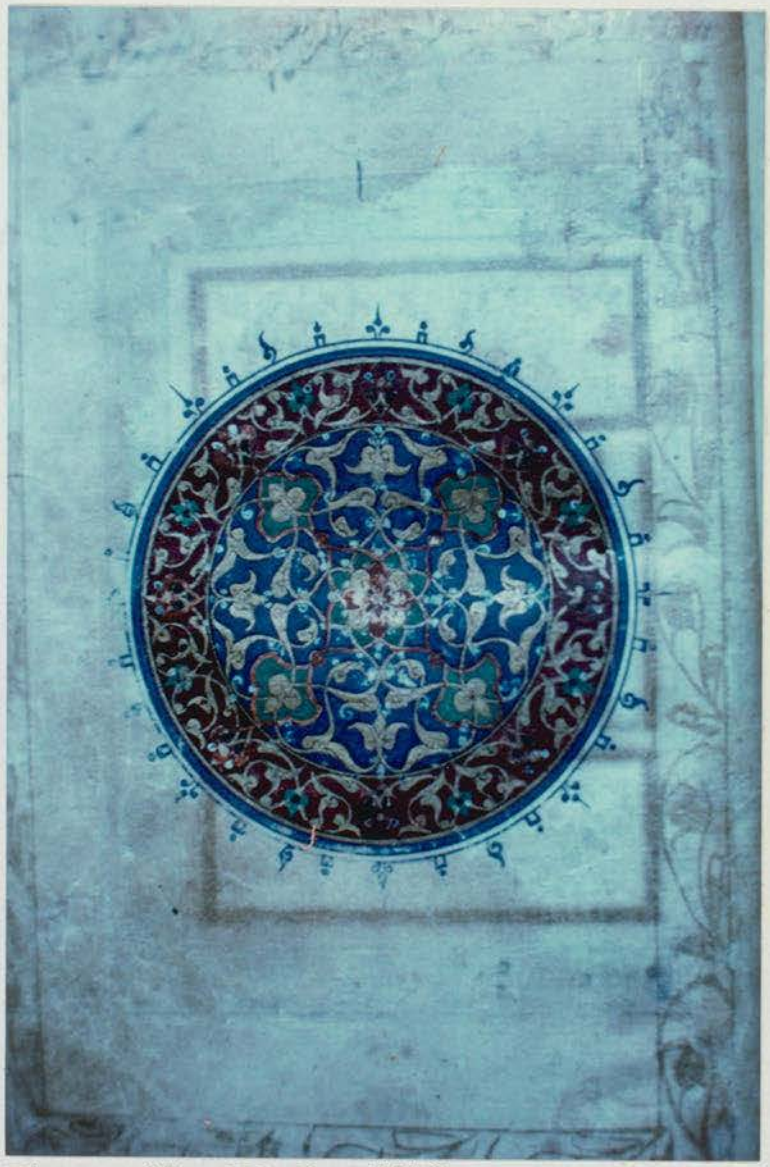

Figure 27: CBL Ms. 1518
Qur'an
folio 1a
1464/868
5 cm diam.

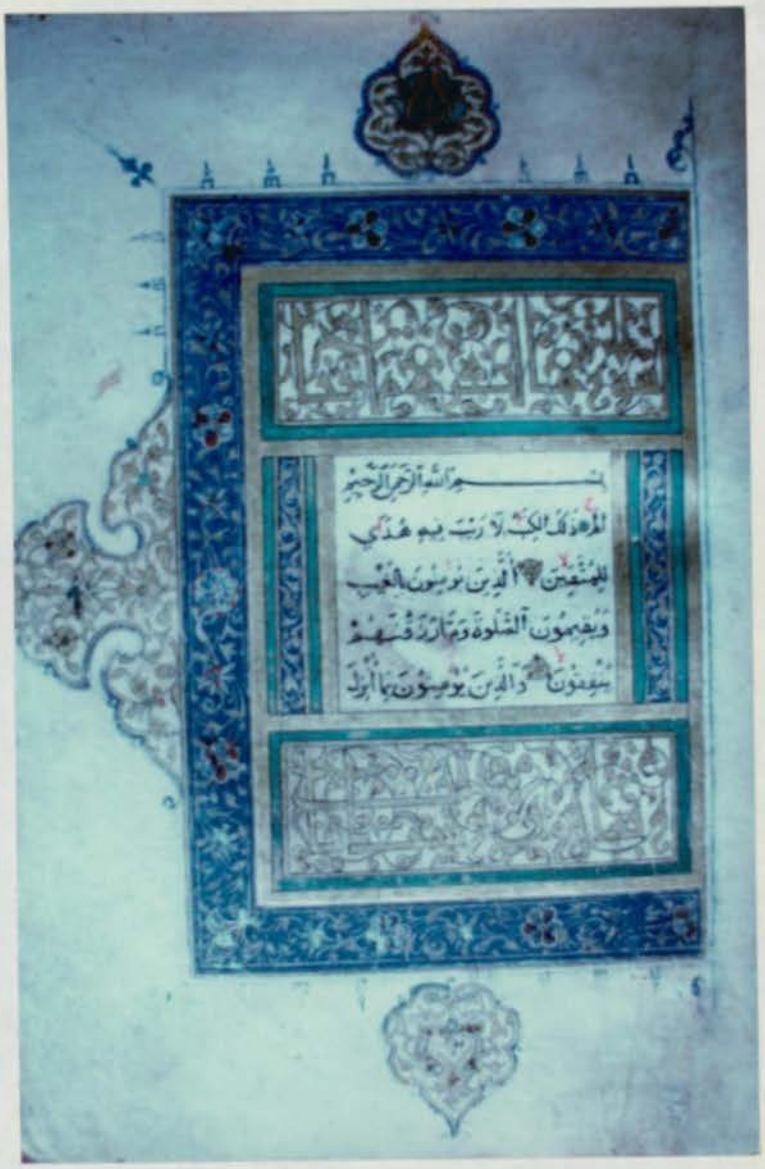

Figure 28: CBL Ms. 1518
Qur'an
folio 2a
1464/868
13.1 x 9 cm (whole page)

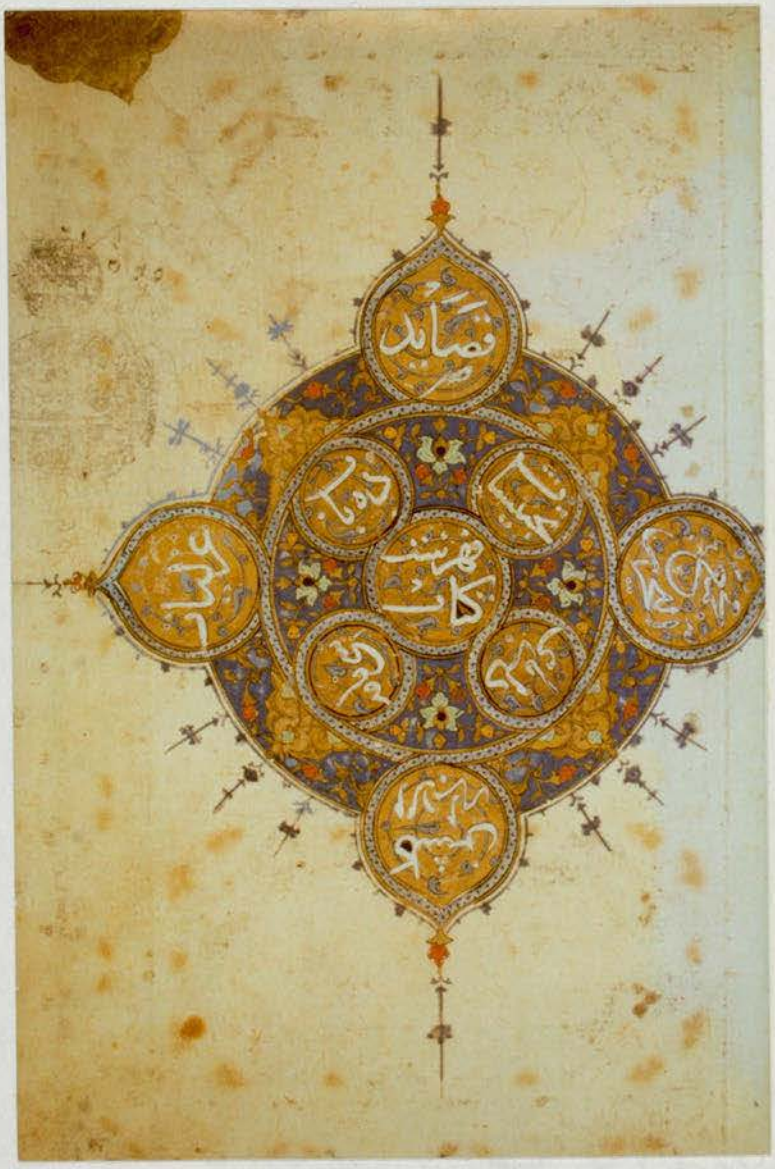

Figure 29: BOD Ms. Elliot 177
Kulliyyat-i-Katibi
folio 1a
1484/889
9 cm diam.

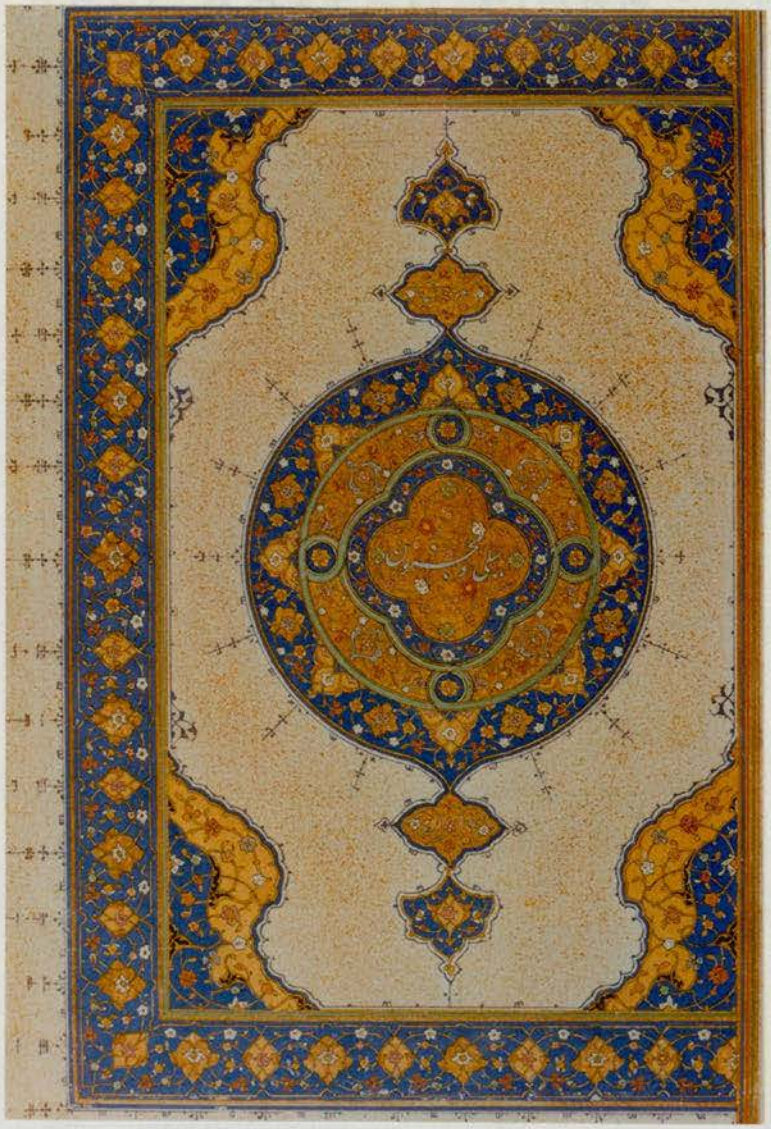

Figure 31: State Public Library, Leningrad
Dorn 560
Khamsa of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i
flyleaf to "Laila and Majnun"
1492-93/898, Herat

Figure 32: State Public Library, Leningrad
Dorn 560
Khamsa of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i
flyleaf to "Sabyai Sayera"
1492-3/898, Herat

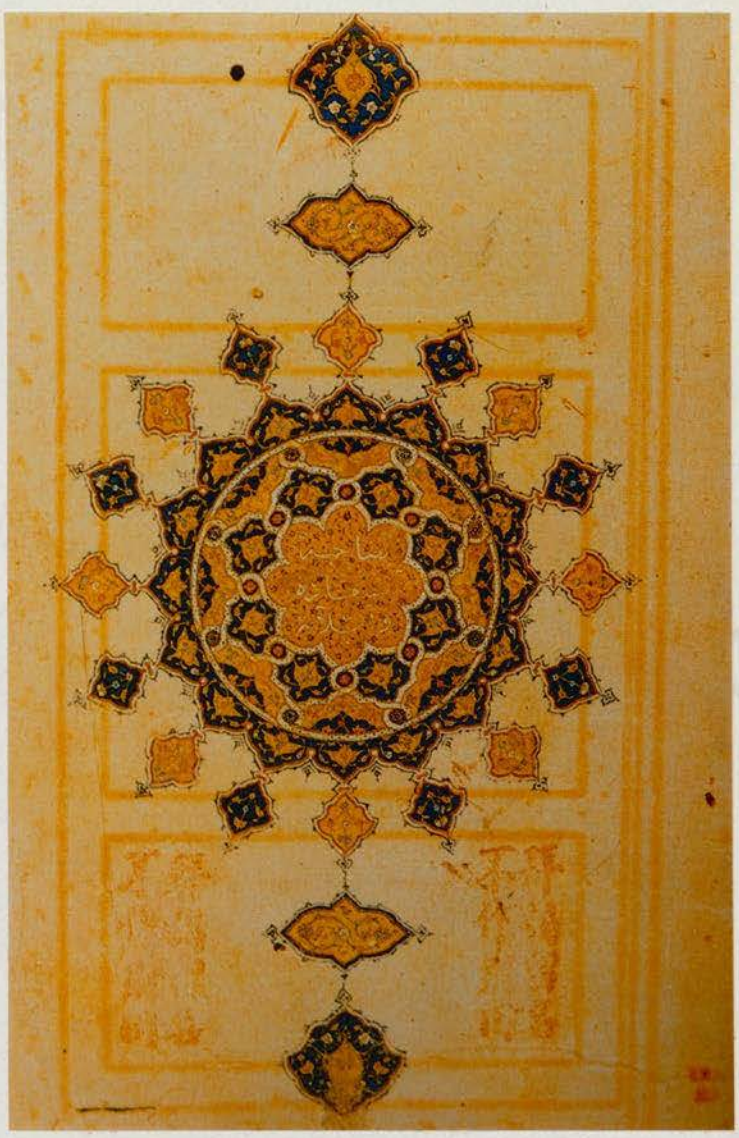

Figure 33: Institute of Manuscripts, Tashkent
Ms. No. 26
Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i
close of the 15th/9th c., Herat

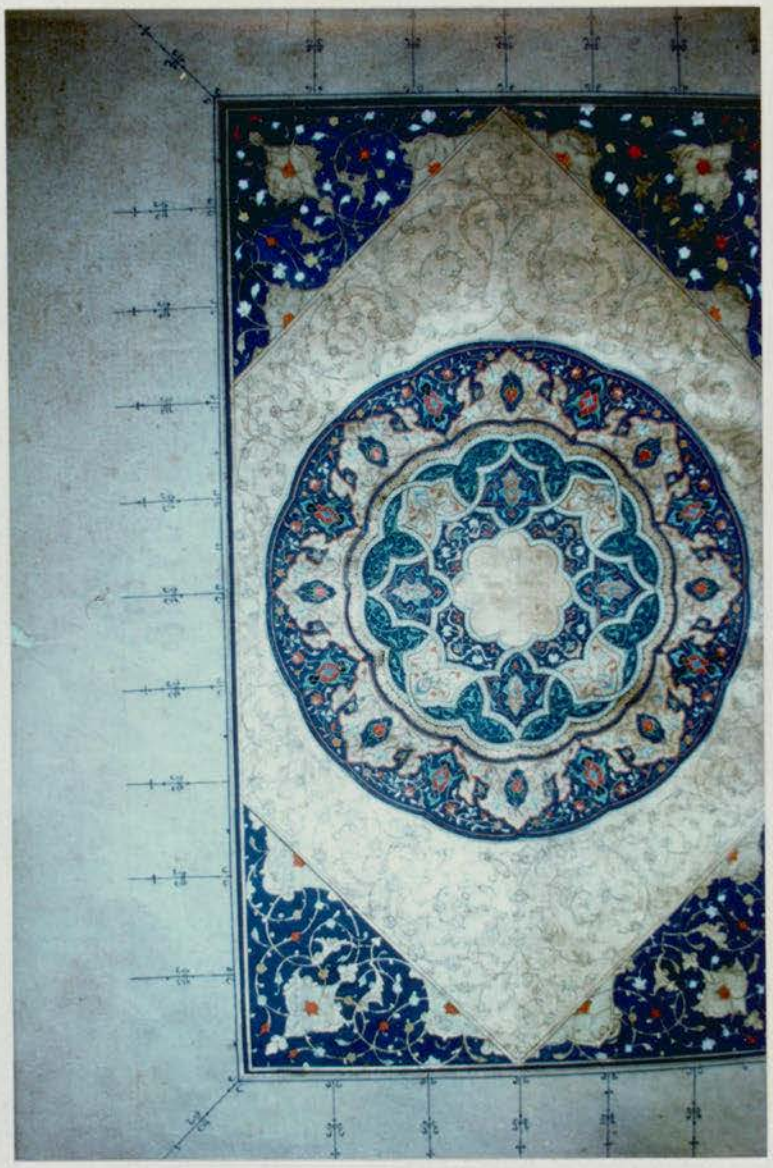

Figure 34: CBL Ms. 183
Bustan of Sa'di
folio 2a
1510/916, Herat
9.7 cm diam.

Figure 35: CBL Ms. 200
Two poems by Jami
folio 1a
1534/941, Bukhara
6.5 cm diam.

Figure 36: CBL Ms. 200
Two poems by Jami
folio 10a
1534/941, Bukhara
6.4 cm diam.

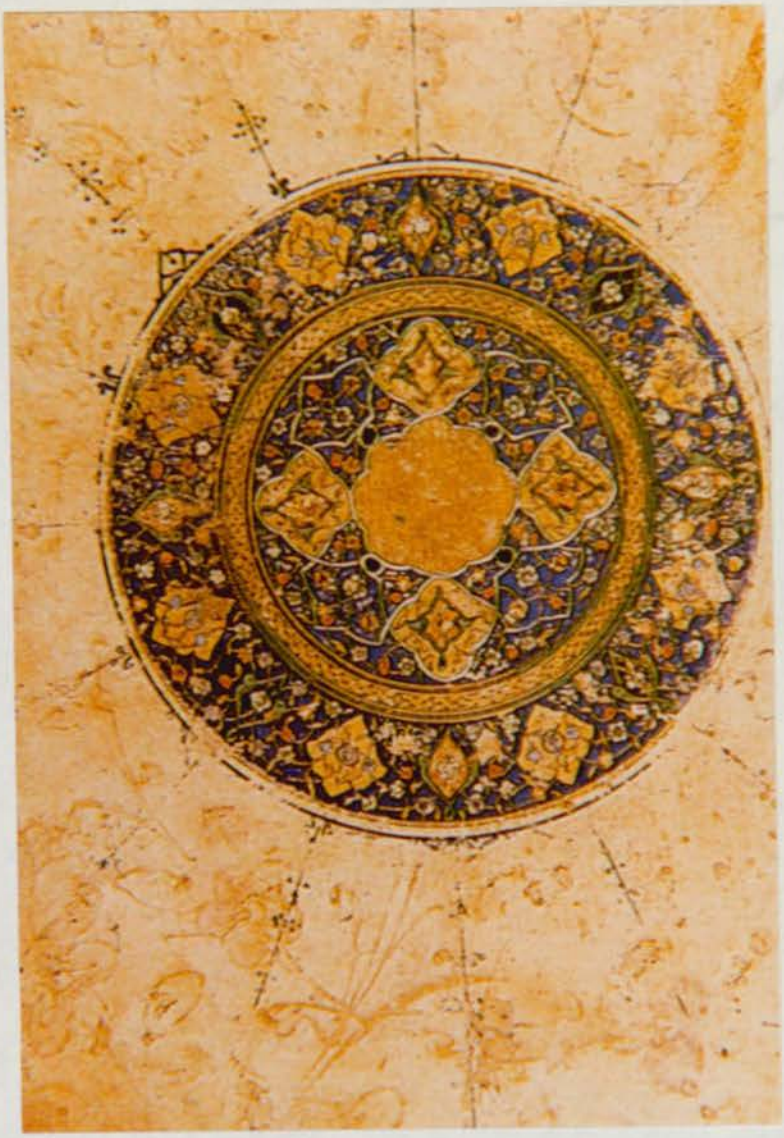

Figure 37: Qur'an
1585-86/994, Samarkand

Figure 38: BOD Ms. Elliot 247
Jami's Yusuf and Zalikha
folio 20la
prob. 17th/11th c., prob. Samarkand
8.9 cm diam.

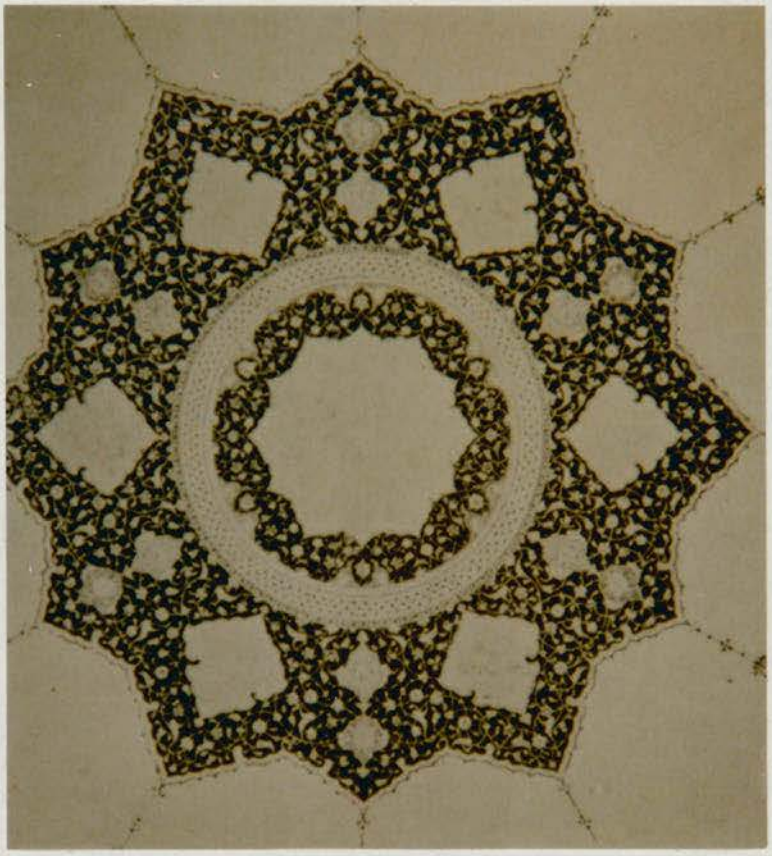

Figure 39: BL Ms. Or. 2265
Khamsa of Nizami
folio 1b (same as 2a)
1539-43/946-49, Tabriz
12.1 cm diam.

Figure 40: CBL Ms. 1545
Qur'an
folio 1b (same as 2a)
16.6 cm diam.

Figure 41: CBL Ms. 218
Gulshan-i-Raz
folio 2a
5.7 cm diam.

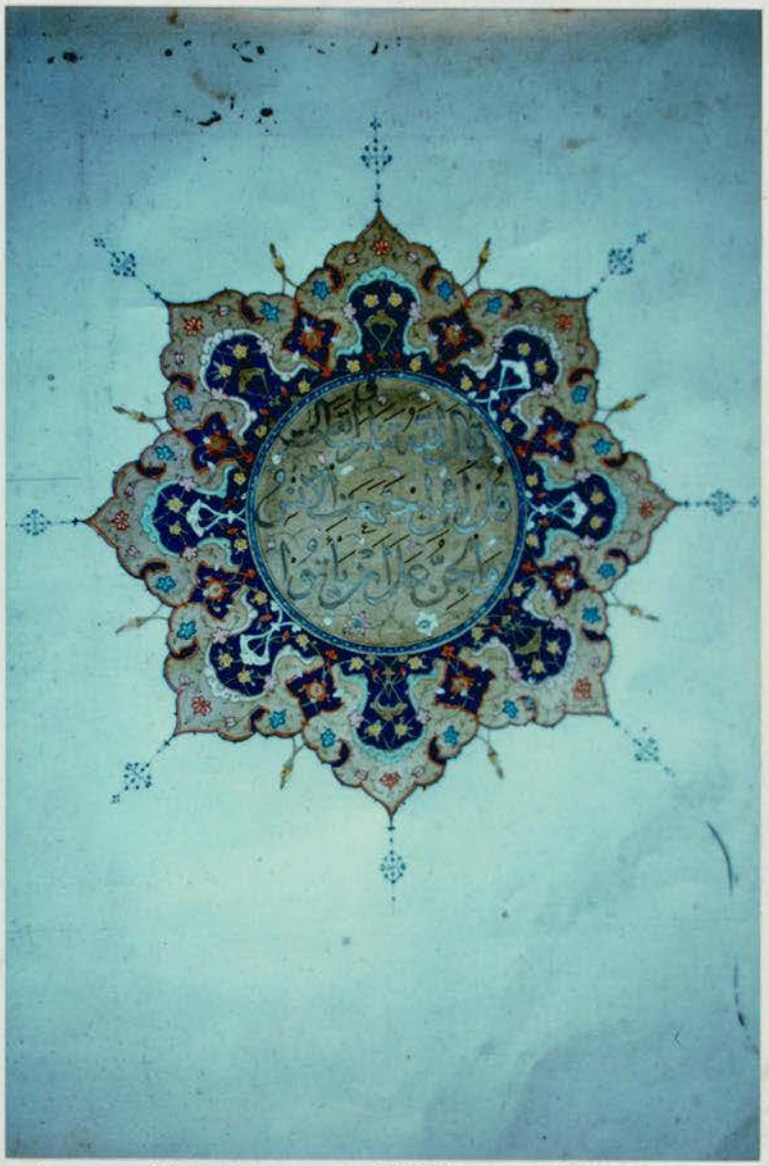

Figure 42: CBL Ms. 1534
Qur'an
folio 1b (same as 2a)
1573-74/982
12.3 cm diam.

Figure 43: BOD Ms. Arab d. 98
Qur'an
folio 1b (same as 2a)
29.6 x 19.2 cm (whole page)

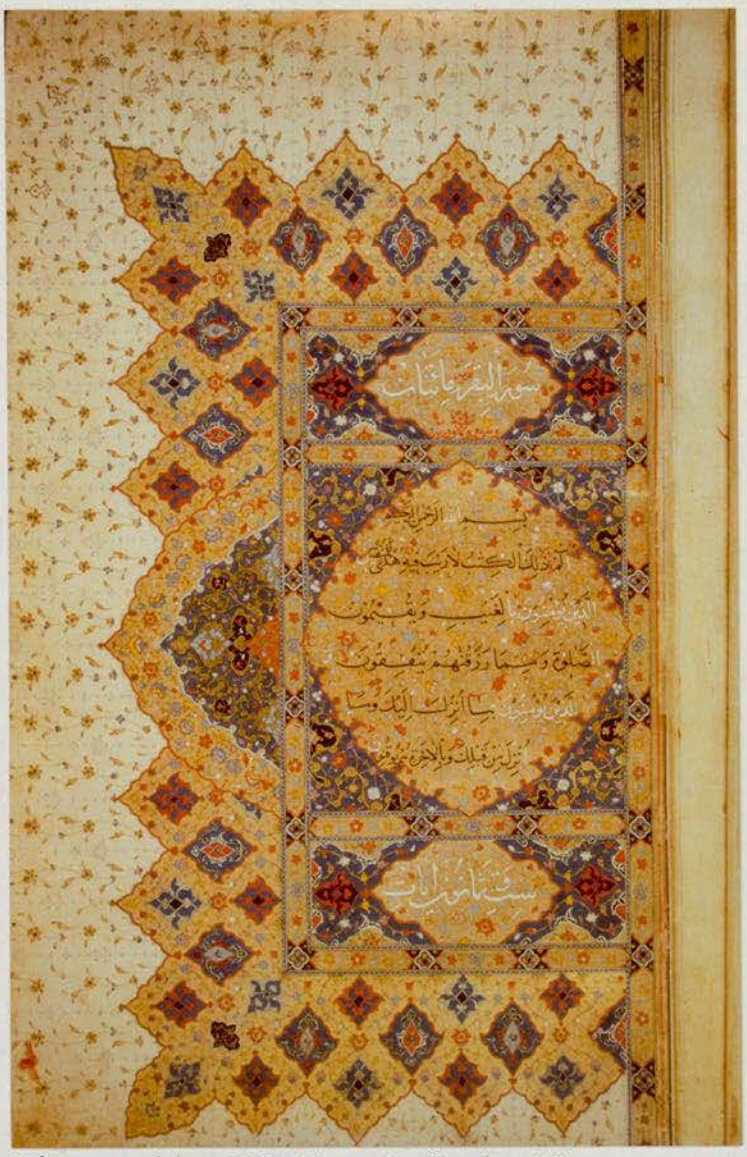

Figure 44: BOD Ms. Arab d. 98
Qur'an
folio 3a (same as 2b)
29.6 x 19.2 cm (whole page)

Figure 45: CBL Ms. 1534
Qur'an
folio 2b (same as 3a)
1573-74/982
35.5 x 23.7 cm

Figure 46: Collection of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.
The Houghton Shahnama
folio 16a
c. 1524-37/931-44

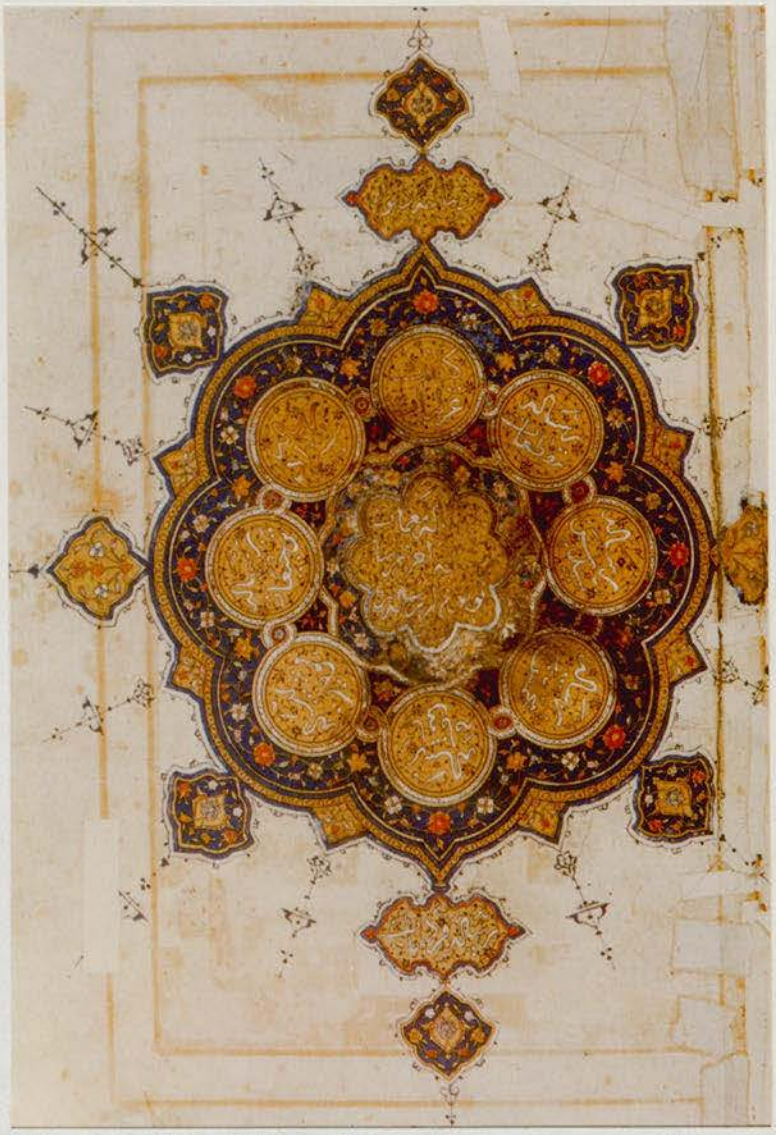

Figure 47: Bib. Nat. Supp. turc. 762
Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i
1564-65/972

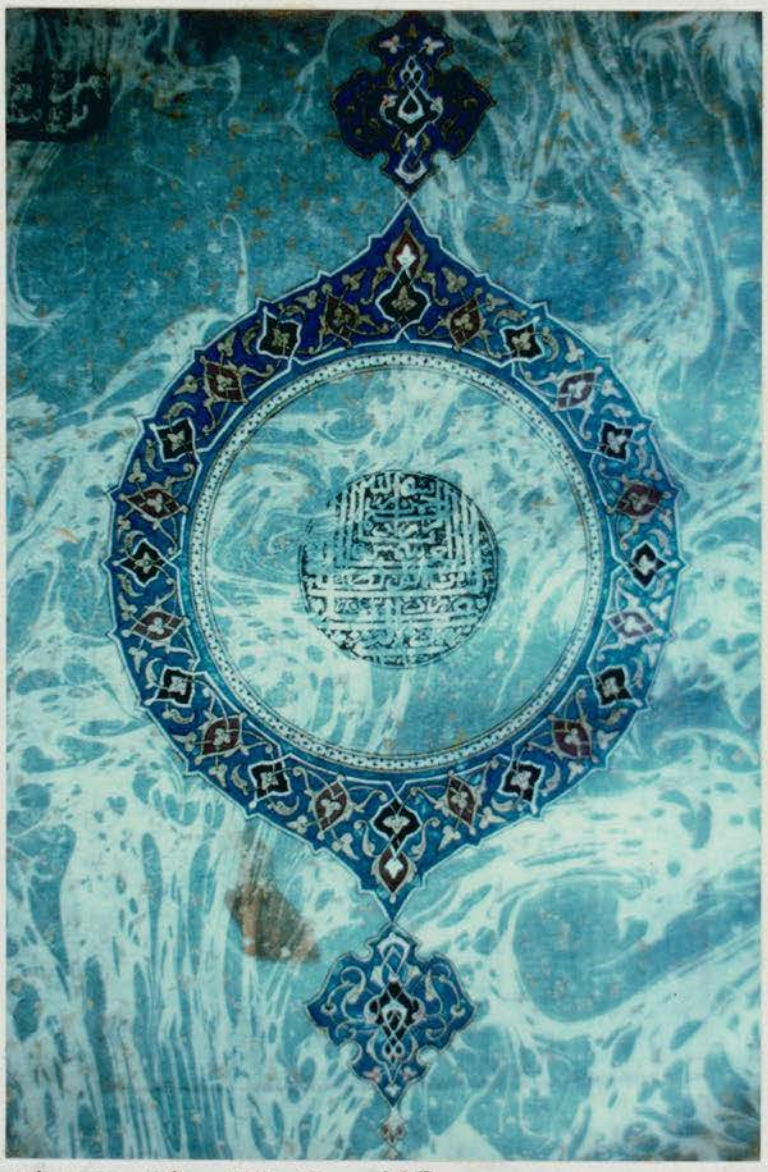

Figure 48: CBL Ms. 227
Araba'in Hadith
folio 1a (same as folio 9b)
1557/964, Mashhad
13 cm diam.

Figure 49: Rock carving at Taq-i-Bustan of the investiture of Ardashir II, with Ahura-Mazda and Mithras, A.D. 379

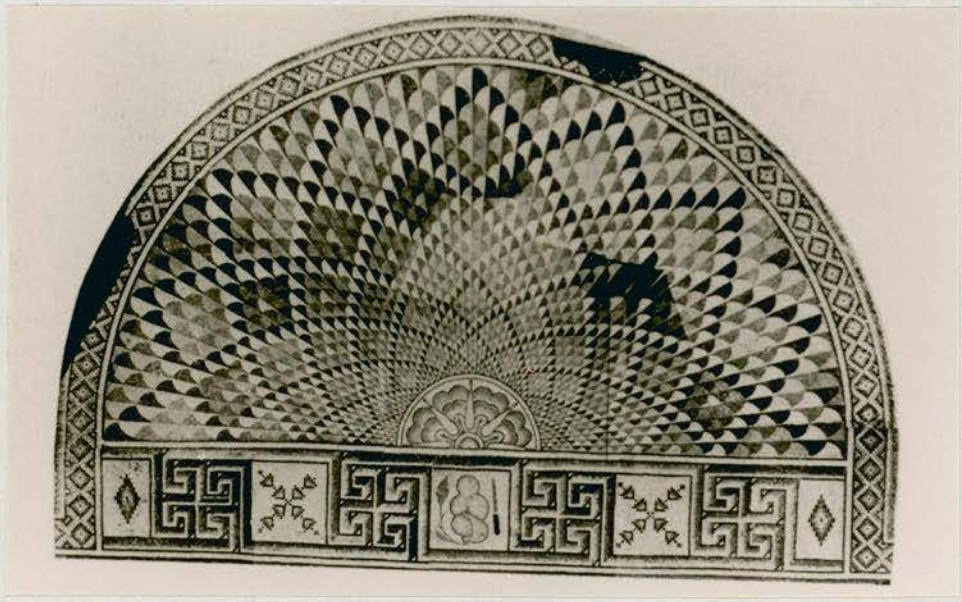

Figure 50: Floor mosaic in the Throne Apse (Exedra V), Khirbat al-Mafjar, c. A.D. 724-43

Figure 51: Achaemenian Seal
6th-4th c. B.C.

Figure 52: The Bargello, Florence, No. 364c
late 13th/early 14th c. Mamluk bowl

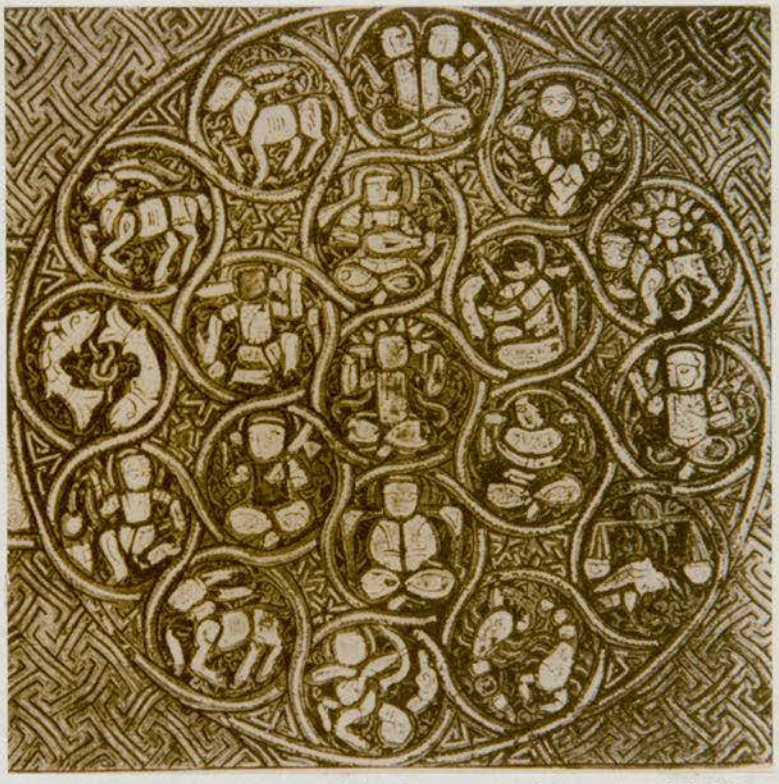

Figure 53: Museo Civico, Bologna, 2129
From the cover of an Ayyubid pen box
13th c.

Figure 54: ex. Minassian Collection (present owner unknown)
Base of an Iranian inkwell
late 12th/early 13th c.

Figure 55: Iran Bastan, Tehran
Syro-Mesopotamian basin
c.1275

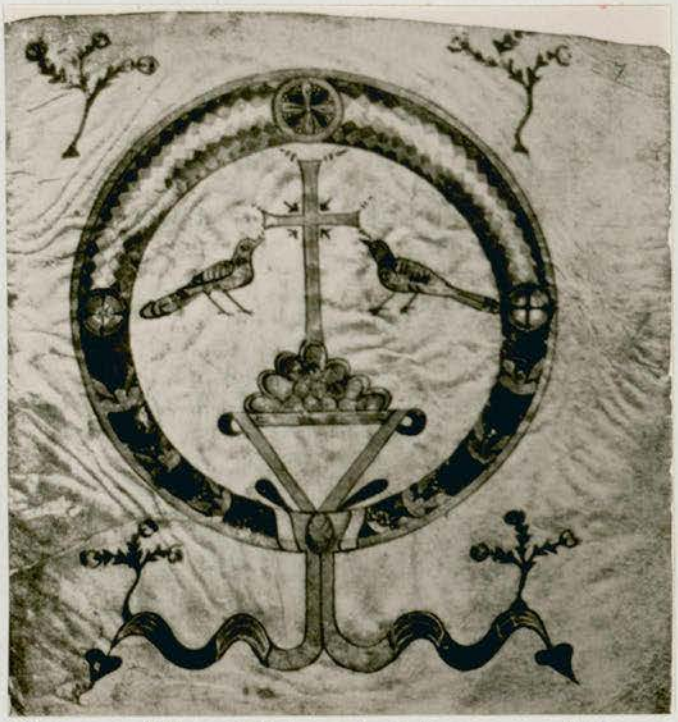

Figure 56: National Library, Vienna, No. 847
The Gospels
folio 1
6th c.

Figure 57:
National Library, Vienna
Ms. Med. gr.1,
Title page, Dioscorides'
De Materia Medica
A.D. 512

Figure 58:
(same ms. as
above)
folio 6b

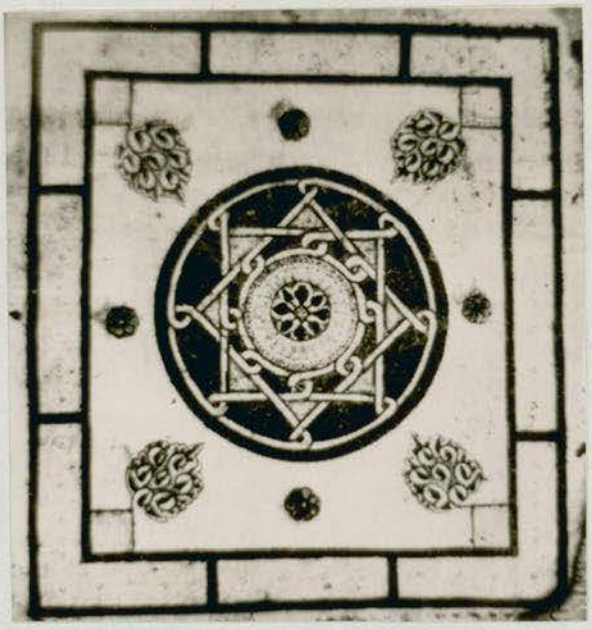

Figure 59: Karaite Congregation,
'Abbasiye, Cairo
Codex of the Prophets
A.D. 895, Tiberias

Figure 60: CBL Ms. 1434
Qur'an
folio 2a (same as 1b)
971-72/361
26 x 17.8 cm

Figure 61: BL Ms. Or. 1397
Qur'an
folio 15b
9th/3rd c., Iraq or Iran

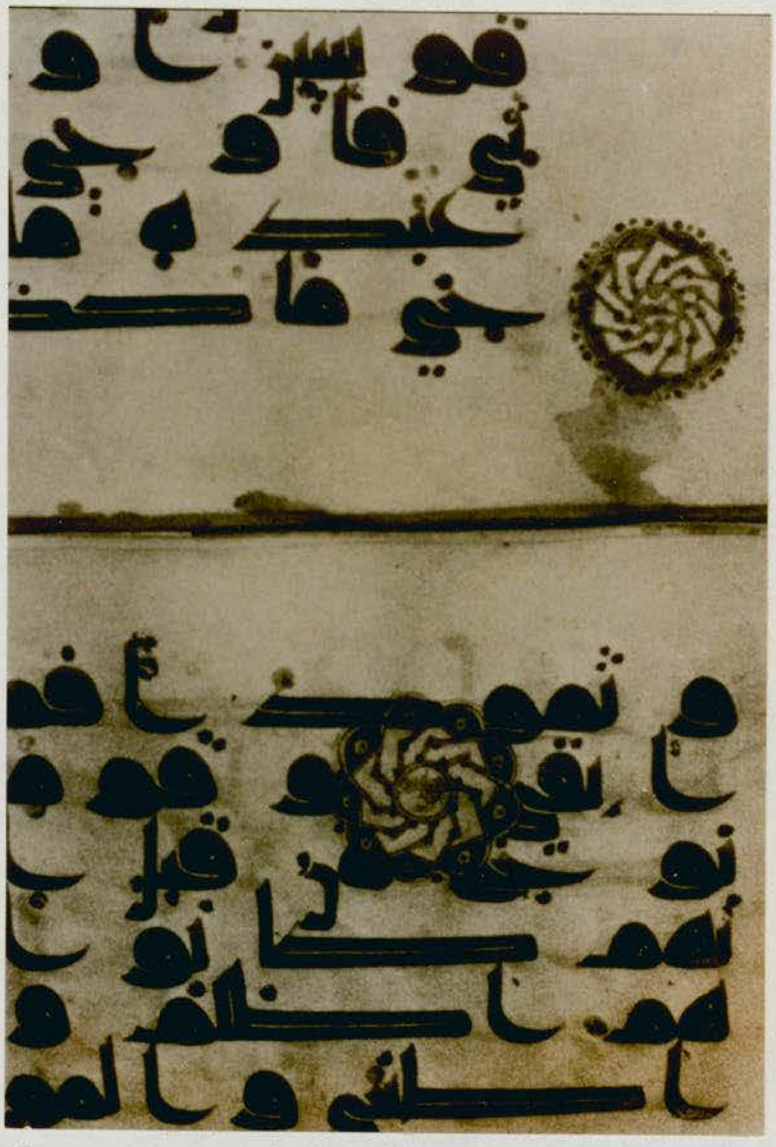

Figure 62: National Library, Tunis
Qur'an
9th/3rd c., Kairouan

Figure 63: CBL Ms. 1434
Qur'an
folio 46b
971-72/361

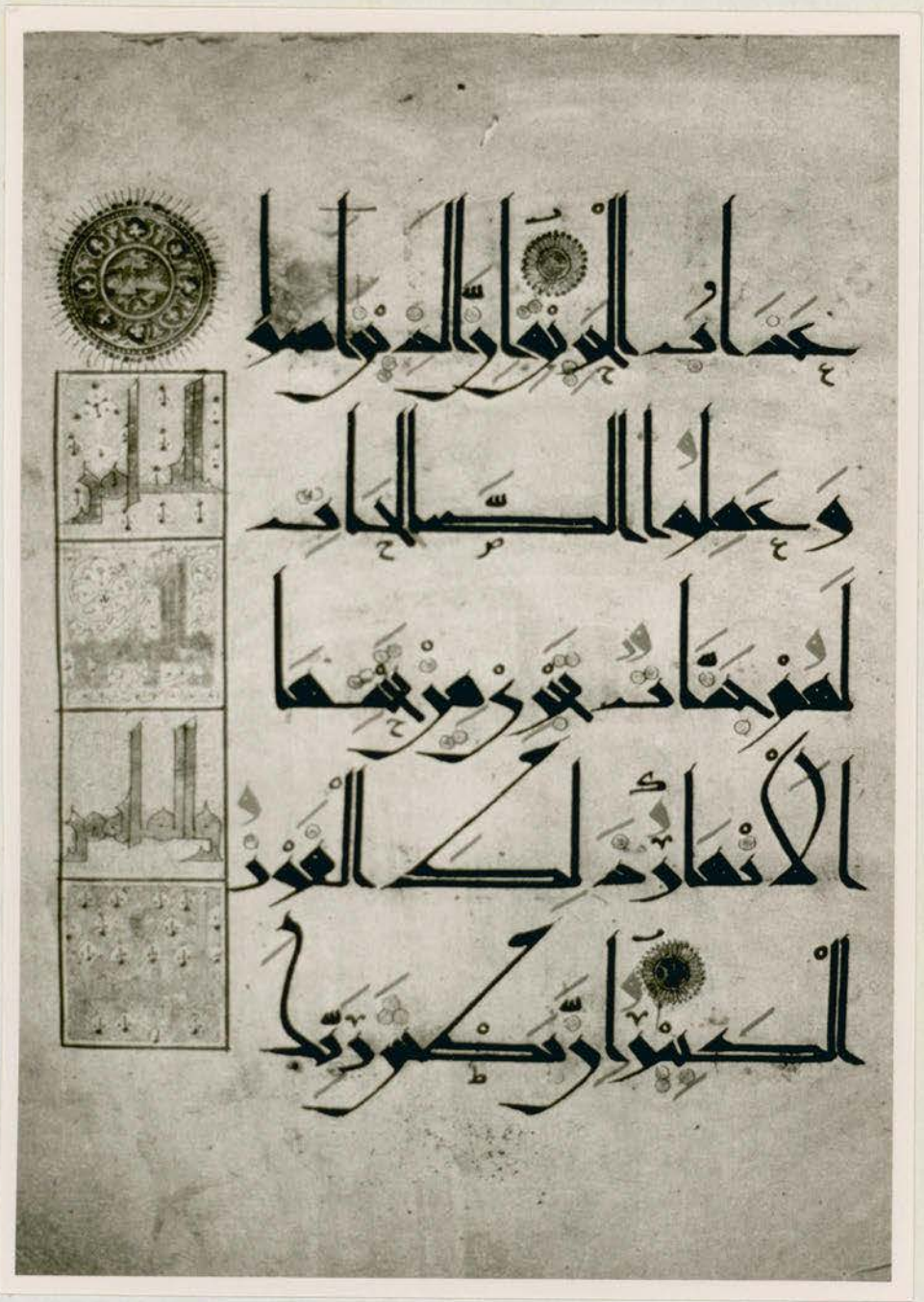

Figure 64: Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan
Qur'an
late 11th/5th c., Iraq or Iran

Figure 65: CBL Ms. 1431
Qur'an
folio 242a
1000-01/391, Baghdad

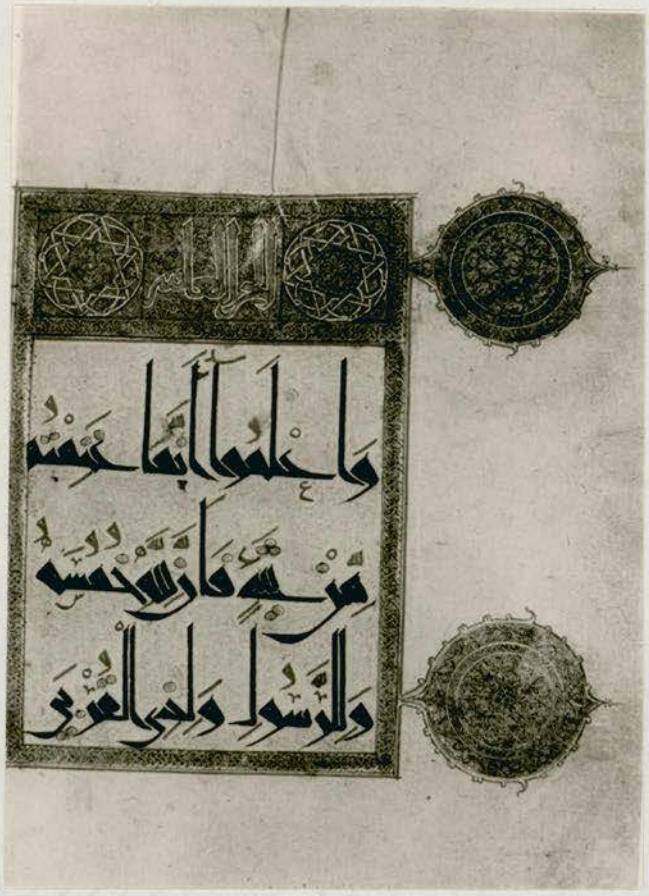

Figure 66: Mashhad Shrine Library, Ms. 4316
Qur'an
folio 2b
1073-74/466, Iraq or Iran

Figure 67: CBL Ms. 1438
Seljuq Qur'an
folio 105a
1186/582
6 cm diam.

Figure 68: CBL Ms. 1435
Qur'an
folio 47b
1195/592

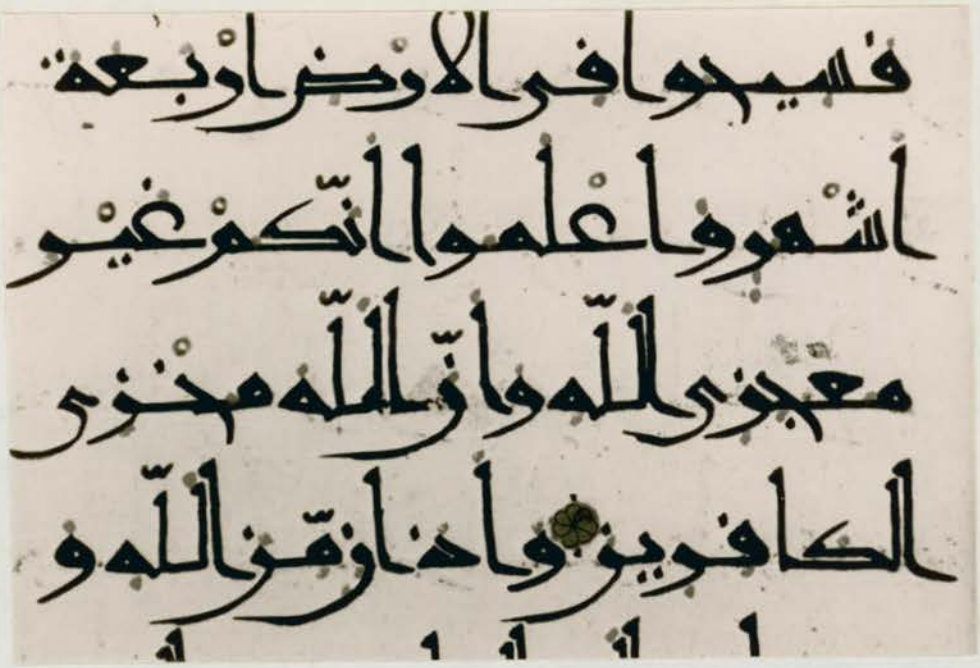

Figure 69: CBL Ms. 1433, Qur'an, folio 1b
12th/6th c., Iran

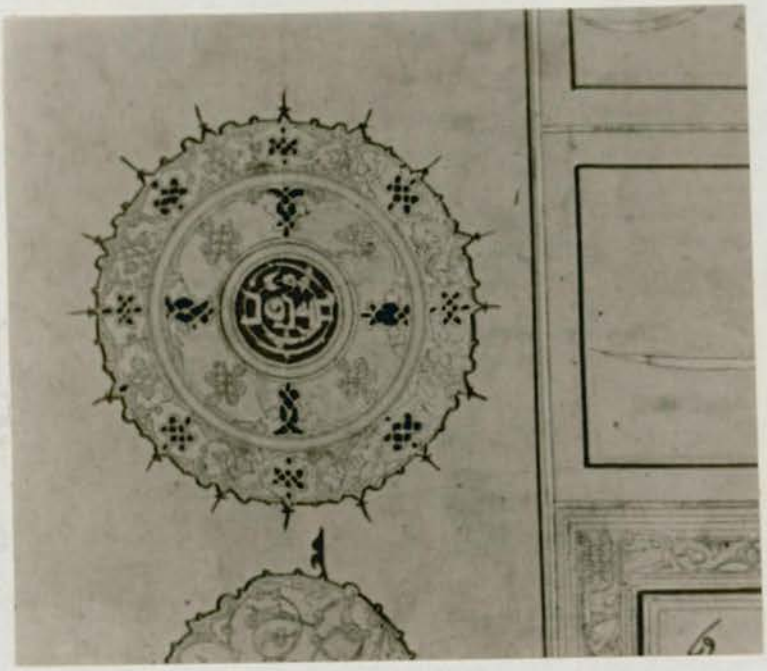

Figure 70: National Library, Cairo
Ms. 72, part 30, folio 29a
1313/713

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APPENDIX 1
LIST OF SHAMSAS INCLUDED IN STUDY

The figure number is listed for all shamsas illustrated in this study.

Il-Khanid Era

Tabriz

Edinburgh University Library, Ms. Arab 20, World History of Rashid al-Din, ff. 137a and 148a (Figures 3-4), 1306/706. Illustrated in David Talbot Rice and Basil Gray, The Illustrations to the World History of Rashid al-Din (Edinburgh 1976), 184.

Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Geneva, World History of Rashid al-Din, ff. 19a and 42a (Figures 20-21), 1314/714. Illustrated in Basil Gray, The World History of Rashid al-Din, A study of the Royal Asiatic Society Manuscript (London 1978), figs. 36-37.

Maragha

Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms. 500, Manafi' al-Hayawan for Shams ad-Din ibn Ziya ad-Din az-Zushaki (Figure 8), 1297/697. Illustrated in Richard Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," A Survey of Persian Art, ed. A.U. Pope and Phyllis Ackerman (1939; rpt. Ashiya, Japan 1981), X, plate 946a.

CBL Ms. 1470, Qur'an, folio 1a (Figure 9), 1338/738, copied by 'Abdallah ibn Ahmad ibn Fadl-allah ibn Abdul-Hamud. Illustrated in Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," X, plate 946b; and David James, Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library, A Facsimile Exhibition (London 1980), 64, no. 47.

Shiraz

Topkapi Saray, Istanbul, Hazine 1479, Firdausi's Shahnama, folio 1a (Figure 7), 1331/731, copied by Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Bahmani. Illustrated in Norah Titley, Persian Miniature Painting (London 1983), 230, fig. 77.

BL Ms. Add. 7622, Ta'rikh Tabari, folio 1a, 1334/734, copied by Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Bahmani.

Il-Khanid Manuscripts of Uncertain Provenance

BL Ms. Add. 7942, Diwan of Khakani, folio 223a, 1265/664, copied by Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Hussein Samani at Khojand.

BL Ms. Add. 25026, The Alchemy of Bliss, folio 1a, 1274/672, copied by 'Ali b. Muhammad b. Abdallah al-Nasakhi al-Shaibani al-Farasi.

IOL Ms. 132, An Anthology of Diwans, ff. 1a, 19a, 48a, 76a, 88a and 97b, 1315/714, Tabriz or Maragha, copied by 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Alawi al-Kashi.

BL Ms. Or. 2676, Jami'ul-Hikayat, folio 4a, 1332/732, Shiraz style.

BL Ms. Or. 4392, Jami'ul-Hikayat (a portion of the first book only) for Husan al-Din Siraf, folio 1a, 1340/741.

Other 13th Century Manuscripts

BOD Ms. Arab d. 138, Dioscorides' De Materia Medica, folio 1a (Figure 1), 1240/637, Baghdad, copied by al-Hasan ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Nasawi.

CBL Ms. 1466, Qur'an, for Sayf al-Milla wa'l-Dunya wa'l-Din Sunqur bin 'Abdallah, ff. 331b (Figure 2) and 332a (identical), 1278/677, illuminated by Mukhlis ibn 'Abdallah (al-Hindi), Konya.

JRL Ms. 25-38/760-73, Qur'an (Trilingual), ff. 26-1a, 26-34a, 26-100b, 27-1a, 28-86a, 29-66b, 30-15a, 30-17b, 31-1a, 32-45b, 33-40b, 33-41a, no date, prob. Anatolia.

Timurid Era

Tabriz

Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, Ms. No. 31.37, Khusrau and Shirin, c. 1405-10/808-13, copied by Mir 'Ali b. Hasan al-Sultani (al-Tabrizi). Illustrated in Basil Gray ed., The Arts of the Book in Central Asia, 14th-16th Centuries, plate V.

Herat

Library of the Gulistan Palace, Tehran, Ms. No. 61, Shahnama for Baysunghur (Figure 19), 1429-30/833, copied by Ja'far Baysunghuri. Illustrated in Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray, Persian Miniature Painting (1933; 2nd ed. New York 1971), plate XLIII-B.49; and Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," X, plate 946c.

CBL Ms. 121, Musibat-Nameh (The Book of Affliction) of 'Attar for Shah Rukh, folio 4a [previous pages blank] (Figure 20), 1429-30/833, copied by Mir 'Ali Tabrizi.

BOD Ms. Elliot 210, Kulliyyat-i-Imad, folio 1a (Figure 21), 1431/834, copied by Azhar.

BOD Ms. Fraser 65, a selection of Amir Khusrau's minor poems, folio 1a (Figure 26), 1456/860, copied at the court of Mirza Shah Mahmud.

CBL Ms. 126, Mi'atu Kalimat (The Hundred Sayings of 'Ali), folio 1a, c. 1456-90/861-95, copied by Zain al-Abidin ibn Muhammad.

BOD Ms. Elliot 48, Kulliyyat-i-Da'i, folio 1a, 1474/879, copied by Sultan 'Ali.

CBL Ms. 168, Diwan of Hafiz, folio 1a, c. 1480/885.

BOD Ms. Elliot 287, Hayrat al-abrar by Ali Shir Nawa'i, folio 1a (Figure 30), copied for Sultan Badi' al-Zaman Bahadur Khan, eldest son of Sultan Husayn, 1485/890.

Leningrad State Public Library, Dorn 560, Khamsa of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, ff. four shamsas, folio numbers not available (Figures 31-32), 1492-93/898, copied by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, illustrated by Maulana Yari. Illustrated in E. Yu Yusupov ed., Miniatures Illustrations [sic] of Alisher Navoi's Works of the XV-XIXth Centuries (Tashkent 1982), plates 48, 50, 52, 54.

IOL Ms. No. 1023, Diwan-i-Kamal Ima'il, folio 1a, 1499-1500/905, copied by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi.

Institute of Manuscripts, Tashkent, Ms. No. 26, Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, (Figure 33), close of 15th/9th century. Illustrated in Yusupov, plate 101.

Shiraz

Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Islamisches Museen, East Berlin, Ms. I.4628, Anthology for Baysunghur, folio 1 (Figure 16), 1420/823, copied by Mahmud al-Husayni. Illustrated in Die Miniaturen der Berliner Baisonqur-Handschrift (Frankfort am Main 1970).

BOD Ms. Ouseley Add. 176, Firdausi's Shahnama for Ibrahim Sultan, folio 12a (Figure 17), soon after 1430/833, illuminated by Nasr al-Sultani.

CBL Ms. 294, Anthology, ff. 7a (Figure 18), 46a and 79a, early 15th/9th century.

CBL Ms. 134, A Collection of Tracts for Pir Budaq, folio 1a, 1459/864, copied by Shaykh Mahmud.

Samarkand

Topkapi Saray, Hazine 786, Khamsa of Nizami for Ulugh Beg, folio 1a, 1446-47/850, copied by 'Ali ibn Iskandar al-Kuhistani, illuminated by Sultan 'Ali al-Bavardi. Illustrated in Ivan Stchoukine, Les Peintures des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami au Topkapi Saryi Muzesi d'Istanbul (Paris 1977), plate XXV.

Timurid Manuscripts of Uncertain Provenance
(all are in the style of Herat unless indicated otherwise)

BL Ms. Or. 3391, An Historical and Topographical Account of the City of Qum, folio 1a.

CBL Ms. 117, Five Mystic Mathnawis of 'Attar, folio 73a (Figure 15), 1418/821 (Shiraz style).

BOD Ms.Elliot 121, selections from Amir Khusrau's ghazals, folio 1a (Figure 22), 1435-36/839.

CBL Ms. 130, Tashrih al-Badad (a treatise on anatomy) by Masur ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad, folio 1a, c. 1430-50/833-54 (Shiraz style).

Collection of M.H. Vever, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Khamsa of Khwaju Kirmani, 1438/841 (double identical shamsas). Illustrated in Binyon, Wilkinson and Gray, plate LIII-B.57a.

Keir Collection, Ms. III.82 and 83, Khamsa of Nizami, ff.1b (Figure 23) and 2a, circa 1442-44/842-44 (Shiraz style). Illustrated in B.W. Robinson, E. Grube, G.M. Meredith-Owens and R.Skelton, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, The Keir Collection (London 1976), colour plate 13 and plate 25.

Sultans' Library, Istanbul, single page shamsa decorated with zodiac, mid-15th/9th century. Illustrated in Ernst Kuhnel, Miniaturmalerei im islamischen Orient, (Berlin 1922), plate 41.

CBL Ms. 132, Jami's Hilyati Hulal (Embroideries of the Robe), folio 1a, 1452/856.

BOD Ms. Elliot 251, Rumi's Mathnawi for Pir Budaq, ff. 1b and 2a (Figures 24-25), c. 1455-65/859-69 (prob. prior to 1458), prob. Shiraz, copied by Nasr bin Hasan of Makkah.

CBL Ms. 136, Rumi's Mathnawi for Kamal al-Daulah wa'l-Din Muhmud ('Syndic of the Merchants'), folio 1a, 1462-63/867.

CBL Ms. 1518, Qur'an, folio 1a (Figure 27), 1464/868, copied by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Imran al-Hanafi.

CBL Ms. 143, Kulliyyat of Khwaju Kirmani, folio 1a, 1468/873, copied by Sultan 'Ali.

CBL Ms. 144, Tarikh (Annals) of Tabari, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1469-70/874. Illustrated in David James, Islamic Art, An Introduction (London 1974), 71.

CBL Ms. 149, Anthology, folio 1a, 1475/880, copied by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, made for Abu Sa'id i Gurkan (but he died in 1468?).

BOD Ms. Elliot 194, Khamsa of Nizami, folio 1a, c. 1480/885.

BOD Ms. Elliot 260, Rumi's Mathnawi, folio 1a, 1480/884.

CBL Ms. 162, Khamsa of Nizami, folio 1a, 1481-82/886, copied by Murshid.

BOD Ms. Elliot 177, Kulliyyat of Shams-aldin Muhammad bin 'Abdallah Katibi, folio 1a (Figure 29), 1484/889.

IOL Ms. No. 402, Khamsa of Nizami, folio 1a, 1488/894, copied by Mawlana Hajji Muhammad al-Durustaqi al-Badakhshi.

CBL Ms. 169, Rumi's Mathnawi, folio 1a, c. 1490/896.

BL Ms. Or. 1215 Diwan of Amir Khusrau, folio 1a, 1490/895.

BOD Ms. Elliot 325, Firdausi's Shahnama, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1494/899, copied by Sultan Husain bin Sultan 'Ali bin Aslanshah.

BL Ms. Or. 5096, Jami's Baharistan, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1494/899.

CBL Ms. 1546, Qur'an, ff. 1a and 2b (identical), 1497-98/903, copied by Sadr b. Bayazid b. Ibrahim, called 'Farsi.' Illustrated in James, Qur'ans and Bindings, 75, no. 57.

BL Ms. Or. 1374, Diwan of Ali Shir Nawa'i, folio 1a, late 15th/9th century. Illustrated in Yusupov, plate 202.

Safavid and Uzbek Era

Tabriz

Collection of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., The Houghton Shahnama, folio 16a (Figure 46), c. 1524-37/931-44. Illustrated in Stuart Cary Welch, A King's Book of Kings (New York 1972), 78, no. 16; S. C. Welch, Wonders of the Age, Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting 1501-1576 (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1979); and M.B. Dickson and S.C. Welch, The Houghton Shahnameh, 2 vols. (Harvard 1981), ii and no. 4.

BL Ms. Or. 2265, Khamsa of Nizami for Shah Tahmasp, ff. 1b and 2a (identical, Figure 39), 1539-43/946-49, copied by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri. Illustrated in Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination," X, plate 946D: and S.C. Welch, Wonders of the Age, 135, plate 48.

BOD Ms. Fraser 78, Jami's Kulliyyat, folio 1b and 2a (identical), 1571-72/979.

Qazvin

Private Collection, Shahnama for Shah Isma'il II, 1576-77/985. Illustrated in Toby Falk ed., Treasures of Islam (Geneva 1985), 106, plate 72.

Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran, Ms. No. 3310, Qur'an, 1581/989, copied by Shams al-Din Muhammad 'Abd Allah for the Ardabil shrine. Illustrated in Hayward Gallery, The Arts of Islam (London 1976), 364, fig. 617.

Shiraz

BL Ms. Add. 24944, Kulliyyat of Sa'di, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1566/974. Illustrated in F.R. Martin, The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey (1912; rpt. London 1968), plate 260.

Mashhad

CBL Ms. 227, Araba'in Hadith (The Forty Precepts), ff. 1a (Figure 48) and 9b (identical), 1557/964, copied by Shah Mahmud Nishapuri.

JRL Ms. Ryl. Pers. 18, Anwar-i Suhayli, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), c. 1580/988.

Herat

CBL Ms. 183, Bustan of Sa'di, ff. 1b and 2a (Figure 34), 1510/916, copied by Sultan Muhammad Khandan.

BL Ms. Add. 24983, Khamsa of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, ff. 1a and 80a, 1511/917. (As the dedication is to Sultan Husayn Bayqara who died in 1506, it may have been incorrectly dated.)

Bukhara

CBL Ms. 200, Jami's I'tikad-namah, ff. 1a and 10a (Figures 35-36), 1534/941, copied by Mir 'Ali al-Katib al-Sultani.

BOD Ms. Elliot 255b, Jami's Subhat-alabrar, ff. 1b and 2a (identical), 1535/942, copied by Mahmud ibn Nizam al-Shihabi of Herat.

CBL Ms. 215, Jami's Tuhfat al-Ahrar (Gift to the Free) for 'Abd al-Aziz Bahdur Khan, folio 1a, 1548/955, copied by Mir 'Ali al-Husayni.

Samarkand

BOD Ms. Elliot 200, Intikhab-i-diwan-i-Kamal, folio 69a, 1580/988, copied by Mirak.

Private collection, Qur'an, (Figure 37), 1585-86/994, copied by 'Abd al-Faqir al-Raji al-Rahmatullah al-Bari. Illustrated in Falk ed., 111, plate 78.

IOL Ms. No. 737, Yusuf and Zalikha, folio 1a, 1599/1007, copied by Mir Salih al-Katib.

IOL Ms. No. 301, Shahnama, ff. 1a and 6a, 1600/1008, copied by Adina al-Bukhari.

IOL Ms. No. 122, Ma'arij al-Nubuwwah, folio 1a, 1602/1011.

Safavid and Uzbek Era Manuscripts of Uncertain Provenance

BOD Ms. Arab d.98, Qur'an, ff. 1b (Figure 43) and 2a (identical).

CBL Ms. 1548, Qur'an, folio 2a.

BOD Ms. Elliot 328, Shahnama-i-Kasimi, folio 1a.

IOL Ms. 119, Khamsa of Nizami and Khamsa of Khusrau, folio 1a.

Keir Collection, Ms. VI.36, single page. Illustrated in Robinson et al., The Keir Collection, plate 146.

CBL Ms. 1545, Qur'an, ff. 1b and 2a (identical, Figure 40). Illustrated in Martin, plate 247.

BL Ms. Add. 21104, Kulliyyat of Amir Khusrau, folio 5a, 1517/923.

Keir Collection, Ms. VI.30a, Qur'an. Illustrated in Robinson et al. The Keir Collection, plate 145.

CBL Ms. 218, Gulshan-i-Raz (The Rosebed of Mystery), folio 2a (Figure 41).

Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, Ms. Sup. turc 316, Kulliyyat of Amir Khusrau, 1526/933, copied in Herat, but B. Gray (Persian Painting [Geneva 1961; 2nd ed. 1977], 148) says prob. illuminated in Tabriz. Illustrated in E. Blochet, Musulman Painting, XIIth - XVIIth Century (London 1929), plate CLXXI.

Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Qur'an, (double shamsa), c. 1550-70/957-78. Illustrated in Anthony Welch and S.C. Welch, Arts of the Islamic Book (Ithaca, New York 1982), cat.no. 26.

BOD Ms. Elliot 215, Jami's Kulliyyat, folio 3a, 1556/963, copied by Muhammad al-Kiwam of Shiraz.

CBL Ms. 231, Qisas al-Anbiya (Lives of the Prophet), ff. 1b and 2a, c. 1560/967.

BOD Ms. 345, Zafarnamah, folio 1a, c. 1560/967.

CBL Ms. 139, Sa'adat-namah (The Book of Felicity), folio 1a, 1562/969.

Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, Supp. turc. 762, Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i (Figure 47), 1564-65/972. Illustrated in Yusupov, plate 215.

BOD Ms. Ouseley Add. 1, Kitab-i-Dastan, ff. 2b and 3a (identical, but 2b is not coloured), 1565/972.

CBL Ms. 1534, Qur'an, ff. 1b (Figure 42) and 2a (identical), 1573-74/982, copied by Taqi al-Din Muhammad ibn Mutahhar.

JRL Ms. Ryl. Pers. 43, Shahi-i Diwan, folio 3a, 1579/987.

BOD Ms. Elliot 247, Jami's Yusuf and Zalikha, folio 201a (Figure 38), prob. 17th/11th century, copied by Muhammad Husain.

IOL Ms. No. 3266, Ma'arij-alnubuwwah, folio 11a, 1606/1007.

CBL Ms. 221 Bustan of Sa'di, folio 1a, 1551/958, but shamsa added c. mid-17th/mid-11th century.

APPENDIX 2
SHAMSAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

These shamsas have been excluded from the study for a variety of reasons, e.g., only very poor or no illustration available, insufficient data regarding provenance, or not of Iranian origin and with no immediate bearing on this study.

Seattle Art Museum Ms. 44.67, single page, 1305/705 or 1402/805.

BM Ms. Add. 18113, Khamsa of Khwaju Kirmani, folio 79a, 1396/800, Baghdad.

Keir Collection, Ms. VI.15, one of four folios from a Qur'an, 1409/812, Turkish. Illustrated in B.W. Robinson, E. Grube, G.M. Meredith-Owens and R. Skelton, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, The Keir Collection (London 1976), plate 143.

Keir Collection, Ms. VI.12, one of three folios from a work on the Caliphs entitled Majmu' al-Nahrain Multaqa al-Tirain by Shaykh Ahmad b. 'Ali Taghlib, 1412/815, Iranian or Turkish. Illustrated in Robinson et al., plate 142.

CBL Ms. 119, Sadi's Gulistan, folio 1a, 1427/830, Herat, copied by Ja'far al-Baysunghuri for the library of Prince Baysunghur son of Shah Rukh.

Topkapi Saray, Ms. III(?), Khamsa of Nizami, folio 1b, 1442/846, shamsa inscribed with the name of Muhammad the Conqueror of Constantinople. Illustrated in Ivan Stchoukine, Les Peintures des Manuscrits de la "Khamseh" de Nizami au Topkapi Saryi Muzesi d'Istanbul (Paris 1977), plate VII.

BL Ms. Or. 4120, Sadi's Gulistan, ff. 1a and 2b (identical), 1481/886, copied at Shamakhi in Shirwan by Sharaf al-Din Husayn for Sultan Nasr ush-Shari'ah wa' al-din Shirwanshah.

State Public Library, Leningrad, New Turkic Coll. Ms. 58, Diwan of Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, 16th/10th c., Tabriz. Illustrated in E. Yu. Yusupov ed., Miniatures Illustrations [sic] of Alishir Navoi's Works of the XV -XIXth Centuries (Tashkent 1982), plate 245.

CBL Ms. 1558, Qur'an, ff. 1a and 2b (identical), c. 1520/927, Iran, copied and illuminated by Ruzbihan Muhammad al-Tab'i al-Shirazi. Illustrated in David James, Qur'ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library, A Facsimile Exhibition (London 1980), 77, no. 58.

BOD Ms. Elliot 186, Jami's Khamsa, ff. 1b, 2a, 229a and 230b, 1563-65/970-72, Iran, copied by Kamal al-Din Husayn b. Jalal al-Din Mahmud (shamsas may have been added later in Turkey).

IOL Ms. 842, Jami's prose works, ff. 1b and 2a (identical except for script), 1572/980.

IOL Ms. 4069, title unknown, folio 1a, 1572/980, Bukhara.

BM Ms. Or. 12208, Khamsa of Nizami, ff. 1a, 31b, 32a, 110a, 168b, 169a, 231a, 285a, 1595/1003, Mughal. Folio 285a illustrated in Norah Titley, Persian Miniature Painting (London 1983), 231, plate 46.

CBL Ms. 220, an unidentified work, ff. 1b and 2a, c. 1600/1008, possibly Turkish.

IOL Ms. 118, Shahnama, ff. 1a, 12a and 318a, 1601/1009.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, funds given by the Kevorkian Foundation supplementing the Rogers Fund, 1955, two different but similar Mughal shamsas, both from Shah Jahan albums, c. 1640/1050. One each is illustrated in Anthony Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World (Austin 1979), 9, no. 85; and Victor Danner, "Shahadah," Parabola, XI:1 (February 1986), 59.

Location Unknown, Mughal shamsa from a Shah Jahan album, c. 1640-50/1050-60. Illustrated in Milo Beach, The Grand Mogul, Imperial Painting in India 1600-1660 (Williamstown, Massachusetts 1978), 129, plate 21.

IOL Ms. 837, Khamsa of Nizami, folio 1a, c. mid-17th/11th century.

IOL Ms. 4640, Shi'r Laqit, folio 1a, 1840, London, copied by William Hook Morley in style of Il-Khanid World History shamsas.

BOD Ms. Elliot 204, Kulliyyat of 'Attar, folio 1a, no date.

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